

**Inter-Lakes School Board Regular Meeting
Inter-Lakes Middle/High School, South Parking Lot
1 Laker Lane, Meredith, NH
August 3, 2020**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Richard Hanson called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. RECORD ROLL

Members Present:

Mr. Richard Hanson, Chair
Mr. Mark Billings, Vice-Chair
Ms. Lisa Merrill, Secretary
Mr. Craig Baker
Mr. Charley Hanson
Mr. Duncan Porter-Zuckerman
Ms. Nancy Starmer
Ms. Raven Strother, Student Rep.

Members Absent:

None

Administrators Present:

Ms. Mary Moriarty, Superintendent
Ms. Trish Temperino, Asst. Superintendent
Ms. Elaine Dodge, Student Services Director
Ms. Ashley Dolloff, HR Director
Mr. Michael Bryant, Principal ILES
Mr. Scott Currier, Principal ILM/HS
Mr. Jeremy Hillger, Principal SCS
Mr. John Martin, DoIT Director
Mr. Mark Parsons, Asst. Principal ILM/HS
Mr. Brian Swanker, Facilities Director
Ms. Holly Vieten, Guidance Director

Others Present:

Chris Mega, Video Recorder
Public

Superintendent Moriarty provided a brief overview of the reopening plan that she presented to the School Board at their July 28 meeting, posted on the district's web site and also shared with the public at several educational sessions

The school year will start on Sept. 8, with some grades returning on certain days in a staggered format. All students participating in in-person instruction return to school on Sept. 15. The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) will provide classes for those who opt for remote learning.

The Superintendent stressed that the plan is designed to be flexible. Students participating in on-line learning can chose to return to the classroom. Those who chose remote learning could also decide to take a particular class in school instead of on-line.

Plans for in-person instruction could change based on COVID-19 infection levels in the local area, adequacy of staffing levels, and other factors including the ability to obtain needed sanitizing materials.

She likened the learning models to a dial that can be turned as high as full, everybody in or low, as everybody remote, as the schools did last year. The dial has four positions:

- Full, in which all students opting for in-person instruction will be at school.
- Reduced, meaning there could be one group of students who would go for in-person instruction on certain days, and another group on other days.
- Partial remote, where students who have significant needs or who lack a consistent Internet signal would come to school along with some staff.
- Full remote, where all students would take classes on-line.

A confirmed COVID-19 infection would prompt all schools to immediately return to remote learning to allow time to evaluate the level of impact. The COVID-19 Decision Team would meet to review the situation and determine what tier to shift schools to and when.

Students will be required to wear masks at school and traffic patterns in the buildings will be one-way to avoid students having to pass each other in the hallways.

The recommendations of the N.H. Interscholastic Athletic Association will serve as guidance for sports with the caveat that the district can forfeit games against schools in an area that has a higher coronavirus infection rate.

IV. PUBLIC INPUT (Note: All speakers names were not audible; therefore not noted in the following section.)

Craig Hale, Center Harbor, asked whether consideration would be given to the drop in GPA experienced by students over the past two quarters? The Superintendent said the District planned to continue with the same grading system.

Lindsay Weiner, Meredith, credited the School Board for their transparency. Ms. Weiner express several concerns with opening schools with students and staff physically in attendance in the buildings. She also noted that there is no health expert on the proposed Covid-19 Decision Making Team. Families who chose remote learning should not be pushed off onto VLACS, but be able to be taught remotely by District teachers. She urged the administration to reconsider VLACS and bring the remote learning piece in-house and staff it with teachers who do not want to return to the classroom because of fear of infection.

Ashley Dunn, Meredith, expressed that it appeared decisions about safety were being crowd sourced. Ms. Dunn stated that masks should be mandatory and wearing them should be enforced; they are proven to help reduce the risk of infection. As a veterinarian who wears a mask professionally, she said it is myth that people experience "brain fog" while wearing them, noting she would not be allowed to perform surgery were that the case. If pediatric cancer patients can learn to wear a mask so can young students, she said.

Elisa of Meredith, said the decision facing the Board was incredibly difficult; her feelings about returning to school waffle daily. It is not a matter of if, but when the District will return to a remote learning model. She noted that traffic at the Inter-Lakes campus in Meredith is already problematic and will be made worse when more kids are brought to school by private vehicle. It shouldn't be an all or nothing scenario for students or teachers.

Heather LaRowe, Sandwich, said she appreciated the Superintendent's information sessions regarding the proposal. She urged educators to group children with similar academic abilities when creating cohorts.

Liz L. respects everyone's concerns; kids need to be around others adults, students and friends as part of their normal development. Remote learning is not ideal for every student and she expressed concern that a bad experience could make a senior decide not to continue with their education. She also voiced concern about a loss of electives and students being exposed to bad weather when they have to exit the building as part of the one-way traffic pattern. Liz L. asked what the difference was between the recommendations of the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services and the N.H. Interscholastic Athletic Association regarding sports.

Superintendent Moriarty responded that State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan remains concerned about contact sports, but that she is still recommending the District follow NHIAA guidelines that would allow for the decision to be made to forfeit games with schools based on potential infection risk.

Kimberly Ide, Center Harbor, questioned why students should not be allowed to take off their masks while sitting at their desks if they are separated by three to six feet. The virus is deadly but has a very high recovery rate, she said. She asserts that relationships change when masks are worn, and that a little bit of compromise should be made for when kids are at their desks.

Karen, from Meredith, said she was the mother of a 2020 graduate and told the Board she would be forever grateful for the special experience the graduating class was given. She disclosed that she has a child who has been diagnosed with ADHD/ODD and is not medicated and has a 504 plan. Sports are a part of that plan which helped her daughter earn great grades. She urged the administration to allow school sports to be held maintaining it supports physical fitness and mental health. Spectators could be limited to one per student or 20 per sports team.

Sarah, from Meredith, said she felt the tiered learning models were confusing and that students should not need to wear masks while sitting at their desks. Athletics are very important to her daughter; academics and athletics should go hand in hand. Her child does well in the classroom because she wants to play sports which helps reduce anxiety and depression.

Steve Merrill, Meredith, commented that everyone will have to make some sacrifices. All of the experts say masks help limit the spread. State Epidemiologist Dr. Chan has said there should not be any contact sports; they are not critical to personal development and that he would rather see the schools remain open.

Roland Tichy, Meredith, said not wearing a mask is a statement that you don't care about others. With 158,000 dead in the U.S. he doesn't understand how people can be of the opinion that COVID-19 is no big deal. He spoke in support of the administration's mask requirement and social distancing standard.

Sarah Champagne, Meredith, said she didn't think it was necessary for those dropping kids off at school to remain masked while in their vehicle.

Doug Hentz, Meredith, said after viewing reported COVID-19 infection rates in the three communities that make up the Inter-Lakes School District that he believes people

in the communities are at low risk. He said his son is on a club lacrosse team and has traveled throughout New England to play. Local sports would reduce the risk of transmission. Mr. Hentz also questioned the safety of the one-way traffic plan for student movement within the schools, noting the District has just made a considerable investment in the installation of magnetic locking doors and bullet proof glass to harden the campus but would be directing students to walk outside around the building to avoid passing other kids in the halls.

Joseph Spicuzza, Meredith, said interaction with other students and teachers is important to child development and that he feels his own children do best with that. As a single working parent, he found it difficult to make sure his children were doing what they were supposed to when learning went online. Both his sons are athletes and keeping them on the fields and in the rinks keeps them active and provides an important balance to academics.

Christina Toomey, Meredith, thanked the Board for being so transparent. Speaking as an educator in a neighboring district she said kids thrive on consistency; she expressed concerns with the tiered options and the eventual impact on students. Ms. Toomey supports using District Teachers for online learning versus VLACS. She also stressed the impact on mental health returning to school - kids won't be returning to the same school or activities that they left, which could lead to anxiety and depression. The risk of contracting the virus with physical attendance and spreading to family members at home needs to be considered.

Eden Hamel, Meredith, a 10th grade student said she suffers from anxiety but doesn't think that wearing a mask is a big deal. She has taken VLACS courses and found it very difficult. Ms. Hamel told the Board that she thinks exploring other options for at-home learning would be more helpful for many students.

Peter Champagne, Meredith, asked whether there was any money left over from last year's budget and it could be used to cover some of the added costs caused by the pandemic to avoid a tax hike.

Superintendent Moriarty responded that we are still working within last year's budget but that a withdrawal from the Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust may be needed. There may also be an additional source of funding coming from the state to offset expenditures associated with COVID-19.

Assistant Superintendent Temperino said that the School Board voted at the end of the year to retain \$300,000 to offset the 2021-2022 school year. Money was encumbered to offset the summer wellness program, the replacement of the failed boiler at Sandwich Central School and to purchase small buses for transportation to local field experiences. She anticipates \$187,000 will remain this fall to reduce the tax rate, but cautioned that was a rough estimate as the District has faced so many unexpected expenses related to the pandemic.

An unidentified woman said she believes masks provide a false sense of security and commented that what parents are most upset about is that the remote learning option is VLACS or nothing and are being told there are not enough teachers.

Nick Schwarz, Meredith, said kids have been playing baseball together for the last two months and that if the District didn't give them a place to play, they would find one.

Jude Hamel, Meredith, questioned whether there was a way to synchronize kids learning at home with kids learning in the classroom via whiteboards and Zoom or other technology. The high stakes of COVID-19 need to be taken into consideration; it would not take much for the virus to spread out of control. Ms. Hamel commented that sports are important but sacrifices need to be made and there are ways to keep kids physically active without exposing them to other schools. She said she didn't appreciate the "threat" that if the District doesn't offer sports, they will go elsewhere and bring it back to our schools.

Jeremy Hallett, Meredith, said he is a Registered Nurse who work for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Manchester, and that his wife works with an oral surgeon. He commented that he sees no requirement for wearing masks in open air and that there is a .8 percent mortality rate for children worldwide. He stated that the risk of contracting COVID-19 in Meredith is incredibly low and it has been proven that children are not supercarriers. Mr. Hallett shared that remote learning was not successful for his three children and questioned whether the plan was protecting kids or staff. He maintained teachers should be declared essential workers and that the risk of infection in returning to the classroom is low.

Dan Kusch, Sandwich, said he appreciates that every student regardless of the model of learning they are enrolled in will get food. He also urged the Board to consider the lifelong impacts to the youngest students learning remotely and how they would benefit from local staff.

Inter-Lakes Middle/High School Principal Scott Currier, said the common theme of questions to the Board posed by those listening to the meeting on-line was the difference between the VLACS models vs. District Staff.

Superintendent Moriarty responded that the District cannot offer an in-person option for remote learning, explaining that the learning models were developed based on survey results. Characterizing the survey that was done in early July as being a quick "dipstick," she said things may change if more parents/guardians opt for remote learning as it could free up staff, causing the plan to evolve and change.

Jeremy Hallett, Meredith, asked if the one-way paths outside school buildings were going to be chaperoned voicing concern about student safety. Superintendent Moriarty responded that students would be accompanied by an adult.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Opening Plans for the 2020-2021 School Year

Superintendent Moriarty expressed that she favors adding community parents and a paid consultant with expertise in public health to the COVID-19 Decision Making Team. She is also proposing that a fulltime Nurse be hired to work at Sandwich Central School and to assist with district-wide data collection. School will start on September 8th with the Principals developing a staggered schedule; schools would open full-time on September 15th. She request that the School Board approve the opening plan with learning tiers. It is difficult to predict funding impacts and what state and federal funds may become available.

Assistant Superintendent Temperino stated they are trying to work within the existing budget and to find money that may not be spent due to our new model learning. The

largest impacts will be \$142,000 in added transportation costs attributable to the need for more bus runs and \$105,000 cost for a full-time Nurse. Total impacts are estimated at \$421,000. Savings of \$270,000 have been realized in field trips, delaying renovations scheduled for this year and shifting some furniture purchases from the high school and elementary school, leaving a \$151,000 deficit.

Ms. Merrill asked whether the additional School Nurse could be hired at an hourly rate instead of fulltime and was told the position is part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and cannot be arbitrarily changed.

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Mr. C. Hanson, to approve the school opening plan as recommended by the Superintendent.

Discussion ensued amongst School Board Members regarding the proposed School Opening Plan for the 2020-2021 school year.

Mr. Billings said he thought the plan was excellent. Mr. C. Hanson said he thought the proposal was nimble, credited the administration for a job well done, commenting that the plan was designed to allow the District to change on the fly.

Ms. Starmer said she understands the complexity of the issues and that in an ideal world she would like to see all students learning remotely worldwide, every family financially secure, etc. but that we don't live in that ideal world. She believes the administration has done an excellent job working with experts to develop a flexible plan. She said she was very much in favor of the proposal.

Ms. Merrill suggested that there should be more than one School Board member on the COVID-19 Decision Making Team.

Mr. Baker questioned how closely VLACS mirrors the in-school curriculum and whether kids could switch to in-school learning without being shut out for the whole year. Ms. Moriarty responded that transitions would be allowed around the close of marking periods.

Chairman Hanson complimented the Superintendent and Administrators for developing a plan to provide the best meaningful education for students noting the District may have to modify how some credits are earned and lessen available electives to allow kids to be in school buildings and safe. With this model, Mr. Hanson said he was confident the model can really reduce the risk to students and staff.

Board Secretary Merrill took a roll call vote on the motion:

YES: Mr. R. Hanson; Mr. C. Hanson; Mr. Billings; Mr. Baker; Ms. Starmer;
Mr. Porter-Zuckerman; Ms. Merrill

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

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| A. Members of the Board | None |
| B. Members of the Administration | None |

VII. PUBLIC INPUT –

Cameron Daly, Meredith, said he graduated from Inter-Lakes and formerly served as the student representative to the School Board. He graduated from Brown University this spring, after completing his classes remotely. He feels the Board is putting the wants of some of the people ahead of the needs of some of the students and faculty. Mr. Daly stated that he did not understand how people felt it was safe to go back to class and not continue on-line learning. Commenting that he and his brother had enjoyed considerable success as runners, he didn't believe that people or teachers should be put in jeopardy for the sake of sports.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Tuesday, August 25, 2020 – Location to be determined

- Inter-Lakes Special School Board Meeting – **6:00 p.m.**

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Billings moved, seconded by Ms. Merrill, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote:

YES: Mr. R. Hanson; Mr. C. Hanson; Mr. Billings; Mr. Barker; Ms. Starmer;
Mr. Porter-Zuckerman; Ms. Merrill

NO: --

The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted.

Bea Lewis Wheeler
School District Clerk