

RSU 56 Board of Directors Minutes
Board Meeting Amended Agenda- September 12, 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 Members Present: Barbara Chow, Don Whittemore, Larry Whittington, Tim Kelly,
Elizabeth Kelly, Kathleen Szostek, Carl Lueders, Brad Dyer,
Joy Bradbury, Tina Courtway, Natalie Sneller,
Diana Cayer (Student Rep)

School Board Members Absent: None

Staff Attending: Pam Doyen, Cathy Arsenault, Jared Hodgkins, Kenny Robbins,
Jay Nicholson, Heather Bishop, Brian Keene, Aaron Arsenault,
Gena Cloutier

Also Attending: Marianne Hutchinson, Gretchen Souther, Cathy McGlauflin (sp??)

CALL TO ORDER AND 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: #2 Chain of Command, #3 Surplus Technology

VIII Supt. Report, reporting of coaching position

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: L. Whittington

Motion Carried

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

1. Minutes of the August 22, 2023 ~~Special~~ Board Meeting

Motion: L. Whittington

Seconded: D. Whittemore

L. Whittington asked Pam if she had heard from the town of Dixfield regarding the condition of Severy Hill Rd and the buses? Pam replied she had not.

B. Dyer stated he drove up the other day and it's not in good shape. A bus should definitely not be going up there or a wide vehicle. It's just not safe.

T. Courtway asked to make a motion to have the policy enforcement of the Student Dress Code.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Heather Bishop, an RSU 56 employee, spoke regarding the enforcement of the dress code policy. It is somewhat being enforced. She feels it needs to be stricter. Not sure what authority she has over speaking to students. According to an email sent out by Pam to employees the other day, a sex offender has moved into the area. That is a huge deal and we need not to feed the eyes of pedifiles. There is an issue with not

just the lack of clothing but types of clothing. She said she saw butt cheeks/ breasts, mid drifts. It can make some staff uncomfortable because it may be turned against them. It makes her feel uncomfortable. T. Courtway would like to make an adjustment to the agenda for today. The policy that B. Chow sent, states that she can do that. Tina said the policy states she can make a motion as long as it's seconded it can be added to the agenda. T. Courtway made a motion to enforce the dress code that needs to be brought priority because many parents & staff go to her in regards to this being not enforced, particularly in the high school where she is told it is not enforced. Students & parents are under the impression that they can wear whatever they want because it will not be enforced at all. Seconded: B. Dyer
B. Chow said it would be moved to New Business #1 and to adjust the agenda accordingly.
There was a brief recess and made copies of the Student Dress Policy for the board.

COMMUNICATIONS

RSU 56 received communication that a \$54,828 cyber security grant submitted by technology director, Brian Keene, was approved through the Maine Department of Education.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss and review of the Policy JICA-Student Dress

Pam stated that she has dress coded a number of students already this year as had Mr. Long at the MS. We have talked about the dress code and how challenging it is. She has spoken to Barbara about bringing the dress code policy to the policy committee to review it.

D. Cayer (student rep) said she understands where people are coming from...but also skin is just skin. As long as genitalia or breasts are not showing, she doesn't feel it's that bad. A bra strap showing? Would people rather they didn't wear a bra?

L. Whittington-asked how many days of school so far? There have been 9 days..He feels students will test the waters. Doesn't feel the policy is unreasonable and if the student body is made aware they will comply.

T. Courtway: The policy has been in place. I don't think that's the issue. It's pretty specific. As an adult seeing young people with their skin out, that leads to other things, including touching which is something that I would hope we're not encouraging in any level of school. She feels the problem is that we just need to follow through with the enforcement. The discussion would then lead into how do we make that happen?

B. Dyer: Yes skin is skin. He has female teams, they test the waters. Whether it's workplace or school, there are pressures on young men and young women by what they see. They are distractions. Feels that with a lot of hormones coming together adds fuel to the fire substantially. Based on some pictures he saw being worn at MS,,sounds like it was addressed, we have to set these standards right away and enforce them. If we start to enforce this how do we know it's being enforced?

