



**Minutes of a Regular Meeting, October 7, 2021
Novi Community School District
Board of Education**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Novi Community School District was held on Thursday, October 7, 2021, beginning at 7:00 PM.

Present: Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Hood, and Mr. Cook
(by Roll Call)

Absent: Mrs. Murphy

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Members of the audience joined with the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mr. Smith that the Novi Board of Education approve the agenda.

Ayes: 6 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Hood, and Mr. Cook

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

AWARDS RECOGNITIONS PRESENTATIONS

National Merit Semi-Finalists

Novi High School Principal, Nicole Carter, will present the 29 seniors from the Class of 2022 that have been named National Merit Scholarship Program semifinalists. Last spring, 1.5 million high school juniors entered the National Merit Scholarship program by taking a qualifying test (PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test), which serves as the initial screening of program entrants. For 2021, only 16,000 of the students become qualified as Semifinalists. Our 29 seniors are among the highest-scoring entrants in the state of Michigan.

Ms. Carter will present the students who are in attendance for recognition and provide additional biographic information including their varied scholastic endeavors, their participation in athletics and fine arts; and for a large number of the students, their volunteer commitments and philanthropic efforts.

Venkatesh Alagappan
Varnika Chandra
Evelyn Cho
Jimmy Dai
Jivesh Dandnaik
Olaf Dsouza
Shaun Garg
Grace Harte
Netra Jayagopal
Ritij Jutur
Lianne Kim
Takuya King

Ankita Kumar
Navya Kumar
Rachel Lee
Anjani Malli Reddi
William Meng
Manvitha Mogalayapalli
Ruheen Qadeer
Sreenidhi Saripalli
Rishith Seelam
Noori Shankar
Jayashree Sundaram
Anita Tan

Julia Tauro
Abhishek Vangipuram
Aimee Wu

Melissa Yu
Eric Zhang

We applaud these students for their tenacious work ethic and outstanding academic achievement and present them to the Novi Board of Education this evening for recognition as the exemplification of the very best of Novi High School.

There was a brief break at 7:10 PM. The Board reconvened at 7:15 PM.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

There were no comments from the audience related to agenda items.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Items included in the Consent Items are those which have previously been considered by the Board in committee or at a prior meeting, or of such a routine nature, that discussion is not required. Board members may request that any items be removed from Consent Items for further discussion, if additional information is needed or available.

CONSENT ITEMS

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of September 23, 2021

- B. Approval of Field Trips
 - a. Fall 2021 MHSAA Overnight Field Trips

It was moved by Mrs. Hood and supported by Mr. Mena that the Novi Community Schools Board of Education approve the Consent Item(s) as presented.

Ayes: 6 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Hood, and Mr. Cook

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

ACTION ITEMS

Personnel Report

Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presents for your consideration the following personnel changes:

A. New Hires

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Philka, Rachel	NW	Media Specialist	New Hire	BA+15	TBD

A. Retirements and Resignations

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Bedford, Julie	DF	Principal	Retirement	10-29-21

B. Leaves of Absence

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Capatina, Natalie to 06-30-22	PV	2 nd Grade Teacher	LOA #1-Personal	10-13-21

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported Mrs. Roney by that the Novi Board of Education adopts the personnel report recommendations as presented.

Ayes: 6 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Hood, and Mr. Cook

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

MICIP

The MICIP is a pathway for districts to improve student outcomes by assessing whole child needs to develop plans and coordinate funding.

At the August 12, 2021 Board meeting, Dr. RJ Webber, Assistant Superintendent, presented the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP), formerly the District Improvement Plan (DIP) to the Board for information and discussion.

It was moved by Mrs. Hood and supported by Mrs. Roney that the Novi Community School District Board of Education approve the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) as presented.

