

Wakefield School Board Public Minutes

March 5, 2024

Held in Paul School Library

Approved



BOARD MEMBERS		ADMINISTRATORS	
Mary Collins, Chair	✓	Anne Kebler, Superintendent	✓
Bob Ouellette, Vice Chair	✓	Frank Markiewicz, Business Administrator	
Brennan Peaslee	✓	Sarah Howard, Special Ed Director	
Sandra Taliaferro	✓	Norma DiRocco, Principal	
Robert DeColfmacker	✓	Ivy Levitt-Carlson, Assistant Principal	

Those Present: Norma Joy, Relf Fogg, Katie Howard, Donita Bourne and Max Gearing from Clearview TV

Mrs. Collins led those present in the salute to the flag at 6:30.

Agenda Review

Mrs. Kebler added the Judy Nason Scholarship which she will talk about with her report.

Presentation

None

Public Comment

Mrs. Bourne asked about an item on the agenda that wasn't in the non-member packet. Mrs. Collins said they weren't included as there has to be a discussion for clarification first. Mrs. Bourne was told it will be discussed in public. Mrs. Peaslee asked why it was put on the agenda. Mrs. Collins replied it was put on the agenda because the people involved need to explain themselves better. Mrs. Peaslee said if it's put on the agenda then it was made public. Mrs. Collins explained that it was not public yet.

Mrs. Kebler said it's emails from a Board member to the Superintendent and she put it on the agenda. Mrs. Bourne asked when the emails will be discussed as they are not allowed to comment on an item after it's discussed. Mrs. Taliaferro said she brought copies. She said Anne had two with Board members on it. She said there are five with all Board members included and she brought copies of all five. Mrs. Collins said they were not put in the non member packet because they need to be explained. They will become a public document.

Mrs. Peaslee said anything put on the agenda has to have the backup for the public. She said they discussed and voted on that. She went on to say by putting this on the agenda you made this a

discussion that they (*the audience*) are allowed to be part of. She said the emails are technically meetings if the Board members are all involved in them. She said if they needed clarification they should have been clarified in non public and then put in the next Board packet. Mr. Ouellette disagreed that it was a meeting. Mrs. Taliaferro passed out paperwork to the audience. (*inaudible everyone talking at once*)

Mr. Fogg asked about a second comment omitted from the agenda. He says he believes there was a consensus of the Board to have a second public comment. Mrs. Joy asked if the audience will be able to comment on the emails. Mrs. Collins told Mrs. Joy that the policy states one public comment for thirty minutes.

Mrs. Taliaferro made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette to add a second public comment to tonight's agenda until we can fix the policy. (Vote 5-0) The Board, by consensus agreed that tonight each public comment would be fifteen minutes long.

Mrs. Howard thanked the Lions Club, Principal and Vice Principal for helping the PTA with the school dance. She believes they made over \$1,000. Their Easter event is coming up on March 23rd and they are looking for cake and raffle donations.

Reports

Superintendent's Report

Mrs. Kebler said with February behind us, it looks like we can look forward to an early spring, and busy times at the Paul School.

We are excited to join in the celebration of the Wakefield 250th Birthday. I have joined the committee forming the events of the birthday and as a school we are excited to build these events into our curriculum. Some of the things we are thinking about doing are:

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Time Capsule - we will be working with our staff and students to fill a time capsule with artifacts from each class. The details of this have not been completely worked out, but we will keep you updated as to how and when this will happen

School float - we hope to have a school float to join in the parade scheduled for the birthday, date to be determined.

The East Wakefield School has been renovated and we hope to work with fourth graders to have a field trip to the school and get the feel of what it was like to go to a one room schoolhouse. The Heritage Commission (Pam Wiggin) will be working with us on this and the plan is to have an essay contest to go along with the field trip focusing on the history of Wakefield.

The town of Wakefield has a song which was written and we hope to teach this song to the students of the school so they can share their talents by singing the song at events throughout the celebration year.

On July 27th the first class to attend the Paul School will be having a reunion at the school. We hope to have some of our students available to offer tours of the school for the members of the class.

We will be working with Mrs. Dexter to do some sort of ad project to celebrate the birthday. In addition, we have been asked if we might be able to have the students make the buttons that will be sold for entrance to the birthday celebration planned for August 31st, 2024.

These are just a few of the ideas of what the school will be working on to help with this great celebration, we encourage any ideas that the board or school community might have to add to the celebration. There is much history to be learned about Wakefield, within the fourth grade social

studies curriculum we study the state history we will be incorporating Wakefield history into the curriculum.

Technology Update: We have contracted with Acapella, a third party IT company to assist with the work needed to be done to our infrastructure. We are still committed to a full time IT staff member that is able to provide immediate support to our staff and students and continue to advertise. A big thank you goes to both Tarah Llewellyn and Alex Gillikin for doing everything they can to assist us in supporting our school community with technology as we move forward. The technology committee will be bringing a proposal for a buyout purchase of our older apple computers for our teachers. Many still have their apple computers, and would like to be able to buy them. This proposal will come to the board at the March 19th board meeting.

State testing will begin this month, and we ask that parents encourage their children to come to school well prepared to take these tests. It is important for students to know that this testing is important to us as a staff to assist us in learning what we can do better to assure our students are learning the essential skills necessary to be able to move forward in high school and beyond in a successful way. State testing is one of many ways we measure student achievement. Other testing we use as benchmarks and for progress monitoring are the STAR testing and NWEA testing. These tests are given 3 ' times a year and are used to help teachers drive instruction. Of greatest value for a measurement of student achievement is their own work. As a staff we will begin working on ways in which we can use our student work as one of the many ways we assess achievement.

Mrs. Kebler told the Board that they finally got clarification from the Attorney General about the Judy Nason Trust Fund. The family had asked to have that changed over to a scholarship fund. The attorney from our firm worked with the Attorney General and we now have an amendment. The family will fill that out and then we need Board approval from the Wakefield School District to be the holders of the trust and agents to expend. This will be done at the Boards March 19th meeting. Mr. Ouellette said the Fund is right around \$10,000. Mrs. Taliaferro asked if students will be able to apply for the scholarships this year. Mrs. Kebler replied that the kids will be able to apply after the next Board meeting.

Technology

Mr. DeColfmacker said that he did find out that the school has 434 active Chromebooks available to students and there are 11-12 loaners so no one should be without a computer. All the kids are aware if they are having issues with their computer they can go to Ms. Llewellyn and get a loaner in the morning. Mrs. Taliaferro talked about her sons issue with getting a computer. She asked if there was another process she could try. Mr. DeColfmacker said he was told it's a well known process that everybody knows about so they know where to go and what time to go. She said he's thirteen and shouldn't be punished for forgetting. She'd like an alternative especially with testing. Mrs. Kebler said she is sure that the administration won't allow him to not have a computer for testing. Mr. DeColfmacker suggested that Mrs. Taliaferro reach out to Ms. Dexter.

Consent Agenda

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to approve the consent agenda. (Vote 3-2)

Meeting Minutes

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to approve the non public minutes of 2-20-24. (Vote 4-0-1)

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins to approve the public minutes of 2-20-24 with one correction. (Vote 4-0-1)

New Business

Board Member Emails

Report/clarification of emails dated 2/25/2024, 2/26/2024, 2/27/2024

I asked to have these emails put on the agenda so I could clarify some questions in the emails, get clarification of roles and responsibilities of school board members and superintendent and get a feel from the other members of the board how they are feeling about these emails, and procedures.

Clarification:

While I try to not read emails over the weekend, they are on my phone, I take my responsibilities seriously, and if there is an emergency I want to be the first to know. I understand that some do their email work on the weekend, but if it is not an emergency, I would ask that the person uses the scheduled send so that the email comes to me on Monday. I also received an email sent at 12:00 am.

From the first paragraph in the first email, I felt that the language was threatening, and mine and our BA's credibility were being questioned.