D. Whittemore: Asked if Pam had heard from any staff or anyone about this? Pam: She has only heard from a handful of staff about checking someone's dress code. She has addressed the ones that go to her. Don: Now that we have everything in front of us, you will enforce the policy correct? Pam: I will do as you direct me to do. She would like to have this policy reviewed by the policy committee because she does think some of this is very challenging if you have tried to go and buy anything in the girls section, the junior section, I think the majority of our students are dressing appropriately. Maybe they have a little of their stomach showing but it's not like the

pants are really low and the shirts are not covering the bottom of their breasts. If you tell me to enforce this to the letter tomorrow I will enforce it and parents need to be aware there will be a lot of students who's coming home because they do have stomach showing.

Don: I can understand that but what I can't understand is on April 2022 we passed this noone brought up about putting this in front of the policy committee because you thought something was wrong. I don't understand this change from the time we voted it in to why you think it may be wrong to enforce it.

Pam: I don't think it's wrong to enforce it. I think it's right to treat young adults like young adults and if they're moderately dressed I would be willing to allow that except I will follow this policy if you want me to follow it to the letter.

L. Kelly: We're supposed to be educating children/students to go into the world, especially in the high school and be professionals and dress accordingly. When you're dressing for phys ed or the beach it's not the same as going to school. I think kids need to be held responsible for being responsible. Worked many years trying to enforce a dress code at the middle school. I kind of gave up. I think if we're going to have a policy we need to follow the policy. They need to be responsible enough to dress like responsible professional.

T. Courtway: I have to disagree with you Pam as far as what you can find in the stores. There's plenty to find in the stores. That's a really bad excuse for letting kids dress that way. She saw a lot of first day of school pictures which were awesome. What these kids are wearing is really not appropriate for business, work or school. That's holiday wear or going out with their friends. They're young people, they're not adults yet. We have these policies in place for a reason and I think they should be followed.

J. Bradbury: Who's responsible in high school now to report these kids who are coming dressed inappropriately? Is the home room teacher? Pam: it is everybody's responsibility.

J. Bradbury: It's not your job (Pam) to canvas the halls, it's who ever is sent to the office? Pam: it would take a lot of work hours to just walk around and check clothing.

B. Dyer: He agreed with Pam that he would be fearful if it was tomorrow, we lock the place down is insanity. There are some behavior changes that we say now,,to Pam's defense here, the clothes it is harder and the taste. I think we should step carefully, we have to have some trust that it is being addressed. If what we're asking is greater enforcement I think it is leadership's responsibility to be realistic about it. We have to work our way into this. It would be my recommendation that we relook at this in 6 weeks, in 180 days..see what it is looking like then.

L. Whittington: Everyone is pointing the responsibility on the teachers in the school. The ultimate responsibility is the parent. The parents have the responsibility to make sure their students are walking out appropriately. My question is: they receive a copy of this policy on FB, media whatever means so they, the parents are ultimately responsible. We are not the police of the children. Can they get a copy of this so they know what they're looking for?

Pam: We send out a packet at the beginning of school. This is one of the things that's in it. She highlights some things and they have the link to go see the entire policies. That has already been sent out before school starts.

D. Whittemore: I didn't mean to say that you should be standing at the door checking everyone. It states that all administrators, and staff. So if anyone feels that something isn't appropriate they should be able to send them to the office. This is not just upon Pam to do all the policing.

D. Cayer: Some people made comments about distraction. I definitely think if you're distracted by skin, that's your own issue. Don't send us home and disrupt our learning if you're getting distracted by us, that's not our issue. I don't want to be sent home from a class that I might miss some homework just because my bra strap is showing.

B. Dyer: Diana, I appreciate your comments. You're coming from the perspective of the one that's going to be policed. I take a different approach to it, the adults make the decisions, the children sometimes understand it and often times don't. We have to be careful and it's causing problems. When we have a policy and the feeling is it's not being enforced why have the policy. Heather Bishop: I respect your opinion and how you feel but as parents our job is to protect you. There was a pedafile that moved into town, and I can't even imagine what some of these girls are wearing walking out of this school. Pam, I did notice a significant change today in what kids are wearing. Please do not feel this is a personal attack because this is across all of the schools. I think we make rules for our children to enforce them, we don't make rules and then break them. What are we teaching our children if we break our own rules. It is up to the parents, but we also have to think of the community we live in. We have a lot of kids who go home to parents who are absent, who are absent minded, parents who don't care. I feel strongly that we do have the ability to make a difference in this building. I know that some of the students that I talk to everyday in that lunch room do not agree with what I'm saying.

B. Dyer: I agree with the parents, there are probably many ways across social media to communicate. There will be a lead into this and then it will get really tough. Don't blame the administrators, the leaders if one of the students gets sent home because you had 90 days to get this right.

J. Bradbury: I had 4 grandsons come here in the last 4 years and graduate. They do see the skin, they take it home and tell gram what they wear. It is distracting. For you to understand, we want you to come to school for the idea that we're preparing for the future jobs and you should learn to dress accordingly.

B. Chow: It is very difficult for a male administrator to enforce. It can backfire.

L. Kelly: Is there something you can send home and the parents have to sign it? H. Bishop: we do have to sign it. The parents should all know about this.

H. Bishop: It wasn't that I didn't know I could come to you Pam. It was more telling a student put something on, or go to the office and they'll handle it.

L. Whittington: In your defense and the staff in the school, we live in a strange place in the world where teachers are afraid to say anything because they're afraid if they say something,,it's taking away the parents rights or whatever. Don't be afraid to say something because these are the rules to be followed.

B. Chow: I think we've heard enough. I don't know how the administrators will do it but they've heard from the board that we've had a number of complaints. If we have a policy follow it, we can review it.

2. Review the RSU 56 Goals/Objectives and update as needed

Pam explained that the Goals/Objectives were established when the RSU was first became a district in 2017. She feels it's time to write new strategic goals for RSU 56. That's the board preview if they want to do that or not. These goals got us up and running but we need to be more strategic with our goals going forward.

B. Chow: When we made the goals, we had a night and a full day of business people, community members, administrators, teachers. A committee incorporated what the groups had gathered. Pam stated about 70 people, what are we, where are we, where do we want to be? And they came up with these goals.

B. Dyer made a motion that we form a committee or set up a like process as last time to evaluate the goals and set new goals. Seconded: L. Kelly

B. Chow: it gets the community, students, everyone and it was a good listening.

K. Szostek: She's curious how we're doing at the 90% of 12th graders? The first objective.

Pam: She reported out last year, doesn't have that data on the top of her head. Last year was a lower one, the pandemic impacted that. We have been in the high 80's, low 90's most of the time prior to the pandemic. Last year we had 1 student withdrew right at the end of the school year, all the other students crossed the graduation stage. K. Szostek: I don't see very much about academics in here.

B. Dyer: I think we have an opportunity here to decide how this process is going to go, if it was successful last time, maybe we'll get more people involved. I would specifically challenge us to look at our vision. If we keep that vision, feels it's a fine vision, we need to align our actions to keeping that.

Pam: We did have an outside consultant come last time. We can do it with an outside consultant or we can do it ourselves.

B. Dyer: I make a recommendation that we do not use an outside consultant or use any money on a consultant. I would imagine within our community that we have a community member, whether that be a business leader, educator, retired educator or whoever that is we could probably find someone that is capable of holding our hands through this process. I would urge us not to spend any money to do this.

