

Green Mountain Unified School District Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 17, 2019

GMUHS, Library

6:00 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER:

Board: Jeff Hance, Wayne Wheelock, Joe Fromberger, Fred Marin, Doug McBride, Michael Studin, Rick Alexander, Marilyn Mahusky

Staff: Lauren Fierman, Deb Beaupre, Mary Moeykens, Amy Hamblett, Frank Kelley, Todd Parah, Kevin Fay, Cheryl Hammond, Jim Spaulding, Laurie Birmingham, Meg Powden

Student Reps: Ryleigh Thomas, Laurel King

Public: Shawn Cunningham, Sharon Huntley

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. He invited the board members to introduce themselves.

II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the agenda. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fromberger asked the board to move the student representative comments to the next item so they don't need to wait for executive session. Ms. Mahusky questioned if the student reps are allowed to be in the executive session. Mr. Fromberger noted that he was not aware that they have ever been invited into executive session, but they would have to be invited in to be able to attend since they are not board members. Ms. Mahusky wondered if there would be an appropriate time for such an involvement. Mr. Studin noted that they might have personal relationships with these people, they might not want to be involved. Ms. Mahusky asked that this topic be reviewed and researched and placed on the next agenda.

III. COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Student Representative Comments

Ms. King reported that the girls' varsity soccer senior game was yesterday and the team's only senior, Maddie Wilson, scored the only goal of the game and it was the winning goal. The boys' senior game is tomorrow. The only senior from Chester is James Anderson, and there are two seniors from Ludlow, Bowen Stark and Alexander Kirdzik. Their record is 8-5. Cross country just competed in their first SVL league championship and had 2 runners, Laurel King and Olivia Bernier, place in the top 10. They reported that the fall play, Almost Maine will be performed on the weekend of November 1. The NHS renovated the girls' bathroom on the third floor outside the library. They reported that there are motivational sayings on the wall and has helped with the morale. They reported that everyone has been supportive of the change. Tomorrow the first newspaper club has its first publication. They are working on writing articles without bias. They reported that while the school took PSAT's the seniors took a trip to a Trampoline Park as a bonding trip.

Last weekend the seniors held the homecoming dance in Mr. Garvin's room. Most of the kids felt that the smaller space was better for the dance. Mr. McBride asked that the board receive the school newspaper. Ms. Thomas reported that it is an online newspaper available through the

website and they can email the link to the board members. Ms. Thomas founded it and it is named the Green and Gold.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A. Title I V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(E) to discuss pending litigation under the provisions of Title I, Section 313 (a)(1)(E) of Vermont Statutes (Pending or probably civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party)

Mr. Fromberger noted that the board will take that session in another room if approved. Mr. Marin **moved** to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the report and discussion of all pending legal matters would place the board at a substantial disadvantage because it might reveal defense strategies. Mr. Studin seconded. Ms. Mahusky noted that she felt that it is appropriate to enter executive session both because of the confidential nature of the topic and in part because the litigation is directed at the board of directors. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Marin **moved** to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the pending litigation under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(1)(E) of Vermont Statutes (Pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party) inviting Ms. Powden, Ms. Hammond and Jordan Bergeron for VSBIT. Mr. Alexander seconded. Ms. Mahusky echoed her comments on the first motion noting that she felt that this makes sense because of the confidential nature of the discussion and that it is directed at the board. The motion carried unanimously. The board recessed to the back room of the library at 6:14 p.m.

The board returned from executive session at 7:06 p.m. No action was taken.

B. Title 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(D) to discuss pending support staff grievance

Mr. Fromberger advised that there is a support staff grievance that the board needs to discuss. Mr. Marin **moved** to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the recently filed grievance would place the board at a substantial disadvantage because it might reveal defense strategies. Mr. Studin seconded. Mr. McBride questioned if it was a single person filing the grievance or a group of people filing it. Ms. Powden explained that Sue Willis, the president of the support staff association filed a grievance on behalf of a support staff member. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Marin **moved** to enter executive session at 7:08 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the pending grievance under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313 (a)(1)(D) of Vermont Statutes, inviting Ms. Powden and Ms. Hammond. Mr. Studin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at 7:15 p.m. Mr. Fromberger advised that there is no longer a grievance.

