

SAULT STE. MARIE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN 49783
REGULAR MEETING, BOARD OF EDUCATION
Phone 906/635-6609

Minutes – Monday, January 11, 2021

154. **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Smith called the electronic Zoom meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
Electronic Meeting via Zoom: <https://eupschools.zoom.us/j/97280010327> or Dial
In: +1 646 876 9923 Meeting ID: 972 8001 0327

155. **A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD**

Present: Daniel L. Smith, Christine M. Curtis, Melissa S. Pingatore,
Jay D. Wilson, Lisa A. Young, Caitlin L. Galer, Raymond J. DeWitt

Absent: None

156. **B. OATH OF OFFICE BY NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS**

Member Curtis individually administered the Oath of Office to returning
Board Members Daniel L. Smith and Lisa A. Young, and newly elected
Board Members Caitlin L. Galer and Raymond J. DeWitt.

“I do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United
States and the Constitution of this State, and that I will faithfully discharge
the duties of the office of Member of the Board of Education of Sault Ste.
Marie Area Public Schools, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, according to the
best of my ability.”

157. **C. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The following officers were elected.

It was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Pingatore to
nominate Daniel Smith as President.

There were no other nominations.

Yeas: Curtis, Pingatore, Wilson, Young, Galer, DeWitt

Nays: None

Abstain: Smith

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Daniel Smith accepted the nomination.

President, Daniel Smith

It was moved by Member Pingatore, supported by Member DeWitt, to nominate Christine Curtis as Vice-President.

There were no other nominations.

Yeas: Pingatore, DeWitt, Smith, Wilson, Young, Galer

Nays: None

Abstain: Curtis

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Christine Curtis accepted the nomination.

Vice-President, Christine Curtis

It was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Wilson, to nominate Melissa Pingatore as Treasurer.

There were no other nominations.

Yeas: Smith, Young, Galer, DeWitt, Curtis, Wilson

Nays: None

Abstain: Pingatore

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Member Pingatore accepted the nomination.

Treasurer, Melissa Pingatore

It was moved by Member Pingatore, supported by Member Curtis, to nominate Lisa Young as Secretary.

There were no other nominations.

Yeas: Pingatore, Curtis, Smith, Wilson, Galer, DeWitt

Nays: None

Abstain: Young

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Member Young accepted the nomination.

158. **D. Secretary, Lisa Young**
BOARD COMMITTEES

Appointments were made to the following committees with unanimous support.

2021 Facilities and Grounds Committee

Jay Wilson-Chairman, Daniel Smith, and Raymond DeWitt were appointed to the Facilities and Grounds Committee.

2021 Finance Committee

Christine Curtis-Chairman, Daniel Smith, and Melissa Pingatore were appointed to the Finance Committee.

2021 Superintendent Evaluation Committee

Melissa Pingatore-Chairman and Caitlin Galer were appointed to the Superintendent Evaluation Committee.

2021 Athletic Advisory Committee

Christine Curtis-Chairman, Jay Wilson and Raymond DeWitt were appointed to the Athletic Advisory Committee.

2021 District School Improvement Committee

Lisa Young was appointed to the District School Improvement Committee.

159. **E. LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS NETWORK DESIGNATION**

Member Daniel Smith accepted the position of representative for the Michigan Association of School Boards Legislative Relations Network.

160. **F. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education move to adopt the agenda as revised.

Add item Closed Session for strategy and negotiations to VII. and move Adjournment to VIII.

Yeas: Wilson, Young, Smith, Curtis, Pingatore, Galer, DeWitt
Nays: None

Absent: None
Motion Carried.

161. **G. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Special Meeting - December 29, 2020

It was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Wilson, that the Board of Education approve the December 29, 2020, minutes.

Yeas: Curtis, Wilson, Smith, Pingatore, Young
Nays: None
Abstain: Galer, DeWitt
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

162. **H. BUSINESS REPORT AND APPROVAL OF BILLS – Mrs. Michelle Bennin**

Mrs. Bennin sought approval for the November General Fund Bill List.

Mrs. Bennin reported the first allotment of the \$500,000 State Aid Literacy Grant was received in December. She noted all except \$25,000 of the district’s administering fee would be paid out on behalf of all the participating districts.

Mrs. Bennin reported the December state aid payment was adjusted with the new fall “super blend” calculation resulting in only a 10.57 FTE loss. She reported the state was forced to make the “super blend” formula to keep districts from being penalized if students left their districts for other learning plans due to the pandemic. She noted a greater loss will most likely be realized in the 2021-22 budget.

Mrs. Bennin reported all July and August COVID relief funds have been spent with a large portion used for chrome books and needed PPEs.

Mrs. Bennin reported on the significant revenue from federal sources due to grant drawdowns, the reduction in fund equity due to a third payroll, but an overall increase in projected cash and fund equity compared to last year’s amounts.

Mrs. Bennin reported there was one check that required a second signature for a bus engine overhaul.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Curtis, that the Board of Education approve the General Fund Bill List in the amount of \$2,491,248.28 for December.

Yeas: Wilson, Curtis, Smith, Pingatore, Young
Nays: None
Abstain: Galer, DeWitt
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

II. COMMUNICATIONS

163. A. *REPORTS TO THE BOARD*

1. Audit Report - Rehmann

Rehmann Auditor Kim Lindsay reported on the 2020 comprehensive audit.

Mr. Lindsay reported the district received the highest rating of an Unmodified Opinion. He noted there were no findings or reportable conditions with the audit and thanked Mrs. Bennin and her staff for assisting with providing the necessary documents.

2. Extended Continuity of Learning Plan – Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer

Mrs. Scott-Kronemeyer reported the district had been operating face-to-face for six days since the last board meeting. She noted the district's average daily attendance rate has been 95% and the highest number of students absent from the district due to parental concern for the spread of COVID has been 41.

Mrs. Kronemeyer reported approximately 30 students plan to return to face-to-face instruction for second semester and 25 students plan to move into Virtual Blue. She noted there will be a short turnaround to ensure adequate staff is in place for second semester as enrollment can sway heavily by grade level.

Mrs. Kronemeyer thanked families who have broadband internet for returning district hotspots upon returning to face-to-face instruction so they could be reassigned to other students.

Mrs. Kronemeyer reported the district transparency site is maintained with current information.

Mrs. Kronemeyer reported the mid-year MAP testing is being conducted required to be done mid-year and this year's results will be shared at the February board meeting.

3. Athletic Update – Mr. Steve Lockwood

Mr. Lockwood reported except for Wrestling, which is slated to start January 25, MHSAA has given approval for winter competitions to begin January 22. He stated MHSAA’s last order allowed for fall sports to continue and there was hope at that time for winter sports to begin January 15.

Mr. Lockwood indicated he had not heard of any spectator limits yet.

There were no questions.

164. **B. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

1. Remote Learning

Dr. Hall announced he was comfortable with having students back in the buildings and would not be recommending a change from face-to-face instruction at this time.

Superintendent Hall reported there have been 50 students and 8 staff that tested positive with COVID so far.

Superintendent Hall reported there are 30 students and 6 staff members quarantining throughout the next couple of weeks.

Superintendent Hall reported the district has been operating with substitutes in all categories over the last several months, but if there was an illness breakout, it could get difficult to keep everything running.

Karen Senkus reported the county’s positivity rate had slightly decreased from a week ago, but it is still running strong.

Superintendent Hall reported War Memorial Hospital has a 4.6% positive testing rate with 8 patients being hospitalized.

Superintendent Hall reported over the past 2 weeks 30% of the 535 new COVID cases in the tri area were from Chippewa County. He stated the numbers are moving in the right direction, but discussion needs to continue.

Superintendent Hall reported the health department and hospital have seen some post-holiday gathering COVID cases and they are somewhat concerned.

Superintendent Hall reported there has been a lot of discussion with the health department on the Phase 1B vaccine rollout to employees in the school setting with face-to-face instruction. He emphasized the health department has been overwhelmed with phone calls, and they have been receiving the vaccine slower than originally expected. Dr. Hall suggested the delay was most likely due to the lowering of age for the first rollout from 75 to 65. He further explained that given the number of people in our group and the requirement for two shots, it could literally take months to get all school employees vaccinated.

Superintendent Hall reported 80% of the staff had indicated they are interested in receiving the vaccine and the health department is extremely supportive. He further indicated the district would stay vigilant in working with the health department on how to roll out the vaccine.

Superintendent Hall reported flu cases have been down largely due to the hand washing, face covering, and physical distancing practices associated with stopping the spread of COVID.

Superintendent Hall stated the hospital has been seeing an overall reduction of COVID inpatients, including MDOC prisoners which made up 50% in the past. He noted David Jahn indicated the hospital will remain vigilant.

Superintendent Hall reported he had been updating the Board on student attendance rates across all grade levels and the district is doing well. He confirmed students who had initially opted for virtual learning are continuing to return to school.

Superintendent Hall reported JKL School was operating under a hybrid model, but the rest of the area schools are open for face-to-face instruction.

Superintendent Hall reported he is not recommending a move away from face-to-face instruction and the Board would need to make a motion and vote if it wanted to modify the existing plan.

Upon inquiry from Member Wilson, Superintendent Hall reported the only transmission of COVID from school involved one small classroom for 3- and 4-year-olds at the Malcolm Complex. Superintendent Hall reported the district had not been contacted by the health department on any of our buildings being hotspots. He noted there was just one situation involving the JV football team early on.

2. Capital Projects

- a. Superintendent Hall reported the district is looking into moving water and snow away from the Washington School building and roof to reduce ice build-up and stop leaks. He stated an RFP would go in hopes of asking the Board to award a bid in March.
- b. Superintendent Hall reported a section of the Middle School roof that had not been addressed with the 1999-20 site bonds was now in need of repair. He confirmed Mrs. Bennin had posted an RFP in hopes of bringing a recommendation to the Board in February.

3. Retirement

Superintendent Hall announced his retirement from the district effective June 30, 2020. He confirmed a letter would be submitted to the district following the meeting and stated it was an honor to serve the district alongside a host of outstanding board members, staff, and students, but he will most likely miss watching the students grow and develop friends the most. He reported he had been talking with President Smith about his intentions of retiring over the past two years.

Superintendent Hall reported the district has a lot of work to do such as physical construction, migrating to a new student software system, confirming back to face-to-face instruction, and negotiations. He indicated he would provide some comment to the board on superintendent search firms and will keep busy working to make a smooth and timely transition for everyone.

President Smith confirmed there were no questions.

President Smith acknowledged his good working relationship with Dr. Hall over the past 10 years.

165. C. *AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION*

President Smith reviewed the process for how the audience could address the Board.

Mr. Nick Huyck reported he wanted to give some constructive parental feedback on the students return to school. He indicated he could see some children got their rhythm and emotional attitude back upon the return to school. He thanked the board for allowing students to return to face-to-face instruction.

Mr. Huyck welcomed the new board members, thanked Dr. Hall for his years of service, and stated he was sad to see him retire.

Mr. Stephen Minta congratulated Dr. Hall on his retirement, thanked the board for allowing students to return to school, and inquired on when extended clubs or groups would be allowed to use the buildings. He stated he had emailed some of the board members over the weekend and would adhere to any rules MDHHS required for wrestling.

Superintendent Hall indicated facility use would be presented to the Board for a discussion and vote later in the meeting.

Upon inquiry from Member DeWitt, Mr. Minta speculated the Sault Youth Wrestling team would have about 20 students in grades kindergarten through eighth.

Jody Burtt sought permission to allow Sault Youth Wrestling to return and use the high school balcony for practices 2 to 3 nights a week even though it is not a Sault School sanctioned club. She noted the program has been a good community feeder for youth to stay fit, learn the skills and gain experience to move up to and make high school sports successful.

On behalf of Superintendent Hall's retirement announcement, Tim Hall thanked his father Dr. Tim Hall for the years of taking education seriously, for setting an example, for his service to the district, and for the years of encouragement in continuing with his education from his youth through adult life.

