

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2021
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

July 20, 2021

1. Opening Items

1.01 CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room of the Central Administration Building, located at 425 East Ninth Street in Reno, Nevada.

1.02 CEREMONIAL SWEARING-IN OF NEWLY APPOINTED MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President Taylor conducted a ceremonial swearing-in of Trustee Joe Rodriguez.

1.03 ROLL CALL

President Angela Taylor and Board Members Jacqueline Calvert, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, and Joe Rodriguez were present. Board Member Jeff Church was present via video conference. Superintendent Kristen McNeill and staff were also present.

1.04 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Trustee Joe Rodriguez led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOARD) REGARDING THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM APPLICANTS TO FILL THE VACANCY ON THE BOARD IN DISTRICT D CREATED BY THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER TRUSTEE KURT THIGPEN; AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO SELECT THOSE CANDIDATES TO BE INTERVIEWED BY THE BOARD FROM AMONG THE FOLLOWING LEGALLY-QUALIFIED APPLICANTS: HAWAH AHMAD, MATTHEW BUEHLER, TERRY EDWARDS, MARK GREEN, JILL PELLICCIARINI, SERENA ROBB, TYLER ROGERS, ANN SILVER, ELIZABETH "BETH" SMITH, AND SHELIA YOUNG

President Taylor reviewed the process the Board would use to narrow the candidates down to be invited to be interviewed for the vacancy in District D. Each candidate would be provided 5 minutes to introduce themselves to the Board and community prior to the Board ranking the candidates.

Matthew Buehler spoke about his passion for education and that he believed education allowed individuals to reach their full potential. He had served in the United States Air Force for over 20 years and earned two Master's degrees. He had volunteered for many years in the District when his wife worked as a school nurse and then as a long-term substitute in math and science at both North Valleys High School and Damonte Ranch High School. He understood the importance of working as a team and wanted to ensure the Washoe County School District was an incredible place to work and an inspiring place to learn. He believed schools should be places where social and leadership development was fostered among students.

President Taylor wondered how Mr. Buehler's ideas on fostering leadership in the classroom could be applied to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Buehler indicated it would be important for all Trustees to understand how to work together to solve problems and find solutions to improve the quality of education for all students.

Elizabeth "Beth" Smith had been a member of the community for close to 20 years and had two children in the District. She spoke about her commitment to public education and her gratitude for all the educators who guided her when she was younger. She provided information on her experiences as a member and then chair of the District's Zoning Advisory Committee and how she had been able to help transform a process that had been frustrating, confusing, and polarizing into a model for transparency, engagement, and understanding. She noted that while there had been times when some in the community disagreed with the final recommendations from the Zoning Advisory Committee, they understood why the Committee made the decisions and they knew their opinions and voices had been heard and considered. If selected to be a member of the Board, she would bring value because of her ability to focus on long-term strategic goals, while at the same time being cognizant of short-term impacts.

President Taylor asked how Ms. Smith would apply the skills she learned on the Zoning Advisory Committee to the difficult decisions the Board of Trustees had to make. Ms. Smith mentioned she would be interested in working closely with the community to find answers and solutions to their questions through a transparent process.

Terry Edwards believed students should have access to a quality education, no matter their ethnicity or socioeconomic status. He felt the role of the Trustees was to partner with teachers and administrators to develop sustainable goals related to the success of students in the classroom. He mentioned he had recently moved to the area and worked for Microsoft as a global delivery service manager, where he was responsible for developing internal and external stakeholders. He spoke of the importance of ensuring students remained in school by having smaller class sizes and quality teachers. If selected to be part of the Board, he would work with all Trustees through collaboration and determination to do what was best for all students.

Ann Silver was the Chief Executive Officer for the Reno Sparks Chamber of Commerce. She was interested in serving on the Board of Trustees because of her strong belief in and commitment to public education. Education taught her how to interact with others to resolve conflicts, strengthen collaborative relationships, compromise, deliberate, and to be honest. She emphasized her commitment to ensuring students were provided every opportunity to succeed, to dream big, and to graduate prepared for their next step. She was motivated to find solutions that worked for parents, students, teachers, and District administration because everyone in the community wanted the students to thrive and be successful.

Shelia Young stated she was a first-generation college graduate and attributed her success to the foundation she received through public education. She saw the passion and commitment of teachers in the District when her children were in school and praised the differences they made daily on the lives of their students. She was interested in focusing on mental health and the impacts of suicide and traumatic stress on the students and staff in the District. She spoke of her support for programs that valued a physical and psychological safe environment for students and staff. She emphasized the importance of teaching tolerance and respect for everyone and expressed her support for equity programs. She understood the importance of working as a team toward consensus and believed the mission of the Board was vital to the community.

Mark Green spoke of his family's commitment to education and their history in the Washoe County School District. He had been a teacher in the District for over 20 years and helped in the development of curriculum, training of teachers, and creation of common tests. After retiring from the District, he continued to work in private education. He believed the main focus of the Board should always be the students and how to motivate them to take pride in their education and become successful. He felt establishing a good dialogue was an effective tool to accomplish that goal and that education was more about connecting with the students than the specific subject. It was important for the Board to remember that money spent without a clear vision or definite goal led to waste.

Hawah Ahmed was a graduate of the District. She explained much of her work after she completed law school was surrounding education policy through the legislative process. She was interested in finding ways to combat the negative impacts of the pandemic on students, including both their academic growth and social and emotional growth. She was interested in looking at ways education could be delivered differently to students based on what was learned during the pandemic, especially closing the technology gap. She felt it would be important for the District to properly utilize the funds from the American Rescue Plan to support the schools so teachers could be

teachers and students could be students. She would like to see more dedicated towards teacher recruitment and retention.

President Taylor requested clarification on what Ms. Ahmed meant by teachers being teachers and students being students. Ms. Ahmed explained teachers were expected to fill a variety of different roles in the classroom, including identifying the social and emotional supports students might need. Teachers were also required to put in a lot of additional time outside of the classroom, as well as have one-on-one contact with each other their students every day. She believed some of the expectations were unrealistic with the number of students in each classroom.

Jill Pellicciarini was a native Nevadan and had attend school in the District. As a person who had been diagnosed with ADHA, she was interested in focusing on neurodiversity and finding ways for schools to support all students and help them learn in whatever way was best for the individual. She saw schools as a microcosm of the community and everything that occurred in the schools had an impact on the larger community. She believed everyone deserved a high-quality, free public education and was interested in participating in helping to maintain the integrity of education in the Washoe County School District. As a therapist, she was skilled in conflict management and prioritizing communication. She had also seen the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of students and families in the community through the higher number of patients she worked with.

Trustee Church wondered if Ms. Pellicciarini would have the time needed to devote to the Board with the number of patients she had. Ms. Pellicciarini indicated she would limit the number of hours she would practice to be present at meetings and events of the Board.

Tyler Rogers was a native Nevadan, attended schools within District D growing up, and was married to a current high school teacher. He believed the strength of the District was the interactions between the students and teachers. He was interested in serving on the Board to protect and advocate for public education because it was capable of changing lives and teaching community members how to work together and celebrate diversity. Additionally, he was interested in repaying the investment his teachers and the District made in him growing up so that he could become a productive member of the community. He would bring an understanding of contract negotiation, technology, and strategic planning if he was selected to serve. He committed to listening to stakeholders and help to find solutions to their problems and building better relationships with the community.

Serena Robb noted she had worked for the District for most of her life and that she would provide a unique voice on the Board as both someone who had worked inside and outside of the District. She believed she would be able to bring a holistic view of

the schools to the Board. She had a proven track record of collaboration and understood leading required consensus and education was a team sport. She remarked that discussion and debate were vital for a healthy society, but schools should remain sacred places of learning where students were free from the noise and chaos of politically passionate and divided times. She stated the highest priority of the Board had to be enabling students within the District to return to the classroom and back to learning.

President Taylor recessed the meeting for 15 minutes.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment. The Board received an email from Adriana Publico.

The Board held a discussion on the applicants and provided their thoughts on the candidates they were considering. The differences among the candidates were considered and how those differences could be of value to the Board as a whole.

The individual Trustee rankings were as follows:

Trustee Calvert

Hawah Ahmed – 5

Terry Edwards – 4

Beth Smith – 3

Ann Silver – 2

Jill Pellicciarini – 1

Trustee Church

Hawah Ahmed – 5

Matthew Buehler – 4

Shelia Young – 3

Ann Silver – 2

Tyler Rogers – 1

Trustee Minetto

Hawah Ahmed – 5

Serena Robb – 4

Tyler Rogers – 3

Terry Edwards – 2

Beth Smith – 1

Trustee Nicolet

Beth Smith – 5

Ann Silver – 4

Tyler Rogers – 3

Mark Green – 2
Hawah Ahmed – 1

Trustee Rodriguez
Beth Smith – 5
Jill Pellicciarini – 4
Serena Robb – 3
Ann Silver – 2
Shelia Young – 1

President Taylor
Beth Smith – 5
Tyler Rogers – 4
Serena Robb – 3
Ann Silver – 2
Hawah Ahmed – 1

The totals were as follows:

Beth Smith – 19
Hawah Ahmed – 17
Ann Silver – 12
Tyler Rogers – 11
Serena Robb – 10
Terry Edwards – 6
Jill Pellicciarini – 5
Matthew Buehler – 4
Shelia Young – 4
Mark Green – 2

The Board discussed the next steps in the process and the number of candidates that should be invited to interview.

It was moved by Trustee Church and seconded by Trustee Nicolet that **the Board of Trustees selects the following five applicants to interview on July 26, 2021: Hawah Ahmad, Serena Robb, Tyler Rogers, Ann Silver, and Elizabeth "Beth" Smith.** The result of the vote was Unanimous: (Yea: Jacqueline Calvert, Jeff Church, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, and Angela Taylor.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

3. Closing Items

3.01 PUBLIC COMMENT

Valerie Fiannaca spoke against the teaching of Critical Race Theory in the schools and claimed that two of the largest teachers' unions were vowing to fight for teachers, politically and financially, who taught Critical Race Theory against the wishes of parents, school districts, and states. She noted more children had died from suicide over the past year than from COVID-19 so it was important for the Board to put an end to the restrictions in place.

John Eppolito, Protect Nevada Children, spoke against the amount of information collected on students by the District through Infinite Campus. He expressed frustration that the Board would not provide an opportunity for the community to have a two-way conversation about the concerns. He wondered if the counselor who was recently arrested on child pornography charges had used Infinite Campus to find potential victims.

The Board received emails from the following members of the community:

Katie Silva
Marika Moore
Pamela Payne
Pablo Nava Duran

3.02 **ADJOURN MEETING**

There being no further business to come before the members of the Board, President Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Angela D. Taylor, President

Ellen Minetto, Clerk

From: Katie Silva
Sent: Friday, July 16, 2021 12:33 PM
To: McNeill, Kristen; Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding Masks in Schools

Dear Dr. McNeill and Trustees,

I am writing because I strongly feel that masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated. This is aligned with CDC recommendations. Because we are unable to vaccinate our children under age 11, they are vulnerable and need to be protected. Although I can encourage my children to wear masks in schools, it makes little difference if other children are unmasked around them.

With the new delta variant affecting younger people and being much more transmissible, the current policy is irresponsible. I kept my 7-year-old and 5-year-old twins home from school for a year. Our kids need to be in school, but it needs to be done safely. Please make a decision for all of our children that is based on science and guidelines, and refrain from following the chants of a loud minority.

Best, Katie Silva Huffaker Elementary Parent

From: Marika Moore
Sent: Saturday, July 17, 2021 4:28 AM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] IMPORTANT concerns for fall school year

Good early morning to you!

I can't sleep at the thought that I am figuring out how I will be homeschooling my WCSD kids who should be attending public school this fall if they are forced to wear masks. They absolutely will not be vaccinated either, or bullied into the pressure of either.

You are right to take precautions about public pressure. However, you know very well that masks are ineffective and dangerous (unhealthy!). It has been scientifically proven. I wish for your own sake that you wouldn't wear them either.

There is a huge amount of the population that feels the same as I do and those that don't are unfortunately brainwashed. The marketing by the media has been effective. Nevertheless, those of the public that actually contribute to society instead of staring at fake news will be pulling our kids from public school and joining the class action lawsuit against these issues if necessary. You know it will be too hard for some to pull their kids but they resent the masks too. I truly hope you make the right decision, for heaven's sake, and stand up for ultimately good to prevail.

The agenda of fear and hate I see being pushed consists of masks, vaccinations and CRT (called it what you want: social benchmark, social justice, etc) is evil. I hope you chose to stand up against these abhorrent tactics.

As always, you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Marika Moore

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Marika Moore
Owner, Moore Than Locks

Your local locksmith and more

From: Pablo Nava Duran
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 10:17 AM
To: Public Comments; Taylor, Angela; McNeill, Kristen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] District D

Dear Board Members,

I want to inform you that the appointment of replacing Trustee Kurt Thigpen and IT technology for my getting a new laptop for my sister for the upcoming school year. I won't be here for a special meeting tomorrow but I will be here next Monday for the District D finalist. I will talk about the District D candidates who I really believe should move or advance to final selection for next Monday. I currently live in District A, which is Jeff Church district, but I live close to District D. My neighborhood (NEil Road) is split between district A and D and it is gerrymandering, I hopefully this map should be fixed with the redistricting begins.

