

**TRSU BOARD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
Thursday, October 3, 2019  
6:00 p.m.  
Mount Holly School, Library

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

**Board:** Joe Fromberger, Wayne Wheelock, Fred Marin, Mary Alberty, Kelly Tarbell

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Mary Barton

**Other Board Members:** Jeff Hance

**Public:**

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

**II. APPROVE AGENDA:**

Ms. Hammond noted that the agenda should be corrected to say FY20 Financial review. Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

**III. APPROVE MINUTES:**

**A. September 5, 2019 Regular Meeting**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes from the September 5, 2019 meeting. There was discussion to remove Rick Alexander from the attendance list. There was also discussion to delete the sentence about Mr. Buckley requesting additional ballot language regarding housing. The motion carried with Ms. Tarbell abstaining.

**B. September 9, 2019 Special Meeting**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minute from the September 9, 2019 meeting. The motion carried unanimously with Ms. Tarbell abstaining.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

**V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Ms. Powden reported on Act 173. The legislation was passed in 2018 and will impact the schools and funding. It will be fully implemented in 2025, but they need to begin working on the implementation now. It will transition special education to census-based block funding. They will need to be more intentional with their development of MTSS (multi-tiered systems of support). She noted that Vermont has more students identified with social-emotional challenges than elsewhere in the nation. She advised that the work in PBE is helpful in this transition. This helps the students continue to get their first instruction from the classroom teacher rather than be pulled out for special education. Ms. Hammond reported that there will still be a service plan for students, but the funding mechanism will change somewhat. There was discussion about the districts having to fund the difference between what they will receive from the state and federal government and what they are required by law to provide for students. Ms. Powden noted that this change speaks to our children with the highest needs needing instruction from the highest skilled teachers. There was discussion about the mental health system not being funded as much as it needs to be and those needs will be absorbed by the schools. There was discussion about the opioid epidemic playing a significant role in the mental health issues,

and there is a waiting list to get people the help that they need when they are in crisis. Ms. Tarbell noted that there is the thought that this is pushing for more universal “middle ground” before intensive needs.

BRHS held their school fair on September 17 and the area schools gave a presentation about their school and invited families to talk individually with them. The fair was not well attended. The students will visit the schools this month. They will be choosing their top two schools and visiting them. She also reported that there was a professional development day that was broken up by “strands”. They also looked at personalized learning and personalized learning strands, as well as early literacy.

Ms. Powden reported that the designated employees in each school participated in a hazing, harassment and bullying prevention training. She also reported that Rachel Root, the out of district case manager will be retiring at the end of this year.

There was discussion about what the low attendance at the school fair meant, whether it meant that students have decided already or if they didn’t think that it was helpful. There was discussion about posting the school presentations on the school website. Ms. Powden will follow up with Ms. Trimboli on the presentations. The fair was from 6pm-8pm. Ms. Powden reported that they have sent out a packet to the 6<sup>th</sup> graders from LES and MHS and all the 7-11<sup>th</sup> graders asking for their initial selections by October 15, with a final choice by November 15 in order to help with budgeting.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

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

Mr. Marin noted that in policy D7, there has been a lot of discussion about the amount of background check that needs to be done on volunteers. The most sensitive areas are the teacher appreciation lunch where parents are invited in to supervise the classrooms, and the ski programs at each of the schools where volunteers take students all over the mountain. The policy language now indicates that there will be background checks on all volunteers that will be unsupervised and the districts will cover the expense so as not to eliminate all volunteers. There was discussion about the background check being annual or something different. Mr. Marin noted that this would be outlined in the procedure by the administration. There was discussion about there not being Act 1 training mentioned in the policy, and LMH requires it, while GM does not. There was also discussion about the recreation department programs that happen on school grounds and how that fits in with definition 1. There was discussion about “school setting” meaning “school sponsored”, not “recreation sponsored”. There was discussion about specifying in a contract with the recreation department for use of the property that they are responsible for the activities happening during that property use.

The consensus of the board was to leave the language as is. There was discussion about the policies being able to be amended after the fact. Ms. Albery **moved** to adopt policy D7 Volunteers and Work Study Students, Version 2.0. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Marin reported that in policy H8, school community relations, item 7 the last phrase “and board members and staff members will refer all inquiries to the designated individual” is stricken. In C7, since there are no enforcement procedures, they can’t use the term “will”, and instead new members “are encouraged”. In policy C9, the introduction sentence was changed to read “At least annually, the board will engage in goal-setting and self-evaluation activities in consultation with the Superintendent, when the board decides”. In policy F33, there has been a lot of discussion about having a uniform procedure throughout the SU, but there has also been discussion about them being different at the elementary level versus the high school level. The policy committee recommends that those differences be addressed at the procedure level. There was a note to

remove the typographical error of a “t” in the first sentence of Implementation: “procedures t governing”.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adopt policies C7, C9, F33 and H8 as discussed. The motion carried unanimously.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. FY20 Financial Review**

Ms. Powden reported that the administration has been discussing budget priorities. They have been thinking about the positions that they may be proposing. One of the positions that needs to be considered is an elementary health educator as they are not currently in compliance as they should be. Currently the classroom teachers and others are coming into classrooms to lead health units. They are also looking at food services in Ludlow and Mt. Holly given that the prices may be too high with only 2 schools. They are looking at hiring a SU-wide food service director to oversee all 5 schools. They will also be looking at an SU-wide transportation director since Ludlow will no longer provide transportation once BRHS closes. There would be an additional bus and driver in Ludlow and there would be need of supervision, and having one shared across the SU would be helpful.

