Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission

550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1236

Anchorage AK 99501

ADOPTED MINUTES

January 28-29, 2021 (Via Zoom)

**Call to Order:** Kent Runion called the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m. There were 9 members present on the conference call so there was a quorum.

**Members Present:** Chair Kent Runion, Tony Graham, Diane Kardash, Janine Todd, Tammy Van Wyhe, Secretary Jamie Burgess, Vice Chair Lem Wheeles, Adam Reid, Jennifer Stafford. All members attended via Zoom.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Agenda Approval:** Tony Graham moved and Tammy Van Whye seconded to approve the agenda as presented. The agenda was unanimously approved.

**Introductions/Updates from Communities**: New member Jennifer Stafford introduced herself. All other members reintroduced themselves and provided a brief update from their communities.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Approval of Minutes:** It was moved by Lem Wheeles and seconded by Diane Kardash to approve the October 18-19, 2020 minutes. The motion passed.

**Executive Director’s Reports:** Melody Mann delivered her reports in the following areas.

Activity Report: Number of cases are lower than usual; the pandemic has reduced contact between staff members, and districts are being more lenient in handling resignations, so fewer breach of contract complaints. Questions continue to be directed to the Executive Director regarding potential ethics issues with COVID-19 as far as remote teaching, handling resignations, etc. Melody ensures that complaints are referred back to districts to handle if the internal complaints process has not been followed. There have been discussions with the attorney general regarding the legal authority of the Commission regarding COVID-related complaints. Policy and law are lagging in response to the pandemic. Fewer background checks have also come through the Teacher Certification Office – a year ago it was common to get 12 per week, this year there are often weeks with none. No issues this year with barrier crimes (involving children). Most frequent hit from background checks involve DUIs, and Melody also works with the DEED Teacher Certification Office if the disclosures don’t match the background check results, or if an applicant fails to disclose.

Presentations have been more popular with the availability of the Zoom format and given Melody more access to school districts. Melody presented to 25 principals through the ASDN – scheduled for 50, but an announcement from the Governor regarding COVID meant fewer showed up than were registered. Melody presented to a group of nine aspiring superintendent candidates at UAS; one of those individuals invited Melody to present to her school staff within BBBSD, which is scheduled for February.

Melody is still waiting for updated records retention information to archive/destroy old records currently in the office. Once it is determined how much storage space is actually needed, discussion can be held regarding potentially downsizing the commission office space.

Melody has been working with AASB and AKPEI (AK Public Entity Insurance) to develop training on the new Professional Boundaries school policy. Discussion is being held to possibly add this training to the DEED eLearning platform.

Financial Report: Melody reviewed the PTPC Financial Report. There are still some funds allocated for travel in case travel is permitted for the April meeting.

Case Report: The commission was provided a summary of the cases the PTPC office has investigated since the last meeting.

Discussion around Conflict of Interest: Kent Runion reviewed the guidelines around conflict of interest for Commissioners.

**EXECUTIVE/DELIBERATIVE SESSION**: Tony Graham moved and Tammy Van Wyhe seconded to go into executive session as permitted by AS 44.62.310(d). The motion passed unanimously. The commission moved into deliberative session at 9:20 am.

**Chair Kent Runion called the meeting back into order in Executive Session at 9:35am.**

**The meeting was recessed at 11:48am for lunch. The meeting came back to order at 1:02pm.**

**It was moved by Lem Wheeles and seconded by Tony Graham to move out of deliberative session at 2:35 pm. The motion passed.**

