

RSU 56 Board of Directors Minutes
Board Meeting Amended Agenda - August 22, 2023- 6:30pm
(This meeting will be held at Dirigo High School. The board meeting will also be available
via zoom and live streamed on YouTube.)

School Board Member Present: Barbara Chow, Tim Kelly, Larry Whittington, Elizabeth Kelly,
Don Whittemore, Carl Lueders, Deanna Dolloff, Tina Courtway,
Joy Bradbury, Kathleen Szostek, Brad Dyer, Natalie Sneller

School Board Members Absent: Student Rep

Staff Attending: Jason Long, Charlie Swan, Pam Doyen, Mary Dailey, Cathy Arsenault,
Jared Hodgkins, Gena Cloutier, Michelle/Chris Araujo, Heidi Broomhall,
Brian Keene

Also Attending: Bruce Ross, Marianne Hutchinson

CALL TO ORDER AND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Barbara Chow, Board Chair, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:30pm. Audience introductions were made. Everyone on zoom and YouTube were welcomed.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Motion to add the following:

VI New Business- Election of board chair, vice chair and appointment to committees

VII Supt. Report- Reporting of new hires

Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: D. Whittemore

Motion Carried

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

1. Minutes of the June 27, 2023 Board Meeting

Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: D. Whittemore

Not Voting: N. Sneller, T. Courtway, B. Dyer, J. Bradbury, K. Szostek

Motion Carried

2. Minutes of the August 8, 2023 Special Board Meeting

Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: D. Whittemore

Not Voting: T. Courtway, B. Dyer, N. Sneller

Motion Carried

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

1. RSU 56 received communication of approval from the Small Public Water System Emerging Containment Grant program. Kenny had submitted a \$60,000 grant to update the water system at DES to ensure PFAS are not an issue.
2. RSU 56 received an approval of notification from Stronger Connections Grant. She submitted and had a grant approved for \$250,000 which will cover an SRO for three years. She has started the process with the Oxford County Sheriff's Department.
3. RSU 56 received notification from the Office of Special Services and Inclusion division of the Maine Department of Education indicating that RSU 56 Meets Requirements in implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
4. RSU 56 received notification from the MDOE Child Nutrition office concerning the Summer Food Service Program Administrative Review. No Finding (deficits) were noted. The commendations read, "Gena Cloutier ran a wonderful summer program at RSU 56. Also operating using our non-congregate waiver, Gena kept wonderful records showing clear accountability. Thank you for your service to the children in your area, they are very fortunate to have this service available to them." Pam also added her public thank you to Gena and the nutrition department.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Motion to elect a board chair

Motion: C. Lueders made a motion to nominate B. Chow as Board chair.

There were no other nominations. Nominations ceased

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Abstain: B. Chow

Motion Carried

2. Motion to elect a board vice chair

Motion: L. Kelly made a motion to elect N. Sneller as Board vice chair

Seconded: B. Chow

Motion: L. Whittington made a motion to elect C. Lueders as Board vice chair

Seconded: B. Dyer

On the first motion to elect N. Sneller- 3 in favor

On the second motion to elect C. Lueders- 9 in favor

Motion Carried for C. Lueders as Board Vice Chair

3. Review of board committees and appointments to committees.

There was a review of what was entailed on each committee. Board members chose committees they wanted to be part of for the 2023-2024 SY.

4. Motion to approve the 2023-24 Dirigo Elementary School Handbook

There was some discussion if some of the board members had received the email with the Handbook in it. It was then discovered that they had all received it though some had not read through it. C. Swan noted that the only changes from the previous year were some name changes.

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: L. Kelly

Not Voting: J. Bradbury
Motion Carried

5. Motion to approve the 2023-24 TWK Dirigo Middle School Handbook

J. Long explained any changes made from the previous year.

Motion: L. Whittington

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Not Voting: J. Bradbury

Motion Carried

6. Motion to approve the 2023-24 Dirigo High School Student Handbook

Motion: D. Whittemore

Seconded: L. Whittington

Pam explained a few of the changes for this school year. Freshmen/ Sophomores would not have open campus. Juniors would have open campus only during lunch period. Seniors would have open campus for lunch and any learning labs. There was some discussion around why that was changed. Pam explained that from speaking with staff and community members along with the Leadership team made the changes. She felt that during and directly after the pandemic it was important for the students to get out of the building and have a break, however they felt it was better to make this change at this time.

Motion Carried

7. Motion to approve the 2023-24 Athletic Handbook

Motion: D. Whittemore

Seconded: L. Whittington

B. Dyer questioned if the school song was really sung at any activities. Pam said Yes it was sung at some sporting events and such. He also questioned about participation. B. Dyer also mentioned that there are situations that schools don't need parental permissions for: such as, gender identity, names they choose to be called, potentially suicidal situations but parental permission is needed for sports participation. He wanted it on the record that he finds it odd that we need parental permission for this but we don't have to communicate with parents on very meaningful things. He also mentioned about the chain of command.

Motion Carried

8. Motion to approve the 2023-24 Dirigo Elementary School Emergency Plan

Pam explained about the emergency plans. We are an Alice district.

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: T. Courtway

Motion Carried

9. Motion to approve the 2023-24 TWK Dirigo Middle School Emergency Plan

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: T. Courtway

Motion Carried

10. Motion to approve the 2023-24 Dirigo High School Emergency Plan

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: T. Courtway

Motion Carried

11. Motion to approve the bid on the bus note (Verbatim per sheet provided)

Mary went over the bids for the bus note. Mary sent the invitation to bid to 14 banks. She received 4 back. They ranged from 4.75% to 6.35%. The low bid was Partners Bank at 4.75% but their bid specified that the district would have to open an account and maintain a deposit relationship with them for the term of the loan. It is in the board's right to not accept that bid even though it is the lowest bid. The next lowest is 5.74%. It was discussed whether it was worth the extra interest amount to go with the lowest bid since they are further away and require an account opened.

N. Sneller read the motion: I move that the vote entitled, "Vote to Authorize Issuance of a \$132,750 School Bus Bond," be approved in form presented to this meeting and that the Secretary file an attested copy of said vote with the minutes of this meeting.

VOTE TO AUTHORIZE ISSUANCE OF A \$132,750 SCHOOL BUS BOND

Voted: That the offer of Androscoggin Bank (the "Bank") to purchase a bond of Regional School Unit No. 56 (the "RSU") in the original principal amount of \$132,750 with an interest rate per annum on the outstanding principal amount thereof equal to 5.74%, is accepted and approved.

Voted: That the School Board of Regional School Unit No. 56 hereby authorizes a borrowing in the principal amount of \$132,750 from the Bank on behalf of the RSU, said principal to be paid in three equal annual installments of \$44,250 commencing on or about November 1, 2023, with interest payable semi-annually on the outstanding principal amount thereof commencing on or about May 1, 2024 at a rate of 5.74% per annum, which borrowing is for the purpose of financing costs of one (1) new school bus with related accessories and equipment (the "Project") at an aggregate purchase price of \$132,844.

Voted: That under and pursuant to the provisions of Title 20-A M.R.S. Sections 1490 and 5401(15), and approval of Warrant Article 21 at the annual Budget Meeting duly called and held on May 23, 2023, the Chairperson of the School Board and the Treasurer of the RSU are hereby authorized to issue a general obligation bond attested by the Secretary and dated on or about August 29, 2023, in the name and on behalf of the RSU in the principal amount of \$132,750 at the per annum interest rate of 5.74% (the "Bond") for the purpose of financing the Project, and to execute and sell the Bond to the Bank, in such form as the Chairperson of the School Board and the Treasurer may approve; and that the appropriate officials of the RSU be and hereby are authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the RSU such other documents and certificates as may be required in connection with the issuance and sale of the Bond; and that no part of the proceeds of the Bond or the Project shall be used in a manner that would cause the Bond to be an "arbitrage bond" or "private activity bond" within the meaning of Sections 148 and 141 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"); and that the Bond be designated as a qualified tax-exempt obligations within the meaning of Section 265(b)(3) of said Code; and that the Chairperson of the School Board and the Treasurer be and they are hereby authorized to covenant on behalf of the RSU to file any information report and pay any rebate due to the United States in connection with the issuance of the Bond, to take all other lawful actions necessary to insure the interest on the Bond will be excluded from the gross income of the owners thereof for purposes of federal income taxation and to refrain from taking any action which would cause interest on the Bond to become includable in the gross income of the owners thereof.

Voted: That the RSU establish written procedures with respect to the Bond for the purpose of ensuring timely "remedial action" for any portion of the Bond that may become "non-qualified

bonds,” as those terms are defined in the Code and regulations thereunder; and monitoring the RSU’s compliance following the issuance of the Bond with the arbitrage, yield restriction and rebate requirements of the Code and regulations thereunder; and that the Treasurer is designated to implement and follow these written procedures.

Seconded: B. Dyer

Motion Carried

12. Motion to approve changing the Early Act Club at TWKDMS to a Craft Club at TWKDMS (Jason Long)

Objective: Use other more successful methods to promote and provide community service at TWKDMS, and redirect the stipend funds to engage a greater number of students.

Original Early Act Club goal (2020): “The goal is to have 15 student participate in 10 hours of community service directly valuable to the RSU 56 community during the 2020-2021 school year, for a total of 150 hours of community service to our local community.”

Outcome: During the first three years of Early Act Club, TWKDMS succeeded in expanding the Cougar Den and increased use of that service. However, the number of students involved fell well short of the goal. The students with the most interest were often student athletes and unable to participate in sustained project development in an after school club. Community service projects integrated into the school day have had MUCH more success.

Early Act FY 20-21

- Advisor joined the Rotary Club
- 4 regular attendees, met biweekly
- Organized Cougar Den Clothing Closet
- Contacted local businesses for donations
- Provided clothing (especially winter clothing) to students in need
- Frequent announcements and recruiting efforts to increase membership

Early Act FY 21-22

- 3 regular attendees, met biweekly
- Maintained Cougar Den Clothing Closet
- Provided clothing (especially winter clothing) to students in need
- Large “take what you need, pay what you can” yardsale at TWKDMS

Early Act FY 22-23

- Advisor stepped down, new advisor recruited
- Schedule conflicts prevented Rotary collaboration
- Student attendance highly irregular depending on sports season
- Unclear membership, met biweekly depending on sports season
- Student service projects incomplete; lots of brainstorming

Student Community Service Projects (not through Early Act)

- Veteran’s Day Luncheon and Assembly; 14 students
- Family Movie Night to raise money for a local family in need; 10 students
- The 8th Grade Capstone class increased its direct impact on the community with student-led projects with a stronger civics-based direction; 55+ students involved
- Student Council Fundraising; 12+ students
- The Positive Cougar Club (River Valley Healthy Communities Coalition), 10+ students

Proposal

After speaking with current River Valley Rotary Club President Dave Duguay, the current Early Act Advisor Yami Hamalainen, the previous Early Act Advisor and Rotarian Judy Horne, as well as Faculty Leaders at TWKDMS:

Transition the TWKDMS relationship with the River Valley Rotary Club to happen between the TWKDMS Student Council and the Rotary, thereby building off of a club with similar objectives that is already well established. Rotary agrees with this approach.

Continue the strategy of focusing community outreach efforts through initiatives integrated with the school day (for example, in 2-23-2024, the Gifted/Talented students are partnering with Anne Chamberlain to research and restore gravesites). We will again host a Veteran's Day Luncheon, maintain the 8th Grade Capstone Class as a service learning experience, and look for other opportunities that integrate with the school day.

During FY 22-23, a staff member volunteered to occasionally host craft club. Attendance was robust (at times 10+) and appealed to a group of students otherwise not engaged. The previous volunteer advisor is no longer employed at RSU 56, and I would like to make a more regular Craft Club.

For FY 23-24, TWKDMS would like to reappropriate the Early Act stipend funds in the budget for a pilot of a Craft Club. Attendance will be recorded to determine if this merits being included in future budgets.

T. Courtway: Asked if possibly some older citizens would be invited in to show some of their abilities, such as quilting, crocheting etc. Jason: it could possibly be considered. He is not able to micromanage everything. It will depend upon the skills and interests of the person that is put in the position. If the person advising the club asked what would need to be done to have some folks come in and teaching quilting, etc Jason would very much support that.

B. Dyer appreciates that Jason puts a lot of thought into presenting to the board. He feels club such as rotary and this craft club are meaningful clubs for students.

B. Dyer made a motion to support Jason in moving the funds to a craft club.

Seconded: T. Courtway

B. Chow- Jason will need to meet with the union to work up a job description for the new advisor. Agree with Tina in having some people from the community involved. N. Sneller voiced the same sentiment.

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS

1. Region 9 Updates (Bruce Ross/Brian Keene/Wayne Thurston)

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent's Report: Pam Doyen

Our schools are in good shape. We will be ready to start school next week. Due to a conflict in BARR training for Dirigo High School staff, Freshmen Orientation was canceled. DHS will be hosting an Open House on Wednesday, August 30 from 4:00-6:00 for students and parents/guardians to come in and visit classrooms.

Our bus fleet was inspected by the State Police. The State Trooper indicated that we had “one of the best fleets in the state.” I applaud the board for being forward thinking and keeping our fleet up to date.

As Superintendent of RSU 56, I sent a letter to the town of Dixfield indicating that the new bus garage is tentatively scheduled for completion in August 2024. This was in response to our lease with them that indicates that we need to give them prior notice.

As we move into the 2023-24 school year, it is the intent to have the first three “snow days” as traditional snow days. After three, the situation will be assessed each time. When possible (not a widespread power outage), remote learning days will be used to ensure that school ends in June in a timely manner. (Intent is to finish by June 14, 2023 as that would keep us in alignment with required senior days.)

Administrator’s Reports: Mary Dailey, Business Manager

The audit for fiscal year 2022-2023 was started in June when the auditors came here to do their preliminary work. The auditors will continue with the audit work in October, but they won’t be onsite at that time. I will upload all the necessary documents to the firm’s secure portal.

As for an update on COVID funding, ESSERF2 has to be completely spent by September 30, 2023. The district is continuing to spend the ESSERF3 funds which have to be spent by September 30, 2024.

When I reported out the last time, we had recently signed a contract for the new accounting software from Harris School Solutions. Harris’ Aptafund program is replacing ADS Profund. We started the training process in April and Cathy and I spent many hours in Zoom meetings learning how to set up and use the new software. Our go-live date was July 1, 2023. We started doing most of the accounting in Aptafund at that time. The payroll for teachers and ed techs had to be paid through the old accounting system for July and August, but starting with the September 1 payroll, all employees will be paid through Aptafund. The student activity accounts have also been tracked through ADS. I am working on converting the student activity accounts now and those will be switched to AAWeb as of January 1, 2024. The conversion has been quite time consuming and a lot of work, but we are happy with the Aptafund program.

Pam stated that Mary downplayed the amount of work that they have put into this transition. She and Cathy have done an incredible job, hours and hours of work. This transition, they told us, took 40 hours of training and they did their regular job at the same time. I can’t say enough about getting people paid and we got Aptafund up and running.

New Hires:

Reporting of New Hires:

Sheena Holmquist- Title 1 ed-tech at DES

Stipended and Coaching Positions:

Nicholas Chapman- DHS Golf Coach

Resignations/Retirements:

Jennifer Woods, Title 1 Ed-Tech III at DES

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report- N/A
2. Policy Committee- Will set up a meeting with the new committee
3. Finance Committee- We are very fortunate to have such an experienced, dedicated central

office staff. If anyone has kids, grandkids,,the send paperwork home for the state funded nutrition money. Be sure they all fill out the packet. We missed out on a large amount of state funding because paperwork wasn't filled out. N. Sneller spoke and reiterated what Carl stated...the middle school doesn't give out the student laptops until the paperwork is returned.

4. Curriculum Committee- Jason will email the committee to set up the first date for a meeting
5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Barbara will contact Kenny to arrange setting a meeting the new committee
6. Negotiations Committee- Usually we wait until the union sends us an intent to contract. The Board has to answer in 10 days. There is a lot of prep, reading the contract.
7. Personal Committee- No meeting is scheduled yet. Will work on a job description for the New Craft Club advisor and get the new group together.
8. Ad-hoc Committee- Jason will set a date to meet before October

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

B. Dyer: Commented on the cleanliness of the bathrooms. It glows. Kudos to our janitorial team.

L. Kelly: A few meetings ago I asked for consideration of a rating system. I just wanted to qualify that as she was not targeting any particular group, it had nothing to do with any population. More concerned with the students and the grade level, what they were possibly being exposed to. She got a letter from a couple groups, she felt that was directed to her. She wanted to clarify that. She speaks for generally all children.

B. Dyer- Over this term controversial things will come up. When he was on the board previously, he took a stand on some things around Covid, he was never targeted. No board member should feel bullied. Everyone here is thoughtful, whether we agree or not. We want our parents' right to be recognized.

K. Szostek: Thanked Liz for speaking up with something that is a concern for other schools. She has knocked on a lot of doors and heard those same concerns. Thank you for bringing that up. This is still the United States of America and we still have freedom of expression.

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: N. Sneller

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm