



Wakefield School Board Public Minutes

January 18, 2022

Held in the Paul School Library

Approved

BOARD MEMBERS		ADMINISTRATORS	
Bob Ouellette, Chair	✓	Anne Kebler, Administrator	✓
Relf Fogg, Vice Chair	✓	Michael O'Neill, Financial Manager	✓
Mary Collins	✓	Kristen White, Principal	
Sheena Robbins	✓		
Caitlin Gelinas	✓		

Others Present: Nichole Dolaher, Norma Joy, Randie Fox, Kyla Pennino, Stacey Dubreuil, Kelley Bushman, Heather Dube, John Gavell, Julie Crowley, Sharon Bonnevie, Brennan Peaslee, Sandra Taliaferro

Mr. Ouellette opened the meeting at 6:00 with the flag salute.

Public Comment

Mr. Fogg objected to only having one Public Comment on the agenda when the practice has been to give the public two opportunities to comment. Mr. Ouellette said he was following the policy.

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to add a second Public Comment to the agenda. (Vote 3-2)

Mrs. Fox said she works in child protection assessing abuse and neglect. She said that CDC puts out guidelines and DHHS follows those guidelines. She said that the administrations job, not the SAU's job is to take care of employees and offer services and the Boards job is to take in input and be a community liaison and when the Board is acting like they are the school staff liaison that's where we have a breakdown. She said you have an SAU and an administration for a reason and the two are supposed to work together.

She said the SAU role is to look at what's best for the community. The Boards job is to listen to the people who come to meetings to voice their concerns and take those concerns into consideration. She brought with her a school board assessment tool. She asked if the Board had a mission statement for the Board. She ended by saying data and facts not feelings should be used in decision making.

Mrs. Dolaher said the last meeting she attended everyone agreed on something and last meeting when no parents were here it got completely changed. Mrs. Joy said we should be going by what the CDC recommends.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Fogg objected to the manifests being signed prior to approval. He said it has to be approved in public. Mr. Ouellette said the Board voted to do it this way. Mrs. Collins said we each receive the manifest individually to be doc-u-signed and any question could be asked of Mr. O'Neill.

This way the bills get paid on time.

Mrs. Gelinis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Robbins, to approve the Consent Agenda. (Vote 4-1)

Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Colbath will correct votes on two items if necessary after checking the video.

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to approve the 1-4-22 public minutes with any amendments offered. (Vote 5-0)

New Business

a. Director of Special Education. b. SAU Administrator. c. Superintendent Services

Mr. Ouellette announced that Lisa Dubois will be taking on the roll of Special Ed Director for forty hours a week at her current salary of \$47,400 plus a stipend of \$385.42 a week funded through the IDEA grant. She is finalizing her Special Ed certification. Currently her former position will not be filled.

Anne Kebler will take on the roll of SAU Administrator full time. She will receive her current salary of \$90,000 plus a weekly stipend of \$500 per week. She is in pursuit of her Superintendent certification.

Pamala Stiles will be continuing as Superintendent Services at a contracted amount of \$75 per hour for up to 20 hours a week when needed.

Mr. Fogg called for a Point of Order. He said that what was presented to the Board clearly said \$75 for up to 20 hours a month not week. Mrs. Kebler said when it was determined that she was going for her certification it was recommended that we have a Superintendent of Record, which is what Mrs. Stiles is being called. Mr. Fogg said this feels like a bait and switch and he's not comfortable supporting this. He said he voted yes on the original plan.

Mr. Fogg said that with Superintendent Services you don't need an interim superintendent. Mrs. Robbins said we need someone that is highly competent and can take care of things required by law and we need someone inhouse to take care of the day to day things. We have issues here. We need systems in place. We're trying to build the house while we're in the house and it's on fire. Right now this is a need. After some Board discussion it was determined that there were actually three management plans. Mrs. Kebler will find out which one is accurate.

d. Chair Statement

Given the recent correspondence from staff and Superintendent Stiles, I want to inform all Board members of the following:

1. The day-to-day operation of the District/SAU shall be managed by the SAU Administrator, Anne Kebler, in conference with, and at the direction of, Superintendent Stiles.
2. No Board members has the authority to take any action relative to District/SAU business without being authorized by majority vote of this Board.

