

**Madison Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
August 28, 2018
7:30 PM
Town Campus Hammonasset Room**

MEETING MINUTES

“Full documentation of these proceedings can be found through on demand video located in the Meetings/Minutes section of the district website.”

1. Call to Order / Attendance

The public meeting of the Madison Board of Education was called to order by Chair Katie Stein at 7:34 p.m. Chairman Stein led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Jessica Bowler, Greg DeSantis, Seth Klaskin, Happy Marino, Violet McNerney, Tom Pellegrino, Emily Rosenthal, Katie Stein

Also Present: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools, Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Bruce Wilson, Madison Board of Selectmen

2. School / Community Session - 7:36 p.m.

2.1. Public Participation: No public participation.

3. Superintendent's Report

3.1. District Reconfiguration Update

Superintendent Scarice reported on the work done over the summer regarding the district reconfiguration. Superintendent Scarice spoke to the importance of remaining focused on curriculum during the transition phase and addressed the core elements of the transition plan which address what we are doing for students, parents & staff along the way. Other areas of discussion included technology needs, professional development initiatives and staffing models.

3.2. School Opening Update

The district is fully staffed with 303 certified teachers and approximately 200 non-teaching staff members. Convocation is tomorrow morning; Dr. Yohuru Williams from St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota is our guest speaker. Professional development is the focus for the next 3 days. Bus routes are in place. Hand athletics are up & running and elementary & middle school orientations take place this week.

3.3. Other Matters – no other matters

4. Board Members' Comments

Chair Stein reminded the Board of the September 8 Board retreat with Tom Mooney. Chair Stein also asked for volunteers to represent the Board at upcoming back to school nights.

5. Board Committees / Liaison Updates (Ref. Bylaw #9450)

5.1. Planning Committee: No report, committee has not met.

5.2. Personnel Committee

Mr. DeSantis reported negotiations with the teamsters are ongoing. The parties have agreed to enlist the free services of the state mediator as the negotiations continue.

5.3. Policy Committee

5.3.1. Bylaw #9450 - Board Committees (3rd Reading)

5.3.2. Policy #3150 - Medical Reimbursement for Special Education Students (3rd Reading)

5.3.3. Policy #5125.1 - Health/Medical Records (3rd Reading)

5.3.4. Policy #6161.3 - Comparability of Services (3rd Reading)

5.3.5. Policy #6090.10 - IEP/Special Education Program (3rd Reading)

5.3.6. Policy #5144.4 - Physical Exercise and Discipline of Students (3rd Reading)

5.3.7. Policy #6162.51 - Survey of Students (Student Privacy) (3rd Reading)

5.4. Finance Committee: No report, committee has not met.

5.5. LEARN Liaison: No report.

5.6. Facilities Committee: No report, committee has not met.

6. Audience Response to Information Presented (Ref. Bylaw #9540.10)

7. Consent Agenda (Ref. Bylaw #9540.2 and #9540.8)

7.1. Bills Payable: 2017-2018: \$32,458.07. 2018-2019: \$952,174.91

7.2. Line Transfers: \$560.00

MOTION: by Klaskin, seconded by Rosenthal to approve the consent Agenda.
AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN:
MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

8. Action Item: Minutes of the August 14, 2018 Board of Education Meeting (Ref. Bylaw #9540.9)

MOTION: by Bowler, seconded by Rosenthal to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2018 Board of Education meeting.
AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; McNerney; Rosenthal; Stein
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: Marino, Pellegrino
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

9. Action Item: To approve Bylaw #9450 Board Committees

Comment from Happy Marino:

I have prepared a written statement about the policy vote on bylaw 9450 this evening, as I would like my words to be included in the minutes and this board no longer includes comments in the minutes unless a statement is submitted, despite multiple requests from Board members to do so.

I am going to vote No on this policy change for several reasons. I have no issue with the Communications Committee, although I do not feel it is necessary, as in my opinion the Superintendent currently serves this function perfectly well.

The facilities committee has been discussed about as much as it can be so I have no wish to revisit that issue, I am just glad that my colleagues decided to honor their own votes from a few months ago.

The reason for my no vote is that this policy is based on arbitrary changes to the Purview of the planning committee. As one of our members said, this is a solution without a problem, and it is being done, not for the sake of providing better direction or input on issues related to our children and staff, but in my opinion to serve the personal desires and political leanings of specific board members. These members do not appear to trust the decisions of the current planning committee and have tried to block this committee from providing input to the district. Through this change, they will limit the scope and role of the committee. The majority of the items being removed from the current planning committee will go to the Policy and Facilities Committees. Anyone who looks at the membership of these committees can clearly see that these Policy and Facilities committee board members, are the very same board members who are advocating most strongly for this change.

Additionally, for the community who may not know how the board works, the board chair is a de facto member of each committee but does not have a vote during the committee process. The board chair has expressed several times throughout this process that items should not be discussed in the planning committee, but rather go through the executive committee or to the whole board. In both of those instances, the board chair will have more control over who and what gets to be heard.

Lastly, I am really concerned about how partisan this bylaw change is. Politics should not factor into the decision making of any Board of Education. Throughout this policy process, comments have been evenly split for and against this change. I cannot understand why the four voices in favor of this change were given far more credence, while the comments and suggestions of the four who were against the change were not incorporated as evidenced in the redline version of changes to planning. Collaboration does not mean letting the other point of view speak and then ignoring all of their suggestions. It does not mean gathering and incorporating input on the changes from just your own party before sharing with the rest of the board or withholding draft revisions until the last minute that the agenda is released. I am unclear why all of our opinions do NOT matter equally, and it is unfortunate that the opinions that matter less all fall on the right side of the aisle.

The passing of this bylaw change will result in seven standing committees, with it being left to the discretion of the board chair to determine who works on many issues that don't fit neatly into a bucket. It is unclear how the communications committee will be staffed, but of the six current committees, this board chair has already determined that 4 of them are Democrat majority, leaving only Finance and a newly dismantled and limited planning committee. This is a very clear signal that this board does not value equal diversity of thought and opinion, and it is disappointing that our colleagues think so.

Comment from Jessica Bowler:

I do not think it is a secret that I am not in support of the bylaw changes that we are voting on tonight.

Along the way I have repeatedly asked why we are making the changes – was something not working – was something broken. I thought these were interesting and important questions to pose as the person who drafted the changes and submitted them to policy has only been here on this board for a few months. The only straightforward answer I keep getting is about aligning with other schools in our DRG – I have never seen us ‘follow’ others before – typically we are the leaders and set the standard and that is part of what I love so much about our district – striving to be the best even if it is not what everyone else is doing.

A few months back after a long debate, I voted to split planning into facilities and planning as a gesture of goodwill and compromise towards my fellow board members despite the fact that the planning committee had been able to handle facilities oversight with no issues for many years. The timing of this is also somewhat suspect as well, as the policy change was introduced within days after a period of repeatedly denied requests from the planning committee for information from the administration. This to me feels like a power or control move as no one else can give any other explanation despite my asking many times why this is necessary. I hope that people on the board remember when they vote tonight that the people in these seats will change and that altering things for the ‘right now’ is very short-sighted.

Although I will be voting No tonight as I don't think any of these changes are needed or necessary I am looking forward to leaving this discussion behind us so we can focus on the actual work of the district and stop revisiting votes and bylaws. Moving responsibility from

one committee to another does materially nothing to help our kids - which is what I feel this board of volunteers should be spending our time on.

A discussion ensued amongst the Board.

MOTION: by DeSantis to approve Bylaw #9450 Board Committees.

AYES: DeSantis; Klaskin; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: Bowler, Marino, McNerney

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

10. Action Item: To approve Policy #3150 Medical Reimbursement for Special Education Students

MOTION: by DeSantis to approve Policy #3150 Medical Reimbursement for Special Education Students.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

11. Action Item: To approve Policy #5125.1 Health/Medical Records

MOTION: by Klaskin to approve Policy #5125.1 Health/Medical Records.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

12. Action Item: To approve Policy #6090.10 IEP/Special Education Program

MOTION: by Rosenthal to approve Policy #6090.10 IEP/Special Education Program.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

13. Action Item: To approve Policy #5144.4 Physical Exercise and Discipline of Students

MOTION: by Pellegrino to approve Policy #5144.4 Physical Exercise and Discipline of Students.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

14. Action Item: To approve Policy #6162.51 Survey of Students (Student Privacy)

MOTION: by Pellegrino to approve Policy #6162.51 Survey of Students (Student Privacy).

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

**15. Action Item: To approve Policy #4141 Social Networking
(3rd reading occurred at August 14, 2018 meeting)**

MOTION: by DeSantis to approve Policy #4141 Social Networking.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

16. Action Item: To approve Policy #6161.3 Comparability of Services

MOTION: by McNerney to approve Policy #6161.3 Comparability of Services.

AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

17. Old Business

18. Future Agenda Items

Comment from Jessica Bowler:

Before I was elected to this office in November of 2013 I did a lot of homework to make sure that being on this board was the right decision for me. I have volunteered in one capacity or

another since arriving in Madison 10 plus years ago. I attended board meetings, I spoke with current board members, staff, past board members – it was going to be a big time commitment and I wanted to make sure it was the right position for me and I was the right person for the position. For me the driving factor was the impact I would have on almost 3000 kids in our community and in the end I decided to run. I was very proud to have been elected to this seat - to represent the community and even more proud and honored to serve on a board that was truly non-partisan and all about the kids. When the next decision came on whether to run again in November 2017, it was a no brainer – we were deep in the school reconfiguration and I wanted to see that project through to ensure that we were doing the best and right things for the kids and the community at large. As I approach my 5th year anniversary on this board something has changed and not for the better. Politics have entered the door in a way I never thought possible for a school board and especially for our community. It is very disappointing to watch how this board's focus on the kids and employees of our district has shifted now to a constant revisit of things we have already voted on. Attempts to discuss actual work of the district and provide context and input are denied by the administration and blocked by the board chair. We have always agreed to support every vote no matter the outcome even if the vote did not go the way you or your party hoped. I have never once in my 5 years voted because someone in my party called me and tried to sway me to vote that way and I am proud of that. Since the November 2017 election in my opinion this board has accomplished nothing except revisiting decisions that were already made and fixing systems that aren't broken in order to stack the impact of committees more politically - budget decisions and the facilities committee as two examples and rewriting our own bylaws to minimize the roll of planning, and to now create yet another new committee. For my 5 years in this volunteer position, the 4 committees have been able to cover the work of the district successfully and without issue but now apparently we need 6 committees to do that same work. That is a lot of committees to ask 9 people to cover for a volunteer position.

In addition, there seems to be no need to use the Executive committee for any of our work – this committee has met one time since the election. The chair has not reached out to me for communication or input with any consistency, and in fact has withheld information and activity from my position as Vice Chair. It appears the board is being run as a dictatorship. I disagree with the board operating on the need to know basis which the Board Chair promotes and especially as the Board Chair seems to think we need to know nothing. This cloud of secrecy creates a feeling of mistrust even if there is nothing to mistrust and leads me to feel like our board is very broken in its current state. Lastly, none of the tenure and knowledge of my 5 years on this board seems to be valued by many people sitting around this table.

It is because of all of this, after a lot of thought and consideration that I have come to not an easy decision but the right decision for me that effective tomorrow August 29, 2018 I will step down from this board. My party will work to find a replacement as soon as possible.

I wish you all the best of luck and I hope that you can work to become the great board you were just a few years ago – where the focus of the board was doing the work of the district rather than rubber stamping decisions; where you did not always agree and you did not always vote unanimously but you did always respect and value people's thoughts and opinions; when something was voted on no matter how the votes split, you all got behind the decision and got to work; where party politics were left at the door and you just did what was best for the district and the community as a whole; and you utilized your executive committee so that there was a true balance of power; and where complete information was disseminated to the full board in a timely manner.

I will submit my letter of resignation tomorrow and ask that you add an agenda item to accept my letter of resignation at your next Board Meeting.

19. Meetings / Dates of Importance (see attached)

20. Action Item: Enter into Executive Session

MOTION: by DeSantis, seconded by Klaskin to enter into Executive Session to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation, Personnel Matters: Leave of Absence, District Security and Negotiations.
AYES: Bowler; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

20.1. Superintendent's Evaluation

20.2. Personnel Matters - Leave of Absence

20.3. District Security

20.4. Negotiations

21. Adjournment

MOTION: by DeSantis, seconded by McNerney to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 p.m.
AYES: DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Pellegrino; Rosenthal; Stein
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Approved at the September 11, 2018 Board of Education Meeting