



**North Slope Borough School District Board of Education  
Archie K. Brower Conference Room, Central Office  
Utqiagvik, AK**

**Unapproved Minutes  
Special Meeting  
November 1, 2022  
12:00 p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER AND MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Robyn Burke, Board President, called the Board of Education special meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. at the Archie K. Brower Conference room and over ZOOM Video Communications in Central Office in Utqiagvik, Alaska.

**FLAG SALUTE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Board of Education.

**ROLL CALL:**

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| Nora Jane Burns – Present via teleconference  | Charles Brower – Present via teleconference          |
| Madeline Hickman – Present via zoom           | Robyn Burke- Present                                 |
| Frieda Nageak – Present                       | Nancy Rock – Present via teleconference              |
| Qaiyaan Harcharek– Present via teleconference | Student Representative: Magdalena Stringer – Excused |

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Charles Brower MOVED to APPROVE the agenda. Frieda Nageak SECONDED the motion. Question called for UNANIMOUS CONSENT. No objections. The motion carried UNANIMOUSLY.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** District staff were recognized as present.

**CONTRACTS OVER 10K – JOBS CONNECT USA STAFFING LLC AND LAW OFFICES OF NICOLAS CARAQUEL PLLC** is presented by David Vadiveloo, Chief School Administrator. This meets Strategic Plan goals 3.0 Staff Success and 3.1 Hiring. Under Board Policy 3311, Bids, the district shall purchase equipment, supplies, and services on a competitive bidding basis when required by law and whenever it appears to be in the best interest of the district to do so. Under Board Policy 3312, Contracts, the Superintendent or designee may enter into contracts and memoranda of agreement (MOA's) on behalf of the District. All contracts and MOA's with a dollar value of \$10,000 or greater must be approved by the School Board. Nationwide, there is a shortage of over 200,000 teachers and Alaska is experiencing this shortage in a particularly critical way due to the North Slope remoteness and high teacher turnover. The North Slope region, including Northwest Arctic Borough School District, is one of the worst affected areas, with each District currently struggling to cover more than 30 certified teacher vacancies each. This is having a severe impact on staffing in village schools. In response, many Alaskan Districts (and Districts nationwide) are turning to overseas teacher recruiting. At the May 10, 2022 Regular Meeting, the Board of Education approved Human Resources to recruit teachers through the J1 Visa Program through a placement agency called I Teach America. However, due to the unexpected demand nationwide and some restrictions placed on Agencies placing J1 teachers in rural Alaska, the District was unable to secure any J1 Visa candidates this year. In an attempt to find an alternate pathway to secure the required number of overseas teachers, the District identified the H1-B Visa category as a possible alternate pathway. Employers wishing to utilize the H1-B visa category must satisfy a number of State Department legal requirements to achieve "cap-exempt status" before they can bring overseas employees into the US. Bringing any overseas candidate into any District under either the J1 program or H1-B program comes at a cost in the multiple thousands per teachers to the Districts. Because the H1-B pathway requires Districts

to prove their cap-exempt status, the Administration decided to launch a test case to demonstrate to the State Department that we qualified for this cap-exempt status. Our test-case application has finally been approved and last week, the test case teacher was scheduled for a US Embassy interview on November 4, 2022. With the test-case approved, the Administration now wishes to apply for H1-B visas for up to twenty-five overseas teaching candidates. To process these applications the District wishes to utilize two contractor agencies that successfully processed the test case. Those agencies are a recruiting agency called Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC and a legal firm called Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC. Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC will: identify the teacher; assess certifications; support the interview process; support the teacher by securing local permissions including consulate interviews and an OEC certificate from the Philippines; meet the candidates in the U.S. and assist their transition. Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC will: process all legal documentations; manage the H1B Visa process; and support the State Department with inquiries and follow-up. For compliance with BP 3311, three bids were received from different companies who provide the same service of bringing teachers to the U.S, these companies are International Alliance Group (IAG), Cascadia Law Firm, and Jobs Connect. For a J-1 visa candidate, the International Alliance Group charge between 20-25% of the salary of each teacher every year for up to four years and would represent a cost to the District of approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 per teacher over four years or \$13,000-\$15,000 per year, per teacher. Cascadia Law Firm is an H1B processing firm whose mini-rfp bid was reasonable but did not include the following charges which we know are required: the cost of processing educational qualifications and verifications, the cost of the firm's time to process requests for further evidence from the State Department; the cost of supporting the teachers to receive consulate interviews. In addition, the Cascadia firm does not provide service support in the Philippines and do not factor in the cost of the Overseas Employment Certificate from the Philippine government, which is a required certificate to leave the country for employment. Adding these cost estimates to the Cascadia law bid we estimated the cost to the District would be between \$12-14,000 per candidate but the District would not receive the benefit of vital Philippines based support like Overseas Employment Certificate processing support and support for candidates at both the Embassy interview and upon arrival in the US. Jobs Connect is an H1B agency that utilizes the Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC to process legal documents with an approximate cost of \$8,560 per candidate in year one, then an additional \$4000 per candidate in year two if the teacher remains and renews their certificates for a total cost of \$12,560 per teacher over two years. Jobs Connect and Nicolas Caraquel PLLC successfully processed the Districts test-case. Their collective fee includes every charge for support to the District and teacher candidate, including processing educational qualifications and verifications, processing requests for further evidence from the State Department, supporting the teachers to receive consulate interviews, support in the Philippines with the Overseas Employment Certificate and support upon arrival in the US. In addition, they do not process their agency fee until the candidate has landed in the US and is placed in the District. In consideration of the number of overseas teachers the District is seeking to bring to the US, the comparative costings and the level of support provided to candidates, the Administration believes Jobs Connect and the Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC represent the best option for the District to process the H1-B visa candidates required to staff schools. The contracts will commence upon approval by the Board through June 30, 2024. These contracts will be grant funded under ESSER II account code 277.200.350.000.410 with an available budget of \$274,555.11. Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solution, LLC contract amount is \$92,750 and Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC contract amount is \$126,500 for a total of \$219,250.00.

Board discussion regarded risk assessment and contract parameters with approval or denial of teacher visa applications and re-certification; continued recruitment of teachers in U.S.; J-1 Visa sponsorship district potential; teacher retention vs. turnover; teacher vacancy status; application process timeline; housing; and community installation/welcome of teachers.

Frieda Nageak MOVED that the NSBSD Board of Education APPROVE the above \$10,000 and greater proposals and related contracts for Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC and Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel, PLLC, in the amount NOT TO EXCEED \$219,250 as described in this memo and related attachments. Madeline Hickman SECONDED the motion. Discussion called. Question called for UNANIMOUS CONSENT. No objections. The motion carried UNANIMOUSLY.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** No public comments were received by the Board of Education.

**SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS:** Board comments regarded appreciation for recruitment efforts of vacant staffing positions;

**SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING:** November 16, 2022 Work Session in Utqiagvik, AK at the Archie K. Brower Conference Room / ZOOM Video Communications; and November 17, 2022 Regular Meeting in Utqiagvik, AK at the Archie K. Brower Conference Room / ZOOM Video Communications.

**ADJOURNED AT 1:11 P.M.** Madeline Hickman MOVED to ADJOURN. Frieda Nageak SECONDED the motion. The meeting stands adjourned.

Respectfully submitted for the August 16, 2023 Regular Meeting:

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Chelsie Overby, Board Secretary

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Robyn Burke, Board President

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Frieda Nageak, Board Clerk