

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020  
GILFORD HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM  
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**The Gilford School Board held a special meeting on November 24, 2020 in the Gilford High School Auditorium. Present were Board members Chris McDonough, Gretchen Gandini, Jeanin Onos, Kyle Sanborn, and Karen Thurston. Gilmanton representatives were Adam Mini and Michelle Heyman. Administrators present were Kirk Beitler, Danielle Bolduc, Brenda McGee, Anthony Sperazzo and Amie Leigh. Peter Sawyer joined remotely.**

**Opening**

School Board Chair Chris McDonough called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Superintendent Beitler confirmed posting of the meeting. Chair McDonough informed the public they could email comments to [comments@sau73.org](mailto:comments@sau73.org).

**Public Comment**

Chair McDonough switched public comment until after Superintendent Beitler's presentation stating that many questions would probably be answered in the presentation.

**Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Beitler referred to his handout and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the instructional models for November 30-December 23.

- Students, parents and staff have been incredibly resilient.
- Staff have worked incredibly hard during in school and remote instructional models.
- Administrators have worked in many capacities to support teaching and learning.
- During contract tracing, we must keep students and staff out of the buildings until the tracing is complete.
- One positive case can impact many with contract tracing leading to quarantining,
- There are 18 active COVID cases in Gilford.
- There are 10 active COVID cases in Gilmanton.

**Gilford High School:**

- As of 11/23/2020, there are 145 students in quarantine at Gilford High School.
- As of 11/23/2020, there are 17 staff members in quarantine at Gilford High School.
- On 11/30/2020, 75 students at Gilford High School will still be in quarantine.
- On 11/30/2020, 8 staff members at Gilford High School will still be in quarantine.
- Remote instruction 11/30/2020 – 12/23/2020 is recommended.
- Quarantining will be complete by 12/1/2020.
- Staffing is pushing critical issue.
- Finals are December 9, 10 and 11.

**Gilford Middle School:**

- As of 11/23/2020, there are 21 students in quarantine at Gilford Middle School.
- As of 11/23/2020, there are 6 staff members in quarantine at Gilford Middle School.

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- All of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and staff are out due to quarantining.
- On 11/30/2020, 21 students at Gilford Middle School will be in quarantine.
- On 11/30/2020, 6 staff members at Gilford Middle School will be in quarantine.
- All of 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be out until 12/5/2020.
- Remote instruction 11/30/2020 – 12/23/2020 is recommended.

**Gilford Elementary School**

- As of 11/23/2020, there are 10 students in quarantine at Gilford Elementary School.
- As of 11/23/2020, there are 11 staff members in quarantine at Gilford Elementary School.
- On 11/30/2020, 10 students will still be in quarantine.
- On 11/30/2020, 11 staff members will still be in quarantine.

**District Considerations:**

**Special Education**

- We must provide services to students.
- Some student services must continue in person.
- We will need to staff this programming.
- Precautions will need to be put in place.

**Food Service**

- If we are remote, we can deliver food.
- We can be available for pick up.
- We will continue to offer breakfast and lunch.

**Co-Curricular**

- Athletics starts in phase one and progresses to phase two in December.
- Play rehearsal will resume once quarantining is completed with performance in December.
- These will be family decisions.

The Board asked various questions and discussion ensued regarding Gilford High School.

Michelle Heyman asked if we are remote, would we still contract trace? Superintendent replied yes.

Gretchen Gandini inquired if there would there be an opportunity for small cohorts to be in the building for families who cannot pivot to remote. Superintendent Beitler replied that 504, Special Education and ESOL students would be invited into the building as long as we have the staff.

Adam Mini ask what the date would be that we could staff in person learning. Superintendent Beitler replied that quarantining would be complete by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Discussion ensued regarding the following:

- The rise in positive cases over the past week.
- Possible trends/linked cases.

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- Did exposure occur in school or in the community?
- We need to deal with the reality of the rising numbers.
- Impact on staff. Back-up staff is now impacted
- Remote learning is much better than it was in the spring.
- Concern for teachers working from home day and night.

Gretchen Gandini stated that this is a challenge and the Board's job is to advocate for the students. Switching to remote would provide some predictability and consistency for families and she does not see how we cannot pivot to remote. Our community positivity rate right now is over 5% and rising. It is ideal to be in person but we are also an employer and an organization that needs to deal with the reality of the numbers. We proved that we can do this and be in school when the numbers and the data dictate such as in September. We are doing better in remote than we were in the spring. The uncertainty that tends to happen when you get that phone call that someone tested positive. I don't see how we can't pivot right now. This would provide consistency for a short period of time.

Jeanin Onos asked if we can have staff teach remotely from the buildings. Gretchen Gandini stated that based on input from staff, that some feel they are more productive working from home, maybe give them the choice.

Karen Thurston inquired if staff would be allowed to come into the buildings and teach from their classrooms if they wished to do so. Superintendent Beitler replied that yes they would, as long as the Governor does not shut down the schools and we are not conducting contact tracing at the time.

Kyle Sanborn commended all staff, teachers and administration for their hard work and efforts.

Chair McDonough asked Anthony Sperazzo if there was anyway to know if the cases are linked to school. Anthony replied that there is really no way to tell.

Chair McDonough opened up the public comment section. Many staff as well parents offered comments both for and against pivoting to remote learning. Some of the comments included:

- Staff is hearing that the Board cares about their safety.
- Schools do not promote community spread.
- Appreciation for the staff going above and beyond to keep learners safe.
- Worried about daughter's health if schools do not go remote.
- We have to get a handle on this and need to go remote.
- Stricter rules are needed for mask wearing.
- Go remote now and start fresh in the new year.
- Hybrid instructional model would help limit close contact.
- Will there be a bus for sports if we are remote?
- Go remote until we get a better handle on the spread.
- It is difficult to remain consistent with teaching with so many students out on quarantine.
- Can volunteers help to relieve the stress?
- The risks of keeping kids in school are much less than out of school.

There being no more comments, Chair McDonough closed the public comment section.

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Gretchen Gandini motioned to accept the recommendation of Superintendent Beitler to pivot to remote instruction at Gilford High School November 30, 2020 through December 23, 2020. The motion was seconded by Michelle Heyman.

Kyle Sanborn stated that he would support remote learning until the end of the quarantine period but he is not in favor of going remote until December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Chair McDonough stated he did not see the need at this point to go beyond the quarantine period. He opined that we can have another meeting next week to revisit it but would rather not take 18 more instructional days away. He feels we are not forced to make that decision now and he is more concerned about students that struggle with remote learning. There are also safety and the food issue for some students. Until the numbers show the need, he is not in favor of remote learning until December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Gretchen Gandini asked when the Board would meet again. Adam Mini opined that he didn't think the numbers will be any better after Christmas.

Gretchen Gandini stated that if teachers have a set amount of time they can figure out a comprehensive way to address the learning needs of students. If you have kids coming in and out of quarantine, you are not addressing those needs as effectively. At least we could get a month in of consistent teaching one way versus getting the phone call and my child is going to have to go remote and they are not as dialed in as they would be if they were logging into the same class at the same time. A month of effective teaching is an area we should think about as well. There is too much uncertainty. They would all be getting the same instruction together.

Michelle Heyman stated that we are looking at three days that are built in for finals as well. We would be going right into finals. Last time we had finals on line. Is that something the staff is going to be able to do. She asked if it was worth it to reassemble everything and stated if we can get things under control, it might help lessen the burden.

Adam mini stated that he has an incoming freshman. He is petrified of remote learning. He did not do well in the spring. Having never gone through finals and never started a second trimester, there is anxiety with freshmen.

Chair McDonough stated that right now we don't have enough staff and there is a sizable number of students on quarantine. The first week after Thanksgiving, we should not be in school. He suggested the Board make the decision tonight to be remote until December 4<sup>th</sup>. The Board could meet on December 2 or 3 and look at the numbers and make a decision then on how to proceed after December 4<sup>th</sup>.

Gretchen Gandini suggested making the decision for the full month as families are getting together over Thanksgiving and the numbers are going to continue to rise. There is a 14 day period and people test positive on the 14<sup>th</sup> day. We are going to put them all back together. For consistency purposes, it just does not make sense. Dr. Chan is expecting these numbers to go up.

Kyle Sanborn felt we cannot try to predict the numbers and stated that the CDC is finalizing new quarantine recommendations of 7-10 days with a test. He feels in person learning is so valuable and we have to look at what we have now and would like to keep as much in person as possible.

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Chair McDonough stated that we have seen the kids can transition and every day in school is worth fighting for and felt there is no rush to make a decision beyond next week. Until we do not have the staff, and there is too many students out, then it is time to stay remote.

