

Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1236
Anchorage AK 99501
ADOPTED MINUTES
October 5-6, 2023

Call to Order: Lem Wheelles called the meeting to order at 8:50 a.m. There were 9 members present so there was a quorum.

Members Present: Secretary Jamie Burgess, Chair Lem Wheelles, Vice-Chair Adam Reid, Kim Bergey, Emma Melkerson, Mary Carlson (via Zoom), Deborah Riddle, Danette Peterson and Stephanie Green. Melody Mann, PTPC Executive Director was also present.

Members Absent: None.

Agenda Approval: Kim Bergey moved and Danette Peterson seconded to approve the agenda as presented. No discussion or amendments were proposed. The agenda was unanimously approved. Lem noted some items may be taken out of order.

Introductions: Members of the Commission introduced themselves and something new they are pursuing this year.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes: It was moved by Emma Melkerson and seconded by Kim Bergey to approve the minutes of the April 19-21, 2023 meeting and the June 28, 2023 special meeting. The motion passed to adopt the minutes.

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

Activity Report: 15 cases filed since July 1 with 16 open. Several cases have been dismissed and closed. Contractual obligations policy is reviewed with educators when they call, as well as ensuring that local options regarding a complaint have been exhausted. AAG Susan Mitchell is available as a legal advisor for Melody regarding potential and ongoing investigations. AAG Erin Egan has returned to the DOL and is also an advisor when AAG Mitchell has a conflict of interest.

Melody is seeing a continued pattern of reduced numbers of "hits" from the state Certification Office from background checks and applications. The majority are not barriers to certification. Non-disclosures of any convictions, misdemeanor or otherwise, have to be followed up with the applicant. Five inquiries from other jurisdictions were received when the Commission took an action against an educator who held a license in another jurisdiction. This is a growing area of interest in ensuring there are not issues with cross-state actions.

Melody has made several presentations to groups of educators regarding the PTPC and professional boundaries policies.

Digitizing all of the old Commission records is now complete and has reduced the amount of paperwork needed to store in the Executive Director's office. Melody mentioned that the high

number of administrative hearings last year necessitated a requested for a supplemental allocation. As a result, the development of the eLearning module on professional boundaries has been tabled for the current fiscal year. Melody has requested that this be considered for the future, as well as an admin assistant position for routine paperwork.

Financial Report: Melody reviewed the financial report. Travel for in-person meetings for the current year has been approved, as well as Melody's attendance at the National Professional Practices conference.

Case Report: The commission was provided a summary of the cases the PTPC office has investigated since the last meeting. 12 cases have been dismissed since April of 2023. Melody has endeavored to be thorough in investigating before making the decision to dismiss to determine if a sanction is warranted. Several breach of contract cases were filed with educators who had expired certificates, or where the district responded to the educator's resignation with acceptance and then filed a breach of contract complaint – these cannot be acted upon by the Commission.

EXECUTIVE/DELIBERATIVE SESSION: Kim Bergey moved and Deb Riddle seconded to go into deliberative session as permitted by AS 44.62.310(d) to address cases before the PTPC as well as evaluation of the Executive Director. The motion passed unanimously. The commission moved into deliberative session at 9:26am. Melody Mann left the room.

There was a brief break at 10:35 am for 15 minutes.

It was moved by Deborah Riddle and seconded by Kim Bergey to move out of executive session at 12:27pm. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission recessed for lunch at 12:27pm.

The Commission came back to order at 1:37pm. Chair Lem Wheelles called the roll again and re-established quorum with all 9 members present. Mary Carlson was present via Zoom, and

Action Items – PTPC Cases

PTPC Case 23-47: *The Commission upholds the denial of the teaching certificate of Arlette Houghton-Parker.*

Moved: Kim Bergey Second: Jamie Burgess

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Kim Bergey
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Danette Peterson
Jamie Burgess

Deborah Riddle

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 24-01: *The Commission upholds the dismissal of the case.*

Moved: Adam Reid Second: Emma Melkerson

AYE

Lem Wheelles

Adam Reid

Emma Melkerson

Kim Bergey

Mary Carlson

Stephanie Green

Danette Peterson

Jamie Burgess

Deborah Riddle

NAY

Discussion: Danette Peterson noted that the district in the case could have handled the situation better regarding communication and handling of leave.

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 19-11: *The Commission accepted the revocation for life of the expired Professional Teaching Certificate of Lukis J. Nighswonger.*

Moved: Emma Melkerson

Second: Stephanie Green

AYE

Lem Wheelles

Adam Reid

Emma Melkerson

Mary Carlson

Danette Peterson

Jamie Burgess

Stephanie Green

Deborah Riddle

NAY

Recused: Kim Bergey

Motion passed 8-0.

