

Oyster River Cooperative School Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2021

DRAFT

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

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Jim Morse, Sue Caswell, David Goldsmith, Catherine Plourde, Misty Lowe, Suzanne Filippone, Jay Richard, Todd Allen

STAFF PRESENT: Andy Lathrop

GUEST PRESENT: Holly Stark

I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Michael Williams

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Denise Day moved to approve the agenda, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0 with Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Denise Day moved to approve May 5, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Brian Cisneros.

Brian: Correction on page 5, my quote should read, "so I am not really accepting of that."

Tom: Correction on pages 3 and 9, the correct spelling of Monica Chiu's last name

Yusi: Correction on page 6: my quote should read, "varying degrees of training"

Vote on motion to approve May 5, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes with corrections passed 7-0 with Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

Denise Day moved to approve both May 5th, 2021 Non-Public Session Minutes, 2nd by Yusi Turell.

Denise: Correction that Dr. Morse was not present for the second non-public session.

Dan Klein: Correction that Suzanne Filippone was present for the non-public session that began at 7:04 pm.

Vote on motion to approve both May 5th, 2021 Non-Public Session Minutes passed 7-0 with Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District: None

B. Board

Denise commented that seeing the list of this year's retirees was like taking a walk down memory lane, and they had a profound impact in the district, and she wished them the best.

Tom Newkirk recognized Chris Hall on the completion of his book that will be published this Fall. Tom also recognized other notable authors that have come from the community in the past.

Michael Williams recognized tonight as Megan Deane's last school Board meeting as the Student Representative and read a goodbye speech on behalf of the Board.

Al Howland stated that in the past the hope was that the Student Representative role would expand, and that he hopes Megan can pass along her knowledge to the next Student Representative.

Dan Klein commended Megan on the fantastic job she has done, including the work she has done behind the scenes in her role.

Denise Day shared her appreciation of the initiative Megan took with student surveys, and for going above and beyond in the role.

Brian Cisneros commended Megan for not being afraid to deal with serious issues, and setting the bar so high for the next Student Representative.

Yusi Turell asked Megan if she had any reflections on how the Board serves the students of the district.

Megan thanked the Board for their comments and stated her time has been a great experience. Megan felt this was an important year for a student representative to be on the Board and gave encouragement to future students considering the role.

Dr. Morse stated that Megan raised the level of discourse for the entire Board and recognized the impact she had on the Board by participating so fully.

Michael Williams presented Megan with a small gift and flowers on behalf of the Board.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

A. Assistant Superintendent / Curriculum & Instruction Report(s)

Todd Allen commended Megan Deane on being a great Student Representative.

Todd also commented that the COVID data is in a really positive trend and Durham is in a great place numbers-wise.

Communications Committee

Todd began by acknowledging community members on the committee: Melissa Gass, Amy Sterndale, Tom Elliot, and Holly Stark.

Holly thanked the Board for having her, as well as Yusi and Dr. Morse. Holly discussed the committee was made of community members, teachers, and users from various backgrounds that worked together to find the charge of what the district needs. The committee decided there would be multiple phases in determining the current state of communication now, what needs to be changed, and the best way to implement those changes. Holly also discussed the areas the committee wants to prioritize and what will be focused on in those areas.

Todd described the “low hanging fruit” items as things that are inexpensive and doable in the short-term, such as good news stories from classrooms, Friday updates from the Board before School Board meetings, and short informational videos. Todd stated the next steps are on the last page of the report, and that they will be seeking help from the UNH Survey Center in creating a survey to help establish what is needed.

Holly stated the committee also developed a vision of what communication in the district would look like and there are multiple moving parts that need to lead back to one place.

Todd opened the discussion for questions.

Yusi thanked the Holly and Todd for identifying the three pillars of the plan, and asked if there is a need of a project manager, and at what point does that become a need?

Holly stated that need became apparent in order to keep the process going, make sure there is a non-biased party, and to make sure perspectives don't fall through the cracks. Holly also stated this would provide room for experts and consultants in very focused areas.

Al Howland commented that he appreciated the systemic look at the approach at the underlying issues instead of just patching the issues and asked what the timeline was for the survey and getting back the results.

