

**GILFORD/GILMANTON JOINT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
MONDAY OCTOBER 7, 2019  
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**The Gilford/Gilmanton School Boards held a joint meeting on Monday October 7, 2019 at the Gilford High School Library. Present were Gilford Board members Chris McDonough, Gretchen Gandini, Rae Mello-Andrews and Karen Thurston. Gilmanton Board members present were Johanna McKenna, Michelle Heyman, John Fauci, Frank Weeks, and Malcolm MacLeod. Administrators present were Kirk Beitler, Scott Isabelle, Anthony Sperazzo, Peter Sawyer, Danielle Bolduc, Rick Acquilano, and Tim Goggins. Student Council member Alex Cheek was also present.**

**Opening**

School Board Chair Chris McDonough called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. Superintendent Kirk Beitler certified the posting of the meeting at the SAU office, online, and in the schools. Motion to go into non-public session was made by Rae Mello-Andrews, seconded by Karen Thurston. Voting was in the affirmative, 8-0.

Non-public – RSA 91-A:3II (k) *Consideration by a school board of entering into a student or pupil tuition contract authorized by RSA 194 or RSA 195-A, which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general public or the school district that is considering a contract, including any meeting between the school boards, or committees thereof, involved in the negotiations.*

**Resumption of Meeting**

Chris McDonough recalled the meeting open at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Rae Mello-Andrews made the motion that the Board approve the minutes of the June 11, 2019 meeting. Michelle Heyman seconded the motion. Corrections were made. The motion passed unanimously. Karen Thurston made the motion that the Board approve the minutes of the September 3, 2019 meeting. Gretchen Gandini seconded the motion. Following discussion, the minutes will be reviewed, corrected and resubmitted for approval at the November meeting.

**Public Comment**

Mr. McDonough set the guidelines for the public comments. They will be limited to Gilford or Gilmanton residents only, with five minutes allowed per speaker. Any questions unable to be answered by the Board should be submitted in writing to Superintendent Beitler and the Board. All comments should be civil.

Public comments were made by the following Gilford residents, as noted. No Gilmanton residents commented.

- Jake Maxwell, Gilford – As a parent of a transgender child, Mr. Maxwell spoke in favor of the school policy. He read letters written by a third grade class in support of transgender children, addressing the rights of all children. He also read letters from fourth graders supporting transgender children. Mr. Maxwell said that we need not to fear difference but to engage and make the world a better place than what we have now.
- Rev. Michael Graham, Gilford – Rev. Graham spoke about his son's experience at Gilford High School and the suffering he went through, including having his dreadlocks cut off, then mocked, by a fellow student. Because of the treatment his son suffered throughout his life, he committed suicide at the age of twenty-seven. At the conclusion of his comments, Mr. Graham spoke in favor of the policy.

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- Skip Murphy, Gilford – Mr. Murphy stated he wanted to speak about the SB263 law. He requested that the Board address items in the law, specifically the conflict with those who are of faith. He asked how the Board will address each of the protected classes, including those with religious beliefs. Mr. Murphy also wants guidance on the use of pronouns and a response to his Right to Know requests. Mr. Murphy spoke against the policy, stating that he feels the Board does not have the power to force others to observe the names chosen by those children involved. He called it coerced thought and totalitarianism.

Chris McDonough asked Mr. Murphy to submit his questions in writing, and that his Right to Know requests had been responded to by Mr. Beitler. The public comments then continued.

- Joy Southworth – Speaking as a concerned mother, devoted Gilford resident, and alumna of the Gilford School District, Ms. Southworth stated that her family does not discriminate. She stated she wants equality for all children, for all children to have their rights protected, for their safety and comfort to be enforced, and for a fair solution for all children. She commented she would want a unified agreement that regards all views and comes up with a safe and comfortable learning environment for all.
- Kyle Sanborn, Gilford – Mr. Sanborn, a Gilford alumnus commented that no one is saying that a child is not able to express themselves in any shape or form, but they cannot usurp the position of any other child. He stated his opposition to forcing a female child, who may have been abused, into using a bathroom or locker room where boys were allowed. Mr. Sanborn inquired about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. He stated the pronoun usage preferred by transgender students should not be used at the expense of all other children's privacy and their feelings. Continuing, he asked if a teacher would be fired or a student suspended for not using proper pronouns. He concluded that he feels others' rights are being infringed upon with the policy.
- Abby Maxwell, Gilford – Ms. Maxwell stated that she is the mother of a transgender child. She explained that her whole family had been targeted with verbal abuse, but especially her child, to the point where they considered moving. She said she wants to encourage the Board to adopt the policy, and she asked the Board, Town, and Administration to stand proudly in support of it. She stated research shows enacting the policy shows no harm is done to students when the policy is enacted. She said transgender children and youth are not an opinion, they are a fact. She stated that gender is separate from sexuality, and that transgender children and youth are marginalized and at risk, that more than one-half of transgender youth have considered suicide, with seventy percent reporting hate and harassment in school. Ms. Maxwell encouraged the Board to pass the policy.
- Steve Earle, Gilford – Speaking against the policy, Mr. Earle commented that he does not agree that an open bathroom will help marginalized students. He stated that he feels the issue is political, not scientific. He said he wants the rights of the rest of the students to be considered, and that open bathrooms will not change anything.
- Angelo Farruggia, Gilford – Mr. Farruggia stated that he feels what he is hearing here is about hate; people are not discriminating against a child's education. He said he feels the letters from the children are from an uneducated viewpoint due to the age of the children, and that children are being trained only to see the negative. He stated that everyone has their own point of view, but it comes down to reality. Mr. Farruggia commented that his religious beliefs are being put on the back burner for one child; he feels we are creating a negative environment. He stated that the percentage of suicide rates are for all youths, not just for the transgender. He commented that in his opinion, the policy is unfair, the bill does not apply to schools, and he hopes the Board can come to a reasonable conclusion.

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- Dr. Michelle Rush, Gilford – As a physician with transgender patients, she stated she has spoken with them about their childhood. She said she has no moral or religious objections to transgender people. Dr. Rush quoted the Title IX law, and said that Governor Sununu stated that the law can be implemented as the Board sees fit. Dr. Rush asked for a compromise that makes everyone happy; call them by the gender/name/pronoun if they want. She asked if they could just use the single bathroom and not the locker room.
- Amber Latorre, Gilford – Ms. Latorre stated she supports the Board’s policy for transgender and non-conforming students, adding that it is not our business who these kids are. She commented that if a student tried to sneak into a girls’ bathroom, it would be considered a prank and a behavior issue and should be addressed as such. Ms. Latorre commented that the sexual harassment policy in the handbook addresses this behavior. She commented on the behavior of others towards transgender students, feeling they are marginalized and need protection. Continuing, she said single use bathrooms would isolate them. In her opinion, teaching students to use the right pronoun is common decency; she urged the community to educate themselves on being transgender and asked the Board to offer more education to children and parents as to what transgender is.
- Linda Shanley, Gilford – Ms. Shanley expressed her concern with the policy, stating that it is signaling out transgender students, but should include all students, so that all students feel safe in the bathroom. She said she feels the Board’s responsibility is to make the children feel safe in the bathrooms. She commented that she wants to see locks on the bathroom doors, wants to see locker rooms safe for children to change in without fear, and that children must feel safe changing in the locker rooms. Ms. Shanley stated that she feels everyone wants to feel safe, and asked if people can agree on that.

Mr. McDonough called the Public Comment portion of the meeting now closed after no others chose to speak. He explained the next steps in the process, stating that the policy has to go to back to the Policy Committee, then it will come back to the Board for a second reading. No vote or action will be taken at this time.

### **Student Council Report**

Student Council Representative Alex Cheek submitted his report as written. He stated that Homecoming, held last week, was successful. The theme this year was Disney Movies. The hallways were displayed to the entire school Friday morning during homeroom. Each fall sport team played a game on Saturday. At the football game on Saturday night, the Meadows was a collection site for the New Hampshire Tackles Hunger food drive. WMUR gave our Student Athletic Leadership Team a \$250.00 Hannaford gift card Hannaford, which our Leadership Team matched. The gift cards were used to purchase non-perishable food items that were donated to the food drive. Over four hundred pounds of food was received, and more is still arriving.

Mr. Cheek stated that one week per month, GHS participates in “Choose Love.” In September, the week was broken up into four, one day challenges, which all seemed to enjoy. Another recent activity was the arrival of the exchange students from Spain. The exchange students seem to really enjoy their time here.

On October 17, 2019 the physical education classes will be taking a field trip to Mount Major for a hike. It will be a great opportunity to spend time outside in our technology dominated world.

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**Superintendent's Report**

**Budget Work Sessions Schedule**

Mr. Beitler presented the Gilford School District Budget Meetings calendar to the Board. Meetings will be held at the SAU office starting at 5:00 p.m. They will be on October 22-24, 2019.

**Data Presentation**

Mr. Beitler presented the Gilford School District 2018-2019 Student Performance Data. He opened the presentation with the considerations looked at when reviewing the data, stating that the data will be shared with the Board, then the teachers. This is the Board's first look at the data.

Discussion ensued with the following comments regarding the NWEA testing data:

- Mr. McDonough asked if there was data from this year yet. Mr. Beitler replied it is not available yet.
- Peter Sawyer stated that he sat down in June of last spring to discuss growth from fall to spring; the principals at the next early release will do a data review on this fall's data for the students we have right now
- Rae Mello-Andrews asked about data for spring for class of 2024. Mr. Sawyer said they have not done spring of eighth grade yet.
- Rae Mello-Andrews asked if we still do summer reading. Mr. Sawyer replied yes, it is mandatory; Math summer program is still held but is not mandatory. She continued, commenting on the "summer slide." Peter Sawyer said that yes, they scores go down over the summer, then go up in the spring.

Discussion ensued with the following comments regarding the NHSAS testing data:

- Mr. Beitler stated the District currently assesses the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades, but it no longer assesses fourth grade.
- Mr. McDonough asked about the change in the trend for eleventh grade in 2018. Mr. Beitler said we were not at the state level, to which Anthony Sperazzo said that it is difficult to compare classes-to-classes, and he will continue to meet with science department teachers to go over the data to evaluate it.
- Chris McDonough stated he would like to see students over 50% proficient; we are currently at 46%.
- Malcolm MacLeod asked if the new test was not in step with our program or vice versa. Mr. Sperazzo replied the tests and teaching are now more geared to inquiry type learning, and teachers are attending workshops to attend to this.
- Rae Mello-Andrews asked if the tests contain more critical thinking questions than in the past. Mr. Sperazzo replied in the affirmative.
- Chris McDonough noted the same with the SBAC and math tests years ago and how, once the curricula changed, scores went up.
- Mr. Beitler commented that 2019 NHSAS ELA scores are above the norm.
- Peter Sawyer explained how it is not just the data he looks at with teachers, it is the various parts of the tests. He continued that informational writing, as it was our low point, will be addressed as to how we can improve on it.

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Mr. Beitler continued to explain the data given, including the SAT results:

- Mr. McDonough asked Danielle Bolduc if this was the first third grade to know nothing but Eureka math, to which she replied yes.
- Mr. Beitler said that this was the first year the school took the SAT electronically, and the scores dropped drastically.
- Mr. Sperazzo commented that more student test prep was done than ever before, yet scores really dropped. He said he has not seen a slide like this in many years; more students practiced on the platform than ever before. Continuing, he stated GHS is one of only a few schools to use the new digital platform start to finish, and IT issues caused the test to be five hours long, upsetting both staff and students. Mr. Sperazzo said GHS has gone back to the paper and pencil test until issues with the on-line test are worked out. He noted similar schools had the same frustration and will not use the on-line version until issues are resolved.
- Anthony Sperazzo said he met with students, several commenting on not going to college and whom do not value the SAT. (We have ninety-seven students enrolled at the HUOT, and they commented that they had no interest in taking the test.) He stated that students are encouraged to take the test, but do not have to.
- Gretchen Gandini asked if there was an informational night for parents regarding opting out of the test. Mr. Sperazzo said that students can opt out on their own, they do not need parents' approval, as the form is submitted on-line.
- Malcolm MacLeod commented on room for improvement with only 37% scoring proficient, and that this is huge area of concern for him.
- Gretchen Gandini commented on the length of test, asking if it was a hiccup in the system and should students have been given the option to take it again. Mr. Sperazzo replied that he had discussed this with the test coordinator and learned there has to be an extraordinary case to have a retest allowed by the College Board.
- Mr. McDonough asked if a survey had been given to the students asking if they had really tried. Mr. Sperazzo replied that a survey had been given, with several students saying they had "Christmas-treed" the test.
- Chris McDonough stated that these numbers mean something, and we need to get them interested or let them opt out; he is alarmed as well – it is either the curriculum or what we are teaching, or we need to get them excited about doing well on the test.
- Mr. Sperazzo highlighted that the brand new calculus teacher got her students to an average of 4.7 out of 5 on the AP.
- Michelle Heyman asked about the number of students taking AP courses vs the number of test takers. Mr. Sperazzo said there are thirty-five students in AP classes, but the numbers of students who took an AP test include students who could be taking more than one test.

### **Superintendent's Report, Continued**

Superintendent Beitler reviewed his report as written.

### **Curriculum Responsibilities**

Mr. Beitler presented the 2019-2020 Gilford School District Curriculum Responsibilities handout. Following discussion of the positions listed in the handout, the item was tabled and will be revisited at another date.

### **Budget Work Sessions, Continued**

Mr. Beitler continued the discussion of the schedule. Gretchen Gandini stated that she cannot be at the meeting on October 24, 2019. Rae Mello-Andrews said that she also cannot be at the meetings on October 23-24, 2019. Chris McDonough commented that the meetings will run on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 22-23, 2019, and will go from there.

### **High School Principal's Report**

Anthony Sperazzo reviewed his report as written.

Mr. Sperazzo introduced Neal Miller and Katrina Boucher, who presented their Robotics team's second place trophy to the Board. The competition, held in Plymouth, was sponsored by the governor and only New Hampshire teams were eligible. Scholarships are available for the winners, and their placement puts our students in good standing for some of those. A total of twenty-seven teams participated.

Mr. Sperazzo stated the National Honor Society Induction will be held on Tuesday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. He invited both Boards to the ceremony, requesting that any Board member interested should contact him so that he can reserve seats.

Athletic Director Rick Acquilano presented information on the schools' athletics:

- The participation numbers from fall of 2018 and winter 2018/2019 show the trend is a loss of athletes; many JV players also play on Varsity teams.
- The loss is present at both MS and HS level.
- Last year we received an award for no disqualifications in the state, out of a thousand games. Schools are rated for sportsmanship by other teams – GHS received zero negative votes; this demonstrates we are doing things the right way.
- Homecoming: Varsity teams were undefeated; volleyball is playing extremely well.
- Patrick Gandini is an amazing runner as a freshman, and all teams are doing well in general; we are very proud of our fall athletes and all they have done.
- The Student Athletic Leadership (SAL) team has purchased t-shirts that they give out to promote those doing it right, both on and off the fields and in the stands.
- We are purchasing 3-sport athletes a t-shirt for their participating in three sports per year; getting different colors so that if they do it all four years, the shirts will be a different color for each year.
- GHS is looking to grow its SAL team; he has asked for nominations from coaches; the students then apply.
- Teams are continuing to have busing issues – nearly every day – often having to double up teams on a bus; this is not unique to Gilford – we are seeing it across the state.
- The length of the Division III winter season is being discussed; studies show it is grossly long; a committee is forming to study it at the state level.
- Discussion followed.

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Mr. Sperazzo continued his report:

Mr. Sperazzo stated he is seeking approval to set the graduation date: “The high school graduation date shall be set no more than five school days or thirty instructional hours before the end of the scheduled school year without consideration of making up lost time pursuant to Ed 306.18 (a)(4).” He stated he is seeking approval to have Graduation on Friday June 12, 2020 at Gilford High School at 6:00 p.m., on the fields. If there is inclement weather, the decision will be made earlier in the day and the ceremony will take place in the auditorium with overflow in the gymnasium. Mr. Sperazzo added that an additional \$5,000.00 would be needed for added costs if held on the field. If held in the auditorium, a set number of tickets would be given to the students graduating, based on the available seating.

Discussion followed:

- Tim Goggins explained that we would have graduation the same day as Belmont, and that they are considering moving it back to their facilities as well. He said that it is a bigger cost to have it outside because of the added cost for the sound system.
- Michelle Heyman asked if there was a cost savings to having it at the Meadows and sharing it with Belmont. The difficulty of parking at the Meadows was discussed.
- Karen Thurston asked about having it back here and using the cafeteria, etc. for overflow.
- Tim Goggins also stated that it is difficult to wait for the sixty-days out response from Meadowbrook
- Chris McDonough asked Anthony Sperazzo to survey the seniors as to where they would like to have it and if they would support a limited number of tickets (5) if it is here.
- Mr. McDonough said the rental number for chairs is a big number; he asked about purchasing some over the years until we would not need to rent them, but then the question is where to store them.
- Chris McDonough asked Mr. Sperazzo to bring the survey results back to the next meeting, at which time a decision would be made.

Mr. Sperazzo next asked for approval for the Robotics team to apply for two \$5,000.00 grants from BAE and Meredith Village Savings Bank to help purchase supplies for the robot that exceeds the budgeted amount. Gretchen Gandini made a motion to allow the robotics team to apply for the two grants; Malcolm MacLeod seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Business Administrator’s Report**

#### **DFA –Administration of Federal Grant Funds**

Mr. Isabelle read his report as written.

He reviewed the DFA Investment report and Fund Balance Policy. Mr. Isabelle asked the Board to reaffirm the DFA. He stated that no changes have been made since June 2011. Karen Thurston made a motion to reaffirm policy DFA Investments; Frank Weeks seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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**Policies for Review – First Reading**

**GCG** – Part-time and Substitute Professional Staff Employment. Gilford School District policy for review. Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.

**GCGAA** – Per Diem Rates for Substitute Teachers. Current Gilford School District policy for review. There is no NHSBA sample policy. Kirk Beitler said the going rate for substitute teachers is currently \$75.00 per day in the Lakes Region. Mr. McDonough asked about raising it; he stated that in his opinion, a nominal increase would be good. Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.

**JLF** – Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect. Current Gilford School District policy. Suggest replacing with NHSBA sample policy. Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.

**JBAB** – Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students. NHSBA Sample Policy. Revised to (a) more closely track the requirements RSA 169-C, (b) clarify the participation of the Principal, (c) include reference to the NH Code of Conduct for Educators, and (d) provide a mandate for annual training. NHSBA sample policy. This policy is required by law. We do not have this policy.

Discussion followed:

- Gretchen Gandini asked for clarification on the language and where parent permission is needed and when it is not. She asked if a birth certificate is needed when student is enrolled and can students register as transgender or is there a way for us to know how many transgender students are in school. Mr. Beitler replied that birth certificates are required by no, there is no way for us to know the number of transgender students in school.
- Malcolm MacLeod asked if there are barriers/curtains to provide a private changing area in locker rooms which would give everyone more privacy. Anthony Sperazzo said we have dividers in bathrooms; Scott Isabelle said we have to look at asbestos issues if drilling into walls, ceilings, etc. were we to change the current set up.
- Michelle Heyman asked about curtains like in doctors' offices.
- Rae Mello-Andrews asked about a curtain in the locker rooms.
- Malcolm MacLeod asked about having an adult monitor in the locker room – it would eliminate discrimination; having a curtained off area for privacy would cover all questions. Mr. Sperazzo stated that we do have monitors there already.
- Chris McDonough said every bathroom should be a one-occupant bathroom to avoid a big controversy in the town.
- Karen Thurston said we have not had some of the issues that could happen, but we are trying to tackle all possibilities. There is no crystal ball.

Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.



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**DAF** – Administration of Federal Grant Funds. NHSBA sample policy. This policy is required by law. We do not have this policy. Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.

**DJE-R** – Bidding Procedures. Current GSD policy for reference. Policy sent back to Policy Committee for review.

### **Principals' Reports**

#### **Gilford Elementary School**

Danielle Bolduc reviewed her report as written. No added comments.

#### **Gilford Middle School**

Peter Sawyer reviewed his report as written.

Chris McDonough asked about the summer math academy – is this consistent with past years? Peter replied that enrollment was slightly lower; attendance shows that although students signed up, they did not participate fully, which he attributes to more opportunities available to students in the summer.

Mr. Sawyer also commented that the student population has ballooned. The October 1, 2018 enrollment was 311; end of school, 2019 enrollment was 318. Current enrollment is 329.

### **Public Comment**

- Matthew Wood, Gilford – Mr. Wood asked if there was a policy being put into place at this time. Chris McDonough said not at this time, continuing to clarify “policy” wording – it is a practice, not a policy. Mr. Wood asked for the Board to vote on a current policy or to retract or reaffirm it.
- Malcolm MacLeod made a motion to retract the practice until a policy is enacted; Chris McDonough seconded the motion.

Discussion followed:

- Chris McDonough asked if we retract it, what happens now.
- Kirk Beitler said that we have students currently using single stall bathrooms.
- Karen Thurston said the initial Board meeting was held to discuss what to do if we did not have a policy.
- Chris McDonough said the Board voted 4-0 to approve what was sent out in Mr. Beitler’s letter.
- Malcolm MacLeod withdrew his motion, stating he wanted to respect what the Board has done previously. He stated that he will wait for the Policy Committee to complete the process.
- Maria Suarez, Gilford – Ms. Suarez stated she has three boys and that what people are doing seems to come from fear, to not support transgender students. She suggested getting people educated – not to have them feel something that they do not, but to have them make an educated decision, not one made out of fear. She said her research shows her that nothing has happened from a transgender child and

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- (Ms. Suarez cont.)  
asked the Board to please have a forum or speaker so parents can ask any question they want, good or bad, so they can understand.
- Skip Murphy, Gilford – Mr. Murphy stated he feels children are the utmost in importance, but the way the government works here needs to be done properly and by due process. He thanked Danielle Bolduc for the way Gilford Elementary School secretaries treat his grandson. He re-stated his opinion on the rights of the individual. He asked the Board to understand the nuances and terminology, and if we are teaching civics, asking if people have a complete understanding as to what the words actually mean. He concluded that a right is not an entitlement, in his opinion.
- Kyle Sanborn, Gilford – Mr. Sanborn stated that he wants the best outcome for the children. He stated that he feels he is fighting for the girls, and that this is a polarizing subject – especially with sports. He asked if girls were losing out, and stated that he will fight for his children’s rights.
- Gretchen Gandini – Ms. Gandini clarified statements misinterpreted by another speaker. She said that she does believe that transgender children should be able to play on the team with which they identify.

**Non Public Session**

Non-Public – RSA 91-A:3II (a) *The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.*

At 9:24 p.m., Gretchen Gandini made the motion to go into non-public session; Karen Thurston seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion passed.

**Adjournment**

Motion was made at 10:15 p.m. by Karen Thurston to adjourn the meeting; Gretchen Gandini seconded. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Karen Thurston  
Acting School Board Secretary**