

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

School Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

School Board Meeting

6:30 p.m.

Physical Location: SAU 1 Board Room

Virtual Location:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89832797476?pwd=aUhNZUdScWpDZkZyNXZkTHZ2Nnd4QT09>

Meeting ID: 898 3279 7476

Passcode: zhwur2

Phone: +1 646 558

Webinar ID: 898 3279 7476

Passcode: 882961

Minutes

BOARD

Rich Cahoon (6:38), Keira Christian,
Richard Dunning, Alan Edelkind,
Jim Fredrickson, Katherine Heck,
Janine Lesser, Kevin Pobst,
Robert Short, Jr., Liz Swan,
Tim Theberge, Stephen Ullman,
Jerry Wilson

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Supt.
Dr. Ann Forrest, Asst. Supt.
Lori Schmidt, B.A.
Cari Christian-Coates, Student Serv.
Carrie James, H.R.
Heather McKillop, CVHS
Anne O'Bryant, SMS
Kat Foecking, GBS
Larry Pimental, PES
Deb Riley, CVHS
John Reitnauer, CVHS

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Kimberly Saunders called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Introduction and Swearing in of Returning and New Board Members

Dr. Saunders introduced Keira Christian as a new member to the board from Bennington.
Dr. Saunders further introduced Elizabeth Swan as a new member to the board from Temple.

3. Right to Know for Public Meeting Emergency Declaration

Kimberly Saunders read the "Right to Know for Public Meeting Emergency Declaration".

4. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A: 3, II (If Required)

a. Legal

None.

5. Call for Election of Officers – Superintendent

a. Committee Assignments and Requests

Tim Theberge was nominated for School Board Chair. Unanimous on a roll call vote.

Dr. Saunders turned the meeting over to the newly elected Chairman of the Board, Tim Theberge.

Tim Theberge turned to the election of the Vice-Chair. Janine Lesser was nominated for School Board Vice-Chair. Unanimous on a roll call vote.

Tim Theberge thanked Rich Cahoon for sending out descriptions of committees. Those serving on a committee may continue unless they are looking for a change of assignment. Board members should let Tim know which committees they are interested in serving.

6. Acceptance of School Board Meeting Minutes (Board Vote Required)

a. March 2, 2021

Stephen Ullman moved to approve the minutes of March 2, 2021. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous on a roll call vote.

7. Points of Pride

Dr. Saunders reported working closely with Tricia Zahn, Director of Community Strategic Partnerships & The Center for Population Health Cheshire Medical Center to coordinate the vaccination opportunity for ConVal staff.

50 staff were vaccinated last weekend, 112 on Thursday, and 50 more on Friday. ConVal will be upward of 90% vaccinated soon. Thanks to Denise McLenon, ConVal H.R. and Tricia for coordinating this opportunity for ConVal.

8. Public Comment

Tim Theberge said that two minutes per speaker is available to anyone wishing to address the board.

Celeste Lunetta shared her excitement about the Sports Recommendation that will be heard tonight, she urged support. In addition, she urged student representation come back to the board.

Terrence McNamara, echoed Celeste's comments about athletics. He thanked everyone who worked on the proposal and urged board support. He said that athletics is important for engagement of young people in school and in the community. Physical and mental health are impacted by this as well.

Lisa Wirth commented on the budget that recently was voted. She said that she was disheartened to vote against it. She said that she could not support the \$780K for remote learning. She was disappointed that her vote resulted in a vote down for additional counseling support.

Corey Boyd echoed her disappointment having to vote against the budget. She felt some items should have been put forward as independent warrant articles. In addition, there are monies heading to the district for support. Ms. Boyd asked how the community can have input on how this funding can be directed. She hoped that outside opinions are welcome. Less than 20% of the State has accessed the first distribution of funding.

Tina Kriebel reported being present at the polls last week. Voters asked her if her husband was in support of the remote school and other related questions. She heard that School Board members were not responsive to questions. The current communication from the Superintendent is not effective. The community wants high quality education. Voters did not trust that the leadership was what is needed. Those that champion public education could not find what they needed. Two-way communication needs to be created. She suggested creating a FAQ as questions are submitted. Respond to voters so they know they are being heard.

