

Our Mission is to prepare and support all students within a culture of excellence to do their best and to be their best, so that each can be a successful contributing citizen, able to adapt to change and to successfully respond to the future.

5:30 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.
School Board Member Orientation
School Board Workshop - POSTPONED
PRHS AUDITORIUM

RSU 16
Mechanic Falls * Minot * Poland
The 3rd Regular School Board Meeting
for 2021 - 2022 was held
Monday, October 4, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.
>>>>> PRHS LIBRARY <<<<<<

MINUTES

Present: Mary Martin, Laura Hemond, Melanie Harvey, Christine Downs, Mike Downing, Amber Lyman, Patrick Irish, Emily Rinchich, Scott Tiner, Jennifer Tiner, Jessica Smith, Steve Holbrook, Ed Rabasco (Remote), Joe Parent (Remote)

Absent: None

Student Rep: Anna Brettler

1.0 CALL TO ORDER: Mary Martin, Chair

Pledge of Allegiance & Mission Statement Pursuant to subsection 403-A of 1 MRSA (Maine Revised Statutes Annotated), we will now confirm that each member of the Regional School Unit 16 School Board can both hear and be heard. We will do this by calling the roll, members present are asked to say Yeah. We ask all other members to listen and report any audio difficulties when the roll call is complete.

Mechanic Falls	Minot	Poland	Student Reps
Amber Lyman	Jen Tiner	Christine Downs	Anna Brettler
Jessica Smith	Laura Hemond	Ed Rabasco	
Mary Martin	Mike Downing	Emily Rinchich	
Patrick Irish	Scott Tiner	Joe Parent	
	Steve Holbrook	Melaine Harvey	

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85709801798?pwd=VmhEMDQxNIRUVkhnOU1rU3Npa1o3QT09>

Meeting ID: 857 0980 1798

Passcode: 062621

We now would like to confirm that members of the public who are remotely attending the public proceeding are able to hear all members. All participants can send a message via the Zoom chat feature on the right of the screen. Recognizing that this is the board's first time conducting a meeting in this manner to help combat the spread of COVID-19, we ask the community and all members to proceed with patience and an understanding that the district staff and board members are doing the best they can in an unprecedented time. As a reminder to conduct an orderly meeting, all board members and community members must remain muted and wait to be recognized by the chair before speaking.

FOR ALL VOTES

Pursuant to subsection 403-A of 1 MRSA, item D. –“All votes taken during the public proceeding are taken by roll call vote”. To the question before the board, I will call the roll, those in favor of passage are asked to say yea, those opposed say nay; members wishing to abstain may do so by stating abstain.

Mechanic Falls	Minot	Poland	Student Reps
Amber Lyman	Jen Tiner	Christine Downs	Anna Brettler
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Patrick Irish	Scott Tiner	Joe Parent	
	Steve Holbrook	Melaine Harvey	

2.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: (10 minutes)

Mary Martin reviewed the public participation policy and guidelines, and reviewed the public participation pamphlet. If individuals who attended remotely want to participate, they should raise their hand and we will call on them.

Matt Garside (Poland Town Manager): Asked the board to consider changing their date for the RSU 16 budget referendum proposed to be held at the end of May. Matt asked the board to reconsider this proposed date due to the closeness of this date to the State Referendum which happens three weeks later. Matt is concerned about the two sets of absentee ballots that will be coming through the town office for these separate votes. He is concerned about the co-mingling of these two ballots. Matt is also concerned with having two separate envelopes coming in for the elections due to the additional data entry that is required with absentee ballots. Matt feels that the state vote would have a higher turn-out than the local school budget would. He shared that Covid has made the election process more complex and that it will be a challenge to find enough staff willing to work for both referendums. He also shared that it could be possible that given the absentee ballot process that voters might use one envelope to return their two ballots and votes for the RSU 16 budget would potentially be uncounted as they would be included in the town referendum vote which happens after the RSU 16 budget referendum.

Response from Board to Matt Garside, Mary Martin: Shared that the board will be setting their budget schedule soon. She shared that at the next finance sub committee meeting they would be discussing the upcoming timeline for the budget process.

Karlee Lothrop (Poland): Shared that she is currently a student at Bruce M. Whittier Middle School. She shared that she receives peer pressure from her classmates inquiring about her views and her family's views on mask wearing and vaccination. She was excited to start at the middle school and to see the faces of her friends and staff. She shared that it has been difficult being asked to wear a mask after being able to start the year without masks. She shared that in the past when students were sick with colds or viruses, they would stay home from school until they felt better.

Lisa Lothrop (Poland): Wanted additional information in regards to pooled testing. She shared that the PCR testing use has been linked to false positives for COVID-19. She would like the board to reconsider the use of PCR testing. She would also like the board to consider allowing a negative test from an outside provider to allow them to end quarantine. She also has concerns about our remote learning plans that have been developed for students who are required to quarantine as a result of exposure to COVID-19. She shared that masks do not work to protect against the

virus and that families should be able to choose if they would like their children to wear masks at school. She asked the SOP to be considered and revised.

Sarah Rand (Poland): Are you in possession of or going to receive any funds as a result of following the CDC guidance?

Response from Board to Sarah Rand, Ken Healey shared that the ESSER III funds provided by the State does require that we follow the DOE guidance in order to receive the funds.

Mary Martin shared that the ways we have utilized the funds are available on the district website.

Ken Healey added that the funds have been used to improve our facilities and to update the vaccination. He also shared that we have received approximately 7 million dollars in grant usage.

Mary Martin encouraged Sarah to reference the website to see where the funds have been spent.

Amy Hediger shared that the funds were used to purchase additional technology, to purchase academic screeners, to add additional intervention positions, to pay teachers who worked remotely and to support students who attended school remotely last year. Amy Hediger explained the process for getting the funds approved and how items were selected to be purchased.

Sarah then asked about the use of the technology fee and how those funds are used?

Ken Healey offered to provide Sarah with a detailed overview of how we utilized all of the grant funding we have received. Sarah then asked for clarification on when the masking policy will be reviewed and what the case numbers would need to be in order to make masking optional for students.

Mary Martin shared that each month they will review the SOP for our school.

Zackary Campbell (Minot): He shared that he has enrolled his elementary aged children in homeschooling due to the masking policy at school. His older children in high school are now complaining about headaches due to the new masking requirement instituted by the middle school/high school. He shared that he has concerns about the school requiring the vaccine due to how new it is. He would like the board to wait and give parents more time to review the data about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Elizabeth Martin (Minot): She shared that masking should be a choice for students. She shared that her child has only been able to attend school for five days due to quarantining.

Robert Martin (Minot): He shared that his child has only attended school for five days due to an at-home exposure. He feels that pool testing and vaccines are being used to keep some students in school and some students out of school. He had questions about the PCR testing done at school as opposed to having the PCR test completed by a doctor's office.

Mark Childs (Poland): He shared that his daughter needs an education, to make friends, and play sports. He shared his concerns about her having to wear a mask.

Randy Lotts (Poland): Asked about the funding being connected to the requirement to wear masks.

Response from Board to Randy Lotts, Ken Healey clarified that RSU 16 received federal funds to help mitigate the effects of COVID, such as remote learning, improved ventilation, and buses for spacing. Ken Healey clarified that these funds did not come from the CDC, they came from the Federal Government and as part of the application, we were asked to verify that we were following the recommendations from the DOE and the CDC.

Randy Lotts inquired if the district has consulted their lawyer in regards to what will happen when parents pursue legal action due to the mask mandate. Randy shared that his daughter is allowed to wear a face shield to school only because they shared private medical information with the school in order to get clearance to wear the shield instead of the mask. He feels that the mask mandate is a violation of her privacy rights and her right to medical privacy of her given conditions.

Response from Board to Randy Lotts, Mary Martin shared that they have not had conversation with the lawyers if this were to rise to the court system as a violation of a student civil rights.

Randy Lotts shared results from an article about the negative health impacts of mask wearing. He offered to provide members of the board with a copy of the article. Randy shared concerns that the board is not focused on what is best for the students versus what is best for the community.

Response from Board to Randy Lotts, Mary Martin shared that she is here to represent RSU 16 students and we are committed to doing the best that we can do solely for the students of RSU 16.

Whitney King-Buker (Minot): She has concerns about a directive being given to students that they will be required to vaccinate in order to attend school. She shared that when her children have symptoms at school, they are required to go home. She shared that this impacts their ability to work, as they are required to be home with their children or take them to get tested. In addition to the loss of work, she is concerned about the costs associated with taking your child to the doctor or to a facility to receive the COVID test.

Kavita Sharma-Nason (Minot): She offered thanks and appreciation to Ken Healey, Amy Hediger and the school board for their use of the funding to help support the schools. She shared that in meetings held last year, the board and the administration were clear with the funds and how those funds would be utilized. She would like to see the board meetings be able to use their meeting time to focus on education and budgets. She would like to see the

community be supportive of the board, despite our opinions on masking and how they are using the federal funds. We should think of the board as partners and not as enemies. She encouraged individuals to attend the board meetings regularly if they would like to know more about what is happening in our schools and in our district.

Daniella Mason (Poland): She is currently a fourth grade teacher and has a sixth grade student at PCS. She shared that she trusts the CDC and those that are making the decisions to keep us safe in schools, not just the children but the adults around us. She shared that although we might have different views on our board, she recognizes that the members of the board have the students' best interest in mind. She encouraged individuals to reach out to Ken and Amy. She also shared that the board should consider instituting a time limit on those sharing during public comment to help move the meeting along more quickly.

Michelle St. Cyr (Poland): She also supports the use of a time limit for public comment in board meetings. She asked if the mask mandate is up for a vote tonight, as she feels that the masks are keeping us safe. She encouraged the board to review the SOP for quarantine to remind members of the community that vaccination and participation in pooled testing help avoid unnecessary quarantines.

Valerie Emery (Mechanic Falls): She asked what research the board has done on the effectiveness of wearing masks. She read passages from a booklet that provided information about the ineffectiveness of masks. Valerie shared a passage from a text which stated that masks we are requiring individuals to wear in school are not effective at preventing the general public from spreading COVID-19.

Response from Board to Valerie Emery, Mary Martin shared that the board receives updated information in regards to masking from the Maine CDC and the DOE. .

Jennifer Bisette (Minot): She shared concerns that the masking policy requirements are similar to the actions of child predators.

3.0 **RECOGNITIONS/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: (5 minutes)**

Congratulations - Food Service Staff and ALL Elementary School Staff, achieved Let's Go! recognition for the 2020-2021 program year.

4.0 **AGENDA ADJUSTMENT:**

*Removed the bid for the truck as the supplier did not honor the bid.

5.0 **PRESENTATIONS: (20 minutes)**

PRHS trip to Italy & Greece, April 2022 - Mike Carter

- Mike Carter asked the board for approval for a trip to Europe. This trip has not been able to happen for the past few years due to COVID. While there is still some uncertainty with the trip, they would like to have permission to begin planning for the trip. They have 53 participants interested in the trip, 39 students and 14 adults. Mike shared that they will follow the recommendations from the state and the CDC, as well as any of the international guidance related to travel and COVID-19. Anyone going on the trip will be required to be vaccinated as well. The adults who are traveling will have required background checks to ensure they have the proper clearance in order to travel with our students.
- Kris Wright, a teacher from the high school is attending this year as a co-leader of this experience.

Discussion: Mary asked about what would happen if they were not able to travel due to COVID. Mike shared that they have a few options - they could move the trip to the summer if travel was cleared; a second option would be that the students would be given a travel voucher to travel on a different EF tour; the third option would be to sell the voucher to someone else to attend an EF trip; lastly, they can receive a refund minus the cancellation fee.

Anna Brettler shared that she and her parents are hopeful to attend the trip if it gets approved.

Motion by: *Joe Parent to approve the PRHS trip to Italy & Greece for April 2022*

Seconded by: *Emily Rinchich*

Vote: *Unanimous*

Poland Regional High School Administrator Update by Cari Medd, Principal

*Cari shared an overview of her school's plan to reboot classrooms as all of our students returned to school for five days a week. Cari shared it was important to have consistency and routines across all of our classrooms as our students transitioned back to a more normal school environment. The teachers are all participating in a course on Making Student Thinking Visible, which helps encourage students to do the majority of the talking, to explain their thinking, to listen to each other, and to take initiative to explain another's thinking. The teachers have been taking the course together during their professional development time on Wednesdays.

*Cari also shared that the number of students either participating in COVID testing or being vaccinated has increased to 75% as of today. Cari has been working with students and their families to continue to increase their participation in pool testing and/or getting vaccinated to help eliminate the need to quarantine. Cari shared that identifying close contacts and managing quarantines has been a challenge this year.

*Cari outlined challenges they have faced this year, including larger student enrollment, understaffed nursing, behavior challenges, internal issues, vandalism in bathrooms, inappropriate behavior in unstructured times, primarily with grades 9 and 10.

*Cari shared the progress they have made with facing these challenges with their return to five days a week of instruction by: improving classroom climates and teachers are feeling more productive. They have increased supervision in the cafeteria and hallways and they have been talking with students about the issues and the concerns about the students' behaviors. Lastly they have increased their level of communication with home. They are also looking forward to the homecoming activities this weekend.

*Cari shared that there have been some difficult conversations and feelings with students in regards to the masking policy at the high school, as some individuals elected to vaccinate in hopes that they would not have to wear the masks.

6.0 CONSENT AGENDA INTRODUCTION: (5 minutes)

Approve 9-13-21 2nd Regular Meeting Minutes

Notification of Support Staff New Hires:

- ★ Phillip Kimball, Custodian - PCS
- ★ Sue Weeks, Food Service - PRHS
- ★ Sarabeth Latulippe, Ed Tech III - ESS

Notification of Retirement:

Notification of Resignations:

- ★ Richard Kramer, Teacher - PRHS
- ★ Carolyn Rowell, Transportation

Sub Committees Minutes - September 2021

Motion by Steve Holbrook to approve Consent Agenda

Seconded by Mike Downing

Vote: Unanimous

7.0 ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL SUMMARIES: (5 minutes)

The payroll warrants will be available for signatures in the Central Office conference room on *Fridays (7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)*, and we will have documentation for the accounts payable side of it as well.

Motion by Mike Downing to approve financial summaries

Seconded by Steve Holbrook

Vote: Unanimous

8.0 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: (10 minutes)

The current enrollment of Regional School Unit 16 as of October 4, 2021 is:

Elm Street School (253 – up 2)

Minot Consolidated School (234 – no change)

Poland Community School (433 – down 3)

Bruce M. Whittier Middle School (291 – down 3)

Poland Regional High School (501 – down 3)

Total Enrollment 1712 – down 7 from 9/13/21

It saddens me to report the departure of our very talented School Resource Officer (SRO) Jim Jacques, his last day is tomorrow. He is leaving the Sheriff's Department to take on another employment opportunity. We will miss his calming presence and his all-around great personality. He is the most perfectly suited SRO that I have ever worked with. I wish him well in his new adventure. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Jim's replacement Kevin Cramp who is a certified SRO and a local community member. We all look forward to working with Kevin to continue to provide the safest educational and working environment for both our students and staff in all our RSU 16 buildings. Welcome Kevin!

Tonight, I will be asking you to confirm my recommendation for the recently established School District Nurse position. This position will provide the much needed leadership continuity, in our nursing staff, that our previous stipend position could not provide. This position will provide daily expertise, relief and assistance to our existing nursing staff. I'm certain the person who is nominated will be a welcome positive addition to our nursing culture.

Additionally, we have signed an agreement with Dr. Eric Dombroski, D.O. who works at Pediatric Associates of Lewiston to be RSU 16's School Health Advisor. This agreement goes from September 15, 2021 to September 15, 2022. Dr. Dombroski will provide consultation to the school nurses, will meet with them as needed, review school health policies and procedures at least annually, and develop and approve standing orders. This agreement will be reviewed and renewed on an annual basis.

We received notification that our ARP/ESSER 3 application was approved last week. An explanation of the use of funds and a copy of our application is on our website under the Return to In Person Instruction tab. I attended our monthly Town Manager's Breakfast on September 22nd. We are scheduled to meet on October 20th for our next meeting, and it looks like the new Town Manager, Vic Hodgins, from Mechanic Falls will join us.

I had the privilege to serve as acting Principal at the High School on Friday, October 1st. I had a fun day, and I would like to thank Cari Medd for having the confidence in leaving me the master key to all the classrooms.

Do I have any questions?

9.0 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: (10 minutes)

- Amy Hediger shared that she met with PCS principal Lisa Burns and her two school counselors (one position was added with the ARP/ESSER 3 funds). Having two counselors aligns more with the ASCA suggested model of 1 counselor per 250 students.
- Amy also met with the PCS Title team, the school principal, and their ESSER 3/ARP interventionist to help support their targeted service model within the Title funds. The Title funded teachers are creating an intervention lab to support the identified students in literacy and math. They will also use the intervention position to help support the students who are not identified for Title services of the targeted Title program.
- Amy was also able to monitor and review and help support the pool testing program at PCS last week. She shared that it has been running efficiently within our schools, and that the students are able to complete the pooled testing process with ease.
- Amy pointed out to the board members copies of the SOP that have been placed on the tables for them to review. Amy shared that we can not change the items included in the SOP, however we can change our return to school plan that was created by the district.

Discussion from Board Members:

Christine Downs shared that it would be helpful to post the SOP on the COVID section of the website on the RSU 16 webpage.

Emily Rinchich asked if we, as a district, have been able to utilize the SOP exemptions to help limit the number of students who are required to quarantine.

Amy Hediger shared that the district *Return to School Flowchart* that allows for exemptions from quarantining for students if they are vaccinated, participate in pooled testing, the district enforcement of universal masking (if student has been more than 3 feet apart with no physical contact, for buses and cafeterias, the distance is 6 feet).

Emily Rinchich would like to know how many students did not have to quarantine as a result of the universal masking.

Cari Medd, PRHS Principal shared that by using masking and assigned seating charts this has helped to limit the number of students who have to quarantine.

10.0 NEW BUSINESS: (45 minutes)

Approve trip for PRHS students to Greece & Italy - April 2022 vacation week (**Approved above - 5.0**)

Superintendent recommends the hiring of Luke Johnson, PE Teacher, PRHS

Motion by Steve Holbrook to approve the hiring of Luke Johnson, PE Teacher, PRHS

Seconded by Mike Downing

Vote: Unanimous

Superintendent recommends the hiring of a District Nurse, candidate Dottie Foster

Motion by Mike Downing to approve the hiring of District Nurse candidate, Dottie Foster,

Seconded by Steve Holbrook

Vote: Unanimous

Approve Snow Plowing Bid, as recommended by the Operations Subcommittee on 9/27/21

Motion by Steve Holbrook to approve the Snow Plowing bid

Seconded by Mike Downing

Vote: Unanimous

Approve Snow Plow Truck, as recommended by the Operations Subcommittee on 9/27/21

Motion by Steve Holbrook to approve the Snow Plow Truck

Seconded by: Mike Downing

Vote: Unanimous

11.0 OLD BUSINESS:

Review Covid-19 Return to School Plan

- Amy Hediger shared the most recent information on the COVID-19 situation in Maine.

She shared that the CDC continues to recommend masking in schools regardless of vaccination status.

Androscoggin County has seen a 33% increase in COVID cases and is now considered high risk for unvaccinated individuals. As of yesterday, we have had 36 cases of COVID-19 since the start of school, including 33 in the month of September alone, which ranks second to April 2021. We have had 9 cases identified through pooled testing.

- Ken Healey shared that we have had an increase in staff vaccination from 86.40% to 89.21%. Student vaccination rates have increased by 1% in the high school (51% of students vaccinated) and 2% in the middle school (37% of students vaccinated). In terms of pool testing, PCS now has 59% of their students and staff participating, MCS has 41%, WMS has 41%, PRHS has 51%, and ESS has 45%.

Mary Martin asked about the Federal requirement in terms of vaccination or regular testing. Ken Healey shared that the guidance being offered suggests that vaccinations will be required for school staff or participation in regular testing. Ken is hopeful that participation in the pooled testing programs at school will count for the routine testing.

Emily Rinchich asked if there have been cases involving transmission within the schools. Amy Hediger shared that there is an indication that school transmission has occurred this year.

Discussion by Board:

Scott Tiner asked if there was a recommendation to make changes to the plan, that they be provided to the board in advance of the meeting.

Melanie Harvey asked that Amy Hediger provide the flowchart in the next School Board packet.

Jessica Smith shared that while the board is hearing from individuals at the board meetings, they are also receiving correspondence from many others that are not seen.

Ken Healey shared we will continue to follow the guidelines that are provided to us from the State.

Amy Hediger noted that we are working with area superintendents and with the Commissioner to evaluate what the criterion might be to address the removal of masks and what that threshold might be.

Steve Holbrook asked if it weren't for the mandates from the state if we felt that we would still be masking.

Ed Rabasco wants to revisit the public participation policy at the next subcommittee meeting.

Motion by Mike Downing to keep the current Covid-19 Return to School Plan as is.

Seconded by Christine Downs

Vote: 13 for - 1 against (Emily Rinchich) the motion passes.

12.0 POLICIES: N/A

13.0 REPORTS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD:

Student Representatives: (5 minutes)

Anna Brettler spoke about the upcoming Homecoming activities this weekend. She shared that seniors are focusing on college applications and preparations. SRB representatives were shared with the board. Anna stated that the bathrooms are currently closed, due to the vandalism. Patrick Flynn has been participating in class meetings to help address the vandalism.

Report of the School Board Chair: (5 minutes)

Mary Martin shared there is an open School Board Seat (Mechanic Falls) - The selectboard is meeting tonight and there is a candidate who has expressed interest in filling the vacant position.

MSMA Fall Conference (October 28th and 29th) Registration - If anyone is interested in attending the conference, please let Lauren Hendry (lhendry@rsu16.org) know and she will get you signed up.

Mary also shared her concerns about Public Participation time at school board meetings. She shared that it is challenging when the public participation time interferes with the board's ability to make it through the agenda as it presents challenges to getting the business of the school board done. Mary would like the board to discuss a time limit for public participation.

Discussion:

Steve Holbrook: Shared concerns that it is hard to limit what people are saying, and that the amount of time it takes to complete the public participation is a challenge.

Mary Martin suggested making changes to the public participation policy to allow for a more productive school board meeting and to allow the board to be able to get through their agenda in a timely manner.

14.0 ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

A Team Reports:

Mary Martin appreciated the time administrators took in their reports to outline what they are doing to support students who are missing school due to quarantine or isolation.

15.0 COMMUNICATIONS:

16.0 HANDOUTS:

17.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION:

18.0 REMINDERS:

19.0 ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Steve Holbrook to adjourn at 9:03 p.m.

Seconded by Mike Downing

Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenneth J. Healey