

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**Board of Education**

Virtual Meeting – June 8, 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 Board President Denise DuFort indicated the presence of **Board Members:** Denise DuFort, Jarrod Smith, Jon Shiflett, Sara Clark Pierson, Kim Mulvenna, Patrick McKennon and Ben Cwayn. **Central Office Administrators:** Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Nancy Rasinske, Sara Holding, Mark Deschaine and John Ellsworth. **Others in Attendance:** Greg Almy, Wendy Dill, Erica Ledesma, Abigail Burmeister, Adam Martin, Alexander Woods, Alison McRae, Alyssa Cummings, Amber Schwennesen, Amy Hall, Andrew Ford, Angie Kanazeh, Ann Paquette-Lukens, Ashleigh Shepard, Bill Albrect, Catherine Fox, Charles Hobbs, Chris Cambas, Christin Sandell, Christine Ansted, Cindy Anderson, Cindy Hoskins, Colleen Price, Cyndi Finkhouse, D’Anne Golub, Danielle Lundstrom, Danielle Nelson, Darbi Carter, Darcy Kerr, Dawn McCoy Gibson, Debbie Diesen, Debra McCrumb, Denise Green, Diego Soria, Ellie Darnell, Elyse Fox, Emma Smith, Francis D’Huyvetter, Heather Vanderlaan, Hudson Kerr, Jamie Losch, Jamie Viecelli, Jennifer Deja, Jenny Jarrard, Jenny Kish, Jeremy Babcock, Jessica Cornman, Jessica Fuentes, Jessica Leopold, Jill Rycus, Jim Gee, Jim Kaiser, Joan Pedraza, John Szczerowski, Julie Schieding, Justin Heany, Karen Batterham, Kassandra Davis, Katie Westen, Keith Smith, Kelli Bohnet, Kelly Smith, Kevin Fitton, Kim Abed, Kristen Thompson, Kristen Wren, Kristy Merignac, Kristy Welch, Kyle Dymond, Lindsey Fender, Liz Jackman, Lori Bucholz, Lynn Goldman, Lisa Swem, Margo Susjar, Mary Ann Frost, Mary Ann Schmedlen, Meghan Morris, Melissa Bennett, Melissa Mazzola, Michael Snyder, Michele Hill, Mike Hoskins, Mike Franco, Nancy Coleman, Nancy Lonberger, Nola Cockroft, Pat St. George, Pat Williams, Pete Bucholtz, Rachel Buffenbarger, Rachel Greco, Ranjit Singh, Raymone Gude, Rob Wilson, Rosemary Possanza, Ross Richard, Sarah Kovach, Sarah Sullivan, Scott Pohl, Shelby Logel, Sonya Hernandez, Susan B. Jackson, Susan Sowle, Sydney Riekse, Tamela Jones, Tammy Sue Fletcher, Tasha Kelley-Stiles, Theresa Abed, Tiffany Finkle, Tiffany Organek, Tonya McGill, Tracy Smith, Trudy Strouse, Tyler Bradley, Whitney Craig, Mike Franco, Nick Crofut, Doug Vettraino, Aaron Sternaman, Aaron Yusten, Abby Taylor, Adam Orange, Amanda Hengesbach, Andrea Babbitt, Andrew Balcer, Annette Kelly, Brian Flowerday, Bruce Dunn, Carlie Koets, Carly Waldrop, Caroline de Mauriac, Cassie Graven-Watts, Dave Burwick, Eric Dean, Erica Deters, Erin Snyder, Freneka McCan, Karen Frisbie, Jamie Barger, James Edgett, Jenny Waybright, Jill Ford, Jody Lyon, Julie Brunk, Katie Fox, Katie Fox, Katie Grass, Katie Grass, Katie Price, Kelli Hammond, Kim Browning, Lacy Schneider, Laura Guild, Laurel Miller, Laurie Hubbert, Leesha Lee, Lindsey Grostefon, Lisa Powers, Lisa Singh, Lynne MacDowell, Marlene Promer, Megan Spedoske, Meghan Joseph,

Meghan Richey, Mike Boruta, Mike Johnson, Nanette Pearson, Nate Moore, Nicole Shannon, Pete Marvin, Phil Cutts, Raymone Gude, Rebecca Sorek, Rene Brown, Sabrina Claude McGahee, Sarah Dymond, Shelly Wiggins, Sherry Sbraccia, Susan Burm, Tasha Rios-Thomas, TD Brown, Todd Davis, Todd Marsh, and Kim Manning

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS**

**Motion by Ms. Clark Pierson, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the June 8, 2020 Agenda Items, as presented.**

**Roll Call Vote**

<b>Mr. Smith</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>	<b>Mr. McKennon</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>
<b>Mr. Shiflett</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>	<b>Mrs. Mulvenna</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>
<b>Mr. Shiflett</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>	<b>President DuFort</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>
<b>Mr. Cwayna</b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>		

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

District Employee and GLEA President Greg Almy expressed the appreciation of the association for holding the special meeting on Friday and allowing the public to be heard and then swiftly and decisively coming to a decision. He noted GLEA is confident in the board’s commitment to restoring faith in our school system and noted that the administration is truly listening and wants to work on affecting positive change and GLEA looks forward to helping move forward.

Grand Ledge Schools Alumni Wendy Dill advised she has reached out to former students asking them to lend their voices to this issue to show it is not just a “handful” of students. She asked the board and administration to use this as a tool. She thanked them for listening and offered her assistance.

Community Member Erica Ledesma provided the board with a list of demands from the GL Alliance for Diversity and noted they are here to hold them accountable. She noted they stand with the board and administration and are here to be proud comets.

Grand Ledge Schools Alumni Alexander Woods read an excerpt from an anonymous former student laying out the treatment they received as a student noting it caused them to transfer out of Grand Ledge.

Christine Ansted of Florida spoke in support of Dr. Metcalf noting we all make mistakes and believes he should be given the opportunity continue as Superintendent with increased humility for what he has been through.

Lynn Goldman spoke in support of Dr. Metcalf noting he should not be removed from his lifelong work for simply stating something in a manner that was politically correct.

Community Member Rachel Buffenbarger noted the decision has already been made with regard to Dr. Metcalf’s tenure with Grand Ledge and it is time for a new fresh start.

Grand Ledge Schools Alumni Charles Hobbs read an excerpt from an anonymous former student laying out the treatment they received as a student.

Community Member Mike Franco noted he has never met Dr. Metcalf, never talked to him, but has lived in the area for 25 years and has never experienced any type of racism in all his years. He believes Dr. Metcalf made a mistake and he doesn't believe he should lose his job over it.

Doug Vettraino of DeWitt spoke in support of Dr. Metcalf noting hate speech should never be tolerated but does not believe Dr. Metcalf's remarks rose to that level. He asked the board to not give in to public pressure.

Community Member Ellie Darnell noted there is a lot of work to do and new leadership will be beneficial to start a new direction and bring Grand Ledge to what we would all like it to be.

Elvin Caldwell of Lansing read an anonymous statement from a former student providing an overview of their time as a student and Grand Ledge and noting their mother pulled the student out of Grand Ledge.

Keith Smith of Traverse City spoke as a friend and colleague of Dr. Metcalf noting his statement does not represent him as a person and he believes he can successfully move the district forward.

Grand Ledge Schools Alumni Tyler Bradley provided the board the board with an overview of her class lesson on the Civil War and having to play a member of the Confederate Union as a black student and being asked, by teachers, for the "black perspective" on issues. She advised teachers need to be more aware.

Community Member Todd Davis noted Dr. Metcalf has the right to free speech noting maybe it wasn't as eloquent or came off wrong, but it should be used as an opportunity to open a dialogue with him and for everyone to work together.

Chris Cambas noted Dr. Metcalf is a good man and doesn't believe his intention was to harm anyone. He noted everyone has slip ups and if you take one slip up and put it under this particular microscope, everyone might come up short, but to deem someone a racist by one or two sentences is wrong. He believes the issues in the district, expressed in these meetings, need to be rectified by not at the cost of Dr. Metcalf's job.

Community Member Nick Crofut spoke on behalf of Dr. Metcalf noting he believes what happened in Minnesota is horrible and evil, just like everyone else. He spoke of Brian being the only one from Grand Ledge Schools who attended a City Council meeting to stop a Marijuana store from coming to Grand Ledge noting Dr. Metcalf is with us, he is a doer.

Former District Employee Denise Green thanked the board for listening to everybody. She also stated no one is doubting Dr. Metcalf is a good man and this is not about just one comment it is just that comment was the last straw.

Brad Hemmes of Holland spoke on behalf of Dr. Metcalf noting he worked with him for many years and has tragically watched this unfold. He expressed Dr. Metcalf is one of the best Superintendent's he has worked with. He is a doer with a proven track record. He encouraged the board to work through this with Brian noting everyone deserves a second chance.

Community Member Dawn Velianoff thanked the board for last Friday and asked if the Board Statement issues on June 2, 2020 was inclusive of all board members.

Board Parliamentarian Sara Clark Pierson noted the board does not engage in dialogue during Public Comment and noted this is a time for the public to talk and share with the board. The Board President may answer your question later in the meeting, but not during public comment.

Community Member Keli Hammond noted the board voted unanimously on June 5, 2020 to move to terminate Dr. Metcalf and expressed concerns the board is reconsidering that decision noting she feels that would be a big step backwards with the vote of no confidence from the teacher union and the hundreds of people who spoke on Friday about the inherent racism Grand Ledge has become known for.

Community Member Andrew Balcer noted he is not downplaying any of the previous testimonies but noted his experience with Dr. Metcalf has been pleasant and believes what is going on is an American issue, not just a Grand Ledge issue and would like to see this being used as an opportunity for Dr. Metcalf to grow noting we all make mistakes.

Joe Spalding of California recognized the effort to prop up Dr. Metcalf but noted the race issue was already here in Grand Ledge when Dr. Metcalf arrived and nothing in his nine-year tenure has changed.

Board Trustee Patrick McKennon called for a point of order asking the comments to stay on the issue and not address the concerns or comments of other speakers.

Community Member Stacy Washington thanked the board for their patience on Friday and listening to everyone. She noted Dr. Metcalf is entitled to his feelings but not a feeling she wants guiding her children in this school district.

Hudson Kerr of Sunfield noted this is a truly heavy issue and he thanked each of the board members for responding to him openly and kindly. He then read a portion of the eMail he wrote to the member.

Community Member Megan Spodoske noted she cares about Dr. Metcalf as a person, but this has sparked a movement in our district and implored the board to take the opportunity and noted she looks forward to helping the board move the district forward.

Community Member Caroline deMauriac reiterated she wants to see training for the board and district staff and would like to see something put into the curriculum to teach our children the history of racism.

**ACTION ITEM**

**A. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF SINKING FUND INVOICES**

**Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mrs. Mulvenna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Sinking Fund Invoices in the amount of \$33,817.96, as presented.**

This completes the work of the underground storage tanks at the Operations Building.

**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>YES</u>
President DuFort	<u>YES</u>		

**The motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. McKennon provided an overview of the invoices presented.

**B. Approval OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND INVOICES**

**Motion by Mr. Smith, 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 \$1,396,181.85, as presented.**

Mr. McKennon provided an overview of the invoices presented.

Sara Clark Pierson requested abstention from both bond votes as Clark Construction, a family company, is involved in the oversight of the projects.

**Roll Call Vote**

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>	Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>		

**The motion carried unanimously with member Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.**

**C. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2 BOND INVOICES**

**Motion by Mrs. Mulvenna, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 2 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$1,796.64, as presented.**

Mr. McKennon provided an overview of the invoices presented.

Mr. Smith noted it is nice to see work starting on the bond projects.

**Roll Call Vote**

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

**The motion carried unanimously with member Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.**

**D. APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND BID AWARD**

**Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Proposal 1 Bond Bid Award to Play Environment Design in the amount of \$187,000 with a construction contingency of \$6,090 and general conditions of \$3,740 for a total Bid Award of \$196,830 for Holbrook Elementary School Playground Equipment, as presented.**

Mr. McKennon provided an overview of the bid noting there will be many more students at Holbrook once it is converted to an elementary school which requires renovations to the playground area.

**Roll Call Vote**

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

**The motion carried unanimously.**

The board took a recess at 7:45 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Community Member Jessica Fuentes thanked the board for their service noting it is not an easy job. She encouraged the board to evaluate the hiring practices of the district and to look outside the community for the next Superintendent.

Community Member Amy Hall noted she felt the comments in support of Dr. Metcalf were very unnerving to her noting that many law-abiding citizens have been killed by the police. She felt Dr. Metcalf was being ignorant to what was going on his own school district and noted we need to find a better path forward.

Community Member Debra Martinez expressed her appreciation to the board for their time and noting Dr. Metcalf created a divide and the district needs a superintendent who will bring people together. She noted being a board member is not a full-time job and encouraged the board to let the parents, students and community help so we can build something wonderful.

**COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD**

Ms. Clark Pierson noted she didn't get a chance to speak on Friday but she rejects Dr. Metcalf's comments but we must acknowledge the racial violence in this country against people of color simply because of their skin color. While Dr. Metcalf didn't condone police violence, just noted good people wouldn't be in that position, but the fact is, good people are exposed to violence. The question posed to the board was his ability to lead our district and community. We had to take into account all the hurt we heard and all the things those comments triggered. She expressed she believes a steering committee needs to be created that brings a diverse group of people together and charge them with designing a program that breaks down into smaller groups that examine the administration, teachers, students, hiring practices, how we discipline. We need to start the discussion and get us moving in a positive direction. Lastly she noted she rejects the confederate flag in every possible way and noted she believes this issue needs to be addressed immediately. She further urged language be included in our student handbooks that the confederate flag cannot be used in our buildings or be on our property noting she will not vote for the student handbook if language is not included.

Mrs. Mulvena noted she agrees with all of Ms. Clark Pierson's statement but noted it was gut wrenching to hear some of the stories and comments. She noted all the alumni who came back to share but who have gone on to such great successful was wonderful to see. She agrees with developing a steering committee noting a lot of people who want to be involved but asked everyone to remember this will not happen overnight and it will be an on-going process. She noted we are all different, but the black community has been treated so poorly it is time to say enough is enough. She also agreed with Sara on the use of the Confederate Flag stating it is a symbol of hate, of intimidation and these should not be allowed. In closing she expressed she looks forward to the work that is ahead and the support of the community.

Mr. Cwayna thanked everyone for sharing their voices last week and this noting it was immediately apparent this is an important issue. He thanked our staff for taking a very different ending to the school year and making it special for the students expressing he sat with his son while the teachers and staff from Willow Ridge did a drive-by parade at each of the students' homes. He thanked the board members noting he has a new found respect for each of them remarking it has been a difficult week for everyone, the board, the staff, the community, the students who told their stories, Dr. Metcalf and his family. Everyone. He expressed the process has not been perfect by any means, but he feels the people's business has been done with a great deal of respect and dignity. He addressed the statement released by the board initially noting the board tries very hard to speak with one voice but there are times with not everyone agrees. He noted it is his opinion the community is owed an apology for the statement and he believes it didn't adequately encompass what the board was trying to say. He further noted the vote to begin the termination process is just that, the beginning. He asked for patience and understanding as the board works through these complex legal issues with district legal counsel. And in closing he expressed his appreciation to everyone who is trying to learn and move forward from this incident.

Mr. Smith stated he doesn't want to be redundant but believes we are moving in the right direction. He thanked everyone for their emails, notes, personal sentiments and testimonials, for making this very personal expressing he feels people have been heard and maybe in a way never heard before. He noted the board will emphatically welcome help and input to move

the district forward to ensure every student feels safe and accepted in their school, to make our community's reputation one we can all be proud of. To anyone, staff, teacher, or family, thinking of leaving our community, he asked them to hang on a little longer to allow the process to make the changes that will make you want to stay. He noted as a board we had to sit and listen to the stories and testimonies, but it pales in comparison to the what the people dealt with who went through the story. He thanked our teachers and staff noting it was a very odd ending to the school year, but being a father of three children to go through this district and having a wife who is a teacher in this district, he knows teachers want the best for their students.

Mr. McKennon expressed he believed the conversation on Friday and since was a turning point for Grand Ledge. It was a conversation that has been needed for a long time. The ball is now in the Board's court and they need to make sure they act on it. He affirmed what Sara and Kim said about the Confederate Flag needs to be our next step. He addressed MLK day and implementing an equity steering committee will start the process of making Grand Ledge better along with a lot of training and further conversations. He expressed none of this would have been possible without the community, the alumni reaching out knowing that want to better their schools. He noted we will need the help of the community, to help guide us and steer us, but believes the district is better today than we were on Friday and the board needs to make sure we are better tomorrow.

Mr. Shiflett thanked everyone for coming back today and asked everyone to keep coming back noting that moving an institution such as this takes time and we need people to stay invested noting the board needs the constant support of the community to impact a real culture change district-wide, community-wide. He reflected that the fact that we still have students who are speaking anonymously for fear of reprisal, speaks volumes about the problems the district is looking to change.

Denise DuFort responded to the question about the June 2, 2020 statement accepting full responsibility for that statement. She went on to thank Cabinet members and the entire staff of Grand Ledge Public Schools for demonstrating high levels of professionalism in dealing with the crisis the district was thrust into this past week. She expressed the staff rose to the challenge and served all of us well and deserve our utmost respect and thanks. She thanked the community for coming together and sharing their voices. She understands that some of the conversations were probably not easy and while it pushed the board beyond their comfort zones, it was needed to recognize the magnitude of the crisis. She expressed she recognizes there is a lot of work to do and a lot to learn. She asked everyone to stay engaged in the process, continue to reach out and continue to attend meetings. She went on noting as one of the district's alumni stated on Friday, "this is an opportunity for Grand Ledge" and expressed she intends to take full advantage. She provided three steps she has already taken to begin her learning process. She noted together, as a board, they will work to provide equity, diversity, and inclusion for every student enrolled in Grand Ledge Public Schools in a thoughtful and transparent manner. She stated we are stronger together and we will get through this. Black lives matter.

Ms. Clark Pierson asked President DuFort if she would consider placing an item on the Agenda for the June 22, 2020 board meeting to establish a three-person committee of the board to begin talking with and interviewing experts that can provide the board with steps to get started and how we can begin to move this forward.



**CLOSED SESSION – Negotiations & Appointment of Acting Superintendent**

Motion by Mr. Cwayna 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 and the appointment of an Acting Superintendent for Grand Ledge Public Schools, as per Section 8(c) & 8(h) of the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976.

**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>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously at 8:38 p.m.

**RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION**

The meeting reconvened in Open Session at 10:53 p.m.

**APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Motion by Mr. McKennon seconded by Mrs. Mulvenna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to appoint David Chapin, Interim Superintendent of Grand Ledge Public Schools, effective June 15, 2020, and approve a contract reflecting terms and conditions authorized by the Board.

Mr. Smith noted this is not a replacement of the current Superintendent, it is the appointment of an Interim-Superintendent to assist with district operations while the current Superintendent is on paid administrative leave.

**Roll Call Vote**

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

The motion carried unanimously.

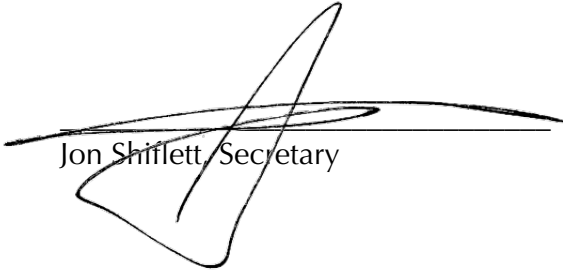
Dr. Chapin is the former Superintendent of East Lansing Public Schools and is currently serving at MSU as a professor in the education department. He has a reputation as a strong community builder and highly qualified and will serve our district well as Interim Superintendent.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:



Jon Shiflett, Secretary



Denise DuFort, President