3. Board members have no authority over District/SAU employees. The Superintendent and SAU Administrator have full authority over all District/SAU employees.

4. Board members have no authority over the day-to-day operations of the School District/SAU other than to make policies and provide direction and input to the Superintendent/SAU Administrator by a majority vote of the School Board.

5. The only employees the School Board has direct authority over is the SAU Administrator and Superintendent.

Accordingly, I strongly urge the following:

A. Board members with concerns over the operations of the District/SAU are directed to bring their concerns to the SAU Administrator/Superintendent so that those concerns may be properly handled and/or investigated.

B. Board members with concerns about the performance of any District/SAU employee other than the SAU Administrator/Superintendent, are directed to notify the SAU Administrator/Superintendent immediately.

C. Board members with concerns about the performance of the SAU Administrator/Superintendent are expected to bring such concerns to the attention of the School Board Chair privately so that those concerns can be properly investigated and/or discussed by the entire School Board in non-public session.

D. Because individual Board members have no authority over the day-to-day operations of the District/SAU, Board members will not attempt to manage, supervise, order, or otherwise influence such operations.

E. Because individual Board members have no authority over the supervision of District/SAU employees, Board members will not attempt to manage, supervise, order, or otherwise influence the actions of district employees in the course of their employment.

F. If employees are approached and feel uncomfortable speaking with any school board member, they should notify the SAU Administrator/Superintendent.

G. Board members will act respectfully when referring to any District/SAU employee or when otherwise interacting with them.

Bob Ouellette

Mr. Fogg responded by saying he had asked numerous times to have things, like a transportation discussion put on the agenda and that never happened. He said we now have an employee directing the Board who are ultimately responsible for everything that happens in the district.

BOARD MEMBERS CONDUCT

Mr. Ouellette said, now I have the unfortunate task of bringing up a school board members conduct. Because of the current circumstances, concerning overuse of Mr. Fogg's Authority, and interference with the SAU and district employees. Mr. Fogg has been involved in disrupting Transportation and overstepping his authority in the SAU office. Superintendent Stiles constant frustration and undermining of her authority with employees, resulted in staff and SAU employees resigning. I'm opening the floor for other board members to read statements from the SAU employees and administration, along with their own thoughts and concerns.

Bob Ouellette

Mrs. Robbins read a statement from Mrs. Kebler, who at the time was Student Services Director. Email to board from Anne Kebler regarding phone call from Relf Fogg on January 6th.

To the Wakefield Board Members,

I'm writing to inform you of a disturbing phone call I received this morning from a Board member. At 11:31 this morning, Relf called to ask if I had signed my contract. He then went on to talk with me about the state of transportation in this district. He informed me that he had gone to NAPA, retrieved our bills, and was concerned that the current Superintendent has somehow misled the Board. He spoke of her in a derogatory manner, using words like "malfeasance", "thievery", and "trickery". This was very disturbing to me. He further stated that he was preparing a "presentation" for the Board to share his concerns with you. He explained that he wanted to support and help me and that he felt he was in a position to do that. I thanked him and we ended the call.

We have lost, in my mind, one of the best Superintendents in the state due to these types of actions. We have lost three Superintendents in four years and we have staff, including administrative staff, who are considering leaving because of the disfunction. How is this disfunction that has caused our district to be in such a dire straight, be addressed? Will the interference from one Board member be allowed to continue?

At this point, the district has drivers who will not comply with any oversight or accountability because of assurances they are receiving from Relf. How will this end? Will I be the next target of name calling and accusations? If a Board member speaks of a current employee in such a way to another employee, this gives me pause as to whether or not I want to accept the position. I am requesting an opportunity to speak with you on January 18th in a non-public session (c) to further discuss this with you. At this point, I have some serious concerns.

Anne

Mrs. Robbins also read the following:

To the Wakefield Board Members,

I'm writing to inform you of a phone call I overheard between Relf Fogg and Anne Kebler on Thursday January 6th at approximately 11:31 AM. I was in a meeting with Superintendent Pamela Stiles and Director of Student Services Anne Kebler, during this conversation I heard Relf ask Anne if she had signed her contract as the Interim Superintendent, to which she responded that she had not at that time. Relf went on to talk with her regarding the ongoing issues with student transportation in our district. Relf shared that he had gone to NAPA Auto Parts to retrieve the bills for services from NAPA to the Wakefield School District. Relf shared that he was concerned that our current superintendent has been misleading the School Board in regards to these bills. He spoke of her in a derogatory and slanderous manner, using terminology such as "thievery", "trickery" and "malfeasance". Hearing a School Board member speak of a dedicated employee or any employee in that manner was extremely unsettling to me.

Relf went on to share that he was working on a presentation for the School Board to which he would share his concerns regarding this situation with the members of the School Board. He went on to share with Anne that he wanted to be of support to her and that he was the one in the position to be able to support her with the ongoing issues with the transportation department. Anne thanked him for the call.

Pamela Stiles has been the pillar of support, strength, and perseverance in this district. She has worked tirelessly to address the overwhelming issues that our district has been facing. Since Superintendent Stiles announced that she would be leaving our district, I have been approached by Relf, staff and members of the school community to ask me if I am staying in the district. This has left me to rebuild the trust our staff has in my own commitment to this community, which has left me to deal with issues

I should not have to deal with, taking my focus away from the true importance of my position. The community has approached me at basketball games, through emails and in person asking me what is going on and they are concerned for their children's education. I have had several staff members report to me that they are looking for a new position outside the district, also sharing that this is not because of the school, but rather the lack of support by the School Board.

Our staff deserve to be supported and should be able to trust that our School Board members have the best interest of our school community at the forefront of all decisions being made. Strong relationships between students, staff, families, and the community are critical to the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral success of all students, the most successful school experiences happen when we all work together towards a common goal. I continue to believe in our school community, together we will continue to make Paul School an amazing place for students to learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Kristen M. White

Mrs. Gelinas read the following three statements:

To: Wakefield School Board

From: Michael O'Neill, Financial Manager

CC: Anne Kebler

Date: January 14, 2022

Re: School Board Member Communication

I was asked by administration if I had been in contact directly with any school board members. I was contacted directly by Relf Fogg during December with questions concerning the current employment status of the Interim Transportation Manager. When I informed Relf that he was currently still employed by the district he replied with he needs to go. Relf then went through a list of his concerns and what he had heard about Transportation Manager and the negative impact he was having on the ability of the district to provide transportation. I did not comment on his concerns, except to inform Relf that I would look into his concerns

January 15, 2022

From: Michele Lambert

Hello,

I am informing you that Relf called me on the Wednesday after the "Emergency Non-Public" school board meeting. He asked me if I would think about being a "Financial Manager", and/or having a mentor provided. He also mentioned a salary increase and if I would think about it and let him know so that he could approach the board with the idea.

Sincerely
Michele Lambert

Although I shouldn't be giving this anymore thought- here goes:

On the phone conversation on Thursday, Relf mentioned that he had talked with "a driver" about the NAPA receipts and "the driver" told him that just about everyone had been turned in- that "the driver" only had a couple that needed to be brought to the SAU. As a point of note- the information about the NAPA bill was discussed in non-public. No action from as single board member should have been taken from protected discussion. How could he have asked "the driver" for receipts if he did not also share that this was something discussed at board level.

Pam

Mrs. Collins read portions of two policies:

BBA Board Member Authority

The authority of individual board members is limited to participating in actions taken by the board as a whole when legally in session. Board members shall not assume responsibilities of administrators or other staff members. The board or staff shall not be bound in any way by any action taken or statement made by any individual board member except when such statement or action is pursuant to specific instructions and official action taken by the board.

Board members may occasionally serve on committees or organizations for the purpose of reciprocal communication and reporting back to the board.

BCA

7. Support the employment of those people best qualified to serve as school staff, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all staff.

8. Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law or is received in confidence or executive session.

9. Recognize that no individual member has authority to speak or act for the entire Board, except as specifically designated to do so by Board action.

10. Recognize that final Board actions will be supported by all members of the Board; take no private action that will compromise the Board or administration; and refrain from private actions which undermine or compromise official Board action.

11. Display and demonstrate courtesy and decorum toward fellow Board members at all public meetings and in all public statements.

Mr. Fogg asked why Mrs. Collins hadn't read 1-5.

1. Attend all regularly scheduled Board meetings, insofar as possible, and become informed concerning issues to be considered at those meetings.

