

**State Board of Education & Early Development**  
**Approved Minutes**  
**March 17, 2021**  
**Virtual Platform Meeting**  
**Department of Education & Early Development**  
**801 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Juneau, AK 99801**

**Wednesday, March 17, 2021**

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Member Erickson gave an invocation to start the meeting. After the pledge of allegiance, the board amended their agenda to include the addition of an item regarding their April meeting. Member Van Diest motioned to amend and member Griffin seconded the motion. Member Van Diest made the following motion: I moved to adopt the agenda of Tuesday, Wednesday March 16 2021 with the following amendments to the agenda, removing the executive session Item 14 state Board of education student advisor and adding in the change of the State Board of education meeting of April 21 to a business meeting. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. Member Stockhausen informed the board that Tongass school of the arts and sciences is in her district. Chair Fields did not consider this to be a conflict of interest and welcomed her to vote on the item.

**Public Comment**

Public comment was opened at 9:08 am

Malin Paquette commented about the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and the importance of investing in the future of Alaska's youth by giving them access to free college credits while they're in high school.

Elena Markova from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education spoke on the tribal education bill and is looking forward to working with the board and other native corporations to create curriculum. She also informed the board about their report on students who need special early intervention measures and issues affecting students with disabilities is available if they would like to access it.

Vivian Cartier whose child is currently a student at Mt. Edgecumbe High School called to say that the school is doing an outstanding job encouraging student learning in the midst of the pandemic. She thanked the school, the administrator, the school board, and the parents for doing an outstanding job to keep the school open and students safe. She also asked that the board consider closing the two year gap between the federal and the state management of the school as it has broken the continuity of the school and the lives of the students who did not graduate as a result. She stated that a gesture by the board would recognize the freshmen and sophomores and go a long way toward bridging that gap.

Danielle Pensley- Mt. Edgecumbe High School parent whose son is currently a freshman. She called to say how impressed she had been not only with the educational and cultural programs offered by the school, but also by the current plan designed and managed by the school's administration. She thanked the board and the administration for their situational awareness regarding their responsibility to keep both the boarding school students and the students who commute from the town of Sitka safe while trying to have a normal learning environment for students to learn.

Public comment closed at 9:22am. Chair Fields reminded the board that the board does not engage with the public during public comment. They take notes but do not ask questions of the public during this time.

### **Agenda Item 1. School Construction and Major Maintenance List**

Commissioner Johnson explained to the board that they are being asked to approve the final annual list of capital projects eligible for funding under the school construction and major maintenance grant funds.

Director Heidi Teshner and Tim Mearig presented to the board regarding the school construction and major maintenance capital project list of eligible projects. Director Teshner shared the number of applications that the department received and was very happy to announce that no applications were considered to be ineligible. The Bond Reimbursement and Grant Review (BRGR) Committee reviewed the CIP lists at its December 2, 2020 meeting, and passed a motion recommending that the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the FY2022 CIP list of projects eligible for funding under the School Construction Grant Fund and the Major Maintenance Grant Fund. Director Teshner and Tim Mearig then took questions from the board.

### **Agenda Item 2. Legislative and Budget Update**

Legislative Liaison Erin Hardin updated the board on the work that the legislature is doing as bills are making their way through the legislative process. Commissioner Johnson is excited about the reading bill if it passes even though it might mean more work for the board but he is committed to working with the board and bill sponsors to implement it. There are about 40 bills that are moving through the legislature that the department is tracking, and included in that list, there are four bills from the governor that the department is tracking. A reading legislation bill is being crafted by the Senate Education committee and special attention is being paid to the fiscal cost due to the state's fiscal situation. DEED Department staff is working with committee staff as this bill comes together. On the house side, they are focused on the budget subcommittee process and the department will be presenting to the House Education budget subcommittee on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss federal COVID-19 funds. March 26<sup>th</sup>, the subcommittee will close out their meetings. Erin updated the board on the confirmation hearings schedule and informed the board that she will be working closely with staff and the board to schedule their confirmation hearings. Member Stockhausen asked if COVI-19 federal funds could help with the fiscal implications of the reading bill. Commissioner Johnson answered that they are working with the bill sponsors to see if that might help. Erin then gave the board of the education loan program bill that has been working it's way through the legislature with regards to the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. The bill has had one hearing in Senate Education so far. Member Erickson asked how the board offers their support or non-support of a proposed piece of legislation. Commissioner Johnson responded that the board would vote on whether or not to support a piece of legislation. Anyone who wishes to comment on a piece of legislation can do so as a private citizen but you have to say that you are testifying on your own behalf and not on behalf of the board. Chair Fields also reminded the board that if they were to support one bill then there would be a flood of bills that people want the board to support. This board tries to stay away from anything that would require them to take a political position and instead focuses their work on supporting student education.

