

Kearsarge Regional School District
School Board Retreat
 June 17, 2023 - 9:00 a.m.
 Kearsarge Professional Development Center
 165 Main Street, New London
Open to Public

<p>I. Call to Order</p>	<p>The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.</p>
<p>II. Roll Call</p>	<p>Present: Ken Bartholomew (via Zoom), Emma Bates, Ben Cushing, Eric Gregoire (via Zoom), David Keith, Kyle Lombard, Alison Mastin, Kristen Schultz.</p> <p>Winfried Feneberg, Superintendent; Michael Bessette, Assistant Superintendent.</p> <p>Absent: Kyle Lombard.</p> <p><i>Ms. Schultz made a motion to allow Mr. Gregoire to vote via Zoom. Ms. Bates seconded. The Motion carried 6-0-0.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Schultz made a motion to allow Mr. Bartholomew to vote via Zoom. Mr. Keith seconded. The Motion carried 7-0-0.</i></p>
<p>III. School Board Goals 2022-2023/Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Superintendent explained the purpose of the School Board Retreat, stating that it allows for the Board to discuss different goals for the District without having a set agenda. He presented the Board with Copies of the Strategic Plan Update. ● Ms. Schultz stated that she heard a rumor that around 26 staff members intended to leave the High School. The Superintendent stated that the rumor is false. The District has seen turnover in the low 20s which is consistent with past ratios. He noted that there have been a number of staff retiring after long careers as well as staff that have experienced changes in life conditions that have taken them away from the District. Supt. Feneberg also explained that there has been a lot of movement within the District with teachers moving from one school to another within the District. Additionally, he apprised the Board that a theme he has been hearing in exit interviews is the concern that administrators don't have enough time to observe what is happening in those teachers' classrooms. He noted the number of things that are on Administrators plates, stating that they are having a harder time carving out the time for observations. Across the board, the volume of work has changed. ● Dr. Bobruff expressed a concern that if administrators were in the classroom more, the District may find a percentage of teachers who felt that they were being imposed upon or being overly watched.

- Mr. Bessette reminded the Board of struggles that the High School has faced in the past and the attention that has been brought to those issues in recent years. Ms. Bates noted that one of the complaints she hears about the High School most often is the issue of communication among staff. She has heard that there are no longer team meetings or whole school meetings. Mr. Bessette stated that there has been a push in the last year plus to support the administration in becoming a more cohesive team. He noted that some things take time to see change.
- Dr. Bobruff expressed his concern that members of the Board that don't have children currently in the School District don't always have the same information. He noted that Ms. Mastin had given him a lot of information that was very helpful and wouldn't have come up at a meeting. He asked if there is a way for members of the Board can all get this information. The Superintendent expressed that there is an awareness about separations of powers between the Board and the administration. He noted that for certain issues he may call Mr. Bartholomew or Ms. Mastin as Chair and Vice-Chair to make a member of the Board aware of an issue that shouldn't necessarily be distributed to the Board as a whole. He gave the example of recent discussion surrounding the incoming 4th grade class at New London Elementary. The Board is the final arbiter in such a situation. Mr. Bessette explained a New Hampshire case in which a School Board got overly involved in the dismissal of a principal.
- Mr. Bartholomew noted that the High School is the hardest to manage. He stated that during his time on the Board there have always been situations at the High School where staff and administration were at odds about something. He expressed that he appreciated that the Board has a mix of experiences: members with students in the schools and those without students in the schools. He stressed the difficult choice Supt. Feneberg and Mr. Bessette face in regard to what issues need to be brought to the Board's attention and which issues should not be before the Board. There are a number of School Boards out there that put a great deal of pressure on Superintendents to share information with them as well as Superintendents who are very worried about talking to their School Board.
- Ms. Mastin expressed that she feels in the past year, the Board in the eyes of the public has been viewed as a body that can make all theses decisions that are not under the purview of the Board.
- Ms. Schultz reiterated her concern about any discontent at the High School. Mr. Bessette stated that changes are being implemented; however, these changes take time, noting that it may be a culturally bumpy road for a time.
- The Superintendent noted that this year the District is in a transitional

time, citing changes such as the shift to competency based education. Some staff is ready and waiting to get the ball rolling while others are looking to wait it out until it goes away. He noted that this project can't be rushed. Mr. Bessette spoke to the changing culture in education across the state. He noted that a contact at the New Hampshire Department of Education (DOE) advised him prior to the start of the last school year to be on the lookout for educator stress induced behavior.

