

Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1236
Anchorage AK 99501
ADOPTED MINUTES
Friday, January 28, 2022 (Via Zoom)

Call to Order: Lem Wheelles called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. There were seven (7) members present on the conference call so there was a quorum.

Members Present: Chair Lem Wheelles, Vice-Chair Adam Reid, Jennifer Stafford, Deborah Riddle, Kimberly Bergey, Janine Todd, and Danette Peterson. All members attended via Zoom. Melody Mann, PTPC Executive Director, and Sondra Meredith, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), were also present.

Members Absent: Secretary Jamie Burgess, and Diane Kardash

Agenda Approval: Kim Bergey moved and Danette Peterson seconded to approve the agenda as presented. The agenda was unanimously approved. Chair Lem Wheelles noted that some items may be taken out of order. No amendments or suggestions were made and the agenda was approved unanimously without objection.

Introductions/Updates from Communities: Members reintroduced themselves and shared a skill that they bring to the commission.

Public Comment: There was no public comment as Chair Lem Wheelles noted at 8:47 am that no one was present to provide public comment.

Approval of Minutes: It was moved by Kimberly Bergey and seconded by Danette Peterson to approve the minutes of the October 7 - October 8, 2021 meeting without amendment. The motion passed. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously and without objection.

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Reports: Sondra Meredith delivered her reports in the following areas.

Department of Education Teacher Certification Report:

Sondra Meredith from DEED updated commissioners on the new teacher certification process which would be online in the future. The process is awaiting approval by the State Board of Education. If approved, the new process would likely be available before the start of the next year and certificate renewal will likely be available even sooner. The opportunity to provide in-person comments to the Board continues until March. She answered questions by Adam Reid and Kimberly Bergey to provide

additional information on accreditation processes by universities that are nationally accredited. Sondra Meredith answered a question by Chair Lem Wheelles to clarify the process of becoming a master teacher. DEED is also constructing something similar to HOUSE to establish a master's teacher certification that is outside of the National Board certification process. The application and metrics are being developed for this certificate. Sondra Meredith answered questions from Janine Todd regarding the additional pathways that DEED is creating for paraeducators to become certified teachers.

Department of Education Legislative Report:

Sondra further updated the commissioners on two new pieces of legislation, namely, Senate Bill 20 and House Bill 19. Senate Bill 20 is co-sponsored by Representative Story and Senator Stevens and the legislative intent is to make it easier for out-of-state educators to become licensed in Alaska by removing certain testing requirements and taking endorsements from another state at face value. House Bill 19 seeks to expand the ability of World Language educators, including Alaska Native languages, to teach additional content areas based upon content expertise. She noted that there are many versions of the reading bill and events that are being held to address the science of reading. Finally, she informed the commissioners that DEED is conducting additional studies on educator retention and recruitment. A contractor has been identified to do more focused groups and studies that might help with the retention and recruitment issues facing the state.

Executive Director's Reports: Melody Mann delivered her reports in the following areas.

Activities Report:

Many inquiries are being directed to PTPC staff around the pandemic and there have been delays due to the pandemic. Melody informed commissioners that breach of contract concerns continue to be the most frequent complaint received by PTPC staff. Presently, there are three administrative cases that are being prepared for hearing. There are few background checks to process with DUI concerns being the most frequent of those received. Melody updated commissioners on the numerous presentations that she has delivered to a variety of audiences since the commission last met, including administrators, prospective principals, educators, and human resource staff statewide. Melody further discussed the preliminary work that is being done for wider community outreach and training to implement Alaska's Professional Boundaries policy. The annual report is published and can be found on the website.

Financial Report:

Melody reviewed the financial report, including amounts authorized, expenditures and balances. There are funds for an in-person meeting in April and could possibly apply for additional funds for an in-person hearing if needed.

Case Report:

The commission was provided a summary of the cases the PTPC office has investigated since the last meeting, including those that have been dismissed or closed.

EXECUTIVE/DELIBERATIVE SESSION: Adam Ried moved and Deborah Riddle seconded to go into executive session as permitted by AS 44.62.310(d). The motion passed unanimously. The commission moved into executive session at 9:55 am and Melody Mann left the zoom meeting at this time.

GENERAL SESSION: It was moved by Deborah Riddle and seconded by Danette Peterson to move out of executive session and back into general session at 10:31 am. The motion passed unanimously and without objection.

ACTION ITEMS:

Professional Teaching Practices Commission Cases

PTPC Case 21-16: *The Commission accepted the one-year suspension of the expired initial Teaching Certificate of Mary Jane Hill, effective October 10, 2021.*

Motion: Adam Reid

Second: Janine Todd

AYE

Kimberly Bergey
Adam Reid
Janine Todd
Deborah Riddle
Lem Wheelles
Jennifer Stafford
Danette Peterson

NAY

Motion passed unanimously with a vote of 7 to 0.

Kimberly Bergey further noted that school administrators don't have the right to supersede medical guidance nor do they have the right to direct staff to make changes to medical guidance provided to them.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Breach of Contract Policy and Practices

_____Commissioners continued their discussion of breach of contract cases from the prior PTPC meeting. As previously requested by Chair Lem Wheelles, Melody Mann provided information and survey results to the commissioners regarding how other states handle similar breach of contract situations. Melody Mann discussed various options including changing the date for notification or

removing the sanction portion. Chair Wheelles noted the unique challenges that Alaskan school districts face, especially in rural areas. He also expressed concerns about locking educators into contracts for lengthy periods of time. Kimberly Bergey commented on the struggles facing military families, and the different challenges facing urban and rural communities. Deborah Riddle commented on the possible need for additional training so that educators can leave their positions professionally so that educators and administrators can avoid contentious interactions when someone has to leave. Adam Reid also commented on ways that employees in other professions can get out of their contracts and the need to get out of the contract even if they do it professionally. Danette Peterson commented on the challenges facing military-connected educators as it pertains to breach of contract concerns. Melody Mann stated it is optional to file a complaint and that military transfers and other transfers that are long distances have been seen as mitigating circumstances in the past. Melody commented on the need for districts to allow for some room for movement by employees before the contract even starts. Janine Todd and Jennifer Stafford both commented on the fact that districts are issuing employment contracts earlier and often before job fairs are held and that there is less in-service training for new teachers on rights and responsibilities. Deborah Riddle raised the possible benefits of an educator eLearning module to address concerns on breaching employment contracts. Both Chair Lem Wheelles, Danette Peterson, and Adam Reid expressed concern about the module being mandatory annually rather than available on an as-needed basis or as part of recertification. Chair Lem Wheelles expressed thoughts about the June 30th date being the deadline that PTPC uses regardless of contract language used by a district. Chair Lem Wheelles asked what would be needed to move forward with an eLearning module. Melody Mann stated that she would not need a motion and that she could work with the eLearning folks if it weren't mandatory. Janine Todd questions whether there is a Q and A section and a drop-down menu on the website. Deborah Riddle and Melody Mann were not aware of such a drop-down menu on the website. Chair Lem Wheelles expressed a desire to revise PTPC language in order to clarify that the language pertaining to the June 30th date is for the following school year. Deborah Riddle suggested that the desired language discussed by Chair Lem Wheelles be given to the Department of Law for review. Kimberly Bergey concurred that there was a need to clarify PTPC language to differentiate between current and future school years. Chair Lem Wheelles requested that Melody Man pursue information from the Department of Law or Regulation as to what would be needed to clarify PTPC language regarding this issue. Chair Lem Wheelles discussed ways that school districts can deal with breach of contract issues within their own contracts if it is before June 30th. Adam Reid expressed a desire to hear Jamie Burgesses opinions.

Melody Mann clarified that the PTPC Commission wanted her to complete three tasks. First, to determine what would be needed in order to clarify language regarding current and future school years concerning breach of contract issues. Second, to develop a FAQ on the PTPC website for parents, educators, and district administrators. Finally, to begin the development of an eLearning module to provide information on ways to professionally leave employment when circumstances arise.

Bylaw Amendments:

Chair Lem Wheelles expressed concern that there is no language as to how bylaws are to be amended. He noted that in the absence of language The process is therefore to give advance notice so that they

can be discussed at the Spring meeting. Article V of the bylaws would be amended to specify how to amend bylaws. The second proposed amendment is to amend the bylaws using “Robert's Rules of Order newly revised” rather than specifying the date in order to incorporate the most recent version. Melody Mann indicated that she would be able to publish the proposed agenda in advance of the Spring meeting.

Lunch break until 12:30

Information Items by Executive Director Melody Mann:

Melody Mann shared the presentation that is provided to administrators with commissioners.

Adjournment: Kimberly Bergey moved and Deborah Riddle seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved without objection. Lem Wheelles adjourned the meeting at 1:38 pm.

Submitted by,
Danette Peterson