

**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING and WORK SESSION
Meeting of December 11, 2024
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; ROLL CALL

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Board of Education met in a regular session on the 11th day of December 2024, in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers. Board President Michelle O'Brien 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:

President Michelle O'Brien, Vice President Jordan Tabb, Clerk-Treasurer Katherine Tatsuda, Members Judy Leask Guthrie, Tom Heutte, Keenan Sanderson, Ali Ginter and Student Member Clara Odden.

Administrative staff present included Superintendent Michael Robbins, Business Manager Daniel Schuler and Guest School Board Clerk Kerry Watson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M/S Guthrie/Heutte

The agenda was approved.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

None.

CITIZEN REMARKS

Frankie Urqhart, citizen, shared a letter from citizen Ali Cook. Ali Cook spoke on behalf of herself and her family, urging the board to vote no on the proposed school specialization, sharing positive experiences from her family's time at Houghtaling Elementary.

Frankie Urqhart shared thanks to the Board for starting the budget conversations early this year. Urqhart urged the school board to vote no on the budget proposal, sharing numerous alternative ideas for the district to save money.

Neila Urqhart, a senior at Ketchikan High School, discusses community concerns about potential school budget cuts. Urqhart emphasizes the importance of prioritizing students' education over budgetary convenience.

Amy Topher, Ketchikan citizen, started by thanking the Board for their hard work. Topher spoke in opposition of School Specialization and reducing electives throughout the district and urged the board to improve their approach and communication.

Lisa Milne Dewitt and Natasha Clevenger, are part of the Ketchikan Native Education Parent Committee (KNEPC). They are reaching out to the KGBSD school board to collaborate on keeping the IEA preschools open full-time. KNEPC seeks a memorandum of agreement with the district regarding financial support. They urge the board to consider this in their budget planning. They invite questions for further communication.

Pat Tully, Ketchikan resident, urges the board for continued support and funding for essential school programs, such as music, physical education, and school libraries, that contribute to children's development into

successful adults.

Jason House, assistant principal at Schoenbar Middle School, President of the Ketchikan Leadership Organization which represents the District's admin team, and father of two in the district, spoke to the board. House started by thanking the Superintendent and the Board for starting the budget discussions early, and thanked the community for being actively involved in the process. House emphasized the need for community support and understanding for the important work done by school administrators.

Sophia Pilgrim, a junior at Ketchikan High School, addressed the board and community regarding the financial issues facing the school district. Pilgrim requests an itemized budget, an audit, and a vote against current proposals until the community receives the necessary transparency and effort deserved by the students.

Rob Arnold, Ketchikan citizen, urges the school board and community to be proactive for education amidst a declining population and potential budget cuts. Arnold stresses the need for better education quality, and insists on responsible budgeting and making bold choices for the benefit of students.

Kevin Kristovich, Ketchikan resident, discusses the recent elimination of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in Ketchikan, highlighting the negative impact on students and the community. Kristovich urged the school district to restore and fund CTE courses, recognizing their vital role in training students and supporting the local economy.

Kelsey McNeil, a parent in the District, finds it hard to access budget information, and believes better advertising of the budget website is needed. McNeil urged the board and district to approach the situation with transparency, accountability, and compassion to earn community trust.

Jolene Thomas, a mom, grandma, and teacher, shares her connection to local schools and acknowledges the budget challenges faced by the district. Thomas discusses her own difficult experiences with change, highlighting community support during tough times. Thomas expresses appreciation for hardworking administrators and emphasizes the importance of preschool education for students with specific needs, noting that preschools provide specialized support not found in daycares.

Christy Johnson, Ketchikan resident, expresses her gratitude for the hard work of school staff and highlighted her concerns about the schooling situation for her grandchildren. Johnson hopes for clearer budget information to better understand the school's financial state and its impact on students and staff.

Ally Jones, student in the district, addresses the school board about the negative impacts the budget decisions will have on students. Jones urges the board to reconsider their proposed budget cuts and focus on preserving essential programs for students' futures.

Martha Thomas, Ketchikan resident, expressed serious concerns about her sons' education due to inadequate teaching staff. Thomas asked the board how the district plans to address these educational shortcomings and insists on accountability.

Gara Williams, community member and district employee, shared her journey as an educator, highlighting her dedication and recent challenges. Williams emphasized the need for community and administrative support, instead of cuts, to better resource teachers and students.

President Michelle O'Brien shared a letter from community member and district employee Miranda Tucker. Tucker wrote to the board to express concerns regarding the two options for the upcoming school year due to budget constraints. Tucker emphasized the need for thoughtful planning that supports children's education

while considering current budget limitations.

President Michelle O'Brien shared a letter from Jillian Polluck, Music teacher at Houghtaling Elementary. Pollock wrote to the board to address the challenges of proposed changes to the school budget that may affect music education. Pollock believes that removing music education would alienate students from the arts and diminish their access to important learning experiences.

Darby Menardi, a parent of students in the district, spoke in opposition of splitting elementary school students. Mainardi suggests creative solutions and potential savings in the school budget, and emphasized the importance of keeping schools intact and supporting all staff and programs.

Dan Ortiz, Ketchikan citizen, urged the community to demand better education funding from the legislature, emphasizing that the declining support for education is unacceptable.

Kendra Adams, a parent of a first grader and a third grader at Point Higgins Elementary, opposes the current proposals for next year's school plans. One plan separates her children, and the other cuts library resources, contradicting the Alaska Reads Act. Adams urged the board to vote against the proposals and explore other options.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Budget Committee/Borough Liaison Meeting - Member Tatsuda spoke on the budget committee that met last Wednesday, December 4, and shared her appreciation to everyone who attended and contributed. Additionally, there was a borough liaison committee meeting, the first since the new board was formed. The meeting was productive, and showed a significant improvement in the relationship between borough staff and district staff and highlighted successful collaboration and problem-solving efforts that have helped reduce health care debt. The district has been invited to participate in the borough assembly policy days in January, where they will discuss budget assumptions and required contributions for the district.

ELL Task Force - Member Heutte shared that the ELL Task Force met last Tuesday, December 3, and is working with the Superintendent on recommendations and questions to be answered by staff. The Task Force will meet again on January 6, 2025 at 4PM in the Kayhi Library.

Policy Committee - The Policy Committee met on Tuesday, December 10, and shared that there are three fairly simple policy recommendations coming to the board at the next meeting. Heutte shared that the policy committee is working on one more that was a little more complicated, getting some questions asked from counsel. Policy will meet next January 14, at 11 AM in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION:

Claims of November 22, 2024

November Board Financial Report

No Objections. CLAIMS APPROVED

REPORTS

STUDENT REPORT

Student Representative, Clara Oden, shared that Ketchikan High School has had a busy few weeks. The wrestling team will compete at the region five tournament this coming weekend, followed by the state tournament next week. Basketball and cheerleading tryouts occurred last week. "Meet the Kings" is Saturday, December 14 at six, with a fundraiser dinner at four. The Clarke Cochrane Christmas classic is from Friday, the 27 to Sunday, the 29. The drama, debate, and forensics team travels to Juneau for a competition, while the

academic decathlon team goes to Craig this month. The Nutcracker was performed last weekend, showcasing student talent. Two weeks ago, the Kayhi student government met with Mr. Robbins to discuss school projects, including maintenance issues and missing classes like maritime, aviation, and more.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Superintendent Robbins expressed his gratitude to the mayor and borough assembly for their support, especially regarding the new ordinance that helps balance the school district's budget for FY24. Robbins also shared that the district has reduced its healthcare debt and noted this was due to dedicated teamwork, especially from borough staff. Robbins shared that he appreciates everyone's continued support, which is crucial for the community.

CONSENT CALENDAR

- a. Motion to approve the ratification of School Board committee assignment.
- b. Motion to approve out of state travel for Ketchikan High School Softball team to Grand Stand Softball Classic in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.
- c. Motion to approve offering administrative contracts to Thomas Varela-Kossak and Daniel B. Schuler; and long-term teaching contracts to Valerie Brooks and Mark Woodward for the 2024-25 school year.
- d. Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 13, 2024.
- e. Motion to approve out of state travel for Ketchikan High School Baseball team to Jackie Robinson Training Complex in Orlando, Florida.

M/S: SANDERSON/GUTHRIE

ROLL CALL:

YES - ODEN (PREFERENTIAL), HEUTTE, TATSUDA, TABB, GINTER, GUTHRIE, SANDERSON, O'BRIEN

CONSENT CALENDAR APPROVED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

DISCUSSION

School Board Meeting Calendar

Members of the School Board entered in a discussion to alter the upcoming January meeting schedule, changing the January dates to accommodate the district winter break. The January dates were changed to January 15, 2025 and January 29, 2025 at 6:00 P.M. in the Borough Assembly Chambers with no opposition.

The Board entered into a recess from 7:25 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

WORK SESSION

FY 25 Budget

The Board entered a work session at 7:30 p.m.

Superintendent Robbins gave a presentation regarding the FY 25 Budget. The Board and Superintendent discussed details of the presentation and the Board asked questions about the next steps in the budgeting process.

The work session ended at 8:47 p.m.

BOARD COMMENTS

Member Tatsuda shared her appreciation to Representative Ortiz coming to speak and emphasizing the need for a united voice in Juneau. Tatsuda shared hopes of participating in the upcoming Alaska Association of School Boards legislative fly-in, scheduled for February 7-10, sharing the board had participated last year and made an impact, despite the governor's veto, sharing that it is crucial for the board to continue representing the community and region, as those far up north may overlook our importance.

Member Ginter suggests having students participate in the fly-in to make more of an impact with legislators. Ginter shared that Robbins had been working to provide information on admin duties and reductions over the years, and asked to have it shared on the budget website.

Member Heutte thanked everyone who attended the meeting tonight for their passion and powerful messages. Heutte echoed Representative Ortiz, and encouraged the community to contract legislation.

Vice President Tabb thanked everyone for the passionate commentary and ideas shared. Tabb shared that as the board and community discuss personnel cuts, they must remember that these decisions affect people's lives and families. Tabb spoke on the importance of maintaining a supportive atmosphere and focusing on supporting each other and finding creative solutions.

Member Ginter spoke a second time, sharing her perspective as a parent in the district on how budget information is being provided to the public. Ginter recommended that the district should share more information on social media to improve communication with the community.

Member Guthrie asked for a list of legislators and state officials that the community can contact regarding funding for the district.

ADVANCE PLANNING

ELL Task Force Meeting, Monday, January 6, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the Ketchikan High School Library.

Borough Assembly Policy Session, Friday January 24, 2025 9-11:00 a.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

School Board Policy Committee meeting Tuesday, January 14, at 11:00 a.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

School Board regular meeting and/or work session Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

School Board regular meeting and/or work session Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

School Board regular meeting and/or work session Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:56 p.m.



BOARD PRESIDENT
Katherine Tatsuda



Board Vice President
Jordan Tabb



Clerk Treasurer
Tom Heutte