

## **Minutes of the Regular School Board Meeting**

Of the School Board of Independent School District No. 709 held at: virtually via video conference, Duluth, Minnesota 55802, on

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

### **Members Present:**

Kelly Durick Eder  
David Kirby  
Rosie Loeffler-Kemp  
Jill Lofald  
Alanna Oswald  
Paul Sandholm  
Sally Trnka

### **Others Present:**

John Magas, Superintendent  
Cathy Erickson, CFO  
Melinda Thibault, Secretary

### **Student Representatives:**

Nabiha Imtiaz (East)  
Phoenix Ocean (Denfeld)

### **Members Absent:**

- Chair Lofald called the Regular School Board meeting December 15, 2020 to order at 7:08 p.m.

## **School and Community Recognition**

**December 2020**

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Anthony Bonds:

Members of the Board, this month I'm pleased to present Haakon Pihlaja from Duluth East High School. Haakon is joining us with his father, Byron Johnson.

The ACT is a college entrance exam. Of the 1.8 million students who take the ACT every year, only a few thousand get the highest possible score, a 36.

This year, Haakon earned a 36 on his ACT exam, a rare and remarkable feat! And especially so given the challenges faced by students during the pandemic.

In a recent interview with the Duluth News Tribune, Haakon talked about his success on the exam, saying he prepared ahead of time by taking practice tests, to get a feel for what it would be like.

Haakon also talked about taking part in post-secondary enrollment options at UMD, in preparation for college.

His high school career includes a range of experiences, including membership in the National Honor Society, the Duluth East Daredevils robotics team and participation in Knowledge Bowl, among other activities.

Congratulations, Haakon, for your accomplishment on the ACT and for inspiring us with your enthusiasm for taking on new challenges.

**M-Durick Eder, S-Loeffler-Kemp, to approve the agenda. Upon a vote on the agenda as presented, the same was approved unanimously.**

**Public Comments**  
**December 2020**

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Public comments were read into the record by the board members or played via voice messages (no public presence was allowed at the meeting) as follows (some spellings/names may be incomplete due to lack of information via voice messages):

Nikki Farleigh - regarding concerns with the distance learning program.

Annie Bloomquist and Marina Udd - asking the board not to cancel or delay the athletics/activities programs citing needs for student contact, and mental health concerns.

Kevin Skwira Brown - regarding the proposed public comment policy/guidelines.

Betty Greene – asking that the board not change to even year elections.

**Communications, Petitions, Etc.**  
**December 2020**

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Chair Lofald stated that was one communication received from Tom Johns regarding his concerns on his proposed property tax statement.

**Superintendent's Report**  
**December 2020**

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Board member congratulated the student representatives on a great year.

Student Representative Phoenix Ocean (Denfeld): Reported - The pause on winter activities means less to report on. Some activities are finding ways to stay active online. The yearbook class facilitated a senior superlative voting through email. The executive board is holding virtual snowman building and cookie baking competitions on social media and the National Honor Society is working on tutoring both secondary and elementary students over Google meet as well as providing recordings of books being read aloud for younger students. Looking to the future interviews for the Whiteside scholarship were conducted virtually for the top ten percent of the class and school counselors continue to offer support and resources for students in the process of applying for colleges and scholarships. Interestingly while we recognized an East student for scoring a perfect 36 on the ACT I scored the same on the ACT test administered at Denfeld in October. As this student reps term was drawing to a close Denfeld is in the process of finding the next student to communicate the successes and challenges of the school year. Many students are feeling apprehensive about the present situation and how it will affect their future, but with the

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collaboration of students, staff, and community as a whole this year can end on a positive note. If we listened to each other and responded in ways that keep everyone safe, learning, and growing we will make it through the difficulty we face together.

Student Representative Nabiha Imtiaz (East): Reported – Haakon has made East very proud with his ACT score, and I hope that Phoenix will receive the same recognition at the next school board meeting, because she really deserves it. The East Association Board has been hard at work on their homecoming activities, and announced the homecoming candidates. The winners were Grent Canete for King and Nabiha Imtiaz for Queen. I'm very excited to report that the exec board has been working on the election for the next student rep, and starting in January Stella Schutz will be East High Schools next student representative for the 2021 year. Finally, since it's my last school board meeting, I just wanted to say a few things. I'm really grateful for the experience and the skills that I've gained this past year that I've been student rep. I never really planned to be a student rep, it was kind of a spur of the moment decision to run and I'm so glad that I did because this has been by far the most important experience of my high school year, and I'm so grateful for it. I'm really excited to see what Stella has for you guys in the next year, and I hope that the school board will continue to open their minds and be open to new ideas and positive change she may bring to the board. It was a really weird year to be student representative, but I wouldn't have had it any other way and I just want to say thank you for the year and all your really kind comments.

Superintendent Magas gave an update on the return to learn planning and discussion took place regarding the update.

Chair Lofald reviewed the schedule of meetings.

**Policy Committee Report**  
**December 2020**

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Member Loeffler-Kemp presented the Policy Committee report which was available electronically to each school board member.

**Monthly Committee of the Whole Report**  
**December 2020**

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Member Lofald presented the Monthly Committee of the Whole report which was available electronically to each school board member.

**Human Resources/Finance Committee Report**  
**December 2020**

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Member Trnka presented the Human Resources Committee report which was available electronically to each school board member.

**Consent Agenda**  
**December 2020**

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**M-Loeffler-Kemp, S-Trnka to approve the consent agenda.**

**M-Trnka, S-Loeffler-Kemp, To Pull Item 1.D.2.A - MSBA Policy 206 to: Change Item VI to: Read Public Comment for the title, and the first sentence to read: The school board shall provide time when persons may address the school board on any topic, subject to the limitations of this policy. Upon a vote the same was approved – unanimously.**

**M-Sandholm, S-Trnka, To pull Item 1.C.2)c.(1) from the consent agenda to have a follow-up meeting on the item. Upon a vote the same was approved – unanimously.**

**M-Trnka, S-Durick Eder, to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Upon a vote the same was approved – unanimously.**

**Special Resolutions/Other Action Items**

**December 2020**

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None

**Other**

**December 2020**

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**M-Trnka, S-Sandholm, to adjourn the meeting. Upon a vote, the same was approved – unanimously.**

Chair Lofald adjourned the Regular School Board Meeting of December 15, 2020 at 10:49 p.m.