V. MINUTES:

A. September 19, 2019 Regular Meeting

Mr. Hance **moved** to approve the minutes of September 19, 2019 meeting. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Moeykens introduced herself and advised that she recently came from a VT communications group meeting. Members of the VSA and AOE also participated. At this meeting she brought up the idea that the district was looking to survey the stake holders and they recommended unanimously that VSBA review the survey and the process and suggested speaking with a college

communications professor to get a proper sample size and understand how to promote it. They also suggested creating a plan to review the survey and its results, including RACE (Research, Action plan, Communicate and Evaluate). She advised that she would be happy to discuss more of what she learned with anyone interested and recommended that the board doesn't just jump in and rather plan it appropriately.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS (continued):

A. Board Comments

Mr. Fromberger noted that they had a notification from the support staff union requesting to reopen the contract under the provisions of the current contract. The teachers have also requested to reopen the contract under the provisions of the current contract. Therefore, the negotiations committees will need to meet and determine how they will proceed. Mr. Studin and Mr. Hance are on the support staff negotiations committee. Ms. Mahusky and Mr. Studin are on the teacher negotiations committee. Ms. Moeykens has sent them information. The support staff negotiations committee will meet preliminarily at 6:00 p.m. at TRSU on 10/30.

Mr. McBride discussed the letter from the attorney regarding the negotiations. He felt that the last round of negotiations was quite expensive with regard to legal fees. He is curious why the teachers and support staff don't have lawyers representing them during negotiations. He isn't suggesting that they don't have a lawyer represent them, but asked if there were ways to make the fees more fiscally responsible. Ms. Mahusky noted that she has participated on the teacher negotiations for a number of year and the TRSU board had people who wanted to be involved in the teacher negotiations, however when they were working to consolidate language, the attorney counsel was helpful. She noted that there are a lot of issues that are going to come up this year in the negotiations.

Mr. McBride noted that what was spent versus what was budgeted was very different, and he hoped that an appropriate amount was budgeted. He suggested that this board needs to review what was budgeted and see if the lawyer can work within that budget. He was clear to say that he is not disparaging the lawyer or saying that the lawyer did anything that was wrong or unnecessary. He just wanted the board to look at the expenses. Ms. Hammond noted that the teachers and support staff have Uniserve representation, which is an attorney, and they were present at the last few support staff negotiations meetings. Ms. Mahusky noted that if they didn't have legal representation, it might cost more in the end because they don't have the guidance of the attorney. Mr. McBride suggested that Ms. Powden speak with the attorney to try to get a ballpark figure from the attorney to see if that comes close to what was budgeted. Ms. Powden will speak with Mr. Leopold.

Mr. Hance noted that this last time was the first time that 3 different groups of support staff came together to negotiate the contract. He didn't think that this next time will go as long since it is one group, and though there are still issues to discuss, they aren't trying to merge three different contracts.

Mr. Studin reported that he recalled that in October the students at BRHS would be making a decision about their school of choice. Ms. Powden advised that they will have those numbers November 15. The students have visited the schools and will be choosing their top two schools. There were 25 grade 9-11 students who visited GMUHS recently, and shadowed students throughout the school. There were 17 grade 7-8 students who did a general tour, and today there were about 20 6th grade students from Mt. Holly and Ludlow who visited the school. She advised that they don't know how many of those students will choose GM. They also don't know how many students didn't come to visit because they have already made up their mind to attend GM.

She advised that they are getting a good idea of how many students that want to attend. Ms. Powden reported that Mr. Hutt Vater reported that the GM students were very helpful to his 6th graders.

Mr. Studin also questioned the materials that were going to be developed for recruiting and promoting the school. Ms. Powden advised that they did not. Ms. Fierman reported that the school has developed a slide show presentation to use at the Black River school fair, as well as paper handouts that are reflective of the programs available at GM.

