

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education

Regular Meeting – February 28, 2022

MINUTES

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

ROLL CALL

Roll Call by Superintendent Marcus Davenport indicated the presence of **Board Members:** Jon Shiflett, Jarrod Smith, Sara Clark Pierson, Denise DuFort, Ben Cwayna and Toni Glasscoe. **Central Office Administrators:** Marcus Davenport, Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Julie Waterbury and John Ellsworth. **Others in Attendance** Matt Oppenheim, Liz Devenbaugh, Jason Devenbaugh, Melissa Mazzola, P. Russell, Tim Totten, Kyle Dymond, Ashley Kuykendoll, Mark Jones, Ken Rolp, Kim Laforet, Alison Walczak, Shari Kissane, Julie Tadgerson, Erin Marsh, Stacy Ervin Oakes, Ashley Oneil, Greg Almy, Nell Pizzo, Howard Pizzo, Anthony Beattie, Chelsea Hare-West, Shannon Young, Kari Thompson, Karlee Ruedisale, Mary Moore, Melissa Burke, Sally Jo Nelton, Tiffany Organek, Martha Hoffman and Kim Manning

President Shiflett took a moment to read a prepared statement:

“Grand Ledge is my home. I love it here. My only time away was to pursue my education and my time in the United States Marine Corps. I love that we have more parades than any other community I know about. I love that some of the parades have more people in them than watching.

Dr. Maya Angelou said, “When people show you who they are, believe them the first time.”

Lately, some of the behavior at these meetings has gotten out of hand. Interrupting speakers, shouting out, and foul language have been a bit too frequent. There have been a couple of folks who felt the need to rush up to the mic and start yelling outside of public comment. It’s not appropriate for this venue and sets a bad example for our children of what it means to participate in government. This is not the kind of behavior that demonstrates Comet Pride.

On January 24, 2022, the board met to appoint someone to fill a vacancy as established by law. All candidates were asked to submit a letter of interest and attend the meeting so if they were selected, they could be sworn in immediately.

During the public comment portion of the meeting one of our community members happened to be sitting near a candidate, only one of clearly identifiable people of color. The community member took the opportunity to tell her about themselves. This community member said some racially insensitive things to them. Coming to board meetings should not subject someone to being touched and having racist comments made to them. This is not behavior that demonstrates Comet Pride.

Serving your community is a truly honorable thing to do. Coming to these meetings to voice concerns or simply learn about what is happening in the schools is an honorable thing to do. Whenever anyone enters this space, they should feel welcome here, because they are welcome here.

The tenants of Comet Pride are out on the district website. They are:

Be **P**ositive,
 Respectful,
Have **I**ntegrity,
Determination, and
Give our Best, **E**ffort.

I'm proud to be a Comet. I commit to working to ensure that I am conducting myself in a way that demonstrates Comet Pride. I will uphold the rules of the board meetings.

Last week, Ms. Laforet talked about teaching the golden rule. That's a good place to start, but I prefer suggesting that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves and that we keep loving one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

There has been a lot of talk about olive branches - so tonight I encourage all board members, candidates for the board, and every person in attendance tonight to help me make a commitment to ensure that people here are treated as our neighbors - because they are our neighbors. This is something that I think we can all work on together.

I commit to loving all of my neighbors - even the guy down the block that hates my wife's cats."

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the February 28, 2022 Agenda Items, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Clark Pierson asked that the February 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes be removed from the consent agenda as she would like amendments made to the minutes.

Motion by Mrs. Clark Pierson, seconded by Dr. Glasscoe for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the February 28, 2022 Consent Agenda Items, as amended.

