

Canyon Creek School District #4
Yellowstone County, Billings, MT
6:30 p.m. – Library

Call To Order

October 25, 2021

Chair Amy Sironi called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 6:30 p.m. by leading those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. The following trustees and officers were present: Amy Sironi, Chair, Amy Gibbons, Vice-Chair, James Wiesner, Trustee. Brent Lipp, Superintendent and Seara Stovall, Business Manager/District Clerk were also present.

Kelly Hickey, Trustee was absent from the meeting

Additional guests present: Haley Morales, Dean of Students, Carey See, Teacher, Sheena Cain, Teacher, Becca Sedlacek, Dani Roberts, Administrative Assistant, Jason Matt, Kirsten Weatherford, Paraprofessional, Kelsey Menahan, Paraprofessional, Brian Menahan, Earl Ross, Facilities Manager, Keziah Lawicki, Carl Siroki, Wendy Bekkedahl, Sarah Kottke, Jordane Work, Kent O'Donnall, Melissa Kamp, Joey Ogburn, Candi Allen

Adjustments to the Agenda

None submitted.

Public Comment

Keziah Lawicki: She read a letter to all, including data of deaths of children. She noted the trustees were judging and dictating to parents. They were noted as imaginary heroes and bullies. She noted that the state cannot diminish the rights of the people. The trustees were noted that they should not representing what an attorney states but rather the parents and children of the community.

Jason Matt: He thanked everyone for attending and wanted to talk about motivations. He is deeply invested in this community and school. He is concerned about individuals who come into our district and dictate without a vested interest in the school. He is vested in the school and community as a parent, prior board chair and community member, with the best interest of the district and students in mind. He asked that everyone consider others motivation when they share their public comments. Masking is a compromise to protect the students and community as a whole.

Kirsten Weatherford: She shared a statement in reference to the masking requirement on behalf of the 13 total classified staff. In summary, the classified staff as a whole is in support of masking to protect students and staff. There is a serious shortage of substitutes in all departments and if there were an outbreak the district as a whole would be in trouble. There is also immune-compromised students and staff members at higher risk.

Robert Ogburn: Noted this is his second board meeting in attendance. His motivation is to unite everyone. He is here to ask for unity. He shared that a big part of the loss of student education is the

division that is coming from masking. He was very disheartened by the last meeting. He commented on Chair, Amy Sironi's comment of drawing a line in the sand. He felt that was a definite political statement. He feels the mask mandate is overwhelming the student's education.

Jordan Work: Out of district parent, voicing his appreciation for the education his child is getting. This is his first board meeting in attendance. He is appreciative of everyone's support.

Candy Allen: Curious about what medical advice and advisor were looked at and is there anywhere to find the data? She is interested in the medical credentials of those advisors and where they are located. In September there were three positive cases and she is wanting to know the spread of the data from then. She is looking for comparison of before and after the mask mandate. She is asking for comparisons to other local schools and their spread in comparison to ours. How is the vaccinated population playing into the data and what is the risk level with the increased population of inoculated and natural immunity? How are the teachers doing in all of this? Are they being supported through all of this?

Carey See: She shared that she has one of the largest classes in the school. She shared that the reason she wears a mask is to protect her students and her co-workers. She noted that all educators are teaching their hearts out.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Stovall shared that Payroll has been added to the consent agenda per the recommendation of the auditor. The auditor shared that it is a chance for the board to review and approve payroll, which is by far the biggest expense of the district, segregates the preparation, review and approval processes, chance to look at employee names, amounts, etc... for reasonableness, approve employee leaves, etc.

James Wiesner moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Amy Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence

1. Letter of Resignation – Stephanie Heaps. Superintendent Lipp thanked Ms. Heaps for her efforts while with Canyon Creek.
Amy Gibbons moved to accept the Letter of Resignation for Stephanie Heaps as presented. James Wiesner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. RiverStone Health School Nurse Report - Superintendent Lipp shared Nurse Rock's monthly report. There has been a challenge in getting student immunization records to the school.
3. Additional Correspondence was remitted for distribution to the Board of Trustees from Brent and Jamie Wegner.
4. Additional Correspondence was remitted for distribution to the Board of Trustees from Kirsten Weatherford on behalf of the Classified Staff.

