

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

Of the School Board of Independent School District No. 709 held via Video Conference, Duluth, Minnesota 55802, on

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

### **Members Present:**

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

### **Others Present:**

Bill Gronseth, Superintendent  
Cathy Erickson, CFO  
Melinda Thibault, Secretary

### **Student Representatives:**

Nabiha Imtiaz (East)  
Phoenix Ocean (Denfeld)

- Chair Lofald called the Regular School Board meeting June 16, 2020 to order at 6:30 p.m., she read a statement regarding outlining the remote video conference meeting process.

Due to the current federal and state emergency declarations, the Minnesota directive to residents to stay at home, and guidance about limiting person-to-person contact due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, this meeting of the Duluth School Board is being conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 13D.021— Meetings by Telephone or Other Electronic Means.

Member Lofald read the School Boards Op Ed from the Duluth News Tribune regarding the George Floyd incident.

**M-Durick Eder, S-Trnka, to approve the agenda.**

**M-Trnka, S-Durick Eder, to add to add a resolution amending the compensatory education funding resolution previously passed to the consent agenda under finance resolutions. Upon a vote, the same was approved – 6-1 as follows:**

**Yea: Durick Eder, Kirby, Loeffler-Kemp, Lofald, Oswald, Trnka**

**Nay: Sandholm**

**Upon a vote on the agenda as amended, the same was approved – Unanimously.**

## **School and Community Recognition**

**June 2020**

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Tonight we recognize Bill Gronseth for his 23 years of service to Duluth Public Schools. Over the course of his career, Bill worked as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent. Those who choose to work in public education know it's a

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challenging path. Teaching is hard work. So is leading a school building and a school district. People who take on these important roles must bring with them an abundance of optimism, patience, energy, determination and a thick skin.

Bill, in your role as a teacher and principal you touched the lives of thousands of students and families. As superintendent, you led the work necessary to complete portions of the long-range facilities plan, engage our community through Think Kids meetings and pass two education levy referendums. During your tenure our district implemented achievement strategies such as Multi-tiered Systems of Support and Professional Learning Communities. We developed an online high school and fabrication labs, strengthened Career & Technical Education programs and adopted new evaluation systems for teachers and principals. Ojibwe and Spanish Language Immersion programs were created and continue to expand. The Duluth School Board adopted an equity framework and is working to implement the use of a tool for equity accountability.

In terms of COVID 19, none of us imagined our spring would look like this. You dedicated everything to the Duluth Public Schools response - 24/7 - doing your best to bring people and resources together with the interest of our students and families in mind.

You have publicly credited everyone in the district many times for their work in accomplishing all of these things. Tonight we recognize and thank you for your service to the Duluth Public Schools, and wish you well as you move on to St. Peter Public Schools.

**Public Comments**

**June 2020**

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Public comments were read into the record by the Board Chair or played via voice messages (no public presence was allowed at the meeting) as follows:

Bernie Bernham on behalf of Education Minnesota and the Duluth Federation of Teachers spoke to wish Superintendent Gronseth well in his new adventures.

Holly Fearn spoke to the board regarding her concerns with proposed cuts to the music and arts programs.

Betty Greene spoke to the school board regarding the need to hire more teachers and staff of color, and the need for role models for our students.

Doris Malkmus spoke to the board regarding disproportionate disciplinary action, restorative justice and the needs of our most vulnerable students.

Kevin Skwira-Brown spoke to the board regarding the proposed amendment to the compensatory education distribution resolution, and the need for equity.

Fred Friedman spoke to thank Superintendent Gronseth for his service and wish him well in his new role in St. Peter.

Loren Martell spoke to the board regarding Superintendent Gronseth's tenure in the district.

**Communications, Petitions, Etc.**

**June 2020**

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Superintendent Gronseth stated that there were no communications received.

**Superintendent's Report**

**June 2020**

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The school year has ended and virtual graduations have taken place. Another congratulations to our graduates and many thanks to all of the staff that worked on making those so special for students and their families. The virtual ceremonies were great and enjoyed by the whole community. If you missed the airing on tv-- you can still see them online! There are links on our district website and both high school websites.

Summer programming has begun. Through the month of June we are serving lunch at Homecroft, Laura MacArthur, Lester Park, Lowell, Myers-Wilkins, Piedmont, Stowe and Ordean-East. Lunch is served from 11:00-12:30. There are also bus hubs at 88th Ave W & Hilton, 9428 Grand Ave, Wheeler Field, and Lismore & McQuade Road. Due to COVID, lunch will be served outside the school building. Lunch service will continue through the summer but we expect some changes to be made starting July 1. More information about the changes will be forthcoming as we learn more.

Key Zone Child Care also started this week. We are operating at 4 sites- Laura MacArthur, Lowell, Lester Park, and Ordean East (due to construction at Congdon). Many thanks to our partners at The Y for collaborating with us to provide these services.

Summer School will be through distance learning this year and Community Education courses will also be online with the exception of behind the wheel sessions for driver's education.

Playgrounds officially opened this week. During the day the playgrounds at our Key Zone sites are reserved for their use. As people use the playgrounds we want to remind them that we do not have capacity to sanitize playgrounds regularly. The Minnesota Department of Health recommends thorough hand washing before and after use.

Planning is well under way for the Fall. We aren't sure what it will entail yet. We are expecting to receive guidance in the form of parameters for three models from the Department of Education this week. The three possible models would be traditional, hybrid, and distance learning. We do not expect to receive guidance on which of the models will be used until late July or early August. While we would greatly appreciate an earlier decision on this, we understand that the State can't see into the future either and it really will depend on what is going on with the pandemic at that time. We will share information on what the Fall will look like as soon as we know more.

Student Representative Phoenix Ocean (Denfeld) and Student Representative Nabiha Imtiaz (East): Thanked Superintendent Gronseth for welcoming them into their positions as student representatives earlier in the year. The made the following statement to the board. In the wake of wake of the murder of George Floyd and other tragic events Nabiha and I would like to deliver an important message together. We would like the school board to consider the placement of SRO's in our schools. While SRO's may have positive impacts on some students, that's not the reality for many others. The achievement gap between students of color and white

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students is a big issue for our district and we believe shutting down the school to prison pipeline will greatly help in the closing of the achievement gap. Having professionals available in school who are trained specifically for mental health and drug related issues instead of a police officer who can make students feel scared to ask for help is incredibly important. Remediation instead of punishment will help build a stronger community and better prepare students for the future. A petition created by former students of ISD 709 urging the school board to take action has already amassed 165 signatures, 131 of which have been from current or former students of the district. As student representatives we believe it is our job to stand in solidarity with and support our peers in the black community. We believe removing the presence of police in our schools will improve the learning environment for all students. Please remember that until black lives matter all lives cannot matter.

After serving as Superintendent for the past 9 years, this is my final School Board meeting. It is bittersweet to be embarking on a new journey. Duluth has been my home for a long time. As I walk down the streets I often think of the 3 generations of my family that walked these streets before me. They watched Duluth being built— including Historic Old Central High School which was built in 1890. When on the lake walk, or in the parks or the trails, I think of the countless memories my family has of time spent together.

My work here as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent has connected me to the lives of thousands of families. I am proud of the work we have done together as a community. I have had the opportunity to work with so many amazing people through the years and I will miss them very much.

Educators are often stopped while grocery shopping or for a walk or just about anywhere by people who want to share how they have made a difference in their lives. This happens to me often as well-- It's humbling to hear this and I appreciate knowing. It's also kind of fun when I hear, "Remember me?" and we have the opportunity to relive some shared memories. I can appreciate too that there are those who have disagreed with some decisions through the years. Know this— I have always held students at the center of everything— I care deeply about each of them and wish them and all of you, the best. Duluth will always be a special place to me.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as superintendent. It has been an honor and privilege to serve the community.

The next leg of my journey will be in St Peter, Minnesota where I will also serve as Superintendent. My family and I are looking forward to the new adventures that await!

And this, Chair Lofald, concludes my final Superintendent Report.

Chair Lofald:

Tonight we thank Gail Netland, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, for her work with our schools. The transition to Distance Learning was an almost impossible task – and yet, you brought people together, worked out the details and effectively managed implementation. And you helped keep equity at the forefront of what we do as a district. We honor and appreciate all that you've done, many thanks. Best wishes in all your future endeavors.

We extend our thanks to Jeff Horton, Assistant Superintendent, and wish him well as he prepares to lead the Gibbons Fairfax Winthrop Schools. Among many projects, Jeff helped our district adopt the ALICE response model, obtain grant money for school safety, helped improve our communication during school emergencies and provided support for emergency childcare operations during the pandemic. Thank you, Jeff, we wish you well.

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Chair Lofald reviewed the schedule of meetings and asked board members if they were ok with moving forward with virtual meetings in July.

**Policy Committee Report**  
**June 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**  
**June 2020**  
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No meeting in June.

Member Oswald left the meeting due to technical difficulties.

**Human Resources/Finance Committee Report**  
**June 2020**  
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Member Trnka presented the Human Resources Committee report which was available electronically to each school board member.

**Consent Agenda**  
**June 2020**  
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**M-Loeffler-Kemp, S-Trnka, to approve the Consent Agenda.**

Member Trnka withheld Items 1.B.1) c., 1.B.2) b., and 1.B.2) c.

Member Trnka withheld Item 1.B.1) c. Resolution HR-6-20-3739-Approval of termination of Certified Hourly Staf to ask administration to find a more humane way to provide notifications to those affected.

Member Trnka withheld Item 1.B.2) b. Resolution B-6-20-3745 To Amend Resolution B-1-18-3520 Distribution of Compensatory Education Funds for discussion. Discussion took place regarding the proposed amendment and the distribution of compensatory education funding.

Member Trnka presented the resolution that was added to the agenda:

**RESOLUTION**

Amend Resolution B-1-18-3520 Distribution of Compensatory Education Funds

WHEREAS, the Duluth School Board passed Resolution B-1-18-3520 Distribution of Compensatory Education Funds at the January 23, 2018 Board meeting; and

WHEREAS, the District recognizes the budget challenges created by Covid-19 and the uncertainty and potential volatility of education funding due to the economic climate in the State.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Resolution B-1-18-3520 be amended to maintain the FY21 compensatory education building allocation funding the same as it was budgeted for FY20 for the traditional 13 sites.

Resolution B-6-20-3745

June 16, 2020

**M-Trnka, S-Sandholm, to approve Resolution B-6-20-3745 to Amend Resolution B-1-18-3520 Distribution of Compensatory Education Funds. Upon a vote, the same was approved 5-1-0 as follows:**

**Yea: Durick Eder, Kirby, Loeffler-Kemp, Lofald, Sandholm**

**Nay: Trnka**

**Absent: Oswald**

Member Trnka withheld Item 1.B.2) c. Resolution B-6-20-3743 – Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget to thank everyone for their hard work in presenting a balanced budget.

**Upon a vote on the remainder of the consent agenda, the same was approved 6-0 as follows:**

**Yea: Durick Eder, Kirby, Loeffler-Kemp, Lofald, Sandholm, Trnka**

**Absent: Oswald**

**Special Resolutions/Other Action Items**

**June 2020**

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None

**Other**

**June 2020**

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**M-Trnka, S-Sandholm, to adjourn the meeting. Upon a vote, the same was approved – 6-0.**

Chair Lofald adjourned the Regular School Board Meeting of June 16, 2020 at 9:22 p.m.