Motion Carried

3. Chain of Command Review (Pam Doyen/Barbara Chow)

Barbara discussed/reviewed the policy and procedure as to what the process is in regards to chain of command particularly in regards to the high school principal also being the Superintendent. During negotiations, it was discussed what would happen if someone at the high school had a complaint about the high school principal. Typically the next step would be the Superintendent. If there was a complaint at the high school level about the principal that complaint would go directly to Barbara, the Board chair after it went to the lowest level. The union is very active, we developed a trust. There is a process.

B. Dyer: Asked Barbara if a complaint about the high school principal got to her what would she then do? Barbara: She would go to the lawyer. Then if the lawyer advised she would go to the board. B. Dyer: Anyone that would be raising a complaint, they would then have to deal with the board chair and that may be intimidating. May have to deal with the board, that could be intimidating. A layer is taken out of it. His recommendation, to Pam's benefit, to the board's benefit and the community's benefit is that we do look at hiring a high school principal. That we do eliminate that problem all together. That is a budget process.

B. Chow: That would be in the budget process. That was not something that we initially said we want to do this. We had no choice or we wouldn't have had a budget. Any employee, even the administrators, have representation. They don't meet with an administrator without a

representative. I'm not against hiring a principal. Pam is on a timeline for her retirement and finding a good administrator is not easy.

C. Lueders: We have 2 principals in the other two schools, perhaps they could be involved in the chain of command if there was a problem with the principal at the high school.

B. Dyer: I think the problem you would find with that is that they report to her as well.

Don't necessarily want to spend the money but I think it's something we need to look into. It is hard to find good administrators but I think it's something that we need to do.

4. Technology Surplus Equipment (Brian Keene)

Approval from the board, have about 100 iPads he would like to send out to a surplus company or put out to bid. Along with a few other pieces of equipment that we've retired from our fleet. Items that were bought at the very beginning of the pandemic or have since upgraded. Rough value on the iPads, we're looking at probably a range of \$100 a piece maybe a touch less.

B. Chow: When was the last time we did that? Brian: we did one last year to a recycling company. The beginning of the year we did a public sale, then whatever we didn't sell we sent to a recycling company. A couple years before we sent out a large batch to a reseller also.

B. Dyer: How did the public sale go? Relatively smooth? Could we offload the bulk of it to the public? Brian: About 60% was done public sale. The problem with public sale for us is manpower. With public sale every device has to be touched, cleaned, all licensing removed. If we do it through a reseller they do all that. B. Dyer: asked if the price between the two was any different? Brian: The price between the two is pretty close, what we lose is on the manpower of it. We usually have to pay overtime to have someone stay late because the public sale people usually can't get in during school hours.

T. Courtway: sounds like it would be more financially responsible to just do the wholesaler. Once that is sold, where is the money going back to? Back into the technology dept? Brian: Put out to a number of reselling companies, they would put out a bid. Brian would compare the numbers to be sure we're getting the best deal but also making sure the company is reputable. There is a technology recycling account so that is where that money goes and the use of that is to do repairs on student laptops. When covid hit we stopped charging for the repair plan which was about \$60 or \$100 a piece.

C. Lueders: How long does it take to wipe one out? Brian: The iPads are definitely quicker than the laptops. iPads probably about 15 min a piece. Physically cleaning the device & mechanically cleaning. C. Lueders: I think the public sale might create more money.

J. Bradbury: I didn't realize they did this until recently. I think it's kind of a good thing toward the school

B. Dyer: Made a motion to do a public sale. If we are capable of grossing up the price reasonably to cover any extra hours that we attempt to do so.

Seconded: K. Szostek

K. Szostek: Maybe we could ask for volunteers to help with the sale. I'd be happy to help.

C. Lueders: Need to at least approach the wholesaler or do we?

Brian: iPads are usually between \$50-\$200. This time I have more iPads than I have iPad chargers.

There was some discussion about Apple chargers.