Mr. Studin reported that he was not at the last finance committee meeting, but he questioned the social justice portion and how they would define this aspect. Would the administration develop a curriculum and would the teachers be expected to teach it and would it interfere with regular curriculum items. Mr. Fromberger noted that Ms. Brown is the chair, but he didn't recall that they have had a lot of discussion on this topic yet. Ms. Mahusky suggested tabling that discussion until the finance committee meeting when Ms. Brown and Ms. Lamphere will be present. Mr. McBride felt that he was confused by what is meant by social justice so he'd like more information as well.

Mr. Studin noted that they had talked about the renaming of the buses and since transportation is owned by TRSU, what is the financial impact and if Ludlow and Mt. Holly will be using the buses purchased by GM. Ms. Powden advised that the tuition funds from the LMH students attending GM will go into the general fund. Mr. Parah is looking into the costs of the routes at LMH. There was discussion about the costs of the renaming of the buses--\$3575. The original estimate was \$2000. The reason for the added expense was that there was an error made in the bus names since the transportation is run by the SU and they want to work on recruiting students to the district so having an SU name. Mr. Cunningham questioned who owned the buses. Ms. Hammond noted that GMUSD took out the lease, but TRSU runs the transportation program. There was also discussion about why the buses are owned by GMUSD by labeled TRSU. Mr. Fromberger noted that if the LMH district wants to use their buses, he would likely welcome an offer of 40% of the total costs of the transportation, however there has been no such offer. Ms. Powden reported that the LMH board has just begun transportation discussions. Mr. Studin questioned if there has been discussion about them paying into our system to use our buses, but Ms. Powden advised that there hasn't, however they have discussed having an SU wide transportation director.

Mr. Studin noted that he received some calls about the concerns of some staff regarding Ms. Powden's speech at the welcoming meeting. Ms. Powden noted that the speech was written to that audience so she is not sharing with the board. She welcomed anyone who was concerned to approach her but she has received overwhelming positive responses to the speech. She reported that the board would not understand the context of the speech. Mr. McBride questioned why. Ms. Powden noted that she shared personal remarks with the staff and she felt that she doesn't trust some of the board members based on some of their actions and therefore didn't feel comfortable sharing that information with the board.

B. RVTC Update

Ms. Perlah was unable to attend this evening so the update will be on the next regular meeting agenda.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Policies, Second Read/Approval (D7 Version 2.0, C7, C9, F33 & H8)

Mr. Marin reported that on policy D7 Version 2.0, the policy committee added the specific detail on volunteers, their status and the distinction between supervised and unsupervised. The policy

also includes that the district school board will cover the costs of the criminal records check. The policy committee recommends adoption. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to adopt the policy D7. Mr. Wheelock seconded. Ms. Mahusky questioned Ms. Lamphere's original concerns. To Mr. Marin's recollection the changes made deal with Ms. Lamphere's concerns. There was discussion about this policy being a required policy from the VSBA. These policies are required by the AOE. There was discussion about the Hazing prevention policy being required by law. There was a clarification that there is a requirement to have a policy, not necessarily the VSBA model. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Marin advised that the board already adopted policy C7 with changes made by the board at the May 16 meeting.

Mr. Marin advised that policy C9 was adopted at the May 16, 2019 meeting with a change and this policy was included in the packet to show the change that the board adopted.

Mr. Marin reported that policy H8 was adopted at the May 16, 2019 meeting with a change in language. Mr. McBride noted that every board member has an obligation to carry out board business. They can designate someone to speak on a topic, but they can't silence board members. Mr. Fromberger noted that designating someone to speak to a topic when that person has more knowledge of a particular situation helps to provide more accurate information. Mr. Marin noted that this decision is one that the board will make. Mr. McBride felt that this board can't make a decision to silence any of the board members. Mr. McBride noted that board members that dissent from the opinion should be able to speak to that topic.

Mr. Cunningham questioned if the board designates someone to speak about a topic does that require that person to speak about it. There was also discussion about changing the language to allow other board members to speak to the topic. Ms. Mahusky requested to table this discussion and refer the policy back to the policy committee to ensure that the language doesn't silence board members.

Mr. Marin reported that policy F33 was discussed at a prior meeting to make uniform forms for the policy between schools, however this is a procedure issue, not a policy issue. This procedure should be developed by the nursing staff along with the administration. The policy committee recommends adoption. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to adopt F33. Mr. Alexander seconded. Mr. McBride questioned the language "may be given" and noted that there is nothing in the policy that states that a student can not bring their own medication to school. Ms. Powden explained that this language is to cover when there are nurses that are part time and some other employees are trained to give medication. There was discussion about a student giving themselves their own medicine. The motion carried with Mr. McBride in opposition.

B. Employee Handbook

Ms. Powden recommended the adoption of the employee handbook as revised. They presented it to the VSBIT representative, and Ms. Hudkins made the revisions. The notes were in the packet regarding the recommended changes. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to adopt the employee handbook as presented. The VSBIT suggestions were incorporated in the version being considered. Mr. Wheelock seconded. Mr. Fromberger requested that the adoption date by each board be added to the manual. The motion carried with Mr. McBride in opposition.

C. Committee Reports

Mr. Fromberger reported that the facilities committee has met recently. Mr. Alexander advised that the facilities committee has been working on getting information on energy conservation

measures. They are getting information from the two different school districts that have recently worked with EEI on efficiency efforts worth \$4.5 million and \$11 million, with paybacks in about 10-15 years. The committee met with EEI and Trane regarding the efficiency audits and plans. The committee recommended adoption of the EEI plan. Ms. Hammond, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Parah will be speaking with their peers at Mill River and Vergennes about how this process has worked for them. The committee chose to recommend EEI as a local company that also contracts with CTI. EEI will complete an energy audit as part of this project, but if the district doesn't choose to go with them for the project, there will be no cost.

The facilities committee recommended to authorize this board to engage EEI to conduct an energy audit for the district. The cost of the audit will be rolled into the cost of the project, but if the board chooses not to move forward with the project, there would be no cost to the board. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to accept the facilities committee recommendation to engage EEI in an energy audit for the GMUSD and its 3 school buildings. Mr. Marin seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Alexander will let Mr. Davies at EEI know the board's decision.

D. Review of Public Survey Questions

Mr. Studin reported that he had worked with Ms. Fierman on the survey and incorporated some of the suggestions. Some of the suggestions, however, would have lengthened the survey to an unwieldy level and some were school specific, rather than district specific. He also received feedback from Mr. Fromberger. He questioned what the VSA and AOE thought would be gained by the VSBA reviewing the survey. Ms. Moeykens explained some of that information, noting that the majority of the people in the district don't have children in the school and have less of a stake other than to their taxes, and to gather that information some place in the survey. She also felt that the survey should ask if someone would be motivated by just the bottom line or other factors. Mr. Studin noted that part of his concern was that this has become a much bigger project than originally anticipated. He noted that his questions incorporate some demographic information to truly get a picture of trends in various stake holder groups. The plan was to disseminate information in the Chester Telegraph in order to get wide sample of stake holders.

Ms. Mahusky suggested that they discuss the survey at a future meeting with the hard copy survey included in the packet. The survey was sent out electronically to the board members. There was discussion about this being a problem since the administration hasn't been given a copy of it, nor has the public. Mr. McBride noted that he felt that the board has had this conversation, but then Ms. Fierman made some suggestions and he redistributed the survey on October 3 and hoped that tonight the board would discuss their suggestions.

The board discussed the questions included in the survey. Mr. Studin explained some of his rationale for writing the questions as they were. He discussed the goal and intent of some of the questions. There was discussion about who the intended audience is based on what questions are asked. There was also discussion about asking non-parent tax payers different questions. Ms. Mahusky discussed plans for some school districts to engage community members before the survey. There was discussion about the goal of this survey was to inform the budget process. There was discussion about keeping questions 1-6, 10-14, 16-17. There was also discussion about who the survey is intended for. These questions appear to be written for parents, not for the broader townspeople. There was discussion about modifying the questions to be appropriate for parents as well as non-parents.

Ms. Powden suggested revising question 7 or adding another question since they have added blogs and social media presence and have been publicizing themselves more. There was discussion about mailing costs to include sending the survey to the entire community.

