

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
106 Hancock Road
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

**School Board Meeting
Immediately Following Public Hearings**

Physical Location: SAU #1 Board Room

Livestream Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Awx_tMA2Z-k

Minutes

BOARD

Rich Cahoon, Tom Burgess,
Keira Christian, Richard Dunning,
Alan Edelkind, Jim Fredrickson,
Katherine Heck, Greg Kriebel,
Janine Lesser, Kevin Pobst,
Liz Swan, Tim Theberge,
Stephen Ullman

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Supt.
Dr. Ann Forrest, Asst. Supt.
Lori Schmidt, B.A.
Cari Christian-Coates, Student Serv.
Ben Moenter, Special Ed.
Carrie James, H.R.
Heather McKillop, CVHS
Deb Riley, CVHS
Tim Conway, SMS
Stephanie Syre-Hager, AES
Colleen Roy, GES
Dianne Fitch, Pre-K
Jackie Colaneri, Pre-K

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Tim Theberge called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Points of Pride

Kimberly Saunders shared various points of pride as reported to her by administrators.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Consent Agenda

a. Acceptance of School Board Meeting Minutes

1) November 16, 2021

On page 1, under agenda item 5, "CLEO" was amended to read "CLIA" waiver.

b. Personnel

1) Co-Curricular Nominations

Co-Curricular Nominations were reviewed.

The consent agenda was accepted as amended.

5. Superintendent's Report and Presentation of Business

a. Reopening Update

Dr. Saunders reported that a permission slip was sent to parents and staff members to conduct COVID testing. If you have not done so, please complete the permission form to be tested. Thirty-five tests were given just yesterday; with one positive. That is thirty-five students who would be symptomatic who would have had to stay home rather than remain at school.

Numbers are continuing to be watched. Concern with a spread in school has been voiced. Close contacts are traced.

Kimberly Saunders will be putting out, as part of the requirements for ESSER, a press release about the reopening plan.

Alan Edelkind asked the response to consent to testing. Kimberly Saunders said that she does not have information yet.

When re-evaluating the reopening plan, will measurement criteria be looked at for decision making related to positivity?

Kimberly Saunders said that the State has made it clear that any remote days due to COVID do not count as school days. As long as we continue our mitigation strategies there is no reason to make a change.

Kevin Pobst asked about the practices that would be followed regarding athletics that take place indoors during the winter.

Kimberly said that if you are on the field of play you do not need to wear a mask. If you are a spectator, you are required to wear a mask.

b. Monthly Events Calendar

1) Deliberative Session & Snow Date

A Budget Hearing needs to take place by January 18th.

Deliberative Session must be held between Saturday, February 5th and Saturday, February 12th. A snow date also needs to be set.

Tuesday, February 8th was the date proposed for Deliberative Session with a snow date of Thursday, February 10th. Start time is 6:00 p.m. in the CVHS Gym. Confirmed.

c. Preschool Presentation

Kimberly Saunders turned the meeting over to Cari Christian-Coates and Ben Moenter to provide a preschool presentation and provide background about what is taking place.

Ben introduced himself, Cari Coates, Dianne Fitch, Jackie Colaneri, and Katie Ayers, parent.

Ben reported that the board adopted the goal of developing universal preschool. It provides early intervention for three-year old children and expanded opportunities for four-year old children.

Anecdotal data was shared from teachers. A day in the life of a preschool student was referenced as well as the smart goal moving to a broader ownership in the district.

The goal last year was to increase to six classrooms. One classroom was added to offset the need for related service staff. The next phase would require additional related service staff.

The program is about access; getting students into the classroom and optimizing the access to learning opportunities.

The RAND Study reflects that an investment in early education has an offset later on.

Dianne Fitch said that providing preschool benefits the entire education of a student. The preschool program focuses on the holistic development of a student. They offer modeling of skilled interventions among others. Opportunity for deeper connections with peers through play is valuable. Connections are being made every day.

Katie Ayers reported that this program is the first point of contact for students. The transition period from preschool to kindergarten was substantial as a result of familiar faces. She provided other information to support gains her children have experienced as a result of preschool.

Jackie Colaneri shared information from current kindergarten teachers. Students have better social and emotional skills. Transitions have come easier for students who attend preschool. Other positives were shared.

Cari Christian-Coates spoke about the referral process. There are requirements that must be followed. The Preschool referral team start conducting meetings when students are involved at the age of 30 months. The team needs to understand the complex needs of each student, evaluate them, write an IEP, and be ready to implement the IEP on their third birthday. There is as specific timeline to respond to referrals. Cari referred to information on how many students were presently attending, how many were in referral, and how many places were necessary for incoming students. Based on the criteria of who needs to be serviced, the five programs are full. Once a spot opens up, the spot is offered to the next person on the waiting list. That spot might not be in the home school or they may wait for another spot. There is a constant juggling.

Placement is determined by the composition of the current students in the program. Individual student needs are looked at.

If the district were to add another program, we would be spreading resources thinner without related services added.

An understanding of the model is important when moving forward. If additional information is needed, it can be provided. Expanding to eight classrooms is the next step. It is based on the census. One of the main reasons for the program is to get to those families who would not have otherwise had access or could not afford a program enrolled.

Rich Cahoon thanked the group for coming. He said that the last discussion had specific asks that he did not hear addressed. When will those be addressed?

Kimberly Saunders heard the question about why the program is not at capacity. The explanation of that is that we have five classrooms with only so many spots. We have students in referral. They don't begin preschool just in September. We need to assure spots for them anytime between September and June when they reach their third birthday.

The other question hears was "why do we need to expand related services". We are running a five-classroom program with four classrooms worth of staffing.

Are we meeting our obligation of providing those three-year old students now? Confirmed, by shoestrings.

Rich Cahoon said that therefore, we would be providing spots for children not referred.

Cari Christian-Coates said that the point of the integrated program has been that we want to do something for both typical and special education students. Typical students benefit incredibly from related services as well. They are getting a boost of support services that will not follow them up through.

Janine Lesser said that there was a significant number of students entering kindergarten lacking the skills necessary at that level. Academic gains require an investment in the early years. This is targeting children and offering related services.

Kevin Pobst said that if we are currently addressing the needs of all three-year-old students and we have a 50/50 ratio would we be expanding so that we could maintain that ratio. Is that what we are doing?

Cari Coates said that not looking at students as special education students or not special education students is important.

Kevin Pobst said that the ratio was brought up which causes the question.

Cari Christian-Coates said that the reason for the expansion is part of a two phased process. The process was slowed due to budgetary restrictions. At the start, based on the census, the basis of eight programs was identified as part of the original proposal.

Janine Lesser said that part of the expectation was to enroll students who are not special education but would not be able to access preschool due to socio-economic reasons.

Stephen Ullman asked if in the budget workshop materials, there were three proposals submitted. The 2B at \$744K, 2B alt 1 at \$496K, and 2B alt 2 at \$337K. Is the board still trying to decide among those alternatives? Where are we?

Tim Theberge said that those are the three options presented. Discussion is if the model presented should go forward or was there a model of expansion that changed the level of services to go forward. Access was the focus. If what we are hearing is that there is a demand on these services, why is the focus not on the demand for those services? Does access matter?

Kimberly Saunders said that high quality preschool programs are those that look at the whole child. The Rand study projects every dollar spent will save \$6 over the next several years. Kimberly said that in order to maintain the integrity of our present program and expand it to an additional classroom, they must have additional staffing. Not just teachers. If we attempt to add a classroom without additional staffing except a teacher, we are watering the program down for all six classrooms.

How many OT's in the program? One. Rich Cahoon said that we are proposing to add two OT's for one additional classroom.

Cari Christian-Coates said that we want two OT's, two speech for the 8 classrooms. We have gone from four staffed programs and want to add four more. We need another set of staff. In order to address the cost factor, it was agreed to expand to five and put related services on hold. If we expand to six, we would water the program down without related services added. The ultimate goal is to add eight programs. If the board wants to change the direction and not go to eight programs that is also the discussion.

Rich Cahoon said that it looks like we are staffing a program with mostly no special needs with services as if it were.