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS

1. Region 9 Updates (Bruce Ross/Brian Keene/Wayne Thurston)
None at this time

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent's Report:

The intensely hot weather last week was challenging at the high school and middle school. DES has air conditioning so they managed fine. I will be working with Kenny to see if any of the remaining ESSER funds could be used to at least address the second floor at DHS in terms of air quality during hot weather. At our admin team meeting this afternoon, administrators reported that it has been a great start to the school year in all of the buildings.

Administrator's Report: Kenny Robbins, BGT Director

Kenny went over the summer projects that were done.

DES: Started with summer school. We ran 5 buses/ 2 vans.

The septic system tanks were all inspected. We usually do that every other year so that was done this year. The AC units, we had those all finished this year. Last week was a good week to test them. Everyone was pleased with the temp in the school.

We did a pretty fair amount of electrical work, in actually all three schools. We focused on getting rid of alot of electrical cords. That was caught up this summer.

The gym floor and stage have been recoated already. The other two schools are slated for Oct/Nov.

A little update on the PFSA...Pam mentioned we got a grant from the state. We went through the lead testing and got that all taken care of in all the schools. The next thing we did was the PFSA test. We sent in a test and the state threshold is 20. The first test came back at 19.8. We were really close to that threshold. If we did a second test that qualified us for funding at the state. We did a second test and it came back a little lower but not much. We are working with the state through a water company. This company at no charge to the schools will guide us through this process. They've come and looked at the filtration system we have now. Kenny had to do a geographical study of where the well was. They will put together a bid process but again at no cost to us.

DMS: The gym bleachers all got recoated. They haven't been done since the 80's so that was a big project. The gym floor is slated for Oct/Nov. They did a lot of painting at DMS, the hallways & classrooms. A lot of electrical repairs.

DHS: Finished the air conditioning in the SCC. Still being tweaked a little. We've had problems in the past with our pipes. Vortex (the old Ted Berry) came this summer with their cameras. They took the drains off and found traps and some things that they didn't know existed. Got a good handle on if there are problems in the future on where to go without having to shut a bathroom down. Last year when the gym floor was done we had some water come in through on the east side, we had the roofing company come and they resealed all the windows this summer. The gym floor, part of that, got taken back up. It had a little bit of wavy in it and it was making the bleachers not working properly. The bleachers got taken off and the floor got taken care of at the floor company's expense. Everything is all back together and working properly. The north end ramps got repaired, there was some broken cement. This summer was the first summer since Covid we were able to put in a pony boiler in the boiler room. That heats our domestic hot water separately, so in the spring when the warm weather starting coming we can shut off the big boiler. Hopefully we'll see a benefit in oil by doing that.

One project that is still waiting on, a couple catch basins washed out out in back of the high school.

Kenny is waiting on the company to come to inspect and hopefully repair them.

The bus lot, where the buses are parked, we started doing some clean up around there in preparation for the new bus garage. We had some surveying done. The building had some repairs that had to be done. The state fire marshall came. We needed to do some upgrades on our fuel tank. Everything is upgrading now except for the diesel tank. The fire marshall is giving us two years to either put in a new tank or do something different.

Trans: All the buses have gone through the garage and all the repairs were done that needed to be.

The state police came in, it depends on what you get for a rank card. We have been lucky enough, the come once a year. They made a quote directly to Kenny to “probably had the best fleet in the state.”

All bus drivers and custodians are completely staffed. They did CPR training this year. Devon Melcher, the high school nurse, took a 2 day course and got all the department updated on that. The state offered an 8 hour class in the spring so all his people went and did that training as well.

Grounds: With all the rain this year, the boys were very busy mowing. We do maintain 23 acres of athletic fields, that doesn’t include all the lawns around the schools. The new dug outs had new doors put on, trying to cut back on the vandalism there. Did a lot of patching along the driveways.

Update on the new garage: They have chosen colors, the project manager has been chosen, the contract did get signed. The price is locked in. Mary ordered the lift this week so that will be coming shortly.

There will be a meet and greet, hopefully this fall and then they will start about April 2024.

Severy Hill: Dick Pickett called Kenny before school started. Kenny went over and looked at it. They have started to repair it. Currently they are doing the run with a van, so they are not going up there with a bus.

B. Dyer: Asked about the roof of the Chow house. Kenny: We take care of anything with Harlow Park but any repairs are split with the town. Something does need to be done with it.

B. Dyer: Asked about the decision to retrofit the bathrooms. Pam: the board voted that down last year.

T. Courtway: Are the trees out back here, is that school property? Kenny said where the trees were is the line. T. Courtway: Heard from some community members that there was some concern.

Kenny: Have taken down some trees last year that were bad. This spring the tree line was cleaned up a bit.

B. Dyer: Congrats on the bus fleet. We take our kids safety for granted sometimes. Also being fully staffed..That’s not the case in all districts. The new bus will be in this Thursday. This will be the first bus with cameras inside and out. We installed some cameras on our Margaret Murphy bus.

K. Szostek: Prior meetings, I thought the grant for the bathrooms was nixed but I thought we would do it inhouse. Barbara: There is no money in the budget for it this year.

Stipended and Coaching Positions:

Meg MacFarlane- Tech Club

Yami Hamalainen- Craft Club Advisor at TWKDMS

Randy DeRoche- DHS Boys Soccer Coach

Katie Chicoine- DES Civil Rights Team Advisor

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report- D. Cayer- This past week was really hot. There was no air conditioning on the second floor, but Ms. Doyen’s report kind of answered that about looking into getting some. Sports is off to a good start. Field hockey won their first game. Football is 1-1 right

now. Cross Country: the girls team won the first meet of the season. 8 person soccer for both girls and boys did have enough people to play and they're competing. Add/drop is ending so students are starting to get settled into their classes. Pam spoke to Diana about having a policy committee meeting before the next board meeting and the Dress code policy would be on it if she was interested in coming to it. Pam also spoke about the e-sports meeting being held this week.

2. Policy Committee- Meet 9/26 5pm
3. Finance Committee- Nothing to report
4. Curriculum Committee- Meeting Thurs 9/14 at 5:30pm
5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Not met
6. Negotiations Committee- Pam emailed the negotiation committee to ask about starting next Wed 9/20 for a meet & greet at 5:30pm
7. Personnel Committee- 9/13 at 3:30pm. Meet in the conference room. Set up a zoom link to Charlie Swan
8. Ad-hoc Committee- 9/28 DMS at 5:30pm

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

B. Dyer: Would like to discuss board member comments and when they are on the agenda. Should comments be moved up on the agenda. Can the placement of board members comments be put on the agenda for discussion for next meeting.

Pam: That is in policy...so will it be in policy and then bring it to the board?

D. Whittemore: Can he get the number of home school kids in all four towns? Pam: Those numbers are reported to the state for Oct 1 so we will have them at the next meeting.

There was then some discussion and opinions from other board members how they felt about moving the board member comments up earlier in the meeting.

K. Szostek: I'm very disturbed in other states where they're discussing lock downs, mask mandates, vaccine mandates. I don't know where that lies but I would like to have it as an agenda item at the next meeting. Feel it is very damaging to our children to have another round of lock downs.

Pam: I work for the board. I know my role. I'm a little concerned about the reactions that I've received from parents about dress code and they had no idea it was being discussed tonight. I do worry sometimes when things come up at the last minute, that people don't know what's being discussed. I've had some less than pleasant conversations around dress code over the last 8 days. I feel like if we're going to put something we should make sure that our communities know that we're going to be discussing it incase somebody has a different opinion and they want to be able to address it.

D. Dolloff: I feel like it would be helpful to hear from community members and staff as well. To be transparent I think we have much more burning issues in the day to day running of the school. I think school is a safe place for a lot of students.

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: C. Lueders

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm