

State Board of Education & Early Development
Not Approved Minutes
August 24, 2021
Quarterly Board Meeting
State of Alaska, Office of the Governor Conference Room
675 7th Avenue, Suite H5
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. After the pledge of allegiance, the board adopted the agenda for August 24 and August 25, 2021. Member Hamilton moved to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Member Stockhausen. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members at this meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment made at this meeting.

Agenda Item 1. Legislative and Budget Update

Legislative Liaison Erin Hardin provided the board with a brief legislative update. The legislature was back in Juneau for its third special session to address the on-going fiscal situation in the State of Alaska. She recapped what the legislature had done in the regular and special sessions that had already occurred, what they were currently working on, and then looked forward to what the board could expect in the upcoming regularly scheduled legislative session. She highlighted the direction from the legislature to conduct a “Statewide Comprehensive Assessment of K-3 Reading Practices”. Staff are currently working on what that survey will look like and it will go out to districts and superintendents in the fall of 2021. School districts now also have the option to carry forward their unreserved operating fund balance through July 2025. This enables school districts to have greater flexibility as they work to manage both their state funds and the large influx of federal COVID relief funds as we look ahead to subsequent fiscal years. The Department of Education and Early Development (Department, DEED) will be required to submit a report to the legislature regarding these funds and will ensure that the State Board also receives a copy as well. She closed her comments by providing the board a brief update on what is ahead on the roughly fifty education related bills that are still moving through the legislature. She will provide a more comprehensive update during the legislative and budget State Board meeting in early January. She then turned the conversation over to Administrative Services Director Lacey Sanders to continue the update to the board.

Administrative Services Director Lacey Sanders provided an update on the FY2022 budget. The State of Alaska budget was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Dunleavy on June 30, 2021. She explained the items in the budget that impacted the department including the Base Student Allocation and other programs that had been fully funded as well as authority to the department to allocate federal COVID-19 funds. The significant technical issue that the department has with the budget bill regards the reverse sweep. Director Sanders explained to the board the definition of the term “reverse sweep” and then informed the board as to the impacts of the reverse sweep to the department. The largest fund that is impacted with regards to the department is the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund which funds programs such as the Alaska Performance Scholarship, Alaska Education Grants, the WWAMI Medical Education program, as well as the Live Homework Help program.

These programs will not be funded in the next fiscal year due to the inability of the legislature to pass the reverse sweep. There are bills that are currently going through the legislature that will address this issue if the legislature were to pass them. The department is working with the legislature and the Governor's Office to address these issues and the department is hopeful that there will be action to address these items. Director Sanders will continue to update the board as updates become available.

Director Sanders then took questions from board members.

Agenda Item 2. Mt. Edgecumbe High School Land Sale

Commissioner Johnson began the discussion regarding a consideration to authorize the Commissioner to enter into a binding agreement to sell Lot 15A associated with the Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, Alaska, to the City and Borough of Sitka for development as a seaplane base. He introduced Acting Deputy Commissioner Heidi Teshner and Mt. Edgecumbe High School Superintendent Janelle Vanasse who discussed this issue with the board. Acting Deputy Commissioner Teshner provided background of this issue for new board members who were not as familiar with this agenda item. The reason that the department is coming back to the State Board is that the City and Borough of Sitka is ready to submit their application to the Federal Aviation Administration to apply for their land grant and they would like a letter from the department, approved by the State Board, indicating the commitment of the department to sell the land to the City and Borough of Sitka. With the State Board's approval, the department will begin the negotiations to transfer the property over to them. Acting Deputy Commissioner Teshner explained to the board how the funds will be protected and directed to Mt. Edgecumbe High School for their use if the sale was to proceed. The department has included appropriation language in the budget that allows for any funds obtained by a land transfer to be directed back to Mt. Edgecumbe High School for operations and maintenance. The department is also researching what an endowment fund would look like for Mt. Edgecumbe High School so that they might use the funds as they see fit without being constrained by a fiscal year time deadline.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Teshner then took questions from board members.

Member Hamilton encouraged the department and Mt. Edgecumbe High School to research options to roll those funds over to a foundation to protect them for the long-term future.