I wanted to clarify the grant process. The grant process about 12 years ago was designed in a way that you would send a paper application in, the grant would be approved, and you would get your money. That has not been the case since at least 2013 when the DOE changed over to a grant management system where you would submit your grant online, and once it was approved you purchased/ paid contract services and paid salaries out of the operating budget and posted once a month to the DOE to get reimbursed. Once you get the reimbursement it gets posted to the correct line in the operating budget. Neither the BA nor I are going to give a number out publicly if we are not sure it is correct. We did indeed answer the question three lines that were the largest lines over spent – those lines were salaries and benefits, 3 unanticipated out of district placements and special education contracted services.

We send our packets out on Friday mornings so that the board members have an opportunity to read through their packets and call the SAU office on Monday with questions they may still have, so that we have time to bring the answers to those questions on Tuesday night giving accurate information.

There were not “new positions” added by the superintendent. When the BA referred to “budget managers” he was referring to the department heads, facilities manager, transportation manager, Director of Student Services, and the principal.

Regarding the budget committee being unhappy with the process and Frank and I not answering questions. That is not the message that was publicly stated both this year at both the public hearing and the deliberative, that the process the BA and I put in place was the easiest in 10 years.

Regarding the 91 A request on Feb. 26th, I asked for it because the board member was asking to take contracts out of the office and home with them, it was my understanding that she was just going to look at them in the office. Because she was not acting on the board’s behalf, she was acting in my mind as a resident and a 91-A was required. She was told that she couldn’t scan because our scanning machine is not set up correctly right now and the only people who are able to scan from this machine are those that have their emails put into the machine. No one was trying to cause the board member to jump through hoops. It was a total of 2 ½ hours that our SAU staff was having to attend to the board members needs.

I asked the board to weigh in on how they felt about this email chain of conversation, and I asked for clarification of the role of a single board member requesting something of the SAU office staff without discussing with the board or having board approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne L. Kebler

She would like the Board to respond and tell her what they think about the emails she’s getting. Her question is; Can one Board member request something without the Board agreeing to that request? Mrs. Taliaferro responded asking what was the directive I gave you that needed Board approval? Mrs. Kebler said, you asked for the contracts. Mrs. Taliaferro said contracts are public record. She went on to say that Mr. Ouellette had submitted a request to Mrs. D’Agostino and Mr. Gregoire on November 4th, 2020, for some work we were doing when he was on the Board. She said he had the list of emails in the packet she has. She said he didn’t need a 91-A request. Mr. D’Agostino scanned 93 pages of contracts and everything else within 24 hours for him. So contracts can be scanned for School Board members. He didn’t need a 91-A request or was he asked to pay for the 93 pages.

She said when she asked for the contracts they couldn’t be done right away and nobody came back to her as to when she would have them. She said she was told that she could come in and look at them so she did. She found things she wanted to bring up to the Board and wanted them put on the agenda. She found some things with the contracts, some aren’t signed, some have wrong dates, some dates are from 2023 to 2022. There are things she thought the Board could button up or have a process to look at and it turned into this.

It actually stemmed from previous emails about closing down the SAU office early on Fridays on one or two holidays and if it’s not in their contract and if the state and taxpayers are paying for their salaries and the staff is not required to use their vacation time or sick time to be out she

finds that to not be okay. She said she has previous contracts from the 93 pages from Mr. Ouellets email that showed specific days listed in the contracts. She knew she had seen contract before with the holiday schedule listed. She said that's why she wanted to look at the contracts. She said she offered to scan the contracts so as not take up the SAU employees time.

She insisted that the email she sent to Mrs. Kebler was not threatening. She said she was trying to be helpful. She reread a portion of her email. She said she didn't have questions by looking at the information in the packet but questions from his statements at the meeting. She said that's what she meant about the Budget Committee, some of them stated that they didn't get the answer they wanted when they asked a question. They wanted information in a timely manner so they could make good decisions. That was brought up to her a couple times. Questions were asked and nobody had the answer.

She thought her email would be helpful key points. She said to Mrs. Kebler, you chose to put one email in which didn't have all Board members on it. She said hers has what was sent, Mrs. Keebler's response and Mrs. Taliaferro's clarification. She does not believe she demanded anything from anybody. Mrs. Kebler said she was out on Monday for a bereavement day and came in Tuesday and she said my staff said please don't be out again when a Board member comes in and asks to spend that kind of time. They were upset. Mrs. Taliaferro said you could have scanned the contracts and the whole thing could have been avoided in the first place. Mrs. Kebler said the scan machine was not working and Mrs. Taliaferro said, there's not one in this building?

Mr. DeColfmacker said he doesn't think it's appropriate to bring up what happened two years ago. We have a different School Board. He said when he read the emails he was confused about the comments about the Budget Committee members because it did read we weren't giving the Budget Committee what they needed. He had multiple Budget Committee members praise him for how well it went and how well Anne and Frank did. He found it a little off-putting.

Mrs. Taliaferro asked Mrs. Kebler if there was anything wrong with the email whether you find it threatening or not? Is this an actionable item? What is the purpose besides trying to shame me for a helpful email? Mr. Ouellette said as a citizen of the town you can request anything you want from the SAU. He doesn't know if a 91-A request is required as a School Board member. If you stated it that way it's a different story. He said when he got the contracts, he doesn't remember that, there was no fee in place at that time for copies. He said if you wanted the contracts for personal use you can do that. If you want to bring them to the Board for discussion then the majority would have to ok that. The whole Board did not ask you to do that. Mrs. Taliaferro said a School Board member has the right to have something placed on the agenda and that's exactly what her email was for.

Mr. DeColfmacker said he believes if you were to ask for all this information as a Board member for a Board meeting that needs to get a vote from the Board as an actionable item or doesn't it? Mrs. Collins said, it does. Mr. DeColfmacker asked if she brings all these things forward does she come as a Board member or private citizen? Mrs. Collins said that would have to be clarified. She said Mrs. Taliaferro got permission before she did anything regarding the food grant and the gym floor.

Mrs. Peaslee said she wasn't happy being added to the email chain at the very end. She said she heard Mrs. Taliaferro ask for the copies at a previous meeting. She asked and a 91-A was never mentioned. She should have been told she needed a 91-A request. Mrs. Kebler said Mrs. Taliaferro sent her an email and she would be at the SAU on Monday to look at copies. Mrs.

Peaslee said she asked to look at copies at a meeting. She sees nothing wrong with the emails besides a School Board member doing her due diligence. She asked to be put on the agenda. She did it the right way and you chose not to do so. She was just asking questions. She doesn't think this should be part of a Board meeting.

Mrs. Kebler said she was told that an individual Board member has no authority to act on behalf of the School Board or district. Mrs. Peaslee said the second she requested a 91-a she was no longer a Board member and anything she got she was not acting as a School Board member. Mrs. Taliaferro said she brought this up at a school Board meeting then emailed on the 20th. She said to Mrs. Kebler, that's twice that I told you what I was going to do without being given any directive until I showed up at the SAU. Mrs. Kebler said it wasn't to shame you. When you get five emails five days in a row and they're aggressive in nature it gets old. Mrs. Taliaferro disagreed that they were aggressive. Mrs. Peaslee said Mrs. Taliaferro could be put on the agenda as Sandra not Sandra the School Board member. Mrs. Taliaferro asked to have Mr. Kebler in non public to address her uncomfortableness with the Board or her in general and that didn't happen. Mrs. Kebler responded that she has no uncomfortableness with the Board she just wants to be respected. (*The 21 pages of emails can be viewed any time during regular business hours at the SAU office.*)

Role of A School Board Member

Mrs. Kebler read the following and asked for clarification:

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 the 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.

Mrs. Peaslee said an action would require approval as a School Board member. Mrs. Collins said we have to have a vote to take action. Mrs. Peaslee said a School Board member can request any information they just can't take action with it. Mrs. Kebler said she had asked if the Board wanted the contracts brought to the Board. Mrs. Peaslee said we didn't want them brought to the Board but Mrs. Taliaferro can still see them and the action would be if she brought it up without acting appropriately to have it on the agenda. Asking for it individually as a Board member is just her doing her research.

Mr. DeColfmacker said he was confused and asked if he could, as a School Board member, just walk into the school and get anything he wants? Mrs. Peaslee said you can get anything. Mrs. Taliaferro said she only wanted to look at the days for holidays but once she looked at the contracts she realized there were so many different errors I sent the email asking to put it on the agenda. She said she made copies of the contracts too. It wasn't to cause problems and it could have been done in non public to just button up some things and no one would know.