Ayes: 5 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

Nays: 1 Mr. Cook

MOTION CARRIED

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were 13 comments from the audience this evening. Five (5) were regarding our excellence in education and support for administrators, staff, and the Board. Two (2) were regarding past meetings and the civility in our community. Three (3) were regarding our curriculum. Two (2) were regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion and one (1) was regarding transparency.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Steve Matthews, Superintendent of Schools, reported that today he was in a sixth grade classroom taught by Steve Ernster, at Novi Meadows. He stated that they were talking about coding and each student had a mini robot. Dr. Matthews said there were talking about how to use coding to help the robot move and use coding to work the remote control. He mentioned that later on today, he spoke with an administrator regarding her first grade teacher who was working with a collaborative group of first grade teachers to help he improve her craft. Dr. Matthews reported that she was focused on celebrating that her teacher was so deeply invested in trying to get better.

He stated that we need to continue to share those stories with our community. Dr. Matthews said that the perception that we are trying to hide our intentions caused him to reflect on how we can get better as a district. He mentioned that our intent is to find ways to do that and to work collaboratively with the Board of Education, our parent community, our teachers, and our staff so we continue to improve our District.

Dr. Matthews reported that his responsibility as he sees it, or at least part of his responsibility in the district, is to promote the good that happens in public education and that includes the good that happens in the Novi Community School District. He stated that over the past week, there has been a lot of community conversation within and about our District.

Dr. Matthews said that from his perspective, here is what our District stands for, it is written in our vision statement; a statement whose intent is to cast before us, all of us, a vision of what we can become. He stated that our vision statement reads that our vision is students who are passionate, empowered, and prepared for their world and their future.

Dr. Matthews mentioned that new offices are being built at the high school, on both the east and west side of the atrium. He reported that outside of those offices will be concrete benches and on these benches will be etched the words, passionate, empowered, and prepared.

Dr. Matthews stated that what our District has said (through a planning process that included our community members, parents, students, and staff) is that our vision is students who develop the passion to be successful, the passion to care for others, the passion to care for our world. He said that we develop students who are empowered, who believe that they have the ability to make a difference in the world that they live in now, and the world that they are inheriting, by preparing them with the skills that they need to move forward.

Dr. Matthews reported that tonight we saw a representative sample of our students who are passionate, empowered, and prepared. He stated that those 29 National Merit Semi-Finalists are also the student body president, officers in HOSA, officers in DECA, they play in the marching band, participate in our theater program, sing in the choir, and play in the orchestra. Dr. Matthews said that those are the students that our District builds and it builds them because we have parents who care deeply. He mentioned that we have staff who have the skills needed to work with those students and administrators who provide the leadership necessary.

Dr. Matthews reported that as we move forward, we need to continue to remember that our responsibility is to talk with and work with each other. He stated that as we do, we will continue to pay attention to the emotional health of our students, and continue to analyze if certain groups of students are over represented and disciplined. Dr. Matthews said that we will provide time and space for students if they become angry or upset and continues to bring in others to help us understand the world from different perspectives. He mentioned that those people will help make us uncomfortable at times.

Dr. Matthews reported that we have done good work here in the Novi Community School District. He stated that he was in his 11th year in the District. Dr. Matthews said that our test scores are strong, our extracurricular programs are strong, our commitment to all students is strong. He mentioned that he was walking through the high school the other day and a student, with the biggest afro he had ever seen, walked out of a classroom.

Dr. Matthews reported that the student looked at him and said, “dude.” Dr. Matthews replied, “that’s Dr. Dude,” and the student smiled. He stated that they had an interesting conversation as they walked down the hall and the Dr. Matthews asked him what he was doing. He said the

student was able to explain to him, in great detail, what he was doing in the class. Dr. Matthews mentioned that all of our students are important, whether they believe what he believes, whether they look like he looks, whether they love the people he loves, they are important.

Dr. Matthews reported that our responsibility is to find ways to meet the needs of every one of those students. He stated that we need to get better at what we do and we will, we have, and we will continue to do that. Dr. Matthews asked, “are we perfect?” We are not. He asked, “do we make mistakes?” We do, but we support the students and families in our District because he believes that we have a strong desire to ensure that all feel welcome and all believe they are important, and all of them develop the skills and knowledge and attitudes that they need to be successful in the world.

