

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education

Work Session - January 11, 2021

MINUTES

President Clark Pierson called the meeting to order at 6:34 . She waived the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION

Interim Superintendent Chapin took a moment to acknowledge and recognize the seven members who make up our Board of Education.

He noted it is important to recognize the contributions of the seven members who make up the Board of Education as they represent the Grand Ledge Public Schools Community. He advised earlier today each member received a small token of appreciation, an insulated water bottle, delivered to their homes. He advised the board bears responsibility of oversight of a \$60M budget, a significant bond project that will serve this community for years to come, student learning for almost 5,000 student and the welfare of 750 employees. He noted Grand Ledge Public Schools is a very large district and this board bears responsibility and oversight. He noted sometime we forget about what serving as a member of the Board of Education entails.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the January 11, 2021 Agenda Items, as presented.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the January 11, 2021 Consent Agenda Items, as presented.

Included on the Consent Agenda were the December 14, 2020 Virtual Meeting and Closed Session Minutes, a teacher leave of absence for Jennifer Soria from Delta Center and the teacher hiring of Erin Fredericks to teach Art at Hayes Middle School.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Ms. Shannon abstained from the vote as she was not a member of the board last month and as such did not feel it was appropriate for her to vote to approve the minutes.

The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

A. Capitol Connections

Mr. Smith noted in this position he keeps an eye on legislative matters that may impact public education. He advised as such, the district is meeting remotely tonight as legislation allowing for this format was extended through March 31, 2021. He advised the district will want to take note of Public Act 364 of 2020 with regard to the requirements to comply with Do Not Resuscitate Orders that may be filed with the district. He advised the Governor Vetoed legislation would exempt personal property, such as Amazon or Meijer, from paying property tax, which would have impacted the school aid fund.

President Clark Pierson spoke of the federal payroll protection program and the possible impact on the State Aid Fund. She noted there are concerns being discussed in the Treasury Department at present.

B. Eaton RESA

Mrs. DuFort noted at the last meeting of the Eaton RESA Board they received an update on the Strategic Plan process congratulated the Grand Ledge Kindergarten Team on their administration of the NWEA testing stating it was noted they did a great job even with the pandemic. She advised the RESA received 70,000 face masks on hand and distributed 50,000 to local district as well as 300 face shields. She advised the entire county has switched special education from PowerSchool to Michigan PSE which was very well received by all the district. She noted this switch makes it easier for special education departments to monitor and administer student IEP's. Mrs. DuFort further reported on the start of the NWEA satisfaction survey, moving Eaton RESA staff to Google Suite allowing staff access to more resources, reapproval of the Eaton RESA's Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan, the release of COVID-19 vaccinations to public school employees and the return of students at the Eaton RESA today, noting they are maintaining flexibility on the variables.

C. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

President Clark Pierson noted there has not been a meeting since the last board meeting, but there is a meeting later this week.

D. Bond Update

Dr. Chapin advised Mike was not on the call to provide a report. Board Members Patrick McKennon and Jarrod Smith who serve on the Board's Bond Advisory

Committee reported they met prior to tonight's meeting to review the invoices being presented to the board tonight and noted the district is still on track with regard to time and budget specifically noting that Beagle is ready for students if the district gets to a place where students can be brought back for in-person learning and remarking that construction at Beagle is having no impact on decisions for bringing students back to in-person learning. In closing they noted there are no material impacts to contingency funds.

President Clark Pierson noted that while the construction of a new school on the 100 Acre parcel of property donated to the district by Dave & Betty Morris is still a ways off, it will be beneficial to begin planning of how that building is going to operate to ensure community input.

E. GLPS Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan Update

Dr. Chapin noted Dr. Barnes is going to take care of, as required by law, presenting this information to the Board. He noted there is a lot of moving pieces and he asked everyone to have patience advising he will continue communicating with district parents and staff every Wednesday commenting he sends out approximately 4,200 emails and he hears back from a few, some critical, some in support of what the district is doing, but either way, he assures our parents that he and his administrative team hear them and are working to get students back. He noted data remains high but the vaccine is coming and the alternate day / full day (1/2 day for Kindergarten) program is ready to go. He noted the district must weigh a lot of factors and cannot project, with any certainty, where things will be in 6-7 weeks. But we are striving to get students back for in-person learning; this is the goal.

