

## GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS *Board of Education*

Committee of the Whole / Work Session – October 12, 2020

### MINUTES

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

#### ROLL CALL

Roll Call by Interim Superintendent Dave Chapin indicated the presence of **Board Members**: Denise DuFort, Jon Shiflett, Sara Clark Pierson, Patrick McKennon and Ben Cwayna. **Central Office Administrators**: Dave Chapin, Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Nancy Rasinske, Sara Holding, Mark Deschaine and John Ellsworth. **Others in Attendance** LeeAnn Dayton, Melissa Mazzola, Erica McDiarmid, Jamil Cage, Andrew Reynaert, Andrea Dionise, Greg Almy, Scott Morrell, Erica Ledesma, Katie Fox, Ron Britton, Jamie Miller, John Hubbard, Jill Fillingham, Jenny Mead, Laura Mauren, Rachel VanDeven, Raymone Gude, Tim Marsh, Becky Zalewski, Stan Myers and Kim Manning

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Secretary Shiflett read the rules for addressing the board.

There was no public comment.

#### DISCUSSION ITEM

##### **A. PRE-SEARCH SUPERINTENDENT PRESENTATION BY SCOTT MORRELL**

Member Clark Pierson expressed her discomfort with this presentation noting MASB is a vendor and she feels this gives the appearance of giving preference to one vendor over another one.

Mr. Scott Morrell from MASB began by recognizing Ms. Clark Pierson's concerns advising he is not here to sell any services he is strictly here to provide a professional development opportunity to the board. He noted his presentation is to provide a high level of information on what the board can look for when they begin the process of looking to seat the next Superintendent. He advised with several open Superintendencies throughout the state, the pool of candidates will be a tough one. He noted his presentation is simply to share things the board can do to help ensure a successful outcome noting the number one job of the board is to hire and evaluate the Superintendent. He expressed now is the time to start thinking about what the board wants in its next superintendent. He noted if the district has an internal candidate they are considering, it would serve the district well to interview that candidate first prior to going outside the district noting if candidates believe the district has someone internally, they may opt not to apply. He reviewed options for conducting a state-wide or nation-wide search noting most candidates for Michigan superintendents come from within the

state. He noted transparency in the process is always best. He advised everything done with regard to hiring a new superintendent is done at an open, public meeting via the Open Meetings Act advising the only thing confidential in the process is a candidate's name, up until they accept an interview. All discussions and dialogue must be done at an open, public meeting. While the ultimate decision is that of the board, he recommends ensuring stakeholder input and making it a Grand Ledge decision. He noted anything generated by the board in these deliberations (notes, emails, etc.) can be requested under FOIA. He advised the search firm the board opts to work with will bring the candidates to the board, but the board does all the hard work. If the board opts to hold community forums with the candidates, it is suggested the search firm host those events and bring information back to the board. He advised online input could be sought, again recommending this be gathered by the search firm and presented to the board in an open, public meeting. He encouraged consensus of the board for the candidate brought forward noting this is one of the times the board wants to work toward a 7-0 vote. He advised the board should be considering level of education (is a Ph.D. necessary, an Ed.D?) salary range, the evaluation tool that will be used for the Superintendent, will the board conduct quarterly check ins or just do a yearly evaluation, review board policies that deal with the superintendency and ensure everything is on track – if not, fix them now. He advised the more work the board does now, the more discussions the board can have now, the better for the district.

Discussion among the members garnered there are several options for who will help the district conduct its search including MLI, Northstar, possibly the RESA, or even district legal counsel may provide this service noting this is some of the research / work the board can do now noting the board needs to have trust and confidence in whomever they work with. It was noted the average length of a superintendency is under three years, with a good search it could be four to six. Further discussion noted the district had experienced a couple of shorter termed superintendents and when the board went to the community to ask them what they wanted out of their superintendent the overall response from longevity. This required the district to up the pay of the Superintendent noting we are a larger district than most of those looking to fill the seat. Further discussion noted that while the board is interviewing the candidate, the candidate is interviewing the board noting the importance of a cohesive board noting there are seven diverse people with seven different backgrounds and ensuring the culture of the board, having a process in place, having a clear vision.

In closing Mr. Morrell thanked the board for their time noting there is no charge for this service expressing the Michigan Association of School Boards is the board's association. The association is here to help the board noting he is very passionate about his work and wants to ensure the board members have what they need to be successful. He encouraged any of the members with questions to reach out to him.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- A. Approval to Ratify All Board Action from May 1, 2020 – October 12, 2020  
Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Ms. Clark Pierson for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to ratify all board decisions made at regular or special board meetings**

**held remotely between May 1, 2020 and the date of this motion, October 12, 2020, acknowledging this does not affect any abstentions during this period.**

President DuFort clarified this action is upon the advice of district legal counsel as a result of the Michigan Supreme Court ruling.

Mr. Shiflett noted he does expect the legislature to act on legislation that will continue to allow virtual meetings, but in the interim this is important to do.

**Roll Call Vote**

<b>President DuFort</b>	<u>Yes</u>	<b>Mr. McKennon</b>	<u>Yes</u>
<b>Ms. Clark Pierson</b>	<u>Yes</u>	<b>Mr. Cwayna</b>	<u>Yes</u>
<b>Mr. Shiflett</b>	<u>Yes</u>		

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**B. Approval of Teacher Hiring**

**Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Teacher Hiring, as presented.**

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Operations noted Marcelino Bedolla has all the required certifications and is highly qualified to serve the district as the Counselor at Delta Center. He noted Mr. Bedolla is a Grand Ledge parent and he is excited to become a member of the Grand Ledge Public Schools staff.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

President DuFort welcomed Mr. Bedolla to the district.

**C. Approval of Technology Purchase**

**Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Ms. Clark Pierson for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Technology Purchase through Gracon Services in the amount of \$41,809.78 using Proposal 1 Bond Infrastructure Funds to expand the Beagle and Holbrook Networks, as presented.**

Executive Director of Technology Mark Deschaine advised this purchase will allow the district to expand the network services at Beagle and Holbrook as we expand those buildings.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**D. Approval of the Payment of Sinking Fund Invoices**

**Motion by Ms. Clark Pierson, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Sinking Fund Invoices in the amount of \$6,003.61, as presented.**

This was one invoice for costs to repair a short in the compressor at the administration building.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**E. Approval of the Payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices**

**Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$2,076,412.46, as presented.**

This cost represents five invoices for costs associated with virtual learning and construction management fees, architectural fees and payment to 25 individual trades for the month of September 2020.

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

**F. Approval of the Payment of Proposal 2 Invoices**

**Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Proposal 2 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$27,745.69, as presented.**

This is two invoices for costs associated with construction management fees and architectural fees for the month of September 2020.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON - AGENDA ITEMS**

Community member and parent Ron Brittan commended the board for their hard work, for the tough decisions and good decisions they have made on behalf of the district. He noted he wants the district to start thinking about opportunities and resources it can utilize for special education students suggesting opening the gymnasiums at the schools and providing under-utilized paraprofessionals to help the district meet the expectations of current 504 plans and IEPs. In closing he noted the district can do better to provide for the students.

Community member and parent Jill Fillingham noted she has two children attending Grand Ledge Public Schools and expressing she is concerned about their education noting both have IEP's. She expressed she does not feel the IEP is being met and has concerns her current 2<sup>nd</sup> grader will not meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading requirements. She noted she would like to see the district bring small groups of students back for in person learning.

Community member Tim Marsh thanked the board for venturing out noting it was good to see everyone in person. He expressed his appreciation for the bond update on the website and for changes made to the agenda. He noted it would be helpful if some of the documents submitted to the state with regard to the M-43 connection be made available on the website

for people to review prior to attending next weeks' community forum. He noted he feels the district is trying to "shoehorn" a track and field facility into a 22-acre parcel. In closing he expressed he does not feel there has been enough community input with regard to athletic facilities under the bond and knows coaches feel they are not being included.

Community member and parent Jamie Miller noted she does not support bringing students back to in-person learning at this time but expressed she is concerned with the education of her middle school student. She expressed a lot of confusion on a day-to-day basis, concerns with cancellation of Zoom meetings by the teachers, concerns with students not being required to turn their cameras on. She noted he believes more student accountability needs to be in place. In closing she reiterated that she does not want her students coming back into the classroom environment, but has concerns with the current virtual practices.

Community member and grandparent Leann Dayton addressed the board to again express her concerns with online learning expressing she feels she is failing her grandchildren, noting she is not a teacher and it is difficult to manage three different schedules that are all over the place. She explained she understands some people are not comfortable bringing students back at present, but some are and feels there needs to be options provided.

Community member and parent Katie Fox expressed she believes many in our community want the option to have their kids back in school. She noted her student has an IEP and is in the Class of 2021. She expressed he missing out on all of his "lasts". She noted her student did not get to say goodbye to friends back in March due to being hospitalized at that time. She questioned how other districts are able to bring students back but Grand Ledge is not. In closing she noted there has to be something we can do to bring the kids back as she can sit by and watch her student miss out on any more of senior year.

Community member and parent Erika McDiarmid noted she has three high school students and many of the teachers in this district deserve a round of applause. She advised she had an opportunity to sit in on a Zoom meeting with one of her students and remarked the student is not learning anything. She expressed she wants the opportunity to send her students back to school. She went on to express frustration with trying to keep track of things, no uniformity asking why everyone isn't using Buzz. In closing she remarked communication has to be improved.

President DuFort asked and received clarification from Ms. McDiarmid noting with regard to communication she is stating she wants to receive the same information her student is getting so she can hold them accountable.

Community member and parent Andrew Reynaert noted his feelings mirror that of the last two speakers. He questioned the plan to get back to school and the lack of communication around that. He noted is December 4<sup>th</sup> is the date, what is the plan expressing he has no understanding of where we are going. He questioned if the goal has always been to get the students back in person, why there hasn't been planning for months. In closing he expressed the plan to get kids back into school needs to be more transparent.

Community member and parent Jamil Cage thanked the board for everything they do and expressed his appreciation. He provided statistics from Michigan.gov/coronavirus and the reported cases. He noted he believes parents and teachers who are comfortable returning to the classroom should be able to and those who are not should be able to stay home.

Community member and parent Laura Mauran also provided statistics to the board with regard to the number of cases reported in Michigan schools noting the majority of those cases are at the college level. She noted she has read through the district's Preparedness and Response Plan and noted that is Phase 5 the students get to return to school. She asked that the plan is, what the benchmark is. She questioned when they get the option to go back. In closing she asked the board to do what it can to get students back that want to be back stating kids in the K-12 age are not harmed by the virus.

Community member and parent Raymone Gude thanked the board for all they have done during these unprecedented times and encouraged them to continue doing great work. He recognized the parent who spoke that is not comfortable sending her students back to in person learning, but noted he is. He expressed two of his students are doing great but expressed his kindergarten aged student is losing so much. He encouraged the board to look at the districts who are having success with in person learning expressing we should model ourselves after the districts that are doing well, while still understanding and appreciating that some parents are not ready to send their children back to the classroom.

Community member and parent John Hubbard expressed he feels a great injustice is being done to students by only having a virtual learning experience, but he said he would feel just as strongly if the district was only offering in person learning. He noted he has three students and two receive special services. He asked the board to consider bringing the kids back sooner. He went on to express he wanted options provided noting the virus is not going to go away and again asked for the board to consider bringing the students back sooner than December 4.

President DuFort thanked everyone for their comments and attending tonight's meeting.

#### **COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD**

Interim Superintendent Dr. Chapin shared with everyone that he, along with the other administrators in attendance, have taken notes on the comments and affirming that everyone that has spoken has been heard. He noted everyone's story is different and a lot of problems have been solved by working with teachers and principals. He noted the district is trying very hard to communicate and explain our process and this is very important to the administration. He advised the "Next Steps" advisory committee is working hard to develop a plan and advising the district is plugged into the neighboring districts and we are working hard to look at this from all sides. He noted it is the intent to bring a proposal to the board for discussion and feedback at the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting but expressed he believes no matter what plan is presented, it will not meet everyone's expectations but remarking the district is trying to get this as right as possible.

Mr. Shiflett noted he looks forward to hearing from the committee.

Mr. McKennon asked if it would be a recommendation or a plan being presented.

Dr. Chapin clarified it will be a plan and the district will be asking for feedback and input. He noted it is his intention to bring a plan forward that will sketch out the remainder of the year while still keeping in mind the situation is still very fluid.

Mr. McKennon thanked everyone who came out to advocate for their students noting the board hears them. He remarked this is not an easy thing to do and not an easy thing to go through but assuring they are doing the right thing and the board is listening.

Ms. Clark Pierson expressed her apologies to those who tuned into the meeting via Zoom but we not given the opportunity to speak to board recognizing she does not understand all the legal underpinning of the decision. She thanked Dr. Chapin for sharing what he the Advisory group has been discussing and working on but expressed she feels this should be a standing item on the agenda. She commented on the opening of gymnasiums, even if it's just a means to end the isolation and provide an opportunity to interact. With regard to virtual learning, she mentioned several districts who have had to shut down in recent weeks due to a positive covid test remarking no one knows the arch of this virus. She noted the district has to balance the safety of the entire school community and the suffering of the parents and students advising she can always second guess her decision, but it comes down to the risk and the risk was not acceptable to bring kids back. She remarked we don't know what things are going to look like in a week, month or year and we are all kind of guessing. She reported the EDI committee had 30 applications submitted and 16 were asked to join the committee making it a committee of 20. She asked that anyone who submitted an application that did not get asked to join at this time to not be discouraged because there will be work to spread around and their talents will be sought out. In closing she noted she understands Mr. Marsh's concerns stating this community has a lot of expertise and she hopes we are utilizing that community expertise.

President DuFort encouraged everyone to keep community with the board noting for those not able to be present tonight, they can still reach out to the board through email on the district website, noting the uptick in communication through that tool has been greatly appreciated. She thanked those who were in attendance and those who spoke to the board. She stated we are all in this to do the best we can for our students noting the board wants to work with everyone noting we are stronger together. In closing she noted these are very challenging times.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

  
Jon Shiflett, Secretary

  
Denise DuFort, President