



**Minutes of a Regular Meeting, December 2, 2021  
Novi Community School District  
Board of Education**

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A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Novi Community School District was held on Thursday, December 2, 2021, beginning at 7:03 PM.

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

Absent:

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Mrs. Murphy and supported Mr. Mena by that the Novi Board of Education approve the agenda as amended, moving the closed session to the work session agenda.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and  
Mrs. Hood

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**STATUS UPDATE**

Dr. RJ Webber, Acting Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, reported that this morning parents had to have conversations with their children that they never thought they would have to have. He recited a quote from Fred Rogers, “anything that is human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.

Dr. Webber stated because in this very room, 40 people met throughout the entire day, including President Ruskin and a host of people (including one of our schools’ officers) that are in this crowd tonight. He said that they discussed what we were going to do to communicate well with our community; and what we are going to do to provide the best and safest environment to come back to our students; and how we were going to attend to, what was indeed, a very traumatic experience.

Dr. Webber mentioned that we will be back at it again tomorrow and that he knows kids want to be in school and wish that they could be in school tomorrow. He reported that every single building administrator was working together as a team. Dr. Webber stated to give you a look into what happened in this room today, one of the members of Mr. McIntyre’s team said that one of the things we will do is to make sure that every egress point in the district, every window that opens, can open. He said that this is just a piece of the story, a piece of the details that we have to think about right now.

Dr. Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, reported that this morning the Oakland County Superintendent's met. He stated that they began with Participation from a number of level officials from the Governor and legislators from the Department of Education all pledging their support to districts in Oakland County. Dr. Kinzer said clearly we are at the epi center of what is happening and there were a lot of resources being made available to districts in Oakland County. He mentioned that then each superintendent gave a brief summary of what was happening in their district.

Dr. Kinzer reported that it became very clear that the vast majority of districts in Oakland County were closed today and will be closed tomorrow. He stated that the districts talked about the level of threat in their own communities as well as their perceptions of the feelings of students, staff, and community members. Dr. Kinzer said that it was clear that we are all in this together and that there is a lot of support from one district to another in this county. He mentioned that we are all facing very challenging circumstances together.

Mr. McIntyre reported that we cannot all be silos. He stated that we talked about the assets and the experiences that we have and one of the things that we talked about was transportation and changing the whole situation for this physical school year. He stated that the things are in place.

Dr. Webber reported that to give the community an idea of who was in the room today; we were having conversations with preschool through fourth grade; fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth, and nine through 12; our special population students with IEPs; students with 504s; our English language learners. He stated that we have 55 languages spoken in the homes of our District. Dr. Webber said that these are the kinds of protocols and challenges we are talking about to keep our kids safe. He mentioned that Don Watchowski, our Athletic Director, pointed out that from 3:00 to 9:00 it is a whole other part of the school day.

Dr. Webber reported that we invited in today transportation as well as. He stated that they invited the union president to have some perspective from our teachers and the Board president was there as well to observe and provide some input. Dr. Webber said that we are continuing to work on some pieces for the community, the most important in his mind, are resources for parents on how to work with their children as well as how we are going to work with our staff for when our children come back into our schools.

Dr. Ruskin reported that today's meeting here was really important to see happen. She stated that everybody with different perspectives. Dr. Ruskin said the observation piece, which took about an hour or so, was broken into K-4, 5-6, and 7-8. She mentioned that PreK-6 was put together and then the high school and it was very interesting to see the challenges that were being had at each level as we went down the line. Dr. Ruskin said that as the kids mature, the challenges became a different set of challenges that were observed yesterday in schools. She stated that it was enlightening and helpful.

Dr. Ruskin reported that the communication plan was talked about and the plan for the immediate response and future response. She said that Dr. Webber did a fantastic job of facilitating the meeting. Dr. Ruskin reported that there were a lot of people in the room

with really great ideas and who care about our kids and gave good perspective on where we need to go from here. She said that not from a safety point, but from a point of supporting our whole school community.

Dr. Ruskin reported that one thing that she saw today that someone, who had gone back to school, had put out a small blurb. She stated just to give people a sense of why it is so important that we get this right and work to make sure our staff and students feel safe and cared for. Dr. Ruskin said that a teacher (not a Novi teacher) said they came back to school today and it was a very messy day. Sixteen of his fifth grade students were with social workers; kids with past trauma were reliving it; kids were drawing pictures of their feelings, and the graphics the teachers were seeing were horrific (as they put it); three of the kids stayed home; one girl in the class left terrified.

Dr. Ruskin stated that it just shows that although people might wonder why you just can't get back in the classroom and get back after it, that the students need this time and our staff needs this time, so we are going to do that as a District this time.

Dr. Webber stated, here is the reality. He reported that we have come out of the pandemic of almost two years. Dr. Webber said that the people we are working with and serving are raw. He said that we are going to get this right for your kids and for our staff and for each other. Dr. Webber mentioned that being in school, being a teacher, through that whole piece, there is a different angle on it. He said that as he mentioned, 50 district were engaged in conversation that they never thought they would have to have.

Dr. Webber stated that we are in this together. He said that if he reflects on the past few months and some contentious moments in this room, it is time to become what we need to become for our kids which is a unified group or people who care deeply about making sure they are okay and we are okay. Dr. Webber mentioned that they deserve it.

Dr. Webber reported that he was an educator and educators can speak to this; just because a student may say they are okay, I'm okay, I'm alright, well draw out your feelings and that is what we find. He stated that here is the beauty and this is amazing thing; it is not just our District but public education in general, we can do something about this in a way to help our children and help our families and we will and we have great people to do it. Dr. Webber said people on this Board, all the way through our entire District; our parents are vested and they care.

Dr. Webber mentioned that his prediction is that we are absolutely going to come together on this as a community and we are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure our kids can look at their school as a place that brings joy, wonder and awe. He said and the parents when they drop them off they know, as we do, that they are okay and that is what we are going to get after.

Dr. Webber reported that tomorrow, in this very room as well, that same group of people will be meeting and dispersing to get after it again for a full day and how we attend to the needs of parents, Board members, families, our kids, and ourselves because, as

administrators, he had seen his own colleagues go through heck in the past couple of years. He stated that part of this, as well, is making sure the people who are running our buildings, running our division, our programs and our groups are well as well.

Dr. Webber said that we are going to be okay; it is not going to be easy. He mentioned that Julie Warren, back there, our SRO, and she is going to stick around and meet with us later on tonight. Dr. Webber reported that they were going to have some conversation with the Board. He stated that for the folks who do not think there is a place for police in the schools, they are wrong. Dr. Webber said that Jon Zabick and Julie Warren, today, were invaluable in our conversations; helping us to see what we can do to protect our kids

#### COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

There was one comment from the audience who expressed her gratitude to the administration and the Board.

#### 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 November 18, 2021
- b. Closed Session Minutes of November 18, 2021

##### B. Approval of Bills

- a. Report – September 2021
- b. Check Register for September 2021
- c. Purchase Card Report for August 1, 2021 through August 31, 2021
- d. Report – October 2021
- e. Check Register for October 2021
- f. Purchase Card Report for September 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021

##### C. Approval of Field Trip(s)

- a. Michigan Thespian Festival December 10-11, 2021
- b. Washington D.C. Trip November 8-11, 2022

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

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

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>
Anglin, Alice	HS	Food Science Teacher	New Hire	MA	01-03-22
Welch, Claudia	OH	Social Worker	New Hire	MA	12-06-21

**B. Retirements and Resignations**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Cadena, Lydia	HS	History/Journalism Teacher	Retired	01-31-22
Condon, Leslie	MS	Counselor	Retired	06-10-22
Pennycuff, Todd	HS	P.E. Teacher	Retired	12-17-21

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

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

2021-22 Board of Education Meeting Schedule Revision

On September 9, 2021, the Board approved the 2021-2022 revised meeting schedule that included the rest of the 2021-2022 school year. A schedule conflict has appeared for June 2, 2021. That is the same date as the Novi High School Commencement Ceremony at EMU.

It is being recommended that June 2, 2021 be rescheduled for June 9, 2021.

This came before the Board at their November 18, 2021 Board meeting for information and discussion. It comes back tonight for Board action

These meetings will be held at the Educational Services Building, located at 25345 Taft Road, Novi Michigan 48374. The tentative schedule includes the proposed dates that will change.

It was moved by Mr. Mena and supported by Mrs. Murphy that the Novi Community School District Board of Education, approve the revised Board meeting schedule as presented.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Novi Meadows Addition and Renovation Structure Cabling Project

IDS worked with the district technology staff, building administration, TMP, and Oakland Schools Technology to determine the structured cabling system for the Novi Meadows addition. The cabling acquired and installed will provide the necessary infrastructure for classroom and office data, wireless access, security cameras, and electronic signage.

On Tuesday November 9, at 2:00 PM, the received bids were opened and publicly read. The six firms that submitted bids were: AmComm Telecommunications, Capricorn Diversified Systems, Complete Interactive Technologies, Infinity Technology Group, Moss Audio, and Technology Solutions Unlimited.

The base bid received were:

<b>Bidder's Name</b>	<b>Bid Bond</b>	<b>Familial Disclosure</b>	<b>Affidavit of Compliance</b>	<b>Base Bid</b>
Moss Audio	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$87,762.07
Complete Interactive Tech.	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$90,492.83
Amcomm Telecomm.	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$94,500.00
Capricorn Diversified	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$96,750.00
Infinity Tech Group	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$102,493.00
Technology Solutions Unl.	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$117,609.00

IDS recommends award of the Meadows Addition Structured Cabling project be awarded to Moss Audio in the amount of \$87,762.07. The project is within the established budget for the scope of the bond projects.

IDS also recommends a district managed contingency of \$17,553. This is 20% of the award based on potential modifications that may be necessary due to delays in construction.