2. Make decisions only after full discussion at public Board meetings; render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.

3. Seek systematic communications with students, staff, and members of the community.

4. Work respectfully with other Board members to achieve the educational goals of the school district by encouraging the free expression of opinions by all Board members.
5. Communicate to other Board members and the Superintendent expressions of public reaction to Board policies and school programs.

Mrs. Robbins read the following:

Considering all that was involved in the statements made tonight, and actions taken by this member in the last two weeks alone that blatantly disregarded the purpose and goals of this board even after explicit discussion...

And due to the vast, pervasive, and ongoing history of comments and reports that all stem back to these same patterns of behavior,

I will make a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinass, that this board recommend the immediate resignation of Mr. Fogg. (Vote 3-1-1)

Whereas this board has no formal authority to remove Mr. Fogg from his seat, I do feel it is our responsibility to take any action we can to protect the district. With that,

I make a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinass, to remove Mr. Fogg from all committees that he is on. Specifically, I believe those would include transportation, facilities, and budget. (Vote 3-1-1)

Mr. Fogg asked Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Gelinass what experience they have with transportation. Mrs. Robbins replied that if Mr. Fogg is saying you have to have experience to be on a committee that's untrue. Mr. Fogg said this is a false accusation and asked Mrs. Kebler what are the assurances to the drivers from me? Mrs. Kebler said she has a meeting with the bus drivers tomorrow. Mrs. Robbins said the motion was about Mrs. Fogg's actions after he was explicitly told not to interfere. Mr. Fogg returned to what he called the allegation asking Mrs. Kebler what were the assurances and who were the drivers. He went on to say that he requested a special meeting to discuss the NAPA bill and drivers and was denied. He was told that one board member asked for a police presence and he was told Mr. Ouellette was fearful one member would resign. He also said Mr. Ouellette suggested he plan his defense. Mr. Ouellette said that was untrue.

Mr. Fogg accused Mr. Ouellette of illegally taking board action outside a meeting. Mr. Fogg feels that he was setup. Mr. Ouellette stated that Mr. Fogg told him to have at it so Mr. Ouellette retained legal advice and moved forward. Mr. Ouellette said the public has a right to know what's going on with the district, why employees are leaving. The best superintendent in the state that we had for six months was changing things and we lost her. Mrs. Gelinass said Mr. Fogg was being disrespectful and badgering people, it is inappropriate behavior. She said you Mr. Fogg are refusing to acknowledge that we had a discussion in non public where you were specifically were told not to do something that you did anyway. Mr. Fogg said what he stated was that he would do anything he can to help this district.

Mrs. Kebler said we have serious problems with transportation and she isn't pointing fingers. We have a critical staff shortage. She thinks it's revealing the Superintendent and the bus manager quit the same day. She said the manager didn't want his reputation harmed any longer. She said

we need to move forward in a collaborative way. We need to be here for children. Mr. Fogg questioned Mrs. Kebler again about assurances. Mrs. Robbins said this has to stop. She said we were trying to have Mr. Fogg recognize the damage that has been caused and have him take ownership. Also inform staff who don't know who they should listen to. She asked Mrs. Kebler if she wanted any help from any Board member with transportation. Mrs. Kebler responded that she did not. Mr. Fogg said he had a problem with the Board acting on false accusations. He continued with his defense and Mrs. Robbins said she was embarrassed and asked to move on. After Mrs. Gelinas's point of order the Board moved on.

Annual Report Cover

The Board looked at the four submitted drawings and chose one for the Annual Report Cover.

Old Business

Covid Update NHDHHS/ Paul School Plan

Mrs. Kebler said Dr. Chan met on January 13th with school nurses. She said CDC and DHHS have come together on the criteria. Today there were 121 students out. 64 were related to Covid in some way. She said there was also a nurse shortage and our sub was fabulous. She said teacher and para staff were good right now. She recommends that we don't go remote, which is a short term option and to keep school open. Of the 121 students 33 would be out 10 days returning 1-28-22, 19 would be out 5 days returning on 1-24-22, 11 are currently testing, 58 were out with no call-in or had an appointment.