Administrative Report

- Superintendent's Report –
 1. Covid/ School Health Report/Matrix – Superintendent Lipp shared that this would be covered under New Business item #12. He shared that he meets once a week on

Wednesday with Mr. Felton, Yellowstone County Health Officer for approximately two hours. They review the data and look at comparisons and trends from the Yellowstone County Schools Weekly Report. The basis of this is trying to do the best they can for a large population of students, in a very small area in which physical distancing is not possible. As a community the ultimate goal is to keep the students in the classroom. Staffing is the number one concern that would lead to a temporary shutdown. Masking is the only tool that is applicable to students of all ages. Vaccination is limited as it is not an option for all students. The best case scenario to keeping the building open and students and staff healthy is masking. The goal is to keep students learning and keeping the focus on academics.

Superintendent Lipp recommended a monthly review of the data and the trends of the data supplied from Yellowstone County Unified Health Command. He reviewed the matrices in detail and shared that this is the data that school boards are using to drive their decisions.

James Wiesner inquired if John Felton shared the comparison of districts who have mask mandates versus districts who do not have mask mandates in place.

Superintendent Lipp shared that he felt other districts were ignoring the data or not compiling the data as they should be within their districts.

There has been inquiries on surveying the community/parents to determine support of or against the mask mandate. Superintendent Lipp noted that is not the only factor in the decision making.

James Wiesner inquired at what point the data drives the decision to move masking to optional again.

There was audience interaction and inquiries on if this is the case for the next five years.

Jason Matt asked for an ongoing communication of the data that is reviewed weekly with John Felton. He noted this would bring comfort to all, if a weekly communication was shared so that there was buy-in by all, to understand what is driving the decisions made by the board and superintendent.

2. Girls Basketball Tournament – Superintendent Lipp shared that the tournament is scheduled for October 28 – 30th and will be held at Trinity. The girls are currently undefeated and seated number one.
3. TEAMS – Superintendent Lipp shared that he is currently working on completing the TEAMS report which is a reporting for accreditation.
4. Math Position – Superintendent Lipp shared that with the resignation of Ms. Heaps, the district advertised for a Certified Math Teacher. In New Business, there is an action item to hire Connie Lambert, with a start date of November 1st.
5. MCEL Conference – Superintendent Lipp shared that he participated in the MCEL conference scheduled for October 21st-22nd. There was positive feedback from Superintendent Lipp, Haley Morales and Amy Gibbons on the information covered during the conference.
6. Bereavement Leave – Superintendent Lipp shared that bereavement leave for all staff varies and for some, they do not have bereavement leave at all. Per the Master Agreement, Certified Staff are entitled to five days of bereavement leave. Per the staff

handbook, Classified Staff may use accrued sick leave but no amount is listed. Per the Superintendent's contract, leave of absence without loss of salary or utilization of sick leave may be granted for up to five contract days. For both the Dean of Student's and Business Manager there is no reference or allocation of bereavement leave in their contracts. Due to the variances across staff and previous application of bereavement leave this is being brought to the attention of the trustees for consideration at a future meeting.

7. Emergency Connectivity Fund – Superintendent Lipp shared that with the assistance of Aaron Dantic, Rimrock Computer Company and Nicole Jones, E-Rate Program Management the district was able to apply for funding that has the potential to cover 100% of the expenditure for laptops up to \$400 each. The application required the district to report on information for unmet student needs in relation to technology access. The district funding request is for 100 Chromebooks at the total cost of \$36,200. There is no guarantee of funding but the application has been successfully completed and certified. A huge thank you to Aaron and Nicole for taking this on and completing it on behalf of the District.
- Dean of Student's Report –
 1. Discipline – Mrs. Morales gave a summary of the disciplinary issues that have been addressed since the last board meeting. September numbers were reflected as one referral per day. There were significant referrals in the other column, which was masking. Discipline issues regularly occur on the bus and in the classroom. Junior High has the most write-ups.
 2. CBEE – Mrs. Morales gave a status update on the CBEE Cooperative program. Currently there are 13 students, with 2 Canyon Creek students. There are currently 4 students within the testing process. There is still a need for an additional paraprofessional. The two current staff members have been amazing and we are very proud of their efforts!
 3. Mentoring – Mrs. Morales shared that she has been mentoring the District Special Education teacher and CBEE Special Education teacher as they are both currently working under provisional licenses.

Old Business

- A. Open Board Trustee Position recruitment status update was given. There is currently one unexpired, one-year term vacant with interest from Carl Siroky, Wendy Bekkedahl and Sarah Kottke.
 - a. Interview and possible appointment of one trustee to an unexpired, one-year term
 1. Carl Siroky (CS)
 2. Wendy Bekkedahl (WB)
 3. Sarah Kottke (SK)
- All three applicants were asked the following questions and scored by each individual trustee on each question.
1. Tell us what you know about the school district. Please summarize what you feel

are our strengths, weaknesses and greatest future challenges.

CS – He knows the area and shared that his children attended. There is not a lot of industry within the district and the district lives off of the home owners and tax payers. Strengths – small district, local with a lot of community staying.

Weakness – age of the building and growth of the district. Lack of staffing is a challenge. Active recruiting is a need.

WB – Her children have attended since kindergarten and have lived nearby for years. They enjoy the K-8 model and they learn to get along with the smaller schools, which is a strength. Weakness is keeping up with the academic resources as hands-on, work ethic, using our resources to facilitate that.

Weakness is the lack of communication on how business is conducted at the district. The addition to FB live would be a strength that could be added to the district.

SK – Rural community, unique to Yellowstone county but not Montana. The dynamic of CCSD is different than SD2. Rural district is why there are both strengths and weaknesses. Size provides learning opportunities and opportunities to thrive in all athletics/academics. Weaknesses are the lack of funding due to the lack of ability to pass a levy. Struggle to get recruited staff and retention. Need active voices in the community.

2. Tell us how you would incorporate community input into your decision-making process?

CS – We are advantaged with items that have a lot of exposure. There is a need for leadership to reach out to the community at PTO meetings or basketball games. It is key to listen and not debate. That is how one gains understanding of the district issues and gains feedback. Surveys of community feedback. The results need to be open, transparent. Seek to understand.

WB – Surveying the community is huge. She noted that she would need to gain additional skills in open communication and discussions on how business is completed. Base line instructions on how business is conducted needs to be readdressed. Policy and procedures need to be adhered to. Lines of communication need to be opened up with questions asked for clarification.

SK – Has made a career out of advocating for people who feel they do not have a voice. This is brought up as an avenue to communicate with parents. Communications with surveys, FB live, and even weekly conversations between teachers and parents, administration and parents. Small communications make others feel involved. Maybe the board sending out emails or newsletters, implementation of Covid trends, student updates. Timelines of events, due dates, more of a parent/administration/teacher relationship where everyone feels like they have a voice.

3. Think of a time when you worked closely with someone who clearly had a different perspective, background or style than you. Tell me what you did to be able to work effectively with this person despite your differences.

SK – Criminal Defense attorney – daily work with prosecutors who are fighting

with differing views. Working together to find common ground is a huge part of her job. It's a reminder that differing views are not wrong but rather a shaping of their lives through their stories. It's important to keep an open mind and ask why. Communications face-to-face bring the human factor back into discussions versus email, text, voicemail etc.

WB – Treat everyone with respect. Listen and respond respectfully.

CS – Listen and seek to understand the other person's point of view. Always seeking data to drive the conversations. Trust of the data and seek to understand and support something based on solid data. Differing opinion and perspectives combine to make things more colorful and offer improvement.

4. Why do you want to be on the school board?

WB – There is a vacancy, right time in her life personally to invest in the district, civic duty to put forth an effort to do what is best for students and community.

CS – Fifty-eight years old and his father was a school board member. He is looking into retirement. He is planning to stay in the Billings area. It is the next phase of his life to give back to the community. He has a lot of experience as an engineer, manager, and supervisor. This is an opportunity to assist teachers with the belief in students to do anything they possibly want to do.