Mrs. Peaslee said as soon as she was asked to fill out a 91-A request the email became null and void because she wasn't acting as a School Board member.

Mr. Ouellette said he wasn't sure about a 91-A request but as a School Board member if you want to dig into something you have the right to do so. But if you want to bring it to the Board his suggestion would be to come to a Board meeting and say what you are doing. I'd like to bring it up to the whole School Board and talk about this. He said what he is hearing is what can

a School Board member do and what can a private citizen do and the requirement for a 91-A request from a School Board member. He said we all need to work together.

Mrs. Taliaferro said she brought up the whole holiday schedule on June 27, 2003. Mrs. Peaslee said Mrs. Taliaferro has mentioned some things concerning to her and she would like to have the contracts brought to the Board and added to the next agenda or have some kind of a procedure in place. She said we can't have contracts without signatures and incorrect dates. Mrs. Kebler said she believes the non-signed contract is hers.

Mrs. Taliaferro said she wanted to reiterate that the Board created policies and we're supposed to enforce them and make sure they're getting done. Policy says we need accurate employee files.

Mrs. Taliaferro made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to add the contracts that have discrepancies on them on the next public agenda. (Vote 4-1) This will take place in non public.

Mr. DeColfmacker said we're sitting in a gray area as to what the right behavior is. Mrs. Kebler said she's still confused. Mr. DeColfmacker asked where to get clarification on this matter. He said he didn't realize he could just make an appointment and get whatever he wanted. He assumed that if he had a question or concern he would bring it to the Board and ask permission to investigate it. If that's not accurate he would like to know. Mrs. Collins said you can ask for anything but if you want it as a topic of discussion at a Board meeting you need Board permission. Mrs. Peaslee said anything in the SAU you can go in and ask for.

Public Comment

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Peaslee, to waive the policy. (5-0)

Mr. Fogg had a question about an investigation and was told it did not transpire and did not cost the taxpayers anything at all. Mr. Fogg also said when he was on the Board a School Board member could go to anyone and ask for anything. Mrs. Joy questioned Mrs. Taliaferro asking to submit a 91-A request. Mrs. Howard questioned Board members being on phones during meetings. Mrs. Bourne said everyone in school appreciates Mrs. Taliaferro doing research and being prepared.

All the Board members said they had no idea the investigation didn't go anywhere. Mrs. Kebler said she has no idea why it hasn't. Mrs. Taliaferro said Mrs. Kebler and Mr. DeColfmacker made quite a spectacle out of her at that time. Mrs. Kebler said you went into non public to discuss my contract. Mrs. Taliaferro denied that.

Policies (all 1st Reading)

BBB School Board Elections

The only thing that was added were the vacancies that occur before the expiration of a member shall be filled according to Board Policy BBC

BBBC Board Member or District Officer Resignation

Will adopt the NHSBA policy. The changes were as a result of substantially revised in August 2021 to offer a more detailed process for the Boards when faced with resignations. Mrs. Kebler read the new language with the six criteria.

BBBE Unexpected Term Fulfillment

Will adopt the NHSBA policy. The Cooperative District rules were removed.

BCA School Board Member Ethics

Adopting the NHSBA policy

BCB Board Member Conflict of Interest

Policy revised. Adds mechanism to handle nepotism.

BDB Board Officers

Adopting NHSBA policy. There will be some research done to see if the Board wishes to remove the Board Secretary being a School Board member.

BBBH (Remove)

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouelette, to remove Policy BBBH from the Policy Book. (Vote 5-0)

Follow Up

Non Public

Mr. DeColfmacker made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette to enter non public session under 91-A:3, 11 (c) at 8:19. Roll call vote: Collins aye, DeColfmacker aye, Ouellette aye, Taliaferro aye, Peaslee aye. (Vote 5-0)

The Board returned to Public Session at 8:23.

Adjournment

Mrs. Collins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Peaslee, to adjourn the meeting at 8:25. (Vote 5-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next School Board meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
School Board Secretary