Dr. Barnes noted in the virtual learning environment, we have fundamentally done things differently. He advised tonight he will be sharing data that shows how teachers are using the tools in the virtual environment that the board approved investing in; which he thanked the board for, as well as the two-way communication data that is required to be presented each month.

Dr. Barnes went on to share the Trimester 1 Buzz usage by building showing the student count, the average number of log ins per student, per day and the average hours spent per student, per day. He advised it is important to point out that Buzz and the Florida Virtual Content is only one tool in the tool belt but the data shows that everybody is spending about half, to almost their full day, engaged in this platform.

He further reviewed IXL noting this program provides students targeted, skill-based questions that help them work through grade level standards at the level they need. It is aligned to NWEA, MSTEP and SAT and using this program builds skills helping them success on assessments. He reviewed each building individually including the average questions per week, per students, average skills per student and the total skills per building. He advised that while Pre-K data is not included in this data set because they are not tied to a common core standard, our Holbrook and Delta Mills Pre-Schools are using this tool with great success.

Dr. Barnes also shared the district engagement data for December 2020, noting the district was on winter break December 23 – 30, 2020.

In closing he noted teachers have done a great job of helping our students. Part of the Return to Learn legislation entails continual updates. The district website is updated regularly and now contains information regarding teacher professional development that was offered to help get the virtual learning launch along with the help provided to parents and students over the summer.

Mrs. DuFort noted she found the Buzz information enlightening seeing how much it is used.

Ms. Shannon expressed she is glad the district has been so proactive in getting information to the staff regarding being able to get the vaccine noting the more folks we can get vaccinated, the sooner we will be able to get back.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS TO INCLUDE PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE GLPS
EXTENDED COVID-19 LEARNING PLAN**

Board Secretary Shannon read the rules for providing public comment to the board.

Community member and district parent Erin Pribble asked questions regarding the two-way interaction level noting she has a freshman that has only spoken to her teacher less than five times noting she believes the numbers presented are artificially inflated.

Community member and district parent Andrew Reynaert noted it was his opinion the district will never meet the requirements of the metric, let alone by March 1. He noted the information presented by Dr. Barnes was pointless without a baseline. He noted the district is not addressing the almost 50% of parents who want an in-person option noting the district is making this all about COVID and not about the poor education being provided to students.

Community member and district parent Nick Crofut noted his family is fine but he worries about everyone else. He expressed appreciation for the communication from Dr. Chapin and the metric, but noted bad data in is bad data out. He commented the CDC is saying go back to school, the Governor is saying the same thing, as are health professionals. He commented we are losing a lot of people in the community and remarking there will be repercussions for years.

Community member and district parent Lucas Terpstra noted he has been a vocal supporter of the online learning but as time goes on he is realizing this is not the best way to keep going. He remarked teachers need to be in the school with the students, not students in learning labs with a teacher assistant. He encouraged investigating how to get back into school.

Community member and district parent Stephanie Phillips expressed she is all for in-person learning but notes her Kindergarten student is doing well but nothing can replace in-person learning. She reminded the board when making decisions, both past and present, they need to ensure they are not losing the trust of the community. The district has said there would be options but no options are being given causing the community to lose trust. She remarked she is not feeling heard, not feeling supported.

Community member and district parent Ellie Darnell noted she cares about the teachers and staff and encouraged the district not to curtail to the mounting pressure to provide in-person learning and to stick with the science. She noted some will say COVID is nothing more than the flu, but her husband had COVID and he died. She implored the district to keep children home and noted the community must protect our students and families. She noted the last 10-days of her husband's life, he was alone. It was heartbreaking not to be able to be with him. Decisions have consequences and she hopes each family realizes this is a community responsibility.

Superintendent Chapin noted there were seven speakers and he has taken notes from each one. He expressed his sympathies to Mrs. Darnell noting it must have been very difficult to share those thoughts in a public meeting like this.

OLD BUSINESS

FLOOR MOTION: Motion by Mr. Cwayna, seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to disband the current metric and return to in-person learning on March 1, 2021.

Mr. Cwayna noted he has heard from numerous parents, and now many parents are failing to reach out now because they feel they are not being heard. He noted this is not to say the board or the administration doesn't care, but noted we have to be realistic. We have lost a year of school – almost a full year. We have data – at least from our Governor that states the issues are not as dangerous as we once thought. He noted Governor Whitmer has been very conservative with this pandemic, and she is requested students go back on March 1, and he believes this should begin to be discussed. He expressed the Superintendent's good intentions with his communications, but expressed she are failing a good segment of our student population. He noted he, and his son's mother, made the difficult decision to enroll his son in private school. He noted he feels very strong about this noting the board has heard from parents that have lost faith in the district, in the board and noting that he, as a parent, has lost faith. He commented that the metric put in place, while well-intentioned, will never allow students back in school. He commented the board has a duty and he asked the members to give some thought to this and encouraged a hard start date for in-person learning of March 1.

Mr. McKennon noted he doesn't disagree with a lot of what Mr. Cwayna said, but he does think the metric is important, the science is important. He expressed he believes the vaccine is a game changer. Does getting the majority of the staff vaccinated change the outcome. He is unsure.

Mr. Smith noted he does not support disbanding the metric, he supports the metric. He noted he contracted COVID and it is not a joke. He noted the administration is listening to the local health experts and when the Governor said to have an option by March 1, he believes she had the vaccine in mind, noting we are all watching this. He noted he knows many teachers who have had COVID and still been able to continue teaching because they are virtual. That won't happen if we are back in-person. Teachers are teaching. He addressed emotional support, support that comes from interacting with other students noting he has a student who is dying to get back with their peers. But the kids aren't being vaccinated. He noted he has seen the effects of COVID on a 12-year-old. It is hit or miss. It is like a lottery. If COVID does impact you, you could be in dire trouble. There is a parent responsibility for the emotional support of our children. This is not our doing, this is COVID's doing, the Governor's doing. He noted he wants to be back out, he wants to see people, but the district cannot do something on a whim. He is a no vote.

Ms. Shannon commented she doesn't think she could say it any better than Mr. Smith just did. She expressed her condolences to the Darnell family and noted she is glad Mr. Smith is able to be with us tonight. She noted she is a no vote as well. She remarked this is awful. This is frustrating. She noted the vaccine, while promising, is rolling out slower than anticipated. She is not disregarding what people are going through, noting she has a preschooler and an elementary student. But she is not ready to chuck the metric.

Mrs. DuFort Noted she agreed with the majority of Mr. Smith's comments having gone through COVID personally. She noted she is a not vote commenting the metric should not be thrown out. She advised there were a lot of people who provided input in the development of the metric, some with medical backgrounds. She noted there was a lot of conversations. She expressed she understands this is frustrating, she believes everyone is frustrated, noting we all want to get back to normal. She noted vaccines are starting to become available, but asked how many of our teachers will be able to get those vaccines noting we cannot force staff to get vaccinated. She also noted the board has an obligation to protect our staff, just like our students and families. We have a plan, we have made a commitment to make safety our number one priority for our students, staff, and community at large. She noted no one can predict where the numbers are going to go. The vaccine may be a game changer, but it is too early to know. She knows online learning is not comparable to being in the classroom, but we are doing the best we can, we have made a commitment to that. Staff is working hard. She noted she will not be able to support Mr. Cwayna's motion at this time.

Mr. Shiflett noted he wants to keep working toward getting kids back to the classroom this year, but he is not ready to chuck the metric either. He expressed he is unsure why the Governor decided to make a statement like this at this time, when Saturday we reported the second highest death total in Michigan since this pandemic began. We had a really nice decline prior to Thanksgiving and Christmas and hopefully after the post-holiday bump, that trend will continue and we may be on track for March 1 or third trimester. He noted the district has a plan, it has been posted and he questioned what has changed other than the Governor's press release. He noted the Governor's suggestion is not binding to us. He noted he is unmoved by the Governor's suggestion noting the district has a plan in place and will continue to work the plan. He is not included to support throwing out the metric.

