

SAULT STE. MARIE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN 49783
REGULAR MEETING, BOARD OF EDUCATION
Phone 906/635-6609

Minutes – Monday, November 9, 2020

108. **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Sault Area Middle School, 684 Marquette Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

109. **A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD**

Board Members Present: Jay D. Wilson, Christine M. Curtis, Daniel L. Smith, Melissa S. Pingatore, Lisa A. Young
Board Members Virtually Present: Martin R. Wolski, Joseph A. Cochran
Absent: None

110. **B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education move to adopt the agenda as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

111. **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Special Meeting – October 6, 2020
Regular Meeting – October 12, 2020

It was moved by Member Young, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education approve the minutes as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

112. **D. BUSINESS REPORT AND APPROVAL OF BILLS –
Mrs. Michelle Bennin**

Mrs. Bennin presented the October financial statements.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the first of eleven State Aid payments, the foundational allowance of \$8,111, the restoration of \$175 per pupil from last fiscal year, and the higher than projected cash flow statement

Mrs. Bennin reported on the implementation of the Office of Retirement Services rate increase effective January 1, 2021.

President Smith confirmed there were no questions, and then stated the report was reviewed by the Finance Committee at its last meeting.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the October General Fund Bill List in the amount of \$1,887,009.20 and the Food Service Bill List in the amount of \$5,070.58.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

II. COMMUNICATIONS

113. **A. REPORTS TO THE BOARD**

1. Recognition

Superintendent Hall acknowledged the following employees and applauded them for all their support on behalf of the students and district.

- a. Teacher of the Month (Jennifer France) – Dr. Sheri McFarlane
- b. Employee of the Month (Kaylee Farrar) – Dr. Sheri McFarlane

2. Extended Continuity of Learning Plan – Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer

Mrs. Kronemeyer reported the Extended Continuity of Learning Plan would remain available through the district website.

Mrs. Kronemeyer reported Chromebooks were deployed to students in grades Kindergarten through 6 on Friday and teachers sent home

workbooks that were associated with their online platforms, but some packets are still being mailed home for students who cannot participate in remote learning.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported elementary teachers take attendance twice a day, and the Middle School is in the process of making time changes that mimic the high school for two-way communication.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported all students start school at 8:30 a.m., the elementary students have breaks built into their day and attendance is taken twice, the Middle School and High School have classes until noon, and Malcolm until 12:30 due to the extra period. She noted the Middle School login time change will mimic that of the high school.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported the 1:00-3:00 Middle School and High School teacher office hours are for students to call in and get online support, and the Malcolm teacher officer hours are 1:30-3:00 due to their 8-period day.

There were no questions regarding the remote learning plan.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported on the percentage of Teacher-Student Virtual Blue communications from October 5 through October 30 for students in Kindergarten through grade 12. She noted some of the communication went down over time due to some students returning to face-to-face instruction.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported on the extra work and student transition of moving students, often multiple times, between face-to-face and virtual instruction. She indicated her desire to have changes just take place at the marking periods.

Superintendent Hall reported the initial plan was to honor Virtual Blue enrollment requests for a whole semester, but when people were having trouble getting used to it, the Board allowed for more movement. He noted administration is finding there is a lot of work for multiple employees in moving kids back and forth. He asked the Board to review the movement process prior to the start of the second quarter so wherever the student is, they make a commitment for 9 weeks.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer expressed concern to support the teachers who are working hard with this program.

President Smith indicated he supports allowing the few outstanding high school and middle school Virtual Blue enrollment/withdrawal

requests, and then limiting the movement to the end of the nine-week marking period.

President Smith sought board input on the Virtual Blue movement decision.

Upon inquiry from Member Wilson, Superintendent Hall stated he would have Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer solidify the communication and allow for a 4-day period before moving to a hard deadline.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, Superintendent Hall stated the movement into or out of the Virtual Blue program could be include as a revision to the Extended Continuity of Learn that is being presented later in the agenda.

Member Wolski indicated he agreed with the Thursday cut off and deadline.

Member Cochran reported parents have expressed to him that they are not happy with having to go back and forth from in person to on-line schooling. He stated it is not good for the teachers, parents, or students. He questioned how long the current method of instruction would be staying.

President Smith indicated the district had made the decision to offer electronic learning until November 30 right now.

Superintendent Hall stated Member Cochran's comment was germane to the current report or action item. Mr. Cochran indicated the need for full Board input on the subject.

President Smith stated further discussion would be held later in the agenda.

Superintendent Hall sought confirmation that Mrs. Kronemeyer was finished with her report. President Smith indicated he happy with how the district is operating and he does not have a problem with establishing reasonable cut off times. There was no other Board comment.

114. **B. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Superintendent Hall reported on the need to provide an additional Wi-Fi hotspot on Sugar Island for students who live on the south end of the Island.

Upon inquiry from Member Cochran, Superintendent Hall stated the hotspot would be available for any student regardless of where they went to school.

Superintendent Hall reported on the difficult decision to cancel the Veterans Day assembly.

115. **C. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

Mr. Nick Huyck reported on the difficulty of flip-flop instruction and inquired on the Board's plan to return to face-to-face instruction. President Smith indicated his understanding of the pandemic uncertainty and asked him to stay in touch with the Board as he would like the district to develop a plan prior to November 30.

Ms. Heather Hopkins reported the teachers had done a good job of front loading prior to shut down and it made for a smooth transition to the first day of virtual instruction. She contrasted this year's move to virtual instruction to last year's impromptu switch.

Ms. Megan Matyjasik inquired on the possibility of having outside businesses donate hotspots for families to use at home instead of having them go out to the hotspots. Superintendent Hall stated he would talk with the EUPISD Technology Director on what is feasible.

Ms. Megan Matyjasik inquired on the possibility of volunteering as a tutor to support the teachers and students online. She noted she is very comfortable with the teaching platforms. Superintendent Hall thanked Ms. Matyjasik and suggested she send an email to the building principals to see if they wanted to post a notice out on their Facebook page.

Superintendent Hall thanked Ms. Matyjasik for her good ideas.

Ms. Stacey Daley thanked the Board and district for doing a good job over the years but indicated her frustration with not receiving enough advanced notice this year on when the district is going to close. She indicated a notice on Thursday indicating the district is closing Friday is very hard on families. She asked for better communication

President Smith indicated Mrs. Daley's comments were noted and confirmed there were no other public correspondence.

III. ACTION ITEMS AND BOARD REPORTS

Superintendent Hall reported the district has a federal requirement to provide services to St. Mary's School, and Mrs. Bumstead is one of our

distinguished retired teachers that has offered to come back and work part-time.

116. A. ***PERSONNEL - Superintendent Hall***

New Hires

1. Colleen Bumstead – Title I Reading/Math Support Teacher – St. Mary’s School

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the recommendation to hire Colleen Bumstead as part-time Title I Reading/Math Support Teacher at St. Mary’s School.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

2. Mark Pingatore – Grade 7 Boys Basketball Coach – Sault Middle School

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education approve the recommendation to hire Mark Pingatore as Grade 7 Boys Basketball Coach for Sault Middle School.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Abstain: Pingatore
Motion Carried.

117. B. ***EXTENDED CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLAN – Superintendent Hall***

Superintendent Hall reported it is a state requirement that the district bring its Extended Continuity of Learning Plan back to its Board monthly to keep it moving forward.

It was moved by Member Wilson supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the recommendation to revise the current Extended Continuity of Learning Plan as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None

Motion Carried.

118. **C. *OPEN MEETINGS ACT RESOLUTION – Superintendent Hall***

Superintendent Hall reported the resolution is a requirement by the state Supreme Court to overhaul the open meetings act while the pandemic’s executive orders are in place.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education approve the Open Meetings Act Resolution as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

119. **D. *2020-2021 BUDGET AMENDMENT – Mrs. Michelle Bennin***

Mrs. Bennin reviewed the major changes to 2020-21 general fund budget.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the projected revenues and expenditures leaving a breakeven lunch fund balance of \$2,279 for July 1, 2021.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the fiduciary fund building activity revenues, expenditures, and projected fund balance of \$304,363 as of July 1, 2021.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the major changes to the general fund budget comparing the original budget to the proposed amendment. She highlighted the local source revenues, political source adjustment, an increase in state sources due to the restored \$8,111 in per pupil funding and higher than projected count, an increase in federal sources due to the coronavirus relief fund award, and the increase in other sources because of restoring the budget back to actual amounts.

Mrs. Bennin noted a large part of revenue increases were due to one-time allocations that will not be actualized when the school returns to normal programing.

Mrs. Bennin reported there was a reduction in Impact aid and At-Risk funding carryover.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the following significant expense adjustments due to prior year retirements, resignations, new hires, staff movement/elimination, reductions in grant allocations for instructional support, big box store tax abatements, additional transportation salaries and benefits, increased support services for the replacement of student

chrome books utilizing COVID relief funds, and the reduction of digital literacy money.

Mrs. Bennin reported the overall year-end fund balance went from \$1,450,706 in the original budget to \$4,797,882.00 in the proposed.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education approve the 2020-2021 Budget Amendment as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

120. **E. SUMMER TAX COLLECTION – Mrs. Michelle Bennin**

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education approve the resolution and agreement to impose the summer property tax levy for 2021.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

121. **F. BUS PURCHASE – Mrs. Michelle Bennin**

Mrs. Bennin presented the lone bus bid and indicated the funds would come from the sale of the Malcolm building.

