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TIMBERLANE REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Regular Business Meeting
October 15, 2020
7:00PM

Performing Arts Center
40 Greenough Road
Plaistow, NH

Call to Order (00:00:00)

Chairman Farah called the October 15, 2020 meeting of the Timberlane Regional School Board to order at 7:02PM and then led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present

Brian Boyle, Lee Dubé, Kimberly Farah, Barbara Kiszka, Sheila Lowes, Shawn O'Neil, Kristin Savage (arrived 7:30PM) and Jennifer Silva (also arrived 7:30PM)

Seated at the Board Table

Dr. Brian Cochrane, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Jenna Horan, Student Representative

Others Present

Sandy Allaire, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Learning
Lucy Canotas, Director of Elementary Curriculum (K-5)
Geoff Dowd, CFO/Business Administrator
Ken Henderson, Director of Technology
Nancy Louiselle, Director of Human Resources
Mark Pedersen, Director of Secondary Curriculum (6-12)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (00:04:02)

MOTION:	Ms. Lowes motioned to accept the TRSB Regular Business Meeting minutes of October 1, 2020; seconded by Mrs. Kiszka. The motion passed 6-0-0. (Mrs. Savage & Mrs. Silva had not yet arrived.)
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DELEGATES AND INDIVIDUALS (00:04:39)

Stefanie Dube, Danville: I just want to make one quick request of the school board. I can appreciate that you all are working very hard to get the kids back to school full time, five days a week. I do think that parents need to hear more about what you all are doing kind of on a weekly basis as opposed to every couple of weeks, or every month. So, I would ask that there be some sort of mechanism whereby the school board can relay how they are doing on a weekly basis back to the parents. I think that would really be helpful. Thank you.

Paul Blair, Atkinson: I would like to begin by thanking the board for their recent efforts to get the kids back in the classroom. It is definitely noticed and definitely appreciated. I am speaking in hopes that the Board can implement the proposed start date of October 19, 2020 for your phased return, starting with the lower grades. Many families continue to struggle to maintain unsustainable situations and that's associated with the current setup. So, we do implore you to move forward with the current plan, putting those kids back in the classroom for four days.

The Covid numbers and cases in all of our towns are five or less. I know there have been a recent uptick in some other areas in New Hampshire, but all the towns we serve, have one to four (1-4) except for Plaistow that has five. The numbers in our towns are extremely low. I want to make sure they stay that way. Today Governor

Sununu announced that there was a two week ban on hockey. They said that there were twenty-four (24) different schools that were affected by this. In other words, the infection was brought into the school and passed on to other people. I'm not saying that we need to take any drastic action but being that our infection rate threshold is very low, I ask the board to keep a close eye on any activities, extracurricular or otherwise, just to make sure that we can actually deliver on what our number one goal should be which is getting these kids in school. We ask the board to keep a close eye on those activities and the COVID trends. I do think it's very important that we continue to look at it just to make sure that we're putting the kids' education on top of our list of priorities. If we identify any activities that contribute to cases coming into our schools, or even community infection rates in Rockingham County that are rising, we ask that this board take whatever actions they can, or they deem necessary. Obviously, you can't enforce things that are going on outside of school activities but to do whatever they can to keep our kids in school and allow them to get in school five days. Massachusetts has a much lower infection rate threshold for putting kids in remote. They have a 4% threshold. We don't have that luxury here in New Hampshire by the numbers that were established in the New Hampshire metrics, so I do feel it's really prudent and important that we stay on top of those numbers to keep our kids in school. We don't have that 4% liberty, we must be extra vigilant in limiting our risk, so we can keep our kids in school. Lastly, I just wanted to say one more time: Thank you all for your work, thus far. Sincerely, and we look forward to seeing the kids back in the classroom, as soon as possible. Thank you.

Coral Hampe, Danville: I have been president of the TTA for nearly a month, but I have learned that there are two major aspects to my role, and a goal that has grown from these aspects.

One aspect is to advocate for my members. Most advocating happens during negotiations, and more recently in writing the MOU. I will advocate for what is fair and respectful. Tonight, I advocate for the truth of who decides which phase of the plan we are in. Paragraph two of the MOU states "It is expressly understood by the parties that it is the sole authority of the Timberlane Regional School Board and/or District to approve reopening plans and procedures, and that this MOU is meant to address the impact of the Board's decision which necessitates negotiation over those issues." Respectfully, Dr Farah if I may ask, can either union block or stop any changes to the reopening plan? (Dr. Farah: Not that I am aware of, no.) Please let's all work together on this.

Which brings me to my goal. Our district is comprised of parents, kids, teachers, staff members, admin and many more. We all have the best for kids at the core of our decisions we make. So why can't we just get along? My very lofty goal is to change the negative environment we have made for ourselves. I would like for all of us to get to a point where we can converse respectfully about the future for our kids. In April, teachers were revered and thanked for their work. Now we are vilified for asking if the HVAC systems are up to date. I don't expect things to change overnight. And I hope that going forward we can communicate better and dispel myths early on in an effort to achieve a more positive environment. Will you join me?

The second major aspect of my new role is to speak for the members. Tonight, I would like to speak to the wonderful things our staff members are doing across the District to engage or help students. We are so lucky to have those people in our schools. For instance, kids are going outside for small group work, their teachers have been creating routines for kids that they have gotten used to. The morning announcements are shared not only online for the remote students, but also in school, focusing on CARES goals (challenge, acceptance, responsibility, empower, empathy and self-control).

They're using chalk outside for handwriting skills. Whole grade level meetings are uniting and connecting the kids. Paras are finding unique and effective ways to support learning. Teachers are willing to grow and learn to support families, using Seesaw, a new learning platform we have, and the kids are enjoying the activities on there. Building relationships with kids get to know each other and interact positively. Germinating green bean seeds, this is being done at home. Teachers took the time to make home kits for every one of their students so that the kids can work on that at home so everybody's growing together. There is a haunted neighborhood map

project being started (map skills) that is technology based. We are sharpening order of operation skills by playing bingo and Kahoot. We're watching the Book of Life in Spanish. Eighth graders complete sentences about it; sixth and seventh graders wrote sentences and words to show their understanding. Steam classes are making electronic Halloween decorations. They're learning about informational text using various topics like soap through the ages, Malala and canine search and rescue dogs. The library is having a virtual bookfair, and classes are using Pear Deck, and hyper docs, to discuss self-esteem and coping skills.

I just want to give a quick shout out to the other people on our buildings: the front office staff, the administrative assistants, the technology coordinators. They are running materials for kids, they watch students when parents are late to pick them up from Sports, after their contract time. They track down lost items. They go to the gym; they go to the lost and found. They're answering phone calls and parent questions, and making Ethernet cords to boost the internet signal, so that we do not drop zoom so often. Thank you and have a good evening.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE (00:14:44)

Ms. Horan stated that the middle school is finally feeling like they're getting into a routine since they had a later start than many other students. Their fall athletics are going very well, and they just want to commend the athletes and all the coaches for the hard work that they've done.

All the elementary schools are getting very excited about Halloween. They're incorporating Halloween crafts and activities. Some of the schools are dissecting pumpkins and using the seeds to work on science activities. They want to extend a big thank you to all the teachers, administrators, and all the educators and the hard-working faculty that are keeping everyone safe and healthy.

At the high school things are going very well with athletics. The games are in full swing, and everyone has a real sense of community now that they feel like things are going back to some sense of normalcy. The club's, activities and honor societies are also in full swing. Applications just closed for most honor societies and students will be hearing back shortly.

"I would just like to say a big thank you to all of the delegates and individuals in the last several meetings that have come forward to speak on behalf of the students being in school right now. It is a very interesting time to say the least. I am dealing with students, every single day, who come to me, genuinely afraid or scared because they don't really know about the cases that are going on or the investigations going on, looking into contact tracing and everything. So, although myself and many of my peers would love to be in school full time, everyone there making it feel like last year, I just want to say to everyone listening and everyone here in the building right now, that students are afraid for their safety and health just like we all are every time we go to the grocery store or we go out in public. Truly seeing a student comfortable and safe and happy is so much more important to me and I'm sure a lot of people, then to make our school look good just because we're all in person. So, it's been my job to try and reassure students and tell them that the Board is working diligently and that everyone is going to be safe and happy. But please, I just urge everyone here to take a deep breath and like Ms. Hampe said to try and work together as a team because truly, the only thing that everyone wants here is for students to feel safe and happy. Thank you."

SCHOOL RE-OPENING PLAN UPDATE (00:17:29)

At the last meeting, the Board tasked the Administration to develop and implement or plan to transition to a four-day in school model of instruction. The Administration reviewed all the factors that need to be considered as we move to transition to four days a week. When we get into grades 2-12, there's a lot more complexity that needs to be considered including staffing, accommodations, space restrictions, bus capacity and the logistics for lunches and snacks.

