

# Green Mountain Unified School District Board

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 15, 2019

Chester Andover Elementary School, Library

6:00 p.m.

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

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

**Staff:** Lauren Fierman, Todd Parah, Cheryl Hammond, Katherine Fogg, Deb Beaupre, Michael Eppolito

**Student Reps:**

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He invited the board members to introduce themselves.

### II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Alexander **moved** to approve the agenda. Mr. Marin seconded. Ms. Hammond suggested deleting the handbook from discussion since it has been sent to the attorney and not yet returned. The motion to approve the agenda carried unanimously.

### III. MINUTES:

#### A. July 18, 2019 Regular Meeting

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the minutes of July 18, 2019 meeting. Ms. Mahusky seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### B. July 30, 2019 Special Meeting

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the minutes of the July 30, 2019 meeting. Ms. Mahusky seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

### IV. OLD BUSINESS:

#### A. Insurance Update

The insurance update was included in the board packet for their review. The information included the questions Mr. McBride asked at the last meeting and their answers. Mr. McBride noted that Ms. Hammond did a great job gathering all the answers that the board had.

#### B. Personnel Manual

The manual is still at the attorney office.

### V. COMMUNICATIONS:

#### A. Board Comments

Mr. Alexander gave an update on the facilities committee activities. He reported that last night the committee met and ultimately will be gathering all of the prioritized facility upgrades that the facilities directors recommend. They will be holding monthly meetings and will have each school update the list. They had a presentation from Mike Davies from EEI. That company will hopefully be providing an energy audit. They will be looking for an RFQ from each company.

The energy audit will include what the energy upgrade costs will be as compared to the savings for each upgrade. Mr. Parah reported that GMUHS has never had an energy audit. He believes that the state did one at CAES, but Mr. Spaulding is having difficulty gathering that information from the state. He also felt that it wasn't nearly as in depth as the one proposed by EEI.

Mr. Alexander advised that the RFQ will include information about what they can do and how much the costs will be. Ms. Mahusky questioned if this work is in anticipation of solar panels. Mr. Alexander advised that if the energy audit can include solar it will. Mr. Alexander advised that CAES is more efficient due to the accident last year and the new boilers installed. They will look into many different alternatives. There was discussion about what the RFQ is and what it entails, and what this board would decide upon. There was discussion about the ROI for window replacement. Ms. Mahusky noted that the CAES windows have been problematic in the past, so any analysis should include them. There was discussion about some companies charging a fee for this service. Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that they are required by the state to go out for RFQ's from various companies and make that decision based on the information provided in the RFQ. They then will decide on the work which may then require a bid process.

Mr. Alexander noted that Mr. Davies forwarded him, including draft date for RFQ by 9/1, with responses due by 9/25. He outlined the various timelines.

Mr. Studin questioned why the new buses are labeled TRSU, not GMUSD. Ms. Hammond advised that the transportation is covered by the SU. She also advised that next year, the LMHUUSD district will be part of the GMUSD system.

Mr. Fromberger noted that at the last meeting the board passed a motion to have the TRSU representatives introduce a motion to the TRSU board to change the fix for the open meeting law violations. He advised that the TRSU meeting was poorly attended therefore they postponed the vote. He advised that the GMUSD alternate was there and Mr. Buckley attended by phone which is the only reason that they had a quorum. It will be raised at the next meeting.

Mr. Wheelock noted that he wasn't listed on the policy committee on the back of the agenda. Mr. Fromberger noted that he had asked the central office to list the committee assignments on the back of the agenda.

Ms. Mahusky suggested that the facilities committee update should be listed as committee updates, not board comments in the future. She noted that this change would help give appropriate notice. Mr. Fromberger noted that the agenda was put together 10 days ago, but the committee met last night and therefore they wanted to give the information, and that was the most appropriate place in this particular agenda. Ms. Mahusky also suggested that all the board members be advised when committee meetings are scheduled, not just the committee members. Mr. Fromberger advised that Ms. Moeykens is working on that for the next meetings.

Mr. Studin also advised that he is not on the transportation committee and requested that Ms. Moeykens also make that change to the agenda.

