

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**Board of Education**

Regular Meeting – August 23, 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** Jacqueline Freeman, Kim Laforet, Kyle Dymond, LeAnn Kirrmann, Steve Laroeque, Susan Dixon, Traci Gentilozzi, Frank Gentilozzi, Lena Shaffer, Donna Ristow, Ginny Patrick, Pam Holbrook, Jon Shaffer, Jeanie Dixon, Bobby Hutchinson, Deborah Diesen, Amy Whisler, Elyse Fox, Ashley Oneil, James Botton, Jessica Schultz, Dani Nelson, Jeff McNeilly, Jeny Davis, Linda Western, Paula Burton, Peyton Davis, Jody Lyon, Dave Mowery, Andrea Mowery, Scott Martzke, Shawn Stoneham, Julie Yeakey, John Hubbard, Michele Vance, Wendy Meece, Tim Totten, Ginny Batcheller, Grey Steven, Todd Hovey, Keith Mulder, Mike Johnson and Kim Manning

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS**

***Motion by Mr. Cwayna to Amend the Regular Meeting Agenda to add the Rescinding of the Mask Mandate under Old Business. There was no second for the motion.***

***Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the August 23, 2021 agenda items, as presented. The motion carried 6-1***

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

***Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the August 23, 2021 Consent Agenda Items, as presented.***

Included on the Consent Agenda were the Meeting Minutes of the August 9, 2021 Work Session, the Teacher Leave of Absence for Alisha Buehrer and the teacher hirings of Matthew Anderson, Crystal Quintanilla-Howard, Kim Driscoll, Molly Turner, Daniel Brunk, Jonathan Lilje, Travis Ward, Allison Miller, Gina Tropf, Teresa Miller, and Holly Sleight-Engler.

***The motion carried unanimously.***

**REPORTS**

**A. Capitol Connections Report**

Mr. Smith advised the legislature is not in session at this time but he anticipates September will be a busy time.

**B. Eaton RESA Report**

Mrs. DuFort advised they received a presentation during their August 18, 2021 Board meeting, approved a new program through Davenport College, approved technical device

replacement, renewed the Geico program, added a new coordinator for the Early On Childhood Program to review additional services, revised the Superintendent job description and are moving forward with plan to hir a new superintendent for the Eaton RESA.

**C. Grand Ledge Education Foundation Report**

Ms. Shannon noted the Foundation held their annual fundraiser in July. It was a success with over 70 participants and they are looking forwarding to more participation next year.

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

Mr. Shiflett advised the committee did not meet in August.

**E. Bond Update**

Dr. Mike Johnson provided the board with a detailed update on the fond construction noting occupancy was approved for Holbrook, it is anticipated occupancy will be granted for Beagle later in the week, construction trades are working hard to complete final projects and classroom furniture is coming in. He noted the Beagle pool is anticipated to be complete the first part of February 2022. He advised this does have some impact on programming noting students will have to walk outside the building to get to the music, band and stem rooms and altered the bus drop off and pick up. The rooms are ready, but the hallway is not. The M-43 roundabout was opened on July 23 and the Grand Ledge portion will open later this week. The high school track project is on schedule and work has begun on the high school pool but there have been some delays in getting parts. He advised the high school fine arts and athletic facilities will begin construction in the next four to six weeks and the planning for the projects at Delta Center and Wacousta will begin in the later part of September.

**F. Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Marcus Davenport noted the district is preparing for success start on September 7 with five full days of in-person instruction. He commended all the staff for their work to ensure a successful school year. He reiterated Dr. Johnson that due to some construction projects building administrators have prepared contingency plans if necessary. He noted he is excited for the building open houses next week and looks forward to welcoming our full staff back on September 1.

Mr. Cwayna requested clarification with regard to the mask requirements noting it is his understanding that it is during the instructional day.

A detailed discussion confirmed the motion was during the instructional day and this will continue to be monitored and modified as deemed necessary or appropriate. It was further clarified that athletic events are following the MHSAA guidelines.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. McKennon read the rules for addressing the board.

Kyle Dymond addressed the board and read a letter, signed by members of the community, county commissioners and township trustees, in support of continuing the EDI efforts of the district.

LeeAnn Kirrman addressed the board opposing the mask mandate and expressing concerns for any EDI efforts.

Steve LaRocque addressed the board to express his concerns of the mask mandate and opposing anything CRT.

Jody Ward addressed the board to express her concerns with regard to the mask mandate and opposing teaching diversity noting that is taught at home.

Kim Laforet addressed the board to express her opposition to the mask mandate noting she believes it should be the parents' decision.

Amber Redman addressed the board and read a letter, signed by members of the community, in opposition of continuing the EDI efforts of the district.

Ursula Averill addressed the board to express her support of the mask mandate and her full support of the EDIC report. She commended the board for their courage and wished Dr. Davenport success as he continues to navigate the school year.

President Clark Pierson took a moment to remind everyone that, regardless of your position, everyone has a right to speak, but you do not have the right to interrupt the speaker.

Jeanie Dixon addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and asking the board to reconsider their decision and make it optional.

Amy Whisler addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and stating PRC tests are being recalled because they can differentiate between COVID and influenza.

Rich Cook addressed the board in opposition to the mask mandate stating there is science that says masks don't work. He further expressed his opposition to CRT and / or DEI being taught in school.

NAME addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and CRT.

Wendy Meece addressed the board expressing there is no place for CRT or EDI teaching in K-12 schools and should only be taught post-secondary where they can spend their own dime.

Tim Totten addressed the board in opposition of the EDI recommendations and the mask mandate. He encouraged the board to make masks optional.

Deborah Diesen addressed the board in support of the EDI Committee recommendations and encouraging the board's full support to implement their recommendations.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and CRT, EDI or 1619 project noting he doesn't want the school teaching politics.

Jessie Reynold addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and commenting now that the FDA has approved the vaccine it can be mandated.

Andrea Mowery addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and sharing concerns for people with disabilities and the difficulties this could present. She further stated she fostered a black child in 2008-2009 and this child never once complained about being bullied.

Julie Wilkie addressed the board expressing she can't trust the people put in a position to protect her children and encouraging the board to remember what they are doing.

John Hubbard addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate and stating it should be the parents' option and opposing DEI.

Todd Hovey addressed the board advising he will not stop fighting and he wants his kids back in this district.

Elyse Fox addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate and expressing concerns that parents have allow access to their child's medical records for a medical waiver.

**OLD BUSINESS**

***A. DISCUSSION ON 2020-2021 REPORT OF THE EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE***

Dr. Davenport noted the EDI Committee presented its report to the Board at their June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting and opened the floor for discussion among the members in how to proceed.

A detailed discussion among the members reviewed the four components of the report, noting all components do not need to be rolled out immediately, concerns about this program, ensuring a clear understanding of what is being taught, ensuring this is not anti-American rhetoric and will not devalue our standards, noting we are not looking to adopt curriculum, not looking to make any student feel bad about their race or make minority students feel like victims. Today we are looking for approval to create an administrative position to not only assist in looking at EDI throughout the district, but working hand in hand with academic services and student services to ensure our students have what they need to be academically successful and prepared for their future endeavors. The creation of this position in no way reflects on the ability of our current administrators, it is to enhance the services available to students and the address the growing needs of our students in an ever-changing environment. Further noted the creation of this position if for duties and responsibilities that go above and beyond what can be absorbed by current staff members to make this an important piece of work. It was noted EDI is not a black and white issue, it is not supporting CRT and this position is broader than EDI and encompasses supports to ensure we have the tools to meet the academic needs of students and ensuring the academic excellence of students.

- a. Potential Approval to Create Administrative Position – Director of EDI & Student Support. Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education approve the creation of the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Student Support Administrative Position.***

Further discussion noting public school looks very different than it did 10-years ago and this is not a position that was pulled out of thin air. There is a need among our student population and this position will help address that need. This position, along with a Director of Operations position,

was budgeted for in the 2021-2022 school budget presented by the Chief Financial Officer in June and noting the salary range starts at \$99,000 for Step 1 of the Administrative Salary Scale.

***Mr. Cwayna offered a friendly amendment to name the position the Director of Student Services. Mrs. DuFort did not accept the amendment.***

***The motion carried 6-1.***

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. APPROVAL OF 2021-2022 CURRICULUM GUIDE**

***Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the 2021-2022 Grand Ledge High School Curriculum Guide, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

**B. APPROVAL OF 2021-2022 STUDENT HANDBOOKS**

***Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the 2021-2022 Student Handbooks, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Scott Martzke addressed the board to provide his suggestions that would allow the members to remove their masks during a meeting so the audience can hear them clearly and engage with the members in professional conversation.

Tracy Gentilozzi addressed the board acknowledging some difficult decisions the board has had to make over the past year, noting she wished the board would have waited to implement a mask mandate, and commenting enough with the anger, hostility, shouting, yelling, intimidating, bullying and that Grand Ledge is better than this.

LeeAnn Kirmann addressed the board to express Grand Ledge is an inclusive, welcoming town and stating we are not a racist, mean town.

Jody Ward addressed the board expressing her taxes are paying for the district to address educational issues, not social issue.

Kim Laforet addressed the board to express her opposition of the mask mandate, expressing her view on why it is so hard to hire teachers, stating we will lose more students if we continue with EDI and encouraging the development of an Education First committee.

Amber Redman addressed the board expressing she believes the board had this already sorted out, and stating her child will be removed from the district.

Tim Totten addressed the board with regard to CRT and creating a EDI director.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board expressing this community is divided and claiming the board is responsible for teaching his kids, but he has already pulled his students from the district.

Jessie Reynolds addressed the board advising them he was going to hire a forensic investigator to find out who is paying them.

Andrea Mowrey addressed the board in opposition of the mask mandate, encouraging we teach children to appreciate each other instead of pointing out differences.

John Hubbard addressed the board expressing he doesn't feel the board is listening and stating it is ridiculous.

**COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD**

Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services Dr. Bill Barnes thanked the board for their approval of the Curriculum Guide and Student Handbooks allowing the district to continuing moving forward for the successful start of the 2021-2022 school year.

President Clark Pierson recognized tonight is Chief Financial Officer Nancy Rasinske's final meeting with the district and congratulating her on her retirement.

Mr. Smith congratulated the 11 new teachers we hired tonight and welcoming them to the district.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

  
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Nicole Shannon, Secretary

  
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Sara Clark Pierson, President