

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

Minutes – Tuesday, December 29, 2020

149. **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Smith called the electronic meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

150. **A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD**

Present: Daniel L. Smith, Martin R. Wolski, Christine M. Curtis, Melissa S. Pingatore, Jay D. Wilson, Joseph A. Cochran, Lisa A. Young

Absent: None

151. **B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

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

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

152. **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Regular Meeting - November 9, 2020

Special Meeting - November 24, 2020

Special Meeting - December 3, 2020

It was moved by Member Cochran, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education approve the November 9, 2020, minutes.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Special Meeting - November 16, 2020

Closed Meeting – November 16, 2020

It was moved by Member Cochran, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education approve the November 16, 2020, special and closed minutes.

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

Abstain: Wilson

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

153. **D. BUSINESS REPORT AND APPROVAL OF BILLS**

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the General Fund Bill List in the amount of \$2,275,810.59 for November.

Mrs. Bennin reported the district received the final 2019-20 audit and the principal auditor from Rehmann would be making a presentation at the January meeting.

Mrs. Bennin reported the EUPISD technology support contract was slightly higher this year.

Mrs. Bennin reported the November percent of budgeted expenditures were below last year's and the 14 months fiscal year percentages, resulting in higher cash flow projected.

Mrs. Bennin reported the transparency site had been updated with all the required information to date.

President Smith stated the report was reviewed by the Finance Committee and there were no questions.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND CORRESPONDENCE

154. **A. REPORTS TO THE BOARD**

Superintendent Hall reported on the following recognitions in appreciation for their hard work and dedication. He reported Mrs. Chevillot would ensure Mrs. Gibbons and Mrs. Brady received their Parker Ace Hardware Helpful Teacher and Employee tee shirt along with a \$50 Parker Ace

Hardware gift certificate sponsored by Doug LaPrade Agency MEEMIC Insurance and Parker Ace Hardware.

1. Recognition
 - a. Teacher of the Month (Tammi Gibbons) – Mrs. Diane Chevillot
 - b. Employee of the Month (Erin Brady) – Mrs. Diane Chevillot

On behalf of the board, President Smith thanked Mrs. Gibbons and Mrs. Brady for their outstanding work.

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

Dr. Hall reported under Public Act 149 Section 98a, the Board is required to reaffirm or revise the Extended Continuity of Learning Plan monthly. The meeting was turned over to Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer to provide an update.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported in addition to providing Chromebooks to students in grades K-12, 38 hotspots have been deployed to students who lacked the technology capacity in their home.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported the plan requires the district to make specific changes for students with disability needs.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer provided the average daily attendance rates by school for November 30 through December 22 and the total number of Virtual Blue students and teacher contacts by grade for December 1 through December 18.

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer indicated there was a little drop in attendance at the Middle School and High School due to the Christmas holiday, but Virtual Blue attendance remained high.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported there were 8 students the district had a decrease in communication with since the moved to virtual learning. She stated it was attributed to parent working conditions.

There was no further comment.

3. Impact Aid - Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported on what is entailed in obtaining Impact Aid and Federal tax exemption. She stated there was no change to the Indian Policies and Procedures, but it was a requirement to hold a hearing to receive comment.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, there was no questions or comments.

155. **B. *IMPACT AID PUBLIC COMMENT – Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer***

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education accept comment on the District’s Impact Aid Educational Programs and Services.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, there was no one in the virtual audience who had a comment.

156. **C. *IMPACT AID - Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer***

1. 32-MI-2022-0038 School Year Indian Policies and Procedures – Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve 32-MI-2022-0038 Indian Policies and Procedures as presented.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

2. Resolution - Federal Impact Aid Assurances – Mrs. Amy Scott- Kronemeyer

It was moved by Member Cochran, supported by Member Wilson, that the Board of Education approve the Federal Impact Aid Assurances Resolution as presented.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

D. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

On behalf of the district, Superintendent Hall extended condolences to the family and friends of teacher Mike Ellis who recently passed away.

Superintendent Hall reported meal distribution would continue for all students while the district is operating under virtual learning and will continue throughout the year for students in Virtual Blue.

Superintendent Hall reported the district received the highest rating of an unmodified opinion from its 2019-20 audit. He stated the district would continue to run appropriately.

