

GRiffin SCHOOL DISTRICT #324

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Board of Directors' Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 23, 2023 – 5:15 p.m. – In-Person & Via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83304507493> - Meeting ID: 833 0450 7493.

Vice Chair Ridgeway called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. The flag salute followed.

Present

- Board: Brad Ridgeway, Trish Gregory, Julie Osterberg and Emma Rose. Dan Teuteberg was excused.
- Leadership: Telisa Reed, Kim Ferra, Karen Lett, Kelli Anderson, Rebekah Keiser, Erin Hagen, Kyle Nixon, PK Koehler, and Allison Barker.
- Staff: Johanna Dowler, Jenna Anderson, Ali Daughtery, Kelsie Adams, Camie McGregor, Justin Poland, Michelle Poland, Frank Ehresmann, Kayleen Evans, Jennifer Tomlin, Tina Johnson, Tanisha Smith, Jenelle Hutnik, Justine Oestreich, and Ronda Fry. Please note, there were several other staff members present that may not have signed in.
- Members of the Public: Kacey Magnusson, Kelly Magnusson, Hayden Milligan, Craig Jodan, Nancy Chapman, Brandy Franko, Michelle O'Dell, Traci Johnson, Abbie Rose, Natasha Heck, Jennie Anderson, Joan Thomas, Melisa Cushman Guevara, Joshua Guevara, Brent Wise, Rachel Groves, Chelsie Crow, Mark Messinger, Emma Messinger, Jordan McGregor, Joel Anderson, Malia Jones, Tesa Frevert, Karen Hurley, Mary Kunsman, Blair Baker, Kristina Lineham, Christine Williams, Mel Durward, Angie McIsaac, Marchall McCabe, Kelly Flowers, Julie Nichols, and Austin Groves. Please note, there were several other community members participating via zoom (approximately 58) and also in person that may not have signed in.

Agenda

- Approval of the Meeting Agenda: Director Gregory moved to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Director Osterberg, the motion passed four to zero. Chair Teuteberg was excused.
- School Board Land Acknowledgement: Director Osterberg read the land acknowledgement.

Tab 1 Communications - INFORMATIONAL

- 1.1 School Board Planning Calendar –2023-2024 School Year: No comments were made.
- 1.2 Meeting Attendance: Record attendance at a school board meeting. Not enough space but recognize that the community has strong interest in tonight's meeting.
- 1.3 GEA Contract: The GEA contract is not on the meeting agenda. The board is not prepared to comment on this topic.

Public Comment - INFORMATIONAL

The public was asked to sign up ahead of time for Public Comment. Comments should be limited to three minutes and should be respectful and inclusive. The board will not respond to statements or questions. There will not be a back-and-forth dialogue.

- Johanna Dowler: Mrs. Dowler addressed the board noting that she is the GEA president, and she is speaking on behalf of the GEA. She shared comments about the bargaining process and the GEA Contract. She also shared that the GEA has filed several grievances as well as an unfair labor practice against the administration. Teachers are not feeling safe, there is a lot of mistrust and fear. She asked why the GEA Contract is being disrespected.
- Jason Richter: Mr. Richter thanked the school staff and the board for allowing him to use the facilities for practices during the school year.
- Kelsie Adams & Camie McGregor: Mrs. Adams and Mrs. McGregor addressed the board about a job share opportunity for the 2023-24 school year. They shared that this job share was agreed upon by the former administration. However, they were recently told the job share was not agreed upon by the new administration. They shared details about the job share with the board. They thanked the board for allowing them to comment.

5:45 p.m. Tab 2 Consent Agenda – ACTION: Director Rose moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Director Gregory, the motion passed four to zero. Chair Teuteberg was excused.

The consent agenda was approved as follows:

- 2.1 School Board Meeting Minutes, June 7, 2023
- 2.2 Approval of the July Budget Status
- 2.3 Approval of the Donation Report
- 2.4 Approval of Warrants and Payroll
- 2.5 Approval of Enrollment
- 2.6 Approval of the Personnel Report

6:05 p.m. Tab 6 District Reports - INFORMATIONAL

6.1 Finance Directors Report: Finance Director, Kim Ferra gave an update to the Board about district finances. She shared that the financial statements are included in the packet for the month of July. She is working to close the books for last school year.

6.2 Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Telisa Reed gave an update on district activities. She prepared some comments for the board that she noted she can substantiate and validate with evidence. She started at Griffin on July 17th and since then has reached out to multiple community members and staff to schedule one-to-one meetings. Some have responded and she has met with them. Others have not responded. She has enjoyed the conversations she has had with those she has met with. She stated that she has only met two teachers and has only met with Johanna Dowler. No one has shaken her hand, had a conversation with her or could pick her out of a crowd. She added that it has been disheartening to be new to a community and to have this be the welcome she received with the lies that have followed. She did share there is a contract issue and that the district made a request to have illegal language removed from the contract prior to its approval. She has never spoken to what the board will decide about the contract. She did not argue for the 3.7% raise because that is a state mandated increase. She never meets with people one on one. All of this is happening when she is standing in the gap to make sure the district doesn't continue to face litigation specifically in the area of special education services. Specifically in the contract it says that teachers can diagnose students with a history of behavior as exceptional students which is a label used in special education. A special education student has a legal medical diagnosis that teachers don't have credentials to conduct. She feels that while she is advocating for kids, members of the community have launched a lynching on her.

Mrs. Reed shared that there are posts on Facebook which state that community members need to attend the board meeting, but they don't know why. No one has asked why or asked any questions or reached out to the district for clarification. She went onto state that the district has made several attempts to communicate with the GEA board, they have refused to communicate with her and have not responded to her emails or invites to meet. Instead, they have avoided her, gone around her and directly approached the two white male board members, ignoring protocol. They have removed her from email correspondence. Telisa Reed feels that she has been slandered and that an all-out attack has been launched by the community based on lies and ambiguity. She feels that she has been disrespected, minimized, dehumanized, discriminated against, and retaliated against (with the use of frivolous unsubstantiated grievances). The district filed for PERC mediator, and she encouraged community members to ask the GEA when they filed their request for mediation. The process was not completed accurately. She asks that the illegal language be removed. She has been accused of being intimidating by people that have never met her in person. Teachers have expressed that they are in a hostile work environment even though she is not there and has never met them. She stated that historically white people are a bigger threat to her than she is to them, hence the number of people in attendance at the meeting. She attributed her feelings to a "lynching." These are discriminating behaviors and reflect how the community feels about her. She feels like she is in a hostile working environment. The equity plan on the website has been there for two years, it dictates who was on that committee. Community members have connected the document to her even though she was not part of the development of the document. Telisa Reed noted that she had not changed anything other than what is in alignment with state law. She added additional FTE's for an Ed Tech Teacher/librarian, a Spanish teacher, two registered behavior therapists, and a BCBA to supervise them. She also added a library paraeducator. She has made it possible for every eighth grader to take the PSAT like other districts. She has developed an instructional infrastructure and framework as required by OSPI and implemented process for teaching with fidelity. When kids did not get what they needed, where was the crowd then? Where was the mob then. She then shared the Emmett Till Story. She feels like the people in attendance are accusing her of lying and that they want to lynch her and came to the meeting as a mob. She did address policy 5222. She has done what she was hired to do, she has been kind, and personable. She is embarrassed about what has been happening and feels that not all staff are in agreement. She has met several people in steamboat and even gone to characters for a burger. She is clear about how she feels unwanted in the steamboat community. She invited the community to reach out to her and meet with her.

Vice Chair Ridgeway recessed the meeting at 5:44 p.m. for a short break. Vice Chair Ridgeway reconvened the meeting at 5:51 p.m.

Public Comment - INFORMATIONAL

- Melissa Kushman Guevara: Addressed the board as a parent. She came because she wanted to make sure she was in the room to see what was happening. She did see some comments on Facebook that were concerning. She didn't know about the interim superintendent. She feels it's important that the community is part of this conversation because of the way things have been going in education. It is troubling.
- Joshua Guevara: Addressed the board noting that he is in attendance because of something that might have been brought up. He is new to the community and wants to be more involved in the community. He plans to attend more meetings and get more involved. Has been a teacher for 15 years. Wants his voice to be heard more in the community.
- Kelli Anderson: Addressed the board noting that she has worked for the district for 21 years. She has not missed a board meeting. She expressed her feelings about the Facebook post that garnered 157 comments. She invited the public to attend the board meetings anytime and not just when there is conflict. She expressed her feelings about Mrs. Reed and the situation.
- Michelle O'Dell: Addressed the board and thanked Dr. Reed for her comments noting that it has opened her eyes to many things including the illegal language in the contract. This is disturbing language if it is in fact in the contract. She thanked Mrs. Reed for her courage in speaking out. She advocates for special education and inclusion and is inspired by Mrs. Reed to be a better advocate. She thanked Mrs. Reed for finding the funding to hire behavior specialists.
- Tanisha Smith: Addressed the board noting that she is a fourth grade teacher and is doing her administrative internship at Griffin this year. After hearing Mrs. Reed's statement, she wanted people to know that there are staff and other people that have reached out to Mrs. Reed. She sent her an email and noted she never received a response. She understands why she didn't get a response but did have one interaction with her. She was told that at the end of the next school year, several staff will be let go, including her. She took that as a threat.
- Julie Nichols: Addressed the board as a parent and PTO president. She is shocked. She also feels that there is a big misunderstanding at the meeting tonight. She is friends with community members, she is here because two teachers asked her to be here. Whenever that happens, she will change her plans to attend a meeting. The accusations that people are here knowingly engaging in mob mentality makes her sad. She provided two dates to meet with the new superintendent and hopes the meeting still occurs.
- Austin Groves: Addressed the board noting that this is his first board meeting. He noted that he has been involved in recent board meetings and was hoping to the minutes. He has reached out for the meeting minutes from the June meetings and has not received them. He loves the teachers and hopes that the district is not stonewalling him. There are so many labels out there now and feels that we have to be able to come together as a collective and not as enemies. We want the board to be empowered to do great things and he wants Griffin to be great. He doesn't know who is responsible for the hiring. He noted that we are not here against you. He hopes that parents won't be removed from participating.
- Patrick Pulley: Addressed the board noting that he has been in the Griffin community for nine years. He didn't know about the meeting before he came. Teachers asked him to come and thought it would be a great opportunity to meet the new superintendent. What he witnessed at the meeting tonight has validated his fears that came about when he heard Greg Woods was resigning. Parents become accustomed to leadership and whenever there is a change, it brings about fear and anxiousness for what's to come. That is how he feels. He shared that the behavior of the interim superintendent was reprehensible and alarming. He has heard racial comments more at this meeting than in his whole nine years of being in the community. These are remarks are clearly being made by someone who has no bearing on the community. Someone who is insecure as a leader and not prepared to lead in the role that she has been hired. He doesn't believe the situation will actually improve. He is shocked by the lack of candid leadership and sincerity. He could homeschoo, but he chose not to isolate his family. He loves the staff at Griffin. He feels that this situation has the ability to tear it all down. He is in support of whatever can help us move forward and bring back positivity.
- Colleen Kunsman: Addressed the board noting that she didn't show up for the new superintendent. She doesn't have Facebook. She noted the hateful rhetoric that was spewed toward the community. She feels that this is hurting teachers and the community that we love so much. This is very hurtful. Know who you're voting for, elections have consequences. Vote her out.
- Sadie Tilson: Addressed the board noting that her husband was the one that posted the meeting on Facebook. They support multiple teachers in the district and have for a long time. If the teachers and kids are upset that needs to be addressed. This is a tight knit district, teachers are scared, and asked community members to show up. She did respond to an email meeting request and didn't hear anything back. She wants parents that are in attendance to know that This is unfair and dangerous

➤ Kerri Blankenship: Addressed the board as the special education director. She noted that she has worked with Griffin for about five years. Has done contracting work and improved systems for support for students at Griffin. There has been a lack of leadership that was removed in June. Ask your principals what it feels like to be empowered to lead their own building with someone behind them supporting them. Ask your teachers what it feels like, what kids feel like when we are going to close that 30% gap that has kept kids with disabilities at the bottom of performance and not growing with their peers. There has been time after time that she has presented solutions to the current administration with no results. She created a plan with Kim Ferra and the principals to bring in more special education staff to Griffin to help reform instruction and make Griffin more inclusive. She met Mrs. Reed and knows that she is committed to helping our kids succeed. These students have been ignored in the past. Mrs. Reed met with her even when she was experiencing tragedy and left shortly after to attend to family matters. She has been available. She is the leader we need in this building; she is going to hold people accountable. When people are given expectations and are expected to follow them, they don't like it and that is what has gone on for decades with the former leadership. She is the woman we need in this position, and she means well.

➤ Rebekah Graham: Addressed the board and thanked Dr. Reed for sharing. She is at the meeting tonight because of the racist rhetoric online. Maybe there is a problem of racism in our community. Mrs. Reed shared her thoughts and backed it up with real data and shared what she is doing for special education kids and yet the community comes and says it's about love. She just heard facts about what change can be made in the community. She encouraged people to think about their emotions and why they are feeling them.

➤ Jan Robbins: Addressed the board noting that she was on the equity committee when her son attended Griffin. She brought concerns about diversity at Griffin to this committee and to the administrators at Griffin. There was only one African American female at Griffin the whole time her son attended Griffin (K-8th grade). She advocated for more diversity, and it hasn't happened. The majority of the administration is white. We are so far from implementing DEI measures at Griffin. She is flabbergasted at how the new superintendent has been treated. Steamboat is a nurturing community and embraces individuals and shows kindness. She has not seen this at Griffin while she was here. Once she found out about the new interim superintendent, she felt that Griffin was taking measures of more diversity at Griffin and since feels that is not the case. She asks the board what they will be doing in the future to address diversity at Griffin.

➤ Kristine (Middle School Parent): Addressed the board noting that her son is starting middle school this year. She came because she was told there were some changes happening in middle school for the coming year. She read about Mrs. Reed. There is fear of the unknown but is open to new people. She came to the meeting innocently and was offended that she was accused of being part of a mob or a lynching. She is not racists; she treats people how they deserve to be treated. The new leader is accusing us of something we are not and is offended that his happened at the board meeting. She didn't come to talk about racism. She doesn't appreciate being accused of that.

➤ Lindsey Pulley: Addressed the board noting she has students at Griffin. She is not opposed to change. There are areas of growth needed at Griffin. She shared her own personal experience. She works in early intervention. She is in favor of the changes being made to give kids what they need. Everyone is in favor of that. What she is not in favor of is coming tonight and being accused of being unwelcoming. She would love to meet Mrs. Reed. She is from the south as well. She did not come here tonight to be a part of a lynching whatsoever. But wanted to hear what the new school year will bring as a concerned parent. Griffin is not perfect. We are really proud of this community. She is not proud of those who are racists, and not proud of people who are outspoken on Facebook about it. We love our school and our staff. She asked Mrs. Reed to give the opportunity to allow us to welcome her into the community and to hear community input. She is in favor of change and feels that students are falling through the cracks. There is a bigger story here.

➤ Wendy Potkonjak: Addressed the board as a fifth-grade teacher at Griffin. She wanted to speak to several emails she received over the summer. She was not available in July to meet with Mrs. Reed and then the school was shut down. The school has never been shut down during the summer. Teachers have always been allowed to come in and work in their rooms. She has worked here nine years, she attended Griffin and her kids went to Griffin. She is appalled at the number of emails sent out to multiple people who do not even exist as staff members at our school and the references made about the contract language. She was appalled at the emails that were sent to the GEA team on Monday. She is scared and nervous.

➤ Hayden Milligan: Addressed the board sharing that she knows most of the people in attendance. She encouraged everyone to come together as a community. We all love Griffin. We all have friends and friends that are educators. Let's just all come together as the community we are. Steamboat is a great place to live, and Griffin is a great school. We have an opportunity to continue the greatness of Griffin in new ways. She thanked everyone for coming and thanked the board for allowing so many people to attend and give public comments. She thanked Dr. Reed and wants her to feel welcome and feels sorry for her loss but wants her to give the community a chance to welcome her.

➤ Unknown Person: An unknown person addressed the board noting that she just moved to the community and works in higher education and understands that being in administration is hard. She asked the community to separate themselves from the facts. You trust these people with your children. Children have to be prepared for what's out there. She is white, she works with people of color. She feels that Mrs. Reed is bringing forward something that white people don't see. She feels amazing that her daughter can attend Griffin. She is coming into a situation where people are already angry with her. She is coming in just looking at facts and she came to the meeting because her son mentioned the Facebook posts. She is getting mixed messages from the meeting tonight. She feels Mrs. Reed is just here to do her job and invest time in your children. Put a little trust in her, take the feelings out and look at the facts. She hopes to buy property in Steamboat.

➤ Lance Carey: Addressed the board noting that he moved here about 6 years ago just so his kids could go to Griffin. He attended a school play here and thought Griffin was amazing. He had no idea what the meeting was about. He thought it was about a contract dispute. He was astounded by what Mrs. Reed said. He feels like he is a problem because he is a white male and feels she thinks he is secretly racist. He is not racist. He is concerned that white males are a problem. His son is a white male and if leadership thinks that is a problem, that is a problem for him. He is considering homeschooling because of this and feels uninvited to attend Griffin. At this point doesn't feel comfortable sending his son to Griffin.

➤ Bret Wise: Addressed the board noting that he has lived here for seven years. He does feel that Dr. Reed feels like an outsider. He still feels like an outsider and has been here for seven years. This is a very tight knit community. This is a tight group and it's hard to get in and even when you are in, you're not really in. His family has had issues with his daughter who has special needs. He encourages people as an educator to hold back their comments. He is okay to be outsiders and feels that people should pick and choose their battles. He has had to fight for his own daughter and come together with the school to find solutions. There are always three sides, the truth, one side and the other side. He hopes we can work through this.

➤ Curtis Kloonsman: Addressed the board sharing that he didn't want to speak, and he is a new member to the community. He hasn't even been here for three months. He came to the meeting because he is invested in his children and wants them treated fairly. His children are mixed, not that should matter to anyone. He did move from a state where he didn't feel they would get opportunities because of race. He heard complaints from community members that if you're not part of the community you won't get treated the same. He understands that roots are deep here. If you are offended because Mrs. Reed said these things, then look at yourself. Maybe you're not standing up and saying that what is happening isn't right. Stand up and fight against hatred by saying it can't happen here. He doesn't know about the Facebook posts. If you don't want to be viewed as a community like this, then don't be a part of the conversation. We have to look inside and stand up for what is right and good.

➤ Tracy Rathke: Addressed the board as an educator. She does not have a student at Griffin. She did see the Facebook posts and that is why she is here tonight. It made her sad. She wanted to welcome our new superintendent. She knows what it's like to be in grief while taking on a new job. It's super hard and she understands. She wants the best for the school and community. We can be better than this. It worries her to hear people saying their son will be targeted because they are white and wishes that students could be wrapped in brown skin every day to know what it's truly like to be targeted. That isn't what the superintendent said. She wants to support all students. She feels that we have missed the mark of being welcoming. She added that being an educator, she knows it's sometimes hard to get ahold of administration during the summer. She wants to see the community take a breath and let the school year unfold. The thinks the Facebook post stirred up interesting emotions and people should be cautious about what they put online. The group mentality did go down. Please keep kids in mind. There are so many possibilities ahead for our kids and she hopes the community can come together to make good things happen at Griffin.

➤ Frank Ehresmann: Addressed the board as a teacher at Griffin for 11 years. His grandma hangs on the wall in the hallway. His kids went to Griffin, he went to Griffin. Long story short, the contract was bargained, established and TA'd by the district. He is on the GEA bargaining team. He works during the summer painting houses. He didn't want to have to come back and renegotiate a contract that had already been negotiated. This is about a failure of leadership. How can the new leadership get to know the staff when it's July. This is an absence of gentle leadership coming into to get to know the school. What a perfect way to invite the new leadership into the school with a contract already in place. He is a white male and doesn't even want to go near the school. He is all for improving things at Griffin. This is not about racism. The whole conversation has been hijacked to be about racism. He said the superintendent needs to run the school that is what you are tasked with. The principals and parents will keep him in line. He is disappointed. This is not what we are here for.

➤ Kayleen Evans: Addressed the board as a teacher sharing that all teachers at Griffin know that there is so much room for progress and change. And they want change, and they want what's best for kids. We love the tight knit community. But to be transparent, her joy has been wiped out. Instead of a welcoming email she felt that she

was berated and told about all of the things she was doing wrong. She is hoping we can find some resolution. She thanked the community and the board for their support.

- Jeff Devlin: Addressed the board noting that he has no idea what is going on. He came because staff members asked him to attend. The meeting time got changed. He will look at Facebook. His personal feeling is that when people move into this community they do so because of Griffin School. It's part of their decision to move here. Someone has used racism to describe this community. If that is true, you are going to see me on your calendar.
- Griffin Custodians: Director Gregory read a letter on behalf of the custodians at Griffin School. Drew Macy asked not to be included as part of this statement.

Chair Ridgeway thanked everyone for their comments, and respect. This was a great exercise and there is obviously a lot of passion and differing views.

For the Good of the Order

- Griffin School Foundation Auction: Hayden Milligan shared information about the foundation noting that it is a nonprofit organization that supports Griffin School. It does not fund the district's budget. The foundation funds scholarships for students and teacher grants. The foundation is here for the kids, educators and the community. The auction fundraiser is coming up on September 23rd and open to the community by ticket only. There are tickets left. She Encouraged the community to come and be a part of the event. She extended her contact information.

Vice Chair Ridgeway recessed the meeting at 5:44 p.m. for a short break. Vice Chair Ridgeway reconvened the meeting at 5:51 p.m. noting that the board will go into executive session to discuss litigation and the performance of an employee. No decisions will be made. He anticipated the session to last approximately one hour.

Executive Session & Adjournment

Vice Chair Ridgeway reconvened the meeting at 6:53 p.m. No further business coming before the board, he adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Signatures

Board Chair: 

Vice Chair: 

Director: 

Director: _____

Director: _____

ATTEST

 Secretary to the Board