III. ACTION ITEMS AND BOARD REPORTS

166. **A. REMOTE LEARNING – Superintendent Hall**

Superintendent Hall acknowledged there was no need for a vote since it appeared Board consensus was to keep with the current form of instruction.

President Smith confirmed there were no objections or questions.

167. **B. EXTENDED CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLAN – Mrs. Amy Scott-Kronemeyer**

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education affirm the current Extended Continuity of Learning Plan.

Yeas: Wilson, Pingatore, Smith, Curtis, Young, Galer, DeWitt

Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

168. **C. *FACILITY USAGE – Superintendent Hall***

Superintendent Hall reported the use of facilities for non-school sponsored events had been discussed administratively and it is the recommendation to not allow non-school sponsored groups access to the facilities at this point, but to revisit the possibility on a month-to-month basis.

He asked the Board to postpone acting on a motion until next month to allow for more time in obtaining a stabilized COVID rate, to receive direction from MDHHS and MHSAA, and to confirm DM Burr custodians would have enough time in between events to properly clean facilities.

President Smith stated he did not have a problem with revisiting this item next month as it should be well beyond the post-holiday incubation period.

Member DeWitt questioned allowing spectators in the buildings but no other groups. Superintendent Hall suggested waiting for further information from MHSAA so the district could follow the same rules.

Member Wilson apologized for not having an opportunity to respond to Mr. Minta’s email and stated he hoped to receive some guidance on MHSAA and MDHHS orders, so a clear decision can be made on allowing non sanctioned groups back in the schools.

Member Curtis reported on her desire to open the schools for outside activities, especially the teachers’ fitness group, but agreed with Member DeWitt that the board needs more information on keeping everyone safe and looked forward to hearing back from Mr. Lockwood at the February meeting.

It was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Wilson, that the district continue to keep school facilities closed for outside activities and revisit the matter at the regular February meeting.

Member Pingatore indicated she would like to revisit the option next month, so everyone is comfortable voting.

No vote was required or taken.

169. **D. *2019-2020 AUDIT APPROVAL – Mrs. Michelle Bennin***

President Smith reported on the requirement to approve the annual audit. He stated the district had already passed it on to the state as required.

It was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education accept the 2019-20 audit as presented.

Yeas: Wilson, Pingatore, Smith, Curtis, Young, Galer, DeWitt

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

170. **E. *BANKING RESOLUTION – Mrs. Michelle Bennin***

Mrs. Bennin presented the annual review of depository accounts and signers under the district's Tax ID number.

Mrs. Bennin reported the money market account at CSB was closed for a general fund investment account with better interest at Milaf, the Soo Elementary PTO account at CSB was closed because it now operates under its own Tax ID number, the 2017 Capital Project Fund account at Old Mission was closed because the project is complete, and the 2014 Building and Stie Bond account was closed because the bond is paid off. Mrs. Benin stated there was no change in account signers from last year.

It was moved by Member DeWitt, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education approve the annual banking resolution for the accounts and signers as presented.

Yeas: Dewitt, Young, Smith, Curtis, Pingatore, Wilson, Galer

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

171. **F. *FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE LEAVE ACT – Superintendent Hall***

Superintendent Hall reported the Families First Coronavirus Response Leave Act extends the former federal leave act that expired December 31, 2020, to March 31, 2021. He noted the federal government is allowing organizations to extend their paid leave options for employees who test positive with COVID and fall into certain criteria.

Superintendent Hall reported there has not been a need for employees to use this in the past so he cannot estimate how much it could cost but it is the right thing to do and would take the burden off our staff should they contact the virus and not have sick time to cover their absence.

Superintendent Hall reported our staff is very responsible and generally does not take advantage of leave time, so it is his recommendation to extend leave time through March 31.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, Superintendent Hall confirmed paid sick time would only be for staff member who is sick and only for the actual required leave time.

Upon inquiry from Member DeWitt, Superintendent Hall reported the leave protects employees who do not have sick time to use.

It was moved by Member DeWitt, supported by Member Young, that the Board of Education approve the extension of employee leave as provided in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

Yeas: DeWitt, Young, Smith, Curtis, Pingatore, Wilson, Galer
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

172. **G. GIFTS AND DONATIONS**

1. Meijer donated \$960 in gift cards to the Students in Need/Homeless Program.
2. Chippewa County Sunrise Rotary Club donated \$500 to the Middle School Kidz Klozit.
3. Army Corp of Engineers New Lock Office Team donated \$500 to the Middle School Kidz Klozit.
4. Chippewa Correctional Facility Holiday Giving Committee donated \$600 to the Middle School Kidz Klozit.

It was moved by Member Young, supported by Member Wilson, that the Board of Education accept the above donations with thanks and appreciation.

Yeas: Young, Wilson, Smith, Curtis, Pingatore, Galer, DeWitt
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

173. **IV. ADMINISTRATION REPORTS**

There was none.

174. **V. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND BOARD POLICY ISSUES**

President Smith welcomed new board members and officers.

Member Curtis thanked Superintendent Hall for his years of service and acknowledged that he has been a huge asset to the district.

Member Wilson reported he wanted to piggyback on former Member Joe Cochran's goal of raising the student athlete GPA requirement to possibly 2.0 effective next year. He suggested the Board discuss assembling a committee to review this at next month's meeting.

Superintendent Hall reported there was plenty of time for the Athletic Director to form a committee(s) and present a recommendation prior to next school year.

President Smith suggested having Mr. Lockwood report on the committee(s)'s findings at the June meeting.

Superintendent Hall stated he thinks the Board would like to decide on athlete GPA requirements in July.

Member Wilson reported he would like the Board to vote sooner than later to give students as much time and possible prior to the start of school.

Superintendent Hall reported a July report would give students and families enough time and allow the district to work backwards if necessary.

Superintendent Hall reported the Board had a major decision to make in securing a superintendent search firm. He suggested considering the following questions.

- What is the firm's previous success rate and experience?
- Does the firm have more experience with small districts than large cities?
- Look for firms that work with and match individuals to boards.
- Review the firm's fee structure for reimbursable and travel expenses.
- Ensure there is a previous superintendent on the search committee.
- Look at the firm's strategy, some districts only look at candidates who were previous teachers.
- Make sure the firm will help guide you through the process.

Superintendent Hall stated the Board needs to know at the end of the day they chose the best candidate for the district.

Superintendent Hall reported the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Leadership Institute are two superintendent search firms that are familiar with the hiring of Michigan schools in this region and are less costly than mid-western, larger regional firms. He contrasted using a search firm to a board for hiring a superintendent. He referenced time, impartial review of candidates, and their viability to the district.

Upon inquiry, Superintendent Hall reported the Board could have the ISD conduct a search, but they may not have the time, experience, or resources to dedicate for a diverse group of candidates.

Superintendent Hall suggested the Board think about the kind of candidate(s) they are interested in that would most positively impact the district and students and what kind of external advisory committee they would like to use for discussion at next month's meeting.

Upon inquiry from Member DeWitt, Superintendent Hall estimated the cost of a search firm to be around \$7500.

President Smith reported he was on the Board when Dr. Hall was hired, and he highly recommends securing a search firm. He stated that firm did a good job of vetting and started out with 10 candidates then after their preliminary work, presented around 4 to the Board to be interviewed.

175. **VI. FUTURE PLANNING**

President Smith announced the following meeting and indicated the locations would be determined.

February 8 - Board Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

176. **VII. CLOSED SESSION**

A. MOTION TO GO IN CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Member DeWitt, supported by Member Wilson, that the Board of Education move into closed session in accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act §15.268, 8(c), for strategy and negotiations.

Yeas: DeWitt, Wilson, Smith, Curtis, Pingatore, Young, Galer
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion Carried.

President Smith stated there would not be any action items following the closed session.

The Board went into recess at 8:57 p.m. so all non-board members could log out of the meeting.

177. **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at 9:28 p.m. it was moved by Member Wilson, supported by Member Pingatore, that the Board of Education adjourn the meeting.

Yeas: Wilson, Pingatore, Smith, Curtis, Young, Galer, DeWitt

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried.

Daniel L. Smith, President

Lisa A. Young, Board Secretary

Judy L. Sirk, Recording Secretary