- The Superintendent shined a light on the positive things going on in the District, noting that there have been close to 20 people hired for the next year. He noted a recent interview he had with a potential French teacher who would fire students up about world languages. He discussed a recent project of the Marine Biology class at the High School looking at revitalizing the trout brook on the High School grounds. He stated that there are hopeful signs left and right.
- Ms. Schultz expressed concerns about retaining teachers and discussed teachers being under fire across the country. She asked how these issues can be mitigated and stated that this should be reflected in the District Goals. Mr. Bessette noted that it is included in the Strategic Plan. Ms. Schultz stated that it's not because teachers aren't dedicated to the education of kids that they are leaving, it's everything else. Mr. Bessette gave the example of Special Education teachers, noting that they are consistently facing criticism from parents and lawyers. The Superintendent stressed the importance of the curriculum work, noting that is the best defense teachers have.
- Mr. Bessette stated that one of the biggest things the District and School Board faces is weaponized transparency. He noted most information people are looking for is readily available, people just aren't willing to take the time to look.
- Ms. Schultz stated that education has given more and more to the say of parents as if they were trained, professional educators.
- Mr. Bartholomew listed a number of ways the Board goes out of their way for the sake of transparency, giving examples of allowing public access to Board meetings through Zoom and using the public comment standards loosely in terms of the Board conversing with the public. He went on to discuss how social media has a tendency to shine a light on minority viewpoints. He stated that the Board should have well thought out reasons behind their decisions.
- Mr. Bessette stated that the District needs to work hard to balance the voices of parents with the needs of the system.
- Dr. Bobruff stressed the importance of hearing parents out and being receptive to their comments.

- The Superintendent assured the Board that the professionals in the District do an excellent job listening to and involving parents. He gave the example of a Special Ed meeting he had recently had the chance to be involved in and stated that he was blown away by the quality of the dialogue.

The Board took a short break at 10:26 a.m.

The Board reconvened at 10:33 a.m.

- Dr. Bobruff expressed his concerns about the obesity rate among children, noting that the goal of the District is to prepare students for long happy lives. He noted the importance of encouraging students to increase the number of calories they burn while at school.
- Mr. Bessette noted that the standards for instruction time are in state policy ED306. He noted that the amount of instruction time is the only place that he can find that lists a maximum amount of something rather than a minimum. Mr. Bessette noted that Physical Education is one of the only classes the is doubled up at times. He also explained the efforts in incorporating movement and time outside into other classes. Dr. Bobruff stated that the students are definitely better off coming back to the classroom after moving.
- Ms. Bates explained some of the ways she has seen teachers weaving movement into their classes through what she's seen of her children's experience at school.
- Mr. Bartholomew stated that Dr. Bobruff had a great point and that it's something that has been part of the District's thinking for many years.
- Dr. Bobruff asked what the Physical Education Minimums are. It was noted that there are no specific Physical Education minimum standards, but that each class in the District typically shas two blocks a well at 40 minutes each.
- Supt. Feneberg shared the positive note of the strong participation in athletic cocurricular activities. 50% of students participate in athletic offerings. Dr. Bobruff stated that it's the 50% that are not participating in athletics that he is worried about.
- Ms. Bates said that her kids aren't very athletic and wouldn't want to play competitively but would love to play for fun. Dr. Bobruff asked what could be done to give kids the opportunity to play sports just for fun. Mr. Bessette stated that one of the challenges that comes with that is space, explaining the practice schedules of the existing teams. He also explained the lack of a transportation network to take students to games for athletics.

- Ms. Schulz stated that she felt the obesity topic is a very important one and that it's one she felt the parents should be taking the lead on. Ms. Mastin stated that as great as it would be, the District can't be all things to all people.
- The Superintendent expressed a willingness to get smaller buses and offer to cover teachers getting a bus endorsement on their license so they could drive the smaller buses. He noted that the next contract speaks to 6 minibuses. Mr. Bessette noted that the District is looking into the insurance requirements that would need to be carried by teachers in order to drive the minibuses.
- Ms. Schultz asked about the recent discussion about the incoming 4th grade class at New London Elementary, asking if the District and Board are still comfortable with the class sizes.
- The Superintendent noted that there is no policy in place surrounding class sizes, it is a past recommendation by the Board. He stated that the actual class size numbers are usually much lower than the recommendations. He noted that limitations that Principal Collins now faces with the fourth 4th grade class regarding space in the school. If the Board was to lower the maximum class size to 18, the District would need 7 additional classrooms.
- Mr. Bartholomew stated that if the Board decreases the class sizes he believes the District would need to move to a consolidated elementary school. He stated that the Board should consider putting money aside for such a project if it is ever needed in the future. He noted that a consolidated elementary school is the only way for the District to bend the cost curve.
- Mr. Bessette made clear that there is no proposal on the table to consolidate elementary schools. He expressed the idea of renovating the New London campus to provide space for more students. He also noted the idea of consolidating Bradford and Sutton the Middle School campus. This would also open up the property of Sutton Central for the possibility of teacher housing. It could be a possible solution to the difficulty teachers face of finding a place to live within the District.
- Mr. Cushing stated that people still want to move to the District and noted that the median home price in New Hampshire is at \$465,000.00 with no decrease in sight. He expressed concern that the District buildings are at mass and are of an advanced age.
- The Superintendent proposed the idea of incorporating the 5th grade classes into the Middle School.
- Mr. Gregoire noted that the average age of the District has been increasing and said that it will have to shift to a younger demographic as

	<p>time goes on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Bates asked if writing a letter to each town’s Select Board making them aware of the housing situation had been considered. Ms. Schultz apprised the Board of some changes Newbury has made to their zoning. She expressed the stigma that seems to be attached to workforce housing. The Superintendent stated that is the reason he volunteered to join the housing committee. • Mr. Cushing stated that zoning in the towns is an issue. He discussed the recent workforce housing approved to be built in New London. He noted that the minimum income requirements for workforce housing is still up there. He mentioned the additional issue of cost. Although construction costs have come down, buying land and building is still very expensive. In order to build workforce housing, he noted that the developer would need to be doing multiple projects for it to be profitable. • Mr. Bessette asked if this is something that should be a priority of the Board and whether that would even be a possibility. The Superintendent noted that the Board can promote and encourage workforce housing to help recruit teachers and give them a place to live. He noted that it’s something that has been discussed with facilities and he stated how pleased he has been with Mr. Paré’s approach to the role as Director of Facilities. He discussed the numerous projects that need to be addressed throughout all the buildings in the District. He stated that in the Fall, the Board will need to discuss any plans to move forward with putting a plan for funding these projects before the voters. • Mr. Keith asked about how the Board responds to the public based on decisions that have been discussed by members of the public at Board meetings. The Superintendent explained that the Board receives requests from the public and the decides whether or not changes need to be made. • The Board discussed the policy relating to the tuition paid by the families of District employees to send their children to Kearsarge when they live outside of the District. They discussed sending the policy back to the Policy Committee to review whether the policy should remain unchanged or if different factors should play a role in determining the cost of tuition for District employees.
<p>\16+VI. Adjourn</p>	<p><i>Ms. Schultz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cushing seconded. The Motion carried 7-0-1 (Ms. Mastin abstained). The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.</i></p>

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Hilton
School Board Note Taker