Dr. Matthews said that we want our students to feel passionate, empowered, and prepared for their world and their future, so together we will continue to work with each other. He mentioned that we will continue to listen to one another; we will continue to disagree at times, but we will find our way through together.

Dr. Matthews reported that we have done that for the 11 years he has been in this District and he anticipates that we will be able to continue doing this for many more years. He stated that there are times when we will be very angry with one another, but he has great confidence that we know deep down inside our hearts that we can find our way and that is what we stand for. Dr. Matthews said that he is proud of the work that we have done and will continue to do for the students and families in our District.

On another note, he mentioned that our Novi High School Marching Band Fanfare is this weekend and starts on Saturday, around 4:30 PM. Dr. Matthews reported that there are 14 bands coming to Novi High school. He stated that the Novi band will perform shortly after 8:00 PM, on Saturday. Dr. Matthews said that he believes admission is eight dollars and will benefit the Novi Band Boosters and all of the support they provide the students in our school.

Dr. Matthews mentioned that he held his first Coffee with the Superintendent on Wednesday and Ms. Roney was there to help guide him through some of the discussion. He reported that they had interesting discussions on a whole variety of topics. Dr. Matthews stated that it caused him to think through and think about how we can get more information on some of the things that are important to parents who are there. He said the next coffee will be in November and he invited parents to come and participate.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Greg McIntyre, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, reported that there was a credit coming back to us. He stated that credit was \$22,900. Mr. McIntyre said that we have a potential four new hires that will pass through our screening that will help alleviate some of the shortages in transportation.

Dr. Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, recognized Julie Bedford and her retirement. He stated that it has been his pleasure to work closely with Dr. Bedford. He wished her the best as she moves on and thanked her for her contribution to the District.

Dr. Kinzer reported that he, Dr. Matthews, Dr. Webber, Mr. McIntyre, and Mr. Sipple visited Novi Woods, Novi Meadows, Parkview, and maintenance to recognize employees for their years of service. He stated this is something they normally do at the beginning of the school year and they were not able to do this again this year. Dr. Kinzer said that it was terrific to be able to present veteran teachers in our District with recognition and the most enjoyable visit was to Mr. Kendrick's classroom, at Novi Woods. He mentioned that it brought back memories of going into a kindergarten classroom, getting those students all wound up, and then leaving. Dr. Kinzer mentioned that Mr. Kendrick is a fantastic teacher.

Dr. Kinzer reported that they will be traveling to additional buildings in the District next week to recognize not just teachers, but employees of the District for their years of service.

Dr. RJ Webber, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, reported that one of the amazing pieces of our community is the brand. He stated that is the Novi Community School District that has been built over the course of 50 years from people before us, from Board members, teachers, families, and parents. Dr. Webber said that brand is something that is precious in so many ways. He mentioned a brand that is known, fortunately, throughout the state and in the country.

Dr. Webber reported that when we see our students where they go to school and the opportunities that they have, people have worked very hard to build that brand. He stated that as such he thinks it is important that we continue to be advocates and allies for those people who contribute to that brand and to make sure the brand of the Novi Community School District stays where it is.

Dr. Webber said he believes that is an obligation that we have, and part of that piece is to do a little storytelling. He mentioned that he had the good fortune to go to the ROAR Center. Dr. Webber reported that to the Board of Education and Dr. Matthews' vision a year ago, when they first thought about purchasing Walsh College. He stated that they went through the process and yesterday he saw something very few people can see.

Dr. Webber said that hopefully some folks will appreciate the transparency. He reported that this was a shining example of what public schools can be in communities and the students they serve. Dr. Webber stated that our Novi Adult Transition Center, he believes that we are the only state in the country that services youngsters until they are 26 years of age. He said these are students with deep needs and we have 14 students at our Novi Adult Transition Center that is housed at the ROAR Center in a beautiful space. Dr. Webber mentioned that there is an apartment set-up to teach life skills to these youngsters, who get picked up by the bus and are taken to job settings to learn what it is like to be and to live in this world. He reported that he saw teachers that teach them.

Dr. Webber stated that it is amazing, the Novi Virtual is housed there and in his wildest dreams he could have never thought that there would be 375 kids on count day in a virtual school who are doing things under the leadership of Principal Pohlonski and our virtual teachers. He said they are delivering art supplies, science supplies, having parents and kids meet up at the ROAR Center, meet up at Stewart's Ice Cream to build connections and community because those 375 students needed something different and we are providing that.

Dr. Webber mentioned that we have over 50 languages spoken in the homes of our District and we are providing adult ESL for our English Language Learners. He reported that Novi is the place that attracts diverse population. Dr. Webber stated that families move here and utilize our school to learn English, so they can function and thrive in our community.

Dr. Webber shared the final bit of the story, which he mentioned is harder for him to tell, and that is Career Prep. He said that we have 46 students there who live on the margins where traditional school does not work for them. Dr. Webber mentioned that in the 12 years that he has been in the District, surrounding districts have been shutting down their adult ed and alternative ed programs, one after another. He reported that we had 18 students in there a number of years ago and now we have 46.

Dr. Webber stated that yesterday he walked into a room and there was a circle of students in that room. He said he could tell and felt something was going on in that room, there was an energy to it. Dr. Webber mentioned that they were having a conversation about what it is like to just make it through the today. He reported that these were students who were struggling; these were students whose doors had been shut in their face time and time again.

Dr. Webber said that these were students the Novi Community School District, a public community school district with a heck of a brand, that deserves to be defended from things that may not be true at all because that brand is what has enabled us to do things like purchase the ROAR Center and be there for those kids yesterday. He mentioned that the person who was facilitating the group was a former middle school principal in Livingston County that Dr. Webber had worked with a long time ago.

Dr. Webber reported that the principal said he had not seen Dr. Webber in forever and said that room was all about getting these students through yesterday, one day at a time, and helping them. Dr. Webber stated that he cannot help but to think the life of his own family would have turned out far differently had they grown up in a place that had community school that were strong and had a place for them to learn and this is something that people cannot always see.

Dr. Webber said that we talk about how beautiful our elementary schools, our high school, and middle school are, but there are programs that occur in this District that do not occur in public institutions elsewhere. He mentioned that this is because our school board, the people before us, have built a brand that has allowed us to leverage that brand, to be financially solvent, to have a vision, and to take care of each other regardless of what we look like or where we are from.

Dr. Webber reported that yesterday he left the ROAR Center, and after the week that he had, became emotional because of the stuff going back and forth. He stated that what he saw and experienced in his heart was the fact that what we do here as a community is something to be proud of. Dr. Webber said that he hopes we can all go away tonight thinking and realizing that just maybe we have more in common than we realize. He mentioned, at the very least to be proud that there are people out there in this world who made it through yesterday because of the work that we do here.

BOARD COMMUNICATION

Mr. Smith, Board Trustee, reported that the Board members all have building assignments, but he tries to visit other schools. He stated that he visited the Early Education. Mr. Smith said that everyone knows Jason Smith, Executive Director for the NEF. He mentioned that his wife, Andrea Smith, and he are co-chairs for Novi Youth Assistance (NYS).

Mr. Smith reported that he had to stop by there and talked to Ann Hansen about some things that we are doing for NYA, specifically the holiday gift giving. He stated that while they were there, Ann had an opportunity to introduce him to a couple of new teachers. Mr. Smith said that probably five (5) years ago, they really did not recognize the new teachers in that building because they were not in the union. He mentioned that he was talking to Ann and a really talented educator who worked part-time in preschool, but really needed full time.

Mr. Smith reported that, with Dr. Kinzer's help, she was able to get another part-time teaching position at Orchard Hills. He stated that this teacher works with students on a one-to-one basis providing coaching and special education. Mr. Smith said that these are the little things that the Board knows is going on, but is an example of Gary working with building administrators to find qualified candidates and figuring out how to make it work. He mentioned that it is a win, win. Mr. Smith expressed his gratitude to Dr. Kinzer for doing the work that nobody knows about, that is so meaningful for our district.

Mr. Smith reported that his second visit was to Village Oaks. He stated that the teachers were talking about their theme for Halloween and it is going to be construction. Mr. Smith said that he walked through the back to get to the gym and the garden is right there. He mentioned that the NEF provided funds, with the help of Bosch, for this garden and it is massive and full.

Mr. Smith reported that Dr. Ofili does a phenomenal job. He stated that his staff meeting was action-packed. Mr. Smith said he had the chance to speak with a few people and told them if there is anything you need, reach out. He mentioned that the teacher reached out within 30 minutes and asked if they could have snacks and within 30 minutes the teacher had 50-60 bucks.

Mr. Smith reported that he went to the ROAR Center on count day and they had a mission barbeque that was really good. He stated that there was a large group of ESL people standing out there, similar in appearance, and he asked, "what are they doing?" Mr. Smith said he was told they are practicing talking. He mentioned that the NATC, Career Prep, and Novi Virtual are there. Mr. Smith reported Emily is doing a great job over there and that he loves the ROAR Center. He stated that everyone should get out there.

Mr. Smith said he is working with Principal Carter in the Mental Health Alliance Group, at the high school. He mentioned that if you have a student or a family member who is interested, on Tuesday there will be a couple of private showings of the movie, Dear Evan Hansen. Mr. Smith reported that it would be important that kids have the opportunity to see it in a safe place, with like-minded people. He stated that it is a very powerful film.

Mr. Smith apologized because he did not know how to bring up the subject of masks, but he hates them. He stated that he saw the verbiage that Dr. Matthews put out based on the advice of our

attorney and he does not want to jeopardize our protection, but can he have a conference call with the attorney and ask a couple of questions? Mr. Smith said that he just wants to understand why Oakland County is still imposing masks on our kids, making them sick, and their social and emotional development is being harmed. He mentioned let the kids building their antibodies, smile, laugh, and see each other.

Mr. Mena, Board Secretary, reported that he, too, would like a dialogue with Tim Gardner, who is his go-to person whenever he needs and opinion. He stated that he has always been fair, to the point, and easy to understand. Mr. Mena said that he would like him to educate us on this confusing process that we clearly do not understand. Mr. Mena mentioned that there seems to be a lot of confusion created by the state in signing the new budget and it would be nice to have a dialogue with him.

Mr. Mena reported that a lot of stuff has happened in the last couple of week that has been great in this district. He stated that he attended the Pep Rally last Friday afternoon. Mr. Mena said the homecoming at night was just a great event, and what was cool was there were so many people, so many students that were involved. He mentioned that you might think it was just football, but there was so much happening with the band, pom, the cheer team, great parade, and all of the homecoming festivities, then the football game that ended with a win.

Mr. Mena reported that he attended a few cross-country events yesterday and had the opportunity to stop by the middle school football game, and finished the night by attending the theater stage booster meeting. He stated that Mr. Smith likes to visit a lot of different buildings and he likes to go make the rounds on booster meetings. Mr. Mena said that what is cool is that everybody on this Board has a different interest and they can split themselves up to have representation at these meetings.

He mentioned that he really did not have much to say about the political meeting and the former teacher that spoke. Mr. Mena reported that originally, he was not planning on going, but was invited to a team dinner that the football team was having. He stated that they had a real nice nighttime practice and it was going to be a cool event, but folks were reaching out to get information, so he was compelled to go.

Mr. Mena said that he did not want people to think that because he attended or goes somewhere that he automatically hates teachers. He stated that he loves our teachers and has said that for a number of years. Mr. Mena mentioned that he is around the property in the District as much as anyone and he talks to just about anybody in the District, whether it is a parent, student, or teacher. He reported that we have conversation where they do not always agree, but this notion that we cannot go and get information or if we do that somehow it means something nefarious, is something that he wishes we could get over. Mr. Mena stated that he will meet with Dr. Matthews, at some point, to address some issues shared with him by parents over the past months.

Mr. Mena said that he has never been prouder, as a Board member, after listening to the audience comments tonight. He mentioned that he could not have said anything better that what the members of the community had to say and he understands there is a lot of frustration and perceptions that he has certain viewpoints about certain issues and that is fine, but he hopes that

this divide we have we will be able to discuss it and work together as a team, as a group, to get to the root cause of it and resolve these things, so that everybody has an understanding of what it is that we are trying to accomplish in the District. Mr. Mena stated that we will see if we can come to an agreement on the best way to get there without alienating anyone along the way.

Mrs. Hood, Board Treasurer, reported that she had attended the dedication of the Novi Woods Hammock Garden, last Friday. She stated it is a wonderful place for kids to read and contemplate and thanked all who contributed. Mrs. Hood said that it was the brainchild of Mrs. Steinberger, but supported by the Novi Educational Foundation. She mentioned that DTE had their big trucks there and the kids loved it.

Mrs. Hood reported that the Novi Woods PTO and DTE had several executives, several managers there and they said they were initiating helping other schools around southeastern Michigan to create their own hammock gardens.

She stated that a celebration is in order as our state representative, Kelly Breen, secured a four hundred thousand dollar grant for the NEF, to support our outdoor learning. Mrs. Hood said that is an example of a representative listening to her constituents and advocating for the children of Novi. She mentioned that she knows there is a lot more to come and more planning.

Mrs. Hood reported that homecoming was fun to see. She stated that she did not go into the stands; the sea of humanity in the stands was crazy with all the little kids running back and forth. She stated it was a really nice evening. Mrs. Hood said there was fanfare on Saturday and some of the people were complaining about the steep entrance fee. She explained that the boosters have to pay all of the expenses, the judges, the transport of everything.

Mrs. Hood reported that, this week, a few people have asked whether she was surprised by the events described in the blog post. She stated that she would say not really and that she did not attend the presentation so she cannot confirm what happened there; however, over the summer, she googled this former teacher and her presentation is out there.

Mrs. Hood said that in the spirit of seeking to understand, she watched the video of her reading her bullet points of school outrage, at a church in Northville. She commented that, as a Board member, the teacher repeatedly cited the Christian gospel, her conservative Christian values, biblical morality, the United States Constitution, and the claim that the United States was founded on Christianity.

Mrs. Hood mentioned that no one has apparently told the teacher that the constitution has 4,500 words and not one of them is god, Jesus, Christianity, or bible and that is just so basic that it hurt her feelings when she heard the teacher say that. She said that overall, she found the teacher's commentary ridiculous and obviously so many parts of it were not true, knowing what she knew about Novi Schools.

Mrs. Hood stated that the effects of the teacher's speech are harmful to our schools because people believe her. She said in the July video, after the teacher established herself as a practitioner of conservative Christian values, the teacher proceeded to tell her audience the ways

she worked to undermine our District's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and bullied or was disrespectful towards our kids, our kids, these Novi kids. Mrs. Hood mentioned that she is a former Novi teacher and this is not like a Grand Ledge teacher, souring the state, giving this presentation; she is a former Novi teacher.

Mrs. Hood reported that the former teacher was talking about our kids, our LGBTQ kids, our African-American kids, our Transgender kids, our confused or unsure kids, our Muslim kids, our kids who expressed concern about the climate change. She stated that the teacher mocked them and when she was finished, what Mrs. Hood felt was the teacher's shameful narrative, the audience applauded, and Mrs. Hood found that alarming.