Ms. Hammond noted that they currently have a part-time accounting assistant, however next year, there will be need for more work as a data-specialist to track LMH students and residency, as well as having consistency in data uploads across the SU. This .5 position currently would become a 1.0 fte position if approved. There was discussion about what the increase in the budget will be as a result. Mr. Fromberger noted his concern with adding administrative expenses and not classroom teachers. Ms. Powden explained that the SU-wide transportation and food service directors already exist in GM and would then be a shared position across both districts. Additionally, the health teacher will be directly impacting the students. Ms. Hammond asked that the board have an open mind until they work through all the numbers.

Ms. Powden explained the Ludlow and Mt. Holly transportation routes that Mr. Hutt Vater and Ms. Trimboli have proposed after the BRHS closes. There was discussion about Mt. Holly perhaps needing new buses. Ms. Hammond reported that she has spoken with Mr. Heald before he left and the amount of money needed to convert them back to school buses might be better spent purchasing a new bus. There was also discussion about some districts having eliminated transportation completely and they might consider that. Mr. Fromberger noted that when the GMUHS district was created 40 years ago, Cavendish was only willing to join the district if they guaranteed transportation. Ms. Alberty noted that when Proctor eliminated its transportation, there were concerns about students, particularly low-income students being able to attend, but the attendance wasn't impacted and families car pool. There was discussion about extending the morning drop off time to better allow for parents to drop off on the way to work.

Ms. Hammond noted that she has distributed the central office portion for FY20. Next month she will bring back special education and transportation for review. She advised that she and Ms. Barton have been working very diligently on the special education expenses. She reported that there have been some changes in the special education needs compared to what was budgeted. Ms. Hammond reported on the over expenditures. The property/liability/errors and omissions insurance went up substantially. There was an across the board increase of 4.5% and workers compensation went up 6.3% based on use. There is overall a 9.2% increase, some of which is due to some underground additions and some is due to the CAES insurance claim that affect the experience rating. There was discussion about the entire SU being impacted by the events in only one district. The expense is up \$1000 this year. She also reported on the over-spend in Ivisions software.

She has begun the initial budgeting process. She will present budget drafts at next month's meeting. There was discussion about the format, and the board needing a larger view of where the money is being spent, not the fine detail. There was discussion about some board members wanting to review the finer detail. There was discussion about the state chart of accounts.

Ms. Hammond reported that SpyGlass came in and reviewed all the phone and internet bills and found that the SU has an A+ for rates and usage. There are a few lines that they are not sure that they are using, but the rates are good. Currently the SU received 70% reimbursement for internet. There was discussion about the erate coverage for services and how it is determined, and the purpose is to "level the playing field" since it is more expensive to provide internet services to rural areas and lower income areas typically.

**B. Review Revised Employee Handbook**

Ms. Powden reminded the board that they approved the handbook a few months ago, but the GM board requested that it be reviewed by legal counsel. They did so and the legal counsel has recommended some changes, which are highlighted in this version. There was discussion about LMH having approved this version at their last meeting. Mr. Fromberger noted a typographical correction in section 1.3, adding "and" between receptionist and office management. There was discussion about whether the employees who this handbook affects have had any input. Ms. Hammond advised that they haven't because they are non-bargaining employees. Ms. Powden noted that there are some non-bargaining staff members who are looking forward to the approval because it provides more equity than before. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the revised Employee Handbook as presented with the addition of the word "and" as Mr. Fromberger suggested. The motion carried unanimously.

**C. Math Interventionist 0.8 to 1.0 fte**

Ms. Powden noted that they have been waiting to see if they were going to be fully funded under Title I before asking for approval on this change. This position is currently a .8 fte math interventionist at CAES and now that it is fully funded, they would like the position to be moved for this year to a 1.0 fte position. This change would be retroactive as the person has been working full time in the hopes of having the funding and if it didn't come through, they would have to reduce the time at the end of the year to meet the financial needs of the budget. There was discussion about the other math interventionists at the other schools. Mr. Wheelock **moved** to approve Ms. Powden's recommendation to change the math interventionist position at CAES from .8 fte to 1.0 fte retroactively for the school year. The motion carried unanimously.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

**IX. NEXT MEETING:**

The next regular meeting will be Thursday, November 7, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at GMUHS.

**X. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to adjourn at 7:10 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary