

Inter-Lakes School Board Regular Meeting
Inter-Lakes Community Auditorium
1 Laker Lane, Meredith NH
March 21, 2023 @ 5:15 p.m.*
**Public Session Starts at 6:00 p.m.*
Additional Public Access via Google Meet

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Moriarty called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. Mrs. Moriarty reminded those present that School Board will enter Nonpublic Session first, then reopen public session at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

RECORD ROLL

Members Present:

Ms. Lisa Merrill, Chair
Mr. Mark Billings, Vice-Chairman
Ms. Siobhán Balázs
Ms. Nancy Starmer
Mr. Craig Baker
Mr. Charley Hanson, Secretary
Mr. Duncan Porter-Zuckerman

Members Absent:

None

Administrators Present:

Mrs. Mary Moriarty, Superintendent
Ms. Elaine Dodge, Director of Student Services
Dr. Amanda Downing, ILM/HS Principal

Others Present:

Mr. Chris Mega, Video Recorder
Members of the Public
Ms. Heather Bullimore, Recording Secretary

NONPUBLIC SESSION

RSA 91-A3(c) – This includes matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this Board, unless such a person requests an open meeting.

Mr. Hanson moved, seconded by Mr. Porter-Zuckerman, to enter Nonpublic Session. Mr. Hanson called the Roll Call Vote.

YES: Ms. Merrill, Mr. Billings, Ms. Balázs, Ms. Starmer, Mr. Baker, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Porter-Zuckerman

NO: --

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Porter-Zuckerman moved, seconded by Mr. Baker, to return to Public Session. Mr. Hanson called the Roll Call Vote.

YES: Ms. Merrill, Mr. Billings, Ms. Balázs, Ms. Starmer, Mr. Baker, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Porter-Zuckerman

NO: --

The motion carried unanimously. Public Session reopened at 5:51 p.m.

The Board entered a recess at 5:52 p.m.

Mrs. Moriarty called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

Mrs. Moriarty explained the process of reorganization of the School Board.

A. School Board Chair

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. Duncan Porter-Zuckerman, to elect Lisa Merrill as Chair of the School Board. The motion carried 7-0.

B. Vice-Chairman

Ms. Starmer moved, seconded by Mr. Porter Zuckerman, to elect Mark Billings as Vice-Chairman of the School Board. The motion carried 7-0.

C. Secretary

Mr. Porter-Zuckerman moved, seconded by Mr. Baker, to elect Charley Hanson as Secretary of the School Board. The motion carried 7-0.

BUSINESS OF THE BOARD

A. 2023/2024 School Board Schedule

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. Porter-Zuckerman, to approve the 2023/2024 School Board schedule as presented. The motion carried 7-0.

B. Committee Assignment Interests

Mrs. Moriarty explained the process of choosing committee members. This will be done at the next Board meeting. No action was taken.

MINUTES

A. February 21, 2023 Regular School Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Ms. Starmer, to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2023 Regular School Board Meeting. The motion carried 6-0-1. Mr. Hanson abstained.

CURRENT BILLS PAYABLE

A. General Operating Expenses

Mr. Hanson moved, seconded by Mr. Billings, to approve the payment of bills, manifest #3028. The motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT – *Opened at 6:04 p.m.*

Please clearly state your name and town of residence.

OLD BUSINESS**A. Non-Discrimination Policy**

Mrs. Moriarty explained that the administration has updated the seventh/eighth grade multi-stall bathrooms to be single-use bathrooms. The interior looks the same, but the exterior doors now have locks that say "vacant" or "occupied." There is a sign on the door that states that only one student is to use the restroom at a time. The administration plans to make these changes for the fifth/sixth grade wing at Inter-Lakes Elementary School, and their objective over time is to try to convert all restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms. This will be a financial commitment and will take some time.

Peyton Harper, an eighth-grade student, expressed her concerns regarding the District's nondiscrimination policy being misused, and suggested that the School Board should revise the policy to help keep students safe and comfortable.

