



HUDSON SCHOOL DISTRICT ♦ Hudson, New Hampshire  
Hills Memorial Library, 18 Library Street

6:30 pm

Regular Meeting  
Non-Public Session

## Hudson School Board Meeting Minutes February 7, 2022

### In attendance:

#### Board Members

Gary Gasdia, Chairman  
Diana LaMothe, Vice-chair  
Ethan Beals  
Mike Campbell  
Gretchen Whiting

#### SAU Staff

Larry Russell, Superintendent of Schools  
Rachel Borge, Director Special Services  
Jennifer Burk, Business Administrator  
Terry Wolf, Director of Strategic Engagement & Communication

### A. Call to Order

Mr. Gasdia called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

### B. Non-public Session

*Mr. Beals made a motion to enter non-public session according to RSA 91-A:3 (c) at 6:00 pm, second by Ms. Whiting. Motion passed 5-0.*

The superintendent search was discussed. The names of individual candidates were indicated.

*Mr. Beals made a motion to exit non-public at 6:23 pm, second by Ms. Whiting. Motion passed 5-0.*

The regular meeting began at 6:30 pm and Mr. Gasdia led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. Public Input - Non-Covid Related [0:00:55]**

There was no public input regarding non-Covid related issues.

***Ms. LaMothe made a motion to order the next items as: Farm Equipment Replacement, Student Wellness and Support, Covid Update and Public Input. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.***

**D. Farm Equipment Replacement [0:01:52]**

The current tractor needs repair. Three quotes were received and the preference was the John Deere tractor which was the most powerful of the three choices and had better interchange of parts and accessories with the current John Deere equipment.

***Ms. LaMothe made a motion to approve the transfer from cleaning supplies to tractor equipment replacement in the amount of \$41,000 for the John Deere tractor as recommended. Mr. Beals seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.***

**E. Presentations to the Board [0:06:08]****1. Student Wellness & Support - Mental Health Bill Hughen, Director of School Counseling will discuss student supports and management.**

Mr. Hughen reviewed the multi-tiered system of support in mental health: School Counseling. Topics included: school counseling not being called “guidance” any longer (issues were different today than many years ago); four elementary counselors (social skill building, etc.); three middle school counselors (transition, career exploration, etc.); five counselors at the high school (transition from middle school, courses and career paths, etc.); 504 plans/meetings; ways in which students self-report or teachers report situations/behaviors to counselors and how these are addressed; mental health counselor; off-site resources; technology (pros and cons of cell-phone use in class that could inhibit learning in the classroom); dysregulation (not being ready to learn/getting counseling support); parental involvement (including Zoom meetings); and the importance of confidentiality. There was review of the tiered system of supports:

- Tier 1: Universal Supports for All Students
  - Building classroom and school community
  - Strengthening connections and citizenship
- Tier 2: Targeted Supports for At-Risk Students
  - Check In/Check Out - all levels
  - Lunch Bunches (Elem.)
  - Individual Counseling Meetings
  - Skills/Support Groups
- Tier 3: Individualized Supports for Students with Highest Needs
  - School-based Mental Health Counselor
  - Student and Family Interventionist
  - District Outreach Coordinator
  - Referral to community-based mental health services
  - Referral to school-based community mental health liaison

Ways to move forward included: strengthening the tiered teams; supporting the MTSSB process; increasing community partners; and working with the Outreach Coordinator. The School Board's support was welcomed. Personal connections would be beneficial. Resources and mental health support at school were working well. Stability was important, as well as data gathering and focused interventions. Staff burnout was relieved with the use of yoga, mindful minutes, and other teacher support. The Board thanked the Counseling Department for the work they did.

#### **F. COVID Update [0:44:30]**

Mr. Russell noted that he did not refer to political talking points to make decisions, rather, he looked at data and trends and school decisions. Historical perspective: in August opening plan - mask optional setting, then Delta strain began then Omicron hit which peaked in January and has decreased quickly. There were vaccines available for students over 5 years old. Covid rates were reviewed and the trend was decreasing. About 120 staff members were positive since school started (59 since the holiday break). Staff members collaborated and helped each other. Today there were 82 cases in Town (from 121). Hospitalizations were lower as well. Social distancing had decreased over time. DHHS announced reporting changes, ramping down. There was a balance between safety and mental health. Recommendation: on February 14th, masks would be optional for staff and students. When 3% level was reached in schools, this would be reviewed; it was nowhere this now. If there were clusters/outbreaks/another variant, remote learning would be an option, but this was unlikely.

#### **G. Public Input - Non-Covid Related [0:53:48]**

Austin Terrio of 27 Beechwood Road was concerned about mental health, learning disabilities and speech issues related to (mandated) mask-wearing in public school. He did not feel that the Board should mandate masks that hindered children's breathing and he encouraged parents to choose mask-wearing or not.

Craig Powers of 31 Cedar Street referred to RSA 189 1A and 15 vested authority to School Boards to adopt rules regarding masks and Covid protocols. He was concerned about precedent - with the example of mandating helmet wearing to avoid injury to slips/falls at school. He wondered if there was a limit to such authority without parental consent. He asked if the Board could provide the cost benefit analysis that resulted in the conclusion that mask wearing resulted in a higher benefit than the cost (e.g., mental health).

Patrick Quinlan of 10 Hurley Street was suspicious that mask mandates were being removed around election time but he was happy that students would not need to wear masks. He felt that children should not feel odd in no longer wearing masks because they had to wear them for the past 2 years. Masks were ineffective and should always be worn by parental choice.

Kimberley Allen of 3 Daniel Webster Drive was pleased that masks would be optional. Out of the first 100 days of school, 75 resulted in her son having nose bleeds due to the dryness in wearing masks. She was concerned that it made him not want to attend school. She felt that parents should decide on mask-wearing.

**CLOSE PUBLIC INPUT**

Mr. Gasdia made remarks: looked at this as risk-benefit. The last 6 weeks changed things: vaccines were available and quarantine went from 10 to 5 days. Keeping schools open was most important and masks helped to that end (but Omicron got in the way). He did not think data would change so he favored adopting the change going effective immediately. If entering a mask mandate in a day was possible, he reasoned that removing the mandate in a day was similarly possible. Mr. Beals agreed and he did not see risk to change immediately. Ms. LaMothe agreed things could change quickly; if we are going to go one way or the other, it will be when it's needed. It may not be a week notice. She also pointed out resources used for decisions. We don't have a true measure of what the majority of the population wants unless there is an official survey. There are a lot of different perspectives on this. Mr. Campbell said the reopening plan was approved by the Board in August (the only time the Board voted regarding masks). Other districts were starting mask-optional on February 14th. It was noted that masks were still required on buses.

***Mr. Gasdia made a motion to adopt the Superintendent's request to make mask-wearing in school optional but effective immediately rather than on February 14, 2022. Ms. Whiting seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0.***

Mr. Gasdia was thankful that related discussions at meetings were civil and not uploaded to YouTube.

**H. Good News Update (Information) [1:19:24]**

Assistant Superintendent Ms. Organek was absent so Terry Wolf shared some good news about current events including celebration of the first 100 days of school; Nottingham School Store opening this week; and the 5th Career Exploration Day being held.

**I. Old Business [1:22:25]****1. Mental Health Counselor Position - Follow-up (Discussion & Decision)**

Director of Special Services Ms. Board discussed the position of Mental Health Counselor whose current caseload was 58 (35 at the high school and 23 at the middle school). She would like to see students more often than she could now. The impact of switching a provider was not insurmountable. Due to the pay structure, a person would be paid until June and would not work over the summer so the chance of finding a candidate willing to work for 3 months, not work over the summer, then return at the beginning of school was slim. The contract was school year. A suggestion was to think about what hours might be helpful in the summer (target a number of hours for both counselors for extended services - even for one summer to help close the gap). A question was what the risk was to post the position now. There would be budgetary impacts to that also.

**2. School Board Self-evaluation (Discussion)**

Discussion on the School Board self-evaluation included the following: budgetary, policy and evaluation roles; improvement in evaluations, having the Strategic Plan as a guiding document, and having trust/respect for one another. Board meetings overall were prepared but could be more efficient (get information earlier). Process for evaluating and maintaining

policies was good but had room for improvement. Communication with the public was always an area of improvement. Points to consider for future evaluations: provide useful feedback to the Board to be more effective; add at least the superintendent to the survey for constructive criticism to do better; the Board to be evaluated as a whole – design a questionnaire to evaluate Board process and product, set goals and measure how they are achieved.

#### **J. New Business [1:40:54]**

##### **1. Policies (1st Readings)**

- a. KI Visitors to the Schools (review)
- b. KLG - Relations with Police Authorities (new, NHSBA version with tracked

changes)These will be brought back to the next meeting for second reading.

#### **K. Recommended Action [1:41:36]**

##### **1. Manifests are all set.**

#### **L. Committee Reports [1:41:40]**

##### **1. Superintendent Search Committee**

Mr. Beals and Mr. Campbell provided an update on the search. Interviews were complete and candidates would be recommended to the Board. The Board would hold interviews and choose finalists and a final Board decision would be made at the end of February.

#### **M. Reports to the Board (Information) [1:42:50]**

##### **1. Superintendent Report -(previously done)**

##### **2. Assistant Superintendent Report (absent)**

##### **3. Director of Special Services Report**

Ms. Borge last spring approved money to rebuild space for Life Skills (new kitchen, etc.) Students were involved in using the space such as cooking.

##### **4. Business Administrator Report**

Ms. Burk reported that the FY21 audit was released; the DOE noted that they completed the audit and there were no issues. This was available on the District Website.

#### **N. Board of Selectmen Liaison Comments [1:46:45]**

Ms. Roy was pleased with participation at the Deliberative Session. She hoped to see the same level this Saturday.

February 5th: School Deliberative Session  
February 12th: Town Deliberative Session  
March 8th: Election

The deadline to register to run for office was Friday.

#### **O. Board Member Comments [1:47:15]**

Mr. Campbell was pleased with the participation at the Deliberative Session and thanked HCTV

for covering it. February 24th was Candidates' Night. He encouraged voters to turnout.

Ms. Whiting was happy to see the public's comment and vote to ensure that the budget was the one the District asked for.

Mr. Beals encouraged high school students to seek help and resources in the District regarding mental health, etc.

Ms. LaMothe agreed and as Mr. Huguen said, it is better to be proactive than reactive and the key to that is open communication, and it sounds like we made a lot of progress in that regard. Parents, the school and students all working together. Regarding end of the year fund balance recommendations, she suggested looking at the Capital Improvement Report and reviewing the long-term plan for the Early Learning Center as soon as possible due to the growth of the kindergarten and pre-K. Capacity assessment quotes were done (around \$75,000). There should be discussion about the plan and what the Capital Investment would be, as well as the data that forecasted the cycle.

Mr. Gasdia said it was good to see people at Deliberative Session. He encouraged people to view the Website for information and to be involved in the schools.

**P. Non-Public Session Per RSA 91-A:3 II (c) [1:57:48]**

At 8:28 pm, Ms. Whiting made a motion to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (c), Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0. Roll call vote.

Superintendent Russell presented a request by a parent for their child to remain in the Hudson School District for the current school year.

***Mr. Beals made a motion to approve the request, second by Mr. Campbell. Motion passed 5-0.***

Ms. Burk, Ms. Borge, and Ms. Wolf left the meeting.

Superintendent Russell presented contract proposals for Ms. Burk and Ms. Organek for informational purposes only.

**Q. Adjournment**

***A motion to exit non-public and adjourn at 9:33 pm was made by Ms. LaMothe, second by Ms. Whiting. Motion passed 5-0.***

Respectfully submitted by

Susan DeFelice (public)

Ms. LaMothe (non-public)