

ISLESBORO CENTRAL SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020—5:30 P.M. VIDEO CONFERENCE
PUBLIC IS ASKED TO ATTEND VIA INTERNET LINK

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(US) +1 949-445-0603 PIN: 527 156 925#

MINUTES/DRAFT

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
Nakomis Nelson (NN) called the meeting to order at 5:31
SB members present: Nakomis Nelson, Bill Kelly (BK), Meilssa Jagger (MJ), Skylar Purdee (SP), and Dave Dyer (DD).
Others in attendance, Supt. Chris Downing, Head of School (HoS) Chuck Hamm, Peggy Shea, Sara Babbage, Karen Betts, Beth O'Mara, Blair Cook, Sonya Leach, Becky Bolduc, Jon Bolduc, Ellen McDonald, Hannah Wayda, Jen McFarland, Shey Conover, Josh Conover, Shiloh Filed, Betha Howell, Owen Howell, Kate Legere, Karin Lockwood, Lindsay Dakers, Meg Britton, Melissa Burns, Ouda Baxter, Peter DiLalla, Kristen Kelley, Rob McHugh, Tracey Wouri, John Van Dis, John Oldham, and Jennifer Temple.

- I. Approval of Agenda / Adjustments to the Agenda
Some discussion regarding adjustments including the possibility of an Executive Session. A motion for Executive Session did not materialize. Some discussion to bring Athletics up first with Open Session following.
Nakomis motions to adjust the agenda to rearrange the agenda in the order of Open Session first, then Athletics, and finally In-Person COVID. BK seconds, all in favor.

- II. New Business:
- III. Open Session
- IV. Nakomis opens by referring to a letter written by staff to the school board and thanks them for drafting it. HoS Chuck Hamm suggests a review of how the decision to go with a hybrid model came about. He goes on: Having met with the Leadership Team under the facilitation of Korah Soll, the Lead Team and HoS discovered a nuanced and interlinked set of challenges. He goes on to point out he has always intended to keep a six foot distancing measure in place as outlined in the Reopening Plan. With those parameters, ICS was faced with some classes that did not meet that criteria. Hallways and stairwells were also crowded. In the last weeks of summer break, ICS experienced an influx of 12 more students upstairs than previously planned for. Changes in Cooper Cunliffes position due to absorbing his classes to adjust for the new Technology

Integrator position also causes larger classes than predicted. ICS started the school with half days, moved some classes to the gym, trimmed specialists classes, and began discussing options to go remote. A 25% measure was discussed as that was how many students were taking advantage of the already in place hybrid offering. Transportation, meals, and distancing led to the development of two cohorts of grades 7-12. This would clean up the helter skelter of the random numbers of students joining classes remotely. Sixth grade was exempt from the proposal as there numbers are low. It tightened control of which students were remote, albeit, a few more than experienced so far. The Leadership Team unanimously felt this was the right direction to go and had the support of teachers. HoS has noted a rise in morale with staff after this decision. He felt it fits within the parameters of the Yellow aspect of the SB approved Reopening Plan. Elementary school will continue with a half day schedule as ICS transitions into a four, full day schedule with Mondays remaining as a way to continue with remote learning as we prepare to go full remote given a rise to community spread of the coronavirus in Knox or Waldo Counties. HoS continues outlining the two day a week cohort model, or hybrid. It alleviates issues we are experiencing with the ferry, meals, common areas, displaced teachers, and controls who is online and when. This is an attempt to transition into four full days, with cohorts, for the foreseeable future.

Nakomis brings up the staff letter, signed by virtually all staff and inquires. HoS verifies missing an ed tech signature due to absence. The letter reviews HoS review of reasoning to go to hybrid. Nakomis reads the last line stressing the full support of staff to continue with the hybrid model. Melissa interjects and asks about the letter and notes that she has not seen it. Nakomis returns to the letter and says it will be public. Melissa and Melissa discuss the intent of the letter and whether or not it was shared with SB. Evidently, it was not shared with SB. A misunderstanding between the sender, Kristen Kelley, and Nakomis is evident and the letter was not shared. Chuck shares it on his screen. Bill notes he finds a disturbing pattern developing with the Leadership Team. Kristen Kelly comments that the letter was not meant to be kept from anybody. There was not a lot of time to draft it. The SB meeting was called on short notice. The faculty, staff, and Chuck, all signed it.