Mrs. Hood said, pardon my indignation on this, but this topic has never been on our agenda and so we have never talked about it, but just after Mr. Ascher's post, she felt compelled to respond in some way. She reported that she did not think this was about politics. Mrs. Hood stated that this is not about some former teacher who is on her 15 minutes of fame tour.

She said this is about the children who attend Novi Community School and our commitment and obligation to care for them, all of them. Mrs. Hood mentioned and speaking of gospels, someone was channeling this earlier, it is up to us to provide extra care to the one out of a hundred who on any given time needs it. She reported that as parents or grandparents could probably relate, you know when one of your kids comes into the house or calls you and they are upset or crying, whether they are 4 or 24, every parents first response is, "oh my gosh, honey, what is wrong? How can I help you?"

Mrs. Hood stated that one of her favorite people in the world was Mr. Rogers and when he was a kid and was scared by something, his mom would tell him to look for the helpers. She said that our schools are filled with helpers including our kids. Mrs. Hood mentioned that she thinks often kids are sometimes the adults in the room, so we need to do a better job of listening to our kids, all of our kids.

She stated that she does not believe that this is about politics. Mrs. Hood reported that it is about whether we, as a community public school district, are committed to fulfilling our vision and goals, especially goal number three, which is to foster a district-wide culture of unity and well-being. She said that is one of our goals that we set, how many years ago? Mrs. Hood mentioned that the whole community took part and that is one of our goals. She reported that we can do that by helping and respecting every one of our students where they are.

Mrs. Roney, Board Trustee, reported that she, too, was at that meeting and is just appalled by what has come out of it. She stated that she and Willy have been vilified because they attended. Mrs. Roney said that she went there, the same as RJ, Mr. Ascher, and the rest of the group in the back of the room, to see what the teacher was saying. She mentioned that she was unaware that the teacher had videos out on Google.

Mrs. Roney reported that she has busier things to do than sit and look at Google, so she went to see what this lady had to say. She stated that what the teacher was saying, Mrs. Roney thought that does not bold well with her and she wanted to learn. Mrs. Roney said that she is going call

dirty, hateful all because she wanted to learn and hopefully come back to say this lady is saying stuff that some of it is wrong and some is true because we have talked about it at Board meetings.

Mrs. Roney reported that there has been so much thrown around about her and Willy, that she was ready to resign. She stated that is how upset she was about it. Mrs. Roney said that nobody has a great school system, but being personally attacked by it, is not worth it.

Mr. Cook, Board Vice-President, reported that he saw in Mary Ann's not that the band boosters need help with concession, during fanfare. He stated that he had the chance to get to the Pep Rally. Mr. Cook said that any high school football game, you will find more volunteers behind the scenes that you will find football players in the field. He mentioned that it is a community event and the community really puts forward to it.

Mr. Cook reported that it was amazing, the energy coming out of the stands. He stated there were a few years where it lacked luster in the stands, but now, the last few games, we have noticed that the energy has really increased.

Mr. Cook said that he had the chance to talk with Mr. Baker and he shared a story with Mr. Cook about a couple of students at the middle school who had a little bad luck. Mr. Cook mentioned that Mr. Baker told the story because of what one of the students did. He reported that the students were name-calling a little bit, shoving and things did not get resolved, but one of the students went to Mr. Baker and said, "I did wrong. I think I did wrong. I need your help to make things right."

Mr. Cook stated that Mr. Baker did help that student and he knows back when he was a kid, if he would have gone to the principal and said he did wrong, the principal would have probably suspended him. He said that is not how things are done because our teachers, our administrators, our principals all support our kids. Mr. Cook mentioned that they are not afraid to go to them and say, I did wrong please help me.