Ms. Mahusky felt that the survey includes a lot of important information, but felt that it isn't ready to launch yet. It will need a special meeting to approve. Mr. McBride felt that this board should be aware of not getting anything done by thinking about it too much. He thanked Mr. Studin for creating this and noted that they can still use information from an imperfect survey to inform the current budget process. He felt that this is a "down payment" on a bigger idea. He recommended moving forward with it, understanding that it has some flaws and they can revise it for the future. There was discussion about needing a letter of introduction.

Ms. Moeykens advised that the board is stuck in the action plan piece of the process. She also noted that while this is a good idea on some levels, it may not in other areas. They also need to determine how to evaluate it before they disseminate it. She felt that a committee might be able to work out some of the kinks and recommend a final product to the board at the next meeting.

Mr. Fromberger suggested conducting a straw poll to determine whether there was enough support to move forward with what they have currently. Mr. Studin advised that the goal was to have the board present a united front on the survey, and since there have been concerns raised, he suggested re-working the survey for the next time, along with a cover letter. Mr. Fromberger suggested that each board member send Mr. Studin their suggestions to be included in the revision to be discussed at the next regular meeting.

Ms. Hammond noted that if the survey isn't approved until November, the results won't be in until December and that might pose a problem for informing the budget. Further discussion was tabled at this time.

IX. ADMINISTRATORS' REPORTS:

A. Elementary Principals' Presentation

Ms. Powden introduced Mr. Fay and asked if the elementary presentation could be moved to the finance meeting since there is data discussion on the finance meeting agenda.

Mr. Fay thanked the board for welcoming him to this meeting and to the district. He felt that this district has a lot of professionalism. He thanked the administration and his school for making him feel welcome.

B. Superintendent's Report

Ms. Powden reported that this month the SU has begun working on professional development and wellness in various different strands, including Math for all learners, Tarrant middle grades work on personal learning, early literacy, social studies, assessment literacy, PLP development. She also reported that many departments are working together as a group. She also reported that this morning they hosted representatives Webb and Pajalla to the preschools at Ludlow and Mt. Holly to give information in anticipate of legislation changes to Act 166. She has been working with Ms. Rax, Ms. Cloud, Ms. Barton regarding bringing a preschool program to CAES, perhaps using the TD bank building in front of CAES. The building is going to auction, but currently has an asking price of \$265,000. They will be sending a survey to parents of 3-year olds.

She reported that the TRSU board approved the .8 to 1.0 increase for the math interventionist. They have also received a letter from Ms. Austin of her intent to retire after 21 years at CAES and GMUHS.

She reported that Mr. Kelley has submitted a sabbatical request. She also reported that the SE Superintendents will host legislators at the Howard Dean Education Center on November 15.

She also reported on the VSA hosted conference at the VSBIT Center on Better Conversations Everyday.

X. NEW BUSINESS:

A. FY20 First Quarter Update

Ms. Mahusky suggested that this discussion could be part of the finance meeting on Tuesday. The board thanked her for her work on the budget, but due to the late hour, they preferred to hear the information at that meeting. Ms. Hammond distributed the information.

B. Sabbatical Request

Mr. Kelley thanked the board for their work that they are doing. He read aloud his letter requesting a full year sabbatical. He noted that he is honored to represent CAES and TRSU at different events across the state and region.

Ms. Powden recommended that the board approve Mr. Kelley's request. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to approve the one-year sabbatical. Mr. Marin seconded. Mr. Studin noted that the energy that Mr. Kelley brings to the school and the community will be missed, but this would be a great opportunity. Ms. Mahusky echoed that sentiment. There was discussion about how the absence would be filled. Ms. Powden advised that the candidate would be advised that this would be a one-year contract only. It is in accordance with the teachers' contract and there is a financial implication because Mr. Kelley would be paid his normal salary and benefits, but also his temporary replacement. The motion carried unanimously.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

XII. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA ITEMS:

The next meeting will be Thursday, November 21, 2019 at CAES at 6:00 p.m. The finance committee will meet on Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at GMUHS.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Alexander **moved** to adjourn at 9:11 p.m. Ms. Mahusky seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary