

**Inter-Lakes School Board Regular Meeting
Inter-Lakes Middle/High School Community Auditorium
1 Laker Lane, Meredith, NH
October 27, 2020**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Richard Hanson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. RECORD ROLL

Members Present:

Mr. Richard Hanson, Chair
Mr. Mark Billings, Vice-Chair
Ms. Lisa Merrill, Secretary
Mr. Craig Baker*
Mr. Charles Hanson
Mr. Duncan Porter-Zuckerman*
Ms. Nancy Starmer
Ms. Raven Strother, Student Rep.

Members Absent:

None

*Remote attendance

Administrators Present:

Ms. Mary Moriarty, Superintendent
Ms. Trish Temperino, Asst. Superintendent
Mr. Michael Bryant, Principal ILES
Mr. Scott Currier, Principal ILM/HS
Ms. Sarah Dumais, Athletic Director
Mr. Jeremy Hillger, Principal SCS
Mr. John Martin, DoIT Director
Mr. Mark Parsons, Asst. Principal, ILM/HS
Mr. Brian Swanker, Facilities Director

Others Present:

Chris Mega, Video Recorder
Jason Cornelissen, Automation Technician
Public

IV. PUBLIC INPUT

Liz Littell, Center Harbor, cited the District's Core Values and Mission Statement; she believes that the social, physical and mental wellbeing of students had been overlooked in the decision to suspend fall sports. She asserted that students had neither been supported nor heard as part of the decision which was made without public input. She said student athletes followed all guidelines established by the Board as did parents coming to games and that the board still let the kids down by abruptly ending play. Kids need some normalcy in their lives at this time and playing sports gave them that.

The decision to end play precluded the Girls' Volleyball Team from defending their State Title, stonewalled Boys' Soccer that had the best team in five years and ruined the season for the Football Team, who did not have the chance to have a last practice. She called the Superintendent's suggestion that teams plan a food drive for a local food pantry or help the community in other ways, so that they could still do something together "ludicrous" arguing that the comment made people feel even more "insulted and degraded" and did not take into account the physical outlet sports provide. She said an apology was owed to student athletes.

Ms. Littell maintained some students would miss out on scholarships as a result of the suspension of play. She characterized the decision as being "sneaky and underhanded." She faulted the Superintendent's letter that noted that one of the reasons behind the decision was the COVID-19 transmission rate in Merrimack County. She charged that the School Board was not working for student athletes and parents.

Major LaRowe, Center Sandwich, asked who made the decision to end athletics this season and who on the School Board voted?

School Board Chair Hanson said three members of the board serve on the COVID-19 Response Team which includes about 14 members including public health experts.

LaRowe asserted that the COVID-19 Response Team was appointed not elected.

Superintendent Moriarty said the COVID-19 Response Team is acting in an advisory capacity and are reviewing county and statewide data. During the October 13 meeting the School Board asked the committee to make a recommendation as to whether continuing to play made good public health sense.

Ms. Merrill, School Board member said she hears what students are saying but that the potential public health threat impacts all three communities. The School Board is hearing from public health experts and has a huge weight on its shoulders.

Mr. LaRowe feels that a unilateral decision to end the fall sports season was made by the Superintendent and argued that more children have died in crosswalks than of COVID-19. He said he was not happy that the Superintendent made a decision based on a recommendation from a board that was not elected and suggested that both the Superintendent and the School Board should resign as they are not representing the public.

Bruce Vaal, Meredith, said his daughter is on the Volleyball Team and that he expects elected officials to accommodate their constituents. He commented that while overall cases of COVID-19 in the state are increasing, numbers within Belknap County remain low and even lower within the school community. He is confident that student athletes would restrict their potential exposure risk even more to retain the ability to play.

Corrine Jutton, Meredith, said her daughter needs the opportunity to play sports. While participating in AAU competition earlier this year the teams were all complying with Public Health recommendations including temperatures checks. The kids are willing to follow stringent safety measures for the chance to play.

Heather Larowe, Center Sandwich, said parents and students are under represented on the COVID-19 Response team. She also voiced her concern that students were not receiving a full year of Math and asked how free lunch was being funded.

Lisa Staples, Meredith, commented that the District should return to using Google Classroom for virtual learning asserting that Schoology was more complex.

Christina Touhey, Meredith, said she supports the School Board's decision to end sports. While agreeing that the decision was disappointing to many students and parents it was supported by the fact that we are in the midst of a global pandemic.

Laura MacDonald, Meredith, said some parents have paid up to \$1,200 to allow their kids to play club sports year-round and that the School Board let them down by cancelling the fall season.

Sacha Anastasio, Meredith, said the decision to end sports was made based on concerns about the spread of COVID-19 but that every weekend the parking lot at the school is full. She asserted that the board's decision had blind-sided student athletes.

Doug Hentz, Meredith, said Dr. Fauci considers one percent as an acceptable rate of infection. Using infection data for Meredith from WMUR of 16 cases and a population of approximately 6,200 the rate is .0025 or two one thousand.

Chairman Hanson said he has served on the School Board for more than 20 years and has never been associated with a group who have worked harder to provide a good education or with a Superintendent who has worked harder or cared more about students. The School Board made a decision, perhaps an imperfect one but is doing what they perceive is in the best interest of students. He said it was unfair to impugn the School Board as being not caring and insulting to the Superintendent. The School Board and the Administration have been preoccupied with the health and safety of students during a stressful time. He said the School Board has heard all of the comments and credited the speakers for their passion.

V. MINUTES

A. Regular School Board Meeting – October 13, 2020

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. C. Hanson, to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2020 Regular School Board Meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. CURRENT BILLS PAYABLE

A. General Operating Expenses

Mr. C. Hanson moved, seconded by Mr. Billings, to approve the payment of bills, manifests #3010. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT/ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. District/School COVID-19 Update

Superintendent Moriarty reported that the District had been aware of a confirmed case of COVID-19 on Monday morning which prompted the Middle/High School to shift to the Remote Learning Tier. With a third case being identified in the District a number of families are asking to move to the Virtual Learning Pathway; a shift that is impacting staffing.

The goal is to keep class sizes at 15 or less to allow for social distancing inside. The Superintendent said she is concerned about Inter-Lakes Elementary Grade 1, which has classes of 16, 17 and 17. The Administration is recommending the advertising for an anticipated Classroom Teacher but said that the situation may resolve itself. Next steps will be to get feedback from families through a survey, to make staffing adjustments if warranted.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE None

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Public School Infrastructure Fund – Security Improvement

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. C. Hanson, to approve the request for payment in the amount of \$484,000 from the Public School Infrastructure Funds – Security Improvements. The motion passed unanimously.

B. School Calendar Adjustments

Mrs. Moriarty reviewed proposed calendar adjustments to provide teachers additional time for professional learning regarding on-line learning in content specific areas and increase skills in the use of Schoology.

Ms. Merrill moved, seconded by Ms. Starmer, to approve the School Calendar adjustments as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Winter Athletics

The Administration stated that thoughtful consideration is needed as we begin to look at the concept of winter athletics. Limiting spectators and keeping within Belknap County and not competing against teams from Merrimack County would mitigate some risk. The Centers for Disease Control graphic shows that the highest risk of infection is posed by full competition from teams from different areas. The NHIAA has set January 11 as the first day of competition. The Administration said there was no recommendation at this time.

XI. POLICY No Action Required

XII. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

A. Members of the Board None

B. Members of the Administration

Mr. Jeremy Hillger, Sandwich Central School Principal; Mr. Michael Bryant, Inter-Lakes Elementary School Principal; and Mr. Scott Currier, Inter-Lakes Middle/High School Principal provided an update on their students' participation in State testing that provides data points to track academic success. Principals also commented on positive feedback and popularity of using Page Pond as an Outdoor Classroom.

XIII. PUBLIC INPUT

A member of the public commented that decisions about fall sports were made before there was a single positive case among students. They also questioned why Sandwich Central School was being closed when the positive case was reported at the Meredith campus.

Ms. Merrill responded that it could be an instance in which a sibling goes to Inter-Lakes Middle/High or Elementary School.

Superintendent Moriarty indicated that the closure was part of the original plan approved by the school board back in August to ensure we didn't have any overlap and to give the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services time to compete contact tracing. The district's first case was on October 15. The administration became aware of a second case on Saturday and that there had been no close contacts allowing for Sandwich Central School and Inter-Lakes Elementary School to remain open.

Liz Littell asked what the procedure is for the school to be cleaned. The Superintendent responded that each case is unique but that the protocol is to leave the space vacant for 24-hours after the District learns of an identified case. In the most recent case, there was a weekend in between during which the school was thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

Ms. Littell asked whether the Board and the Administration could guarantee that they would not make a decision about winter sports without public input and that the School Board not the COVID-19 Response Team would be the decider.

Chairman Hanson said the situation is new for the School Board as well as the public. The Board has received a great deal of input; the goal is to create as much normalcy as possible within the limits of safety. He said he thinks that reasonable people can

disagree. He said there would be an opportunity for public input prior to a decision being made on winter athletics.

Dylann Anastasio, ILM/HS Student, said he was number #64 on the Football Team and that as a result of the Board's action tonight was the last time he would put on his jersey. He said the Board's decision ruined his senior year.

Fellow footballer Devon Schwarz said other teams in Division III were still playing.

Julie Hayward, Meredith, said she helped start the middle school football group that had the opportunity to play four games. When the decision to cancel the fall sports season was announced she said she sent an email to the School Board, but felt the need to address concerns publicly. She asked that the Administration collaborate with local schools and the Athletic Directors. She was saddened that the team couldn't finish its season against Franklin a team it had already played.

Doug Hentz, Meredith, asked that the parent representatives on the COVID Response Team be identified.

Reed Leberman is the parent representative. There are no student representatives because of the sensitive nature of the information being discussed.

Major Larowe, Center Sandwich, said the more time students spend in school the better off they are. While nationwide some 200,000 COVID deaths have been reported, Larowe asked how many school children in N.H. had died from it. Chairman Hanson said to his knowledge, none.

Nicholas Schwarz, Meredith, said he believed the COVID-19 Response Team would benefit from a local physician who was actively engaged in treating patients over those who had retired from a career in public health.

Michael Hayward, Meredith, said he believed the School Board had overstepped their bounds in making the decision to end fall sports.

Chuck Buhrman, Center Harbor, said he hoped that School Board would take more public input before making a decision on whether to pull the plug on winter sports.

Superintendent Moriarty said the concern is community spread and the risk of bringing the virus back to the District and the resulting impact on in-person education time. She felt that was not a reasonable risk to take given the rising positive case numbers in Belknap County.

Bruce Vaal, Meredith, commented that the public was never going to penalize the administration for exercising a safety risk and maintained it was a poor excuse for the decision.

Joe Doda, ILM/HS Senior questioned what the sensitive topics were that were being discussed precluding student representation on the COVID-19 Response Team.

The Superintendent responded that no names are used, but that other sensitive information was discussed.

Tom Gintof, Meredith, asked for the timeline and process for the winter sports decision? He was advised it would be a topic for the School Board's November 10 meeting

XIV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Tuesday, November 10, 2020 – Inter-Lakes Community Auditorium

- Inter-Lakes Special School Board Meeting – **6:00 p.m.**

B. Tuesday, December 8, 2020 – Inter-Lakes Community Auditorium

- Inter-Lakes Regular School Board Meeting – **6:00 p.m.**

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Merrill moved, seconded by Mr. Billings, to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.
The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted.

Bea Lewis Wheeler
School District Clerk