The total award for this project is \$105,315.07

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There one (1) comment from the audience this evening expressing her sincere gratitude for all that the administration and the Board has done for the past couple of years and continues to do.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. RJ Webber, Acting Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, expressed his gratitude to the parent and our kids. He stated that they are being asked for a lot as well right now and we will find where we need to get to. Dr. Webber said when he thinks of our administrators, our teachers that gratitude means a tremendous amount after the past two years. He mentioned that we will continue to do it as well because it is just how we are wired. Dr. Webber sent so much love to everybody out there, to your families through this difficult week and he appreciates what Dr. Ruskin read.

Dr. Webber reported to the community that we will be going into a closed session to have a conversation about what we are doing, how we protect your children and our staff and to bring some detail with Det. Warren as well. He, again, thanked the people today who came in and gave their all while they left their own kids at home. Dr. Webber stated that people who are coming to keep your kids safe are leaving their kids home.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Greg McIntyre, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, reported that today was the moment of truth and he was very appreciative of our team and the work that they were able to

do today. He expressed his gratitude to Dr. Webber for taking the lead. Mr. McIntyre stated that his leadership was exceptional. He said that tomorrow, we will have the opportunity to engage in similar conversation with teachers and administrators. Mr. McIntyre mentioned that he is equally excited about those conversations because great work will happen tomorrow as well.

Mr. McIntyre expressed his gratitude to Dr. Ruskin, Jon Zabick, and Julie Warren for stepping up to the plate and getting it done. He stated that he is so proud of everyone and now we are ready to rock and roll.

Dr. Gary Kinzer, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, expressed his appreciation to the team and the work that they were able to take on. He reported that Dr. Webber's leadership was exceptional. Dr. Kinzer stated that talented and very dedicated administrators stepped up to the plate as they have done for a long time. He said that tomorrow they would have the opportunity to engage in similar conversations with our teacher and our staff. Dr. Kinzer mentioned that he was equally excited about those conversations because great work will happen tomorrow as well. He reported that there is no doubt in his mind that we will be prepared for our students next week.

#### BOARD COMMUNICATION

Mr. Cook, Board Vice-President, reported that the hockey coach had his 100<sup>th</sup> win. He stated that that is a milestone that should be celebrated.

Dr. Danielle Ruskin, Board President, reported that she did not want to reiterate what everyone had said, but that she saw amazing work being done today. She stated that it was not just one individual or one leader, but it was a team and that is what is important. Dr. Ruskin said that one of the comments that came out of today was if you noticed yesterday, at school, things were kind of even keel with hills and valleys and people were in shock and just trying to understand how their day was going to look, whether it be staff members or students.

Dr. Ruskin stated then they went home and social media can make things spiral out of control especially for teenagers and things got real ramped up and by the evening things were in the space where kids' anxiety and staff members' and parents' anxieties were extremely high.

She mentioned that she has been watching very closely Mike Bouchard's news conferences and he is doing an exceptional transparent job of sharing information with the community and today he shared a few things. Dr. Ruskin reported that he said it is important to remind your kids that social media comments of things that they think are funny and putting things on social media is not funny. She stated that making a threat because you may think you will not have to go to school the next day is problematic. She stated that the prosecutor was there and she was very stern and said that it is a 20-year felony, so a 12, 13, or 14, or 16 year olds who makes a slight mistake, can impact their lives forever.

Dr. Ruskin said that it is important for parents to have these conversations and those are good reminders and that is part of our role as people who raise these children in our community to just remind them of those things. She mentioned that one of the other facts he made really clear because the social media did spiral out of control, where people are sharing screenshots and things like that, is he does not want to detour people from sharing, but sharing them amongst each

other and individuals is not helpful. Dr. Ruskin stated that it is causing this situation and this fear and this agony for parents and children. She reported that those are two (2) things that we can use as a community in to potentially help make sure things are moving along in a positive space.

Mrs. Murphy, Board Trustee, reported that parents need to be their kids' frontal lobes right now because their frontal lobes are not developed. She stated that they do not have that ability to make that judgement to discern for themselves until they are 24 to 26. Mrs. Murphy said that if they are vacillating back and forth as to whether it is good or bad, encourage them to come to you to help them give them a good sense of whether it is something that should or could be done. She mentioned just having that open dialogue and letting them know that you understand.

Mrs. Roney, Board Trustee, reported that she was watching a lot of conferences, too and the Oakland County Sherriff and most law enforcement agencies offer gun locks for free, so if you have one they will help you.

#### CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Mr. Mena and supported by Mrs. Murphy the Novi Community School District Board of Education move into a Closed Session to discuss District land.

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

Nays: 0

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Ayes: 7 Dr. Ruskin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith, Mr. Mena, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Roney, and Mrs. Hood

Nays: 0

#### **MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for December 2, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., at the Educational Services Building.

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Willy Mena, Secretary

An online recording of this meeting is available on YouTube and on the District Website: [novi.k12.mi.us](https://novi.k12.mi.us)