For the District to move to this updated model and try to go for full return as of December 7, 2020 (first day of Trimester 2), that will require that the plan be updated to reflect a minimum of three feet distance with mandatory masks. The date gives the District some time to work on issues and gives parents time to prepare. One issue that generated a lot of discussion was the three-foot distance when students are eating. While some parents may have been comfortable at a six-foot distance, some may not be comfortable with a three-foot distance. Some schools can still maintain a six-foot distance in most classrooms while others may not.

MOTION: Mr. O’Neil motioned to update the plan to reflect minimum three-foot distancing with masks; seconded by Ms. Lowes. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Mrs. Canotas indicated that students have done much better with masks than was expected. She also stated that at the current enrollment numbers, students in Danville will only have two classes that are less than six feet. However, Pollard and Sandown’s enrollments will require all classes to be at three feet. A survey will be sent to parents in early November to assess numbers of returning students. If a large number of students that are currently remote choose to come back into the classroom, this would necessitate another review of what could be done to accommodate that number of students.

HVAC Update (00:33:38)

The in-house HVAC Technician has completed the re-assessment of the deficient rooms as listed by The Lawson Group. Additionally, as requested, all other rooms are in the process of being assessed with anticipated completion date of mid-November (beginning with the High School, Middle School, and then elementary schools, estimated 400+ rooms). The Schedule is pending based on access to classrooms without interrupting learning. A duplicate set of equipment is on order to accelerate this process. A rough quote was received from The Lawson Group to complete this project, estimated at \$52,000.

Mr. Dowd indicated that the second round of testing has thus far produced better results. Because of this, they are still assessing how many air purifiers may be needed. He does not think that there will be a delay in getting the purifiers once ordered.

The Board questioned the life of a filter. The Board requested that a plan be developed and brought back before the Board to quantitatively measure the life span.

CHROMEBOOKS (0040:29)

The new Chromebooks (1,000) have arrived in the United States and are due for delivery sometime late next week. These are all the non-touch screen Chromebooks that were ordered in May and early June. We do not have an ETA yet on the touch screen model. Due to manufacturer cost increases on materials the price on the Chromebooks increased from \$158 to \$174.90 each. This cost was partially offset by removing twenty-five touch screen Chromebooks from our order as we ended up over ordering based on projections from last year. The total price increase was \$10,545 when accounting for the touchscreen Chromebooks removal. Mr. Henderson does anticipate price increases on the touchscreen Chromebooks (quantity of 220) as well when they get closer to shipping.

The Board inquired as to how there is a price increase when we placed an order for them months ago. Mr. Henderson indicated it was due to the cost of the materials going up by the manufacturer that they are passing on to us. If this were a regular day, Mr. Henderson stated he would have pulled the orders back but in these times of remote learning, we would end up paying a lot more than that if we went back out to bid. We likely wouldn’t even get the Chromebooks this year as we would be back at the end of the line. After discussion with Dr. Cochrane, it was decided to stay the course.

The Board questioned whether we should order now for next year. Mr. Henderson explained that the typical budget issue is that the monies don’t become available until July 1st. Last year, the Board was able to free up

some money so that we were able to get those orders in early June. Dr. Cochrane asked Mr. Henderson to investigate all available options, including lease to purchase options, etc.

COVID NUMBERS (00:43:14)

With guidance from NH DHHS and medical professionals, TRSD continues to adapt to the changing conditions associated with COVID-19. To date, TRSD has had a relatively small percentage of staff and students that have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been state mandated to quarantine. In an effort to keep our community informed, TRSD will begin to report out on the known COVID-19 cases and quarantines, posting this information on the district’s website.

There was a lot of discussion around the meaning of potential exposure and communicating information to parents, etc. Often when a communication is sent out, the District has a very small amount of information to go on but is erring on the side of caution and getting the information out as soon as possible. Mr. Pederson indicated that the District does not provide names of students to the state. The state has the name of the positive case and does their own contact tracing.

The Board asked for the historical absenteeism rate for students and staff be added. Mr. Pederson also indicated that quarantine numbers will likely go up when classrooms are moved to three-foot distance because under DHHS guidance, any close contact over ten minutes (in total) will result in quarantine.

