

**LEBANON BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
LYMAN MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
FEBRUARY 8, 2022 - 7:30 PM**

MINUTES

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Haynes (Chair)
Alexis Margerelli-Hussey (Vice-Chair)
Maureen McCall (Secretary)
Dawn Whitcher
Danelle Person

John Konow
Nicole McGillicuddy
Matt Smith
Bruce Calef

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Gonzalez (Superintendent), Rachael Springer (Student Representative), Valerie Belles (Business Manager), James Apicelli (LMHS Principal), Jessica Scorso (LES Principal), Robert Laskarzewski (LMS Principal)

REMOTE ATTENDEES: Kevin French (Supervisor of Facilities and Custodial Services), Rita Quiles-Glover (Director of Curriculum and Instruction)

I. Call to Order

Chair Sarah Haynes called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Recognition

Superintendent Gonzalez recognized eight 4th grade students who participated in the CAS Leadership Conference on January 11th: Mia Albee, Patrick Carpenter, Liam Charron, Kendall Constant, Evelyn Dodge, Samuel Hilario, Michael McGillicuddy, Layla Romero. Superintendent Gonzalez also recognized Alyssa Lander and Layla Romero who will be recognized at the CAS Celebration of the Arts.

III. Public Participation (Bylaws of the Board #9324)

- A. Jeannette Picard (LMS Reading Consultant and Teacher's Association co-president) spoke in favor of extending the masking policy at Lebanon schools until spring. She is concerned about the possibility of virus transmission if the masking policy ends, stating that the idea is especially worrisome to those staff members with health issues, who would be at greater risk of infection without masks. In springtime, teachers are able to open windows and conduct instruction outdoors, along with other mitigating factors that would reduce the chance of virus transmission. She fears that ending the mask policy now would put both educators and students at increased risk.
- B. Kathleen Smith (LES 4th grade teacher and Teacher's Association co-president) also spoke in favor of extending the mask policy, requesting it continue until at least April break, which would be an additional 45 days after the governor's mandate ends. She understands there is opposition to masks, but asks the BoE to consider continuing the policy until the weather gets nicer, and students can spend more time outdoors.

- C. Elizabeth Casey requested an end to the masking policy. She and her husband Jason have three daughters in Lebanon schools, and have noted increased anxiety, stress and sadness. Further, she states that masks are largely ineffective in stopping virus transmission, and hopes the BoE will end the mask policy.
- D. Paul Franson, 54 Bascom Rd, spoke about the nurse's positions within the district, specifically the following:
 - 1. He understands the salaries for unaffiliated staff members are currently under review, assumes the nurse's positions are included in that category, and hopes an update will be provided to the public as discussion progresses.
 - 2. The nurse's contract stipulates 191 working days. He wonders if this includes "extra" days worked at the request of administrators, including weekends and holidays. He asks if a legal opinion has been rendered on this contract question, and if the BoE would consider providing additional monetary compensation, or compensatory time off, for work performed outside normal work hours.
 - 3. Currently, the nurse's positions are exempt from state wage and hour laws. He understands that while part of the nurse's duties fall into the exempt class, he doesn't believe the position is categorically under that group. He asks the BoE to revisit this issue, and asks when the answers to these questions will be made available.
- E. Nick and Kendall Constant, 244 East Hebron Turnpike, spoke in favor of ending the mask mandate as soon as possible. Kendall is a Lebanon student and finds learning while wearing a mask difficult, and misses seeing her friends' smiles. Both are looking forward the end of masking.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of minutes

- 1. Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee Meeting – 01/10/2022
- 2. Finance Subcommittee Meeting, Input Sessions – 01/11/2022
- 3. Finance Subcommittee Meeting – 01/11/2022
- 4. Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – 01/11/2022
- 5. LBOE Regular Meeting – 01/11/2022
- 6. Negotiations Subcommittee Meeting – 01/20/2022
- 7. Enrollment Subcommittee Meeting – 01/20/2022
- 8. Finance Subcommittee Meeting – 01/25/2022
- 9. Safety & Security Subcommittee Meeting – 01/27/2022
- 10. Policy Subcommittee Meeting – 01/27/2022
- 11. Negotiations Subcommittee Meeting – 02/03/2022
- 12. Budget Transfers

Motion by M. McCall and seconded by J. Konow to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

- V. Student Representative's Report** – R. Springer reported. She was unable to meet with LES and LMS students this month, but provided an update on the middle school drama production. Set construction has begun, and the show is on track to be performed at the end of April. Similar progress is underway for the high school musical, with set design and choreography nearly done. Debate club hopes to have their first debate next month. Poetry Out Loud has been meeting weekly. NHS decorated the high school for Valentine's Day, featuring paper hearts with the name of every student and staff member. NHS also has a trivia night planned later in the month. The girls' basketball team is 9-8 overall, and has qualified for states. If they win their last home game, they will also win their division. The boys' basketball team has five games remaining in their season. The girls' indoor track team placed 5th overall at ECCs, while the boys' team placed 3rd. She also noted the boys' team broke three school records.

VI. Committee Reports

- A. Safety & Security** – D. Whitcher stated that they did meet in Executive session.

- B. Curriculum – D. Person stated they did not meet.
- C. Superintendent’s Evaluation – J. Konow reported that they completed the mid-year evaluation.
- D. Negotiations – A. Margerelli-Hussey stated they met on 01/20/2022 and 02/03/2022, discussing the unaffiliated salaries, personnel and evaluations.
- E. Policy – M. McCall reported they did meet, and have several first readings on the agenda for this evening.
- F. Facilities – N. McGillicuddy stated they will be meeting on 02/15/2022, and have nothing to report currently.
- G. Finance – M. Smith stated they have met several times, including tonight (02/08/2022) and are continuing budget discussions. Input sessions with the public, as well as administrators and teachers, have been held. He also noted the goal of presenting the budget to the BoF by the beginning of March.
- H. Enrollment – B. Calef stated they met 01/20/2022, with minutes included in the board packet. Outreach to other school districts is ongoing.
- I. Governance – S. Haynes noted a special meeting will be scheduled in late February, in order to approve the final budget prior to the presentation to the BoF. Additionally, the BoE will discuss updating the mask policy at this special meeting.

VII. Administrators’ Reports

Reports were included in the board packet. Additional updates are below.

- A. J. Apicelli (LMHS Principal) noted the student-designed logo for Lyman’s 100th anniversary celebration, created by LMHS Graphic Design students.
- B. J. Scorso (LES Principal) reported that the 4th grade concert was held in-person this evening, and also shared that a variety of mid-year assessments have been conducted, with that data driving targeted interventions and strategies. The LES book fair is underway, and a PTO Bingo night is scheduled. There will be an in-person Invention Convention on 02/15/2022.

VIII. Superintendent’s Report – A. Gonzalez reported.

- A. Enrollment - Enrollment report (as of 02/03/22) was included in the board packet. Total district enrollment is 960 (LES – 354; LMS – 274; LMHS – 332), an increase of three students since last report. A. Gonzalez noted outreach efforts to other districts, with the LHMS team scheduled to make a presentation to Lisbon school officials on 02/28/2022. Lisbon is interested in having Lyman as a designated choice high school, as well as a sending VoAg (Vocational Agriculture) school. D. Person asked where Lisbon currently sends VoAg students. A. Gonzalez replied he believes they go to Ledyard, but is unsure. M. Smith asked if it was possible to find out how Lebanon compares (cost-wise) to other VoAg districts. A. Gonzalez will look into that issue.
- B. Review of budget enhancements and staff/community input session feedback – A. Gonzalez reported that the budget remains at about a 2% increase without any proposed new enhancements, initiatives, or staff positions, or about 5% with those enhancements included. A. Gonzalez reviewed the following proposed enhancements with the BoE, in order to gauge support for each new initiative as the budget is finalized.
 - 1. Nursing Practitioner Teacher at LMHS, \$16,500 estimated cost (Supported by BoE)
 - 2. Turf Management Teacher at LMHS, \$77,000 estimated cost. D. Person noted the cost increase, saying it could be a potential cut further down the line, but she supports the enhancement. A. Margerelli-Hussey asked for clarification regarding equipment for this initiative. J. Apicelli confirmed that equipment would be purchased via grant money, and would not impact the operating budget. Regarding the higher cost, M. Smith asked if the position could be part-time, in order to lower the cost to the district. J. Konow noted that it would likely be harder to recruit someone for a part-time position. (Supported by BoE)
 - 3. Gym Teacher at LES, to be increased from a 0.6 to a 1 (i.e., the position would be upgraded to full-time), \$51,500 estimated cost. S. Haynes noted the disparity in cost between schools for these positions (namely, LMHS accounts for about \$177,00) and wondered if creative

scheduling could provide LES with a full-time gym teacher while also leaving this enhancement out of the budget. (Supported by BoE)

4. Special Education (three enhancements, discussed jointly) (Supported by BoE)
 1. Occupational therapist, to be increased from a 0.6 to a 1
 2. Special Education instructor (Part-time), to be increased from a 0.5 to a 0.6
 3. Speech pathologist, would be moved in-house and no longer contracted through EASTCONN
5. Social Worker at LMS, which has been covered by ARP/ESSER funding recently. J. Konow noted that the position has been a request for several years, and he supports keeping it filled, especially during the pandemic. D. Person disagreed, saying that the district has lived without it for this long. S. Haynes noted that the district currently has two social workers, with one paid for via ESSER funding. If the BoE does not support this initiative, that number would drop to one when ESSER funds run out. After continued discussion regarding the funding history of the positions, it was determined more background information is necessary. This enhancement will be discussed further at the next Finance subcommittee meeting, which will report back to the full Board accordingly. R. Laskarzewski noted that LMS needs a school psychologist, but has been unable to fill the position due to a statewide shortage of available psychologists. He stated that having a social worker helps serve some of the needs normally addressed by a psychologist.
6. Central Office/Business Office Account Specialist (Part-time), to be increased from a 0.4. V. Belles noted that having only two accountants makes the appropriate separation of duties more difficult, as well as requiring advanced scheduling of time off so as not to disrupt payroll. She stated increasing the number of people would help the department run more efficiently and productively. This position is also an area in which shared services between the district and the town could be explored. BoE support for this initiative is mixed, with members generally favoring the enhancement, or stating they are neutral, but mindful of the cost. N. McGillicuddy stated it would be the first initiative she would cut, given her support for instructional enhancements first and foremost, a statement echoed by D. Person. D. Person also stated she considers herself neutral, but is interested in moving towards shared services with the town. B. Calef, J. Konow, and A. Margerelli-Hussey stated they would defer to V. Belles in assessing the need for additional staff. S. Haynes noted that discussions regarding shared services have been preliminary, and are currently on hold. She would want to see a specific action plan before any money is spent.
7. Secretaries (one per school), to be increased from part-time to full-time, \$143,980 estimated cost. This would give each school two full-time secretaries. (Currently each has one full-time and one part-time.) BoE support is mixed. M. Smith noted the high cost, with D. Person concurring. D. Whitcher and N. McGillicuddy fully support the enhancement. J. Konow stated that it is a big item and would likely be among his first cuts, as he also favors instructional enhancements first. A. Margerelli-Hussey is conflicted as well, saying she would favor keeping instruction-related enhancements (such as the previously discussed nursing and turf management positions) over additional secretaries, though she would defer to administrators and the superintendent if they determined the need was great. M. McCall and S. Haynes agreed, with S. Haynes stating that she might feel differently if the cost was lower, but that it represents a significant expense in an enhancement that doesn't potentially drive enrollment, as new programs and classes would.
8. Nurses, 5% increase with contractual benefits, \$4,710 estimated cost. The BoE is generally in favor, with several members citing the low cost. D. Person noted that the cost is spread among three positions, and that the low number speaks to how little the nurses are paid to begin with. The initiative is fully supported by N. McGillicuddy, B. Calef, D. Whitcher, D. Person, J. Konow, A. Margerelli-Hussey, and M. McCall. M. Smith stated he would need more information before determining his position.

9. Special Education Teacher at LES. This enhancement was added as a result of staff input sessions. (Supported by BoE)
- C. COVID-19 Update – A. Gonzalez stated the district website’s Covid dashboard is updated every Friday. As of 02/07/2022, Lebanon had 6 students isolating with confirmed cases of Covid. There were no cases among staff members. There were no students required to quarantine due to close-contact exposure at school. There are about 5 students isolating due to close-contact outside of school. He noted that while the cumulative number of Covid cases in the district throughout the year may seem staggering, with 100 at LMHS, 88 at LMS, and 87 at LES (not including staff members), the data suggests the district is in its best position since Thanksgiving. He thanked the community for their support in following the mitigation measures in place, as well as teachers for implementing them in classrooms. He then discussed the governor’s press conference regarding Covid mandates. He received communication from the state’s Commissioner of Education today, and noted the wording used by the state’s department may be different than what is reported in news outlets. He referenced the Commissioner’s message, which states it is an “intention to request that the general assembly extend the mandate” through the 28th. The measure must pass through numerous channels before becoming official. A. Gonzalez stated that the governor’s position at the press conference indicates it will indeed become a formal request. He noted that point is still several steps away, and schools must continue to comply with masking mandates. He also stated his intention to provide communication on this topic from the Superintendent’s office, in conjunction with the BoE. BoE members will have the opportunity to further discuss the issue at the upcoming special meeting.

IX. Facilities Report – K. French reported. Painting, as well as installation of the new fuel tank at LMS is complete. Crack sealing at LMHS is complete and paid in full, at a cost of \$22,000. Work on new doors and proximity readers at LMS will begin on 02/16/2022. Similar work at LES will be done over winter break. K. French will be meeting with the camera company to look into installing exterior cameras in the parking lots of each school. He has an upcoming meeting to discuss recent bills received for the LED lighting project, as there is some confusion. Also, the catch basin project is on hold until spring. He will be reaching out to the town regarding the curbing project at LES.

X. Finance Report – V. Belles reported, reviewing the budget status report (as of 01/31/2022). She stated the overage shown under Pupil Transportation isn’t a true overage, but the result of open POs and expenses being held up in encumbrances. She noted similar overages in the Custodial Supplies and Computer Software & Supplies lines, stating she believes they are also influenced by open POs, which she will be seeking to address with K. French and J. Dulac. S. Haynes asked about reimbursement from the bus company. V. Belles stated the district received a \$3,500 credit, but she, and BoE members, are unsure how that number was determined, and will be reviewing material prior to accepting any credits.

XI. Discussion

- A. LMHS 100th Anniversary Celebration – S. Haynes shared information in the board packet highlighting Lyman’s upcoming 100th Anniversary, and sought BoE input and ideas regarding the celebration.

XII. New Business

1. **First Read, Update – Policy #9010 – Public Meetings and Executive Session**
2. **First Read, Update – Policy #9011 – Meeting Conduct**
3. **First Read, New – Policy #1012 – Communications**
4. **First Read, Delete – Policy #1000 – Community Relations and Communications**
5. **First Read, Delete – Policy #1100.2 – Communications with the Public**
6. **First Read, Delete – Policy #6146.3 – Graduation Exercises**

XIII. Action Items

- A. Act on 2022-2023 General Education Tuition Rate for Contractual Sending Towns

Motion by M. McCall and seconded by J. Konow to accept the 2% General Education Tuition Rate increase for Contractual Sending Towns. M. Smith asked how the 2% increase was determined. S. Haynes stated the increase has traditionally been 2%, with an increase of 0% two years ago due only to one sending town requesting the rate not increase for that year. She also noted the BoE is not allowed to increase the rate by more than 2.5%. M. Smith wondered how the District's tuition rate increase compares to other districts, and if this could influence the decisions of sending towns.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Act on 2022-2023 General Education Tuition Rate for Children of Staff Members

Motion by M. McCall and seconded by J. Konow to set the general education tuition rate for children of staff at 25% of the contractual sending town general education tuition rate. The BoE discussed the history of this rate after it was asked how 25% was determined. Related to this topic, A. Gonzalez noted the existing policy was written in 2003, and references only certified staff members. The policy subcommittee will review and provide any recommended changes to the full BoE. **The motion passed unanimously.**

C. Act on 2022-2023 Special Services Rates

Superintendent Gonzalez stated the main change was the breakdown of service charges from an hourly rate to a per day, per class rate. Evaluation rates are largely the same. S. Haynes noted the BoE has limited ability to alter these rates.

Motion by N. McGillicuddy and seconded by J. Konow to approve the 2022-2023 Special Services rates as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

XIV. Executive Session

Motion by A. Margerelli-Hussey and seconded by N. McGillicuddy to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel, unaffiliated salaries, evaluations and job descriptions, inviting Superintendent Gonzalez. D. Person asked if the BoE was required to vote on the resignations. S. Haynes stated that since they did not come in via communications to the BoE, that vote would be pushed to next month. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Board entered Executive Session at 9:24 PM.

The meeting came out of Executive Session at 9:48 PM.

Motion by A. Margerelli-Hussey and seconded by N. McGillicuddy to amend the agenda to add an action item #4 to act on separating the unaffiliated salary group into individual positions. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by A. Margerelli-Hussey and seconded by M. McCall to separate the unaffiliated group and determine salary increases by individual positions so that we can create the most competitive pay schedules to recruit and retain employees. The motion carried unanimously.

XV. Items for Next Agenda

1. 2022-2023 Budget
2. Masks
3. Resignations

XVI. Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Walcott (Board Clerk)