Agenda Item 3A. Eagle Academy Charter School Amended Application

Commissioner Johnson discussed the request to the State Board to approve the Anchorage School Districts' amended application for the Eagle Academy Charter School to add 7th and 8th grade beginning with the 2022-2023 school year. Division Operations Manager Deb Riddle walked the board through the amended application and introduced Deanne Carroll, Principal, Eagle Academy Charter School. Ms. Carroll answered questions from board members about their charter school and their programs. Member Griffin expressed his concerns about their lack of space and encouraged them to find a new space. He praised their scores and assessments. Principal Carroll also answered questions from the board about their grading system and waitlist system.

Agenda Item 4. UAS Teacher Preparation Program

Commissioner Johnson introduced this agenda item by asking the board to consider the continuation of the state approval of the initial and advanced educator preparation programs at the University of Alaska Southeast's (UAS) School of Education through June 30, 2025. Kelly Manning, Deputy Director of the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, and Sondra Meredith, Administrator, Teacher Education and Certification, reported on the accreditation process for the UAS School of Education and

took questions from the board. Commissioner Johnson reminded the board that since they would be with the University of Alaska during their next board meeting day that they should ask them specific questions about this program. He also recommended that the board ask for an annual update so that the board can monitor the progress of this program.

Agenda Item 5. Questions Regarding Standing Reports

Commissioner Johnson introduced the standing reports which includes the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence; Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums; Mt. Edgecumbe High School; and the Department of Law. Member Kowalski asked for clarification on some of the programs under the Innovation and Education Excellence report and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center. Susan McKenzie, Director from the division answered the question from Member Kowalski and will do some further research for Member Kowalski to reference. Member Stockhausen asked for an explanation regarding the special education program and the graduation rates that have been identified. Special Education Program Coordinator, Don Enoch, answered the question from Member Stockhausen. Chair Fields asked for an update on the Alaska Virtual School. The department will get the information for Chair Fields and report back to him on this item. Commissioner Johnson stressed the fact that Alaska ranks 51st in the nation in terms of 4th grade reading scores and that there is nothing that he won't do to improve those outcomes. He highlighted the new assessment and reminded the board that department staff will utilize the data correctly so that it translates to growth for students. He spoke to the importance of working with tribal leaders and partnering with them on elements of school improvement so that the cultural element is also present.

Member Hamilton asked Superintendent Vanasse for an update on the Mt. Edgecumbe school opening. Superintendent Vanasse expressed her excitement about the 385 children that were on campus. They have had a couple of positive COVID-19 cases, but those children are isolating and, as of now, there is no spread. She feels like the mitigation plan that they have in place is working and they are excited to get back to in-person learning. There were no other questions from board members.

Agenda Item 6. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Johnson thanked the board for the opportunity to interface with them in an informal setting during their board retreat day. He encouraged the board to view the Joint House and Senate Education committee with Mississippi State Superintendent Kerry Wright and Kymona Burke from ExcellnEd as it was a very informative presentation and one worth watching if they had not yet done so. It is important that DEED staff engage with the board and get the board's guidance and leadership in order to do their job more effectively. He thanked staff for their help with the board meetings and introduced the new staff that the board will be voting on in the business meeting. He detailed his travel around the state in which he was able to visit different districts and the joy that it was to be back in schools and visiting with students and faculty. He thanked districts for their work to return students to in-person learning even though they are all addressing the COVID-19 pandemic a bit differently. He also detailed the work that the department is doing with the Department of Health and Social Services in partnership to keep students healthy.

Amend Agenda Motion

Member Hamilton made the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education alters its agenda to move the Commissioner's evaluation under executive session because of a personnel evaluation to now in place of tomorrow's meeting. The amendment motion was seconded by Member Griffin. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 15. Executive Session: DEED Commissioner Evaluation

Chair Fields made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development convene in executive session to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. Member Stockhausen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

At the end of the Executive Session, Chair Fields made the following motion to come out of executive session: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development come out of Executive Session and to go back on the record. Member Hamilton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. Chair Fields informed the public that Commissioner Johnson had received a positive evaluation and he thanked the commissioner for his work to lead the department during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The board recessed until August 25, 2021.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021**Agenda Item 7. Approve FY2022 DEED Budget**

Member Hamilton made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Fiscal Year 2022 enacted budgets for the Department of Education and Early Development. Member Griffin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 8. Mt. Edgecumbe High School Land Sale

Member Hamilton made the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development authorize the Commissioner, subject to a Final Best Interest Decision, to negotiate and enter into an agreement to sell a portion of Lot 15A, U.S. Survey 1496, to the City and Borough of Sitka. If the proposed sale is found to be in the best interest of the State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development, and Mt. Edgecumbe High School, this motion also authorizes the Commissioner to finalize the negotiated sale when possible. Member Kowalski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 9A. Eagle Academy Charter School

Member Griffin made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development to approve the Eagle Academy Charter School amendment for 7th and 8th grades pending provision of an approved Amended Charter. Member Erickson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 10. Approve UAS Teacher Preparation Program

Member Erickson made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the continuation of the University of Alaska Southeast's Initial and Advanced Educator Preparation Program's state approval through June 30, 2025. Member Hamilton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 11. Approve Deputy Director

Member Kowalski made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve Commissioner's appointment of Kelly Manning as Deputy Director of the Division

of Innovation and Education Excellence. Member Erickson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 12. Approve Division Director

Member Hamilton made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve Commissioner's appointment of Susan McKenzie as Division Director of the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence. Member Stockhausen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 13. Consent Agenda

Member Stockhausen made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the June 9-10, 2021 board meeting. Member Griffin seconded the motion. Commissioner Johnson reminded the board that minutes are posted to the department's State Board of Education webpage after they are approved by the board. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item 14. Executive Session: FY2023 DEED Budget Discussion

Member Griffin made the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development convene in executive session to discuss the Office of Management and Budget's Fiscal Year 2023 Guidance Memorandum and the Fiscal Year 2023 budget priorities for the department. Under the Open Meetings Act, AS 44.62.310(c)(4), these are matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure. Member Stockhausen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

At the end of the Executive Session, Chair Fields made the following motion to come out of executive session: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development come out of Executive Session and to go back on the record. Member Hamilton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

Member Kowalski- she expressed her excitement about the fact that students are returning to in-person learning and encouraged districts to follow the CDC guidelines so that students get the best benefit that they can during the school year. She thanked the school districts for welcoming the board and is looking forward to more interaction with school districts in the future especially in rural communities. She thanked department staff for their work to prepare for the board meeting as well as their continued work with the board in the committee meeting setting.

Member Erickson- thanked the department for their work to pull off a successful in-person board meeting. He looks forward to the committee meetings and hopes that the board will be able to plan a trip to a rural school district to learn more about how instruction is conducted.

Member Hamilton- echoed Member Erickson's comments about the importance of an in-person board meeting. He requested that the board be allowed more than one in-person board meeting per year in next year's budget if at all possible. He encouraged the Mt. Edgecumbe High School and their advisory board to continue their efforts to form a foundation to protect any funds that are generated in the sale of any land in the future. He stressed that it was the best long-term solution to protect those funds and to keep it within the management of the Mt. Edgecumbe High School administration. He also updated the board on the work that the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is doing to allow

credits to be transferred to the University of Alaska system. After much work with the University of Alaska President, Pat Pitney, and the Executive Director of the ACPE, Sana Efird; Member Hamilton was pleased to announce that credits can now be transferred from the ACPE to the University of Alaska system. He thanked department staff for their work and reminded them that we are a team who are tasked with moving the needle forward for student success.

Member Stockhausen- thanked the department for their work to ensure that students returned to a safe learning environment as well as their work to obtain COVID funds. She also expressed her desire for more in-person board meetings in the future. She is excited about the committee meetings and the work that will come from those meetings and is hopeful that the forward momentum will continue to grow. She also praised the new assessment system and hopes that it will better empower teachers to meet student needs and how it will move reading instruction forward in the state.

Member Griffin- thanked the department staff, the University of Alaska, and the school districts that hosted the board for their work to make the board meeting a success. He enjoyed seeing everyone in person and hopes to have more in-person meetings in the future. He is looking forward to watching the work of the committees and is hopeful for the things that will come out of that work. He applauded the approval of the Eagle Academy Charter School. He encouraged districts to view the CDC guidelines and take the appropriate measures to ensure that students around the state stay healthy. He concluded his remarks by stressing the importance of reading and the work that the Reading Committee will be doing in the future.

Chair Fields- thanked Dr. Zinc for her presentation during the board's professional development day and encouraged school boards to bring forward rational mitigation plans to try to keep students in school as much as possible. He thanked the districts for hosting the board as well as the University of Alaska Fairbanks staff for the museum tour. He welcomed the new department staff and thanked department staff for their work to hold a successful board meeting. He thanked the commissioner for his work running the department and his work to engage with stakeholders during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.