

KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA STATEMENT

No. 9 b

MEETING OF March 25, 2020

ITEM TITLE:

CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of the emergency special meeting minutes of March 13, 2020

SUBMITTED BY: Kerry Watson, Clerk to the Board

CONTACT PERSON/TELEPHONE:

Kerry Watson 247-2142
Phone

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:

Superintendent

CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Motion to approve the emergency special meeting minutes of March 13, 2020.

*** NOTE:**

If amendments or corrections are desired to the minutes, request removal of the minutes. The minutes will then be acted upon under Unfinished Business. Appropriate motions to correct or amend the minutes are in order.

Otherwise, the motion to accept the Consent Calendar of March 25, 2020 is appropriate.

**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
EMERGENCY Special meeting of March 13, 2020
1:30 p.m.
Room 132, District Administrative Offices at Ketchikan High School**

CALL TO ORDER; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; ROLL CALL

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Board of Education met in an emergency special session on the 13th day of March, 2020, in Room 132 of the District's Administrative offices at Ketchikan High School. Board President Bridget Mattson called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

The following members were present to establish a quorum and due notice had been published: Board President Bridget Mattson; Vice President Sonya Skan; Clerk-Treasurer Diane Gubatayao; Board Members Leslie Becker; Jordan Tabb; and Thomas Heutte. Board Member Paul Robbins Jr. was absent.

Administrative staff consisted of Beth Lougee, Superintendent; Business Manager Katie Parrott; Bob Hewitt, Principal/Teacher Mentor; Clerk to the Board Kerry Watson.

Several media representatives were also present.

Purpose of emergency special meeting

Board President Bridget Mattson stated that the purpose of the emergency special meeting was to take proactive steps to minimize the spread of the coronavirus after spring break at the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District.

Superintendent Beth Lougee stated that the proactive step she recommends is extending spring break by one week for all Pre-K through 12th grade students. This recommendation is not based on any specific concern about cases in Ketchikan or its schools, said Superintendent Lougee, but again emphasized it is a proactive measure. She prefaced her recommendation by referring to the continuous meetings she'd been involved with on the subject of coronavirus 19, including a teleconference at 7 a.m. that morning with the state superintendents' association and Alaska's Education Commissioner. She added that also that morning President Trump had declared a national emergency.

Measures such as keeping students out of school are to assist in "flattening the curve" for the coronavirus, terminology used by health officials, said Ms. Lougee. Flattening the curve refers to efforts to slow the rate of infection early after an outbreak, she said; and was discussed in a teleconference with Borough officials that day. The idea is that if individuals keep their distance from each other, "social distancing," the growth of cases may slow, and more time and resources are available to care for those affected.

The superintendent stated that she recognizes extending Spring break will be an imposition on families in managing child care, including staff who are parents. Superintendent Lougee stated that the spring break extension affects students only. All district staff are expected to come to work on Monday, March 23, 2020. Staff will be planning with school administrators on contingencies such as delivering instruction by internet or through packets. Meanwhile, without students in the buildings, classrooms, halls, offices and gymnasiums can be deep-cleaned.

The one-week extension will require a waiver from the state which Education Commissioner Michael Johnson assured the superintendent he would provide. For teachers, the week will be considered as inservice days and will not extend the school year, said Ms. Lougee.

School meal provisions

The Superintendent and Business Manager Katie Parrott also reported on plans to provide school meals during the extended closure. The plan is for sack lunches to be made available from Schoenbar Middle School starting March 23, with other school sites potentially being added. The state's child nutrition program has stated it will provide a waiver so the district can continue to provide food service to students, said Business Manager Parrott.

The situation would operate similarly to the summer lunch program using Schoenbar as a hub. However, a waiver from the “congregate meal” requirement of the summer lunch model is also being requested to allow for students to pick up a meal and take it away with them. Other schools may be used as sites for meal distribution as well to provide for access in other neighborhoods.

Ms. Parrott also said plans are being made in the case of additional closures or interruptions to ensure the Business Office would still be able to provide support to staff, students and families.

Superintendent Lougee also updated the Board on student and staff travel. Any remaining travel in March will be cancelled. She noted that currently there are Ketchikan students in Juneau at the Region V basketball tournament who will be returning to Ketchikan soon. Planned travel in April is being monitored and may be postponed.

Board discussion and questions

Board Member Tom Heutte asked if the decision to extend Ketchikan’s spring break was made at the recommendation of the health department or other agencies. Superintendent Lougee answered that the state’s guidance was that these decisions be made locally, but observed that school closures and spring break extensions have occurred in other Alaska districts.

Board Member Diane Gubatayao expressed appreciation for the efforts to provide school lunch and the possibility of making them available at multiple school sites. Some families may lack transportation and district-provided meals are also critical for some families, she said.

She also asked about whether classes would need to extend into June. Superintendent Lougee said that right now with available inservice days, extending spring break will not affect the calendar. She added that further announcements are expected from the education commissioner’s office.

Board Member Sonya Skan spoke about her experience as a student in Washington state when Mount St. Helens erupted. No school days were required to be made up as it was an emergency, she said; adding that this current situation might be considered similarly.

Ms. Mattson commented on how other states are handling COVID-19 outbreaks, by taking safety measures while trying to minimize the detriment to students. She also noted that Governor Dunleavy had declared a state of emergency earlier this week. Alaska’s medical system is limited and can be overrun quickly. It is smart for Ketchikan to be proactive, she said.

Board Member Jordan Tabb also remarked on extending spring break as being a limited proactive measure which will provide time for more long-range planning.

Superintendent Lougee also answered questions about plans for upcoming PEAKS testing, sufficiency of supplies for deep cleaning, and how parents would be adequately notified of the Spring break extension.

President Mattson commented on the risk of an epidemic occurring in Alaska, due to residents’ frequent travel, especially with Spring breaks, and the particular traits of the virus. She noted that Anchorage had extended its spring break as had Fairbanks and Kenai. She indicated that although closing school may not seem the best decision for children or their academics, the closure will be what’s best for the community, and its families.

Board Member Gubatayao commended Superintendent Lougee and the staff for being on top of the situation and having a plan.

Motion to adopt the plan as presented by Superintendent Beth Lougee to extend spring break by one week.

Moved by: GUBATAYAO; Second by: HEUTTE

Discussion on the motion

Board Member Tabb stated that this is a challenging decision, but other businesses and organizations in Ketchikan are waiting to see what the school district does, and what measures are appropriate.

Ms. Mattson said the action is proactive enough to give families time to make some plans.

Board Member Leslie Becker questioned if another extension would be made if no “break outs” occurred in the next two weeks. She stated she wondered if this decision was too early.

Superintendent Lougee said no outbreaks would be ideal, but the situation will be monitored continually.

Responding to Ms. Becker’s concern, Ms. Mattson commented on how other countries have handled their outbreaks; and spoke to being proactive even with no confirmed COVID 19, so medical facilities aren’t overrun and to prevent unnecessary deaths as a result.

Ms. Gubatayao also spoke to “flattening the curve” measures and the uncertainty of what people may bring back to the area on return from spring break. She said she believes this was a wise decision.

Board Member Jordan Tabb stated he appreciated that Ms. Becker shared her uncertainty. He said there is no clear instruction on how to deal with the COVID-19 situation and there is lack of available testing, but he is hopeful that better guidance will be forthcoming.

Mr. Heutte said it is easy to make a decision when one has all the information. However, often decisions have to be made based on the information one has at the time. Information coming from other parts of the world indicates that an abundance of caution is merited, he stated.

Ms. Skan said she’d rather be proactive than reactive; and thanked both Ms. Lougee and Ms. Parrott for their planning.

The Superintendent commented on the stress of keeping up with the information coming out on the corona virus and trying to get factual information out. She stated that she had designated Bob Hewitt as the public information spokesperson on this issue.

ROLL CALL

BECKER, SKAN, TABB, GUBATAYAO, HEUTTE, MATTSON – ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, a motion to adjourn was approved, and the meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.