

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
December 9, 2020
Virtual Platform Meeting
Department of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. After the pledge of allegiance, the board adopted the agenda for December 9, 2020. Member Van Diest moved to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Member Kowalski. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members at this meeting.

Public Comment

Public comment was opened at 9:07 am

Malan Paquette- calling in from the Kenai Borough- asked that the Post-secondary education commission should be added to the directory of state officials. She also praised the board for their thorough public notice and encouraged them to be a leader for other state boards and commissions for as some do not have as thorough of a public notice system.

Agenda Item 1. DHSS COVID-19 Update

Dr. Anne Zinc, Alaska's Chief Medical Officer; Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Alaska's State Epidemiologist, and Dr. Elizabeth Ohlsen, Staff Physician updated the board on their work to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as the availability of a vaccine in the State of Alaska. Dr. Ohlsen discussed the roll out of the vaccine and how it will be distributed once it arrives in Alaska. She also discussed the importance of the public to have confidence in the vaccine to stop community spread and getting students back to school. Dr. McLaughlin detailed some of the steps that communities can take to slow the spread especially with regards to additional travel restrictions that communities can implement. Dr. Zinc explained the diversity of the numbers that schools and districts must consider when they think about opening schools. She told the board that the Department of Health and Social Services is there to support and offer tools to keep people safe, schools open, and the state moving forward. Dr. Zinc thanked the board for their partnership and collaboration with DHSS to ensure that students are continuing to learn while being safe and having access to testing. They then took questions from the board.

Agenda Item 2. Mt. Edgecumbe COVID-19 Update

Superintendent Vanasse updated the board on the work that Mt. Edgecumbe High School has done to prepare for and address COVID-19 in their school. She walked the board through their protocols and their work to ensure social distancing with students while still forming relationships and providing quality education for their students. There have been cases at Mt. Edgecumbe High School but they have ensured that communication still exists with families and the community while working that contact tracing to identify close contacts and checking with students while they quarantine. She detailed the steps that students follow to continue their education as well as physical education while they are in quarantine. They have had six positive test results since the start of the year but they have had no spread from those students. All of those students were asymptomatic when they tested positive which

allowed Mt. Edgecumbe staff to quarantine that student to ensure that there was no spread of the virus on campus. She then took questions and comments from the board.

The board took a break at 9:50 and resumed at 9:55am

Member Griffin joined the meeting at 9:50am

Agenda Item 3. LAM COVID-19 Update

Patience Frederiksen, Director updated the board on the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums work as they mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while still assisting school districts across the state. She walked the board through a PowerPoint presentation which detailed the work that the division is doing while they have been shut down. Director Frederiksen expressed her excitement about the fact that their workshops have been able to reach a statewide audience due to the availability of access to virtual platforms. Staff have begun to add content to a cloud-based digital storage system that provides stable storage and preservation for the digital assets that exist in the state. The LAM team has also been working with OIT to ensure that archives retention schedule policies are also being followed while state employees have been teleworking. She then took questions from the board.

Agenda Item 4. Legislative Update

Erin Hardin, the department's legislative liaison updated the board on legislative activities for the first session of the 32nd Alaska State Legislature. She mentioned that legislature is still forming their leadership and committees but that the department is looking forward to working with whomever is placed on the education committees for both bodies. She reminded the board that any legislation that did not pass last session must be reintroduced and go through the committee process again. She walked the board through the new members of the legislature and the districts that they will be representing in this new session. She gave the board a few key dates to be aware of and reminded the board that some of the members must still go through the confirmation process. Their confirmation hearings will be held virtually as the capital is closed to the public.

The board took at break at 11:22 and reconvened at 11:40

Agenda Item 5. Draft Board Report to the Legislature

Erin Hardin, the department's legislative liaison updated the board on their annual report that they will be presenting to the legislature. This report satisfies the requirement in state statute that says that the board must submit an annual report to the legislature of the board's actions during that previous year. She reminded the board that they will hold the final approval vote for this report at their January meeting so there is till time to make edits if necessary. She then took questions from the board.

Agenda Item 6. 2020-2021 School Enrollment Update

Commissioner Johnson encouraged the board to go to akleg.gov and listen to the presentation that Director Teshner gave to the legislature regarding this item as it provided some different perspectives on this topic and committee members asked informative clarifying questions that the board would find helpful. Heidi Teshner, Division Director of Finance and Support Services, provided the report to the board regarding the 2020-2021 school year enrollment counts across Alaska's school districts. She informed the board that the initial FY2021 preliminary student count data shows a decrease of 14,878.13 in the regular average daily membership (ADM) and an increase of 13,343.34 in the correspondence ADM, compared to the FY2020 actuals. She reminded the board that these numbers are only preliminary and they were subject to change but that she would update the board when the department has concluded their review. She walked the board through the process of how the

department gets their student counts and added that the brick and mortar school student counts saw a decrease while correspondence schools saw an increase in student count. She reminded the board that the student counts affect the student funding formula for schools so it is very important to be as accurate as possible when assessing these numbers. She then took questions from the board and showed the board the slides of the presentation that the department provided to the legislature regarding this topic.

Agenda Item 7. MEHS Endowment and Land Issues

Randy Ruaro, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Office of the Governor, and Chuck Clement, President and Chief Executive Officer, SEARHC, presented to the board regarding on the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's (SEARHC) proposal to purchase three parcels of land owned by the Department of Education and Early Development and located on Japonski Island in Sitka, totaling 16.15 acres. They briefed the board on Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Endowment Fund options, and other land issues. They discussed the options for the proceeds from any sale of Japonski Island property owned by the Department of Education and Early Development, including establishment of an endowment fund for the students of Mount Edgecumbe High School. Chuck Clement provided a history of the work that SEARHC has done with the department to purchase this land and the steps that they have taken to ensure that any action that they take benefits the student of Mt. Edgecumbe High School as well as SEARHC. He detailed the work that SEARHC has done with the Mt. Edgecumbe High School advisory board to keep them updated on SEARHC's plans for the property should they be allowed to purchase it.

Member Stockhausen, as the board's representative on the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board, provided some details as to the meeting that the advisory board held on December 8th regarding this issue. The advisory board would like to receive the full market value of the land and they want to see any money that is gained from the sale be put to use with the best interests of the students there. The advisory board is also are looking at the parcels as individual pieces and not a group to be sold together. Mr. Ruaro and Mr. Clement then took questions from the board. This is an ongoing issue and SEARHC is eager to have the board's direction with regards to the three parcels of land.

Agenda Item 8. Questions Regarding Standing Reports

Commissioner Johnson introduced the standing reports which includes Innovation and Education Excellence; Libraries, Archives, and Museums; Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and the Division of Law. Member Kowalski asked about the data section with regards to the division of Innovation and Education Excellence and if the collections correspond with the Oasis count. DEED Staff members Colton Christian and Sondra Meredith walked the board through that section of the report to better assist board members with their understanding of that section. Member Stockhausen asked the department about the assessments schedule for the spring and if there will be testing allowances due to the pandemic. Commissioner Johnson informed the board that the topic of assessments is a conversation that is happening at the national level and that he will keep the board informed of any adjustments to assessments that are decided. As of now, the directive is to give a statewide summative assessment but the department is also looking for alternative ways to administer these in the wake of the pandemic.

Agenda Item 9. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Johnson discussed the NAEP assessment and informed the board that the federal government has postponed the 2021 NAEP assessment. He reminded the board that not every grade is impacted by this assessment and that it is only for fourth and eighth grade students. The department has applied for an amendment from the federal government to assist with the fact that the department did not hold a statewide assessment last spring. The department is looking for superintendents to

comment on the proposed plan that the department will present to the federal government and is looking forward to their feedback. They are working with the new federal administration and are watching closely for any updates that the new administration will provide regarding assessments.

Commissioner Johnson then expressed his condolences to the members of the community of Haines and the families of the two citizens that were lost in the mud slide. He commended Superintendent Roys of the Haines School District for his work to keep students in school throughout the pandemic and now with this latest disaster that is impacting their community. He then informed the board of some new staff in the education system around the state and wished them well as they begin their work to advocate on behalf of Alaska's students. He then updated the board regarding standards review. He informed the board that department is going through Alaska's standards and the board has a part in that process and they haven't forgotten but that it might take a little bit of time to put together.

Agenda Item 10. Approve Draft Board Report to the Legislature

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve its annual report to the legislature. Member Van Diest motioned and Member Kowalski seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the draft report to the legislature. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a rollcall vote.

Agenda Item 11. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve its consent agenda. Member Stockhausen motioned and Member Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the June 10-11, 2020 meeting as updated, the minutes of the September 16-17, 2020 meeting, and the minutes of the October 21, 2020 work session. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

Member Scott- commended the department and the state for their work to return to in person learning and thanked them for their work on keeping students safe while promoting learning.

Lt. Col Hammill- is impressed at the work that the department is doing and thanked the department staff for their dedication to students.

Member Kowalski- expressed her excitement at the success of the mitigation efforts in her community to combat the spread of COVID-19. She reminded the board to social distance and wear their masks because the sooner schools can open for in person learning, the better.

Member Hamilton- encouraged the board and the department to move forward quickly with regards to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School land sale issue. He thanked the work that the Department of Law and the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board has done to move this issue along. He also encouraged the department to work towards having another in person board meeting whenever it is safe to do so.

Member Griffin- is looking forward to the board's continued work with the legislature regarding the reading bill and is hopeful to make some additional headway on its progress this year. He would also like to see continued progress on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School land sale issue and, although he does not want to sell the land if it means that Mt. Edgecumbe can't expand in the future, is supportive of the

idea of the merits of this project. He also encouraged the department to work towards opening schools and is hopeful that with the vaccine it will be able to happen sooner rather than later.

Member Stockhausen- thanked the department for their work during the pandemic and their commitment to ensure that students are still learning even though it might look different than it has before.

Member Van Diest- echoed the comments of the other board members in thanking the department for their work and reminded the board about the importance of social distancing and wearing masks so that students can get back to in person learning as quickly as possible. She thanked Superintendent Vanasse for her presentation and her leadership of Mt. Edgecumbe High School and their work to make sure that COVID-19 does not become transmitted from the high school to the community.

Chair Fields- expressed his excitement for a vaccine and expressed his hope that with it, students and teacher can get back to the classroom while still being safe. He is looking forward to the work that the department is doing to continue that goal and thanked Commissioner Johnson for his leadership of the department.

Adjourned at 1:44pm