Dr. Morse stated it will depend on the workload of the Survey Center and the Committee will share the timeline and results when they have them.

Yusi asked if the Committee thought about reaching out to teachers to see what is working well and what could be improved.

Todd stated that he thinks all impacted groups should be included in the survey group and participating in the process.

Yusi asked if the teachers would be outreached through the survey.

Dr. Morse stated the survey would be for the community at large, as the teachers could be easily outreached.

Holly stated the Committee is definitely a group effort, and was happy to represent them tonight.

B. Superintendent's Report

Acknowledgment of 2021 Retirees

Dr. Morse stated that this year's retirees in the district have over 500 years of combined service, and invited the Principals to say a few words.

Misty Lowe stated there are four retirees from Mast Way this year with over 90 collective years.

David Goldsmith stated there are six retirees from Moharimet this year with over 160 years of service.

Jay Richard stated there are six retirees at the middle school with over 155 years of service.

Suzanne Filippone stated the high school has three retirees this year, with a combined 77 years of service.

Dr. Morse also recognized the retirement of Todd Allen and Michelle Loring, and corrected himself in saying there is actually closer to 600 years of combined service amongst the retirees, and thanked them all.

Al Howland also thanked all the retirees.

Denise Day recognized several retirees and the role they played in her son's education in the district.

Megan Deane thanked all the retirees and noted several of them had played a role in her education as well.

CDC Mask Recommendations

Catherine Plourde spoke about the mask protocols that will be in effect over the next few weeks while school is still in session. Catherine stated that students will still be required to wear masks when indoors or on the bus, but outdoor sports and end of year activities will have more relaxed guidelines. Catherine also discussed how these guidelines apply to fully vaccinated individuals, and that some guidelines are vague and can be used as the district's discretion.

Brian Cisneros stated the guidelines presented do not follow CDC guidelines, as the end of year activities allow for individuals to be distanced by only three feet if they are unmasked, and outdoor classes call for individuals be masked if they cannot distance by six feet, however CDC says individuals no longer need to wear masks outside.

Catherine stated that the CDC and DHHS guidelines and alternatives, as well as outdoor transmission rates, vaccination rates, the schools' information, and local metrics were all taken into consideration when determining what guidelines would work best for the district.

Brian stated the issue is that the CDC has been used to guide the decisions, and now the DHHS is being used when they were never used previously.

Catherine stated DHHS guidelines have been looked at as well in the past, and now they are trying to learn from what they have done previously and look at what they know now versus what they knew then, and look at the alternatives offered by the CDC that didn't exist earlier.

Brian stated that the Board is currently sitting six feet apart and most of the Board is vaccinated and asked why we are wearing masks.

Catherine stated that the indoor guidelines and rules haven't changed per the CDC.

Denise Day thanked Catherine for her work, and stated she is concerned about indoor sports and the potential confusion with coaches regarding who is vaccinated and who is not vaccinated, and it may be easier to continue requiring those athletes to wear masks.

Andy Lathrop stated a list would be required from other schools of who is vaccinated and can play without a mask.

Michael Williams stated it is a great way to encourage vaccination.

Andy stated it may lead to more kids pushing to be vaccinated so they do not need to wear a mask.

Michael asked if there is still a limit on spectators for sporting events.

Andy said there is still a limit and covered what that limit is for indoor and outdoor sports, stating the number of attendees has been manageable.

Michael asked which middle school sports are running right now and if they are following the same guidelines.

Andy stated track and field, lacrosse, baseball, and softball are currently running, and they are adhering to the same guidelines.

Michael asked how these guidelines have been communicated to parents.

Andy stated the Board is hearing it first and he will be sending the communication to the athletic community.

Dr. Morse stated the middle school and high school principals would communicate it to parents.

Al Howland thanked Catherine and Andy for doing this work and stated the Town of Durham is pretty consistent with the guidelines they had set forth.

Dan Klein thanked Catherine as anything that becomes more complex is more work, also stated he agrees with Michael that this may add more incentive for individuals to be vaccinated.

Brian cited the CDC website stating fully vaccinated individuals could resume activities without masks or physically distancing.

Catherine stated this was relating to outdoors and the school guidance portion clarified masks are to be worn inside. Catherine also stated there have been many articles written stating that the CDC did not clarify this well enough.

Yusi stated the CDC was not clear enough in their intent in their new guidelines regarding schools

Brian stated wearing masks defeated the purpose of getting vaccinated, and cited the original order from the Governor exempting specific individuals from wearing masks.

Yusi thanked Catherine and Andy for their work in interpreting the new guidelines, and stated that as an athlete she can't imagine trying to play sports while wearing a mouth guard and mask, and feels the new guidelines are showing more compassion for the kids.

Catherine stated that indoor masking will continue to be reviewed, but tonight's discussion was aimed specifically at outdoor events.

Brian stated he feels the indoor mask discussion should happen tonight, considering the changes that have been taking place at the CDC, and a fully vaccinated person that is distanced six feet from others should be able to remove their mask, those that are uncomfortable can keep their masks on.

Michael Williams asked for clarification from Catherine and Dr. Morse on if this is information being given to the Board or if there is action required of the Board.

Dr. Morse stated it is an update on providing guidance to the community and not an actionable item by the Board, wants to loosen the guidelines where they are comfortable, such as outdoor activities. Dr. Morse also stated that school staff and students will be required to continue wearing masks, and as representatives of the community the Board should be modeling that behavior.

Brian stated he agrees with that and clarified to Catherine and Andy that he does think it's an excellent report and agrees with a majority of it.

Catherine thanked Andy and Suzanne for their teamwork in putting together the guidelines.

Dr. Morse thanked Todd Allen, Catherine, and Sue Caswell for reviewing the documents each week to help guide the district each week.

Dr. Morse reminded the Board of the Asian-American and Pacific Islander Forum on Tuesday, May 25, and thanked Yusi for her massive amounts of work in organizing the event, hoped the Board and community would be able to attend.

Denise pointed out the event will be starting at 6pm, not 7pm as stated on the Meeting Agenda.

Brian thanked Andy for implementing the previous mask rules at sporting events and acknowledged that spectators were not always nice in complying.

Catherine recognized Brian Ryan for being awarded and Emerging Leader for the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators in the Southeast Region.

Yusi added that the doors for the Asian-American and Pacific Islander Forum will open at 5:45pm, and there will be a slideshow with faces of members of our community. Yusi also thanked Yanhong Dai and the other parent speakers that will be sharing their experiences.

C. Business Administrator

Towle Driving School Bid

Denise Day moved to approve the Towle Driving School for the driver education program, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed, 7-0 with the Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

Sue Caswell stated that New Hampshire Saves is starting a new program called Power to Net Zero and would like to use the new middle school as their poster child for the campaign.

D. Student Representative Report

Megan Deane thanked the Board for being so wonderful and willing to listen to her input as the Student Representative. Regarding all-in, Megan stated it has been going well for students and

nothing compares to being physically in school. Megan stated that some students have chosen not to return, but teachers are getting creative to meet the needs of these students. Megan also stated that it is difficult to have two types of students in one class, and she encouraged the Board to move toward removing the remote option entirely for students.

E. Finance Committee Report

Al Howland discussed the finance committee wanting to prioritize what the district obligations are, to determine where the fund balance will be and if any of the items are negotiable. Al discussed the CIP projects that could be moved to make more funding available for the Chinese program and the piano for the middle school, as well the motions required to move the funds.

Denise Day moved to use up to \$175,000 toward the Moharimet office project and approve the \$178,205 to complete the CIP projects as listed on the Finance Committee Memo, 2nd by Brian Cisneros.

Brian asked if the technology costs should be included.

Denise added to the motion the \$174,850 for the technology costs.

Michael clarified the new motion is for \$174,850 for the technology costs, materials for the Moharimet project for \$175,000, and additional capital projects as outlined in the total of \$178,205.

Tom Newkirk asked for clarification on the three projects that would be shifting, and what the total amount would be.

Michael states the total amount will be \$528,055.

Vote on motion to use up to \$175,000 toward the Moharimet office project, approve the \$178,205 to complete the CIP projects as listed on the Finance Committee Memo, and \$174,850 for the technology costs at the middle school passed 7-0 with the Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

Michael continued to the discussion regarding the piano for the middle school.

Brian Cisneros moved to purchase the piano for the middle school for \$145,000 out of the fund balance, 2nd by Denise Day.

Yusi expressed concern over not seeing options for a slightly less nice piano or a more used piano that could save a lot more money.

Dr. Morse stated the option was looked at and it was determined the best decision to go with is this piano.

Tom asked if anyone has travelled to actually play the piano.

Dr. Morse stated that has not yet happened, but it will before the purchase is made official.

Tom requested a concert pianist travel to actually play and be sure it is a quality instrument.

Dr. Morse agreed.

Dan expressed concern in that the Board approved the Chinese program, technology for middle school, as well as new bleachers, and that there is a lot more to be done to get the Middle School functional, and is unsure the piano is something needed right now.

Dr. Morse states he feels it is an investment in the future, like the other programs that were just approved.

Brian Cisneros amends the motion to purchase the piano out of the fund balance for \$145,000 after the testing at the discretion of the superintendent with the guidance of the music department.

Denise accepts the amendment.

Motion with amendment passes, 6-1 with Dan Klein voting in the negative, and the Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

Chair Williams calls for a Five minute break 9:24pm

The Board returned to at 9:29pm.

F. Other: None

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

Brian Cisneros moves to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda to approved teacher nomination for the 2021-22 school year, 2nd by Michael Williams. Motion passed, 7-0 with the Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

May 25 Diversity, Visibility, and Standing Together Forum

Michael Williams stated this was touched upon in the Superintendent's Report, asked if anything needed to be added.

Discussion on May 12, 2021 Form

Brian requested that in the future we decide on one topic for the forum.

Tom suggested the Board give guidelines to the audience for how to participate, such as no comments from the audience, limiting the number of questions that can be asked in one turn, and request that everyone must identify themselves.

Michael stated that as the Chair he would try not to be too lax with guidelines next time.

Yusi suggested a tighter facilitation and topic, maybe some type of presentation regarding the stage we are in.

Al stated that we need to look at what we have learned from the forum and how we want to address those issues, and suggested that we next have a forum about the Anti-Racism Policy as there were a lot of questions regarding this.

Michael asked for opinions regarding a forum for faculty and staff.

Denise stated she would like to see a forum for the faculty and staff because it is important to hear their opinions on what worked and didn't work for them in the past year.

Michael suggested using the first hour of the June 16 meeting as a remote forum for teachers, faculty, and staff.

Al stated he thought it would be important to hold remote forum for remote families.

Dr. Morse will speak to the Guild and support staff to see if that date will work for them.

Ongoing discussion for the opening of schools for Fall 2021

Dr. Morse discussed his desire in wanting to open school in the Fall as normally as possible, and he is hopeful the number of students will be close to what would be typically expected. Dr. Morse stated that the transportation department will need more staff in order for this to happen, as well as what other obstacles the district will face.

Motion to approve list of policies for a first read. DN – Booster Clubs, DIA – Fund Balance

Denise Day move to approve both DN – Booster Clubs and DIA – Fund Balance for first read, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0, with Student Representative voting in the affirmative

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES: None

Manifest Reviewed and Approved by Manifest Committee:

Denise Day and Tom Newkirk reviewed the manifest.

Payroll Manifest #25 \$900,183.33

Vendor Manifest # 25 - \$358,743.51

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

Future Meeting Dates: May 25, 2021 Public Forum – 6:00 pm – ORHS Auditorium
 June 2, 2021 Regular Meeting – 7:00 pm – ORHS Auditorium
 June 16, 2021 Regular Meeting – 7:00 pm – ORHS Auditorium

XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

- Discussion of matter that will likely affect persons reputation.

NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A2 I {If needed}

Michael Williams moved to enter into non-public meeting session at 10:35 pm in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II c, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed 7-0.

Chair Williams declared the School Board back in public session at 11:00 pm.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Brian Cisneros moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 pm, seconded by Al Howland. The motion passed with a vote of 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alexa Fusilier
Recording Secretary