

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education

Virtual Meeting– July 20, 2020

MINUTES

President DuFort called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. She led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call by Interim Superintendent Dave Chapin indicated the presence of **Board Members**: Denise DuFort, Jarrod Smith, Jon Shiflett, , Kim Mulvenna, Patrick McKennon and Ben Cwayna. Sara Clark Pierson joined the meeting at 6:12 p.m. **Central Office Administrators**: Dave Chapin, Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Nancy Rasinske, Sara Holding, Mark Deschaine and John Ellsworth. **Others in Attendance** Ann Paquette-Lukens, Ashleigh Lore, Blake Wegenke, Dave Kushman, Dawne Velianoff, Ellie Darnell, Elyse Fox, Eric Leopold, Erica Ledesma, Kelly Smith, Ken Wright, Kim Abed, Kirk Crowner, Kyle Dymond, Margo Susnjar, Meghan Ritchey, Nicole Shannon, Pat St. George, Rachel Greco, Rachel Kuntzsch, Ranjit Singh, Lisa Singh, Tamela Jones, Wendy Dill, Greg Almy, Elizabeth Mullins, Liz Jackman, Tonya Rice, Julie Lawrence, Justin Heany, Karen Batterham, Theresa Abed, Whitney Craig, and Kim Manning

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mrs. Mulvenna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the July 20, 2020 Agenda Items, as presented.

Roll Call Vote

President DuFort	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>	Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>	Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>ABSENT</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE ON CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the July 20, 2020 Consent Agenda Items, as presented.

Included on the Consent Agenda were the June 26, 2020 Virtual Meeting and Closed Session Meeting Minutes, and the teacher hirings of Allison Lerew-Cordier, Jenna Riekse, Ashleigh Lore, Allison Shumate, Gillian Eisenbraun, Amanda Gabriel and Brittney Anderson.

Roll Call Vote

Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>	Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>	Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>ABSENT</u>	President DuFort	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

A. Capitol Connections Report

Mr. Smith noted there is not a lot to report noting no news is good news with respect to no further reduction in state school aid. But we are all watching the progress being made at both the district and state level with regard to any news with respect to in-person or online instruction for the fall. Obviously the staff and administration are having to plan for both scenarios. Legislation has been proposed to try to guide that process, specifically– House Bills 5910-5913 are all aimed at modify an E-Learning Day – described as online instruction so those days would count toward in-school instruction and qualify for state school aid and other materials. The legislation hasn't moved far but could have a significant impact.

Mr. Shiflett recommended everyone watch the news over the next 24-48 hours for budget issues.

B. Eaton RESA Report

President DuFort noted they met last week for their organizational meeting, they also reviewed the strategic plan with an update and talked about early literacy programs. She noted the early literacy program has received a grant of \$21,000 for the Grass Program to update their curriculum to provide a strong focus on social and emotional growth. With regard to General Ed, they reviewed the final results and scores however with no spring scores it is challenging but using other data sources such as MTSS, NWEA and IDEX it appears they are on track. RESA is focusing on training teachers in instructional strategies Pre through 12. CTE completion rate was at 95% which is attribute to starting early and these increased completion rates is attributed to more online work as a result of the COVID-19 shut down. They continue to work on Internal and external communications, share tech, and inter-district shared staff. They are changing the system for substitutes to Red Rover and will realize a 17.5% savings and provide better services.

C. Grand Ledge Education Foundation Report

President DuFort advised the Education Foundation Board has not met.

D. Governance Committee Report

President DuFort advised the Governance Committee has not met.

E. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Ms. Clark Pierson advised the committee met about two weeks ago. Dr. Chapin connected us with Darinda Carter-Andrews, MSU Professor who is a veteran of these

kinds of community dialogues. Talked about maybe using her as a person to help guide us and develop the structure to go about this. Ms. Carter-Andrews submitted a proposal this weekend, but the committee has not had a chance to review this. We asked her to provide us with guidance in three areas: (1) To find a way for people who have felt excluded or in some way were not able to fully participate in the culture of the educational experience at Grand Ledge to be able to communicate and describe their experience; (2) Ensure community involvement; (3) Ensure this wasn't a one-day conversation, but a conversation that encompasses several areas such as hiring, discipline, opportunity gap, and curriculum – to name a few. She noted what the final structure looks like is still uncertain but she envisions people will gravitate to areas that interest them so we can keep them engaged over a long-period of time. She expressed it is important that the district change the way it operates, that there is real reflections, not just in how other are affected but how it affects each of us individually.

Dr. Chapin suggested the committee meet again to review the proposal, but stressed the conversation is very active and very much alive and a priority within the district.

Ms. Clark Pierson agreed a meeting would be set in the next day or two and expressed Ms. Carter-Andrews is very impressive and has a deep experience. She also noted several people have spoken with her in the last month about their skills and she would like to weave in other to gain more prospective.

F. Interim-Superintendent's Report

Dr. Chapin advised a one-page handout of the back to school plan was released to the public on July 14 which is the direct result of a parent survey that showed 40% of the responses favored online learning and 60% favored a traditional in-person option. The administrative team is developing a FAQ document to address the many questions that have surfaced and have scheduled three online meetings with all staff in July and August to discuss the options and to begin to address the many questions out there. A larger more comprehensive plan is in the draft form, but everything is very fluid right now. Dr. Chapin advised the final plan will be brought to the board for final input before we open in the fall. He commended the administrative team noting the district has good people in place helping to make these decisions in how we move forward. He thanked Grand Ledge Police Chief Tom Osterholzer for organizing along with Grand Ledge High School alumni John Horford to establishing community-wide meetings to address systemic racism, noting members of the district faculty and administration have been in attendance at these meetings and the administrative team would like to see the initiative from the district merge with the current energy from the community versus having two different strands. Dr. Chapin noted the he and the administrative team are very interested and support the language being proposed to the board tonight on racial divisiveness expressing the district is not looking at this as a confrontational issue but as a teachable moment. He expressed his appreciation for the professionalism of the administrative team noting this is very difficult work, but there is excellent work being done and noting the board can be proud of the staff working on these things. In closing he apologized that he is behind on his email responses but the Director of Technology is providing him assistance and it is important to him that he responds.

Mrs. Mulvenna asked if the board members could join the staff online meetings.

Dr. Chapin affirmed it would be great to have the board members join. He further noted these are meetings for the staff but there will be community-wide online meetings in the future to provide parents with an opportunity to discuss with the administrative team as well.

Dr. Gabriel noted the district has also been looking at the reopening of the buildings from an operational stand point in how we prep the buildings to make things safe for our students and staff to return. He noted the district has been stockpiling cleaning supplies since the onset, but we are competing with every other district in Michigan. He noted maintenance staff has been putting signage in buildings, installing plexiglass in the offices noting it will be very obvious we are doing our part. But, we also have to look at staffing needs with 40% interested in online options and 60% interested in traditional schooling. We have surveyed our teaching staff to see who might be interested in teaching online, or if they would prefer to return to the classroom. In closing Dr. Gabriel noted it is important for people to understand there is a lot that has to go on behind the scenes for us to prepare for students and staff to return.

Mrs. Mulvenna applauded all the work and the team work that is going on to make this happen.

G. Bond Update Report

Dr. Gabriel noted as of right now, bond projects are within budget and on time. He noted work is being finished on the parking and drive areas at Beagle with asphalt scheduled to go down on August 3. He advised a portion of the building has been demolished and removed from the site. He noted the north end of the building will be used for the elementary classrooms and they are replacing light fixtures, and ceilings and are about ready to close things all back up. At Holbrook, similarly, updates to the parking lot are moving along. The front, or north end of the building is down and will be reconstructed as a two-story building. At the back of the building steel work is being done for the new gym, the new boiler and chillers were delivered today and will be installed later this week. The bond team will be finalizing the planning of the pools as well as the music portion for Beagle and will go out for bid in September. The restructuring plan of K-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 is scheduled for the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

H. Continuation of Learning Update Report

Dr. Barnes reviewed the Continuation of Learning plan noting three active teams (in person learning, online learning and blended learning) of approximately 100 people from across the district having been looking at the requirements, recommendations and how we implement them since late June. A team has met with MDE to ensure we are following the rules. Each section has its own set of rules and requirements and the groups are charged with ensuring we are prepared and can meet the requirements, recommendations and standards set forth. He advised the district must also ensure there is a plan so that if we are in stage four and onsite learning is interrupted again,

the district is prepared to provide online learning K-12. These teams presented the leadership team with a draft document to begin reviewing to ensure we have hit everything we need to hit. He noted this has been a very quick process, but it is a great plan. Dr. Barnes advised he is hopeful to have all the details worked out to within the next few weeks so the plan can be share with the board, parents, students and staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Secretary Shiflett read the rules for the addressing the board.

Community member Dawne Velianoff questioned why there are no community members on the Equity Committee as the planning is happening, what is the percentage of parents who completed the survey, if parents didn't complete the survey, was it because of a digital divide and if yes, how will that be addressed? She questioned what emergency preparedness dills would look like and noted mental health is referenced in the one-page flyer, but what does that look like?

Community member Margo Susnjar expressed she did not feel like there was much transparency with regard to the proceedings with Dr. Metcalf. If it is a legal matter that cannot be addressed, can a timeline be provided, what are the board's expectations?

OLD BUSINESS

A. STUDENT HANDBOOK LANGUAGE DISCUSSION: TO INCLUDE DISCUSSION SPECIFIC TO PROHIBITING RACIALLY DIVISIVE MESSAGING, IMAGES, OR SYMBOLS (E.G., SWASTIKA, CONFEDERATE FLAG, ETC.)

A detailed discussion among the members noted concerns for the word "divisive" and suggested changing it to intimidating, suggested tying the language to the list published on the Southern Poverty Law Center webpage, concerns were discussed about where the language is being placed in the handbook with clarification that it will be under the dress and grooming section as well as the parking section, suggested signage be put up around the building, suggested bringing it back in line with the Seminole Court Cases to reference "intimidating, threatening, or reasonably calculating to create a disturbance". At the conclusion, the board asked if district legal counsel could review the language again to address some of these concerns.

Dr. Chapin assured the board district legal counsel will look at this again but he believes the community is looking for the board's input and then the district can implement the specific language. He noted he would ask the board to vote on the language presented advising there will be another chance for the board to review the final language when the full handbooks are presented.

Motion by Ms. Clark Pierson, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the language proposed tonight, subject to modification when the student Handbooks are presented to the board in August.

Roll Call Vote

Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>	Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>	President DuFort	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

B. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF SINKING FUND INVOICES

Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Sinking Fund Invoices in the amount of \$82,622.26, as presented.

Roll Call Vote

Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>	President DuFort	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>
Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mrs. Mulvenna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$2,294,357.65, as presented.

Roll Call Vote

Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>
Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
President DuFort	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of IXL Purchase

Motion by Mrs. Mulvenna, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the purchase of the IXL Program in the amount of \$85,771, as presented.

Dr. Barnes provided the board with background information noting a free pilot of the IXL program was secured during our Continuity of Learning Plan implementation and based on this free pilot, 72% of the district's teachers requested the purchase of the product on the

end of year staff survey. He noted the program includes access to progress monitoring assessments, engaging activities, and other rigorous tasks that are all aligned to state and district assessments and standards. The product includes K-12 literacy and math content, as well as 3-8 science and social studies content.

It was questioned if this program works well for special education students and was noted the program does not lock a teacher into the grade level you are assigned to. It was further noted the program was able to be used with students in categorial classes, which allowed those students to work side-by-side with their classmates, but at their level of learning.

It was asked if the district and board will be able to see reporting on this program to ensure students are proficient and if the board can see how it's used by teachers and students.

Dr. Barnes noted he would certain provide the board with more information after the district has used the program for a while sharing usage and progress and would be happy to demonstrate the program.

Roll Call Vote

Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>
Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>
President DuFort	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Community member and parent Rachel Kuntzsch thanked the board for taking up the issue of racially intimidating and threatening symbols but encouraged the board to review best practices of other districts and both state and national education associations and organizations to ensure we are covering all of our bases. She further questioned the use of the language of a teachable moment, but stressed there must be some form of disciplinary action so students understand this will not be tolerated.

Community member Erica Ledesma asked the board to ensure there is a plan in place as students return to school so the students who have been vocal in the process are safe. She further asked for the handbook language to note that the intimidating symbols or signage cannot be displayed on a vehicle being driven on school property, not just parked. She asked for more timelines to be put in place with regard to the Equity committee to provide more detail to the community.

Community member Margo Susnjar noted it is good the board and district is trying to create a safe place for students, but asked how we are going to talk about this as a white person remarking white people need to get their hands dirty in this while supporting and protecting families of color. She expressed she didn't feel there was much of an update from the committee and she is expecting solid answers noting the community has expectations.

Community member Kyle Dymond expressed his support of not using the word divisive in the student handbooks and supported comments from Ms. Susnjar expressing we cannot force the people of color to do all the heavy lifting. He also noted he is impressed with the leadership of Dr. Chapin on these very difficult issues.

Community member Theresa Abed spoke to her research on the role of the board of education and suggested the board find some way to address the disconnect and share how they plan to connect with teachers, staff, the culture of the students and the community going forward. She suggested establishing coffee hours where the community and staff can come and meet with the members in a less formal setting to keep the board engaged.

GLHS Alumni Wendy Dill thanked the board and administration for the work they have done with the committee and addresses the racial issues. She supported the conversation about the handbook language and encouraged providing actual structure and supported comments and concerns expressed by Ms. Ledesma regarding protecting current students and symbols on parked cars versus those driving on district property and supported Ms. Susnjar's comment about expecting people of color to do the heavy lifting. She thanked Dr. Chapin and Ms. Clark Pierson for all they have done.

District employee and GLEA President Greg Almy noted the teacher's union has ratified their contract and that will be presented to the board in Closed Session expressing he hopes the board finds merit in the contract and will support it. He commended Dr. Barnes and Dr. Gabriel for putting together groups of teachers and staff to figure out exactly what school is going to look like if we are in person, online or blended learning. He noted GLEA is ready to help to ensure we have accurate numbers for staffing and have the information to provide staff with information about what the conditions are to ensure teachers are comfortable with their assignments whether it be online or in person, noting the teaching staff has teams in place to ensure we are providing students the best learning experience possible.

Community member James Cotter encourage the board to look at how to broaden the comfort zone. How can we commit ourselves, commit this community, to bring about a sense of equity for all of our students? He expressed he knows the board is made up of well intentioned, good people but expressed the board has to do more encourage them to look at hiring practices.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD

Mrs. Mulvenna expressed her appreciation for all the work our staff and administration has done to put a plan in place to bring kids back to school. She expressed there is still a lot of variables. She noted the same with the diversity issue noting it has been a very short time since with only one meeting in July and she feels a lot of work has been done. She addressed those that feel the process is not moving fast enough or swift enough, she reminded everyone that a cultural shift takes time and doesn't happen overnight. She stressed the diversity committee is not going to be all white people, it will be expanded to the community and it will include several aspects but asked the community to give the board the time to do the work right the first time.

Ms. Clark Pierson noted a systemic shift started in this district on June 1. She noted she, herself, has done a lot of self-reflection and she has talked with hundreds of people over the past couple months and have collected names of many people who stand ready to help in this process. She reminded everyone there will be many facets of this process and the committee is established to ensure the district gets the process done the right way. She advised the committee met shortly after being established, is working to bring in an expert that can help guide the process, and the committee will continue to move the process forward. She noted this is not going to be a quick process, it is going to be a heavy lift with a lot of work, but one key feature will be community involvement. She expressed this has to be successful and while the community wants it to be fast work, there is going to be lots of work that goes into the process. She noted she is happy to see the people of the community having these discussions and wanting to be involved. She noted the district will have to undertake a Superintendent Search and we need to look at if we are going to use the status quo of using MASB or do we look at it differently? She addressed the student handbook language noting the language proposed is very similar to what other districts are using. She apologized for not knowing there was a bigger problem, but did note she was very active when she was made aware of the classroom issue and the use of the Confederate Flag. In closing she noted she is hoping to fix herself.

Mr. Cwayna noted he appreciates everyone comments about not taking the easy way out and noting steps have to be taken but he would ask for patience from the community as the board works through this very complex issue to ensure it is done correctly. He supported providing the community with an update on Dr. Metcalf to the extent we can. In closing he expressed the board is listening, is doing the best it can, and again asked for patience as they work through these issues.

Mr. Smith agreed with what has been said noting it is absolutely necessary for students who have been vocal during this process be protected when they return to school should there be any form of repercussions. But he wants students to know and have the comfort in knowing the board is here and they can reach out to us. He praised the administration and staff noting we are burning a lot of resources on a plan that may not be able to be implemented, or may need to be revamped completely, because we don't know where we are going to be in two weeks. And he again reminded everyone the board is a public body and the board can only gather in a formal setting with the appropriate notice to the community. However, the board is not sitting idle between meetings.

Mr. Shiflett encouraged anyone who is being harassed away from school property to contact the police. The school's power does not extend very far and harassment is something that is not acceptable within our community and should be treated as such.

Mr. McKennon thanked everyone who spoke today noting it provides the board with views from other people who see things from different angles which is very helpful to the board. He noted community members are welcome to reach out to members of a committee to provide input as well. He thanked the administration and staff for continuing to try to hit a moving target noting he appreciates everyone efforts.

President DuFort Denise noted after being placed on administrative leave Dr. Metcalf made numerous Freedom of Information Act Requests. Legal counsel determined to wait for those requests to be reviewed and processed. Charges will soon be shared with Dr. Metcalf’s legal counsel and a hearing will be scheduled for a mutually convenient date. Again, there were not timelines in the contract language. She expressed she wants the community to know there is work going on behind the scenes and the board is making every effort to continue forward on this as well as the many other challenging topics. She expressed she agrees with many of the comments made tonight both by the public and the other members of the board, noting we are in this together, we are stronger together, and the board is committed to continuing this work and making Grand Ledge Public Schools a better place and she hopes the community understands by all of us working together, allows all of us to that better.

CLOSED SESSION – Negotiations

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to move into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Negotiations Strategies, as per Section 8(c) of the Open Meetings Act, PA 267 of 1976.

Roll Call Vote

Mrs. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>
President DuFort	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>	Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously at 7:55 p.m.

RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION

The meeting reconvened in Open Session at 8:27 p.m.

APPROVAL OF GRAND LEDGE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CONTRACT

Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mrs. Mulvenna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Grand Ledge Education Association Contract, as presented.

Ms. Clark Pierson advised that in accordance with the Revised School Code, anyone related to a teacher cannot vote on the teacher contract. Therefore, Jarrod Smith, Patrick McKennon and she must abstain from the vote.

Roll Call Vote

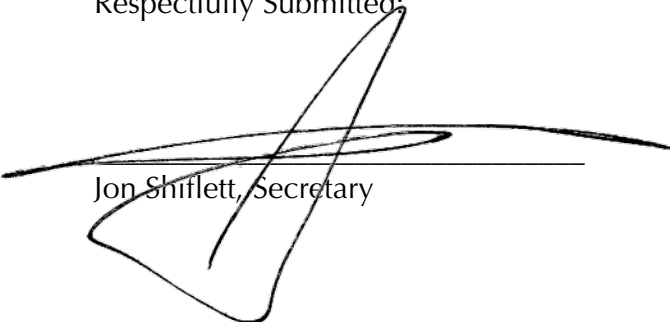
Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
Ms. Mulvenna	<u>YES</u>	President DuFort	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>ABSTAIN</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Jon Shiflett, Secretary

Attest:



Denise DuFort, President