President Clark Pierson noted she has had conversation about this with Mr. Cwayna in the past. It is a hard vote because she knows parents are struggling, kids are struggling. She knows there are some students / parents who need more supports than we have been able to give them. But we now have 375,000 deaths according to information from Johns Hopkins. Yes, the vaccine could be a game changer, but getting it deployed is a different story. The good news is, people want it, people are lining up to get it but it has not been fully planned by the federal or state government on how to get it to everyone who wants it. The death toll is high and she is thinking about people like Sgt. Darnell and her fellow board member, and noting the board has to think about our entire community, It isn't just the schools. Kids go home to their families. She noted her vote feels fragile, but I am not ready to change this. I would not support this motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Shiflett	<u>NO</u>	Mr. McKennon	<u>NO</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>NO</u>	Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>
Mrs. DuFort	<u>NO</u>	President Clark Pierson	<u>NO</u>
Ms. Shannon	<u>NO</u>		

The motion was defeated 6-1.

A. APPROVAL OF THE GLPS EXTENDED COVID-19 LEARNING PLAN

Motion by Ms. Shannon seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Continuation of the GLPS Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan, as presented and approved on December 14, 2020; larger scale in-person instruction to begin as guided by the "GLPS COVID-19 Guide to Decision-Making – Safe Return to In-Person Instruction document.

Mr. Shiflett noted he wants the board to continue working and adjusting the metric as necessary. He noted this vote is proforma in that the board must do it under state law. The discussion should continue and evolve as things change.

Ms. Shannon noted she agreed with Mr. Shiflett and noting she is legitimately hopeful the board will be having a different discussion soon.

Mr. Cwayna noted we shouldn't plan on the vaccine being this magical bullet. He suggested maybe reconfiguring the high school for the younger kids. Let the older students stay virtual, but the younger students need to be in-person. He suggested focusing on how to transition the students who really need it in the next four to five months. He noted what we are doing is not working for the vast majority.

Dr. Chapin noted this was a really good conversation noting that each month the administrative team has brought back different data and a different recommendation. He remarked this is not a stagnant conversation. COVID has been the constant. Dr. Barnes is required by law, and we are compliant with requirements from the state department. He noted he expects the conversation will be different in February.

Further discussion among the member addressed the make up on the 20-21 'Next Steps' Advisory Committee, movement in the Return to Learn Plan, the personal expectation by

a that students would not return at all this year and the rebuttal by another that is this is the case, we need to say that, the fact the pandemic is not going away, devoting energy to figure out a “common sense” way of getting students into a classroom with a teacher, fluctuating COVID numbers that can’t be pushed aside, the fact that everyone wants our students back in school, there is a lot in play, the fact the board is not placing the safety and wellbeing of the staff above the needs of the students but is prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of the staff, student and this broad community, this is a transmittable disease, double the deaths since this summer, the fact that our staff and this board has been involved in developing a very conscientious return to learn plan which is alternate day, full day (1/2 day for Kindergarten) that was coordinated at the high school, middle school and elementary level with a lot of work to coordinate the plan that has the district ready to go back as soon as possible.

Superintendent Chapin thanked the board for recognizing the work of principals and teachers who worked through the winter break to ensure we were ready to bring students back. Refinements have been made and the plan is ready. He assured everyone that the district hears them and everyone wants the students back.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mrs. DuFort	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Shannon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Cwayna	<u>NO</u>		

The motion carried 6-1.

B. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

Dr. Chapin advised he prepared material for the board to review and it is the determination of the board in how they want to proceed.

A detailed discussion among the member weighed the pros and cons of creating an RFP with consensus to not draft an RFP and move forward with the five candidates who have presented proposals to the board at this time including: Global Business Resource Group; Hazard, Young, Attea Associates; Michigan Association of School Board; Michigan Leadership Institute, and; Ray & Associates. The board has asked the Superintendent’s Administrative Assistant, Kim Manning, to reach out to each of the five search firms and schedule a time for an interview on January 25, 2021. It was further discussed and determined that President Clark Pierson, Mr. Smith and Mrs. DuFort will meet to further establish the interview process for the 25th.

NEW BUSINESS

A. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Jon Shiflett seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$2,129,404.06, as presented.

Mr. Smith provided an explanation of the invoices noting the Board Bond Advisory Committee reviewed all the invoices and approved them to be brought forward for full board approval.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Ms. Shannon	YES	Mr. Shiflett	YES
Mr. McKennon	YES	Mr. Smith	YES
Mr. Cwayna	YES	Mrs. DuFort	YES
Ms. Clark Pierson	ABSTAIN		

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

B. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Mr. Smith seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Payment of Proposal 2 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$727,789.10, as presented.

Mr. McKennon provided an explanation of the invoices noting the Board Bond Advisory Committee reviewed all the invoices and approved them to be brought forward for full board approval.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. McKennon	YES	Mr. Smith	YES
Mr. Cwayna	YES	Mrs. DuFort	YES
Ms. Clark Pierson	ABSTAIN	Ms. Shannon	YES
Mr. Shiflett	YES		

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

Parent John Hubbard thanked Mr. Cwayna for his words. He expressed concerns with the learning pods. He stated he didn't believe Dr. Barnes numbers jived. He commented to the board member who had COVID and stated he knew other teachers that had contracted it asking what they are doing not staying home and keeping themselves safe noting we all need to keep ourselves safe.

Community member and district parent Andrew Reynaert addressed the motion by Mr. Cwayna expressing concerns about the metrics the district is using noting there was no outside input. He agreed the district made the back-to-school plan, but claimed the metric is impossible to meet. He expressed the district must change the metric if there is going to be any change for in-person learning this year. He stated the district is making everything about COVID noting the district's number one job is to educate this community and its children stating this must be first and foremost stating the education is primary and then you have the other considerations. Put education first and get rid of everything else.

District employee and GLEA President Greg Almy thanked the board and administration for their leadership. He remarked students, staff and community health should be our first priority. If we don't value this community's safety, then I have to disagree with some of the earlier comments. Send my condolences to Mrs. Darnell, that is a tragedy that is not isolated. My condolences go to a retired staff member, in her early 60 that passed away due to COVID. These are people in our community that are dying. These deaths mean something to the people who love them. We can do something about this. But we can't control other people, only ourselves. Staff members are starting to get vaccinated. It is on the horizon. Everyone should get the opportunity – if they choose to – to get a vaccine. Without the vaccine this is just going to continue on. Let this happen in its natural course.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD

President Clark Pierson expressed she felt the board should consider only asking for the city and township / county of anyone making public comment.

Mr. McKennon thanked Ben for making his motion noting it is a good conversation. He expressed he knows Mr. Cwayna is frustrated but believes dissent makes the board strong and as such Mr. Cwayna is making this a stronger board.

Ms. Shannon thanked everyone for welcoming her stating she knows there is lots ahead. She expressed her appreciation for having a really engaged community and looks forward to the challenges ahead and a brighter 2021.

Mrs. DuFort thanked the staff and administration for going above and beyond in putting the return to learn schedules together and acknowledging their work over the winter recess noting that just shows how dedicated our building staff is and the strong administrative team that continues to lead. In closing she expressed the district will get back to what we will know as the post-COVID in-person learning.

CLOSED SESSION – Attorney/Client Privilege

Motion by Mr. Shifflet, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to move into Closed Session pursuant to Section 8(h) of the Open Meetings Act to review Attorney/Client Privilege Information.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Mrs. DuFort	<u>YES</u>
Ms. Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Shannon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Shifflet	<u>YES</u>	Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously at 9:12 p.m.

RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION

The board reconvened in Open Session at 9:59 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

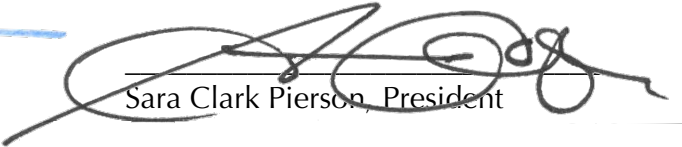
The meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:



Nicole Shannon, Secretary



Sara Clark Pierson, President