Administrative Services Director Lacey Sanders updated the board on the supplemental budget requests of the Department for FY2021. The department has five supplemental requests from the Governor's Office and Director Sanders explained the five requests to the board and then took questions from board members. She then explained the process by which the budget goes from the education subcommittee, to the finance committee to the full floor of both bodies and then a conference

committee is formed to bring the budget into alignment with both bodies. Director Sanders will continue to update the board as the budget progresses through the legislature.

### **Agenda Item 3A. Chinook Charter School Renewal**

Commissioner Johnson informed the board that they are being asked to approve the application of the Chinook Montessori Charter school for a ten year period. Deputy Commissioner Karen Melin provided the board with the history of the charter school including the fact that this became the first charter school in Alaska when it was opened in 1996. The school has an enrollment of 151 students right now and plan to increase enrollment to 175 students if they can negotiate to get another classroom. They do not have more than 20 students to one teacher. They are a Montessori philosophy schools with multi-age classrooms. The students scored higher in both English and Math in the PEAKS assessments than the rest of the students in the district. Member Griffin asked the school for the costs associated with maintaining the facility.

Christina Carlson from Chinook Charter school informed the board that they currently lease their building and they are currently trying to renegotiate their lease as it is up for renewal next year. They are happy with their facility as it is in a prime location to serve their students.

Chair Fields thanked the staff from Chinook Charter School for their attendance and their willingness to answer questions from the board.

### **Agenda Item 3B. Tongass School of the Arts and Sciences**

Deputy Commissioner Melin gave Deputy Commissioner Karen Melin provided the board with the history of the charter school. They are a PK-6 school with an enrollment of 170 students not including preschool. They have 1 teacher to every 14 students. They are a science focused curriculum and students are taught in a multi grade classroom setting. They are a Title 1 school and have goals that are in line with the PEAKS assessment goals. Tongass School of the Arts staff was online to answer any questions from the board. Scott Huff from Tongass School of the Arts explained their Conscious Discipline philosophy and how they use it to teach students and how it trickles down from the teachers to the students. Mr. Huff also answered questions about the facility that they lease from the district.

The board took a ten minute break at 10:31 a.m. and resumed at 10:41 a.m.

### **Agenda Item 4. Assessment & Standards Review and Revision Update**

Commissioner Johnson introduced the presentation. Director Van Wyhe and Deb Riddle updated the board on the assessments and standards review with a PowerPoint presentation. She explained that standards articulate expectations for student learning and then assessments come along behind and they measure student understanding and mastery of those standards. Deb Riddle gave the board a history of the standards, the current status of the standards that are being updated, and where the department is going with the development of standards in the state and next steps. The department is currently reviewing math and English and language arts standards to bring before the board to go out for public comment at their April meeting. The next set of standards that the department is reviewing is the Social Studies standards and employability skills standards as well as the health standards. Director Van Wyhe commended the department for their work in stakeholder input for review and revision of standards when these standards need to be updated. Member Van Diest asked about history standards with specific attention to Alaska history. Director Van Wyhe responded the department is being very intentional and very careful regarding developing these standards because they are brand new but they are working to build these standards. Director Van Wyhe also updated the board on the Request for Information (RFI) process that the department is working to procure a new vendor for our statewide summative assessment for this year. Deputy Commissioner Melin walked the board through the RFI

which allows the department to identify a vendor that the department wants to enter into an initial conversation with. They will then begin to have conversations on how to have innovative ideas to address the unique needs of Alaska's students. Deputy Commissioner Melin will keep the board updated on their work for the vendor selection process. They then took questions from the board.

#### **5. Mt. Edgecumbe High School Strategic Plan**

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve in their business meeting the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Strategic Plan. The current MEHS Strategic Plan was adopted in 2016 and designed to be implemented over four years. Superintendent Vanasse updated the board on the work with the strategic plan. The most important item in the plan was to align their strategic plan with the Alaska Education Challenge and to make this document more of a living document versus a document that just sits on a shelf and no one ever sees. They moved from over forty different goals to seven specific targets to guide their progress while focusing on ensuring that students succeed both academically and emotionally. She explained how the document has changed from its previous version and has brought it into alignment with the Alaska Education Challenge. She then took questions from the board regarding the strategic plan and how Mt. Edgecumbe is working to reach out to students to engage with their communities more while they are away. Board members praised Superintendent Vanasse for her work and the work of the Mt. Edgecumbe High School staff to craft this strategic plan.

