

**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR meeting of
Wednesday, August 11, 2021
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; ROLL CALL

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Board of Education met in regular session on the 11th day of August 2021, in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers. Board President Kim Hodne called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The following members were present to establish a quorum and due notice had been published: Board President Kim Hodne; Board Vice President Diane Gubatayao; Clerk-Treasurer Bridget Mattson; and Board Members Paul Robbins Jr.; Jordan Tabb; Nicole Anderson; and Douglas Gregg.

Administrative staff present included Interim Superintendent Melissa Johnson; Administrator Linnaea Troina; and Board Clerk Kerry Watson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda for the regular meeting of August 11, 2021.

Moved by: GUBATAYAO; Second by: ANDERSON

ROLL CALL

HODNE, GUBATAYAO, MATTSON, TABB, ROBBINS JR., ANDERSON, GREGG - ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

Board Vice President Diane Gubatayao announced an upcoming run event sponsored by the Wellness Coalition in honor of the late Karen Eakes. Ms. Eakes was a former president of the School Board, and prior to that an educator for many years.

CITIZEN REMARKS

Christy Johnson said she'd been hearing about critical race theory being put into the curriculum in some schools nationally, and she hopes that isn't occurring in Ketchikan. She said she was pleased to see a civics book on display in the hallway, adding students need to learn how government works.

Dave Timmerman, parent of a Houghtaling Elementary School student, challenged the Board to take action to stop drivers dropping off and picking up children from a road behind Houghtaling Elementary School. He spoke about how dangerous this practice was, and said the school's principal had tried to prevent its occurrence, but it was still happening.

William Elsner, parent of two Revilla students, said that evaluating the risk of whether to wear a mask at school should be up to the student and their parents, based on their own circumstances, and not mandated by the district. Children are the lowest risk group for any complication due to COVID, he said. He also cited negative impacts to children from wearing masks, which he said needed more attention. Mr. Elsner also said Revilla had stopped having fitness classes last year, which he commented on as a health risk due to potential obesity.

Autumn Elsner, student at Revilla, stated that Revilla students used to be able to participate in electives at Kayhi, and activities such as field trips, but could not any more. She asked why this was so.

Liz Thomas, parent of two Kayhi seniors, described her perspective of what had occurred in the 508 days since last year's "shut down." She said she was concerned that current scientific data is not being considered; and stressed that children are not the demographic of concern with COVID. She objects to masking kids, stating they are not the vulnerable population, and citing impacts to their physical, emotional and educational health by doing so. She provided statistics on the primary cause of death in Alaska youth in 2020 as being suicide,

and also referred to the low rate of pediatric deaths due to COVID. Ms. Thomas said children are being raised in fear, and masking them is not helping. She asked that parents be given the choice to make the decision on masking in school for their children. Ms. Thomas provided the Board with references to articles regarding masking effectiveness and negative side effects.

Gara Williams, Ketchikan Education Association President, provided the association's perspective on the Start Strong plan. She asked that it be revised to reflect updated CDC guidance regarding masking in indoor settings regardless of vaccination status. She noted that the high school will be returning to a 6-hour schedule and that class sizes across the district are larger than last year. KEA is also asking that medical professionals be consulted in establishing the building risk levels, and that representatives from each building be involved in those building level decisions. Ms. Williams also requested that COVID leave and telework arrangements be made available for staff again this year.

A letter from Dr. Valerie Brooks, reading specialist at Houghtaling Elementary, was then read aloud. (*She could not come to the meeting in person.*) Ms. Brooks wrote that the Board and the 'Start Smart' team seem intent on ignoring scientific information regarding COVID and wearing masks at school. She referenced the August 4th CDC recommendations. Ms. Brooks urged the Board to keep students and staff safe and in school by retaining last year's mitigation measures mandatory masking and small groups.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Bridget Mattson, a member of the curriculum committee, explained why new social studies materials were being recommended; and noted they were being displayed in the hallway outside the chamber that evening. She also stated that critical race theory is not anything being considered in the materials.

Diane Gubatayao reported as part of the policy committee on her continued work with WISH to develop a policy needed in the schools.

Ms. Gubatayao also reported on the recent Association of Alaska School Boards directors meeting she'd attended and its current efforts regarding its Strategic Plan. In addition, she met with Saxman IRA Council President Joe Williams regarding potential dates for the council and school board to meet.

CLAIMS FOR INFORMATION of July 23, 2021; and August 6, 2021.

Business Manager Katie Parrott responded to a question about July rent for several annex sites, and also one regarding legal fees.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Interim Superintendent Melissa Johnson opened her report by stating that she and Derek Meister, special services director, had met with some agencies regarding a partnership for counselors in the schools. They also will be meeting regularly with Community Connections regarding supporting students on IEPs.

She then referred to her written report, giving a synopsis of the Start Strong planning efforts, and the rationale for hiring a COVID director. She emphasized that the Start Strong plan is a draft, which will probably be modified after hearing input from the community in the August 12 presentation, and through subsequent meetings of the committee. A new draft plan will be brought to the Board on August 18. Ms. Johnson also commented that 100% in-person learning in a safe manner was the goal for the school year.

Start Strong Committee:

Linnaea Troina, who headed up the Start Strong committee, then reviewed the Start Strong plan in its current draft form. She noted what had informed the committee's work. Another meeting with medical professionals would help the committee to set risk levels and how they would be determined, she said. She hoped this would be ready to present at the community forum the following night.

Ms. Troina shared the school start timeline, including a two-day rolling start for schools, and then spoke about the main premise of the plan, which is to be in school 100 percent in person. Last year's 50 percent model was difficult for the middle school and high school students, she said. Ms. Troina briefly explained the masking at the various school risk levels as well as how student activities would be handled. The plan still has unknowns which will be finalized by that Friday, she said.

For about 40 minutes, there were questions and discussion regarding the plan for school operation, including: school risk levels and how they would be determined; an explanation of the purpose of the rolling starts at the schools; an explanation in response to the student speaker that evening regarding the ability of Revilla students to participate in electives and activities; a suggestion that surveillance testing be considered as a mitigation strategy; the August 5 CDC recommendations regarding masking and responses to positive cases depending on vaccination status; and availability of lockers for secondary school students.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar of August 11, 2021 (consisting of the following):

- a. Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of July 14, 2021.
- b. Motion to approve a long-term substitute teaching contract with Judith Doyon to teach music/STEAM at TSAS.

Moved by: ROBBINS JR.; Second by: MATTSON

ROLL CALL

GUBATAYAO, MATTSON, TABB, GREGG, ROBBINS JR., ANDERSON, HODNE - ALL AYES
MOTION PASSED

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to reschedule the Board's second meeting in August to Wednesday, August 18, 2021 in suspension of Board Bylaw 9320.

Moved by: GUBATAYAO; Second by: ANDERSON

Discussion:

President Hodne stated, as explanation, that this change had come up during the most recent agenda setting. If not changed, the second August Board meeting would have been August 25, with the first day of school the following day. This would have meant no time for teachers, parents and students to prepare for school, with a plan not yet approved, he said.

ROLL CALL

ANDERSON, GREGG, TABB, GUBATAYAO, ROBBINS JR., MATTSON, HODNE - ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

Motion to approve a one-year contract extension for the 2021-2022 year to Tongass Business Center for copier services, in the amount of \$47,190

Moved by: ROBBINS JR; Second by: GUBATAYAO

Discussion:

Ms. Gubatayao said she appreciated that TBC had adjusted its costs, and also appreciated that the district was supporting a local business.

ROLL CALL

ROBBINS JR., TABB, MATTSON, GREGG, GUBATAYAO, ANDERSON, HODNE - ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

Motion to approve an administrative contract for Linnaea Troina for the 2021-22 school year (District Administration) at KGBSD, in the amount of \$150,159.61

Moved by: MATTSON; Second by: ANDERSON

Discussion:

Mr. Robbins Jr. spoke about the specific skill set inherent in a public relations position, as this is his own profession; while adding that his comments were not a reflection on the recommended candidate. He said he would vote against hiring someone who is not qualified for this specific skill.

Business Manager Parrott spoke regarding the source of the funding for the position. As it is specific to the district's COVID response, it is an allowable use of COVID relief funding, she said.

Mr. Robbins commented again that the person needed to have proper public relations certifications and experience, especially at the cost represented.

Superintendent Johnson explained why it was important that the person in this position have administrative experience in the district and at various school levels. She also said that during the Start Strong committee discussions this position was requested, in response to communication lapses last year regarding COVID response.

Board Member Jordan Tabb asked about seeing a job description, adding that it sounded to him as the intent was needing someone to handle administrative functions beyond a public relations aspect.

Recess

A brief recess was called in the meeting from 7:36 to 7:45 p.m., during which Board members were provided the job description for this position.

More discussion ensued regarding the position and its purpose.

Interim Superintendent Johnson spoke more about the need for the position, and what it would entail, and answered questions from the Board.

ROLL CALL

GREGG, ANDERSON, GUBATAYAO, MATTSON, TABB, HODNE - AYES

ROBBINS JR. - NAY

6-1

MOTION PASSED

DISCUSSION

The Board briefly discussed upcoming meetings with the Saxman IRA Council and with the Ketchikan Indian Community.

BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Anderson encouraged the community to come to the forum the following evening to give input regarding school operation.

Ms. Gubatayao stated appreciation to Ms. Troina and the Start Strong committee for their work; and also to the 700 plus people who responded to the surveys regarding school. She asked if her fellow Board members were interested in being trained by the Wellness Coalition in administering Narcan. Board members indicated agreement.

Mr. Robbins Jr. said that those on the Start Strong Committee also love this community and its children and schools, and asked everyone to treat each other with common respect. He commended the superintendent for moving forward with the position hire that evening. He said he looks forward to supporting Ms. Troina in any way he can in the realm of public relations.

Mr. Gregg reminded those listening that they could still file as candidates for the School Board.

Mr. Tabb listed the deadline for candidate filing, and also for registering to vote in the October election. Regarding the Start Strong proposal, he said it is the goal of this board to have 100% in person attendance at school, but mitigation measures are necessary to make that possible. He commented in appreciation of the Narcan training opportunity.

Ms. Mattson expressed appreciation for those who provided public comment that evening, especially the student. She also stated that the Board cares about the education of students in the district, and commented on how much time each Board member has spent in researching data and what other school districts are doing, in an attempt to keep kids in school. She countered the statements that children were being taught to fear, by describing how Ketchikan has supported its youth with the goal of keeping them in school.

Mr. Hodne commented that there are many different views regarding COVID, and mitigation measures. He said he has faith that a civil conversation would take place the following night regarding a school operating plan. He also encouraged more citizens to come forward as candidates for School Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Minutes approved as distributed at the September 8, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Education.

BOARD PRESIDENT
Kim Hodne