Bill highlights some of his thoughts as to why this meeting was scheduled. He expresses concern that students will be attending two days a week and that it was not discussed by the SB. He also believed it needed SB approval. He notes five constituencies; parents, students, staff, administration and the school board. He goes on to say each of those groups needs input and ultimately it is a SB decision absent a COVID case. He says, "Teachers are essential workers, we have a state mandate to educate kids, this issue is probably not going away for the next two years." Further thoughts outlining cases in surrounding areas and lack of community transmission. "We need to follow the advice by the state of Maine, CDC, and DOE...". Bill expresses his desire to follow advice of experts and describes findings on classroom spacing as three feet. He points to the importance of a discussion with all five constituents and that this is a SB decision. Bill goes on to express concerns that we are resorting to popular opinion rather than data and experts. "The three foot measures are not being respected." Bill continues to state

he needs data and facts. He proposes some arrangement of classes within the building. Bill continues to point out “comfort” is not our standard, risk is low, and he is concerned school’s decision is not being made through the normal process. He feels the hybrid is failing the students.

Nakomis agrees with much of Bill’s outline and continues the best success of faculty is married to their comfort levels. He continues with saying he puts a lot of stock in the people in the building. He wants everybody to feel comfortable. He then asks the public and SB to weigh in.

Skylar asks HoS if this solution is long term. He goes on to say, yes, and adds, in person is best but having students in various locations within the building is not better than a consistent routine of online and in person hybrid. The a la carte option is not best for educating students. He cautions not to oversimplify this problem. He goes on to mention that he is attempting to take into consideration the town’s cautious approach to COVID as well.

Nakomis urges the public to comment at this time.

Melissa points to the best interests of staff and students in mind. She outlines some great conversations with teachers. She continues to point to the lack of open discussion amongst constituents and urges those meetings to happen at some time soon. Melissa felt blind sided and pretty shocked, however, after some time and reflection feels this is the right course of action and wonders and hopes this is a short time fix. She urges next steps to be more transparent in the future. She closes by expressing appreciation for all those involved.

Betha Howell requests to have a teacher explain their experience upstairs.

John Van Dis reports on his experience. His room cannot hold more than 8 students and move around in class and that is at six foot distance. Five of six of his classes are in the gym. It’s working somewhat but not working well due to labs, bringing online students with laptop, and juggling other classes in the background of the gym. His concerns grow with inclimate weather. The model of the hybrid addresses these issues. “We need time to work with this a little bit, to learn from it, and adjust from a base point. “

Kristen adds that the stress level is high and school is not at its optimum. She goes on to point to various hybrids all over the state. ICS is in a unique place, trying to keep the island COVID free, and moving forward with caution is best. The hybrid model allows us to teach as well as we can and takes into consideration the efforts and expectations of the island. The hybrid allows students to be out for five days at a time, which is when symptoms generally start to appear. In short, she believes it is prudent to mitigate risks of spreading the virus by continuing with the hybrid as outlined by the Leadership Team.

Peggy adds the virtual option is implemented already and having teachers moving to different spaces due to lack of space, poses challenges that were unforeseen.

Shey adds thanks to everybody. She continues by adding that one aspect of the new proposal takes into consideration higher absenteeism due to screening. She continues highlighting the need to have consistency for students and that this new schedule makes that happen.

Sonya notes that her kids don't learn online as well as in person. She requests teachers and SB to realize some students actually do better online. She continues to request we try to find ways to see who needs extra help and consider optional testing.

Further conversation continues with various attendees.....

Meg Britton adds CDC guidelines outlining distancing recommendations. Her sense is that Islesboro is unique and that Magnets are feeling cautious and fear re: bringing their children to the island because of those concerns. Karen Betts interrupts with "then don't bring your f*!@\$ kids to Islesboro". Meg, undeterred, continues with support for the hybrid.

Owen Howell states that as a medical personnel on the island, he supports distancing measures and further discussion. He goes on to recognize the team that put this schedule together being in the building. He continues to mention ICS is at a highest risk and that the hybrid allows a transition period to get better at online learning.

Lindsay comments that a significant part of the process forecasts absenteeism of staff and students, ICS expects higher absenteeism due to screening.

Nakomis acknowledges the amount of work put into this plan, albeit, the news was sudden. He continues suggesting we don't need a motion to accept this hybrid as it fits into the Yellow aspect of the reopening plan.

Beth O'Mara adds her wholehearted support for this hybrid and goes on to express appreciation for this entire process. She agrees with Meg's comments and that we have been operating in a high risk mode with high numbers of students.

Shiloh Field expresses confusion with hybrid and asks about coupling half days and hybrid.

HoS explains the goal is to go to four full days and that we are in transition to a longer schedule in order to develop capacities within transportation, meals, and weather. He continues to stress the need to prepare for long term remote learning in the event of an outbreak. HoS expresses appreciation of efforts and for people showing up to this meeting. Betha interjects with questions re: elementary. They agree to continue that conversation in house.

Nakomis suggests we move on to athletics and asks HoS to speak to that. HoS outlines a scrimmage season and asks AD Tracey to speak. Recommendations from MPA have set guidelines limiting numbers of fans, number of athletes, etc.

Tracey outlines expectations for Varsity and MS to start goal setting and drilling. She has spoken to outlining area ADs and is in the process of setting a schedule. She continues that we will be abiding by MPA rules.

Supt. Chris adds the historical background of MPA release of findings and CDC and DHHS asked MPA to review and walk back recommendations, saddling local schools with decision making. Skill development and social distancing were to be adhered to with game guidelines also adhered to. There will be no playoffs or championships for fall sports. Individual sports are still being considered later in the school year.

He continues that HoS and the AD are comfortable with moving ahead with sports, and that he supports that decision. HoS confirms moving forward with the season and that all

coaches and students must watch the accompanying video from the MPA. If something changes we will change with it. HoS looks for a motion to approve moving forward with Athletics. Melissa weighs in with appreciation of Tracey and noting the kids are champing at the bit to play. She feels that nearby schools, that are operating on a similar philosophy, should scrimmage with ICS.

Meilssa moves to continue with moving ahead with Fall Athletics. Discussion ensues; Bill asks to add clarification of motion including modifying the motion to recognize the athletics is in the hands of the HoS and AD and that they will follow the guidelines set out by MPA and DOE. Motion amended to **Include Fall sports, Soccer and Cross Country, following MPA and DOE guidelines as a baseline. Bill seconds, all in favor.**

Nakomis leads the meeting into discussion regarding whether or not we need a motion to move ahead with the hybrid as presently being implemented. Supt. Downing defines the definition of motion necessary to move ahead. Discussion ensues. HoS outlines his understanding of the hybrid as being within the boundaries of the Yellow plan. He recounts his discussion with other coastal superintendents and their support of his interpretations of the process in getting to where we are now. Supt. Downing notes the Yellow hybrid was already in the reopening plan, therefore a motion is not needed. Chris reviews DOE framework of reopening schools within the Green, Yellow, and Red determinations. He concludes that administratively, decisions can be made with conversations with SB as we are presently engaged. Nakomis suggests we forego a motion and move ahead. Bill follows up and frames the need to follow a similar mode as athletics that is built around advice from the CDC and DOE and would motion to use their criteria for future decisions made with those standards. He continues to state that he made the request to have this meeting due to process irregularities demonstrated by the HoS and Lead Team. He continues to stress the need to have a baseline from experts in the medical field. Melissa adds appreciation to all who attended this evening and hopes open communication continues and stresses involvement of various constituents. She declines to make a motion and to trust all involved parties. Not hearing a motion, Nakomis moves on to the next agenda item.

-Resignation of Nurse O'Mara

Nakomis notes the huge loss of having Beth resign. HoS thanks Beth and adds that her undying dedication at ICS will be lasting in that we now have a nurses station and a part time nurse for the first time in the school's history. Beth thanks ICS and notes her desire to spend more time with her family.

Nakomis moves to accept Beth's resignation with deep regret. Melissa second, all in favor.

-Consider recommendation of Nurse Ellen McDonald as ICS Nurse

Hos school reviews Ellen's background, connection to Vinalhaven, and unanimous support on behalf of the search committee. **Nakomis moves to approve hiring Ellen Mcdonald. Melissa seconds.** Ellen speaks re: the exciting opportunity to work with

students and staff. She remains optimistic about working with the ICS team. Melissa inquiries about finances. HoS Assures this hiring of a nurse will not impact students. It's a four day a week position and supported, in part, by COVID Relief Funds at 20-25 hours a week.

Bill asks Chuck to describe the schedule. He continues that Ellen will be taking the 9:00 ferry and that the exact schedule is still being worked out. **All in Favor**

-Address COVID plans re: in person instruction

-Approve Fall Athletic Program

V. Adjournment

VI. Motion to adjourn at 7:15 by Bill, Melissa seconds, all in favor.