It was moved by Member Young, supported by Member Wilson, that the Board of Education approve the purchase of a 2015, thirty-five plus, five passenger IC lift bus at a cost of \$53,858 as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

122. **G. CHROMEBOOK REPLACEMENT – Mrs. Michelle Bennin**

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the purchase of 423 replacement Chromebooks at a cost of \$342,860 as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran

Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

123. **IV. ADMINISTRATION REPORTS**

Dr. Hall confirmed there were no administrative reports.

124. **V. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND BOARD POLICY ISSUES**

Member Cochran reported on his concern for not having an answer to why some sports activities are still taking place in the school and in the city while the district is closed to face-to-face instruction.

Superintendent Hall reported on the difficulty of predicting what the pandemic is going to look like in the future and deciding on how to move forward based on current information.

Superintendent Hall explained it is wise for the Board to have some flexibility in its decision on how to offer education with the pandemic. He noted the group of 20 or more people who had helped make the recommendation to hold school electronically starting today until November 30, was represented by the school nurse, teachers, parents, teacher representatives, administrators, custodial manager, maintenance manager, principals, and with the consideration of the local health department.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Superintendent Hall reported the school nurse is working with the local health department on how many students and staff are affected by COVID-19, and the district will know in general what the numbers are prior to the November 30 deadline. Superintendent Hall stated the notification letters on the COVID numbers will continue to be posted on the district website.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Superintendent Hall stated he would speak with Mrs. Karen Senkus of the Chippewa County Health Department prior to Thanksgiving so the Board will have more information prior to November 30.

Member Wilson indicated the rumor mill is wondering how the district could end face-to-face instruction on a Thursday and have a sports team play in Ludington the next day. President Smith stated Friday was the last school day before the district went virtual.

Member Pingatore explained the district was able to make the decision to allow the team to play in play-offs because of the quarantining information it had received from the health department.

Member Wilson indicated he felt he was taken off guard by the closure based on the small amount of school related COVID cases and the limited information he received prior to the decision.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, Superintendent Hall stated the COVID notification letters do not list cumulative numbers as they are constantly changing, but they do provide additional information at that given point in time.

Superintendent Hall stated superintendents are given powers to be able to open or close schools when it is dependent upon the safety of its students and staff. He indicated Karen Senkus from the Chippewa County Health Department was in the virtual audience and could possibly comment on her perspective.

Superintendent Hall reported there were 15 COVID cases in the county and 153 people quarantining within the district last Thursday when the decision was made to close. He noted 124 of the 153 people quarantining were from Sault High or Malcolm High. He stated the district was aware of the super spreader events and could see a domino effect going forward. He stated the lack of finding substitutes, our hospital's capacity, and staffing, as well as multiple communications with Karen, Charity, and Lana from the CCHD led to a better understanding of where we were at with the virus. Superintendent Hall stated it was a hard decision to close the district to virtual learning until the November 30, but he wanted to keep students and staff safe, and did not want to overwhelm our community. Dr. Hall reported Mrs. Senkus supported a 14-day closure, but with the following week only being a partial due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the committee thought it was best to return to face-to-face learning on the 30th.

Member Wilson stated he echoed Mrs. Daley's comment about a lack of communication prior to making the decision on Thursday to close on Friday.

Superintendent Hall stated he was keeping the Board informed as soon as possible on the rapidly changing COVID events. He further explained the reason the football team could play, was because they had already come off a 14-day quarantine and there weren't any players on the team, practicing or playing that had tested positive or needed to quarantine. He further noted the Athletic Director contacted MHSAA and Ludington Schools about the situation and they agreed to hold the game. Dr. Hall reported the high school did everything right and administration wanted to give our athletes every opportunity to play during a state tournament while it was safe. Dr. Hall stated the district did not have a choice when the girls' basketball team was shut down by the state last spring. He stated a decision to allow winter sports will be made prior to the start of practice on November 16.

Member Cochran indicated he agreed with Mr. Wilson that it appears sports is taking center stage.

Upon inquiry from Member Cochran, Dr. Hall reported there were approximately 153 cumulative probable cases in the county. Member Cochran stated it would have been nice to have had information earlier than later.

President Smith stated working in a pandemic is a learning experience for everyone, and he is okay with Dr. Hall providing raw student and staff quarantining numbers.

125. **VI. *FUTURE PLANNING***

December 14 – Regular Board Meeting – 7:00 p.m. - Middle School
January 11 – Regular Board Meeting – 7:00 p.m. – Middle School

126. **VII. *ADJOURNMENT***

There being no further business to come before the Board at 8:28 p.m., it was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Pingatore, that the meeting be adjourned.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young, Wolski, Cochran

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Daniel L. Smith, President

Melissa S. Pingatore, Board Secretary

Judy L. Sirk, Recording Secretary