9. Consent Agenda

a. Co-Curricular/Athletic Notifications

Kimberly Saunders referenced a "Notice of Stipend Positions" that included Derek Sorbello, Girls Varsity Lacrosse, Terrence McNamara, Boys Varsity Lacrosse, Paul Finley, Boys Lacrosse Assistant, Lance Flamino, Spring Track, Brian Moore, Select Choir, and James Wickham, Jazz Band for notification to the Board.

10. Superintendent's Report and Presentation of Business

a. Election Results

Election results were referenced. There is a recount on Thursday. Board members do not count.

This recount request came from ten private citizens across the district. It was timely. The District Clerk verified that the signers are registered voters.

Katherine Heck requested a copy of the original petition.

Kimberly Saunders referenced a para justification that is needed due to a student's IEP needs. It requires one to one support.

Janine Lesser moved hiring the new paraprofessional as recommended to meet the needs of a student.

Jerry Wilson second. Unanimous on a roll call vote.

b. Monthly Events Calendar

Tim Theberge reported that once committees are identified meeting dates and times will be set.

Rob Short asked if School Board meetings would remain as presently scheduled or move to Thursdays.

Stephen Ullman spoke about the importance of certainty in schedules for planning policies.

Show of hands on proposing moving board meetings from Tuesday's to first and third Thursday meetings. Five or six were open to the change. Majority were in favor of maintaining Tuesday meetings. Continuing to meet on Tuesday's was confirmed.

c. ConVal School District Reopening Update & Local COVID Data Update

Kimberly Saunders spoke about the vaccination process that has been opened up to ConVal staff, food service, and bus transportation. She said that the district continues to look at mitigation strategies. An article on physical distancing shared fantastic news of a study that occurred in Massachusetts, primarily grade 2-12 and looked at physical distancing and what mattered. Three feet, combined with masking, may be sufficient.

Tim Theberge said that two options are to take some action that would authorize the Superintendent to act on a recommendation. The second option is the likelihood that the board would be called into an emergency meeting.

Dick Dunning moved to authorize the Superintendent to make decisions once guidance has been given from the CDC.

Kevin Pobst second.

Stephen Ullman shared his reassurance of the inclusion of the CDC recommendation.

Rich Cahoon said that our reopening plan is consistent with this recommendation.

Unanimous on a roll call vote.

Kimberly Saunders said that several board members asked for a brief narrative on K-8 Remote.

Dr. Ann Forrest shared the background on K-8 Remote School. Last spring, the emergency order transitioned us to remote learning. A plan developed. Guidance from the State requiring a remote option followed. The first directive from the Board was to develop a budget assuming that school, the following year, would be the same. Things were pulled back and the budget was revised considering keeping the K-8 Remote School in the budget. Guidance from local and state were factored in. We are hearing that things will not be normal at the beginning of the next school year. Some of the unknowns are around how the vaccine impacts the ability to carry the virus. We do not know the impact of the variants. We know that the current vaccines are for individuals 16 and over. Trials for younger children are underway. With that information, we felt that during the budget season, it would be irresponsible not to bring forward a remote option. As we thought about the model, we took things that we have learned and improved upon them. At the elementary level, if you chose remote, you joined a fully remote class. At the middle school level, if you chose remote, you joined a class live in session and joined remotely. The thought was that there would be more shifting from remote to in person learning as time moved forward; they have been relatively stable. It has been difficult to manage both live and remote students in terms of engagement. As the proposed model was developed, difficulties and strengths were considered. In addition, the minimum standards outlined in ED 306 were incorporated. Moving forward, we want to make sure that the best programming is being offered. Our plan has us offering "specials" e.g. music, P.E., and other choices. There was limited access to certified art and music teachers. Access was through recorded videos. We wanted to bring a program that met the minimum requirements forward. Finally, this focused effort allowed some of the items in the Strategic Plan to move forward e.g. competencies. Concerns about learning loss that some students have experienced were a focus.

Dr. Kimberly Saunders spoke about guidance needed that has not come forward for state funding.

Alan Edelkind said that this new K-8 remote has nothing to do with how COVID progresses. If there were a resurgence of COVID, students that needed to go remote would not be in this remote.

Dr. Forrest said that we anticipated that next year there would be some elements that would be the same. Students could transition from remote to in person and the opposite.

Kimberly Saunders said that we created the budget such that this would be related. There is a chance that we will need to have remote options at the start of school next year, not for reasons of choice, but of need.

Kimberly Saunders said that if a separate remote would need to be set up, we would need to set up more teachers remotely. This would provide an opportunity to be more effective.

Kevin Pobst said that his memory was to remove the assumption that we are dealing with COVID and develop a budget that assumes as normal as possible. K-8 Remote was driven by the assumption that some students would like this option and were successful and that this would be a superior version of remote. He said that he has not been operating as if this was COVID related.

Kimberly Saunders said that PPE was removed after the initial budget was presented. The budget was rebuilt.

Kimberly said that there was a lot of misdirection from the board because that is not the assumption of administrators.

Rich Cahoon said that a budget which allowed for remote instruction was mandated. Community members fear that they voted down any possibility for remote as a result of budget failure. We remain under a State mandate. What was voted down was a different approach.

Kimberly said that we would continue to offer remote for those students who cannot return to school.

Kevin Pobst asked when research was looked at as to how students respond to remote instruction, are there students who are receiving it from a live teacher, or some portion and those that are working through packaged modules. What was the breakdown?

Ann Forrest said that research on a three packaged program allows some students to progress. Research on what ConVal put in place with live interaction with a teacher and other students is just coming out.

Rich Cahoon asked since we are not doing this, if at the beginning of next year, we are not back to normal, have we begun to think about what it might look like. Would the plan for middle school look different?

Kimberly said that an emergency plan will be developed. We are more prepared now than we were last June. It would be unfair for the board or administration to ask teachers to conduct that kind of instruction over long periods of time. That was not the plan. Teachers did a phenomenal job at crisis teaching.

Stephen Ullman said that the MOA is a Memorandum of Agreement about working conditions with teachers.

Tim Theberge said that all meetings and materials were open to the public. There are public comment periods. Minutes and agendas are posted on the website for public review to allow one to get up to speed. The district will continue to explore grant funding for these purposes.

11. Reports

a. Teacher Representative

None.

b. Budget & Property Committee – Jim Fredrickson

Jim Fredrickson said that the committee discussed the solar project. Going with the smaller of the two layouts was confirmed. Which technology will be used is under discussion. The proforma has improved over time.

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was discussed. Challenges in the funding of the CIP exist. Work on the two middle schools and high school are needed. A bond will be required. A modernization or redesign of the classrooms to meet the changes in delivery of education will be pursued. Lastly, discussion on what types of financials reports the board needs took place.

Lastly, Budget & Property priorities were discussed.

c. Food Service Committee

Dick Dunning said that what we have to look at in terms of the deficit this year was of discussion. Over \$200K deficit will be needed to cover. Food Service has done a great job tightening their budget. Looking at federal funding to offset portions is underway.

Kimberly Saunders said that part of the loss is directly related to the decrease in loss from students not being in the building.

Lori Schmidt said that food service management reports those doing a hybrid model are the worst to manage. Government funding to offset some of the loss is anticipated; she does not anticipate a large amount.

Stephen Ullman asked for an update on the transportation contract.

Kimberly said that it would be non-public discussion as it is under bid. Different alternatives are being considered.

Katherine Heck shared appreciation for the work and service Food Service provided during the past year to keep our kids fed during this pandemic.

Rob Short said that he would want to add a financial update on Food Service monthly to keep on top of it.

Rich Cahoon asked Lori Schmidt to confirm that the financials of our food service are such that we depend on sales at the high school. Lori confirmed that a la carte sales are a notable part of this equation.

ESSER II money that was available has not funneled down to the local level yet.

d. Strategic Plan Committee – Tim Theberge

Tim Theberge reported that direct invites went out to members of the community. Responses have begun to come in. Many are willing to help work on the Strategic Plan. Public invite will be an open invite to members of the community to serve on the committee.

Those that spoke about the need for communication during tonight's public comment section are encouraged to take the opportunity to participate in the development of the plan.

e. Policy Committee – Janine Lesser

Janine Lesser reported that the committee met tonight. Title IX was discussed.

A Committee Assignment policy will be put forth as well as DIA, and ability for district to reserve funds unspent at the end of the year.

12. Old Business

None.

13. New Business

a. 1st Read Policy

- BEDH: Public Comment & Participation
- KE: Process for Complaints
- BDE: Committee Organization & Assignments

Tim Theberge referenced the above three policies for consideration of the board. Please send input to Janine or other members of the committee.

b. Spring Sports Proposal

Kimberly Saunders highlighted that the spring sports proposal allows for a competitive season at the high school. It brings teams together for practice regardless of cohort assignment. It requires masking.

Katherine Heck moved to accept the proposal as recommended.

Dick Dunning second.

Kevin Pobst asked John Reitnauer if the ConVal plan is based on NHIAA and National Federation Guidance. He does not see mask requirements during competition. He asked where the disconnect is.

John Reitnauer said that this will be discussed. A recommendation that masks would be mandated, especially for State competitions was made. A unanimous decision to wear masks during the winter was made. He anticipates that same recommendation for the spring. That group (A.D.'s etc.) has not yet met. The NHIAA Council meets next Friday.

Kevin Pobst said that the COVID mitigation guidance has been changed over recent weeks. It appears that the COVID situation is fluid enough such that the guidance could change rapidly. What would cause a change in the mask requirement?

John Reitnauer said that the State CDC and National Federation recommendations will be considered.

Kevin asked the process a parent or other would follow to seek an exception to mask wearing. John said that there is an option to wear a shield. John said that in sports that shields can be worn, such as hockey, the recommendation was that a mask be worn under the shield. John said that swimming, diving, and ski jumping were special exceptions that were considered.

Kevin Pobst said that he recognizes the safety value here but wants to consider the quality experience of the athlete.

Stephen Ullman shared his appreciation for the reports of sports programs. He asked if students will be asked to sign a document that they will abide to the requirements. He suggested that team captains take on the responsibility to enforce compliance.

John Reitnauer said that there is not a document that students are required to sign.

Rich Cahoon said that we will keep up with current guidance as things change.

Katherine Heck moved to amend her motion to accept the sports plan as recommended with flexibility to adjust if changes occur.

Dick Dunning second.

Kimberly Saunders said that if the group meet and the decision is to insist on masks and we want to compete, then students need to wear masks.

Katherine Heck said that she heard that seven different organizations weigh in on these decisions.

This plan says that we would do what is necessary for students to compete.

Unanimous.

Stephen Ullman moved that the School Board request John Reitnauer prepare a document which student-athletes would sign in order to affirm their compliance with District athletic policies.

Robert Short said that a requisition for performance masks were once asked. He sees disposable masks in pictures. What happened to the performance masks? John Reitnauer said that they were made available to athletes and they chose what they were comfortable with.

Katherine Heck asked about feedback about athletics at the middle school. She said that co-curriculars are important as well. Where does it all stand?

Kimberly Saunders said that she would be happy to provide information on what is running and what is not at the next meeting.

Katherine Heck asked if there will be opportunity for expansion of offerings. Kimberly Saunders confirmed.

c. Default Calculation & Direction

Kimberly Saunders said that information that was provided for a default.

Janine Lesser said that K-8 Remote was removed. We still need the capacity to provide remote learning in the fall. Are those still in the budget? Kimberly Saunders said that grant funding would be used.

Jim Fredrickson said that it is a recommendation, we have not decided what will be cut.

Jim noted the addition of a paraprofessional was voted tonight. That would continue on into the next year as well. Kimberly Saunders noted an extra para carried in the budget.

Rich Cahoon said that in the absence of a K-8 Remote school, he questioned the validity of our straight-line projection enrollment numbers. He said that he is unsure some students will return with the absence of this budget. When will we have an idea of how many students will return?

Kimberly said that ConVal was fortunate that the decline in enrollment was less significant than other surrounding districts having lost approximately 40 students. The plan is to survey families again after the push for the vaccine to see what thoughts are to return are.

Rich Cahoon suggested keeping flexibility in the budget to see what enrollment looks like in the fall.

Kevin Pobst asked when kindergarten enrollment numbers will be available. Kimberly said that a report of numbers can be brought forward. Enrollment continues to update right up through the start of school.

Kimberly reminded that kindergarten is not required in New Hampshire.

Rich Cahoon spoke about the intent of several families who did not send their children to kindergarten this year with the intent to send them to kindergarten next year. Our policy would direct them to enroll in first grade.

Kimberly said that they can contact her for a waiver of policy. She has confirmed several families to enter kindergarten rather than first grade.

Stephen Ullman said that relative to the list of potential cuts to meet the default, the more information that can be provided would be helpful.

Jim Fredrickson asked if the remote option is purely a yes or a no or could a lesser option be provided. Kimberly said that it would be the recommendation of this administration to allow the use of grant funding to provide a remote option. It would allow time to gather more information. We are unclear of how many students would be enrolled.

Jim said that the \$780K was for 8 positions to cover 200 students at a cost of \$3,900 per student. He asked for the middle ground and an alternate number. Capital Improvement items might be moved into trusts.

Kimberly said that she is happy to do this, she would want clear direction from the board.

Janine Lesser said that the model in the proposed budget was a multiage multi-grade competency model. Is the new model we are talking about the standard should it be needed? Kimberly said that is accurate. She would reach out to families for information about intent. If this board tells her to create a competency-based model, she will do that. It has been clear from the constituency that it was a major driver in the voting of the budget.

Dick Dunning said that he cannot support leaving remote in the budget; the message from voters was loud and clear. He cannot support funds remaining in the budget.

Katherine Heck echoed what Dick Dunning said. She received a lot of communication on this topic, their tax bill, and the concern for the reasoning behind a remote option. It is important that we have to address the lost learning.

Kimberly reminded the board that a proposal for lost learning was brought forward and the board made the decision not to include it in the budget because it was over \$1M.

Robert Short, Jr. said that the concern was that we would crowbar it into the summer program. It is so fluid that it was too big of a nut to swallow. With the unknowns, getting it all in during the summer was not favored.

Janine Lesser said that we are talking about remote school that voters voted down and having the necessity of some type of remote for those that cannot come to school.

Kevin Pobst said that there are other approaches to lost learning recovery than just the single plan presented to the board. Just because that plan was not put in the budget does not mean that nothing will be done.

Kimberly Saunders said that the budget as directed was brought forward. Another was brought forward. Of course, students who cannot return to school will be taken care of. Lost learning will be addressed. More information is needed from the State. We have committed to making up lost learning by 2022.

Rich Cahoon reminded the board that administrators who designed the K-8 school voluntarily gave up contractual benefits. We need to add that back in.

Rich Cahoon moved to adopt a Tier 00. Janine Lesser second.

Stephen Ullman asked if we have to do this tonight. He is not certain about the meaning about a number of these items.

Kimberly Saunders said that the document remains confidential because specific positions are included in it. It does not need to be done this evening. The faster information is known, the sooner it can be implemented.

Rob Short suggested that the offsets for each item could be reviewed. If all of the items were taken out with this motion, he does not know the correlations.

Jim Fredrickson summarized offsets totaling \$400K that were proposed.

Dick Dunning recommended going into non-public session for further discussion.

Katherine Heck second.

Kimberly Saunders suggested entering non-public at the end of the meeting. Confirmed.

14. Public Comment

Don Boice shared concern with remote K-8; he asked if the board is familiar with VLACS. Mr. Boice said that he would be willing to join the Athletics subcommittee. He said that wearing masks under a helmet would be crazy. He added that tonight's School Board Meeting seems disjointed tonight; unsure what is going on.

Terrence McNamara echoed Mr. Boice's comments. In addition, on the remote issue, he has been impressed with teachers and the job they were able to do. He thinks remote is an unattractive option. Some of the rationale to offset the potential of losing students is the concern. He suspects families are looking for great athletics and activities.

He agreed that masks under helmets during vigorous activities is not favored. Once we are outside, he believes data will be reassuring on outside sports.

15. Approval of Manifests (Board Vote Required)

Lori Schmidt certified that manifests listed totaling \$349,181.22 and Payroll totaling \$1,463,622.67 have been reviewed by her and found to be proper charges against the Contoocook Valley School District for goods and/or services received and have been properly processed prior to their submittal to the School Board.

Dick Dunning moved to approve the manifest as presented. Jim Fredrickson second. Unanimous.

16. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3,II (If Required)

a. Negotiations

b. Legal

c. Personnel

Rich moved to enter into nonpublic session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3,II for matters of personnel and negotiations at 8:49 p.m. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous.

Dick Dunning moved to exit non-public session at 10:27 p.m. Robert Short, Jr. second. Unanimous.

Dick Dunning motioned to seal the minutes of non-public sessions for a period of 5 years. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous.

Kevin Pobst moved to assign Rich Cahoon as mediator for the legal proceedings with Monadnock Tent and Event.

Dick Dunning second. Unanimous.

Kevin Pobst moved to authorize Tim Theberge to sign the contract with the Superintendent. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous.

Rich Cahoon moved to accept Tier 0 recommendation. Janine Lesser second. Unanimous.

Kevin Pobst motioned to adjourn at 10:32 p.m. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok