

Oyster River Cooperative School District

Remote Meeting* Minutes

***In accordance with Governors Executive Order #12**

July 8, 2020

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT VIA ROLL CALL VOTE: Brian Cisneros, Dan Klein, Tom Newkirk, Denise Day, Michael Williams, Al Howland Kenny Rotner.

Student Representative:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT VIA REMOTE ACCESS: James Morse, Todd Allen,

STAFF PRESENT:

GUEST'S PRESENT VIA REMOTE ACCESS:

There were no members of the public present or anyone present with the Board Members at their remote locations.

Tom Newkirk read the following statement:

As Chair of the Oyster River Cooperative School Board, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Microsoft Teams for this electronic meeting.1 All members of the School Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-603-766-5646 and ID Code 461362#, or by clicking on the following website address:
<http://www.orcsd.org/stream>

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Microsoft Team or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the ORCSD Board Agenda for 07/08/20.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

If anybody has a problem, please call 603-280-4202 or email at: orcsd-video@orcsd.org.

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

A roll call vote was then done with all Board Members in attendance with no one in the rooms with them.

I. CALL TO ORDER at 7:04 PM by Tom Newkirk

Tom Newkirk stated that he was fine with the agenda and asked the Board Members if there were any changes.

Kenny Rotner asked Tom if Chris Regan could shut off his camera at this time until he was ready to be asked to join the meeting. Chris Regan shut off his camera.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Denise Day moved to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed via roll call vote 7-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jim Morse read the following statements for public comment.

Jeff Pillet-Shore, Durham, NH

First, thank you for your hard work in guiding our district through the unprecedented crises of the past several months. As a parent of 3 children in the district, I have seen the struggles -- and successes -- first hand, and I have never been prouder to be a part of the Oyster River School District. Kudos to you and every member of the district!

And now we face another tremendous challenge. The past several weeks of demonstrations have reopened my eyes to the challenges of racial justice in our country. As a relatively privileged school district in one of the whitest states, we have a special responsibility to provide our students with an education that reflects the diversity of experience in America as a whole.

I ask the school district to provide a comprehensive overview of where we stand:

- Have we done a Social Justice Equity Audit of our schools?
- What resources do we use to ensure our curriculum (beginning in elementary school) is balanced with diverse histories and stories?
- Does the district have a plan for providing anti-racism education across all grades, beginning in elementary school?
- Oyster River has always prided itself on leading the way in tolerance and progressive values, and I am hopeful to see us continue setting the standard in New England.

Jeff Pillet-Shore, Durham, NH

Please elevate this topic in the community as school restarts. In light of recent events, it's important for the community to understand the priority you put on this work and to shine a light on what's already being done. I also think that much of what you've shared can be put into a more user-friendly, inviting form -- even with your directions it wasn't easy to find this information. Fellow parents need to understand the priority you put on this -- with all due respect, it deserves to be more prominent (and proudly stated).

Provide updates to hold the district accountable for the roadmap you've established; obviously with the disruption caused by COVID-19 it's understandable that some goals must be delayed, so do you know the new target dates (e.g. were equity and inclusion competencies articulated at each grade level by June 2020? Was a strategy to attract, hire and retain applicants articulated by June 2020?)

Also, specifically: Was an inclusion competency committee established? I don't see it on the website.

Finally, while I admire the Racism policy, and even though it is only 2 years old, it is now clearly not what the moment requires. As the Smithsonian Museum says,

To create an equal society, we must commit to making unbiased choices and being antiracist in all aspects of our lives. I am happy to submit as public comment, but I would like the board to revisit the racism policy to revise it, sharpen it, and make it an Anti-Racism policy.

Brenda Worden

I am requesting that the Board please elaborate on the representation of those joining the newly formed anti-racism committee. Could the Board or Superintendent also elaborate on the selection criteria and how staff and community members are chosen? I searched the minutes, watched the school board meeting, and read the back-up for this meeting, and still cannot find details surrounding this. I read the memo that the Superintendent has been inviting community members and is waiting on some to confirm. I write concerned that those of us who have students of color in this District should, at the very least, be invited to participate in each and every matter surrounding topics such as this. As I mentioned in my public comments back in 2017, we represent only 1%. Given the considerably low number, this does not represent many families. If the intention of the District and the Committee is progress and growth, involving all key stakeholders should be a priority. We should be the first families the District reaches out to. Once invited, we would have the option to decline, but it would show us that the District values our voice and perspective. Thank you for your understanding, sensitivity and consideration of including those of us that this directly affects. This is important work.

Thank you.

Amy Pierce - Durham.

If Durham chooses to have school remote this coming school year but there are schools that choose to have buildings open will ORCSD provide the ability for students to attend an alternate school? Remote learning is not a pathway to success on any level in any way for my family and I would like to make sure my children are in school - hopefully here in ORCSD.

Thanks.

Rebecca Throop, Vice President, Seacoast Mental Health Center

As a mental health center executive, I implore you to physically reopen the ORCSD schools this fall. Data from the Harvard School of Public Health, the American Association of Pediatrics, and others are clear – children need to be in school for their wellbeing. My agency's VP of Children & Family Services was on the statewide committee assessing this issue. As a result, I've seen some of the data, and it concretely supports our kids returning to our buildings.

As a parent, my son's long-term educational success is contingent on this re-entry. He definitely educationally regressed this Spring. Our teachers did incredible things during the emergency. But it cannot replicate real schooling, especially at the high school level.

I am intricately involved in my agency's shift from telehealth back to in-person care; I 100% understand the complexities. Our situation and ORCSD's is similar - community facing and complicated. Our re-entry for staff (all ages/health needs), clients (primarily higher risk individuals), community, three locations, field staff, hospital/school/physician co-locations...it's hard. We're doing all the screening, modifications, and investments that schools need. We're finding "re-entry" isn't one-size-fits all – similar to how elementary, middle and high school may need different models.

However, to achieve our mission, we need to get back into our buildings. Mission has to remain paramount over what perhaps subsets of our staff or constituents want. Otherwise – we fail.

ORCSD also has a mission/vision. Those words can't be achieved unless kids go back. It is critical that kids physically resume real educational routine and access to services. Supporting families also involves supporting their employment. ORCSD committing to a remote year without a state mandated Stay-At-Home order will negatively impact the job situation for the vast majority of families. I think ALL parents can agree that this Spring proved that remote learning demands full time parent involvement.

The necessary ORCSD required operational changes are hard, but entirety doable and mission required. These aren't unique from other organizations already doing this.

The state has opened. UNH is opening. Youth sports are occurring on our high school and community fields right now. Indoor operations have opened. I ask ORCSD to not make a decision regarding my child's education based on subsets of fear or due to complexity. That fails our kids educationally, socially, mentally, physically. We can do hard things.

Allison Jumper

As a parent of 3 ORCSD children, I urge you to make an in person return to school this fall your number one priority. Please read thoroughly, listen to, and consider closely the national recommendations of pediatricians (American Academy of Pediatrics, *Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*), which clearly indicate that our children need in person education. Our children are depending on you and need to be back in school. The children of this generation whose educations are being impacted by this pandemic are at risk of their life trajectories being permanently negatively impacted. Remote learning is inequitable education for all. Remote learning puts equal access to education at risk. All children need to have equal access to education, this is an essential principle, a civil right. This pandemic should not be cause for some children to benefit from education while other children have access too little to nothing.

Lengthy time away from school and associated interruption of supportive services often results in social isolation, making it difficult for schools to identify and address important learning deficits, as well as child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse, substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation. It is imperative to give all children access to in person school this fall, as the risks to their well-being, while away from school, are dire.

Please prioritize our teachers during this return to in person education for our children. Teachers have cause for substantial concern for their health and need to feel that their safety is taken very seriously. This means that every effort will need to be made to appropriately mitigate risk for them in the school setting. They will need PPE that is proven to mitigate their risk and also allow them to work with children effectively. They will need safety protocols put into place that are evidence based and allow them to return to the classroom without fear.

Lastly, please maintain great flexibility in planning for all different age levels of children within the ORCSD. The mitigation needs of each level will undoubtedly be different, and the mitigation strategies to reduce risk of COVID-19 will require our district to be innovative and courageous. Please make your decisions regarding risk mitigation based on the most up to date research and evidence that is specific to COVID-19 and children, so as to allow for all children to be in school and for teachers to feel that the risks to their health are being optimally mitigated.

Cullen Jumper, MD Durham, NH

As a parent of 3 young children in the Oyster River school district, I feel strongly that it is critical for the students to resume in-person education at school. We have struggled through an entire quarter now of remote learning, and with young children in particular I do not think anyone can seriously argue that remote instruction is comparable to the quality of the educational experience in person, in school. This entire cohort of children runs the risk of being educationally blighted by this experience, as they start the upcoming year behind where they should have been had this pandemic not occurred. To continue to try to educate them remotely is to accept that they will continue to fall further behind. They deserve every effort not only to resume in person, high quality instruction, but to work to recover the ground that has been lost. This cannot occur with remote learning at the elementary school age.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve June 17, 2020 regular meeting minutes:

Revisions:

Denise Day requested the following changes: page 7 paragraph 10, 2nd sentence at the end replace "fund balance" with "budget".

Denise Day moved to approve the June 17, 2020 regular meeting minutes as amended, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed with roll call vote 7-0.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS:

~~A. District:~~

B. Board:

Denise Day stated that she did some research and stated that in the past the Board approved \$25K to improve the front entrance of the high school and that in the past meeting it was voted against spending \$2,600 to secure the back entrance of the high school and hoped that if there are additional savings we can revisit the request to secure the back entrance of the high school.

Kenny Rotner asked Jim a question on behalf of the people in his neighborhood as to how long the current phase of construction at the new middle school site would continue for.

Jim explained that the earthwork will be completed by mid-August and that the steel work will begin.

Tom Newkirk informed the Board that he arranged for another middle school site walk thru for July 23rd at 1:30 and asked the Board members to let him know within the next week if they wish to be a part of this. He then wanted to invite members of the towns select board and town council if they were interested in visiting. It is illuminating to see the work that is being done, the retaining wall and the geo-thermal wells that have been completed.

Jim asked Tom if he wanted hi to contact the towns with the invite. Tom agreed.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS:

A. Assistant Superintendent Reports:

B. Superintendent's Report:

Jim began by letting the Board know that the ORHS received again this year the NHIAA Sportsmanship Award for Division II schools. This is something to be very proud of and congratulations to the student athletes and coaches.

Antiracism Committee

Jim updated the Board on the status of this committee. He explained that with it being summer, it is a time-consuming process inviting and confirming membership, but he has reached out to the past members from 3 years ago of the equity and diversity committee asking if they wish to be a part of this new committee. He has received a great response and he let the Board know that he has members of the administrative team that are willing to participate and is planning for their first meeting to be held this month. He also informed the Board that NH Listens is going to help organize and bring focus to establishing this committee. He will update the Board when this meeting will be scheduled.

~~C. Business Administrator:~~

C. Finance Committee Update:

Al Howland informed the Board that the Finance Committee met and the first item that they concentrated on was the CIP for the 2020-21 school year and that the \$300K Moharimet project was the top priority that stands out and that the project is not complete. The old administrative office where the nurse's area is located, teachers' room and the counseling office have not been touched and he asked Jim R if we could do the work ourselves which would include the demolition and building walls, but trade skills would still need to be contracted out. The next item was to relay to the Board that approximately 80% of the budget is personnel and what the current District make up of hiring for positions that become open. Jim is asking administration if positions become vacant due to retirements to really look at if these positions and ask themselves if they are needed. Al also mentioned that the Semen's report was given to the Board as additional back up to see if the promised savings to the District happened, and he was happy to report that we exceeded the savings that were expected. Al also stated that he would be working with Jim to develop an agenda for the next Finance Committee meeting with the Towns on July 29th.

Denise Day stated that she appreciated the back up for the finance committee meetings that she received ahead of time and that it helped her to understand. She also referred to the opportunities for energy savings that were mentioned in the minutes and what the small projects were that were referred to.

Al Howland stated that he would need to touch base with Jim Rozycki as he could not remember which projects they were.

Al also stated that they will continue to provide the Finance Committee back up to the whole Board moving forward.

Brian Cisneros wanted to remind the Board that the minutes for these meetings are being done in a quick turn around timeframe and that to be patient if the minutes are not sent out by the Friday before a Board meeting and are received by Monday of the following week.

Denise Day asked if the minutes are not ready for the Friday deadline if the Board could still get the Finance Committee back up without the minutes. Al agreed that this would happen.

Tom Newkirk asked Al where he saw the Finance Committee going moving forward.

Al stated that right now the main priority of the committee has been focused on prioritizing the CIP and personnel. The committee is also focusing on what are the most important CIP projects, the possible outcome from the retirement incentive, streamlining the budget.

Tom asked about structuring the Budget goal for the coming year and gave an example of last years goal being affected by the fund balance with two separate calculated numbers using 3.5% and 2.8%

Brian Cisneros reminded the Board that the committee was formed so that they could comb through the budget and complete the legwork so that they could present the Board with their recommendations, and keep from having very long discussion at Board meetings. He also reminded the Board that they can always discuss further any of the recommendations that are put forward.

~~E. Student Senate Report:~~

F. Other: Sustainability Report – UNH Intern Kendall Gray

Jim informed the Board that Kendall has been waiting to present this report to the Board and welcomed her to the meeting. Maggie Morrison, Sustainability Coordinator to the District gave a brief introduction of the Survey that was completed and introduce Kendall Gray, the UNH Intern who presented the results of this survey using a power point presentation. Topics of discussion where: locations of the disposal bins both for recycling and composting, contamination between the bins, encouragement of peers and mentors, and the steps that need to be taken moving forward.

The Board asked some additional questions.

Kenny Rotner thanked Kendall and Maggie for the report and stated that he was struck by how much peers are not a positive influence and how the message that is trying to be conveyed is not coming through.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEM:

Future Board Meeting Remote or In Person

Tom Newkirk asked the Board if they could let him know where they stood on either keeping future meetings remote or if they wished to return to in-person meetings.

Denise Day stated that for her remote meetings were challenging but appreciates the concern that is being expressed for in-person meetings regarding safety. Her preference would be to move back to in-person with safety guidelines followed.

Al Howland also does not like remoted meetings and suggested a Hybrid model moving forward with Board members choosing which option they would prefer to continue meeting.

Brian Cisneros would like in-person but will go along with what the Board decides.

Dan Klein also would like to return to an in-person meeting and agrees to the Hybrid model is possible.

Michael Williams is satisfied with either option but wanted to make sure that whoever chooses the Hybrid option that they have easy access to the meeting and can be heard and communicate like they were physically at the meeting.

Kenny Rotner felt that remote and hybrid were the way that he would feel safe.

Jim Morse stated that it would not be a challenge to set up a Hybrid meeting. Tom would still need to read the statement and the public would still be able to remotely listen in. Jim is confident that Alexander would be able to do this.

Al Howland suggested that Alexander consult with Craig Stevens, the Durham Town technology person on how the town works a Hybrid meeting.

Fall Calendar – NH State Primary Calendar Adjustment

Jim explained that a request came in from the Town of Durham regarding the use of the high school gym for the September 8th NH primary and the possibility of adjusting the calendar to reflect a change on this date. Jim invited Chris Regan to the meeting in case the Board had additional questions.

Chris Regan began by explaining that he had just finished a meeting with other town officials, and they are still in a flux and not sure what they are going to do. He looked at past voting day information in 2016 showing a turn out of approximately 1200 voters. His research from the 2018 election showed that voter turn out doubled to approximately 2400. He expressed concern that this election could also be a large turn out and with the COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, he felt that the use of the high school gym would be a better alternative, however the set up would need to happen the Friday before which would not be a problem as there is no school that day. The issue would be that the election falls the day after Labor Day and school resumes that day. Chris stated that they are pushing for absentee ballots as much as possible, but still believes there will be a record turnout.

Tom Newkirk clarified that Chris is asking that the school day be adjusted for the election.

Jim confirmed that is what is being asked and that a remote learning day could be used for the high school students only on that day.

There was a brief discussion and a motion was made.

Kenny Rotner made a motion to amend the 2020-21 school year calendar for the NH Primary to make September 8th a remote learning day for the high school only with the elementary and middle school remaining an in school day, 2nd by Al Howland.

Discussion:

The Board asked if the setup of the gym were done on the Friday before the election, that would mean that the Gym would be unavailable until the following week? A question was asked about what the layout would look like and confirmed that the election would be disrupting a regularly scheduled school day. It was also asked if an additional day for calendar adjustment for the November election was going to be needed.

Jim stated that he spoke with Suzanne and that they have already made the adjustments for any activity that was scheduled in the gym to be changed.

Dan asked for the motion to be reread as he was not sure if the additional request for a Wednesday in November was included. The motion was reread, and a roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call vote of 6-1 with Michael Williams voting in the negative. The motion passed.

Re-Entry Planning – Phase 1

Jim began by explaining that this is the Phase 1 building strategies for the Fall. He went on to explain that they did a survey to the community, MS/HS students, and parents and the results were very informative. We had hundreds of questions that were generated from this survey which helped in the development of this power point and the three options that the District is exploring for fall reentry. Traditional, Remote Learning, and a Hybrid model that provided the starting point for our Grid that was used by the administrators and directors.

Jim went on to acknowledge the tremendous amount of staff that participated in the planning for Fall reopening and appreciated all of their efforts.

Jim also noted that he used a lot of different organizations and their research to help in the development of this plan. Those being the AAP COVID Planning, CDC School Guidance, Return to School Roadmap, NH DHHS, NH DOE: STRRT and the Harvard School of Public Health. He stated that we are developing, and continue to refine, re-entry plans to provide both safety and learning continuity for all our students. Jim spoke about the resilience of Oyster River during this difficult time and explained some of the lessons learned based on the survey data. Greater age-appropriate structure is needed, more synchronized learning, particularly at the K-8 level, more social connection needed between teacher and students, parents need Schoology access to support child's learning, and more consistency throughout the system.

At this time, he turned the meeting over to Todd Allen to continue.

Todd began by explaining the process for the Re-Entry planning using the grid in the power point that signified traditional opening with specific health and safety procedures in place. A Blended/Hybrid Learning option which provides a blend of modified in person instruction and remote learning. The third option would be remote learning where children will work synchronously and asynchronously with the support of their teacher.

Todd explained the planning for the fall is guided by the Return to School Roadmap, which is broken down by governance, wellness and SEL, instruction/assessment, school operations, school health, and technology.

Todd went on to explain what the possible scenarios could be for returning to school. They include the requirement for health screening for students, faculty, and staff. Lunch in a modified structure, staggered schedule for drop-off and pick-up, possible quarantining for two weeks following illness or exposure. Enhanced sanitizing, cleaning processes and regular handwashing. Parents and visitors by appointment only, nursing personnel on site at all times. Families responsible for keeping contact tracing log. The use of masks for all students and staff. Athletic offerings guided by NHIAA, limited building uses for outside groups, and encouraging teachers to utilize outdoor spaces for instructional and social purposes.

The introduction of Cohorts/Fixed Groups will be based on AAP/NH DHHS guidance, will be housed in a single classroom or limited set of classrooms, teachers will transition from cohort to cohort and students unable to join cohorts in person may participate virtually.

Todd also provided a chart broken down by PK-4, Middle School and High School that showed the fall re-entry plan which is designed to make on-campus and off-campus learning flow more efficiently and all class content will be created and made available through Schoology. The digital platforms that will be utilized are PowerSchool, Schoology, Microsoft Teams, Freckle, Learning A-Z, and ALEKS.

Jim explained that no one is telling us there is a right answer, we are receiving conflicting reports for the medical field and from politicians. I am relying heavily on the AAP report and encourage the Board to read this document. The issue is flexibility and we need to be ready for three different options that are based on healthcare considerations, state guidelines and local priorities.

We need to prepare for interruptions, unforeseen costs, technology, and supplies, and prioritize the on-campus experience for our youngest students.

Jim asked the Board to consider a second Board Workshop before the August 5th meeting. It was suggested that Thursday, July 30th from 7:00 – 9:00. All Board members agreed to that date.

Board discussion surrounding appreciation for the amount of work to everyone that took part in creating this document. Suggestion of checking building ventilation for better air quality. Ordering PPE early for staff. Hearing concerns from parents, lots of anxiety out there and the possibility of drafting a concise statement to the community. Appreciation for the Grid that was included in the back up as very helpful and gives a sense of process. Request for additional information surrounding the Hybrid variation in schedules. Possible suggestions to break out one column into two separate ones and the possible addition of a column to the grid on how transition would happen from one model to the other.

VIII. ACTIONS

A. Superintendent Action Items: None

B. Board Action Items:

Appoint Board Members to Antiracism Committee

Tom Newkirk made a motion to appoint Denise Day and Kenny Rotner to the Superintendents Antiracism committee, 2nd by Michael Williams. Motion passed with roll call vote 6-0-1 with Kenny Rotner abstaining.

ORMS Letter of Resignation

Tom Newkirk stated that he needed a motion for Aaron Ward's resignation and that he was sorry to see him go.

Kenny Rotner also expressed his appreciation for all that Aaron has done and for the many times that he presented at the School Board meetings and wished him well.

Kenny Rotner made a motion to accept the ORMS Letter of Resignation of Aaron Ward, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with roll call vote 7-0.

Affirmation of Hiring – ORMS Mathematics Teacher

Denise Day made a motion to affirm the nomination of the ORMS Mathematics teacher 2nd by Al Howland. Motion passed with roll call vote 7-0

X. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

~~**A. Manifests Reviewed and Approved by Manifest Committee:**~~

~~Denise Day and Dan Klein reviewed the manifests.~~

~~Payroll Manifest #~~

~~Vendor Manifest #~~

Denise Day mentioned that the Policy Committee is meeting tomorrow and that the unanimous consent agenda is one of the policies up for review.

~~**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**~~

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS:

- A. Future Meeting Dates: 7/14/20 Board Workshop –ORHS - Library 7:00 PM
7/30/20 Board Workshop Meeting – Library 7:00 PM
8/5/20 Board Meeting

~~XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3 II {If Needed}~~
~~NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A:2 I {If Needed}~~

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

**Al Howland made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m., 2nd by Michael Williams.
Motion passed with a roll call vote of 7-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy L. DiFruscio
Executive Assistant to
Superintendent of Schools