First, I think Beth Smith should be the right fit for represent District D for the trustee position. I saw her cover letter and resume is very excellent and very professional because I'm impressive that she has nearly 20 years of professional work experience and does do lot of volunteer experiences, Beth Smith is originally from New Hampshire, she graduated with bachelor degree with communication, and she moved to Reno NV for working at Atlantis as Promotion Manager. She has more than 10 years marketing experience, mostly working at IGT company. She focus relationship with business representatives with project management, company engagement, revenue and growth. She is excellence communcator and team builder with the commitment of workplace, community, and cared about diversity and inclusion program. She also the chairwoman of WCSD Zoning Asority Committee for least three years and this position is not always easy and it quite challenging with community don'y always agree with scholl zones changes that affect students emotionally and affect mental health issues. She volunteer TMCC NEvada Promise Scholar which she mentor students who graduate from high school and helping them scholarship by texts, email, and in-person talks. She cared about Caughin Ranch ES performance plan and this scholl rank probably first in the Nevada education, other than Hunsberger ES. She also cared about diversity about women in the workforce and most white-collar workforce is over-represent men and mostly womens in the workplace are likely to have or experience sexual harassment and often facing quid pro quo and hostile enviontment.

Second, I think Selena Robb should be the right fit for represent District D for the Trustee position. She served WCSD for 36 years as an employee, 20 years as an Administrator. She was a principal at Wooster HS from 1994 to 2002 She established the International Baccalaureate (IB program, which it help Wooster HS become a positive place for education, and many students applied to go to this school for IB programs. She gaining Wooster HS proctive as opening at Damonte Ranch HS and demographic change at Wooster HS. With out the IB program, Wooster HS will be Title one program. She was part of the Zoning Committee in early 2000s when opening at Damonte Ranch HS and they have to rezone Galena HS and Wooster HS. She make lots decisions starting moving Pleasant Valley out of Pine MS/Galena HS and move to Damonte Ranch MS/HS, remain Hidden Valley at VAughn MS/Wooster HS, rezone Neil Road area from Vaughn MS/ Wooster to Pine MS/Galena and Damonte Ranch HS, and split Neil Road area into two or possibly three ES. Neil Road area was originally zoned for Colbert ES until 2003 when it split into three ES schools (Smithridge, Dodson, and Colbert ES).. She was also part of the first principal at Damonte Ranch HS from 2002 to 2005. Without her, the Neil Road area would remain zoned for Vaughn MS and Wooster HS, Hidden Valley would be rezoned out of Vaughn/Wooster HS to move to Damonte Ranch MS/HS, and Pleasant Valley would remain Pine MS/Galena HS. Also, Wooster HS would be Title one school just like Hug HS and the IB program would likely move out of Wooster HS, the Neil Road area would be even worse today, and I wouldn't be here or speaking to you today if she wasn't here.

For IT department, I got called from the IT department and they wanted me to choose a specific laptop. I would choose the HP ProBook x360 laptop for my sister for the upcoming school year and she will be attending Pine MS as a six grader next month.

Sincerely,

Pablo Nava Duran

From: Pamela Payne
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 2:52 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Masks

Dear Superintendent McNeil and BOT Members, First and foremost, thank you! Thank you for leading us through a crazy school year. You have endured quite a bit of abuse this year and I recognize how hard you all have been working at keeping our school community safe. I appreciate that. I am writing to you as a community member and WCSD teacher to ask you to consider keeping the mask mandate in place for the upcoming school year, regardless of vaccination status of students, teachers and other staff/faculty. As of now, I know the policy is that all individuals in the school building ages 10 and up must wear a mask, at all times. I am really hoping to keep this policy in place so that the Delta variant does not get out of control once our schools reopen. Washoe County test positivity rate has been increasing and the southern part of our state is currently a Covid hot spot, so it only seems prudent to keep that mask mandate in order to protect our children and staff/faculty. The pandemic is not over. That is a simple fact, which I know you are aware of. There are many people unvaccinated, which is worrisome. Since rates are increasing, schools are at risk too. There are studies that have been published, which found that places that reopened schools despite levels of Covid-19, saw accelerated spread. I am very concerned about the Delta variant. Since vaccinations rates are still too low in our community, we need to mask up. I know masks are inconvenient for people, however, they also protect lives. I thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,

Pamela B. Payne, Ph.D., CFLE

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Pamela B. Payne

From: Publico, Adriana
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 4:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: In Support of Beth Smith's Candidacy

Dear WCSD Board of Trustees,

I have gotten to know Beth Smith over the past couple years and value her leadership, judgment, tact, and above all else, her strong sense of equity and justice for all students. We would be lucky to have her serve on our board and she has my whole-hearted recommendation in this endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration,

Adriana

Adriana Publico (*she/her/hers*)
Staffing Coordinator
Washoe County School District

<http://www.washoeschools.net/employment>

DAILY REMINDER

- **Wear Face Coverings At All Times**
- **Maintain Social Distancing**
- **Wash Your Hands & Use Hand Sanitizer**
- **Help Keep Our Facilities Clean**
- **Perform a [Self-Screening](#) every day before school**

