

## **SUBJECT TO APPROVAL**

**Madison Public Schools  
Board of Education Regular Meeting  
August 17, 2021  
7:30 PM  
Polson Library & Remote**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

*Full documentation of these proceedings can be found through on demand video located in the Meetings/Minutes section of the district website*

### **1. Call to Order / Attendance**

The public meeting of the Madison Board of Education was called to order by Chair Galen Cawley at 7:35 p.m. Mr. Cawley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Galen Cawley, Greg DeSantis, Cathy Miller, Tom Pellegrino, Emily Rosenthal, Katie Stein.

Also present: Craig Cooke, Ph.D., Superintendent; Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent; Bill McMinn, Facilities Director; Zoe Roos, Communications Specialist, several members of the public.

Chair Cawley began by thanking teachers and administrators for their dedication and work over the summer and for their extraordinary efforts over the past 18 months. The district's goal is to have 180 days of school, in person. In anticipation of public comment this evening, Chair Cawley noted there will be legitimate disagreements regarding issues such as the state mandated mask policy. Tonight is a business meeting and after Dr. Cooke's report, there will be time for board member comments and public input which will be limited to 3 minutes per person. Our Board Secretary, Emily Rosenthal will monitor the length of comments – a yellow card will represent there are 30 seconds left, a red card will mean to wrap up as quickly as possible. Chair Cawley also reiterated the board is available by email.

### **2. Superintendent's Report**

Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D.

Dr. Cooke began his report noting that Governor Lamont will not be changing his executive order mandating the wearing of masks in schools through September 30, 2021. The district will follow that mandate and by doing so are acting in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Cooke reiterated the goal of 180 in-person school days, and the best path forward to achieve that at this time is to follow the mandate.

There are areas where we have relaxed mandates or recommendations from the CDC and our local Department of Health, specifically the three feet rule for quarantine. It is likely that

students who are fully vaccinated will not have to quarantine, and then rather than maintaining a six-foot distance, we are looking at a 3-foot distance. School buses, as with any public transportation, requires that riders wear masks.

Outdoor physical education, recess and sports will take place without masks, with the exception of indoor swimming and volleyball. As indicated previously, we do plan to return to a more normal school operation. Cohorting will be much less than the last school year. The district follows a cohort model K-3, but beyond that the school day will be much different with open recess, sharing of student materials and lunch resuming in the cafeterias. The CIAC has announced sports can begin on schedule (football has already begun) and extracurricular activities will begin as well.

Dr. Cooke reported Madison is one of the highest vaccinated towns in the State, including 60% of the town's 12-17 year-old population and another 5% who have started the process. We estimate 2/3 of our students will be vaccinated by the start of school.

We are looking forward to welcoming teachers back on August 25 with new teacher orientation scheduled for August 24. Convocation will be held in smaller groups, by building, and Chair Cawley will be joining us. Dr. Cooke noted this is the third consecutive year we are asking teachers to do something we have never asked of them before. Thank you to Gail Dahling-Hench for leading our re-opening group which met today and to all who assisted with the reopening plan. Thank you to Bill McMinn and the entire facilities group for taking such care with our buildings and keeping them very clean! Thank you to our Technology team who have worked tirelessly throughout the summer in virtually every area. We are pleased to report that the Chromebooks that have arrived are ready for our students.

Dr. Cooke noted we have seen an increase in kindergarten enrollment throughout the summer (Jeffrey, 89; Ryerson 65), with students continuing to enroll. After exploring all avenues to move a teacher from another location, we felt it best to hire an additional teacher at Jeffrey, the cost of which will be paid out of savings from some unexpected retirements and resignations which occurred this summer.

Also on the agenda tonight is the review and approval of our 10 year CIP Plan. Bill McMinn spoke to the adjustments to the 22/23 plan at each of the schools.

### 3. Board Member Comments

Emily Rosenthal thanked Dr. Cooke for his report and updates, as well as teachers, the opening committee, and Gail Dahling-Hench for her work.

Katie Stein echoed Mrs. Rosenthal's comments. Mrs. Stein expressed her concern about students arriving at school without masks, asking if there will be a policy or can a policy be created to designate a staff member to address that. Mrs. Stein also asked about religious exemptions - if we have students with religious exemptions that have been approved, what can be done in the classroom to mitigate that situation for students who are not? Will there be an option for distance learning? Mrs. Stein also voiced the importance of talking about how the district has utilized the American Rescue Plan and ESSER grant dollars to help support the re-entry to school.

Dr. Cooke provided the following:

To my knowledge, we did not see any issues with mask wearing in the schools. Students were incredibly compliant and after speaking with my colleagues, in many other districts as well. With regard to exemption, there is a process to go through which the State has promised they will address; however, to my knowledge, there were no exemptions last school year. We did have students who took more mask breaks or those with accommodations. We do anticipate that occurring again this year and will deal with that on a case by case basis with assistance from the school medical advisor. If there are students who are approved, we will look at other mitigation strategies. The State has indicated there will be no distance learning option for this year; however, there will be exceptions when a student is quarantined. We were fortunate to have received approximately \$1.2 million in grant money which will be allocated over the next three years. We have put funding towards social emotional efforts and have hired full time social workers in each of our schools. On the academic side, we have reduced class sizes and added interventionists at the K-3 level, where we feel will need the greatest academic support. We also spent some money on technology, as well as on building substitutes.

With no further Board comments, Chair Cawley moved to the Public Participation portion of the meeting, noting there will be disagreements and stressing that the district is under a State Executive Order.

#### 4. School / Community Session

##### 4.1. Public Participation

Numerous members of the public were present. Full comments can be found on the recording on the district website.

#### 5. Board of Selectmen Liaison Scott Murphy

No report – Mr. Murphy was not in attendance this evening.

#### 6. Consent Agenda (Ref. Bylaw #9540.2 and #9540.8) – No consent agenda

#### 7. Board Committees / Liaison Updates (Ref. Bylaw #9450)

##### 7.1. Curriculum and Student Development

Members: Diane-Infantine-Vyce, Chair; Greg DeSantis, Catherine Miller

No report – the committee has not met.

##### 7.2. Communications Committee

Members: Tom Pellegrino, Chair; Diane-Infantine-Vyce, Greg DeSantis

No report – the committee has not met.

##### 7.3. Facilities Committee

Members: Emily Rosenthal, Chair; Happy Marino, Katie Stein

No report – the committee has not met. Mr. McMinn provided an update on what has taken place over the summer. Yearly, extensive cleaning of the buildings, which is still ongoing, but will be ready for the return of the teachers. Mr. McMinn spoke about the problems with getting carpet, and the challenges of taking apart a classroom, specifically at the elementary level, in order to lay down new carpeting and paint, and then putting that classroom back together. Carpet had been removed at the high school and we had no choice but to replace it with what was available. The solar project has been delayed as we are waiting for the steel to arrive, which may create issues when the teachers return. Mr. McMinn spoke to the shortage of custodians, noting one new full-time person was hired over the summer.

#### 7.4. Finance Committee

Members: Katie Stein, Chair; Happy Marino, Tom Pellegrino

No report – the committee has not met.

#### 7.5. Personnel Committee

Members: Violet McNerney, Chair; Diane Infantine-Vyce, Catherine Miller

In Dr. McNerney's absence, Chair Cawley reported that NAGE has moved into mediation as a formal agreement has not been met. Formal teacher contract talks will commence in the next few weeks. We are waiting to hear from the Teamsters in order to move the custodial contracts for mediation forward.

#### 7.6. Policy Committee

Members: Happy Marino, Chair; Violet McNerney, Emily Rosenthal

No report – the committee has not met. Mrs. Rosenthal noted there is one policy on the agenda tonight for a first reading: #3020.7 Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers.

#### 8.7. LEARN Liaison

Katie Stein

No report.

#### 9. Action Item: Motion to approve \$2,462.86 donation from Stop & Shop A+ School Rewards to Jeffrey Elementary School

MOTION: by Miller, seconded by Stein to approve the \$2,462.86 donation from Stop & Shop A+ School Rewards to Jeffrey Elementary School  
AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein  
NAYS: None  
ABSTAIN: None  
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

10. Action Item: Motion to approve the disposal of used equipment

MOTION: by Stein, seconded by Pellegrino to approve the disposal of used equipment.

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Action Item: Motion to add agenda item to approve the Board of Education's prepared CIP expenditures.

MOTION: by Stein, seconded by Rosenthal to add an agenda item to approve the Board of Education's prepared CIP expenditures.

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Action Item: Motion to approve the Board of Education's prepared CIP expenditures of \$951,832 as noted in the documentation. All in favor, motion carried 6-0.

11. Action Item: Motion to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2021 Board of Education Meeting (Ref. Bylaw #9540.0)

MOTION: by Rosenthal, seconded by Miller to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2021 Board of Education Meeting

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

12. Future Agenda Items

13. Meetings/Dates of Importance

14. Adjournment

MOTION: by Stein, seconded by Pellegrino to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None  
ABSTAIN: None  
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

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