Mr. McBride noted that the internet password should be open for the public while they are here. He questioned why there are passwords on the guest connections. He also noted that many community members don't have the funds to have their own internet and this is a public service he felt they should provide. Mr. Studin noted that at a recent CTES meeting, there was someone watching inappropriate material on the free public Wi-Fi. Mr. McBride noted that they could add a filter on the free Wi-Fi. Ms. Mahusky suggested that they follow up on that with Ms. Baker.

Mr. McBride noted that at CTES there are hopscotch games on the driveway that need to be repainted. Ms. Beaupre advised that it has been done.

Mr. McBride also suggested that they consider moving the public comments to the front of the meeting to encourage more participation from the public. He also noted that at CAES, the school crossing signs are blocked by trees and he suggested that the administration notify the appropriate people to get those taken care of.

Ms. Mahusky noted that this is a topic that should be raised to the principals, not take up board time. Mr. McBride noted that he has been explicitly advised by the superintendent not to approach the principals and that it needs to be done at the board level. He also noted that teachers are asking students to bring certain things to the classrooms, but the board statute obligations are to provide all necessary supplies for their students. Ms. Beaupre noted that there are many times that parents *want* to buy things for their students, and the teachers sometimes advise parents that if they *want* to buy things, they should buy x, y, and z, but not a, b, and c. Ms. Beaupre also advised that the teachers purchase their supplies for their classroom, but in the beginning of the year, they might not have all of the necessary items. She advised that she has attempted to keep the budget number small, but they didn't run out of their various supplies. Ms. Mahusky noted that the letters need to clearly state that the school will supply the necessary supplies, but if a parent wants to send something, these are the things to purchase. This allows parents who want to purchase appropriate things, but those that can't or don't want to don't have to.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATORS' REPORTS:**

Mr. Eppolito reported that the high school will present data to the board in September, with the elementary schools presenting in October. The administration completed an administrative retreat for 3 days recently. They also brought in 10 teacher leaders to help with that. They have also completed new teacher orientation. They also completed a public records training for many senior members of the staff. The training was conducted by Mr. Leopold. There was discussion about the retreat being 3 days long at the Inn of Six Mountains. Ms. Lamphere questioned why the administration was doing strategic planning when that should involve the board. Ms. Mahusky advised that the board has been reluctant to complete strategic planning, so the administration began that work and will bring it to the boards. Mr. Eppolito advised that they are looking at the continuous plan of improvement, and develop strategies for implementation of these plans. Ms. Mahusky suggested having a presentation on this plan in the near future. Mr. Fromberger advised that Ms. Powden will give a presentation at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Beaupre noted that the administration worked on the guiding goals of the strategic plan, which include the items listed in the SU vision statement. There was discussion about the various activities that the group participated in, including team building, professional development plans, reviewed data cycles and inquiry cycles. Ms. Fogg thanked Mr. Eppolito, Ms. Powden and Judy Carr for the work done on this retreat. She also noted that the timing of this retreat was good and will help invigorate them on starting the year focused on these goals. Mr. Eppolito noted that a few years ago, the team went to the Vermont Principal's Academy, but Ms. Powden felt that this format would be more focused and have less distractions, allowing the administration to focus on the work at hand.

Ms. Fierman noted that there isn't as much information in the report as there will be during the school year. She noted that it contains start of the year information. They are inviting all students to come into the school before school starts to get their laptops, so they can begin using them at the start of the school year. She outlined the times they can be picked up, but advised that there are alternatives, including Mr. Ripley delivering them to Cavendish. She reported that there are several new teachers

that they are welcoming. She also included the yearly discipline data-in 2010 there were 1748 issues, and last year there were 304. Much of this is due to Mr. Ripley's consistent model of approaching discipline. They are now looking at different ways to approach discipline, including restorative justice training, but will do whatever they choose consistently. She also shared the SBAC data. She also reported that this information is contained on her principal's page on the GMUHS website. Ms. Fierman also reported that the school is looking great due to the hard work that Mr. Parah's crew has been doing over the summer.

Mr. McBride questioned the outcome of the VT Department of Transportation and slowing down traffic in front of the school. Mr. Parah noted that the state will work on changing signage, and have added markings in the road, but the speed hasn't changed to a lower level yet. Mr. Cunningham advised that the traffic study needs to be provided to the state traffic committee which only happens a few times per year.

Ms. Fogg reported that she attended the VPA conference where the theme was reading for equity. She noted that girls are outscoring the boys significantly and FRL students aren't making adequate progress so she hoped to gain some strategies to help with the equity. They learned about implicit bias and how that helps with equity. She also reported on the work at the school, including a new presentation TV in the library. They also moved the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms down to the k-2 wing (now K-3). She advised that enrollment is still in flux. She also reported on the book reading that her staff will be participating in. The back to school barbecue will be the Tuesday night before school. The teachers meet at 3:30 and then families come at 4:30 to visit the classrooms.

Mr. Hance questioned if the test score statistics are also gathered by family structure, such as single family versus nuclear family. There was discussion about doing implicit bias training for the entire staff, as well as for the board. Mr. Fromberger asked the administration to follow up on that.

Ms. Beaupre noted that there were some other things that have happened at CTES since her report was submitted. She reported that she is experimenting with a digitally based newsletter. They will have an opening day breakfast to commemorate certain people and Mr. Thomson will be invited to help. There is also a curriculum night being held so parents can learn about what is going on in the schools. There is a crisis team that is working with the school on natural disasters, as well as active shooter situations. They have been working with Springfield Fire on this, coordinating with volunteers with Proctorsville Fire Department, and the state police. She advised that state police response is about 30 minutes. There was discussion about entering an MOU with area police departments. She has approached the select board to look into coordinating a smaller town police force. She has been working on evacuation locations for the students that will give them a location on each side. They will be expanding their drills to make them more realistic, including blocking some doors, having a "move and count" option. They are aiming to move these changes into routine use.

There was discussion about the collaboration between the schools. Ms. Beaupre noted that each of the administrators are in different places with how long they have been there. Ms. Mahusky clarified if the schools are collaborating on teacher training and curriculum in order to be more unified. Ms. Fogg noted that they are spending a bit of time in the admin meetings collaborating on how "we" are doing things. She felt that these collaborations are making each of the principals more aware of what is going on in the other schools.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. FY19 Year End Report**

Ms. Hammond noted that there is only one item over budget not mentioned previously, which was substitutes for the principal's office. Next month this will be included in the board packet.

She advised that FY19 ended about \$189,000. She noted that there was a credit from the state, but realized that it needed to be returned to the town of Chester and Baltimore. She explained some of the items that have contributed to the deficit. Ms. Hammond reported that she marked the over budget items in the budget, noting that the special education van wasn't budgeted, but there was an offsetting transportation savings. Most of the other overages were in special education. She also reported that the central office had a \$17,000 savings that is returned to the GMUSD. There was discussion about some of the special education overages being partially reimbursed, but these overages already include the reimbursements from the state. There was discussion about one of the reasons for establishing the autism program was to save money. There are also talks about creating a social behavioral program to bring more students back to the districts which saves the district tuition and transportation funds. She also advised that with Act 173, there will be a change in block grants for special education.

Mr. Studin questioned how they are \$189,000 short in the budget. Ms. Hammond noted that there were two things that weren't budgeted for—the autism program, and the transportation van and driver. Ms. Hammond noted that there was some other savings in transportation for this purchase, but there were additional students added to the program. Ms. Mahusky noted that though the autism program itself wasn't budgeted, the expense of sending those students to an out of district program was budgeted, and therefore that expense is essentially a wash. She felt that this overage is likely due to having additional special education students to educate. There was discussion about whether the autism program was financially sound. Ms. Hammond noted that there are 4 students in the program for about \$200,000, but educating them out of district would be more than that. There was also discussion about the costs associated with the transportation prior to having purchased the van.

Mr. McBride questioned if adding additional students to the program has a lower cost increase since the startup costs of the program were already absorbed. The board discussed having Ms. Barton present information on the numbers of students covered, as well as cost savings. They also discussed having her present information on this program to further outline the benefit of the behavioral program. There was discussion about the name of the program being very diagnostic.

Mr. McBride thanked Ms. Hammond for giving them exactly what they asked for. He noted that it is difficult to break out where the CTES expenses are versus the CAES and GMUHS expenses. He suggested including a key with the budget. He also reported that it is difficult to determine where in the budget the transition funds are used, and if the board's responsibility is to review the transition funds, they may need other documents. He suggested having a dashboard-type review of the percentages of various expenses to give more information, rather than data, using charts of the key information. He suggested this information be provided once per year.

Mr. McBride suggested that the business office can tell the board what they think is important for a board to know and then the board can add to that as they go along. Mr. McBride questioned the time study results and the impact on the reimbursement eligibility. Ms. Hammond explained that the time study is done twice per year and averaged together to get the amount of special education cost can be claimed for reimbursement. She gave examples of how this can be impacted. They have found some of the issues where special education para-educators have done lunch duty which isn't eligible, so they need to code their time differently. Mr. McBride questioned why someone hired to work 8 hours on an IEP is working on other non-eligible activities. There was discussion about the way the state sets up the time study. Ms. Barton advised that she and Ms. Barton have discussed this problem and there will be work done with the principals as well as training of the special educators on coding their time.

Mr. McBride questioned the net overage versus underage makes it seem that the budget is over by about \$140,000. He also suggested that if a line item is over spent or under spent the board should know about it. He advised that the board may not want to overspend in that area. He requested that the business office total the overages and underages and outline where they are in order to give a better idea of the bottom line. Ms. Hammond gave an example of Ms. Fogg overspending the budget item for the Apple TV and taking that fund out of the books line item. Ms. Hammond advised that she can give an underage report at the end of the year, but because the school has all year to purchase the item, they are either technically under budget all year, or they aren't underbudget until the end of the year if they didn't purchase the item.

There was discussion about the Free and Reduced lunch applications and direct recertifications, and students having to reapply each year. Ms. Hammond advised that there have been about 10% drop in FRL students. There was also discussion about the attempt to reduce staff in the hot lunch service, as well as the extended lunch period due to having all the students in the same school. Ms. Hammond reported that they reduced staff, but in order to accomplish all the needs, the remaining people had to work longer. There was discussion about savings in salary due to a new food service director. Ms. Mahusky suggested getting a report on the food service specifically to try to identify where any more savings can be found. Ms. Beaupre reported on CTES encouraging families to apply for FRL even if they think they don't qualify. She also noted that in some cases families have a high bill and she then encourages them to apply if they might qualify. There was discussion about the schools having large unpaid bills for student lunch and how long they let that balance grow. Ms. Fogg reported that at CAES there is a donation from a community member that pays off student balances. Ms. Hammond also reported that food service enrollment is down which impacts the revenue. Ms. Mahusky suggested speaking with the food service committee and the new director to ensure that this deficit is unacceptable. Ms. Hammond reported that Mr. Kennedy has attended some training this week and may be able to help with this going forward.

There was discussion about the water damage and the expenses that weren't covered by insurance, including the water line for \$76,000 and the secondary electrical trench for \$10,000. The board requested a breakdown of the hot lunch expenses/revenues and the special education expense. Mr. Cunningham questioned if the STEAM program, world language, professional development and crossing guard and as much health insurance as was budgeted was spent, this would be a deficit of about \$400,000. Mr. Cunningham noted that it feels like the district is relying on not providing the services budgeted for in order to stay within budget. He felt that some of these overages fell like they are on the back of programming that the board approved. Mr. Studin noted that if the board had gotten all the programming, they wanted they would have been under budget about \$500,000. Ms. Hammond reported that this is part of the cuts that the board requested. This year the board will have a full year of history in order to better plan for the next budget which they didn't have before.

Ms. Mahusky questioned if they have realized any of the savings they planned to have by merging. Ms. Hammond felt that there wasn't yet, but they formed a RED instead of a full merger. She noted that she would have to go back to the data to fully review. Most of the savings was on the tax rate. Mr. McBride requested the comparison of the total overages and underages to prepare for the budget. The board also requested a conceptual budget before October 31. There was discussion about fuel budget. The budget was based on \$1.99 but it was locked in at \$2.59. Ms. Hammond reported that the state doesn't provide a lot of information before December, so October 31 might not be realistic for a budget draft. The board thanked Ms. Hammond for this work.

## **B. Recommendations for Hire**

Ms. Fierman reported that they have a new Spanish teacher recommendation. His name is Luis Salvindano. Ms. Fierman shared his education and teaching history. His certifications will transfer and has attended the new teacher orientation. Ms. Fierman noted that they are fortunate to have found someone this qualified and certified at this late date. Ms. Powden has also interviewed him. The candidate has a masters degree with 15 years of experience. The contract would be a one-year contract due to the late timing of the contract. Ms. Fierman noted that they frequently offer one-year contracts to new hires, but almost always when it is a last-minute hire. There are some occasions when they offer a multiyear contract, such as when it is early in the season and there are multiple candidates.

Ms. Mahusky **moved** to approve hiring Mr. Salvindano as recommended by the superintendent for the Spanish teacher. Mr. Studin questioned if he would be available to help at the elementary level. Ms. Fierman noted that the position at the high school is a 1.0 fte so they only discussed the high school position, but his background might allow for that in the future. Mr. Marin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

There was discussion about there being another candidate that will be discussed at the next meeting.

## **C. Job Descriptions**

Mr. Fromberger noted that the board needs to adopt job descriptions for every job that they hire for. Ms. Mahusky suggested reviewing the descriptions already approved by the TRSU. Ms. Hammond noted that these are more school based positions.

The board consensus was to table job descriptions until a later date.

## **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mr. Cunningham suggested that the board priorities for the budget should be discussed before the state numbers come in. He also suggested that they analyze the last year's budget when preparing for the next year. He also suggested keeping the level of detail that they have in this packet. There was discussion about the new accounting system that the state required, but that was postponed. The SU is required to be compliant with the state chart of accounts. Mr. Cunningham suggested having English labels instead of chart numbers. Mr. McBride noted that at the last meeting he suggested the board members talk about their priorities. He brought this up in April and has asked for it to be placed on the agenda, but it hasn't been. He advised that this suggestion was based on the feeling that they shouldn't be presented a budget the day or the week before it has to be approved.

He outlined his suggestions. He also noted that Act 46 requires this board to go to the public for input on the budget, therefore they need to have such a program in place. He also suggested that the teachers need to be more involved in the budgeting process. Ms. Mahusky suggested that they have a retreat to talk about the vision and direction of the district, therefore driving the budget. She also felt that budget discussion should be on all the upcoming discussions. Ms. Fogg noted that all the budget work in the past have been on committee, then repeated again to the board. She suggested special budget meetings with the entire board. Ms. Hammond and Ms. Fierman echoed these feelings. There was discussion about making the entire board the finance committee. Ms. Mahusky suggested starting these meetings next month. She also suggested having less things on the agenda in the fall in order to do more of this strategic planning and budgeting work during these meetings. Mr. Studin felt that it would be good to have the whole board at the finance meetings, but still suggested having a separate meeting for budgeting only.

Mr. Fromberger noted that he and Ms. Powden have been working on scheduling a retreat and it appears that it will be held on September 25 with Diane Watson facilitating. The main goal will be to outline the budgeting priorities and Ms. Powden will also share a 3-5-year plan for the strategic goals. There was discussion about compromising on whether to hold multiple meetings or splitting out the regular meetings. Mr. Cunningham noted that the majority of the finance committee meetings were held an hour before the board meetings, therefore everything felt rushed. Mr. Fromberger asked for a consensus of the board on whether this should be a full board or committee work, and then if a full board, would it be a separate meeting or part of a regular meeting.

The consensus of the board was to hold the budget meetings as a full board on a separate day. Ms. Mahusky suggested picking the dates now. There was discussion about making sure that the principals and Ms. Powden come to the meetings. The board would like to have the retreat guide this budget work so having the retreat before the initial budget meeting would be better.

The board discussed what their thoughts were about the goals of the retreat and whether the budget meeting should be held before or after the retreat. There was discussion about still meeting on September 11, whether that meeting is the retreat or not depending on availability of the facilitator. The consensus was to meet on both September 11 and September 25 and try to hold the retreat first if possible. There was discussion about there being an LMH meeting on September 11 so Ms. Powden might not be available. The board consensus was to hold the meetings on September 10 and September 25 instead.

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

The next meeting will be September 10, 2019 for retreat or budget, followed by the regular meeting on September 19, 2019, followed by another meeting on September 25, 2019 for the other of the retreat or budget meeting, all of which at 6:00 p.m. at CAES.

**X. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Mahusky **moved** to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Mr. Studin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary