

**Regional School District No. 7
Newbury Library Media Center
Board of Education Minutes
July 14, 2021**

APPROVED 8-25-2021

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B) by phone, Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Ms. Kimberly Crone (N), Ms. Lisa Ann Fragale (C), Ms. Mary Duran (B), Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Superintendent of Schools Judith A. Palmer, Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. James Gaskins

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Rob Jerram, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Ms. Alesia Kennerson (NH) referenced the letter she sent requesting the Board to consider holding a social event for the Class of 2020 in the fall.

Ms. Rebecca Welsh (NH) expressed her displeasure with the extension of Governor Lamont’s Executive Order authority and concerns over students wearing masks.

Mr. Kevin West (B) stated concerns about students wearing masks.

Ms. Denise Wells (B) shared a Facebook post with the Board, information on the adverse effects of wearing masks, and expressed her concerns over the Board of Education’s Cultural Awareness goal and the use of the word “equity”.

Ms. Gina Maroney (NH) expressed concerns about students wearing masks, the COVID-19 vaccine and health ramifications.

Mr. Roger Geiger (NH) stated concerns over the validity of COVID-19 data, the vaccine, and students wearing a mask. He questioned whether receiving federal and state funding is tied to following state mandates and expressed concerns over Critical Race Theory.

Ms. Jennifer Iacino (B) expressed concerns about students wearing masks and health effects.

Ms. Shelly Thibault (B) stated concerns about students wearing mask, questioned how classroom books were determined, and her gratitude for the cleaning efforts during the pandemic.

Ms. Anna Goff (NH) shared her concerns about the toll the pandemic has taken on students’ mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Ms. Dawn Geiger (NH) expressed concerns over students wearing masks and health effects.

Ms. Kelly O’Dell Longhi (NH) stated that she is not in favor of students wearing masks in the fall and shared part of a letter written to Governor Lamont from the New Hartford Board of Education and superintendent.

Ms. Trisha Brett (NH) shared concerns about students being segregated based on vaccination status and requested an opportunity for students to participate in school through Distance Learning if Governor Lamont's Executive Order mandates masks for students while in school.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Kenneson to APPROVE the Board of Education Minutes of June 23, 2021, as presented. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: Ms. Lisa Ann Fragale (C), Ms. Mary Duran (B). MOTION PASSED.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Palmer reported that the CDC has released guidance for reopening schools in the fall. It states that masks will not be required for fully vaccinated staff and students.

Dr. Palmer stated that unless there is a legal mandate, the tentative plan is to recommend that unvaccinated students and staff, along with any other person who would like to do so, wear a mask while indoors.

The superintendent clarified that if the Governor's Office, the Department of Public Health, or the CSDE, issues a legal mandate that all students and staff must wear a mask, Regional School District No. 7 will comply with those orders. The superintendent expects to receive specific guidance within the next two weeks.

The Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plan will be updated to meet the new guidance. It will be distributed to families and posted on the NWR7 website when finalized.

Dr. Palmer reported that the Governor's Executive Order authority has been extended through September 30th.

Dr. Palmer and Mr. Amara will study the most recent achievement data, interim assessments, the Next Generation Science assessments, and Smarter Balanced Assessment results to identify areas for improvement. The 6th and 7th grade data will provide us with a starting point in English Language Arts and mathematics.

Teachers are working to prioritize curriculum areas for focused instruction and identifying assessments for monitoring student progress.

Algebra and Geometry Readiness summer school classes for 9th and 10th graders were offered during summer school. There will be a two-week Math Academy for 7th and 8th grade students from August 2nd – 12th.

In the coming weeks, the administrative team will be developing plans to support teachers in regaining our academic strength and high standards.

Dr. Palmer informed the Board that she received notification that the NEASC accreditation visit for Northwestern High School will take place from December 8 through December 11, 2024.

HIRING REPORT:

The superintendent presented the New Hire Report:

Galen Knox has been hired for a one-year grant funded position as a Literacy and Social Emotional Learning Interventionist in the middle school.

Donald Reese has been hired as a Special Education teacher in the high school.

Kurt Dougan has been hired as a Technology Education teacher in the high school.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS:

Mr. Gaskins provided an update on the end-of-the-year assessment offset for the 2022-23 school year.

He introduced an idea to create a Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures account. This fund could be used as a short term offset to the costs associated with unexpected projects that may come up during the school year and other projects.

OLD BUSINESS: Ms. Sexton Read updated the Board on her invitation to the Region 7 elementary school superintendents, Board of Education chairs, and Board of Finance chairs to meet and discuss possible district efficiencies.

NEW BUSINESS:

CORRESPONDENCE: Ms. Sexton Read acknowledged a letter received from Cari Boucher concerning the mask mandate.

OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Ms. Gina Maroney (NH) requested that the Board push back if the state requires non-vaccinated students to wear a mask and stated that she is in favor of regionalizing grades k-12.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to **ADJOURN** at 7:12 p.m. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale **NAY** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Next Meeting: August 25, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith A. Palmer, Ed.D.