Mr. Cook reported that he, like Mr. Mean, got a chance to attend the middle school football game. He stated that that there were two (2) middle school teams; a club team and the middle school team. Mr. Cook said it was nice to see about half of the club team supporting the middle school team and cheering them on, calling for the players to do well. He mentioned that is more of a community, too. Mr. Cook reported that they were not competing against each other; they were not saying you are no good, but they were supporting them. He stated that the coaches, at the club team, actually pointed that out because one of their players was their son and they noticed it.

Mr. Cook said that he has also been to a few soccer games and the parents are so thankful we did a second JV team this year, giving more kids the opportunity to play. He mentioned that the parents love it, the kids love it.

Mr. Cook reported that Tuesday night, they had three (3) games on that field and the way the maintenance crew maintain that field. He stated that you could not go to any other school, playing on the grass, and have three (3) consecutive games and have the field hold up like ours

does. Mr. Cook said that our maintenance crews does a top-notch job on the field and the parents appreciate it. He mentioned the players surely appreciate it.

Dr. Ruskin, Board President, reported that you can see there is a lot of emotion here in our community. She stated that a lot has happened over the last couple of weeks. Dr. Ruskin said we went from the highs of having an amazing homecoming for these kids. She mentioned that they got to be together at a football game, in a parade, and a Pep Rally. Dr. Ruskin reported they watched their teachers do the staff/student dance and have the cheerleaders, pom girls get with different teams and do routines, football players play amazing games.

She stated that we went from that to some broken hearts, some tears, and some feelings of divide. Dr. Ruskin said people have asked her, will you please say this about this Board member, will you do this, or will you speak for the Board? She mentioned that if you know her as a leader, she will not do that. Dr. Ruskin reported that she does not make assumptions of why Board members go places and do things until she sits and talks to them.

Dr. Ruskin stated that we heard tonight, why people attend different events throughout the community, whether it be right or wrong. She said that we have a former employee who she will not say anything about what was said at her meetings, but there are rabbit holes that have been produced and people have gone down them and found pain and agony and a place where our brand is just not feeling good. Dr. Ruskin reported that somebody here asked for transparency tonight and you got it. She stated that she was sure it was more that everyone wanted.

Dr. Ruskin said that she gets to hear all these things, but also gets to hear the good and a couple of weeks ago, we had a committee meeting and had some parents who were concerned about things. She mentioned that they brought those forward and she watched content area leaders, a teacher, a parent who, respectfully, found her way for what she needed for her kiddo and it ended in a result that the student, however their needs looked and whether we agree or disagree that is how our curriculum should look, that they were given what they needed as a student while keeping what other students need.

Dr. Ruskin reported that is just one example of what is happening behind the scenes. She asked, are we perfect? We certainly are not, but she sees parents in the room, who are arguing for something that they should be and asking for transparency and wanting to work with the Board and be parents of this community who are also, on the other hand, supporting sports teams and putting themselves out there and spending hours in their day to make sure that the kids maybe do not see everything that is going on behind the scenes.

Dr. Ruskin stated that we will continue to work together and heal and be transparent. She said please keep coming and asking the really hard question, whether you think people in the audience agree with you or disagree with you. Dr. Ruskin mentioned that that is the only way we are going to continue to heal and move forward as a community.

Dr. Ruskin stated do not let one particular person, whether we agree with that person or not, direct our narrative because in this room is our narrative and that is where we need to go and focus on our kids and not lose our way. She said that she appreciates that we know Board members come

to her whether they think she will agree with them or not, just to bounce ideas off of her, just to be transparent and have a conversation. Dr. Ruskin mentioned that you know it is okay; they did nothing wrong, even if her viewpoint might be different. She stated that we are all here to learn and the only way we are going to do better for our kids and being open to our viewpoint and to others; this is the first step and was a great meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Cook and supported by Mr. Smith that the Novi Board of Education Regular Board meeting be adjourned.

Ayes: 6 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Roney, Mrs. Hood,
and Mr. Cook

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for October 14, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., at the Educational Services Building.

Willy Mena, Secretary

An online recording of this meeting is available on YouTube and on the District Website: novi.k12.mi.us