PTPC Case 23-06: *The Commission accepted the one-year suspension effective August 1, 2022 of the Initial Teaching Certificate of Charles L. Lofink.*

Moved: Deborah Riddle Second: Adam Reid

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Danette Peterson
Jamie Burgess
Kim Bergey
Deborah Riddle

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 23-09: *The Commission ordered the one-year suspension effective October 15, 2022 of the expired Initial Teaching Certificate of Alicia A. Ore.*

Moved: Kim Bergey Second: Deborah Riddle

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Danette Peterson
Jamie Burgess
Kim Bergey
Deborah Riddle

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 23-34: *The Commission accepted the one-year suspension effective March 10, 2023 of the provisional Special Services Certificate of Lori K. Pathmann.*

Moved: Jamie Burgess Second: Kim Bergey

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Danette Peterson
Jamie Burgess
Kim Bergey
Deborah Riddle

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 23-43: *The Commission accepted the warning of the certificate of an educator.*

Moved: Adam Reid

Second: Danette Peterson

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Danette Peterson
Jamie Burgess
Kim Bergey
Deborah Riddle

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 23-45: *The Commission accepted the two-year suspension with conditions effective April 12, 2023 of the Professional Teaching Certificate of Nicholle Johnston-Fisher.*

Moved: Emma Melkerson

Second: Deborah Riddle

AYE
Lem Wheelles
Adam Reid
Emma Melkerson
Mary Carlson
Stephanie Green
Jamie Burgess
Kim Bergey

Deborah Riddle

NAY

RECUSED: Danette Peterson

Motion passed 8-0.

PTPC Case 23-46: *The Commission accepted the one-year suspension effective April 7, 2023 of the expired Provisional Special Services Certificate of Laura A. Beckett.*

Moved: Kim Bergey

Second: Deborah Riddle

AYE

Lem Wheelles

Adam Reid

Emma Melkerson

Mary Carlson

Stephanie Green

Jamie Burgess

Kim Bergey

Deborah Riddle

Danette Peterson

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 24-05: *The Commission accepted the warning of an educator.*

Moved: Stephanie Green

Second: Kim Bergey

AYE

Lem Wheelles

Adam Reid

Emma Melkerson

Mary Carlson

Stephanie Green

Jamie Burgess

Kim Bergey

Deborah Riddle

Danette Peterson

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

Letter from ASA regarding Breach of Contract

There was discussion regarding the letter submitted to the Commission from the Alaska Association of Superintendents asking for review and reconsideration of the stated policy of the Commission regarding Breach of Contract actions before and after June 30th of each year.

Comments were made to encourage districts to build something into their own contracts or negotiated agreements to preserve local control and provide a mechanism to resolve incidents locally before submitting complaints to the Commission. The decision was made that the Commission would respond to the letter, and provide insight as to why the policy exists in its current form.

Re-design of the PTPC Web Page

Melody shared that she had received requests to re-design the web page to make it more user friendly. Discussion was held around ideas for reorganizing/redesigning the website.

Emma Melkerson moved and Adam Reid seconded for the meeting to recess until 8:30am on Friday October 6th. The meeting recessed at 3:29pm.

Chair Lem Wheelles called the meeting to order at 8:37am. Roll call was held. All members of the Commission were present; Mary Carlson and Jamie Burgess attended via Zoom. Melody Mann and Sondra Meredith were also present.

DEED Certification Report – Sondra Meredith attended via Zoom and gave her report as follows. Transition to the new online system is ongoing – the online renewal portion is up and running, with the initial application portion coming online in a few weeks. The new platform will reduce or eliminate the paper application and allow applicants to upload supporting documents online as well. Fingerprint cards would still need to be uploaded. A variety of factors have impacted DEED's ability to process applications in a timely manner, including staffing, the Alaska Reads Act, etc. Danette Peterson asked if the new website would have video tutorials or other support to help complete applications. Sondra stated that the new out of state reciprocity statute is now in effect; she did note that these out of state professionals will need to have two years of teaching experience to qualify. The new Type W certificate for immersion teachers is now available. There is a streamlined application for teachers to add the new reading endorsement required under the Alaska Reads Act. There is still discussion around how the fee waiver/reimbursement for this endorsement is supposed to be handled.

Discussion was held around emergency certificates – Sondra clarified that these are only good for one year and an applicant must re-apply if they need one for a second year. They must submit another fingerprint card if they have not been employed by an Alaska district in the meantime. Lem Wheelles asked if DEED did any notifications to individuals regarding expiring certificates; Sondra said that has not been the case in the past, but the new online system would have the ability to automatically issue notifications. Lem asked about background check processes for J-1 visa applicants; Sondra replied that records review in their home country was a part of the J-1 visa process. Lem also asked about when school nurses were required to be certified through DEED. Sondra stated that it depended on the District and their bargaining units/agreements. Adam Reid asked whether the applicant numbers were increasing or flat. Sondra stated that receipts are slightly higher than previous years, and there are an

increased number of requests for emergency licenses. There was a review of the retire/rehire provision and certification for in-program teachers.

Information Items –

Annual Report

Melody reviewed the Annual Report, which was made available to the Commission for review and answered questions about the different items contained in the report. Discussion was held around supporting educators from other states or countries who are new to Alaska regarding professional expectations, consequences for breaking contracts, etc.

PPI Conference

Melody discussed some of the topics for the upcoming conference and how they relate to the work of the Commission.

The Commission recessed for a 10 minute break at 9:50am.

Discussion Items –

Executive Director Annual Goals

The Commission discussed goals for Ms. Mann for her annual evaluation.

Commission Comments: Lem Wheelles thanked Mary Carlson for her service on the Commission, as her successor may be appointed prior to the next meeting. Mary shared how she had appreciated her service as a learning experience. Jamie Burgess also thanked the Commission for her experience – she is on the list of nominees for a second term and hopes to return.

Adjournment: Lem Wheelles moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved. Lem Wheelles adjourned the meeting at 10:46 am.

Submitted by,

Jamie Burgess