

SALINE AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION - Special Meeting

Thursday, October 3, 2024
Liberty School Board Room
6:30 pm



MINUTES

Mission

We, the Saline Area Schools, will equip all students with the knowledge, technological proficiency, and personal skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex society. We expect that our students, staff, and the Saline Community will share in these responsibilities.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Board Members Present: Tim Austin, Susan Estep, Brad Gerbe, Michael McVey, Jennifer Miller, Jennifer Steben

Board Members Absent: Lauren Gold

Central Administration Present: Superintendent Laatsch

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Motion made by Vice President Steben, support President McVey **to amend the agenda as printed, by inserting a public comment section for all student feedback, of roughly our norm of 30 minutes.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 6-0**

PUBLIC COMMENT: Students only

Isaac Furlong: expressed concerns about due process with students being removed and noted that there appeared to be no in-house investigation.

Aiden Burton: highlighted administrative mistakes, noting that one-third of the season had already passed and suggested there was a lack of due diligence and empathy from the administration.

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Cruz Hanson: questioned why the focus was on this issue now and why students had to suffer as a result.

Jaden Leonard: shared that his mother brought him to this school for better opportunities.

Lincoln Keys: emphasized the strong bond the team had developed.

James Rush: expressed fear that this incident would hinder his chances of going to college.

Coleman Ross: felt that the whole team was being punished and noted that no adult was being held accountable.

3. CLOSED SESSION

MOTION made by Secretary Miller; support Vice President Steben **to enter Closed Session of the Board of Education at 6:48 PM, pursuant to Section 8(1)(a) of the Open Meetings Act to consider the periodic personnel evaluation of and complaints against an employee of the District. Under Section 8(1)(a), a simple majority vote of the Board is sufficient to enter into a closed session.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 6-0**

4. RE-ENTER OPEN SESSION

MOTION made by Trustee Estep, support Trustee Austin **to re-enter Open Session of the Special Board of Education Meeting at 8:10 PM.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 6-0**

MOTION made by Vice President Steben, support Treasurer Gerbe **to direct the Superintendent to contact MHSAA tomorrow to seek information on how the Board could appeal a decision.**

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 6-0**

Special Board Comment:

Secretary Miller expressed her disappointment regarding the scheduling of this special meeting during the observance of Rosh Hashanah, one of the most sacred and important high holy days in the Jewish faith. She further noted that as an organization committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, she believes it is crucial that we are mindful and respectful of the religious observances and cultural traditions of all members of our community. Holding a meeting on this significant Jewish holiday effectively excludes those who observe Rosh Hashanah, further marginalizing the Jewish community.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

STUDENTS: None

OTHER PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS

Danielle Gillespie: spoke about the varsity girls lacrosse team and felt there was a lack of response from the administration. She believed the coach was being protected and that there should have been a third-party review of both the football and girl's lacrosse teams. There was an expression of concern over the failure to address the sexualization of players.

Brad and Janine Ross: expressed frustration and called for better policies and processes in the future. They urged the board to consider appealing to the MHSAA.

Jolena Nollar: inquired about the nature of the violation and asked who ensures these violations don't recur. She acknowledged our attempt to make an appeal.

Shaun Furlong: believed mental health was not considered in the decision-making process and questioned why the issue was being rushed. There was also a question about whether or not this incident was related to a recent racist event.

Marissa Johnson: felt that a full and complete investigation had not taken place, as a conference with the involved parties had not been conducted. She thought the report was premature and stressed the importance of the athletic director's support for athletes.

Tammi Carr: noted the importance of the athletic director's role and felt that proper residency checks had not been done and questioned why this issue couldn't have been addressed at the end of the season. There was also a wish that parents had been invited to meet with the athletic director and superintendent.

Kandace Jones: inquired whether a waiver could have been applied for and felt that the athletic director and administration were unaware of the issues and referenced the MHSAA handbook, pointing out that waivers and exceptions to residency requirements are allowed.

Rushdi Issa: shared that despite double-checking and being willing to sit out an extra game until the issue was resolved, they were still penalized. There was a strong recommendation for better communication.

Vanessa and Matt: asked several questions regarding procedures and wondered whether the athletic director was being supportive of the students.

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Steven Thiesen: questioned how the board planned to prevent this from happening again, believing that students were being hurt because of an adult's actions.

Danielle Sims Woody: raised a few questions and encouraged others to challenge the MHSAA.

Megan Gunnerson: urged the board to consider calling in a third party to conduct an independent investigation.

Nate Hanson: encouraged the board to meet with the players on the team.

6. NEXT MEETING

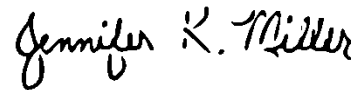
The next Board of Education Meeting will be held on October 8, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION made by Treasurer Gerbe, support Vice President Steben, to adjourn the Special Board of Education Meeting of October 3, 2024, at 9:10 PM.

Ayes - All Present - **MOTION CARRIED 6-0**

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Miller
Board Secretary