

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

Minutes – Thursday, September 28, 2023

62. **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Curtis called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Sault Area Middle School, Room 601, 684 Marquette Avenue.

63. **A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD**

Board Members Present: Michelle M. Ribant, Melissa S. Pingatore, William E. Odbert, Christine M. Curtis, Kenneth D. Dunton

Absent: Caitlin L. Galer and Amy L. Goetz

64. **B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Member Dunton, supported by Member Odbert, that the Board of Education adopt the agenda as revised.

Yeas: Ribant, Pingatore, Odbert, Curtis Dunton

Nays: None

Absent: Galer, Goetz

Motion Carried.

65. **C. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

President Curtis acknowledged the importance of receiving valuable public comment and invited the audience to speak.

Dennis McShane spoke on behalf of Jennifer Hopkins. He produced a Sault High Soccer Boys Raffle ticket that he purchased, which indicated no license number for the raffle. He indicated it is a state requirement to have all raffles licensed. He indicated he wanted to make a point with this and questioned if the soccer coach would be fired. The High School Soccer team also gave away a cooler full of goodies/alcohol. If you are going to fire Jen for making mistakes, then you should fire the soccer coach. People in this district and all districts make mistakes all the time but this person is being centered out.

Where are the administrators above her, Jeanine Sherman & Pat Bennin, in all of this? Where is the oversight? Did the administrators call Jen in and tell her not to do this? Mr. McShane wants a four-month investigation of the soccer program at this school. This crap is ridiculous.

Cara DeNuccio parent and former employee spoke on behalf of Jennifer Hopkins. She had an employee story -- its homecoming week. The Seniors won the lobby decorating contest. In the display, all the seniors' names were on the display. Jen inspired the students of the class of 2024 to dig deeper and always pushed the students to make memories; Jen wanted every single moment to matter for the class of 2024. Mrs. DeNuccio's question was: Is this offense worth firing her for. Mrs. DeNuccio worked for the district for 14 years and indicated Jen is being held to a different standard than others in the district. Is the Board really comfortable terminating a long-time employee with no blemishes on her record?

66. **D. *CLOSED SESSION – M.O.M.A. 15.268, §8(c) and §8(h)(1)***

It was moved by Member Odbert, supported by Member Dunton, that the Board of Education move into closed session in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. 15.268, §8(a) to consider disciplining Jane Doe #1 23/24.

Yeas: Ribant, Pingatore, Odbert, Curtis, Dunton

Nays: None

Absent: Galer, Goetz

Motion Carried.

The Board went into closed session at 5:35 p.m.

The Board reconvened in open session at 6:30 p.m.

The following resolution was read and adopted by the Board of Education:

A regular meeting of the Board of Education (the “Board”) of Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools (the “District”) was held in the Sault Area Middle School room 601, within the boundaries of the District, on the 28th day of September, at 5:30 o’clock in the p.m.

The meeting was called to order at by Christine Curtis, President.

Present: Members: Christine M. Curtis, William E. Odbert, Kenneth D. Dunton, Michelle M. Ribant, Melissa S. Pingatore

Absent: Members: Caitlin L. Galer, Amy L. Goetz

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Ribant and supported by Member Dunton:

WHEREAS:

1. The employment status of Jennifer Hopkins, an administrative assistant employed in Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools, was brought to the Board of Education upon the recommendation of Superintendent of Schools on September 28, 2023, recommending Jennifer Hopkins' employment with Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools be terminated based on her misconduct and violation of Board Policy, the Michigan Code of Educational Ethics, and the employee handbook; and
2. Jennifer Hopkins received written notice of the Superintendent's recommendation to discontinue her services and terminate her employment contract, along with a notice that she could appear before this Board of Education and/or submit written information for the Board's consideration; and Jennifer Hopkins appeared before the Board and received an opportunity to respond to the administrative recommendation; and
3. Jennifer Hopkins submitted a written response to the Superintendent's recommendation; and
4. All information submitted was reviewed and considered by the Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The services of administrative assistant Jennifer Hopkins must be terminated because she engaged in misconduct, unprofessional conduct, and violated Board Policies, the Michigan Code of Educational Ethics along with the employee handbook.
2. The Board adopts the reasoning and conclusions of its administration that the services of administrative assistant Jennifer Hopkins must be terminated due to misconduct and incorporates by reference the Superintendent's recommendations.
3. The services of administrative assistant Jennifer Hopkins are to be discontinued upon approval of this resolution.
4. The Superintendent is authorized and directed to notify Jennifer Hopkins in writing that her services as administrative assistant have been terminated due to misconduct and her employment with the District is discontinued as of September 28, 2023.
5. All resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with the provisions of this resolution be and the same are hereby rescinded.

Ayes: Members: Ribant, Curtis, Dunton, Pingatore, Odbert

Nays: Members: None

Absent: Galer, Goetz

6. Motion declared adopted.

67. **II. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at 6:42 p.m., it was moved by Member Dunton, supported by Member Odbert, that the meeting be adjourned.

Yeas: Ribant, Pingatore, Dunton, Curtis, Odbert

Nays: None

Absent: Galer, Goetz

Motion Carried.

Christine M. Curtis, Board President

Melissa S. Pingatore, Board Secretary

Terri S. Ferroni, Recording Secretary