The Board voted on the motion to accept the recommendation by Superintendent Beitler to go remote at Gilford High School 11/30/20-12/23/20. A roll call vote was conducted as follows: Gretchen Gandini, yes; Michelle Heyman, yes; Karen Thurston, no; Jeanin Onos, no; Kyle Sanborn, no; Chris McDonough, no; Adam Mini, no. The motion failed with a 5-2 vote.

Kyle Sanborn motioned to continue remote learning at Gilford High School until December 1, 2020 and return on December 2, 2020.

Discussion ensued regarding the exact dates of quarantines at GHS.

Kyle Sanborn restated his motion which reads as follows: To continue remote learning at Gilford High School through December 1<sup>st</sup> and return on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The motion was seconded by Adam Mini.

Gretchen Gandini asked if this was an assumption that quarantine numbers stay as such. Will it change if we have other cases and more under quarantine? Are we having a meeting on another date to revisit this?

Chair McDonough said his original thought process was to go remote until the end of the week. What would trigger a meeting is administration reporting new numbers, the cases did not go down, the quarantines did not go down and we are going to have a challenge staffing the school.

Jeanin Onos said that for consistency for students and staff, she would like to see it be the entire week, not two days.

Kyle Sanborn rescinded his motion. Adam Mini rescinded his second on the motion.

Kyle Sanborn amended his motion to “remote through the week bringing students back on December 7<sup>th</sup>”. The motion was seconded by Karen Thurston.

Gretchen Gandini asked for clarification on the dates of finals. Superintendent Beitler stated the finals are December 9, 10 and 11. Gretchen stated that it makes no sense to her to come back to take a test and bring kids together again for a few days. For consistency purposes, they have been doing everything remote.

Michelle Heyman stated that on top of that we will be starting with a whole new group of students and re-blending them. Would it be better to have go through finals remotely and start the second trimester fresh with in person learning.

Adam Mini felt it is better to bring them back the prior week on Thursday or Friday before finals.

Discussion ensued on what would be the best day to return to in person learning.

Gretchen Gandini asked the Board to think of ourselves as a teacher. How are we going to educate kids and provide the best instruction? Doesn't it make more sense given the numbers right now, to just use a month of data and then get back together right after the holiday because we did not see an uptick after Thanksgiving. We can schedule the meeting right now for the end of the Christmas vacation week. At least we could make the call then with informed data and allow the staff to plan accordingly to offer a consistent comprehensive curriculum through the time frame.

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Karen Thurston stated that we knew the high school was going to be the hardest to contain. When they are in quarantine, they are not getting the face-to-face instruction. Leaving students for two weeks on their own to learn is not good.

Gretchen Gandini shared that during remote learning her son would log on and talk to his classmates and teachers. If he pivots to quarantine, he is on his own. At least if a teacher is dialed into remote teaching, they are working with the student. Kids in quarantine are not having equal access to education.

Chair McDonough said there are going to be kids in quarantine all the time.

Gretchen Gandini stated that the numbers are spiking right now. Cases in the community show that positive cases may not show symptoms until 14 days later. It just makes sense to get a month of consistent remote.

There being no more discussion, the Board voted on the motion for remote through the week bringing students back on December 7<sup>th</sup>. A roll call vote was conducted as follows: Jeanin Onos, yes; Kyle Sanborn, yes; Chris McDonough, yes, Adam Mini, yes, Gretchen Gandini, no; Karen Thurston, no; Michelle Heyman, no. Motion passes 4-3.

Gretchen Gandini asked for clarification regarding if the Board would have a meeting to revisit the decision if the data showed otherwise. Chair McDonough asked Superintendent Beitler if the data shows the need, to contact Chair McDonough to schedule a meeting. Gretchen Gandini inquired when would we make that call. Chair McDonough stated the call for a meeting would be made by the 4<sup>th</sup> of December.

Chair McDonough asked for a motion on the middle school.

Chair McDonough made a motion to have the same instructional model at the middle school as the high school. The motion was seconded by Jeanin Onos.

Karen Thurston asked if the movement of the students at the middle school is easier to keep together than the high school. Superintendent Beitler explained that the classes move together and do not mix like at the high school. Karen asked why the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade was quarantine. Superintendent Beitler responded that 21 students are under quarantine in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade but the entire grade is out because all of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are under quarantine. We don't have the staff for 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Peter Sawyer stated that there is no crossing of grade levels but there is some cross contamination at lunches, recess and the busses. It is much easier to trace and contain at the middle school.