SK – She was fired up over a situation. She excelled in school and as a parent found that she wants to be a part of an education for her student with a non-typical skillset. She wants to support students with the non-typical learning styles. Being a part of the conversation to advocate for all students' learning styles is driving her desire to join the board.

5. What is the role of a trustee in the district and the community?

WB – Adopt and maintain policy, collective bargaining agreements, overseeing and evaluating the superintendent. The governing board who hold accountable all administration and teachers. Being invested in the board meeting and taking an active part of the discussions. She is detail oriented and likes to communicate in that fashion. She doesn't like excuses but rather wants solutions.

SK – The voice of the teachers and the community. Governing body to make decisions with all opinions taken into consideration. Be a voice for the students, academics and what the students need.

CS – Trustee represents the community first and foremost. Attending gatherings to gain understanding and trust of community members. Ask a lot of questions, seek to understand, representing them and their desires, applying policy and focus on the main thing... educating children. Trying to be a conduit between the community, board and administration.

Amy Sironi, Board Chair asked for a recess to tally the ballot votes. The trustee's scores were tallied by the District Clerk and reported back to Amy Sironi, Board Chair.

James Wiesner made a motion to appoint Carl Siroky as Trustee. Amy Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously to approve appointment of Carl Siroky as Trustee to Canyon Creek School District #4 for an unexpired, one-year term.

New Business

- A. Business Manager Update – Ms. Stovall shared that the backend billing has been a challenge with BlueCross BlueShield of Montana. To complete the contract and initiation of the new insurance plan, effective September 1, 2021, they required a binder payment which was an estimate of September premiums. The initial warrant was sent August 26, 2021. She was notified September 21, 2021 that the warrant had been misplaced. They had record of receiving it but could not locate it after that. After several communications, it was decided that the best course of action was to put a stop payment on the lost warrant and re-issue the warrant. The re-issued warrant was sent September 23, 2021.

Ms. Stovall shared that on September 24, 2021 she was contacted by a 3rd party auditor representing MTSBA, notifying the district that MTSBA had chosen Canyon Creek for a Worker's Compensation Audit/Review for the 2020-2021 year. Ms. Stovall worked with the auditor to complete the necessary remission of reports and data requested. The information requested was due October 18th. Currently, everything is remitted and she is waiting further communications from the auditor.

- B. CBEE Cooperative Contract Revision – Superintendent Lipp recommended the acceptance of the multidistrict educational cooperative agreement as presented. This agreement is between the following four districts: Canyon Creek, Blue Creek, Elysian and Elder Grove. The revision is necessary to keep all parties invested in the process and lays out guidelines and expectations of the agreement. A change has been made to Section 9, bullet 5 in regards to how tuition will be determined during the year.

Amy Gibbons made a motion to accept the revisions to the CBEE Multidistrict Educational Cooperative Agreement as presented. James Wiesner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Fall Enrollment / ANB Update – Ms. Stovall shared that the fall enrollment count day was completed October 2, 2021. Per the student count, the total was 246 students, with one hundred seventy-eight K-6th grade students and sixty-eight 7-8th grade students. Last fall the total was 253 students, with one hundred ninety-three K-6th grade students and sixty 7-8th grade students. Last spring the total was 252 students, with one hundred ninety-six K-6th grade students and fifty-six 7-8th grade students. The current year Average Number Belonging (ANB), used to calculate the budget for this school year, was two hundred sixty-four. The ANB can be calculated off of the current year ANB or a 3 year average ANB, whichever is greater, and is used to determine budget funding.

- D. MTSBA Policy Services Update – Ms. Stovall shared that the Draft Policy Manual has been distributed electronically to all trustees. The Draft Policy Manual includes the updated MTSBA Model Policies blended with provisions unique to the district. Next steps typically involve the boards or a committee's review of the draft manual to select specific options or adjust language as needed. Then MTSBA representative, Kris Goss, will convene a meeting with the board or committee to answer any questions. After that meeting, the board can meet to adopt the entire

manual or specific policy series. The MTSBA Policy Services contract allows for two meetings with the board or committee so there is plenty of time to answer as many questions as the trustees may have.

It was discussed on how to split the series up via multiple committees for review. This will be brought back to the next board meeting by Superintendent Lipp and Ms. Stovall.

- E. Covid / School Health Update – Superintendent Lipp reviewed the Yellowstone County Schools Weekly Report, week reviewed 10-10-21 – 10-16-21. There are four indicators that were reviewed in detail; 1 – Capacity of Healthcare and Public Health, 2 – Weekly Case Mix: Increase in new cases in children under 19, 3 – Weekly average daily case count per 100,000, 4 – Weekly Yellowstone County test positivity rate.
- F. Policy 1905 Student, Staff and Community Health & Safety - Review/Revision – Discussion was held. Superintendent Lipp recommended to the board of trustees to review Policy 1905 as a monthly diligence to assure that the school district is recommending the proper masking requirements. His recommendation is based upon the data from the health department in reference to Covid-19 occurrences within the district and County. He suggested that the board consider formally inserting these criteria in the 1905 Policy so that it is followed accordingly on a regular and consistent basis.

James Wiesner inquired for specific data that is comparing the masking optional versus masking mandate schools. He struggles with the validity of if masking is worthwhile. Superintendent Lipp shared that per MTSBA a district should consider liability to districts and the correlation to masking. They noted the liability is less to the district if the district has taken the action to require masks.

Amy Gibbons shared that she feels strongly that she has a fiscal responsibility to the district and tax payers to make the decision that is based on current data and the least liability to the district. She is focused on the risk and liability and possible negative impact to the tax payers.

Callie Allen inquired on the statistics of Covid in the building reported in September and the comparison of liability to the district. She made the comparison to other mandated issues and liability. Wendy Bekkedahl inquired about the risk of students getting sick from the mandating risks. There is liability either way if the district mandates masking or if masking is optional. Sheena Cain shared that the division has had a negative impact on students.

Carl Siroky noted that the data we currently have is the best we have. He recommended asking a lot of questions of the school nurse and requested that we use her as a tool to improve the report that is currently being utilized. He shared that air filtration and flow is key to perhaps finding the solution to not needing the masks. He suggested bigger thinking and planning for improvements to HVAC systems. Amy Sironi noted that the challenge to any big facilities improvements is the fiscal limitations.

James Wiesner made a motion to approve the recommendation from Superintendent Lipp of revising Policy 1905 Physical Distancing Option 2 and Face Coverings as Personal Protective

Equipment Option 1 – Required Face Coverings, with a monthly review of the Yellowstone County Schools Weekly Report Matrix with a color improvement of 3 out of 5 indicators, as presented. Amy Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- G. Approve Out-of-District Students FY22 – Discussion was held. Superintendent Lipp recommended the approval of two additional out-of-district students based on the guidelines in Policy 3141. This puts the total out-of-district student count at eighty.

James Wiesner made a motion to approve the additional Out-of-District Students attendance agreements for FY22 as presented. Amy Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- H. New Hire – Connie Lambert – Certified Teacher – Discussion was held. Superintendent Lipp recommended the hiring of Connie Lambert for a 1.0 FTE, 6th – 8th grade Jr. High teaching position. Connie will be placed at the BA30, Step 6 level on the salary matrix, contingent on background check results.

Amy Gibbons made a motion to hire Connie Lambert as a 1.0 FTE teacher for the 2021-2022 school year at a BA30, Step 6, contingent upon a clear background check, for a one-year term. James Wiesner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Superintendent Lipp shared that he will be out of the office on vacation November 8 – 11, 2021.*

Agenda Items for the Next Regular Meeting – November 15th

- A. Covid / School Health Update
- B. Policy 1905 Student, Staff and Community Health & Safety - Review/Revision
- C. CCEA MOU
- D. MTSBA Draft Policy Manual Review
- E. Extra-Curricular Contracts – 5/6 BBB, Student Council
- F. Individual Bus Stop Approvals
- G. FY21 Audit Summary
- H. Substitute List Update – addition of Erika Wilson, MT Certified teacher
- I. Board Education – New Trustee Training

Adjournment

The next Regular Meeting will be held Monday, November 15th, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Canyon Creek School District Library.

James Wiesner moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m. Amy Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Amy Sironi, Chair

Seara Stovall, Business Manager/Clerk