AUDIT (01:03:11)

Dr. Farah indicated that there were some areas of concern that need to be addressed:

Trust Fund Reimbursement: The School District continues to carry a receivable from the expendable trust funds in the amount of \$292,024 that relates to kitchen renovations performed in 2013 to the Danville Elementary School kitchen. To date, management has not requested reimbursement for these expenditures. This could cause the general fund unassigned fund balance to be overstated if the reimbursement is never requested or the request is denied by the Trustees of Trust Funds. Trust fund reimbursements should be requested periodically (monthly or quarterly) as amounts are identified. We recommend the School District request reimbursement for the eligible expenditures or remove the receivable from the balance sheet if reimbursement is not going to be requested. (Action Item: 2 weeks to a month)

Dr. Farah asked that Mr. Dowd contact the Plaistow Trustee of the Trust Funds and see what can be done about this now. She also requested a conversation be had about the scholarships that are coming out of the HS that should be coming out of the trust funds. Mr. Dowd explained that this was really an exception for this year because of the change in trustees from Danville to Plaistow. There could be no open items at the time of transfer.

Negative Student Meal Balances During our review of the negative student meal balances, we noted several students with balances exceeding \$100, and a few that even exceeded \$1,000. Negative student meal balances is a concern, we recommend the School District continue to monitor this as well as review and adopt procedures appropriate for the School District with an understanding that this area presents a sensitive area due to the nature of the receivable due to the School District. Further it is recommended that the individuals whom are on the negative student meal balance report be reviewed on a case to case basis to ensure the School District has offered a Free and Reduced application, or in the event of change in circumstances, that the family is made aware of re-application options through the National School Lunch Program. (Action Item: 2 weeks to a month, update)

Dr. Farah also requested a summary on how the District plans to deal with these student activity funds that seem to be an issue across all schools.

MOTION:	Mr. O’Neil motioned to accept the 2019 Audit; seconded by Mr. Dubé. The motion passed 8-0-0.
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2021-2022 BUDGET (01:10:13)

Mrs. Kiszka pointed out that the operating budget that's been proposed shows a \$3M increase. She asked that it be noted that a large driver is the state pushing down the cost of retirement onto the District. The State of NH has increased our contribution from 11.17% to 14.06% for employees and from 17.80% to 21.02% for teachers which equates to over \$1M. The TTA contract is another \$1M in increases. Mr. O'Neil requested that the dollar amount be added to the summary along with the percentages to make it visible to anyone reviewing the documents.

The Board must incorporate the SAU 55 costs into the Timberlane budget. A review of staffing has been discussed, both as a withdrawal plan and as the board. Timberlane's portion of the SAU budget for fiscal year 2021, which is our current year, is about \$1.7 million. Looking at our new SAU staffing plan, however, we're looking at about \$1.5 million. Roughly, there's about a \$255,000 favorable towards Timberlane, as we transition. Dr. Farah indicated that she had emailed counsel regarding which of the two numbers should go into the default budget.

This year's Operating Budget has approximately \$1M in it for Capital Improvement Projects. Only about \$250K of that is currently earmarked. Another item that needs consideration in this current fiscal year, based on the recommendation of our financial consultant, Steve Martin, is a new financial software package. The estimated cost is in the area of \$100K. Dr. Farah requested a list of capital projects for this current fiscal year, with a focus on HVAC systems and roofs for Danville Elementary and Sandown North.

The Board discussed, that in the interest of expediency in the roof repairs given winter is coming, that it would be prudent to authorize the expenditure of the funds now to not delay the project until the next meeting when a vote could be taken.

MOTION:	Ms. Lowes motioned to put new roofs in Danville and Sandown as noted in the CIP; seconded by Mrs. Kiszka. This motion was later withdrawn.
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MOTION:	Ms. Lowes motioned to expend no more than \$200K on two roofs for Danville and Sandown North under the current operating budget; seconded by Mrs. Kiszka. The motion passed 8-0-0.
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Estimated expenses related to COVID-19 for FY2020-21 are \$585K. The Health Trust return of surplus is approximately \$465K. The CARES Act should refund the District \$124K. Other monies are expected but are extremely fluid, so Mr. Dowd has not included them on the budget documents. Mr. O'Neil asked that he also provided a list of what monies might be in flux, with the caveat of we might see some of this, none of this or all of this.

The District is down a significant number of students from last year. The number of students being home schooled this year is a significant factor. (There are seventy-five in elementary alone.) This will result in less revenue from the state.

The Board reviewed the School Board budget. One of the big numbers that we see in the School Board Budget is a huge legal expense line, where we overspent by \$158K. That is in addition to the expenses coming out of the SAU budget, which now we need to factor into the Timberline legal lines. Covid has caused the Board to need to seek counsel quite frequently for personnel and other things. The Board felt that \$90K was likely too low and agreed to extend it to \$120K.

Mr. Dowd stated that the \$600K addition in Special Education Private is proposed in the budget. It is not finalized as its generally reviewed later in the budget process. There are some assumptions in that line right now. Special Education is scheduled to go before the Budget Committee in another month or two meetings. Before that meeting, we would have a refresher on what that looks like this, this date of the very early budget process and that data tends to change dramatically from the beginning of the year until even November.

The Board discussed how to best use the \$465K Health Trust money. Ultimately, the Board decided to leave the money alone and if a public hearing is needed to use it, they will notice that when appropriate.

POLICIES (01:57:13)

The board reviewed policy JIA, Student Due Process Rights, for first read.

MOTION: Mrs. Savage motioned to accept Policy JIA, Student Due Process Rights, as a first read; seconded by Mrs. Kiszka. The motion passed 8-0-0.
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SUPERINTENDENT'S GOALS (01:58:36)

Given the SAU is in transition, goals were not done for the Superintendent. Dr. Farah suggested the Board vote on the goals below and then she would notify the SAU Chairman Boyle of Timberlane's goals for the Superintendent.

1. Oversight of, and participation in, the Development and implementation of the School Reopening plans
2. Review and evaluate existing District/SAU and School Administrative structure and function in preparation for the 2021-22 School year and the new SAU. Oversee relevant staffing processes and decisions. Review current administrative evaluation processes and make recommendations for change as required.
3. Conduct a full review of Special Education and associated processes and procedures.
4. Participate in and support the negotiation of four new collective bargaining units/agreements.

MOTION: Ms. Lowes motioned to approve goals the Superintendent's goals for Timberlane for 2021; seconded by Mr. O'Neil. The motion passed 8-0-0.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH (02:01:34)

The Board discussed the job description for the incoming Superintendent. There were many facets to the discussion including regional or national search, Doctorate, experience, certification requirements, comparable sized districts, where to post, when to post, etc. The timeline for a Superintendent hire is February 2021.

ADMINISTRATORS REPORT (02:20:00)

MOTION: Ms. Lowes motioned to accept the donation from Hannaford's for \$585 for the 2019 Hannaford Helps Schools Program and \$792 for the 2020 Hannaford Helps Schools Program for Sandown North; seconded by Mr. Dubé. The motion passed 8-0-0.

MOTION: Ms. Lowes motioned to accept the donation from Hannaford's for \$864, \$1000, and \$1128 for the 2019 and 2020 Hannaford Helps Schools Program for the Timberlane Middle School; seconded by Mrs. Savage. The motion passed 8-0-0.

PERSONNEL REPORT (02:22:13)

Dr. Cochrane indicated that TRMS Counselor Patricia Fanning plans to retire at the end of the school year after 32 years of dedicated service to the District.

MOTION: Mr. O'Neil motioned to accept the retirement of Mrs. Fanning; seconded by Ms. Lowes with gratitude. The motion passed 8-0-0.

COMMITTEE REPORTS (02:23:01)

Mr. Boyle stated that the CIP committee met and wants to concentrate on HVAC systems and roofs. He hopes to have real projects and hard numbers for the next Board meeting.

Mrs. Kiszka informed the Board that the District received a \$36K LED reimbursement check. Dr. Farah said the Energy Committee would like the Board to authorize more LED lighting in the current year budget.

Mrs. Silva indicated the C&A committee met and had some very good discussions on the foreign language program, PE credits, graduation credits, etc. They are looking to have some recommendations for the Board relative to the Program of Studies in December. Summer work procedure is also being worked on.

MOTION: Ms. Lowes motioned to go into non-public under 91-A:3, Paragraph II (a) (The dismissal, promotion or compensation or disciplining of any public employee) and (c) (Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person); seconded by Mrs. Silva.

The Board was polled:

Boyle – Yes	Dube – Yes	Farah – Yes	Kiszka – Yes
Lowes- Yes	O’Neil – Yes	Savage – Yes	Silva – Yes

The motion carried 8-0-0 and the Board entered nonpublic session at 9:28PM.

MOTION: Mrs. Kiszka motioned to exit the non-public meeting; seconded by Mr. O’Neil.

The Board was polled:

Boyle – Yes	Dubé – Yes	Farah – Yes	Kiszka – Yes
Lowes- Yes	O’Neil – Yes	Savage – Yes	Silva – Yes

The motion carried 8-0-0.

With no other business before the board, Chairman Farah adjourned the meeting at 10:38PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Lancaster
Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board on November 5, 2020.