Chair McDonough asked if is there anything in place or could be put in place as far as distancing for middle school teachers that could avoid them ever being considered close contact by definition of the CDC. Could they stay at their desks or have a 6 foot tape line or something that would say that the teacher wouldn't be a close contact by definition. Peter Sawyer responded that they would have to sit still at their desk but that at is not how they teach however. They work the room, students come up and ask them questions. The only way around it would be if they sat in their corner and taught from there. Chair McDonough asked if that is not still better than teaching from a computer. Peter said it is difficult to do. We still have 17 kids in a room. It would be tough.

Discussion ensued regarding the numbers of positive cases and quarantines over the past two weeks.

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There being no more discussion, the Board voted on the motion for middle school to return to in person learning on December 7<sup>th</sup>. A roll call vote was conducted as follows: Karen Thurston, yes; Kyle Sanborn, yes; Jeanin Onos, yes; Chris McDonough, yes; Gretchen Gandini, no. The motion passed with a 4-1 vote.

Gretchen Gandini clarified that the Board would meet on December 4<sup>th</sup> if the numbers reflect the need. Chair McDonough confirmed that they would meet no later than December 4<sup>th</sup>.

Gretchen Gandini motioned to follow Superintendent Beitler's recommendation for remote instruction for Gilford Elementary School for 11/20/20 – 12/4/202. Jeanin Onos seconded the motion.

Kyle Sanborn asked if the staff is following the same protocol as the students. Danielle Bolduc replied yes.

Danielle Bolduc shared that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade cases gave the elementary school 3 cases. There are also specialists working with small groups of students. Close contact is within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more. They are looking at ways to spread out even more to prevent close contact.

Kyle Sanborn asked if there was a way to have the special needs students come into the building even if they have to remote learn with the teachers. Danielle Bolduc said they certainly could but we would need a person on staff to be with the child.

Esther Kennedy stated that our special needs, ESOL, 504 students will all be supported. We would look at each student case by case. We are going to get creative but we are ready to do what we need to do to make sure students get what they need.

Being no more discussion on the motion, the Board voted with a roll call vote as follows: Chris McDonough, yes; Gretchen Gandini, yes; Jeanin Onos, yes; Kyle Sanborn, yes; Karen Thurston, yes. Motion passes 5-0

Chair McDonough summarized the voting stating that all Gilford Schools will be in remote instruction November 30 – December 4 and return to in person learning on December 7<sup>th</sup>. Before returning to in person on December 7, there will be an evaluation of quarantine numbers for both staff and students. If it is a number that needs to be looked at, we will schedule a meeting prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> of December to reevaluate each of the schools and determine a model of instruction moving forward from that point.

Superintendent Beitler stated that we will have food available for the week of November 30 – December 4<sup>th</sup> and we will be able to deliver the food if need be. We have a School Board meeting scheduled for December 7<sup>th</sup>. We are planning on opening co-curricular on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Gretchen Gandini asked if we still have our support in place for families during the holidays. Esther Kennedy stated that we are hoping to get the list out tomorrow and it is being done on-line.

Chair McDonough opened the second public comment section. Many staff as well as parents offered comments both for and against pivoting to remote learning. Some of the comments included:

- We do not know how the virus is transmitted.
- We are not hearing a lot of concerns about teachers.
- Disappointed that we are closing 5, 7 & 8 grades.
- Students need structure and socialization.
- Stagger in person learning.

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- Need to pay substitutes more money.
- Remote learning at GES has been a positive experience.
- Elementary kids need and crave the structure.
- There will be more cases after Thanksgiving.
- PCR test is now having a 5-7 day turn around.
- There is a big difference between choosing remote and having to quarantine.
- Students need consistency.
- We are seeing a spike in cases in our community.
- High risk students should not have less opportunities than student in school.
- Can remote students live stream into classes.
- Inevitable that there will be more cases and we are putting the community at unnecessary risk.
- It is very difficult for teachers to plan effective lessons if we do not know if we are in person or remote.
- Quarantine students doing work without direct instruction from a teacher creates inequitable learning in the school.
- The hospital is only recommending rapid testing for those being admitted.

Gretchen Gandini asked if we have explored how other Districts live stream classes. Superintendent Beitler stated that we have not explored the topic with other Districts but it is in our MOU with the union that this is not something we would require teachers to do. We can explore it and have a conversation about it but we did sign off with the union that we would not require it. If teachers want to do it, they can do it and some are doing it.

There being no further comments, Chair McDonough closed public comment.

At 9:42 p.m. on a motion by Gretchen Gandini and a second by Jeanin Onos, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanin Onos  
School Board Secretary