Dick Dunning said that we should go to eight. It might be helpful for the board to understand how the staff help non-coded students. He said that he understands having the resources available for the entire student body.

Greg Kriebel asked what the difference between 2B choice 1 and 2B choice 2 is?

Cari said that the first proposal is for three teachers, the second is two teachers, and the third is one teacher.

Tim Theberge said that the fixed cost is the OT and the speech pathologist.

Jim Fredrickson said that his concerns are how many classes that are added. If we incur the cost, how do we know that we can fill the classroom? What if the ratio cannot be met?

Greg Kriebel said that the lowest phase option of \$337K is for one classroom or \$20K per student. If we go to three, it brings it down to \$16.5K. He did not disagree with the importance of this. He knows that people cannot pay their taxes. We need to be mindful of the taxpayer. It is a big cost to ask.

Katherine Heck asked how the cost of the current program are backed out; is it backed out to town of residence?

Lori Schmidt said that cost is considered a district wide program and cost is allocated across all of the buildings.

Katherine Heck shared her concern about additional costs and that we continue to cut programs for students currently in the buildings. She supports the program but needs to weigh the cost.

Kevin Pobst said that he does not question the quality of the preschool program. He questions the staffing. He said that in terms of related services, we are currently understaffed with related services. If we add someone and don't go to eight classrooms, we will be over staffed. If we fill eight classrooms with students that are not special education we would still be overstaffing with related services. Kevin said that he is interested in not being over staffed.

Kimberly said that Kevin was correct but added that we would be significantly understaffed if we added the classrooms but not the staff. The only other option would be professional service providers, which are more expensive.

Kevin said that if you add students with special needs you would not be overstaffed. But if kids without special needs are added then you would be over staffed.

Rich Cahoon said that 15% of the student population of that age group would be served. He cannot support adding staff without the need.

Jackie Colaneri spoke about the responsibility of evaluating new students and consulting by traveling throughout the district to determine so. Support services done by specialists is important. One OT is traveling to five different preschools right now.

Rich Cahoon moved to add all three classrooms this year with associated staff. Dick Dunning second.

Katherine Heck said that she would vote no because she has district concerns. She needs the whole budget package. She cannot decide. Something might need to be cut.

Stephen Ullman clarified the decision framework. He understands that there are four concrete proposals include one to do nothing. Add one classroom, two, or three as well.

Tim Theberge said that the motion on the floor is to go with option one. This would finish the final implementation of the preschool program in the district.

Rich Cahoon said that this is a gut check on whether the board is willing to jeopardize the budget for this.

Kimberly said that the only other option is to contract services.

Rich said that he has supported this program. Universal Preschool was backed out of because it would not be everywhere. He cannot see where the kids with actual identified needs would come from.

Dianne Fitch said that it is not just three-year-old students but also referrals from other programs for three and four-year-old students as well. We have a waiting list for the general education population. Children who come in as general education rise to the level that they become referred in a program. Issues are being addressed early on so that they might not be identified later on.

Rich Cahoon withdrew his motion.

Dick Dunning withdrew his second.

Jim Fredrickson said that if we do nothing, \$1.5M would be the increase. If we add option 1, \$2.25M is the increase

Kimberly asked that the Business Administrator provide information.

Lori Schmidt said that revised budget would be \$52,223,192 or an increase that is 2.11%, not including the collective bargaining agreement.

2.11% would be the result with full preschool added in. We asked for no more than 2% increase.

Rich Cahoon suggested that next year's presented budget ought to include the preschool number and not a separate discussion. If the guidance is 2% increase, it should not be a separate discussion.

Katherine Heck said that the budget guidance was to include every single thing with the exception of the CVEA. At the time of the budget presentation we were under the guidance. Is that still correct? Confirmed.

Dick Dunning said that going to eight classrooms and staffing with those means \$744,112.

Dick Dunning moved to go with Preschool option 1.

Stephen Ullman second.

Stephen said that the gross spending by district would only exceed instructions by \$40K not including CVEA.

The motion is to add in option 1.

In favor of option 1: 7

Opposed: 6.

Motion carried.

Rich Cahoon said that more information was asked to present to the community.

Kimberly Saunders asked for confirmation that there has been a change.

Rich said that the board at the time made the argument that this was an access proposal.

Janine Lesser said that it is still about access.

Rich said that the argument originally was related to capacity as a result of other local preschools closing.

6. Reports

a. Teacher Representative – Cheryl Jessie

None.

b. Communication Committee – Janine Lesser/Alan Edelkind

Alan Edelkind reported that four items were discussed; the high school communication tree, communication from the October budget meeting and what to communicate. A video on discretionary spending in the budget was suggested. Strategic Planning updating information was discussed. The community forum and planning were discussed. It will be held in January and will be online and in person as well. In person and remote questions will be possible. Two moderators; one at the computer and one on the floor. The moderator should not answer all of the questions. Two subject matters will be discussed. One focus will be the proposed budget.

c. Strategic Plan Committee – Tim Theberge

Tim Theberge reported that work on breaking out the questions that were received as a result of the SWOT analysis to develop the survey took place.

d. Selectmen’s Advisory Committee – Stephen Ullman

Stephen Ullman reported that Select board members were interested in standardized test results. Benefits and costs of smaller and large schools was discussed. Consolidation was briefly discussed.

e. Equity Committee – Rich Cahoon

Rich Cahoon reported discussion on elementary and middle school schedules and their impact on assessment results. Does the schedule impact math assessment results? Not enough information is available.

Second, equity impact of assessment results prompted the question of what constitutes equity in the delivery of math. What best serves students in the delivery of math education?

f. Policy Committee – Katherine Heck

Katherine Heck reported that two first reads and two second reads come before the board tonight. Work on other policies is underway. Work on federal grant administration policy and procedure is underway. DGA is under review.

7. Old Business

a. Legislative Update

Tim Theberge reported sending the board a list of LSR’s. House Bill 1058 establishes minimum times for students to eat lunch.

Answering questions of Public Comment is proposed. Minutes should reflect so.

HB 1137 addresses the duty of the school board to provide an education.

Other bills were highlighted.

Rich Cahoon said that HB1329 should be monitored. It would radically change the high school graduation requirements.

Katherine said that we should invite State Representatives to a meeting as well a State Senator. Rich said that it should be important to first discuss what our positions are.

b. School Board Requests

Kimberly Saunders said that there is one outstanding request on EFA's (Educational Freedom Accounts). EFA's as they are being budgeted are coming from the Education Trust Fund currently. This will change. Tom Burgess said that local vote with 60% passing would be required. The removal of the 300% of poverty level expands this to everyone without a local vote.

c. Revised Budget Discussion

Kimberly Saunders reported that the proposed unreserved fund balance needs consideration. We typically return approximately \$800k. The board might consider \$500K.

Katherine Heck spoke about the possibility of retaining some of these funds. Having a fund balance is preferential to have as an offset.

Tim Theberge said that the expectation of budgeting as close to a specific number with the reserve has been a work in process.

Rich Cahoon spoke about the years put in to squeeze this number down. He cautioned not to reverse drastically.

Jim Fredrickson spoke about balancing this with the larger return this year.

Katherine Heck said that returning \$7.5M due to unanticipated funds may run out. Lori is balancing that for the first year. It is a false amount that does not reflect our budget spending. We did not over budget, we received federal dollars.

Rich said that there is a value in planning for the towns. He suggested sticking with the proposed return of \$250K.

Katherine said that the conversation to understand the estimated payment schedule and why it will vary with the towns would be valuable. The education needs to happen.

Adequacy and SWEPT figures have changed. Adequacy increased. ESSER in the amount of \$1.5M is built in as well.

Rich Cahoon asked for an estimate on the plus or minus costs of adding or subtracting a student. Confirmed.

Jim Fredrickson said that deciding on trust fund warrant article priorities are still needed.

The difference between the proposed gross and operating is \$3.5M.

Order of trust warrants: Energy first.

Default numbers will be needed. Lori Schmidt said that now that decisions have been made she can develop the default budget.

d. Policy 2nd Read/Adoption (Board Vote Required)

- IMC: Controversial Speakers and Programs

Janine Lesser moved to adopt policy IMC: Controversial Speakers and Programs with some slight editorial changes.

Dick Dunning second. Unanimous.

Kevin Pobst will send changes to Kimberly and Brenda.

- JICD: Student Behavior, Conduct, Discipline and Due Process

Janine Lesser moved to accept as presented.

Greg Kriebel second. Unanimous.

8. New Business

a. Policy 1st Read

- JRA: Student Records, Privacy, Family, Student Rights

- GBEF: Acceptable use Policy: Staff

Tim Theberge referenced the two policies for a first read.

b. Town Apportionment

Lori Schmidt referenced the District Apportionment. The schedule has been updated. Payments are flat through December.

Peterborough payments are the same through December. Based on the Peterborough audit and funds available discussion took place.

Tim Theberge said that they had money in the bank and could pay us what was due.

Lori Schmidt said that she took the total of assessed value for the year and adjusted it from January going forward. We could ask for the difference in January.

Kimberly Saunders said that if the board wants to get the payment caught up by a certain date that needs to be identified.

Tim Theberge said that he understood that the town was looking to spread out the payment. We agreed for three months and then to revisit. Funds are available for the balance.

Lori Schmidt reported how the payment schedule was applied.

Katherine Heck said that we are dealing with how the current payment schedule works and spreading out the balance owed over time was implemented. If the cash flow can sustain it, it should move forward.

The situation was recapped.

Dick Dunning moved to take the revised payment schedule funding for Peterborough. Rich Cahoon second. Unanimous.

Lori said that towns have asked that the schedule be emailed. She prefers to mail it to them as a result. Confirmed.

Kimberly said that the reason that the board vote on this is that the board decides how the district will be paid. The board sets the payment schedule for the towns.

Dick Dunning said that we have struggled for years about looking at the advantages and disadvantages of restructuring.

Dick Dunning moved that the board to request that the Superintendent put a request for a proposal from an unbiased consulting firm for advantages and disadvantages educationally and financially and that this would move forward without additional burden on administration as soon as possible.

Kevin Pobst second.

Rich Cahoon asked which class of consulting firms would be sought. He suggested casting the net wider for this work.

Dick said that we would be better serving our students by bringing them closer together.

Katherine Heck said that a motion to allow funding for this purpose was made several years ago.

Kimberly said that a request for proposal requires specifics on what is being looked for. It is not a promise for work.

Rich Cahoon said that a request for information could also be asked. Sample output would be the result. The RFI could direct the RFP.

The motion now stands as a Request for Information. Kevin confirmed his second.

Janine Lesser spoke about looking at the impacts will be important to bring back to the community.

Placing all of the work in this area on a shared drive will take place.

Alan Edelkind asked if the responsibility of the firm would be a recommendation or to provide information. The RFI will inform the RFP.

Liz Swan clarified that this would cover the social emotional impacts as well. She read the past warrant article on this topic.

Confirmed.

Kevin Pobst said that the key first step is crafting the request. How do we craft the RFI request?

Members of the board would begin work on a draft RFI.

Tim Theberge said that he would like the board to draft the RFI.

Rich suggested an ideal configuration is what is being asked. Strategic Planning would come in after that.

Stephen Ullman asked if a three to five-person committee could be formed for this purpose.

In favor: Unanimous.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Approval of Manifests (Board Vote Required)

Lori Schmidt certified that manifests listed totaling \$3,473,179.60 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 manifests as presented. Jim Fredrickson second. Unanimous.

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

- a. Negotiations**
- b. Legal**
- c. Personnel**

Janine Lesser moved to enter into Non-Public Session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3,II at 9:56 p.m. for purposes of Negotiations, Legal, and Personnel. Liz Swan second. Unanimous on a roll call vote.

Stephen Ullman moved to exit non-public session at 10:18 p.m. Katherine Heck second. Unanimous.

Janine Lesser moved to seal the minutes of non-public session for personnel for a period of five years. Greg Kriebel second. Unanimous.

Janine Lesser moved to seal the minutes of non-public session for legal for a period of five years. Greg Kriebel second. Unanimous.

Dick Dunning motioned to adjourn at 10:20 p.m. Stephen Ullman second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok