

**MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT NO. 56**

Frankfort • Searsport • Stockton Springs

Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting

January 8, 2008 – 6:30 P.M.

Central Office - Searsport

Present: Joseph Altilio Nedra Bellows Tom Calderwood  
James Cunningham Denise Dakin Robert Danks  
Harold Grove Michael Hamilton Christopher Krause  
Veronica Magnan Twyler Webster Lisa Hudson  
Julia Martin

Absent: None.

Visitors: 46

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairperson Bob Danks called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.
2. **ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA.** None.
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.** A motion was made by Harold Grove and seconded by Tom Calderwood to approve the December 11, 2007 Board minutes with the following corrections: First paragraph of 9, Old Business, A - insert the word “in” in line 5 (“22 in grades...”). In 11, Executive Session A, first paragraph – should read “motion made by Nedra Bellows”. In 11, Executive Session, A, third paragraph – should read “motion made by Joe Altilio”. These changes will be made in the official copy of the minutes in the District’s Official Minutes Book, and also on the district’s website.

**VOTE: 9-0-1 (Magnan)**

Mike Hamilton asked if the Chairperson should be voting. Mrs. Szwec said she would look it up in Robert’s Rules of Order, but that past practice of this Board was that the Chairperson did vote on a regular basis. (NOTE: Robert’s Rules state that the Chairperson can enter into the discussion. He/she usually makes motions and votes unless board custom dictates otherwise.) Twyler Webster joined the meeting after the vote.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA. Any Board member may request that any item be removed from this consent agenda and moved to the regular agenda.” – Policy File BEDBA, Consent Agenda, approved July 10, 2007.**

- A. January 2, 2008 enrollment report.
- B. Admin Team reports.
- C. Personnel Committee minutes for December 11, 2007.

Hearing no objections, the Chairperson declared the Consent Agenda accepted as is.

5. **PRESENTATIONS.** None.
6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.** The Chairperson postponed public participation until the restructuring schools discussion later in the meeting. Peter Taber expressed dissatisfaction with the minute-taking process in MSAD #56. He feels the superintendent is distracted as a participant and biased and does not do a good job with the minutes. He

would like someone hired to do the minutes. The minutes are an embarrassment to the community.

7. **REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT.**

- A. Efficiency Maine rebates. The superintendent reported the receipt of two rebates totaling \$9,315.00 for changing the lighting system at all three Searsport schools. She thanked Jim Parsons for his work on all the projects, as well as securing the rebates.
- B. No Child Left Behind Site Review update. The review will take place on Thursday, January 10, 2008. It is conducted by state officials.
- C. MSAD #56 District Report Card. The Report Card, a federal/state requirement, is now on the district's website.

8. **COMMITTEE REPORTS.**

- A. RPC:
  - 1. Response from Commissioner Gendron. The superintendent shared this response to the RPC Plan submitted on December 1<sup>st</sup> with the Board. Veronica Magnan, an RPC member, spoke on its contents and the amount of work people have put into the RPC.
  - 2. MSSA reaction to Reorganization. In Board folders. The Superintendent pointed out that there were two other newspaper articles on consolidation in the Board folders as well.

9. **OLD BUSINESS.**

- A. Restructuring Schools. The Chairperson recognized Alan Hammond for sending a letter to the Board of Directors in a timely fashion, giving Board members time to reflect on his comments. The Chairperson proposed a brief discussion on the various proposals, and then that the Board listen to members of the public.

He turned the meeting over to the Superintendent, who reviewed the first report done by her in April 2005. Concerns then were the funding of education, the budget with declining enrollments, priority school status, technology being an essential key for the future, consolidation and restructuring of schools, to closing a school. Copies of this report were passed out to members of the audience.

The Board then discussed the various restructuring options as presented.

- Plans #2 and #3 are cosmetic changes.
- Denise Dakin has a concern with combining the middle and high schools and would like the middle school to remain separate from the high school. She also has concerns with having one principal and an assistant.
- Leave everything status quo.
- Keep the three elementary schools, but fill up the classrooms by sending students from one town to another to meet our class size requirement. Question: How would you determine who goes to what school? Redistribution of lines?
- Students on the Board said that it sounds complicated with a lot to get used to. It is very difficult to switch from one school to another every

other year as they do in Ellsworth. Good idea; something needs to be done, but not sure what it needs to be.

- ❑ How will busing work? Bring all the students to one location? Other ideas? Send this back to the Buildings & Grounds and Transportation Committees.
- ❑ Suggested savings are not that large in the overall budget. Too close to consolidation. The new RSU may try this.
- ❑ Some schools will be closed with the new RSU. There will be another change in a year or two.
- ❑ Our budgets are voted down at referendum and then we go to a district meeting. We will still talk about this if there is a June budget cut.
- ❑ Votes need to be passed.
- ❑ What kinds of pro-active decisions can we make? We have tried to make some prior cuts, other than keeping the status quo.
- ❑ As a group, what can we do? Each town voted the budget down. By getting neighbors together, we managed to pass the budget by seven votes.
- ❑ Do we have room at SDMS and SDHS to bring more students to SES? Or send students to other schools? Closing a school?
- ❑ Elimination of one school, or keep our high taxes.

The discussion was then opened for public comments.

- ❑ Gabriel Baker of Frankfort asked who is serving on the RPC? Number of hours spent on the RPC and we are doing this with our district? What does each household have to contribute to the district budget?
- ❑ Glenn Baker of Searsport – Served on the Ad Hoc Restructuring Committee. The process was meaningful and significant. Their role was to look at ways to restructure with no limits, and then to hand over their information to the Board of Directors. What will happen to our work? It was not a finished product. The Board will change it as needed – it has evolved. He is hearing NO! tonight, which is always the reaction. We should listen openly, and not assume it is a plan and attack it. We should narrow things down and look at the proposals and see what else can happen. The system doesn't work, and it costs too much; this is why we need to restructure.
- ❑ Amber Snow of Searsport – She grew up here and runs a business. She is concerned about how the children will be affected. She asked how many people on the Board have children. The Board makes the decision. She is concerned with them attending three separate schools and how it will affect her business. Why are we rushing?
- ❑ Gail Anthonis of Searsport, a teacher at the Middle School – She has concerns with a grade 7 – 12 school. What will it look like? We need a big discussion. She hoped the Board read her article on Middle Schools. With the CSR Grant, we are back on track, thanks to the Superintendent. We need to pass on the Middle School philosophy.
- ❑ Alan Hammond of Frankfort – What is best for our children? Research shows that changing grade spans in schools has a negative impact on academic achievement which is lost with each transition. Grade consolidation has a negative impact on parent involvement. He is concerned with teacher needs, time spent on buses, etc. He will give the Superintendent a disk of research he has done.

- ❑ Adam Reynolds spoke of his moving around from school to school and transitions. Mt. View is the best school in the state. To be done right, we need one complex for all of our students. He is concerned with the projected savings, and the impact on transportation. We need to wait for the Governor on budget issues.
- ❑ Denise Harriman of Stockton Springs was concerned about the 7<sup>th</sup> graders mixing with high school students. How will we do this? When? This year?
- ❑ Melanie Morse of Frankfort – She was concerned about time on the bus for four-year-olds. Her child gets home at 5 pm now – how will that get better with these changes?
- ❑ Melissa Brown of Frankfort – Corporate America cuts employees to save on their budgets. In two years our class sizes will go up. We will be hiring new teachers we don't know. She is concerned with long bus rides and Disaster Family Plans – how will we deal with this? Students are comfortable with where they are going to be. This won't save enough money, not \$50,000.
- ❑ Charlene Farris of Searsport, a teacher at the Searsport Elementary School – Why are we considering this when the state will make their plans? Should we wait until the RSU passes? Her husband will move her classroom, not the district's custodians.
- ❑ Tina Bleakney of Frankfort – When voting on the budget, what part do you not want to pass? Line vetoes? Can we do this? Mike Hamilton commented that few people attend the district's budget meetings.
- ❑ Tonya Donald said it is hard for people to meet. Flyers, Open House – we discussed it. Send home bulletins to people with updated information. The Superintendent asked for the best way to provide information. Going home through the schools is the best avenue.
- ❑ Michelle Perkins of Frankfort said she would have children in every school. She understands the working plans do not show the dollar savings. Where are they? Why?
- ❑ Estelle Evans of Searsport said we need to put children first – how will they feel? Academics after school. Concerned with Searsport Elementary School and after school.
- ❑ Mandi Grant of Frankfort asked where does this put Special Education services? She is concerned they will have 20+ students in a class.
- ❑ A resident of Searsport said she lives equidistant from all schools. She needs to see the dollar numbers and then put it before the communities. Maybe we should build a bigger school to house all students, and close the other schools. Look at a 5 - 10 year plan.
- ❑ Crystal Garcelon of Searsport asked why are we looking at consolidation?
- ❑ Tammi Alley of Frankfort – Consolidating grades K-1 is a great idea for a large town and city, but not here. Our children will be on buses for 2 ½ hours. When will they be children?
- ❑ Patty Ryder of Frankfort has two children who will be affected. School is now a home away from home. Kindergartners work with the fifth graders. Teachers know all the students. Dividing them up will change this and erode their sense of security. She does not see any benefits. What about Girl Scouts? Do you take these away?

- Seth Brown of Frankfort said that he was a SDHS graduate and had recently moved back to Maine. He found the Frankfort Elementary School as the best fit for his family. When the Board makes their decision, think about him. How will this decision benefit and increase opportunities for his son? We want our students to benefit.

The Chairperson shared that the Board would take all the comments and put them together. Nothing is etched in stone. The easiest choice would be to maintain the status quo and add 10% to the budget. But there is another group in the community that we need to hear from, another group saying we can't afford the taxes, etc. We need to be aware of all people.

The audience reacted with comments:

- Paul Tripp of Frankfort suggested sending a newsletter out to all residents for their input.
- Mike Hamilton wanted to see dollars and figures.
- Bob Mercier of Frankfort suggested meeting in a larger room.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their input.

- B. 2008-09 Budget Process. Connie Burkard asked about the \$1.8 million that was mentioned. That was last year's budget. Donna Parks asked why people were getting raises when we are cutting? The Board decided to follow the same budget process as last year.
10. **NEW BUSINESS.**
- A. Bob Danks will be the MSMA Legislative Contact Person for the year. We will tell MSMA tomorrow.
  - B. A motion was made by Harold Grove and seconded by Mike Hamilton to approve a field trip to Loughborough University in England for three students and Ruth Fitzpatrick from March 15 through March 23, 2008. Students will be involved in leadership experiences, etc. Discussion followed. What are the students doing who went last year? They are involved in projects with youth. This has been in the Administrative Reports. They need to raise \$2000 for costs – the rest will be covered by grant money.  
**VOTE: 11-0-0**
  - C. A motion was made by Nedra Bellows and seconded by Harold Grove to approve a field trip to Brooklyn NY by high school students to visit the Sister School on April 10 – 13, 2008. Questions and discussion followed. Gregg Palmer explained the Sister School and what they will be doing. Four adults will be going along.  
**VOTE: 11-0-0**

11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

- A. A motion was made by Nedra Bellows and seconded by Harold Grove to enter executive session for the evaluations of officials and an employee pursuant to 1 MRSA § 405 (6) (A).

**VOTE: 11-0-0**

The Board entered executive session at 8:47 pm and resumed public session at 9:23 pm.

12. **ADJOURNMENT.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm.  
Respectfully submitted,