

RSU 54/MSAD 54

**Meeting of Board of Directors
October 21, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
Skowhegan Area Middle School**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Maine School Administrative District No. 54 was held on October 21, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. at Skowhegan Area Middle School Gymnasium.

ATTENDANCE BOARD MEMBERS (880 present, 73 absent, 46 vacancy):

Mark Bedard (Skow-53) PRESENT	Jean Franklin* (Canaan-43) ABSENT
Alicia Boulette (Skow-53) PRESENT	Gary Sinclair* (Corn-30) ABSENT
Sarah Bunker (Mercer-16) PRESENT	
Jeannie Conley (Skow-53) PRESENT	VACANCY**(Norr-46)
Annemarie Dubois (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Goff French (Smith-27) PRESENT	
Daniel Frey (Smith-27) PRESENT	
Theresa Howard (Corn-30) PRESENT	
Michael Lambke (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Desiree Libby (Norr-46) PRESENT	
Peggy Lovejoy (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Brandy Morgan (Norr-46) PRESENT	
Jennifer Poirier (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Lynda Quinn (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Gerry Redlevske (Mercer-16) PRESENT	
Dixie Ring (Canaan-43) PRESENT	
Amy Rouse (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Karen Smith (Skow-53) PRESENT	
Kathy Wilder (Norr-46) PRESENT	
Jacqueline Wolinski (Skow-53) PRESENT	

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

a. Flag Salute followed.

2. Good News and Recognitions

Bruce Mochamer, Principal of Skowhegan Area High School, introduced the new River Hawks Mascot to the Board.

3. Approval of the Minutes – 10/7/21

ON A MOTION BY Goff French, seconded by Jennifer Poirier, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting of 10/7/21 into the record. (880 yes)

4. Communications

a. Letters

There were no letters to share.

b. School Personnel

Skowhegan Area Middle School Principal, Zachary Longyear, shared with the Board that the Student Council organized a diaper drive as part of the KVCAP Diaper Drive for Somerset County and nearly 5,400 diapers were collected.

c. Visitors

Todd Jones spoke in opposition of masking students.

Wayne Wilford spoke in opposition of masking.

Dr. Roger Renfrew spoke in favor of masking.

Cecil Gray, spoke in favor of masking.

5. Committee Reports

a. Support Services Committee – 10/7/21

ON A MOTION BY Karen Smith, seconded by Jennifer Poirier, the Board voted to accept the minutes of Support Services Committee meeting of 10/7/21 into the public record. (880 yes)

Karen Smith, Committee Vice Chair, reviewed the minutes and asked the Board to vote on the following recommendations:

**ON A MOTION BY Karen Smith, seconded by Brandy Morgan, the Board to adopt the provisions of 5 M.R.S. 18252C (PL 2021, Chapter 286), as allowed by MainePERS Rule Chapter 803, as presented separately. (880 yes)
(See attached motion).**

ON A MOTION BY Karen Smith, seconded by Desiree Libby, the Board voted to approve the listed donations. (880 yes)

b. Educational Policy/Program Committee – 10/12/21

Sarah Bunker, Committee Chair, reviewed the notes of the 10/12/21 meeting. Due to lack of a quorum, there were no recommendations.

6. Superintendent’s Report

a. Vacancies, nominations, recommendations

The Superintendent reviewed vacancies and recommended the Board’s approval of page one of nominations.

ON A MOTION BY Peggy Lovejoy, seconded by Gerry Redlevske, the Board voted to approve nominations page one. (880 yes)

b. Report on Assessments Payments to Date

The Superintendent shared that as of October 21, 2021, Mercer paid October assessment; Canaan, Cornville, Norridgewock and Smithfield were outstanding for October assessments, which are due on the 20th of each month; Skowhegan was outstanding for September and October.

c. Update on New School Construction Building Project

Superintendent Moody shared that a public meeting was held on October 14th with Stephen Blatt Architects presenting on the educational specifications process and received feedback from community members. There will be another public zoom meeting on October 28th. There was a

meeting with the State Construction Team to review progress to date. We anticipate a mid-March/early-April referendum on the Concept Design phase of the project. It is possible this could take place in June if the building project work takes more time. We hope to have a rough draft of the educational specifications for you to review at the next board meeting.

d. Review of District Budget, Update on Federal Projects and Federal Funds

Superintendent Moody reported that, per the State's request, he is working on revisions to the ARP application to include a breakdown of the eight individual projects.

e. Update on the Opening of School and COVID-19 (discussion of mask requirement)

Superintendent Moody reviewed mask requirements in schools. All MSAD 54 schools are following the federal CDC guidelines for masking and have done so since the start of the school year. MSAD 54 Positive Case Count data was shared, including State and Local Data. To date, there have been 80 positive student cases for the current school year, compared to a total of 36 positive student cases for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

Superintendent Moody shared the recommendation to require masks in schools should continue. The following statement was shared: "The top priority of the MSAD 54 school board and administration remains to have our students and staff in school safely. Universal masing is necessary to allow this to happen."

The Superintendent shared that it is likely masking will remain in place for this school year based on state guidelines. The three areas that would need to all change to allow masks to go away this year would be: 1) The state's quarantine rules would need to change. Currently masking is significantly decreasing the amount of students who are missing schools. It is likely that the High School alone would have shut down 3 or more times this year based on their cases and case rates. Because the district requires masks, no schools have had to close. 2) Covid-19 case rates, as a result of the Delta variant, would need to come down to the levels seen in early July (The Superintendent used a 14-day average as of July 1st). Currently case rates are roughly 23 times what they were in July. 3) The ability for students age 5-11 to have the opportunity to vaccinate. The Superintendent shared that this is anticipated sometime in November.

MSAD 54 has worked with Maine General to schedule clinics for elementary students in November and December.

The Superintendent indicated that the recommendation is in place for this year. When asked about next year he shared that it is unlikely the district could support continuing indefinitely with masking and hopes that CDC quarantine rules will be adjusted to allow schools to move away from universal masking for the 2022-23 school year.

The Superintendent will continue to provide monthly reviews of the masking requirements moving forward but will not change his recommendation unless each of the three items discussed were to change.

The Superintendent reported that the Commissioner of Education has approved the additional workshop days outlined in the board's formal request. We are looking to add an early release day in December and will be discussing with the union, the addition of early release time and a workshop day later in the school year.

The Superintendent updated the Board on co-curricular activities and athletics. Considering the impact of athletics in competitions, there has been minimal impact from COVID-19. There have been some teams who have missed almost 20 days consecutively because of positive cases, but by in large athletics have been really successful. Coaches and students have done a nice job. We do not know what winter sports will look like and hope to have guidance from the MPA. Superintendent regions are considering having a common approach.

f. MSMA Virtual Fall Conference for Board Members – Oct. 28-29

Superintendent Moody reminded board members to let Tina know if interested in attending this year's conference. Sarah Bunker has volunteered to represent the Board at the Maine School Boards Association Annual Delegate Assembly.

g. Other

Enrollment as of 10/21/21 was 2,287 (last report-2,251).

7. Assistant Superintendent and Support Services Manager

Assistant Superintendent Hatch on some school-based activities: REACH Program family dinners with certain number of families set up in family pods. Sports banquets being planned by team and families will have family tables and ensure distancing/limit exposure.

Pooled Testing began this week and went well. Staff from Concentric tested 21 different pools, with all but one coming back negative. When a pool tests positive follow-up testing is required but those students are allowed to remain in school. Follow-up testing worked as designed. Testing is far easier than the PCR test as individuals are asked to swab only the outer portion of their nose for 4-5 seconds. Principals and nurses were commended for all the time put in planning and organizing the process.

Board members thanked for all the work and effort keeping kids in school and sports.

The Support Services Manager reported that there are currently fifteen support services vacancies. Applications are coming in with a potential of four of the vacancies being filled.

8. Old and Unfinished Business

Peggy Lovejoy thanked Mr. Leavitt for having cleaning up the disposable masks littered around the schools.

9. Introduction of New Business

There was no introduction of new business

10. Adjournment

The Board adjourned at 7:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jonathan Moody, Superintendent of Schools