Included on the Consent Agenda was the February 14, 2022 Work Session Meeting Minutes

The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 17, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Clark Pierson noted that there were two items left off the meeting minutes that should would like included. She noted she has provided Ms. Manning, along with all members of the board of education with the specific language she would like the minutes to reflect including under Public Comment that "Kim Laforet stated in public comment that she was running for the school board and among her concerns were that she had heard that there were litter boxes in the bathrooms for

kids who identified as furries (animals).” Under the Comments from Staff and Board and wanted it included in her comments that “the person who identified himself as “Joe Farmer” was inappropriate when he shouted to the last public comment speaker Katie Fox to ‘shoot ‘em up” as she approached the lectern to address the board. Use of violent imagery was inappropriate especially after the shootings at the Oxford School District. Further, Ms. Laforet’s comments about litter boxes in the schools was silly and that she should show some discernment when faced with obviously ridiculous rumors that she simply accepted as truth.”

Motion by Ms. Clark Pierson, seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the February 17, 2022 meeting minutes, as amended.

Mr. Cwayna questioned the significant difference to the minutes.

Ms. Clark Pierson clarified that she appreciates the diplomacy in crafting the minutes but she felt the two items she wanted included in the minutes were significant in specifically addressing her chastising Joe Farms for his comments to another speaker and identifying Ms. Laforet’s believe that we had litter boxes in our bathrooms.

Motion carried 5/1.

REPORTS

A. Capitol Connections Report

President Shiflett advised the Governor has submitted her budget and that subcommittees will meet to determine the funding for public education. He encouraged those who are so inclined to reach out to their legislators encouraging them to maintain a focus on public education.

Dr. Glasscoe added that there is one-time money included the Governor’s budget for various projects and consideration needs to be given to the sustainability of those items after the one-time money is no longer available.

B. Eaton RESA Report

No Report.

C. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Ms. Clark Pierson advised the full committee has not met but an update was provided to the members advising that the administration is working internally to develop avenues to further the goals put forth in the committee report. In the Spring, the full committee will meet to review the goals in the report and the report from the administration as will the Board of Education with the intent of possibly approving recommendations brought forward.

D. Bond Update

Dr. Johnson noted the pool at Beagle is anticipated to be complete in approximately two weeks with the focus on finishing the tiling and the goal of turning the pool over to the district in early April. He noted this will be a great addition to Grand Ledge Public Schools and the swimming program. He shared work at the high school track continues with the restrooms and concession areas anticipated to be finished by the end of March. Cement work will continue as weather permits. Again, he commented this will be a great

addition to Grand Ledge Public Schools noting this will be one of the finest track facilities in mid-Michigan. He shared that the access drive from the round-about onto school property has been named Lohne Drive. He provided background noting this is a tribute to the exchange program Grand Ledge Public Schools' students have enjoyed and participated in over the past 30+ years with Lohne, Germany. He shared Lohne had gifted the district with the street sign a few years back and this was a great way to honor the program. He noted the district had initially wanted to name the roadway Comet Drive, but that name was already taken. He further shared that 911 makes the determination on street names. He advised the high school fine arts and athletic addition is moving along well noting many of the building supplies are on site and sharing there will be visible improvements in the next few weeks. In closing he noted that planning continues to construction work at Delta Center and for the new Wacousta Elementary School.

E. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Davenport shared his great pride in being able to highlight schools each month. He introduced the Beagle Administrative Team, Principal Dave Kushman and Assistant Principal Eric Leopold.

Mr. Kushman thanked the board for having them and providing them the opportunity to highlight the great things going on at Beagle Middle School. Mr. Leopold shared that he and Mr. Kushman spent the day at Hayes today presenting our current 6th grade students with an overview of the offerings at Beagle Middle School. It is a way to help get them excited about moving to the next level of their academic career. Mr. Kushman then introduced Beagle teacher Mark Jones.

Mr. Jones began by introducing Gretyl, Beagle Middle School's facility dog expressing she has been a welcome addition and sharing what she brings to the students and staff. He shared information on the expanded elective offerings at Beagle as part of the "Project Lead the Way" curriculum, the recent Art Night that provided an opportunity for parents and students to work together, the LINKS program and some comments from current students participating in the program, the recent community service of the middle school wrestling team when they went out and helped shovel sidewalks and driveways for our neighbors and sharing that 35% of the Beagle students participated in school-sponsored sports. In closing he expressed his appreciation for the many ways provided to students to explore who they are and have positive interactions within the community, stressing our Comet Pride.

Dr. Davenport thanked the Beagle Middle School team for their time and expressed his appreciation.

Dr. Davenport then noted that work on the 2022-2023 budget has begun to ensure the board can be presented with a balanced budget for adoption in June. He shared projections, at present, show an anticipated fund balance of 12.43%. He thanked all the buildings for their efforts throughout this month to celebrate and learn about African America History as February is African American History Month and expressing his excitement in seeing what the buildings do throughout March as March is Reading Month as well as Women's History Month. He noted Ms. Clark Pierson touched on the EDIC report and wanted to take a moment to point out that in Dr. Barnes 98B Data presentation

it was clear that our economically disadvantaged students have lower scores than their peers and we must continue to focus on the data to ensure we are providing the best opportunities for academic success for all of our students. EDIC provides a focus on what we are doing to assist our students, it is bigger than black or white, bigger than any category we can put our students in. It is for all of our students. We must find a way to meet the needs of our learners. He stated he believes we have the potential to be an academically outstanding district and we must use our resources in the best way possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Smith read the rules for addressing the board.

Melissa Mazzola addressed the board speaking on behalf of herself, a teacher who has taught for 16 years, addressed the concerns being expressed on which bathrooms transgender students use and sharing a biology lesson on chromosomes that make up the “identity” of an individual, asking people to think about how confusing, scary, it must be for someone who is born with the anatomy of a male but inside feels like a female. She reminded everyone that everyone is someone’s child and everyone deserves kindness, compassion and empathy.

Tim Totten addressed the board sharing information from the New York Times and the NGO that categorize the CDC is withholding information and is a “biased political machine”. He shared his opinion that these articles are “cringe-worthy” and that he believes Civil War statues should remain as they detail our history.

Liz Devenbaugh addressed the board thanking them for lifting the mask mandate and expressing her concerns regarding a conversation between her daughter and Trustee Clark Pierson after the meeting stating she felt Ms. Clark Pierson was calling her daughter a liar.

Jason Devenbaugh addressed the board expressing how happy he was with the number of students who spoke at the meeting on the 17th and remarking it shouldn’t take the state removing the mask recommendation for this board to do the right thing. He further noted he is running for school board, expressed his concerns for the conversation between his daughter and Trustee Clark Pierson, flags and noting it is time to get back to the business of education. In closing he stated he has no confidence in six members of this Board asking them to resign and expressing Superintendent Davenport should resign as well because he is not making Grand Ledge his community.

Kim Laforet addressed the board apologizing for her outburst at the February 17th board meeting and stating litter boxes in the school is not a Facebook prank and that she has eye witnesses from staff members at the school. She expressed concerns that public comment is taken at the beginning of the meeting providing no opportunity to rebuke, thanked the board for removing the mask mandate, questioning why there was no plan in place prior to that, questioning the safety and security of our schools and remarking the public has a right to know what the district is doing to keep our schools safe, questioning the plan to hire an EDI Director and questioning the vision for the position, the job description. She stated she knows there is a meeting being held Thursday afternoon and believes this should include stakeholders. In closing she questioned if Dr. Davenport plans to stay in Grand Ledge and if so, she would like answers to these questions.

Stacy Erwin Oakes addressed the board to request that the district discontinue the practice of fingerprinting students as part of a class at the middle school and expressed her concerns over this practice.

Ashley Oneil read a statement from a Grand Ledge Public Schools employee who wished to remain anonymous sharing that she graduated from Grand Ledge and has worked as a Teacher Assistant for the last 9 years who expressed concerns about CRT teaching and teaching students they are oppressed stating that not all people of color are oppressed, stating teachers should not push the LGBTQ agenda, and stating teachers should be teaching math, social studies and science and leave the rest to parents.

Ashley Kuykendoll addressed the board regarding active listening skills, the practice of preparing to hear, showing attentiveness to the message being presented. She provided the definition of diversity as defined in Merriam-Webster noting that in order to be composed of differences, particularly when it comes to people, the environment has to feel welcoming and safe. not rehearsing or preparing a response. She condemned the support of equality but not equity sharing facts on women's rights to vote noting the passage of the 19th amendment in 1920 that allowed white women to vote noting Asian American women weren't afforded this privilege until 1943 and black women not until 1965. She stated when people state we only need equality and not equity, it is saying the needs of marginalized communities should go undiscussed and unmet as long as the needs of the dominate group are resolved. She stated by not including equity in our schools it is saying it is okay to perpetuate the same systems that allowed various groups of people to go without access to the same rights as others. She claimed disregarding conversations about diversity of equity misrepresents the fullness of historical events and distorts the understanding of current decision making. She stated inclusion and belonging happens through our words and actions and starts with respect of other. She stated it is insensitive and ignorant to pretend every student needs the same tools, or the same support and only reinforces why a robust DEI curriculum is needed in our schools.

Kyle Dymond addressed the board expressing if we are going to be a schools of choice school we must include diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure all students feel welcome, safe and comfortable coming here. He believes that children learn best when they see people like themselves in the curriculum and in the staff. He noted President Shiflett's comments are important and it is the board's job to ensure the environment of the board meetings noting the recent past has now shown this is a safe environment for the community.

Melissa Burke addressed the board apologizing to Dr. Glasscoe if she felt unsafe or unwelcome because of the color of her skin noting the person who perpetrated this act should be ashamed of themselves. Elaborating on apologize she remarked the people in the audience are parents, community members, business owners, taxpayers, well-educated and proud comets. She condemned past comments from President Shiflett and Ms. Clark Pierson calling them rude, condescending and disrespectful and referring to the board as hypocritical and acting like spoiled children for "storming out" and calling the police.

Chelsea Hare West addressed the board expressing her appreciation for the Beagle presentation noting her student is new to public school and it has been a great transition at Beagle. She applauded President Shiflett for his acknowledgement of what transpired at the January 24th meeting noting she was in attendance to support Ms. Kuykendoll in her bid to be named to the Board of Education. She shared she had no idea the contentious environment and expressed she

was fearful that evening. She shared she was the one who called the police and she makes no apologies as she was scared and she was scared for her friend. She noted the disrespect that has been shown to Dr. Davenport on numerous occasions. She expressed her sadness in that what happened to her friend, was assumed to have happened to Dr. Glasscoe because she is the other person of color. She noted the absurd behavior from that meeting and noting that she hears it behind herself again tonight. In closing she noted she expects this board to hold people accountable for their actions.

Dawn Velianoff addressed the board saying she is sorry that anyone felt scared and remarking she still feels safe in Grand Ledge and in being here. She questions why Board Policies were not put on the agenda as she had asked. She noted there is a difference between unsafe and uncomfortable. Expressed her prayers go out to the Ukraine. Stating no one has ever gotten violent at a board meeting. She stated the board should focus on curriculum and policies, take down the LGBTQ and BLM flags and only allow the Michigan and American Flags in schools. She stated she wants her child to go to school and feel safe and she wants her child to not be bullied.

OLD BUSINESS

A. APPROVAL TO REVISE 2022 BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING SCHEDULE

Motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the revision to the 2022 Board of Education Meeting Schedule, as presented.

President Shiflett noted that after the Board had approved the 2022 Meeting Schedule it was realized that the March 28, 2022 Regular Meeting would fall on the start of Spring Break. As such, it is proposed that the board eliminate the second meeting of March and conduct the March 14, 2022 meeting as a Regular Meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. APPROVAL OF PARTICIPATION IN SECTION 105 & 105(C) SCHOOLS OF CHOICE FOR 2022-2023

Motion by Ms. Clark Pierson, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the 2022-2023 Participation in Section 105 and 105(c) School of Choice on an unlimited basis for Kindergarten through 9th grade, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MASB PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES

Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Dr. Glasscoe for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Proposal provided by the Michigan Association of School Boards to provide Strategic Planning Services, as presented.

President Shiflett questioned if we looked at any other organizations to provide this service.

Mrs. DuFort noted that she has worked with MASB in the process through the Eaton RESA and she feels the work was very thorough and is very reasonably priced. She noted MASB is in the business to support schools and school boards.

Ms. Clark Pierson noted that while she has issues with some aspect of MASB, their strategic planning services have been good, noting they do not bring any particular point of view with them and follow what the evidence brings. She noted she is more than fine with them providing this service to the district.

The motion carried 5/1.

E. SAFETY & SECURITY DISCUSSION

Dr. Davenport noted this is an ongoing discussion that will continue throughout the year and beyond. He noted he wanted to take a moment to honor and thank our Comet Pride Officer, Chris Chester. He noted Officer Chester goes above and beyond for our district and the students of our district on a daily basis. He assists with our threat assessments, training, drills and improving our safety measures. He is an invaluable asset to the district and we are thankful for the relationship the district has with our Police Department and Chief O and our City Manager Adam Smith. Because of our partnership we are provided Officer Chester's services at no cost to the district. Again, this is invaluable and Dr. Davenport simply wanted to take a moment to recognize the outstanding work Office Chester does for the district.

Dr. Davenport further advised the district has received a proposal from ATAP Security that is currently being reviewed by Administration. Additionally, Officer Chester provided us with another threat assessment program that we are conferring with. Furthermore, the district is partnering with the City of Grand Ledge and local law enforcement and will be conducting walk throughs of our buildings to help us find areas that need improvement. He shared it is important to understand that when it comes to safety and security, a lot of times things can't be shared because the confidentiality of the plan is what keeps our students, and staff, safe. He assured that this is a topic that is not far from thought and discussions on safety and security will be incorporated into budget discussions that are taking place, referencing the concerns expressed at the last couple of board meetings with regard to after school activities and the security of the buildings during these activities.

F. COVID-19 Mitigation Discussion

Dr. Davenport noted there is not a lot to discuss but noted the CDC provided updates this past Friday with regard to mask requirements on school buses and the district's Communications Director, John Ellsworth, shared that information with our families on Saturday noting that masks are no longer required on our school buses. He noted he will continue to provide updates as they are received from the Barry-Eaton District Health Department, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services or the CDC. On a positive note, cases continue to be on the decline.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD

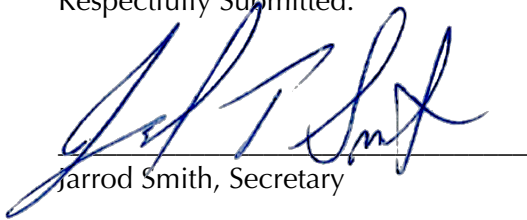
Dr. Glasscoe thanked Melissa for her concerns. She stressed that two things can be true at the same time stating that just because she is not fearful, does not mean that others aren't. She expressed her appreciation to Kim for her apology noting she is very hopeful. She expressed she has many notes and questions, but it will take her a little bit of time to get to know how things are done. She shared she has meetings scheduled with the Central Office Administrators to garner further knowledge and noted operations is not her job, or the board's job. The board's job is Governance. She noted she really wants to focus on the students, the curriculum. She stated she

wanted to become Dawne's BFF, noting we need honesty in a respectful way. She commented this was one of the best meetings in terms of order, kindness and acceptance, but there is still a lot of work to do; on the board, in the community and for our students, and that is why she is here. She shared she is up to addressing the issues, she just needs to understand the process and the system. She committed to do what is best for students. Again, she acknowledged and expressed her appreciation for the concern and the apologies but reiterated that two things can be true at the same time remarking that just because someone looks like me, doesn't mean they feel the same way I do. She noted she can only be honest and speak her truth. She welcomes the olive branch to become a reality so we can work together.

ADJOURNMENT

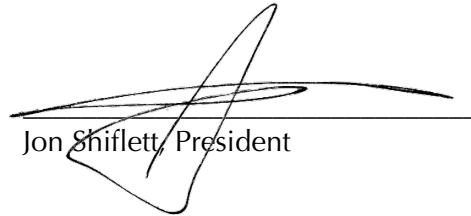
The meeting adjourned at 7:27p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Jarrod Smith, Secretary

Attest:



Jon Shiflett, President