Leah Meeken, an eighth-grade student, thanked the School Board and the administration for the changes to the bathroom system, and expressed concerns about the safety of the new system, noting that the bathrooms with locks on the doors might result in multiple people going into the bathroom and locking the door behind them.

Lisa Miles, Meredith, has two female students at Inter-Lakes Middle School. Back in December, her eighth-grade daughter felt uncomfortable with a biological male in the women's restroom. The wording specific to the bathroom use is in question right now and whether the administration is interpreting it as intended. Mrs. Miles stated that she does not believe this is an LGBTQ+ issue and noted that she supports nondiscrimination for all students. The policy regarding the bathroom states that a student who identifies as transgender should be permitted to use the restroom assigned to their gender which the individual consistently asserts at school or work. If somebody is a biological female, uses "he/him" pronouns, yet still appears and asserts themselves as female, why would they be able to use the male bathroom? This is the situation at the school. The policy also states that single-occupancy restrooms will be provided if an individual expresses the need for one. The school has done a phenomenal job providing single-occupancy restrooms. The policy goes on to say that no individual will be required to use a single occupancy stall over their objection. The girls in eighth grade were told they had to use the single stall bathroom if they feel uncomfortable, even though they wanted to use the female bathroom. The bathroom issue has been somewhat resolved, but the bathrooms look the same inside. Girls feel uncomfortable going into the old boys' bathroom. There are lines to use restrooms. The largest concern is safety. The bathroom walls are cement, and now have a locking door on them. Multiple students can go in and lock the door behind them. It seems impossible for the school to monitor who is going in and out. If somebody was in there and had an emergency, it is unlikely anyone would be able to intervene. Ms. Miles asked the Board to value parent input in this situation.

Edward Twaddell of Meredith has two kids in the Inter-Lakes School District. Mr. Twaddell said that the policy should not be maintained as written. There are several sections that are too vague. First, the current policy uses the phrase "the gender which the student consistently asserts at school" in reference to use of restrooms, but the policy does not clearly define the term "consistent." Second, the current policy specifically references that a student may assert a gender at school that is different than the one they assert at home. Mr. Twaddell recommended the policy be amended to make a clear assertion as to whether the school shall inform the parents if they assert a different gender at school than at home. Thirdly, for overnight field trips, the policy allows transgender students to be housed with the gender they identify with and chaperones to be assigned to the gendered group with which they identify. Mr. Twaddell expressed concern with this and recommended that parents should be notified prior to such circumstances occurring. Fourth, there may be risks associated with transgender students playing contact sports. Overall, Mr. Twaddell asserted that the policy is too vague and should be amended.

Sam Weil-Cooley is an eighth-grade student who is nonbinary. They explain that for them, the bathroom changes have provided comfort. They no longer have to miss class time to travel down to the single-stall bathroom, making it easier for them to stay on top of their work and maintain their mental health. Feeling comfortable at school is beneficial to not only their well-being, but also the community they are a part of. Previously, they did not feel safe using gender-separated bathrooms. When they go into these new single-occupancy, gender-neutral bathrooms, they feel that their comfort is valued in this school. They also expressed that the option to room with someone they feel comfortable with on overnight field trips is something they are eternally grateful for. They are grateful for the fact that their gender is considered valid within the school space.

Maribel Gasque-Storms of Center Harbor, noted that when there is a drill at the school, parents get notified weeks ahead. Parents are given an opportunity to discuss the drills with their children to ensure their comfort and safety. Ms. Gasque-Storm was taken aback at the lack of communication from the school regarding removing the signs on the bathrooms, and the assembly held without notifying the parents. An amendment to the policy should be implemented. She asked the School Board to look at the big picture, and noted that no policy change, especially when it comes to safety, wellbeing and education, should be rushed. Ms. Gasque-Storms was upset that she found out about the bathroom changes from her child rather than from the school administration. Parents deserve to know about this change. She noted that adults are modeling behavior. Respect, love, and empathy should be the bottom line. If the Board makes a decision that only respects one portion of the students, then they need to keep looking for a better solution. Choices need to be made strategically and intentionally, not emotionally.

Melaney Hodge of Sandwich is an Inter-Lakes graduate and has a daughter in eleventh grade at Inter-Lakes High School. Ms. Hodge works in Moultonborough at the high school, where the bathrooms are all single-stall and always have been. The walls are cement and the doors are steel. The school has never had an issue with students being unsafe in the bathrooms. She noted that she does not have gender

separated bathrooms at home. There is no reason why school can't work that way too to make everyone comfortable. Ms. Hodge expressed support for the policy as written.

Dr. Downing read an email comment from Lyndsey Weiner of Meredith. Ms. Weiner expressed support for the policy as written and urged the Board to expand policy by defining LGBT terms specifically and to add guidelines to ensure discrimination-free environments. This would help to ensure that all students could feel more protected.

Nicole Beaubeauf from Sandwich said that she is getting a lot of her information about what is going on at the school from her child. Today, her daughter told her that next year the school is making the locker rooms all "nonbinary". She doesn't even know if her daughter knows what nonbinary means. She asked the School Board and the administration if this was true.

Mary Moriarty said no, that is not true. The District is in the process of having an architect look at locker rooms, and at the April meeting they will present their conceptual drawings. There will certainly still be gender-specific locker rooms, and potentially an opportunity for gender-neutral locker rooms as well.

Gus Kusch is a former Sandwich Central School and Inter-Lakes Middle School student who transferred out of the district, but still has friends and a brother in the Inter-Lakes School District and feels very connected to the community. At his school, New Hampton, there are only "all-gender" bathrooms. They're single-stall, the walls are at least 8 inches of cement, and the doors are 2+ inches of wood. There has never been a problem with assault or self-harm. The bathrooms have been this way for at least 50 years. Mr. Kusch reiterated that this is an LGBTQIA+ issue. It directly affects people in the LGBTQIA+ community. Although he not transgender, Mr. Kusch has seen what feeling discriminated against is like for trans individuals. A lot of that has to do with gendered activities and bathrooms in schools. He is saddened to hear that people are worried that their children do not have a full or thorough understanding of what terms like transgender and nonbinary actually mean. He thinks this goes beyond an issue of gendered bathrooms or activities and sports, and that it has to do with education and an understanding that community members owe to each other. Recently at New Hampton, Mr. Kusch organized a celebration called Stand Up Day, a day to educate each other on LGBTQIA+ topics, so that people who truly just didn't understand those things might get to know people in the community and foster more of a sense of community. A lot of this discussion has to do with people not understanding each other, and not having the opportunity to do so. He urged everyone going forward to educate themselves and to ask the Inter-Lakes community how we can better educate the community as a whole on this topic.

Nicole Brunt of Meredith is the mother of a transgender child and a cisgender male child. As a parent, she struggles with the way the policy is written. The policy is vague and needs clarification. She expressed love and support for the community, and concluded that the wording of the policy needs to be reevaluated.

Public comment closed at 6:40 p.m.

Lisa Merrill commended the members of the public for sharing their thoughts. Safety is paramount, and the School Board wants everyone to feel comfortable using the restrooms. All of the School District policies are reviewed by attorneys as a matter of law. The policies must follow federal and state regulations.

A member of the public asked if Ms. Merrill could read the relevant RSAs out loud.

Ms. Merrill read RSA 193:38, RSA 354-A:1, and a legal opinion from the School District's Attorney which confirmed that the policy is correctly written to provide protections and adhere to state and federal law.

Mr. Porter-Zuckerman moved, seconded by Mr. Baker, to maintain the non-discrimination policy as written.

Mr. Billings notes that the motion suggests maintaining the policy as it stands. Mrs. Moriarty noted that the policy went to the Policy Review Committee on January 4th. Tonight, there would be no changes. This is an unusual circumstance. The motion is to accept the policy as it is written. It was unchanged in the previous policy review.

A member of the public asked, if the Policy Review Committee has met to discuss this policy since the January 4th Policy Review Committee Meeting.

Lisa Merrill confirmed that the Policy Review Committee had met to discuss it, and reiterated that Public Comment is closed.

Nancy Starmer said that, having heard the public comment, it strikes her that we often come to situations like this where there is a legal issue. There are a lot of laws that are vague. Sometimes they are vague because they have to apply to all schools, businesses, public institutions, etc. What she is hearing from the public comment is that the Board needs to take what is in this law and in this policy and clarify for parents and students what these terms mean, how and why the District is interpreting this law this way, why the District chooses to make changes like having single-stall bathrooms, and how that fits into this policy. She thinks the policy and the laws on which the policy is based offer an opportunity to do that. It's up to the Board now to say what this law means in this context. People are asking for interpretation, clarification and definitions. Ms. Starmer thinks the School Board can do that without going back to policy review. Though the School Board is bound by particular statutes, that doesn't mean it cannot hear these comments and respond to them appropriately.

The motion carried 7-0.

SUPERINTENDENT/ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Enrollment Report

There are currently 928 students enrolled in the School District, including special education students up to age 22.

B. Financial Updates

Mrs. Moriarty reported that there is about \$800,000 available at this stage. That is a healthy position to be at; however, Mrs. Moriarty anticipates some unplanned for special expenses over the next couple of months.

Mr. Hanson asked if there is currently any money in special education.

Mrs. Moriarty said yes. The goal would be to fund new special education programs through general funding, and if there is a situation that requires additional funding, the administration would request a public hearing for permission to use special education funding. Nothing has been drawn from the special education trust yet. Mrs. Moriarty estimates that the trust is at \$300,000 at the moment, which can easily be the cost one out-of-district placement if transportation is accounted for.

NEW BUSINESS**A. Professional Employee Nominations 2023-2024**

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. Hanson, to approve Teacher Nominations as presented. The motion carried 7-0.

B. New Hires 2023-2024

Mr. Porter-Zuckerman moved, seconded by Mr. Baker, to approve New Hires as presented. The motion carried 7-0.

C. Rotary Youth Exchange Request

Mr. Porter-Zuckerman moved, seconded by Mr. Hanson, to approve the request. The motion carried 7-0.

D. Donations

- Donation from the White Sylvania Trust to be applied the SCS Student Activities fund to fund field experiences and extra-curricular activities in the amount of \$2,000.
- To be applied to the Student Activities Future Business Leaders of America
 - Donation from the Lucky Dog Tavern to be applied to the Student Activities Future Business Leaders of America in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Hayward & Company in the to be applied to the Student Activities Future Business Leaders of America in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Edward Jones in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella, PLLC in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Meredith Landing Real Estate LLC in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Oliver Mechanical, Inc. in the amount of \$1,000.
 - Donation from Jonathan Ferrante in the amount of \$500.
- To be applied to the After-Prom Party Student Activities Club to be used for future activities within the club:
 - Donation from EM Health, Inc. in the amount of \$250.
 - Donation from Edward J. Detolla DDS PLLC in the amount of \$400.

- Donation from Ames Associates, LLC in the amount of \$250 in the amount of \$250.
- Donation from Hayward & Company in the amount of \$500.
- Donation from Realgreen Lawn and Landcare, LLC in the amount of \$500.
- Donation from Elizabeth MC Schubert Trust to be applied to the Student Activities' Robotics Club for future robotics activities in the amount of \$500.

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Ms. Balazs, to accept, with gratitude, the donations as presented. The motion carried 7-0.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Tuesday, April 11, 2023

Inter-Lakes School Board @ Humiston Building – Conference Room

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

B. Date TBD

Inter-Lakes School Board Policy Review Committee @ TBD

- Policy Review Committee Meeting – Time TBD

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Baker moved, seconded by Ms. Balazs, to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Bullimore
Recording Secretary