

Oyster River Cooperative School District

Regular Remote Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2021

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT: Dan Klein, Tom Newkirk, Denise Day, Michael Williams, Al Howland, Yusi Turell, Brian Cisneros. **Student Representative:** Megan Deane

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: James Morse, Todd Allen, Suzanne Filippone, Jay Richard, David Goldsmith, Misty Lowe

STAFF PRESENT: Celeste Best, Janet Martel, Susan Leifer, Sarah Curtin, Kristin Hughes

GUEST PRESENT:

CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Tom Newkirk

Tom Newkirk stated that they will be removing the non-meeting but adding two additional non-public topics.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Denise Day moved to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the February 10, 2021 workshop, February 17, 2021 regular and non-public meeting minutes as a block:

Revisions:

Denise Day had one revision on the February 17 regular minutes on page 8 under Finance Committee, to replace “so” with “saw” so the sentence read saw confusion.

Dan Klein asked on the heading of the February 10 minutes replace “Committee” with “workshop”

Denise Day moved to approve the February 10, 2021, February 17, 2021 regular and non-public meeting minutes as a block as amended, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS:

A. District:

David Goldsmith stated that they are in the sugaring season at Moharimet and thanks go out to Jim Davis and Holly Burt for helping to organize the sugaring at Goss Farm. They will be on campus for sugaring with the hybrid students. They are very excited to begin.

B. Board:

Denise Day offered congratulations to the Winter athletes for a successful season.

Brian Cisneros stated that over vacation they had a successful tour of the new middle school and that the building is now sealed, and the glass is in. He stated that they are on schedule for next spring.

Tom Newkirk also commented on the new middle school and the amount of light that will be projected throughout the building is like a spiritual experience. He also stated that the School Board meeting on the 17th will be the organizational meeting to nominate the chair and vice-chair and that he would like not to be considered in this leadership position. He went on to say that he has planned 180 meetings and run 140 of them. He is so proud of what we have done as a Board, but it is time for him to step down.

Yusi Turell thanked the middle school families in the District for their acceptance and appreciated the responses that were positive and constructive.

VI. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA: None

Motion to approve the agenda items listed under the unanimous consent agenda:

VII. DISTRICT REPORTS:

A. Assistant Superintendent Reports:

COVID Metric

Todd Allen began by referring everyone to the most recent COVID Metric in their folders. He shared that the overall trending is positive. Durham numbers are still high likely due to UNH. He stated that we are in control of our contact tracing but bringing in more students next week is concerning.

There were no questions from the Board on the COVID Metric and Todd moved forward with the REACH Program.

REACH Program Plan

Todd began by stating that they are not ready to release the programming yet and that he will be meeting with the Town of Lee Select Board next Monday. They will not be able to use the middle school location, so they are moving it to Mast Way. They will once again partner with Durham Parks and Recreation to allow for a full day program. The program will run 5 weeks beginning July 5th and running through to August 5th. Doris Demers will once again be running the free lunch program.

There were no questions and Todd thanked the Board.

Tom Newkirk moved the meeting forward to Dr. Morse.

B. Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Morse began to introduce Suzanne to go over the Spring Sports agenda item as Andy Lathrop was unable to attend this evening. Before Suzanne began, Dr. Morse asked if the Schoology Report could go first.

Schoology Presentation

The Technology Integrators for the District: Celeste Best, Janet Martel, Susan Leifer, Sarah Curtin, and Kristin Hughes each introduce themselves and the school that they are working at and each took a section of the power point to discuss.

The presentation began with Susan Leifer from Mast Way asking the question, “What is a learning management system?” She explained that it is a virtual organization system for delivering classroom instruction. She went on to explain what process is followed at the elementary level.

Sarah Curtin from Moharimet began her presentation on groups and gave three examples of the groups found at the elementary level. Student and Parent Help Desk, Mast Way News, and By the Bear, the Moharimet group. She went on to explain that these groups are used for all school announcements and events, district approved flyers, school and district newsletters, fun spirit videos, interactive polls, and reminders.

Janet Martel from the middle school began her presentation by providing a look at the middle school page which can be personalized for teacher course pages, team pages and a guidance page. She went on to explain the use of groups at the middle school like advisors can share information, activities, and discussions with advisees, clubs can share information and events, parents, staff and student technology support, professional development, communication and resource sharing between teachers, library resources, information and events. She also explained the Schoology grade book and communication at the middle school.

Celeste Best from the high school explained that a lot of information has already been covered by the elementary and middle school presentations, but at the high school level it is based on two different templates. A folder by unit and folder by date. She reviewed the groups and how they are used. She outlined the communication process used by parents, teachers, and students. She finished by explaining how the district will move forward using Schoology.

Kristin Hughes reported out on the special education aspect of using Schoology and the comparison of the website vs. Schoology vs. email. She also explained the considerations for communication by educators which are ADAA, accessibility versus access, audience, and privacy.

They ended their presentation with some of their questions and concerns. How do we engage the community with no ties to the district about what is happening in the schools? What is the role of social media in district communications? How to leverage social media to get information out? The Website needs updating, reorganization. What do our key stakeholders see as the most important piece of communicating?

Dr. Morse stated that the district brought in Schoology with a 5-year time frame that was completed in 2. He thanked the technology integrators for the tremendous amount of work that they have done and continue to do daily working with staff, students, and parents to make Schoology such a great success.

Tom Newkirk asked what strategies they thought they would use to get parents to engage in using the parent portal of Schoology.

Al Howland stated that email is overwhelming versus logging into schoology and customizing what you need. He asked how to make this as simple as possible for parents. One stop shopping.

Michael Williams asked if there was information that the parent can see and not the child. Also, is there a point in the future that Schoology would replace power school?

Celeste Best stated that we need power school to do state reporting, so no it will not replace it.

The Board thanked the technology integrators for coming and making this presentation.

Dr. Morse took a moment to remind the Board the first meeting of the Superintendent's Communication meeting will be tomorrow night here at the high school and asked the Board if they wished to have representation on this committee. He went on to say that they will meet one time per week up until April vacation.

Tom deferred to the Board if anyone wanted to be a part of this committee. Dan Klein asked about the election and the possible outcome affecting the Board participation. Michael Williams stated that he would defer to Dan, but that he would be happy to help out.

Dr. Morse also stated that he had heard back from UNH about the COVID testing and that they are ready to work with us. He will bring this back to the Board.

Dr. Morse introduced Suzanne Filippone who will report out on the spring sports for Andy.

Suzanne began by stating that spring athletics will begin soon and provided a list of spring sports at both the middle and high school level. She stated that tryouts begin March 29th and that games may begin on April 29th. She outlined the proposed spring sports model and the key points that masks will be worn by all and that visiting teams would be allowed to have their parents attend.

She followed up with a slide that posed two questions for the Board. Does the proposed model work for the Board, and is allowing visiting parents to attend contests something we can permit? She stated that locker room usage would be very limited to only the students in the building that day. She also asked about a possible change in transportation guidelines for transporting students to games.

Dr. Morse relayed one instance of the use of district buses for transporting but that was for extenuating circumstances. They would not be able to use the district buses for transport.

Denise Day asked about transmission during the fall and winter season.

Suzanne had already anticipated that question and provided a slide for the winter season COVID 19 data.

Megan Deane stated that students are following the guidelines and gave an example. Students are very dedicated to have these sports and are committed to make them work.

Dan Klein asked that as we schedule with other schools is the general sense that we will have a good number of schools to compete against.

Dr. Morse reiterated that any team that we play will abide by our COVID rules.

Tom Newkirk asked if we wanted to include both questions in our motion.

Brian Cisneros moved to approve the spring sports model as presented with a limit of two spectators per player for both home and visiting teams, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Suzanne thanked the Board.

Proposed Grade 1 Change

Dr. Morse invited David Goldsmith and Misty Lowe to the podium to present their model.

David Goldsmith and Misty Lowe began by acknowledging the challenges they encountered with this option. They reiterated the success of the current hybrid and remote models and spoke of the investigating process for increasing student time in school. They provide the Board with the pros and cons of a first-grade option. They asked how they could provide an option for all students and proposed synchronous learning on Wednesdays and reviewed the pros and cons of this option, including the impact to the teachers, students, and parents. They went on to explain how this option would be implemented and a possible start time. They also publicly thanked the staff at both schools for the extra work they contributed to the current model and to this proposal.

Denise Day thanked David and Misty for all the work that they put into developing this option and asked if there was a possibility of alternating every other Wednesday or at least one Wednesday per month. David explained that they did investigate this and will look into it further.

Tom Newkirk questioned the amount of time that will actually be added with an April 7th start time. David stated that it would be approximately 30 additional hours.

Michael Williams stated that if 30 hours that is 2.5 to 3 hours per week of additional time.

Al Howland stated that he understand the complications for students and staff, but the change equals opportunity and it is an evolution of learning.

Yusi Turell stated that evolution makes sense and that this is the least bad model. She asked what it would take to start a week or two earlier. David stated that there would be issues for families to adjust so quickly and that there are professional development activities that are required by law and already scheduled for March.

Misty Lowe stated that they are already gathering transition teams to meet.

Yusi Turell asked what would happen to remote students.

Denise Day thanked everyone for the phenomenal job that was done to create this option. She also suggested to keep one Wednesday a month for staff professional development.

Brian Cisneros moved to approve the elementary proposed model as presented with all students attending Wednesday with a start date of April 7, 2021, 2nd by Yusi Turell.

Discussion:

Tom Newkirk felt that more pressure is being put on the teachers and that the timeframe is small.

Dan Klein asked David and Misty what their opinion was. Can it be successful? David stated it can be by reducing expectations of Wednesdays, but we would finish off the year with students. Misty Lowe added that this is the only option to increase face-to-face instruction.

Motion passed with a vote of 6-1 with tom Newkirk voting against and with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Update High School Schedule

Suzanne Filippone update the Board on the current percentage of student returning as 50% in-person and 42% remote. She stated that the percentage decrease with age grouping with 9th grade being the highest. They have to hire 1 more paraprofessional and they are working on getting sub coverage as well. She went on to state that building classrooms were set up over vacation and thanked Marek and his staff as well as the building leadership for making this happen. They are ready to go and that the teachers have worked very hard and are excited for this return.

Yusi Turell asked if the school was open for clubs and if community members could connect with administration for curricular activities for students not in sports. Suzanne stated that the building is not open after school and that any activities are run by the staff in the school and usually during the school day.

There were no additional questions and the meeting moved forward with the middle school schedule.

Middle School Schedule

Jay Richard began by stating that they were looking forward to next Monday. The students are enthusiastic to be in two days per week. They will have UNH interns helping out. He has been working with Lisa Huppe with bus schedules. He stated that if families have questions and are reaching out to him, he is immediately returning those inquiries.

Denise Day asked with the change to two days are their families that are moving to the remote option. Jay responded that there were 12 families.

Governor's Executive Order

Yusi Turell asked Dr. Morse about the appeal letter to the state. He responded that this would be discussed during non-public.

C. Finance Committee Update: None

D. Business Administrator: None

E. Student Representative Report:

Tom Newkirk asked Megan when her last meeting would be. Megan responded that her last meeting would be May 17th and stated that she was happy to remain on as the student representative. She went on to state that the vacation last week was a very well-deserved break and that the students who plan to return are looking forward to going back.

Suzanne Filippone clarified to the Board that Ms. Jenson oversees the student senate and that due to the strangeness of this year and the late start of the student representative, they extended this term until May 17th. She went on to state that there has been discussion surrounding a shift in the practice, but they have not decided on a timeline.

Tom Newkirk requested a 5-minute break at 9:09 PM and returned to the meeting at 9:14PM.

Other:

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Quarantine Guidelines

Dr. Morse began by stating that this was a Board item that was brought forward for discussion. He went on to state that the review of guidelines used and testing with partnering with UNH is the intent for the next meeting. He understands that there is a lot of conflicting information and additionally, thoughts surrounding the 14-day quarantine period vs. 10 days period. He felt that he would not be comfortable with continuing this discussion without the district nurses and Catherine Plourde present. He did state that there is a review every week with Todd, Megan, Catherine, and the district nurses to keep abreast of the COVID information.

Brian Cisneros stated that he had no issue with the 14 days of quarantine if exposed, he is hearing from parents that wish to travel for college visits, if exceptions to the travel guidelines could be discussed and possibly revised.

Tom Newkirk asked if college visit travel was the primary concern at this time.

Brian Cisneros stated that travel is travel but look at a possible happy medium for college visits.

The Board discussed this topic further with how to protect most staff and students, asking for the governance committee response, that there is always the remote option for students in quarantine, the example that some states are relaxing their guidelines, and the idea of hotspots at some college campuses.

Todd Allen reminded the Board that with the new models at the schools we will be doubling the number of students in the buildings and we need to be careful of the increased risk. Covid fatigue has set in and now is not the time to relax standards.

Dan Klein stated that he understands the importance of having a fully remote option, but we should still be cautious.

Megan Deane stated that a lot of these college visit will not happen until April vacation and hopefully the vaccination of people will be further along, and the outside transmission rates are going down.

Michael Williams had two observations surrounding this, knowledge is power and college campuses are aggressively testing and quarantining. He also stated that as the rates drop from now to April break the testing capacity should free up.

Tom Newkirk asked Dr Morse to talk to the governance committee and bring it back at the next meeting.

IX. ACTIONS

A. Superintendent Actions: None

B. Board Action Items:

Discussion:

Central Office Administrator's Negotiated Agreement

Dr. Morse explained that this was being returned to the Board after suggestions were made and completed for approval. The original language included verbiage for the superintendent and that was removed. There was also a concern in Section 8 for the time frame allowed surrounding the time frame for not returning to be increased from 3 months to 6 months. There was also discussion for the next negotiation cycle be done in the fall and that consideration be noted that new administrators have a 6-month probationary period.

Dan Klein suggested that since the sick bank language resides in the ORAA contract that a footnote be added that this is a cross reference and that it would also raise a flag for tracking purposes.

Tom Newkirk asked if a combined motion could be made for the negotiated agreement, the superintendents FY 22 salary, and the FY22 Assistant Superintendent and Business Administrators salary be made as one motion.

Brian Cisneros moved to approve the Central Office Administrator's Negotiated Agreement as revised as well as approve the Superintendent's FY 22 salary as presents along with the Assistant Superintendent and Business Administrator FY22 salaries as presented, 2nd by Michael Williams. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Maternity Leave of Absence

Brian Cisneros moved to approve the ORHS Maternity Leave of Absence from May 16, 2021 to End of the Year and from the Beginning of the year to December 2021, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

List of Policies

Dr. Morse stated that there was a Board member request to add additional language to the sustainability policy and that this motion would be tabled until the next meeting. Dr. Morse asked Yusi Turell to please forward the language to him to put before the policy committee.

Al Howland asked that the proposed language be sent to the full Board for review.

X. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Manifests Reviewed and Approved by Manifest Committee:

Denise Day and Dan Klein reviewed the manifests.

Payroll Manifest: #18 \$1,389,000.35

Vendor Manifest #19 \$2,007,392.71

Denise stated that the Long-Range Planning committee is meeting every other Monday and are looking at different ways to create a new report. She also went on to say that they are still looking for a Madbury Representative and if anyone was interested to contact her.

Brian Cisneros stated that if a Board member was unable to attend the last tour, he can reach out to Andre about setting up another one before April vacation.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

XII. CLOSING ACTIONS:

- A. Future Meeting Date: 3/10/21 – Additional Board – 7:00 PM ORHS Auditorium
3/17/21 – Regular Board Meeting – 7:00 PM ORHS Auditorium
3/31/21 – Manifest – 3:30 PM SAU Conference Room.

XIII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3 II C

- Appeal Letter/Superintendent Evaluation/Personnel Matter

NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A:2 {If needed}

Tom Newkirk moved to enter nonpublic session at 9:49 p.m.in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) –Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting, 2nd by Denise Day. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed 7-0.

9:50 p.m. nonpublic session began in ORHS music room

Chair Tom Newkirk declared the nonpublic session concluded at 10:01 p.m. and the Board returned to the ORHS Auditorium.

Tom Newkirk moved to enter nonpublic session at 10:02 p.m.in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) –Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting, 2nd by Denise Day. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed 7-0.

10:03 p.m. nonpublic session began in ORHS music room

Chair Tom Newkirk declared the nonpublic session concluded at 10:17 p.m. and the Board returned to the ORHS Auditorium.

Tom Newkirk moved to enter nonpublic session at 10:18 p.m.in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) –Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting, 2nd by Denise Day. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed 7-0.

10:18 p.m. nonpublic session began in ORHS music room

Chair Tom Newkirk declared the nonpublic session concluded at 10:27 p.m. and the Board returned to the ORHS Auditorium.

Tom Newkirk moved to accept the retirement of Assistant Superintendent Todd Allen at the end of June. Brian Cisneros seconded the motion with regret.

Board members Tom Newkirk, Michael Williams, Brian Cisneros, Denise Day, Dan Klein, Al Howland, and Yusi Turell shared memories and expressed appreciation for Mr. Allen's 36 years of service to Oyster River schools as a parent, teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent.

Dr. Morse commented that Todd's retirement is a devastating loss to the district and commended Mr. Allen's strengths as a caring, kind, and thoughtful educator who is always willing to pick up the load to support the students and staff of Oyster River. Dr. Morse concluded, "I will miss him."

The motion to accept Mr. Allen's intent to retire was reluctantly passed 7-0.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Brian Cisneros moved to Adjourn the meeting at 10:36 PM, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Wendy L. DiFruscio
Executive Assistant to Superintendent of Schools