Superintendent Hall reported on the drainage issues and culvert work at Washington School as well as a portion of the Middle School roof that was not part of the 1999/20 remodeling project. He stated he hoped to bring bids to the Board in February.

Superintendent Hall reported on the need to have light poles installed at the north end of the Middle School for visibility early in the morning. He indicated the probability of seeking price quotes instead of bids for this project.

Superintendent Hall reported approximately 83% of the 160 employees who responded to the district COVID survey indicated they were interested in taking the vaccine when it came available. He stated the numbers were very encouraging and will be communicated it with the County Health Department so they can reserve that amount for our district.

Superintendent Hall reported 36 students have tested positive to COVID since the start of school and 8 staff members. He noted the number of students quarantining today increased by 2 and 1 staff member. He stated the district has been operating well, but if the increase in cases rise, the district may not be able to find substitutes to fill the positions.

Superintendent Hall reported the Chippewa County Health Department positive COVID rate is 6.1% with 15 deaths. He stated they reported to be optimistic based on the numbers and vaccine availability but are concerned about possible community spread over the holidays. Dr. Hall reported school personnel will be eligible for the first phase of the COVID vaccine by the end of January.

Superintendent Hall reported War Memorial Hospital had administered 320 tests to date. He stated there are currently 8 COVID inpatients and one in ICU.

Superintendent Hall reported JKL Bahweting School would be meeting tomorrow to decide on face-to-face instruction, Rudyard, Les Cheneaux, and Pickford Schools were returning face-to-face on January 4, Brimley School was returning face-to-face on January 11, and Ojibway Charter would most likely resume to face-to-face on January 11.

Superintendent Hall announced it was the last meeting for Members Wolski and Cochran who had chosen not to seek reelection last November. He acknowledged their respective service on the board since March 2010 and January 2015 and thanked them for a job well done.

158. ***E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION***

President Smith opened the meeting for public comment.

Steve Minta of the city youth wrestling program inquired on using a school facility as the program represents district students. He cited the extra precautions and unique ways the program continually fights illness and disease. Superintendent Hall indicated the program would not be allowed a waiver because it was not an exclusive district sport.

Jody Burt a parent of students in grades 4 and 7, asked the Board to consider allowing at least elementary and middle school students to return to face-to-face instruction because a lot of kids are struggling with on-line learning and the county (specifically the prisons) are moving in the right direction with declining COVID cases.

Nick Huyck reported the Board needs to take the advice of the people, state officials, and be professionals in deciding to return to face-to-face instruction. He indicated the Board had a previous return to school date of January 4.

Mary Michaels school nurse reported she is happy to learn the COVID rate is declining in the prisons and stated she is an advocate for schools to reopen because transmission is not happening in the schools. She indicated the district under the advisement of the health department will continue to notify parents of positive cases, but she believes kids can return to school safely.

Megan Davidson mother of students in grades 2, 9, and 10 and one of two parents who work at the prisons reported on the difficulty of virtual learning. She asked the Board to take into consideration the mental stress of students and families when deciding to return to school. She stated her kids were anxious for structure and to get back with friends.

Lisa Kipka a mother of two boys in grades 2 and 4 inquired if the Board had heard from the teachers on what their comfort level was with returning to school on January 4 and when they could expect to receive a vaccine.

Superintendent Hall reported the last hard data he received from the teachers was for a return date of November 30 and he was not aware of any more recent surveys. He stated the last data indicated they were not in favor of returning on December 9 and it was his assumption that the group was probably more comfortable with returning now than later.

Tracey Casebier Middle School Teacher stated it seemed logical to wait until teachers could get vaccinated and safely return to the classroom before opening back up. She stated she wants her kids back in the classroom but to be safe about it.

Kelly Beaumont Middle School Teacher voiced her concern for opening school back up. She indicated a lot of people get lax during holiday gatherings and she would like to give it some time to see if there are any affects before sending students and staff back to school. She suggested waiting until the start of second semester before returning to school.

Fred Schneider parent of two reported the county has not seen the middle of the COVID outbreak and the new strain is supposed to be 70% more transmissible. He stated he does not think it is wise to reopen school until other variances have been thought through.

Lindsey Gregg mother of two boys and War Memorial employee reported the vaccine is a two-step process that requires approximately 3 weeks for both injections and the general side effects are headaches and muscle soreness on day two of the vaccine.

Christine Ball Sault High teacher with son in Virtual Blue reported on concern for students do not wear their masks or do not wear them appropriately as they did prior to going virtual. She sought confirmation of a policy to address the situation. Superintendent Hall reported there has not been any movement on a specific mask policy, but teachers need to address the discipline issue in their classroom and if that does not work, send the student to the building administrator for further compliance. He stated the insubordination policy covers this type of behavior.

Lori McKerchie a parent of a grade 12 daughter at Sault High expressed concern for opening school up to face-to-face instruction prior to the start of second semester. She noted the anticipated holiday gatherings and the reported higher number of quarantines for older kids for her basis.

Superintendent Hall confirmed there was no other comments.

President Smith acknowledged the Board is taking all comment under advisement and will not act in haste.

III. ACTION ITEMS AND BOARD REPORTS

159. **A. PERSONNEL**

Superintendent Hall presented the following.

New Hires

1. Brandon Tompkinson – Physical Education Teacher – Sault Area Public Schools

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Brandon Tompkinson as Physical Education Teacher for Sault Area Public Schools.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

2. Jackson Lawrence – Boys Freshmen Basketball Coach – Sault Area High School

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Curtis, that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Jackson Lawrence as Boys Freshmen Basketball Coach for Sault Area High School.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

3. Jacinto Arreola – Varsity Wrestling Coach – Sault Area High School

It was moved by Member Cochran, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Arreola Jacinto as Varsity Wrestling Coach for Sault Area High School.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

4. Brian White – Maintenance Mechanic – Sault Area Public Schools

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Brian White as Maintenance Mechanic for Sault Area Public Schools.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

160. **B. *REMOTE LEARNING – Superintendent Hall***

Superintendent Hall reported remote learning was brought back to the Board for further discussion prior to the January 4 date. He stated current data showed the county was moving into a positive direction and it was up to the Board as to when, if, or how the district would return to school. He noted the state requirement during the pandemic directs the Board to revise its Extended of Continuity of Learning Plan date of January 4 if they chose not to return to instruction on January 4 or move to reaffirm it if they chose to open back up on that date.

President Smith indicated he had received several emotional emails about opening back up on January 4 and that he had personally tested positive for the virus and it was not fun.

Member Young indicated she had also tested positive with the virus and hoped none of the rest had had to deal with it.

Member Wolski stated he would support opening back up on January 4 but preferred January 11.

Member Curtis stated the decision was difficult but with the numbers going down she would support returning on January 4 and was on board with whatever MHSAA dictated for sports.

Member Pingatore indicated she was in support of returning January 4 with the district being able to close just the concentrated building or hotspot if needed.

Member Wilson referenced Lindsey Gregg's comments on the length of time to fully vaccinate staff and stated he was in favor of opening back up on January 4 along with following MHSAA for sports.

Member Wilson confirmed the Board could meet if there was another outbreak by chance.

Member Cochran stated the outbreak has not been good for kids; a lot has happened to them; they need exercise and a healthy diet. He noted the Board should not waiver from the January 4 return date as parents have/had the Virtual Blue option for remote learning.

Member Young reported the teachers have done a good job with remote instruction, but families are struggling, and it is time to return to school. She acknowledged the district is cleaning the buildings and buses and they are ready.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education continue with preplanning to return to face-to-face instruction for all grades on January 4.

President Smith sought comment from fellow board members on the issue of high school teachers being concerned about enforcing student to wear their masks correctly in the classrooms.

President Smith inquired on the possibility of making a motion to address the mask wearing.

Superintendent Hall stated it would be redundant and unnecessary to have a mask policy as typically the classroom rules apply in this situation and the teacher can address it in class or have administration involvement. He further stated a policy could be drafted if the Board wanted one.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of revising the motion on the table to include a mask wearing policy. With unanimous consensus, the board moved on with the vote.

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

161. C. ***EXTENDED CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLAN –
Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer***

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Wolski, that the Board of Education affirm the current Extended Continuity of Learning Plan.

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

162.

D. GIFTS AND DONATIONS

1. Michelle Miller of JoAnn Fabric and Craft Store donated approximately 1,300 face masks to the district and several bolts of fabric for use by the Sault High Performing Arts.
2. Brad and Jennifer Blair donated a 1997 four-door Ford Station Wagon to the Sault Area Career Center Automotive Technology Program.
3. Algonquin United Methodist Church donated clothing, food, body care supplies, and grocery gift certificates for students at Washington School.
4. Chippewa County Health Department donated \$475 through Employee Dress Down Days to support homeless youth.
5. An anonymous donor donated \$2,200 to the Middle School Music Program.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education accept the above donations with thanks and appreciation.

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

163. **IV. ADMINISTRATION REPORTS**

Dr. Hall confirmed he did not have a report.

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

Member Cochran sought approval from President Smith to present the following motion. He indicated it was his opportunity to make a positive change.

It was moved by Member Cochran, supported by Wilson, that the Board of Education approve increasing the Athletic Grade Point Average requirement from its current level of a D+ to a solid C (2.0) Grade Point Average. This change emphasizes our commitment that 'Athletes are Student First' as noted in the Athletic Manual.

Superintendent Hall reported this sort of motion surfaced years ago when he was Athletic Director. He strongly advised the Board not to adopt the motion.

Yeas: Cochran, Wilson

Nays: Smith, Wolski, Curtis, Young, Pingatore

Absent: None

Motion Failed.

Superintendent Hall reported if the board wanted to further consider the motion, they should allow the Athletic Director to gather a group of coaches, teachers, and parents to review the possibility and report back on. He indicated in the past there was a push to increase athletic support which also increased academic progress.

Upon inquiry from Member Pingatore, Dr. Hall reported there had been a handful of kids that needed academic attention in the past, but the process allowed them to bring up their grades to keep them from being removed for lack of academic progress.

Member Cochran stated there are coaches who require higher academic standards for their softball, track and field, and cross-country teams and he felt a student could obtain a D+ by just showing up to class. He further stated a C grade was not too much to ask and questioned if the district stood by athletes are students first.

President Smith reported he appreciated Member Cochran's position, but the district needs to get kids back in school on a regular schedule before addressing the issue. He stated he would vote no on the motion.

Member Wolski stated he would vote no at this time on the issue.

Member Curtis indicated she would like to see some follow up on the feasibility of the motion and would vote no at this time.

Member Pingatore stated she would vote no until she was able to receive some more information. She indicated that sometimes a D+ is the best a student can do.

Member Young indicated the motion should be tabled until a committee could be formed to review the possibilities and would vote no at this time.

Member Cochran thanked the Board for hearing him out and appreciated their comments. He stated you cannot try to make an improvement if you do not bring a motion to the Board. He thanked his fellow board members for their time.

President Smith acknowledged Member Cochran's good remarks and indicated if other board members wanted to raise a motion to bring it up with Superintendent Hall or himself so it could be placed on the agenda.

Member Pingatore thanked Member Cochran for serving on the Board indicating she has learned from him serving on the board and would miss him.

President Smith acknowledged Member Cochran and he were not always on the same side of issues, but he enjoyed serving with him as well as Member Wolski and trying to make a difference.

Member Wolski noted his length of time and relationship in serving with his fellow board members. He thanked them and the community for giving him the opportunity.

Member Curtis reported a lot of meals had been distributed on a weekly basis and thanked all those involved who served the families in need.

Member Curtis thanked Dr. Hall for his work and COVID data, so the Board was able to make a decision.

Member Curtis thanked Members Wolski and Cochran in helping her to be a better board member and for their service to the community.

165. **VI. *FUTURE PLANNING***

President Smith reviewed future planning.

January 11 - Board Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

February 8 - Board Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

Superintendent Hall reported the current MDHHS order that requires the district to meet virtually expires on January 15 and he would keep everyone posted on any changes.

President Smith noted the two out-going members could make the customary last motion.

166. **VII. *ADJOURNMENT***

There being no further business to come before the Board at 8:32 p.m. it was moved by Member Wolski, supported by Member Cochran, that the Board of Education adjourn the meeting.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Daniel L. Smith, President

Melissa S. Pingatore, Board Secretary

Judy L. Sirk, Recording Secretary