

**Stratford School Board**  
**Board Meeting**  
**December 9, 2020**

The Stratford School Board had a meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 5:30 pm. Present were: Kyle Haley (Home-Stratford), James Kennett (Home-Stratford) and Nicole King (Home-Stratford). Absent was: None. Also present were Superintendent Ronna Cadarette (Home-Lancaster), Business Administrator Patty Brown (SAU-Groveton), Student Services Administrator Michelle Mason (Home-Groveton) and Principal Bridger DeWitt (Home-Pittsburg). Absent was: None.

Kyle Haley called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

A motion was made by Kyle Haley and seconded by James Kennett to approve the public minutes of November 12, 2020 as presented. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

**Reports:**

Ronna Cadarette presented her report and discussed the recently awarded Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program (FFVP). GHS flexed out for two days last week because of a positive COVID case and we needed time for contract tracing. The SAU is working very closely with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). No one else tested positive through the contract tracing. Direct contact is described as six feet or less for ten minutes or more.

Policies I, K and L are the last of the Policy upgrades for now. As NHSBA updates policy recommendations we will continue to bring them forward.

Bridger DeWitt presented his report and let the board know the virtual holiday concert is scheduled for December 18, 2020. Holiday events will be the last week before vacation. Staff goals were discussed and continued to be worked on. The bus run changes in the afternoon were done to reduce the number of students on the buses. There is an early dismissal by about five minutes and the remaining students are waiting roughly 15 minutes for the second run.

Michelle Mason presented her report and mentioned her second teacher is now up here working at SPS, she getting to know the IEP's right now and the students, but it's all working out great. Right now teacher #1 has PreK – 4<sup>th</sup> grade and teacher #2 has 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade as case managers.

Shane Cloutier presented his report and commented that the 65" panels will be coming Monday and put together in all the classrooms by December 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Athletic Directors report from GHS was presented and Ronna Cadarette noted it would be nice for Stratford to see what was going on since their students are attending there. This report is informational only, but the board had no questions and thought the report was a great idea.

Patty Brown's report was presented in the board packet but will be covered under the budget section of the meeting.

## **Continuing Business:**

Policies I, K & L were discussed. These sections are the final sections to approve for updates as of right now. This past year has been spent updating the whole policy book. As NHSBA comes forward with policy update recommendations we will bring them forward, but for now we will be all up to date.

A motion was made by Kyle Haley and seconded by James Kennett to approve and adopt Policies I, K & L as presented. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

## **New Business:**

Patty Brown discussed new kitchen equipment that has recently been purchased by grant funds. There will be a mixer that needs to be replaced before next school year. All replaced equipment will need disposal approval by the board. We will try to sell what we can, but more than likely most will be donated or disposed of. If the equipment does not work adequately, we will dispose of it. If it has any life, we will try to sell it, then donate it. Keeping in mind, we will not spend money on advertising. We will use social media, phone calls and word of mouth to try and sell the equipment. Advertising is too expensive and we won't make enough off the equipment.

A motion was made by Kyle Haley and seconded by James Kennett to approve the disposal of any kitchen equipment as presented and to follow school policy on the disposal of such items. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Annual School Meeting options were discussed and the importance of COVID guidelines, etc... The board is confident we can make it happen in the gym and if we had to extend into the classrooms the new panels could be used to telecast from the gym. Social distancing practices will happen and the normal in person meeting will be scheduled for Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm in the SPS gymnasium.

Patty Brown has spoken to the town and let them know when the gym is available for their annual meeting.

Patty Brown went over the budget summary and estimated tax rate for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. At this time the budget is up \$360k in expenses and the tax rate is up \$6.94 with the loss of revenue from adequacy aid and fund balance (\$160k).

The board had a lengthy conversation about controllable expenses versus uncontrollable. Most of the expenses in this budget the board has no control over and legally has to be added. The loss in revenue is also uncontrollable. At this time with all the added special education expenses this year, we do not expect a fund balance come June 30, 2021.

Patty Brown went over options to reduce staff and try to cut the budget, there were four options. The board made it clear they want to keep the school open with grades PreK-8. Patty explained that the average cost of a teacher is roughly \$55k and the cost to tuition a student is over \$16k. Four tuition students cost more than one teacher, so closing any upper grades would not gain anything right now. The board has to look at options, not all options are viable, but you have to do the research and have the answers if asked.

Nicole King asked Patty Brown to work up an estimate to tuition all students, just in case that question is asked. Patty responded she would have that estimate for next month's meeting. Everyone needs to understand our special education budget does not go away, those added figures stay even if we tuition to another town. We still need two buses; I still need to budget some money to maintain our beautiful building. There is still money tied

to a building even if it's closed; plowing, mowing, maintenance, security, etc... I will work on this and get back to you next month.

Ronna Cadarette spoke to RingCentral how it is a necessity and an increase in cost (\$5k) to the budget, but this program protects our students and staff.

Patty Brown responded that it won't be any easy year and we'll go down through each budget line again. Administration will level fund and cut what we can unless it's a necessity. We will do what we can, we will promise you that. But will the uncontrollable increase in costs and the losses in revenues, we truly have our hands tied. All we can do is explain to the taxpayers what this all means and how we have no control and we've all done what we can to this point. We need to supply an education to our students. It's cheaper to keep them here...

**Next Meeting:**

Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 5:30 pm, SAU Board Meeting Remote.

Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 5:30 pm, SPS Board Meeting Remote.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Kyle Haley and seconded by James Kennett to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 pm. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Minutes were respectfully submitted by Patricia Brown