**Department of Education Teacher Certification Report:**

Sondra Meredith reported that they are now fully staffed in the Teacher Certification Office with four analysts. The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Working Group that was assembled by the Governor have started their work; the statewide Teacher Retention Survey closes at the end of January, and the results will be analyzed for the Group’s final report. A new web page with the information from the Working Group is being created and can accessed through the DEED website. The Legislature has reconvened and there are a number of bills around teacher certification being proposed. HB15 has a time restraint on certification processing turnaround time of 30 days for military members and their spouses. Sondra stated that the Office is doing a fairly good job already of processing applications within their target of 30 days, with the exception of waiting for background checks to be returned. HB 18 is proposed legislation to require districts to post a list of National Board certified teachers in each school*;* HB 19 is proposed legislation for limited certificates for teachers in immersion programs other than English, including world or indigenous language, allowing them to teach any subject as long as it is not taught in English; HB 24 would require space for nursing mothers*;* SB20 is a rewrite to the out of state certificates and would remove the basic competency requirements for educators previously licensed in another state.Sondra will provide Melody with a regulatory package that DEED is seeking comments from the field around certification and possible modifications of current regulations, such as lengthening initial certificate to five years, provide alternative pathways to master certification beyond national board certification, etc. Sondra shared that there is outreach from teach.org about a PSA with specific information for a nationwide audience to help interested teachers learn about certification in Alaska and available jobs. The focus is on attracting younger people into the profession as well as celebrating the teaching profession. The Certification Office has been working on emergency certificates under Governor’s Emergency Declaration as well as putting permanent emergency certificates into place. Sondra stated she has not seen a reduction in the number of applications received in the office; however, there has been an increase in the number of individuals certified under the Emergency Certificate categories. UAA is in the process of re-obtaining their accreditation in order to restart their College of Education programs; UAF is completing their reaccreditation cycle.

**Commission Member Lem Wheeles left the meeting at 2:47pm.**

**EXECUTIVE/DELIBERATIVE SESSION**: Diane Kardash moved and Tony Graham seconded to go into executive session as permitted by AS 44.62.310(d). The motion passed unanimously. The commission moved into deliberative session at 2:58pm.

**Chair Kent Runion called the meeting back into order in Executive Session at 3:00pm.**

**It was moved by Jamie Burgess and seconded by Tammy Van Whye to move out of deliberative session at 3:40 pm. The motion passed.**

**Action Items**

Professional Teaching Practices Commission Cases

PTPC Case 20-23: The Commission accepted the mediated stipulation accepting revocation of the Professional Teaching Certificate of James R. Smith for life and authorized the chair to sign the order.

Moved: Janine Todd Second: Adam Reid

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Jennifer Stafford

Tony Graham

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 20-33: The Commission accepted the stipulated agreement reprimanding the Professional Teaching Certificate of Dennis Blackburn.

Moved: Tammy Van Whye Second: Jamie Burgess

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 20-27: The Commission ordered the one-year suspension of the expired Initial Teaching Certificate held by Jennifer G. Bates effective October 23, 2020.

Moved: Diane Kardash Second: Janine Todd

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

PTPC Case 20-32: The Commission ordered the one-year suspension of the Provisional Administrative and Teaching Certificates of Thomas H. Graves effective February 25, 2020.

Moved: Tammy Van Wyhe Second: Adam Reid

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Review PTPC Case 21-07: The Commission upheld staff’s decision to dismiss the case.

Moved: Tony Graham Second: Kent Runion

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Review PTPC Case 21-12: The Commission overturns staff’s decision to dismiss the case.

Moved: Diane Kardash Second: Jamie Burgess

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Review PTPC Case 21-17: The Commission upheld staff’s decision to dismiss the case.

Moved: Jamie Burgess Second: Tammy Van Whye

AYE

Kent Runion

Diane Kardash

Janine Todd

Tammy Van Wyhe

Adam Reid

Jamie Burgess

Tony Graham

Jennifer Stafford

NAY

Motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

Newsletter Items: Melody states she tries to do two newsletters each year, although the bylaws only require an annual newsletter. She is soliciting topics from the members of the Commission for ideas for the upcoming spring edition. Melody discussed an excellent podcast for educators called “Cybertraps” by Jethro Jones (former AK principal) and Frederick Lane, author, attorney, and consultant.

**Janine Todd left the meeting at 3:54pm.**

Breach of Contract and the Pandemic: Melody discussed the possibility of shortening the time for sanction for certificates for certificated individuals who breach contract due to COVID-19 issues. Commission members expressed the wish to look at individual cases in order to determine an appropriate time frame for suspension.

Commission Seats: The Department of Law stated that individuals who served two terms, even if they were not six years, cannot continue to serve. Several seats on the Commission will therefore be replaced (Diane Kardash, Kent Runion), and the Principal seat (Tony Graham) is also up for replacement due to term expiration.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: The Spring meeting will be held April 15-16, 2021. It is yet to be determined if the meeting will be in person or virtual.

Adjournment: Tony Graham moved and Diane Kardash seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved. Kent Runion adjourned the meeting at 4:11 pm.

Submitted by,

Jamie Burgess

April 2, 2021