The school is not allowed to stick with the old guidelines they must comply with the new 5 day quarantine and 5 day mask wearing when they return to school. If a child can't or won't wear the mask for 5 days when they return they must stay out the full 10 days. Mrs. Collins asked if the school was following the new guidelines now. Mrs. Kebler said we will start tomorrow if that's what the Board directs. Mrs. Kebler read the questions and answers during the meeting with Dr. Chan. (available at the SAU)

Mrs. Robbins made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fogg, to adopt DHHS Guidelines update for isolation for Covid positive students and staff and those exposed to someone. Also, the testing to be a recommendation not a mandate to families and to specify just for the Covid positive students or staff or those who were exposed to known positive people. (Vote 5-0)

Mrs. Robbins also believes masks should be optional outside.

Mrs. Collins asked about kids eating in the lunchroom. Seventh and eighth lunch is going well. Sixth grade will be next. Mrs. Collins is concerned for the length of time this is taking. Mrs. Kebler said Mrs. White is out sick and would be the one to answer that question.

Policies

JFACC Tuition Expense

Mrs. Collins read the change the committee made. She wanted to make sure that the parents were aware that they were responsible for transporting their child to Kingswood.

Mrs. Kebler told the Board that Mrs. white had texted her that they do not have enough tables for grade 5/6. K-4 will stay in their rooms until spring. Mrs. Robbins said there are 96 students in

7/8. In 5/6 there's 97. If we can fit 7/8 we should be able to fit 5/6. Mrs. Kebler and Mrs. White will look at this and have an answer at the next meeting.

Deliberative Session

Mrs. Kebler gave the Board a list of items and asked what the Board wanted included for the Deliberative Session. Mrs. Colbath will call Mrs. Kebler to let her know what they had last year.

Public Comment

Mrs. Joy said you only need superintendent services, you don't need a physical superintendent according to the DOE and the services can be split among the Administration in the SAU office. She said do whatever you have to do to make the SAU run as it's supposed to. John Gavell said he is a bus driver and co-coordinator maintenance. He said the manager asked about receipts from Napa. Three of the items on the bill had been paid. He explained his relationship to the Napa incident. He felt it made him look bad. He said he's a loyal employee who has never missed a day. He said he has a name of someone that will train the two girls to get their CDL. He will give the information to Mrs. Kebler.

Mrs. Crowley said the teachers aren't just concerned for themselves. They are concerned for the community. They are afraid of spreading it. She said she checked the CDC site on the 13th and it said CDC recommends universal indoor mask wearing at all times by students, teachers and staff regardless of vaccination. Mrs. Dolaher wanted to know what and who created WIN (what I need) time and sugar time. She asked how the school could say a student can't have something the parent says they can have? They take away something like coffee and replace it with candy. Mrs. Kebler said WIN time is an intervention block to supply support in a specific subject. Mrs. Peaslee asked if WIN replaced advisory.

Mrs. Kebler said advisory was taken off the schedule because we weren't ready for it. Mrs. Collins felt parents should be contacted when there is something new. Mrs. Kebler agreed that there should be more information about the curriculum and she'll work on that. Mrs. Gelinis said Mrs. Stiles talked about WIN, although not called that when she came on board. Mrs. Fox asked if we were doing social emotional learning. She would like to see a board that works with teachers and not see the craziness like tonight. She wants to know what is being put in place to support the teachers. Do teachers have a supervisor or mentor to go to? Mrs. Kebler said we have a health assistance program through the insurance company.

She said Board members should be encouraged to come into school and observe. We need transparency and corporation. Mrs. Peaslee was concerned about kids home and how their educational needs are being met. Mrs. Joy asked why two people were not being trained for their CDL. Mrs. Kebler said we will have a trainer. Mrs. Taliaferro apologized to Mrs. Robbins. All that Mrs. Robbins brought forward at the last meeting is being put into effect now. Mrs. Taliaferro asked for a description of Mrs. Kebler's new duties and questioned the pay. She also was concerned that if the Board had a problem with a member there is no way to remove them. She said it seems like tonight was orchestrated.

Non Public

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to go into non public under 91-A 3:11 (c) at 8:32 Gelinas aye, Collins aye, Robbins aye, Fogg aye, Ouellette aye (Vote 5-0)

The Board returned to public session at 9:10

Adjournment

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 (Vote 5-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next School Board meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
School Board Secretary