

**GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD
GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2020**

The Grand Forks School Board met in regular session on Monday, September 28, 2020, with Vice President Eric Lunn presiding.

Board Members Present: Doug Carpenter, Chris Douthit, Amber Flynn via phone, Jacqueline Hoffarth, Eric Lunn, Jeff Manley, Shannon Mikula, Bill Palmiscno, and Cynthia Shabb. **Absent:** None.

Student Board Members Present: Alicia Dela Cruz and Evan Whalen.

Others Present: Dr. Terry Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Scott J. Berge, Business Manager; Jody Thompson, Associate Superintendent of Elementary Education, Catherine Gillach, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education; Brady Olson, Vice President, Grand Forks Education Association; and Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was called to order and the Pledge of Allegiance recited at 6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Student School Board Members: Alicia Dela Cruz, a junior at Red River High School, and Evan Whalen, a junior at Grand Forks Central High School, were introduced as this year's student school board members, and their oath of office was administered.

Approval of Agenda. It was moved by Carpenter and seconded by Shabb to approve the agenda as written. Motion carried unanimously. Absent: Hoffarth and Mikula.

Approval of Minutes. It was moved by Palmiscno and seconded by Carpenter to approve the minutes of September 14, 2020, as written. Motion carried unanimously. Absent: Hoffarth and Mikula.

Citizen Comments (non-agenda items). None.

Review School Board Norms. Lunn read aloud the school board norms.

Mikula joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

School Reopening Update. Dr. Brenner reported Grand Forks Public Schools is one of the few large PreK-12 districts currently operating in a face-to-face setting daily. He said, as reported

in a recent Teacher Advisory Council (TAC) meeting, that high school teachers in the face-to-face hybrid are feeling overwhelmed with both the face-to-face and distance-learning delivery model.

Hoffarth joined the meeting at 6:08 p.m.

In response to comments from TAC members, teachers were given time at the end of last week's professional development to catch up. Dr. Brenner reported other challenges and remedies in the areas of filling teacher vacancies, supervision of students, keeping distance learners in attendance and engaged, all teachers feeling overwhelmed, and a near-future challenge to find space for distance-learning students who may return to face-to-face learning at the end of the trimester/semester.

Whalen and Dela Cruz reported students do struggle with prioritizing their distance-learning day and students have a good attitude and are willing to do what it takes to get back to a face-to-face school setting. They said their teachers email a lot and provide a lot of tutorials and that it is easier when the teacher explains expectations for the off day on the day before. Gillach said there was a lot of aggravation at the start of the year because students did not know their schedules, but a lot of those kinks have been worked out. She said teachers are available at the end of the school day for students to come

into the building for help even if it is the student's off day but students don't take advantage of the opportunity.

Mikula discussed her concern for teacher burnout. Lunn suggested district administration reintroduce in an email to staff that employee assistance is available.

Hoffarth said there is a lot of communication between the teacher and the student but that there was not a lot of communication received as a parent.

In response to a request from Mikula, Dr. Brenner re-explained the district administration's position on why the number of student COVID cases is not released. He cited the district's significant infectious disease policy, the district counsel's legal opinion about a violation of that policy, and support by the North Dakota School Boards Association attorney to not release numbers as he explained the district is trying to protect student privacy relative to FERPA and HIPPA. He assured the board that those who need to know, do know.

Hoffarth said she thought part of the angst is a lack of understanding of legal matters and public health matters and a concern for checks and balances. She assured the board there is a great deal of work and communication happening and that there is so much happening it would be overwhelming to communicate, but the checks and balances are present.

Mikula asked if there was any thought for hosting another district mass-testing opportunity. Dr. Brenner said that he had just received information on that and would share it in the next issue of *Friday Focus*.

In response to a question from Shabb, Whalen and Dela Cruz acknowledged the school hallways are quieter because students are following what they told and not congregating in the hallways. Students are following the guidelines to enter the school and get into their classrooms.

FY 2020-2021 District Budget & Tax Levy – Certificate of Levy. Berge highlighted the differences between what was approved in the preliminary budget as compared to the proposed

final budget. The changes include the preliminary deficit increased to \$5.7M due to increased expenditures related to additional teachers for distance-learning and staffing isolation rooms and additional supply costs. Revenues are adjusted for additional CARES Act funding for salaries and contracted services, the GE Foundation donation, and a donation from the City of Grand Forks. He said the most significant revenue change is a decline of just under \$1.3M in the anticipated per-pupil payment due to decreased enrollment, which is caused by a smaller growth in enrollment projections than anticipated and an increase in the number of students who choose to homeschool. Berge said the anticipated general fund balance at the end of the fiscal year is \$4.97M. He said there is concern about the impact on cash flow and that during the school year one month's expenditures can exceed \$9M. Berge also discussed the impact of construction-related expenditures on the budget and the impact of 10 mills for the building fund.

It was moved by Carpenter and seconded by Palmiscno to approve the 2020-2021 budget with a property tax levy of 86 mills for the general fund, 10 mills for the building fund, 2 mills for the special assessments fund, and 3 mills for the special reserve fund. Motion carried unanimously.

General Fund Financial Statement. Berge explained that for the period of July 1, 2020, through August 31, 2020, total general fund revenues were \$7,050,794 and total general fund expenditures were \$5,908,614 resulting in an excess of revenues over expenses of \$1,142,180.

It was moved by Shabb and seconded by Carpenter to approve the General Fund Financial Statement for the period July 1, 2020, through August 31, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

GFEA Petition for Consideration as Representative Organization for Negotiating Unit. It was moved by Douthit and seconded by Manley to receive the petition from the Grand Forks Education Association (GFEA) for recognition as the representative organization for the appropriate negotiating unit and authorize the posting of the notice as per North

Dakota Century Code 15.1-16 as recommended.
Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVED _____
(Date)

GFPA Petition for Consideration as Representative Organization for Negotiating Unit. It was moved by Hoffarth and seconded by Manley to receive the petition from the Grand Forks Principals’ Association (GFPA) for recognition as the representative organization for the appropriate negotiating unit and authorize the posting of the notice as per North Dakota Century Code 15.1-16 as recommended. Motion carried unanimously.

Eric Lunn, Vice President

Scott J. Berge, Business Manager

GFDA Petition for Consideration as Representative Organization for Negotiating Unit. It was moved by Palmiscno and seconded by Manley to receive the petition from the Grand Forks Directors’ Association (GFDA) for recognition as the representative organization for the appropriate negotiating unit and authorize the posting of the notice as per North Dakota Century Code 15.1-16 as recommended. Motion carried unanimously.

Announcements. Dr. Brenner made the following announcements:

- Nathan Twining Middle School was named a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School.
- October 2 is National Custodians Day. Copy of a letter sent by Dr. Brenner recognizing the tremendous work the custodians have done will be shared in *Friday Focus*.
- Flu shots for distance-learning students will be offered on October 2 at Lincoln Park.
- The \$100,000 check from GE Foundation is received.

Carpenter pointed out the announcement in *Friday Focus* of a school board work session on October 21 at 5:00 p.m.

Board Requests for Future Consideration.
None.

School Board Norms - How Did We Do?
Douthit reported that the board did fairly well in following its norms.

Adjournment. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.