

# Green Mountain Unified School District Board

## Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 6, 2020

Zoom

6:00 p.m.

### I. **ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER:**

**Board:** Joe Fromberger, Jeff Hance, Doug McBride, Kate Lamphere, Michael Studin, Wayne Wheelock, Lois Perlah, Jeannie Wade

**Staff:** Lauren Fierman, Deb Beaupre, Katherine Fogg, Mike Ripley, Todd Parah, Angela Hurd, Cheryl Hammond, Sue Willis, Mary Bauerband, Kristi Flack, Mindi Munroe

**Student Reps:**

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham, Sharon Huntley

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### II. **APPROVE AGENDA:**

Ms. Perlah **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of discussion of board comments for a short report on the most recent TRSU meeting. The motion carried without opposition.

### III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

#### A. **March 19, 2020 regular meeting unapproved**

Ms. Lamphere **moved** to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2020 meeting. The motion carried without opposition.

### IV. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

### V. **BOARD COMMENTS:**

Mr. Fromberger reported that the TRSU board met on April 2, 2020 and interviewed the candidate that the search committee recommended to the board. They interviewed Lauren Fierman and at the conclusion of the interview the board voted unanimously to offer a two-year contract for \$127,000 subject to passing the appropriate background checks and the approval of the AOE (which is a new requirement). Mr. Studin felt that as part of the search committee, he felt that Ms. Fierman was a great selection. She was by far the best candidate that they had interviewed. He felt she would be a great person to lead the district forward. Ms. Lamphere echoed Mr. Studin's comments. She is thrilled that the TRSU made this decision.

### VI. **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:**

#### A. **Review of Current Status of Education in the District**

Ms. Powden reported that they are in a transition period right now. They have been in a maintenance period, so that the teachers could learn how to be distance educators and become familiar with the technology, such as Zoom, Seesaw and Google Hangouts. In the past week, Mr. Eppolito has been working on developing a continuity of learning plan. All districts in the state have to develop a similar plan to describe how they will educate the students for the remainder of the school year. Tomorrow afternoon, the teachers and staff will review the plan. Tomorrow will be a PD day. The teachers will begin by talking about their successes in order to learn from each other. She noted that they have to find the right balance of what to expect from students who are being educated in their homes. They need to be respectful of the

families, including those who have lost jobs and to those who are working at home with their children at home with them. She is proud of the teachers and staff for working hard to continue to provide the students with an education and with the meal delivery.

Ms. Lamphere questioned if there are standards set by the state in the continuity plan, and have they provided a framework. Ms. Powden reported that each SU gets to decide locally. TRSU has set critical indicators and proficiencies that they want to be sure to meet, and the SU is just required to submit the plan for review. Ms. Lamphere questioned if there is any marker of required time for the students in the plan. Ms. Powden confirmed that there is and it increases by age of the student. Mr. McBride questioned what Ms. Powden anticipates will be the loss of education because of this, or if they will be ahead of what was originally planned with traditional classroom education. Ms. Powden noted that they want students to learn deeply on those topics. She noted that there are critical proficiencies that they want the students to achieve, and this situation has helped them to focus that attention. Mr. McBride questioned if a student is not where the educators would have liked them to be at the end of the year, will there be planning to get the student caught up at the start of next year. Ms. Powden advised that this will definitely be a focus at the start of next year. They regularly assess where the students are at the beginning of each school year. Mr. McBride questioned the amount of time that students are actually participating in remote learning and if it will meet the federal government's guidelines for what is needed for education. Ms. Powden advised that there are state guidelines and though they are educating the students in a unique way, they are still able to count these days as a school day.

Ms. Wade questioned if there is a plan in place preventatively if they are banned from Zoom. Ms. Powden advised that Mr. Eppolito has been working on the aspects of Zoom to make them protected for student privacy. The teachers are also learning the features of Zoom and can remove non-students from Zoom. Ms. Wade suggested having a backup plan. She also asked for input on the teachers reaching out to students via email outside the normal school day, and if there are boundaries. Ms. Powden noted that they encourage teachers to respond to students. She also suggested that if a parent has any concerns with the time and frequency that a teacher contacts their child, they should reach out to the teacher directly to discuss those concerns. She noted that when teachers reach out to students, they are often doing it to assist, but the parents are in charge of their homes and the SU doesn't want to infringe on expectations that parents set up in their homes, but want to find that right balance for everyone. Ms. Wade felt that the boundary issues are a big deal, and she felt that other parents are feeling the same way and are overwhelmed. She suggested that the SU need to be concerned with students who have family members who are ill. She suggested having a weekly parent meeting with the teachers that could address common questions shared by parents. Mr. Fromberger suggested that she have this conversation offline. Ms. Lamphere suggested that the multi-modal communication is overwhelming and therefore other ways of communicating information would be helpful. She also suggested that these important ideas get communicated to families and in ways other than email. She agreed that teachers are overwhelmed and so is everyone, and suggested having a partnership between families and educators. Ms. Perlah suggested that families can turn off the devices in order to "end" the school day. Ms. Powden suggested that this would help develop routines. There was discussion about teachers setting boundaries. There was discussion about teachers setting office hours.

Mr. McBride noted that some school districts in other states have felt that it is too difficult to test and grade work in this period. Ms. Powden noted that they are striving to have students develop evidence-based learning. The principals work more closely with the teachers and may have additional information. Ms. Beaupre advised that at CTES, they are dealing with students who are age 5-12. They have been trying to acclimate students to their expectations and

develop routines and procedures. This is similar to how school is at the start of the school year. She gave some examples of how students can show their learning in this new, creative way. Mr. Studin questioned the standardized tests. Ms. Powden advised that they have been waived for this year. Ms. Fierman advised that at the secondary level, class to class, and grade to grade varies greatly. They have been working on personalized learning even when they were in the classroom. They have to work a little harder to implement that in this new way. She advised that in many cases they are still holding students accountable to new learning, and in some cases they aren't. She gave examples of AP classes versus other classes. They will be continuing to get students to try to reach expectations. She noted that there is no "one size fits all" because everyone's home life and internet access is different. She noted that their motto is be generous, be flexible and be kind.

Ms. Fogg noted that this situation has been a learning curve for parents, students, teachers, and administrators. She advised that they are trying to figure everything out. She supported having a teacher parent zoom meeting to share ideas and thoughts. She noted that it is challenging for teachers to whittle a full day's worth of teaching into a couple of hours. She advised that the evidence-based learning is where they were trying to go with PBE.

Ms. Lamphere questioned how the board would be able to view the continuation of education plan and how will it be communicated with families. She asked for a full picture in a way that is understandable and easily digestible. Ms. Powden advised that when that plan is in place, she will be writing a companion piece for families. Mr. McBride questioned how the budget is doing. Ms. Hammond advised that currently they are doing fine financially. They had budgeted for the payrolls, but are having to purchase some extra cleaning supplies and some internet hot spots.

Ms. Lamphere questioned the decision to not provide childcare for essential workers. Ms. Powden advised that they had had some volunteers and about 8 students who were in need of care. She advised that they were encouraged to offer the service, but as time progressed, the volunteers may have been concerned with their own health as well. They had a child care task force and once they realized that they didn't have the adults available to provide the care, they began contacting the families. They have contacted the families and they are all set. She advised that all of the students of essential workers that she is aware of have care. She advised that there are private care providers and some essential workers have opted not to put their children in other care options. Ms. Lamphere noted her concern with redeployment of workers who may need additional care. Ms. Lamphere also questioned the decision to move forward with April vacation. Ms. Powden advised that the teachers and staff have been asked to change their roles dramatically and she encourages them to take care of themselves so they can educate and feed the students. Part of taking care of themselves involves taking a break. She asked if there was concern with the students having another week of no learning. Ms. Powden advised that this is always a concern whenever there is a break. She noted that most of the students are engaged. She felt that the teachers have a good handle on who they might be concerned about. Ms. Fogg noted that she felt that the families and the children need a break as well. She acknowledged that the worry about learning is always there. Ms. Beaupre advised that she was in a meeting with many people from the SU when the governor's announcement came out. She felt that the teachers need time to shift their paradigm for teaching. She advised that this is similar to when she received her cancer diagnosis, and the teachers are in a whirlwind and haven't had time to catch a breath. She felt that as long as everyone can be patient, flexible and encouraging, this will work. Ms. Fierman echoed Ms. Beaupre and Ms. Fogg's comments, and in order for teachers to teach effectively, they need to be in a place where they can do so rested. She noted that the para-educators are also helping teach students and feed students. She was concerned that some para-educators will not get the break since they will still be feeding

students. Mr. McBride questioned if other districts are also not canceling. Ms. Powden advised that all of the school districts in the state that she is aware of are also taking their vacations. There was discussion about this providing a sense of normalcy.

Ms. Hammond noted that because the para-educators are not working as many hours in special education, this will affect the special education reimbursement that they get which could impact the budget.

**B. Discussion of Planning for the Balance of the School Year**

Ms. Powden advised that for the remainder of the school year, they will be focused on the continuity of learning plan. She is hopeful that the students and staff will be back in school in the fall. Mr. Fromberger noted his concern with whether the school will open in the fall. There was discussion about the impact on next year's budget if they don't open school next year. There was discussion about the pandemic progression and whether the AOE has advised on planning for next year. Ms. Lamphere questioned how the students who need special education services are being met. Ms. Powden advised that Ms. Barton has been working closely with the special educators, SLP's, OT's and PT's. Each student on an IEP has their own plan during this time. The special educators and para-educators are providing this education and the supports necessary. The SU also have a focus on the at-risk students who need the most support. The school-based clinicians are continuing to work with these students. Ms. Fierman advised that they are doing all they can to reach families, but some are difficult to reach, including some without internet, and other connections. She advised that some people, including Mr. Ripley and some paraeducators are working to reach all the students.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Recommendation for Hire**

Ms. Powden advised that they are continuing to conduct the search processes for openings. They have searched for a French teacher. They found a candidate, Ethan Harris, who has spent time in Switzerland and in private schools. She recommended him for hire for next year. Ms. Fierman advised that they were fortunate to have a number of candidates and found that Mr. Harris was very eager and did a demonstration lesson. Mr. Ripley advised that he had spoken with some of the students after the demonstration lesson and they felt very engaged. He felt that Mr. Harris would be a great addition to the staff.

Mr. Wheelock **moved** to approve Ms. Powden's recommendation to hire Ethan Harris as the French teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. The motion carried without opposition.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**IX. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA ITEMS:**

The next regular meeting will be Thursday, April 16 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

**X. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Studin **moved** to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary