

Green Mountain Unified School District Board

Retreat Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Newsbank Fletcher House

5:00 p.m.

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

Board: Marilyn Mahusky, Kate Lamphere, Fred Marin, Wayne Wheelock, Joe Fromberger, Rick Alexander, Lois Perlah, Mike Studin, Deb Brown, Jeff Hance, Doug McBride

Staff: Deb Beaupre, Katherine Fogg, Michael Eppolito, Meg Powden Lauren Fierman, Linda Waite, Cheryl Hammond

Public: Shawn Cunningham, Sue Holson

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. He introduced Ms. Holson, the consultant from the VSBA. Ms. Holson shared information about the upcoming regional VSBA meeting. She set some ground rules for tonight's retreat, including the idea to look forward, not backward and the idea to view solutions and issues in terms of all the students in all the schools in the GMUSD.

II. **Presentation and Discussion of Strategic Plan of Action - Draft**

Ms. Powden shared information about the strategic plan that the administration developed at the admin retreat. She reminded the board of the vision statement that is printed on the agendas. The plan includes the learners, instructional design, instructional intervention, assessment and accountability, and professional learning. She discussed the proposed capstone projects and personalized learning plans. She discussed the strategies that would be used to instruct students and how they would be assessed, measured, reviewed and sometimes revised. There was discussion about how the strategies are determined and the outcomes of the strategies. There was discussion about the continuous improvement plan. There was discussion about setting priorities that are data driven. Mr. Eppolito outlined some specific outcomes and the manner in which they will measure those outcomes, as well as ways that they will plan the instruction. He discussed interventions, including Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and integrated curriculum. Ms. Fierman discussed professional learning and how to assess and evaluate the new expectations, including student outcome-based goals. She discussed this as a pilot program that will incorporate feedback from the teachers involved. The evaluation process of these instructional goals will be more of a coaching and improvement-based process, rather than a disciplinary process. There was discussion about closing the achievement gap and how that is different from excellence, and how closing the achievement gap is an example of excellence.

Ms. Beaupre discussed the passion with which her teachers are approaching some of these concepts, and how they can help the students achieve more. There was discussion about proficiency-based education and how that impacts the ability to assess performance. Ms. Fierman discussed traditional grading being comfortable, but not accurately reflecting a student's ability to meet all the necessary skills that the school defines that they should meet in order to graduate. She felt it was fortunate that Vermont is requiring that change since it is best for kids.

III. **Dinner**

The board recessed for dinner at 6:15 p.m.

IV. **Brief Overview: The Budgeting Process**

Ms. Holson discussed the budget process being dependent upon the board's vision and implementing that in the programming, as well as setting priorities. The board discussed their vision statement being

different from the TRSU vision statement. Ms. Holson suggested that having different vision statements between the SU and district becomes a challenge for the administration to adhere to.

The vision is intended to be so aspirational that it applies to both districts, while the strategic plan might be unique to each district. There was discussion about attracting students from the LMHUUSD to GM. There was discussion about community engagement and the need for the community to be confident in the board, administration and the school system, and the different ways to help the community feel heard.

V. Translating Strategic Priorities into Budget Directives

The board discussed priorities, including diverse education and humanities; basic skills, including early literacy; SU/Board/Administration relations and transparency; execution of plans and priorities; student recruitment; including all stakeholders in community input; critical thinking; STEAM; budget forecasting; fiscal responsibility, world languages, data and outcomes, social justice and cultural humility, safety, preparing a budget in response to imposed legislation. The board discussed the goals set in the Act 46 discussions-STEAM and world languages. They also discussed using their resources well. The board discussed investing in their priorities and “selling” the budget to the community.

The board reviewed their role in the financial oversight—including fiscal management and responsibility, developing policy, developing a budget, presenting it to the voters, then overseeing the approved budget. The board provides direction to the administration about their priorities and the administration develops a budget based on those priorities and their own priorities, then they discuss the budget and the priorities together. The board sets strategic goals with the administration, then sets budget priorities, works with the business office on draft budgets, then presents the final budget that incorporates the priorities. The board makes sure that the district needs will be met, while being fiscally responsible, agree on a final draft and present it to the community in as many places and times that are appropriate within the statutory requirements.

The board discussed student:teacher ratios and the potential savings to be realized by reducing that ratio, but the needs of the students sometimes skewing the adult:student ratio. The board requested that the administration look at these ratios to see if they can be reduced in order to have more funds in the budget.

Ms. Holson also differentiated between board work and district work—meaning operations and initiatives that involve the board and only the board versus those that involve the board and administration. The board discussed transparency compared to understanding, and noted that they want to prioritize the higher-level issues and share that information. There was discussion about board and administration relationships, and the need to effectively work together. The board also discussed ensuring that their representatives on the TRSU are sharing information to and from the TRSU board, as well as working with the LMHUUSD on the priorities for the SU in its entirety.

Ms. Holson recommended that next summer the SU holds a retreat including all board members in both districts of the TRSU. There was discussion about the RVTC board and having a quarterly update on the GMUSD agenda and the TRSU having a monthly update on the GMUSD agenda.

The board prioritized their ideas. Basic skills, community engagement, Board/Administration relations/transparency, fiscal responsibility were the issues that more board members felt were the higher priorities. The board discussed some of the reasons they voted for their various priorities. They also discussed having the administration set a baseline for student outcomes, setting a measurable goal with the administration which may have budgetary implications. The board needs to develop community engagement plans and determine if they need funding for those plans. The board also needs to do regular budget analysis and monitoring, as well as adequately funding budget items

and appropriate oversight of the spending in order to remain fiscally responsible. The board felt that these items don't necessarily feel that these priorities give the administration adequate direction for budget preparations.

The board discussed the most important things in their budget, including adequate allocations for their initiatives. Ms. Holson advised that the board is ultimately responsible for the budget decisions and if the administration presents initiatives that the board doesn't support, the board has the final say. That said, if the administration is willing to "die on the sword" for an initiative, it is worth the board's time to listen to and consider the argument. The board discussed early literacy being reading and math literacy and the board already approved a math interventionist, and now needs to see the data from that initiative.

There was discussion about these priorities not driving people into the district, and also defining the work that needs to be done to be considered exceptional. There was also discussion about directing the administration to work on STEAM, social justice and world languages. Ms. Fierman noted that when she directs her staff on the development of their budget priorities, she needs more direction from the board. The board discussed focusing on board activities and goals while setting a direction to the administration and finding out what the administration's realistic plans are for those initiative—including what can be done and how much it will cost and the impact on the other priorities. There was discussion about the flexible school day and the ability to think outside the box when planning. There was also discussion about the board setting a guideline for the increase and whether it is more appropriate to do from the beginning or later in the budget process based on what is included in the budget. The board discussed the public perhaps paying more for a better product, as well as the public holding the board accountable for the initiatives that they had hoped to achieve with the merger. Ms. Fierman questioned if she was expected to ensure that she is adequately staffed to provide opportunities to attract 40-50 additional students for the following school year. For budgeting purposes, BRHS students are being asked to make a choice about the school they would like to attend next year.

There was discussion about safety and social justice earning more "votes" tonight than world language and STEAM. Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that the finance committee will be meeting on September 25 and can discuss the budget priorities and see a tentative draft of the expenses that they know they will have.

The board thanked Ms. Holson for her work tonight. Mr. McBride requested a meeting be called to discuss the pending litigation. Mr. Studin suggested adding an executive session regarding the litigation. Ms. Mahusky suggested editing the agenda and warning it for the public. Mr. Studin advised that he would be sending a draft survey and a narrative to the board members for their input. Ms. Mahusky noted that for open meeting law, the responses can only go to a single person, and suggested discussion in open meeting.

VI. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA ITEMS:

The next regular meeting will be on September 19, 2019 at CTES at 6:00 p.m.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary