

RSU 56 Board of Directors Updated Minutes
Board Meeting Amended Agenda- November 28, 2023 - 6:30 pm
(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, Tim Kelly, Don Whittemore, Larry Whittington,
Joy Bradbury, Elizabeth Kelly, Brad Dyer, Kathleen Szostek,
Tina Courtway, Carl Lueders, Natalie Sneller (6:33)

School Board Members Absent: Deanna Dolloff, Diana Cayer (Student Rep)

Staff Attending: Pam Doyen, Shawn Murphy, Cathy Arsenault, Charlie Swan, Beth Edwards, Heidi Broomhall, Olaf Johnson, Lea Nolette, Kristin Arsenault, Beth MacFarlane, C/M Araujo, Nick Karavas, Dianna Dority, Justin Fiset, Carolyn Buotte, Jay Nicholson, Cindy Petherbridge, Kathy Wilcox, Rebecca Fletcher, Heidi Connelly, Kate O'Connor,

Also Attending: Jen Bell, Lisa Hutchins, Ella Hines (student), Daisy Sweatt (student), Mike Nolette, Bethany Meehan-Poulin, Darcy Klein, Craig Collins, Lilianna Salvati (student), DMS student, Pamela Ringle ?, Brian Szostek

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Barbara Chow, Board Chair, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:32pm. Audience introductions were made. Everyone on zoom and YouTube were welcomed.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Motion to add the following: Remove VI New Business: #4 Technology Update

Motion: T. Kelly Seconded: N. Sneller

Motion Carried

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

1. Minutes of the November 14, 2023 Board Meeting

Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: N. Sneller

Not Voting: B. Dyer, T. Courtway, D. Whittemore

Motion Carried

PUBLIC COMMENTS

H. Broomhall- spoke in regards to the dress code policy and the policy being proposed to the board regarding books. She wanted some clarification on the policy of dress code and how she is to enforce them. Could the board leave the discretion of the wearing of hoods to the individual teacher.

In regards to the policy on material in the library and curriculum, I am wondering why the current policy that is in the district and vetted by our attorneys is not sufficient enough?

Questioned if there has been an issue with the current policy to look at changing it.

Kristin Arsenault- spoke regarding the proposed policy about library materials. There are no materials in the library which are obscene by law, nor do they pick materials that are. Educators do not intend to give students inappropriate materials. She also read a petition signed by staff members in opposition of the proposed policy.

Karolyn Buotte- oppose the proposed policy. She is the Advanced teacher for DHS. Several of the texts read and learned from would be removed. She hopes that the board will oppose this proposed policy.

Dianna Dority spoke on the proposed policy regarding her curriculum at the DHS. If this policy passes and she is not allowed to show nudity it will entirely change the art curriculum as we know it. There will no longer be multiple artists that will no longer be allowed to be done. She has been teaching here for over 20 years and has yet to have a parent complain about her curriculum. Not sure what has changed recently to make her worry about the type of art her students research in art history.

Lea Nolette- made a statement in opposition to the proposed policy for library materials and curriculum. Negatively impact current and future students. Ask the board to trust the professionals that they hired in selecting materials and dismiss this policy from consideration.

Ella Hines (Student)- Speaking against the proposed policy. An avid reader. Could have an emotional impact on our students if some books are removed. How far will this policy go if implemented? Be cautious with this policy if put through.

Daisey Sweatt (Student)- Also spoke regarding the proposed policy. It would have a colossal economic impact on taxpayers throwing away thousands of dollars of books. Replacing textbooks would cost a small fortune nevermind what would be thrown away from the library. This policy is not practical. All books, including new books being bought would have to be meticulously gone through.

Mike Nolette- Saw on Channel 6 this community being thrown up as “book banners”. The board needs to stop, they are embarrassing us. Hope they have some thoughtful conversation, engage in a dialogue. Put this policy to rest. Trust your professionals, trust your current policies.

Cindy Petherbridge- In the news, the medical field, the educational field, it is not the books that are causing mental illness to our young people. It is the digital age. Feels the board should spend more time looking at our internet and digital curriculum than the books that are on the shelves in our library.

K. Szostek wanted to read something sent to her. B. Chow said things need to be sent to the board chair, not board members for them to get. She advised Kathleen to email it to Pam for her to send to the board. It is not a public comment, it is an email that can’t be read during public comments.

Pamela Ringle (?) parent- spoke on the dress code. Becoming concerned that children get to decide on policies in the school. If we let the kids decide on the dress code, what is next? Choose their own curriculum next? We should have concerns with our kids dressing immodestly.

COMMUNICATIONS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of the policy JICA Student Dress

B. Chow explained the history and standard practice of policy JICA-Student Dress

For the most part the board felt this was a reasonable policy.

After some discussion regarding the policy it was approved with the changing of wording in “D” to read “must always fully cover”

Motion: L. Whittington

Seconded: B. Dyer

Opposed: K. Szostek

Motion Carried

2. Discussion around a policy proposed by a board member

B. Chow- This was brought to the Policy Committee. This is a vital change.

Many of the board members decided that this should be tabled and brought back to the policy committee for more discussion.

P. Doyen stated that on the website is a full list of what materials are in the libraries as well as the materials for the curriculums.

After much discussion it was suggested and decided that the librarians come in and speak to the board on how they vet the list of books for the library.

L. Whittington wanted what he stated added to the minutes for the record: In part he felt that the discussion should be tabled for three reasons. 1. This is a moot point considering that the Maine Department of Education has been required by Statute about this very point (pornography). 2. The supreme court has already made ruling on the banning of books, & 3 the Board needs to hear from all participants involved, especially those who are being criticized for, according to the minority, allowing pornography in RSU 56, the school librarians.

3. Determination of how to complete the board self-evaluation process

It was decided that Pam would send out the board self evaluation out for the board to do and then discussion in January.

4. Technology Update (Brian Keene)

5. Approval for an overnight wrestling meet at Noble High School

The dates being 12/27 & 28 2023

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: T. Courtway

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS

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

No new updates. Bruce Ross will report at the Board meeting in Dec

2. Strategic Planning Update (Pam Doyen)

Everyone should have received a postcard asking all residents to provide input in the strategic planning process including an invitation to a community forum. The community forum will be on Saturday, December 16 from 9:00- 11:00 at Dirigo High School.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent's Report: Pam Doyen

I was contacted by newscenter Maine concerning tonight's board discussion around the policy proposed by a board member. I accepted the interview and explained that the conversation tonight was focused on whether the board had the desire to consider policies brought forth by individual board members as opposed to considering policies that are recommended by MSMA and vetted through legal. I emphasized that it was not an action agenda item.

Pam reminded the board to do the Superintendent Evaluation.

B. Dyer- said he would not fill it out. He didn't feel he knew enough about what Pam does to do it accurately. He wanted to make a recommendation that the evaluation is done by the staff.

B. Chow: Any change for something like that has to go by the Superintendent.

Administrator Report: Nick Karavas (Dirigo High School Assistant Principal/ Athletic Director)

Two positions that have not been reported out yet: Varsity Cheerleading Coach: Kaitlyn Woods & JV DHS Girls Basketball Coach: Tom Kelly

Disciplinary Report:

2023-2024 Total Reports (Aug-Nov): 135

2022-2023 Total Reports (Aug-Nov): 108

The 3 largest reasons for Referrals by Behavior: Defiance, m-Defiance & Skip

Truancy Reporting:

Dirigo High School Truancy Report- 1st Quarter (Through Oct.1): 2

Steps taken with Truancy:

Connect with Families; Schedule meeting(s) to determine steps for success including student(s) and their guardianship; Continue to monitor and support student(s) for future success

Fall Athletics- Gratitude- Those to Thank:

Student-Athletes; Parent/Guardian(s); Families; Community Members; Board Members; Dirigo Athletics Boosters; Coaching Staff; Transportation (Terri, Kenny, Bus Drivers, etc.); Groundskeeper (Jay, Aaron, Randy, Shawn, Richard, Scott, etc.); Custodians, Staff Members, Administration, etc.

Fall Athletics- Student Athletes (DHS):

Cross Country Running: 13 Student-Athletes

Football (8-person): 32 Student- Athletes

Boys Soccer (8-person): 11 Student Athletes

Esports: Summary will be provided in another slide

Golf: 6 Student-Athletes

Field Hockey: 21 Student - Athletes

Girls Soccer (8-person): 18 Student-Athletes

End of Season:

Student-Athlete Total: 101

DHS Student Total: 233

Total Percentage Participating: 43%

Fall Athletes- Event Summary (DHS):

Cross Country Running: 13 Scheduled Events; 2 Canceled Events

Football: 11 Varsity Scheduled Events; 5 JV Scheduled Events; 2 JV Canceled Events

Boys Soccer: 17 Scheduled Events; 0 Canceled Events

Esports: Summary will be provided in another slide
Golf: 11 Scheduled Events; 1 Canceled Event
Field Hockey: 20 Scheduled Events; 1 Canceled Event
Girls Soccer: 16 Scheduled Events; 1 Canceled Event

End of Season:

Cross Country Running- Regionals & States
Field Hockey- Regional Semifinals
Football- Regional Semifinals
Golf- MVC Qualifier
Girls Soccer- Regional Quarterfinals
Boys Soccer- Regional Semifinals

Fall Athletes- Season Awards (DHS):

Girls Soccer: Second Team: Sophia Nino-Aguirre
Cross Country: First Team (Girls): McKenzie Boyle
First Team (Boys): William Morris; Second Team (Boys): Stetson Thurston; Honorable Mention (Boys) Mitchel Wolf
Boys Soccer: Honorable Mention: Dalton Hodgkins; Ethan Woods; Travis Wright
Golf: Honorable Mention: Elijah Lindus; Logan Timberlake
Field Hockey: First Team: Libbie Errington; Emily Woods
Second Team: Grace Averill; Honorable Mention: Lana Waite; Sylvia Hodsdon
Player of the Year: Libbie Errington
Football: First Team: Nathaniel Wainwright; Brady Philbrick; Tanner Bradeen; Isaiah Bradeen
Second Team: Owen Smith; Dakota White; Assistant Coach of the Year: Chris Whitney
Maine Field Hockey Association All-State Award: Libbie Errington; Emily Woods
Academic All-Stars (GPA 90+): Libbie Errington, Logan Timberlake
Maine Field Hockey Association Academic All-State: Libbie Errington

Fall Athletics- Esports Summary (DHS):

- Starting to get more traction within Esports as the season has progressed
- Provided opportunities for students who have not participated in any type of activity at Dirigo High School previously
- Continuing to grow interest within the fields associated with Esports for future careers
- Students have been researching and asking questions about particular opportunities offered through Esports (Example: Computer System based experiences associated with MPA)
- Have been able to offer opportunities without having an impact on the current budget to grow the program
- Will be requesting in the near future for Esports to be offered within the Spring 2024 season

Fall Athletics- Student-Athletes (TWKDMS)

Cross Country Running: 12 Student -Athletes
Field Hockey: 24 Student-Athletes
Soccer (Boys & Girls): 33 Student-Athletes

End of Season:

Student-Athlete Total: 69
TWKDMS (& 5th Grade) Student Total: 234
Total Percentage Participating: 29%

Fall Athletics- Event Summary (TWKDMS):

Cross Country Running: 8 Scheduled Events; 3 Canceled Events

Field Hockey: 15 Scheduled Events; 0 Canceled Events- Regional Semifinals

Soccer (Boys & Girls): 12 Scheduled Events; 0 Canceled Events

Fall Athletics- Lewiston Tribute:

During the Regional Semifinals Football game with Dirigo vs. Maranacook, our communities came together to show our support for those that were all affected by the tragic incident in Lewiston. The hearts of all within both communities were with the families and individuals affected and we saw that as a collective community we will continue to strive to stand with one another during this time.

Fall Athletics- Projections for Next Year (Part I):

- When making projections for the upcoming year, as the Athletic Director I attempt to project a 4-year window with the athletic programs and sustainability.
- Based on the projections that we have from this Fall, I believe that we will be able to offer.

Dirigo High School:

Cross Country Running; E-Sports; Field Hockey; Football; Golf; Girls Soccer (8-person); Boys Soccer (8-person)

TWKDMS:

Cross Country Running; Field Hockey; Soccer (Both Boys & Girls)

Football:

When Dirigo initially transitioned from 11-person to 8-person classification in Football it was with the intent of building the program (similar to other athletic programs throughout the State of Maine) to eventually go back to the 11-person classification.

Fall 2024 Declaration Date: December 1, 2023

There are multiple programs throughout the State that are determining their declaration regarding 8-person or 11-person classifications. With our sustaining numbers averaging around 8-12 athletes per grade throughout the Dirigo High School program as well as the Dixfield Rec program (grades 5-8), the projection is that we will have approximately 40 student-athletes within the Dirigo High School Football program over the next 4 years (MPA guidance projection period).

When a district that is sanctioned by the MPA declares which classification that they are projecting, the decision is put forth to the advisory committee for approval.

If we declare that the Dirigo Athletics Football program will go to the 11-person classification, we would be competing with teams that have similar enrollment numbers as well as student-athletes on their rosters. Furthermore, the development of our programs depend on the possibility of having Junior Varsity games which have not been able to occur within our schedule regularly over the past few years (as seen within the previous slide relating to the number of scheduled and canceled events). The 11-person classification would allow more opportunity for our student-athletes to participate within Junior Varsity games to benefit the further development of our program. Within our local area there are multiple schools that we would be able to obtain a more solidified schedule for our Junior Varsity program.

In referencing travel, we would be decreasing the amount of travel mileage overall based on the current classification due to the amount of schools within our area that are classified as 11-person programs.

There will be some challenges by transitioning back to the 11-person classification such as the learning curve but I have full trust in our coaching staff to be able to implement this transition appropriately for our student-athletes to be successful.

This transition will also allow for more student-athletes to participate at the Varsity level due to the amount of players that are on the field at a singular point within the game. Staying within the 8-person classification with our roster size would not necessarily allow for student-athletes to participate as much as they would within the 11-person classification. Student-athlete involvement is key with the development of athletic programs with practices, scrimmages, competitions, etc.

This information provides the support for declaring that the Dirigo Athletics Football program will classify as an 11-person program within the Fall 2024 season.

Some board members applauded the move to an 11 person program as a good thing.

Question about participation numbers at the middle school and how it will be handled going forward was asked. N. Karavas tough question: will look at as many opportunities to keep students involved and other options rather than going to a cutting policy.

Stipend and Coaching Positions:

Dakota Tompkins- DHS Boys JV Basketball Coach

Resignations/Retirements:

James Gronewold- Bus Driver/Custodian resignation effective November 29, 2023

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report- N/A- D. Cayer has basketball practice
2. Policy Committee- A lot of discussion on policies and will meet again soon
3. Finance Committee- Meeting has been postponed- will be rescheduled
4. Curriculum Committee- Nothing to report
5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Met on 11/3- Kenny went over the new building - Next meeting will be Jan 12 @ DES
6. Negotiations Committee- will have some results in Executive session- Starting Wed 11/29 on another group
7. Personnel Committee- Not met- Reschedule the meeting to Jan 23rd 5 pm
8. Ad-hoc Committee- Not met- Next meeting is Dec 4 @ 5pm

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

D. Whittemore- Talked about a discussion made a few meetings ago regarding a contract decision. He was upset with the numbers and the dollar amount it would cost. He voted no and didn't think the figures were correct. He felt the numbers were double from what was talked about. As a board they should know exactly what the cost will be. He wanted to make a resolution that anytime they vote on anything they have the total dollar amount that it will cost. To be more transparent we need accurate figures.

B. Chow- She needs to go over these with Mary..Never, ever do we give false information. It will be looked into. If numbers are not understood by anyone they should go in and have it all explained to them.

B. Chow- Please if anyone has an issue with anything, pick up the phone and call Pam. She looks into it right away.

K. Szostek- At the last meeting it was discussed about what the cost would be for the board members to be added to the robo calls. B. Chow: replied that Brian is not at the meeting and will still need to look into the cost.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. subsection 405(D) for discussion and consideration of the BGT contract

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: L. Whittington

Entered into executive session at 8:56pm

Exited executive session at 9:17pm

- 1a. Motion pertaining to executive session

Motion: C. Lueders made a motion to approve the 3 yr BGT contract

Seconded: D. Whitemore

Not Voting: T. Kelly

Motion Carried

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: L. Whittington

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:19pm