

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**Board of Education**

Regular Meeting – July 12, 2021

**MINUTES**

President Sara Clark Pierson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll Call by Superintendent Marcus Davenport indicated the presence of **Board Members:** Sara Clark Pierson, Jarrod Smith, Nicole Shannon, Jon Shiflett, Denise DuFort, Patrick McKennon, Ben Cwayna. **Central Office Administrators:** Marcus Davenport, Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Nancy Rasinske, Sara Holding, Mark Deschaine and John Ellsworth. **Others in Attendance** Melissa Mazzola, Margo Susnjar, James Cotter, Erica Ledesma, Greg Almy, Angel Landis, Kyle Dymond, LeAnn Kirmann, Margaret Bierstetel, Melissa Fannon, Heather Algrim, Karin Gyger, Kiel Gloden, Melanie Gloden, Kelly Williams, Amanda Garza, Howard Pizzo, Sally Jo Nelton, Denise Clarity, Leanna Aghekeza, Katie Grass, Jeff McNeilly, Traci Gentilozzi, Frank Gentilozzi, Jason Letch, Nicole Leitch, Chad Little, Elyse Fox, Jenny Waybright, Emily Williamson, Steven Fraleigh, Deborah Diesen, Jacqueline Freeman, Todd Hovey, Kellee Auge, Valerie Holley and Kim Manning

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS**

***Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the July 12, 2021 agenda items, as revised. The motion carried unanimously.***

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

***Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the July 12, 2021 Consent Agenda Items, as presented.***

Included on the Consent Agenda were the Meeting Minutes of the July 14 & 21, 2021 Work Session and Closed Session, the June 28, 2021 Regular Meeting and the teacher hirings of Daniel Dade and Melissa Fannon.

***The motion carried unanimously.***

**REPORTS**

**A. Capitol Connections Report**

Mr. Smith advised the State Aid budget has been presented to the Governor but it has not been signed yet. He noted this legislation directly impacts the funding for all public schools in Michigan.

President Clark Pierson noted that Chief Financial Officer Nancy Rasinske highlighted during the Truth in Budgeting hearing that the budget was very fluid in light of the State Aid Budget not being enacted, noted the budget would mean more than \$2 million in additional funding for the district, depending on the student count, and referencing this legislation will bring districts more in line that have been impacted under Proposal A.

**B. Eaton RESA Report**

Mrs. DuFort advised the RESA is scheduled to meet on July 21, 2021.

**C. Grand Ledge Education Foundation Report**

Ms. Shannon provided information regarding the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Josh Spalsbury Memorial 5K Run taking place this Saturday noting this is a fundraiser for the Foundation.

**D. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Report**

President Clark Pierson advised the Committee has not met since it received the Report on June 28<sup>th</sup>. She anticipates the Board will review and have discussion on the report in August and determine the process and any actions moving forward.

**E. Bond Update**

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Operations Dr. Steve Gabriel provided Dr. Mike Johnson's bond update in his absence noting there is a lot of action around the district. He provided updates with regard to construction at Holbrook, Beagle, the M-43 round-about and the new track. He updated the members regarding the community pool at the High School along with the fine arts and athletic updates. He noted construction on these projects will go out to bid in August, And in closing he advised construction with regard to the new Wacousta Building and other elementary building updates will begin shortly after the new year.

**F. Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Dr. Davenport thanked everyone for the warm welcome. He noted his first seven days have been extremely busy but he is delighted to have met some amazing parents, students and educators. He noted the district is creating the foundation for a strong return in the fall and expressed his thanks to Dr. Barnes for what he and his team are doing for our students. He thanked the members of the teachers' union who met with him and noted he looks forward to working hand-in-hand as we continue to move the district forward. He advised he is working closely with district Communications Director John Ellsworth to ensure we are providing a true picture of Grand Ledge Public Schools and announcing he will begin hosting some public forums noting the importance of being able to talk with parents and community members in a constructive, positive manner. He announced sign-ups for these events will be posted on the district website very soon and the first forum is scheduled for Friday, July 23, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. McKennon read the rules for addressing the board.

Margo Susnjar welcomed Dr. Davenport and expressed her excitement for his plans. She expressed continued support for the work of the EDI Committee and reminded everyone what prompted the development of this committee.

Greg Almy addressed the board with a message of hope going forward, noted nobody is unscathed from trauma or risk and while we can't always control what happens, we can control our resiliency and hope. He encouraged everyone to be an agent of hope for all children noting we can all grow and we can all be better.

Katie Grass addressed the board noting she remembers where this community was one year ago and she has seen the community changing. She noted she participated in a 21-day equity challenge noting this is not something taught at school but she learned about parts of our history that have been unfair. She referenced the last few board meetings noting parents are upset because CRT is not meant to be taught to young children. She expressed her desire for Grand Ledge Public Schools to continue the EDI work and hopes that all students will feel included and welcome. She noted as a first-grade teacher she does teach kindness, empathy and about differences, but it is all done through communications centered around respect.

Amber Redman addressed the board expressing she believes the board has ignored wide-spread concern and thereby degraded trust. She asked for the immediate implementation of live-feeds in every classroom using extra COVID funding. She expressed the board has no real data or statistics and have weaponized the June 2020 meeting. She noted this instance does not give a full, wide-spread view of the community. She implored the board to use funds properly.

Heather Algrim addressed the board noting this is not a left versus right. She spoke about her father-in-law and husband expressing her love and support of both of them but also expressing these are not by rights compassionate or empathetic persons. She expressed her support for the diversity work in Grand Ledge. She expressed her concern for the aggression that has found its way into these board meetings. She encouraged everyone to not take a side, but take a stand noting we are all being judged on our character.

Kiel Gloden addressed the board to expressed his concerns for the EDI program and the use of Dorinda Carter Andrews. He expressed he believes that the board is using EDI as a cover to teach CRT. He conceded that change can be positive, but change can also be disastrous. He noted 23 states have already banned CRT from being taught in K-12 classrooms and including large fines to teachers.

Melanie Gloden addressed the board expressing her believe that CRT is on the table to be implemented into the curriculum noting the board is sugar coating it by cloaking it in the name of EDI. She expressed concerns that the September 11, 2001 attacks are not taught and or mentioned in any classroom when this is one of the single largest loss of life events in our history and she believes we should remember and honor those who lost their lives that day. She expressed the importance of teaching history but noting CRT is not history. She encouraged the board to think about what kind of future they want for the children of Grand Ledge.

Katie Fox addressed the board expressing her disappointment in the way the audience responded to her son when he was addressing the board at previous meetings. She stated her son was taught a modified version of CRT last year and when she emailed the teacher to ask that her son be provided alternate assignments she was told she was being rude. She stated her son was being taught political science in an English class. She expressed she is proud of her son and that he has his own opinion.

Ethan Fox addressed the board expressing the board stating CRT is not in the district is a lie noting he went through it. He expressed he was taught about someone getting shot and gender in an English class. He expressed his disappointment that the board did not implement a small scholarship as a way to recognize a few members of the Class of 2021.

Zach Zulewski addressed the board noting he will be a sophomore next year and recognized the public outcry at recent board meetings. He noted many have voiced their very strong opinions, but noted there is a voice absent – that of the students. He noted the students don't want the current political climate and polarization in their education. He noted he wants to move past the division and politics and focus on what unites us all – providing the best possible education to the students of the district. He noted we all want a better future and we need to come together, accept the events of the past and move on. He encouraged everyone to accept each other and our differences. He expressed appreciation to the members of the board, his excitement about the bond improvements and welcomed Dr. Davenport noting he appreciates his focus on student success.

LeAnn Kirmann addressed the board noting she has not seen a lot of racial divide until this year. She encouraged everyone to love one another. She stated if you ask someone the difference between equality and equity you will get a different answer. She noted just like everyone won't respond to the same medical treatment the same or how everyone will respond differently to education. She noted she has a problem with equity but not diversity. She noted she would like to have parents more involved in curriculum changes as parents are the primary educator.

Valerie Holley read the letter she sent to the school board addressing her heritage in this community, the history of this town noting it is anything but racist but more of a town that took care of each other, no matter which side of the river you were from. She spoke about her academic history noting her education included learning about the horrors of slavery and the civil rights movement and stating what she did not learn was to judge someone on the basis of the color of their skin. She noted she cannot sit back when so many have built this community with honesty and integrity. She noted we are not a perfect school, not a perfect community, not a perfect country. She implored the board to reject the 1619 project and teaching CRT.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board stating there are a lot of concerned parents and they have a right to be as these are their children. He addressed people in the community using hate speech and calling white people supremacists. He noted his concern with Ms. Shannon and the June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting and noted that Dr. Metcalf is no longer here. He commented he believes Ms. Shannon should resign. He remarked we probably cannot get rid of racism, the board is to represent the parents, the majority of parents do not stand with CRT, EDI or 1619 project, and he believes politicians and board members should be changed often.

Todd Hovey addressed the board noting this doesn't seem real noting our society is divided. He noted parents are concerned, but there is a common bond, making sure the kids get a good education. He noted a previous speaker mentioned about how much can be accomplished standing together. He noted he is not an immovable being and encouraged everyone to work through the differences to find the compromise.

Michael Perrine noted a lot of what need to be said has been said over the last few weeks and he believes we are at a point now where there is quite a bit of division. He noted he is not sure Dr. Davenport's forums are going to work. He expressed his belief that people are over sensitive. He noted everyone should be looking at the future of our kids ensuring they will get the education they need. He expressed that it is difficult to get your point across in the three-minute limit in board meetings. He noted his belief that a line is being drawn in the sand with each side giving

the other the finger. He encouraged Dr. Davenport to continue down the path and get us in the same room.

Kaitlyn DenHouten thanked the board for their commitment to returning to full in-person learning next year and removing the masks. She referenced a Lansing State Journal article noting it seemed Grand Ledge is not teaching CRT. She expressed concerns to using Dr. Carter Andrews asking the question of who is teaching our teachers. She noted we do want to do better but not through the lens of CRT and encouraged the board to terminate her contract.

President Clark Pierson addressed Mr. Fox noting public school funding cannot be used for non-public school expenditures, hence the board not implementing scholarships. She further noted that Dr. Carter Andrews' contract ended on June 30, 2021. The board will begin review of the EDI report in August and depending on the direction of the board's conversation it will be determined if we move into another contract with Dr. Carter Andrews.

**OLD BUSINESS**

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

***Motion by Mr. Shiflett , seconded by Ms. Shannon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Sinking Fund Invoices in the amount of \$266,613.04, as presented.***

Mr. Smith provided an overview of the Sinking Fund, Proposal 1, Proposal 2 Series 1 and Proposal 2 Series 2 bond invoices noting that the Board Bond Advisory Committee met prior to this meeting and approved all these invoices being brought forward for full board approval.

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

**B. APPROVAL OF PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND INVOICES**

***Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education approve the payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$1,239,476.25, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.***

**C. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2 SERIES 1 BOND INVOICES**

***Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 2 Series 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$820,550.84, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.***

**D. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2 SERIES 2 BOND INVOICES**

***Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 2 Series 2 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$204,025.06, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.***

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION TO PLACE SINKING FUND MILLAGE RENEWAL ON NOVEMBER 2, 2021 BALLOT  
Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded Mr. Smith by for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Resolution Placing the Sinking Fund Millage Renewal on the November 2, 2021 Ballot, and direct Superintendent Dr. Marcus Davenport to ensure notification to the Eaton County Clark, as presented.**

Chief Financial Officer Nancy Rasinske provided an overview of the resolution and proposed ballot language noting this would be to renew the current .7921 sinking fund millage rate levy, with no increase, that is set to expire at the end of the 2021 tax year. She noted the district has collected the sinking fund millage for the last 20 years and advised these funds are used for capital improvement updates such as parking lot improvements, roof replacements, HVAC systems, carpeting replacement, and the basic maintenance and upkeep of our buildings. She noted this proposal is a three-year renewal and again noted there is no tax increase. She further shared information regarding how the millage rate has decreased over the life-span of the levy due to Headlee Roll Backs.

**Roll Call Vote:**

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

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Kyle Dymond addressed the board expressing he does not concerned his children are being indoctrinated. He noted history should be factual expressing our country is not perfect, but leaving out parts of our history that make us feel bad is not helpful. He noted his main reason to be here to support the board and Dr. Davenport in their EDI efforts. He noted he believes it is imperative students are supported. He comment the decisions made throughout 2020-2021 and has full faith in the board going forward knowing they are following relevant data and doing the right thing for Grand ledge Public Schools.

Traci Gentilozzi expressed concerns with the delayed posting of the agenda for tonight's meeting and asked about the district social media page. She welcome Dr. Davenport and expressed her support for his upcoming forums. She mentioned three minutes is not enough time to stand here and say what needs to be said. She noted she believes we need more discourse, to talk.

Emily Williamson shared she lives in Charlotte but was hired as a teacher with Grand Ledge Public Schools in 1986. She noted she wants to help Dr. Davenport see a truer picture of district and our board, particularly one who for years has helped in her classroom. She shared Mrs. DuFort is frequently in her classroom, volunteering to read to the students, helping students with projects when they don't understand. She noted she is a presence in our building and expressed to the board they are welcome in our classrooms stating she wants the board to see and know what is really going on in a classroom. She expressed she knows the members care about parents and teachers and more importantly about the students of this community.

Ethan Fox addressed the board to share his ordeal with bullying while attending Grand Ledge High School and encouraging the installation of more cameras noting his issue was never resolved because it was never caught on camera.

Amber Redman addressed the board to express her interpretation of equity and equality. She encouraged Nicole Shannon and Patrick McKennon to step down and give their seats to the two men of color who did not win the election. She stated her believe the board is acting as judge, jury and God. She expressed she will continue to fight by any legal means. She expressed there is no room for politics in education.

LeAnn Kirmann addressed the board to share her idea regarding Grand Ledge Public Schools implementing a science fair and noting it could alternate with a history fair a creative writing fairs and expressing her believe this would improve the learning of our students and get the parents involved as well.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board noting nobody becomes a teacher because they don't like children and noting his believe that all the teachers here want to teach our children. Same is true for a Superintendent expressing you become a superintendent to make a difference. He expressed his believe the problem lies in that people have their own morals, ideas and how to do things. He stated left, right or middle, politics do not belong in elementary and middle school curriculum and only in specific high school classes. He referenced the last meeting noting a former staff members comments were dirty and underhanded. He expressed concerns with the lack of transparency . He noted we need to work together, but the board needs to listen to the parents, stay in their lane, educate them but stay out of politics.

**COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD**

Mr. Cwayna shared he had a nice meeting with Dr. Davenport last week and thanked him for the positive way he has stated his tenure. He advised Dr. Barnes joined the meeting to discuss curriculum and how best to involve the parents whether that be through a curriculum night. He expressed his support for the forums Dr. Davenport is setting up that will provide parents and the community more than three minutes to discuss and bring their concerns, suggestions and forethought forward.

Mr. McKennon welcomed Dr. Davenport. He thanked Dr. Barnes and every administrator, teacher, and staff member who has worked to make our summer school program a success. He noted the program seems to be running like a well-oiled machine. He went on to talk about equity versus equality as referenced by Ms. Kirmann noting the district does equity a lot with regard to 504, IEP, AP courses, Free & Reduced Lunches. He addressed Ms. Redman noting we have the data and the board needs to do better in sharing that data. With regard to when the board starts looking at the recommendations form the EDIC group, we need to make sure we are sharing that data and the rationale behind the decisions we make. He noted the district cannot guarantee outcomes, but we can provide assistance where a need has been identified.

Dr. Barnes thanked Mr. McKennon for his words regarding the summer school program. He expressed his thanks to Mrs. Holding and all the teachers and staff who have worked so hard to ensure the program's success.

Mrs. DuFort expressed she was very pleased to hear from Mr. Zulewski noting she felt he made some very valid points. She expressed she hopes we can continue to work together to achieve that goal.

Ms. Shannon thanked Dr. Davenport for his initial communication to the board and noting she is sure he got off on a running start. She noted she was extremely impressed and appreciates that he "jumped in with both feet."

Mr. Smith referenced the comment about drawing a line in the sand and noting things will not get resolved in this board room – the school board is established to conduct the business of operating a school district, the funding, curriculum. The problems are solved at the district level and brought forward to the board for action or implementation. He noted the opportunity for public comment is in place to allow everyone who wants to address the board the opportunity to do that. He noted board meetings are not town hall meetings. He supports Dr. Davenport and his efforts to open that dialogue. He reiterated that nothing with regard to the EDIC report has been implemented but he does not believe the recommendation are as drastic as some may think. He expressed his appreciation to everyone in attendance advising the board hears them. He knows that some anomalies have been hit upon, but any curriculum changes will be made publicly.

President Clark Pierson agreed with all her colleagues and their comments. She noted the Board of Education is a governmental board with specific rules in how to conduct a meeting. She expressed her believe that large community forums do not work, but the smaller forums will be a good start providing an informal and comfortable place to have the conversation instead of in a public governmental meeting. She addressed questions about the district Facebook page and noted there still needs to be some discussion on this prior to bringing it back.

Dr. Davenport expressed his thanks for the warm welcome he has received from the staff and community at large. He noted he is excited to work with our educators as they are the backbone of our district. He thanked the board, his cabinet members and his administrative assistant for their support.

**ADJOURNMENT**

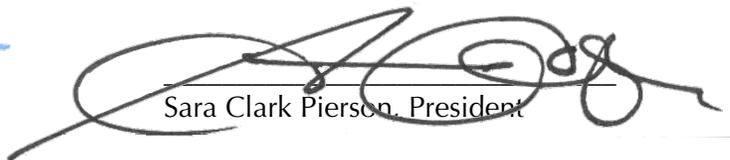
The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:



Nicole Shannon, Secretary



Sara Clark Pierson, President