#### **6. Mt. Edgecumbe High School Land Proposal**

Commissioner Johnson informed the board that they are being asked for approval for the department to pursue the sale of two parcels of land on Japonski Island to the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC). Because of current legal impediments to the sale, the board is also being asked for approval to pursue an agreement with SEARHC to lease the two parcels. He reminded the board that they have expressed support for this whole idea in the past, but that the attorneys needed to guide the board on how to go about the transaction that needed to happen. Superintendent Vanasse led the advisory council in making a specific recommendation on the transaction and they worked with the attorneys at the Department of Law to turn that recommendation into a motion that the board will hear during their business meeting. Chair Fields explained that the motion that will be brought forward is intended to give Commissioner Johnson authority to move forward with the plan so that the board can move on to other things as they have already given their support for the idea. Commissioner Johnson committed to managing the opportunity well and be good stewards of the parcels. He also praised SERRC for their partnership during the pandemic and is excited about this continued partnership with this new project. Luann Weyhrauch from the Department of Law explained to the board that this motion would give the Commissioner the authority to pursue all of the options basically and the Commissioner also would have authority to execute a lease without coming back to the board, and then, as you note in the motion, before any transfer documents or sale documents would be executed, it would come back to the board so, but in the meantime, the Commissioner has a lot of authority to look at each option and decide what makes sense. Member Stockhausen as the board's member on the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board informed the members that the advisory board had discussed this and they are in support of this direction. The important issue for the advisory board is that any funds that are generated from a land transaction goes to Mt. Edgecumbe for them to manage and use for the benefit of students over there. Commissioner Johnson informed the board that it would have to be a statute change for that to happen but that there is great support from the Governor's Office and members of the legislature to make that change.

**The board took a lunch at 12:05 p.m. and reconvened at 12:25 p.m.**

## **7. Approve School Construction and Major Maintenance**

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve the final annual priority lists of capital projects eligible for funding under the school construction and major maintenance grant funds. Member Griffin motioned and Member Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the department's FY2022 final School Construction Grant Fund and Major Maintenance Grant Fund priority lists. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. Member Griffin mentioned that the board should take a deeper look at the facilities because it seems like money is taken from student learning to cover facilities maintenance.

## **8A. Chinook Charter School Approval of Renewal**

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve the application of the Chinook Montessori Charter School for a ten-year period. Member Stockhausen motioned and Member Kowalski seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Chinook Montessori Charter School's application for a period of ten years. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

## **8B. Tongass School of the Arts and Sciences Approval of Renewal**

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve the application of the Tongass School of Arts and Sciences for a ten-year period. Member Van Diest motioned and Member Erickson seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Tongass School of Arts and Sciences application for a period of ten years. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

## **9. Approve Mt. Edgecumbe High School Strategic Plan**

Member Griffin motioned and Member Van Diest seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed MEHS Strategic Plan. Chair Fields thanked all who were involved in the strategic plan process and everyone who contributed so that this work session item went smoothly so that this item could be passed in the business meeting with little discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

## **10. Approve Mt. Edgecumbe High School Land Proposal**

Member Van Diest motioned and Member Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development grant authority to the Commissioner to pursue each of the following options: (1) the sale of two parcels of land owned by the department, the Millerville site, Lot 15G, USS 1496, 8.29 acres, and the Penrod Hall site, ASLS 97-63, 1.53 acres, to Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) when legal issues related to the proposed sale are resolved; (2) a lease agreement with SEARHC for the two parcels for an interim period; (3) the transfer of the two parcels to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with the proviso that if DNR is unable to transfer the parcels to SEARHC, the parcels will revert to the Department of Education and Early Development; and (4) a lease agreement with SEARHC for the two parcels for an interim period prior to the transfer to DNR. As part of the authority granted under this motion, the Commissioner may execute lease documents without further approval from the board, but the execution of sale or transfer documents is subject to the further approval of the board. Chair Fields thanked the Department of Law and the commissioner for their work to craft something that the board can work with while still giving the commissioner the opportunity to move forward with it whatever it may end up being. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no further discussion.

### **11. Questions Regarding Standing Reports**

Commissioner Johnson introduced the standing reports which includes Innovation and Education Excellence; Libraries, Archives, and Museums; Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and the Department of Law. Member Van Diest thanked the directors of the various divisions for their work on these reports as it provides a snapshot to the board of the workings of the department and helps the board as they do their work. Member Kowalski asked about the CLSD acronym which stands for Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant. Director Van Wyhe mentioned that it is the \$20 million grant that the department was awarded by the US Department of Education and that there is a designated staff member on the School Recognition and Support team that manages that particular grant. There were no other questions from board members.

### **12. 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 is looking forward to incorporating more of those into the board meetings. 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 mentioned that he would do more research in response to the public comment regarding a gap year at Mt. Edgecumbe High School and that he looks forward to addressing it if he can. He also informed the board that the teacher retention working group has been meeting and working, and that there was an over 40% response rate to the survey that the working group sent out to educators. Barbara Adams, the contractor, is working on a report based on the results of that survey and Commissioner Johnson hopes to share that report with the board once it has been completed. He also updated the board on the upcoming relief package from the federal government. He did not know the exact amount but he knew that it was going to be an enormous pot of money and he recommitted to making sure that every penny benefits the students of Alaska. He also updated the board on staff who had retired and new staff who had joined the department.

### **13. Consent Agenda**

Commissioner Johnson asked the board to approve it's consent agenda consisting of the December 9, 2020 meeting minutes, the January 26, 2021 meeting minutes, and the February 24, 2021 work session minutes. Member Griffin motioned and Member Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the December 9, 2020 meeting, the minutes of the January 26, 2021, and the minutes of the February 24, 2021 work session. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

### **13B April Agenda**

Member Van Diest motioned and Member Griffin seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve an amendment to its fiscal year 2021 meeting schedule so that the work session previously scheduled for April 21, 2021, is changed to a work session and a business meeting. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There was no discussion.

### **Board Comments**

Member Kowalski- Thanked the commissioner for his comments regarding the Alaska Education challenge and the importance of making sure that the extra funding from the federal government would fall under those five priorities. She is hopeful that these funds might keep crucial projects like the reading bill and tribal compacting moving forward. She is also interested in the results of the teacher retention working group survey and is looking forward to anything that the board can do to address the number of open teacher positions that exist in the state each year. She thanked the staff at the

department for their work during legislative session and thanked Lt. Col. Hammill for his work on the board. She highlighted the importance of Ashley Johnson Barr day and thanked the commissioner for highlighting the fact that today was her birthday and how vital it is that the board do all it can to prevent violence against children.

Member Hamilton- thanked the DEED staff for their work during legislative session and hopes that our next meeting will be in person.

Member Erickson- thanked the DEED staff for their presentations and cautioned them to use the new federal money effectively for students. He also wished for an in person board meeting.

Lt. Col. Hammill- thanked the board for their congratulations and is looking forward to spending his remaining time to work to get an initiative going that will benefit both students and the military.

Student Advisor Scott- expressed her gratefulness that she finally gets to go back to in person learning at the Anchorage School District. While remote learning was essential to ensuring that students continued to learn while being safe, nothing compares to being able to interact with your peers face to face.

Member Stockhausen- thanked the DEED staff for their presentations during the board retreat day and enjoyed the informal discussion time that they were able to have with the staff.

Member Griffin- thanked the DEED staff for their work during session. He thanked Commissioner Johnson for his commitment to the Alaska Education Challenge and his work on the reading bill during session. He expressed hope for the reading bill and tribal compacting efforts as well as the fact that the pandemic might be winding down. He also stressed the importance of focusing on the additional resources that are coming in, for the sake of the kids because they are going to bear the responsibility for paying it off in the end.

Member Van Diest- thanked the DEED staff for the board retreat day and is looking forward to the day when the board can meet in person. She stressed the importance of the reading bill and her hope that it would make it's way through the legislative process. She wished Lt. Col. Hammill luck in his new position as colonel.

Chair Fields congratulated Lieutenant Col. Hammill on his promotion to Colonel. Lieutenant Col. Hammill will be leaving Alaska this summer and the board will have a new military advisor. He concluded with the mission statement of the department which is Department of Education early development provides information resource and leadership to support an excellent education for every student every day and thanked DEED staff and the commissioner for their work to advance that mission.

Meeting adjourned at 1:12pm