

Green Mountain Unified School District Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Green Mountain Library

6:00 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER:

Board: Fred Marin, Jeff Hance, Kate Lamphere, Joe Fromberger, Rick Alexander, Lois Perlah, Michael Studin, Marilyn Mahusky (via phone)

Staff: Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Lauren Fierman, Deb Beaupre, Amanda Tyrrell (arrived 7pm)

Student Reps: Rileigh Thomas

Public: Shawn Cunningham, Dan Tyrrell

Ms. Powden called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. She welcomed the new board member, Ms. Perlah. The board members introduced themselves.

II. ELECTIONS:

A. Board Chair

Mr. Hance **nominated** Mr. Fromberger as the chair. Mr. Studin seconded the nomination. Ms. Lamphere **nominated** Ms. Mahusky as the chair. Ms. Perlah seconded. Mr. Fromberger noted that seconds to nominations are unnecessary.

As there are multiple nominations, the board voted by paper ballot. Ms. Powden counted the ballots. Mr. Fromberger was elected with 5 votes. Three were cast for Ms. Mahusky. The board thanked her for her service as the board chair.

B. Board Vice Chair

Ms. Mahusky **nominated** Ms. Brown as the vice chair. Ms. Mahusky noted that she has spoken with Ms. Brown and she was amenable to the nomination. Ms. Brown was elected unanimously.

C. Board Clerk

There was discussion about the board clerk's responsibilities, including the oversight of the minutes and signatures on certain paperwork. The board discussed reappointing if the nominee does not accept the nomination. Mr. Studin **nominated** Ms. Muther as the clerk. She was elected unanimously.

D. Adopt Code of Ethics Agreement

The board read aloud the code of ethics agreement. The board members agreed to the code and each member present signed the document.

III. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Studin **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of labor relations discussions in executive session and under new business discussion of the job description for food service director. Ms. Lamphere seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. MINUTES:

A. February 25, 2019 Regular meeting

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2019 regular meeting. Mr. Studin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

V. APPOINTMENTS:

A. Appoint Warrant Signer

There was discussion about the duties of the warrant signer. Mr. Fromberger noted that last year, the board approved the board chair and 3 members to be responsible for this duty, but only 2 members were required for signatures. Mr. Studin **moved** to appoint the board chair, the vice chair, the clerk and Ms. Lamphere as the 4 warrant signers with only 2 signatures being required. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Set Meeting Date, Time, Location

Ms. Lamphere **moved** to set the regular meeting date as the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. with the location to rotate every other month between Cavendish and Chester, and while in Chester the location will alternate between CAES and GMUHS, such that the meetings will flow CTES, CAES, CTES, GMUHS, CTES, CAES, CTES, GMUHS, etc. Mr. Marin seconded. Ms. Powden suggested alternating towns every other month and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Appoint Recording Secretary

Mr. Hance **moved** to appoint Amber Wilson as recording secretary. Ms. Lamphere seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Appoint Representatives

a. TRSU Board

Mr. Fromberger noted that there are 3 representatives from each board. The current members are Ms. Mahusky, Mr. Fromberger and Mr. Marin. Ms. Mahusky noted that historically the board chair has served on the board, leaving 2 other nominees. As such, Ms. Mahusky **nominated** the board chair, Ms. Brown and Ms. Lamphere as TRSU representatives. The nominees were elected unanimously.

b. TRSU Board Alternate

The state board of education authorized the board to allow an alternate with voting rights who would fill in for a missing board member at a particular meeting. Mr. Studin **nominated** Mr. Marin as the alternate. Mr. Marin was elected unanimously as the alternate to the TRSU board.

c. RVTC Board

The prior representative was Ms. Lamson and she is no longer on the board. There was discussion about the number of students from GMUHS who attend RVTC. The RVTC board meets the first Wednesday of the month. Ms. Lamphere **nominated** Ms. Perlah as the RVTC representative. Ms. Perlah was elected unanimously.

d. Audit

This committee is responsible for reviewing the audit. Ms. Lamphere **nominated** Mr. McBride and Mr. Alexander to serve on the Audit committee. They were appointed unanimously.

e. Bargaining Council Support Staff

Currently Mr. Hance and Ms. Muther serve on the bargaining council for the support staff. Mr. Hance noted that if anyone has not done it before, it is a learning experience. Mr. Studin

nominated Mr. Hance and Ms. Muther to serve on the bargaining council for the support staff. They were elected unanimously.

f. Bargaining Council Teachers

There was discussion about the small group bargaining council for the teachers. Ms. Mahusky noted that she and Mr. McBride served on the council. Mr. Alexander **nominated** Mr. Studin and Ms. Mahusky to the teachers bargaining council. They were elected unanimously.

g. Facilities

Currently Mr. Marin, Mr. Fromberger and Mr. Alexander serve on the facilities committee. There was discussion about delaying further committee assignments until the next meeting depending on the agenda size. Ms. Powden will contact the board members to see who is willing to serve on each remaining committee. The committees stand as is.

Mr. Studin **moved** to table the remaining appointments to a subsequent meeting. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

VI. FINANCIAL:

A. Bank Selection

Ms. Hammond reported that they currently use Community Bank. She reported on the virtues of that bank. Both she and Ms. Powden recommended continuing with Community Bank. Mr. Studin **moved** to continue using Community Bank. Ms. Lamphere seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

VII. NEWSPAPER OF RECORD:

Mr. Fromberger reported that the VT Journal provided a proposal. Ms. Powden recommended continuing with them since they have kept their rate the same (\$13.50 per column inch). There was discussion about the newspaper reaching all constituent towns. Mr. Studin **moved** to continue with the VT Journal. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Board Comments

Ms. Lamphere noted that she has been reflecting on last month's board training and one of the things that stood out to her was the word trust. She felt that it is important to continue to work on building trust. She felt that a lot of the issues could be solved with building trust, both between board members and between the board and the district administration. She hoped that the board was committed to the end. Other board members agreed with that sentiment. There was discussion about possibly taking action to achieve that.

Mr. Studin requested for the next agenda, they get an update on Proficiency Based Education (PBE), including status, challenges and comments on the state of Maine backing away from PBE. Mr. Eppolito can also update the board on Ogment, the curriculum mapping software.

B. Student Representatives

Ms. Thomas reported that this week was school spirit week. She explained some of the activities that the students participated in. The winter sports have ended and the spring sports have begun. The spring musical is showing in 2 weeks. The GM Iron Chef teams participated in a competition recently. Two of the four teams won. She reported that students are very excited about spring. The Junior prom theme is the Great Gatsby. She reported that the student newspaper conducted a survey regarding PBE. More than half of the respondents felt confused about the PBE. They

shared the responses with the guidance department and principal. Approximately 20% responded. The board asked to view the survey results next month.

C. Public Comments

Mr. Tyrrell questioned the results of the principal survey and whether the results would be shared. Ms. Powden noted that it went to parents, teachers and staff and she will be meeting with the principals regarding the results. He asked if teachers can talk to board members and why or why not. Ms. Powden noted that the board conducted a training last month. She will be working with the board chair on the expectations based on the board training. There was discussion about there not being a law that pertains to that topic, however that is up to this board.

Mr. Tyrrell questioned why the 3/7/19 TRSU meeting was canceled. Ms. Powden reported that it was so that the board chair and superintendent could attend the GM girls semi final basketball game. Mr. Tyrrell questioned what other things the superintendent would be doing to reach out to the community. Ms. Powden reported that she will be working on goals with the TRSU board. There was discussion about the TRSU board ultimately being the board responsible for the hiring and evaluation of the superintendent. There was also discussion about the TRSU board having representation on the TRSU board. There was discussion about the process of the TRSU board conducting evaluation. He also questioned how many board members have been teachers in the past. She noted that this is one of the reasons that he questioned about the teachers being able to talk with board members.

IX. ADMINISTRATORS' REPORTS

Ms. Powden reported that the administration continues to work on the continuous improvement plan. As they are working on that, they are encouraging the cultures in each school to embrace the continuous improvement within their own cultures. She reported that in order to improve systemically, they need to work together and look at data together. They are working collaboratively on improving instruction in all content areas. At the TRSU level, they are in phase 2 which is the PDSA cycle (Plan, Do, Study, Act). They are looking to close the achievement gaps between students who participate in free and reduced lunch and those who do not. They are looking at the curriculum map and look at what individual students' achievement is and what can be done to improve that achievement. The hope is that looking at the small group can help plan for the larger group. She also reported that the budgets passed. Ms. Lamphere questioned if there is a model around culture that they are following. Ms. Powden noted that they are shifting the focus to the work.

The principals' reports have been distributed to the board members for their review. They can report on it after the recess.

X. RECESS TO ANNUAL MEETING:

Mr. Fromberger recessed the meeting at 7:02 p.m. until after the annual meeting.

The board returned from recess at 7:13 p.m.

XI. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORTS (continued)

Ms. Beaupre reported that there is a lot of illness going around in the CTES building, including over 10% of the students at one point and a few of the staff members. The school has settled on a mascot through voting through staff. The winner will be revealed on arts night. They will then have a student re-create the image as a mural on the wall. She also reported that she needs a vehicle to talk with the Cavendish community about Cavendish issues. Their first meeting will be next Monday. They will name themselves and discuss a fundraiser. The school is having various themed activities, including cats vs. dogs, sunglass day, lucky pants day. She reported that the staff has been working on

professional development, including work on being trauma informed and how it relates to poverty and vice versa. She has been working with the teachers on self-care and vicarious trauma. She reported that one of the parents of a CTES student is a trauma specialist and she will be providing professional development. They have been discussing myths about poverty following a protocol. They have also been collaborating together as a team to help resolve an individual problem or challenge. The staff is also looking at tier one training. She discussed the collaboration of the staff regarding guided reading.

Mr. Alexander questioned if the other principals could participate in the trauma training and discussions. The principals noted that they are collaborating on this. The principals suggested that the board members watch Resilience as a board activity.

Ms. Fogg noted that her school is participating in a lot of the same things. She thanked her teachers for being flexible with parent teacher conferences, a difficult task for 240 students and they have almost 100% participation because of the teachers' flexibility. She reported that the winter sports program couldn't use the ice for skating, so they went to the pinnacle for snowshoeing and other winter activities. They will add this to their choices for next year. She also reported that the kindergarten class participated in a treasure hunt during their winter sports program. She discussed some of the theme work that her students are participating in. Ms. Fogg reported on the STEAM activity that Ms. Holderness has been doing with the students. She reported that Ms. Holderness has been helping out in many classrooms. She is creative and energetic. The Keewaydin dinner has been rescheduled for April 10. They are also going to do something different during the next evacuation drill to help parents understand how the pickup will work. The site will be moved from the Baptist Church to the Catholic Church.

Ms. Fierman reported on the Battle Physics competition. It was attended by two other schools. The grade 7 math and the high school physics classes have been doing this competition for a while. She explained the planning and funding process. She explained that there is math and physics involved. There were about 75 students including those from the other schools participating in the competition. She noted that these students eagerly and energetically were doing math to win a prize. Ms. Fierman reported that the first-time middle school Iron Chef team Turnup the Beat won the Crowd Pleaser prize. She hoped that they will be able to continue this competition in the future.

Vermont's Green up day poster contest was won by a GM 8th grader-Chloe Jenkins. She reported that Alex Beshay has been participating in a Music Competition. She reported on the athletics and the upcoming plays. She also reported on the professional development that the teachers have been working on and there will be a variety of wellness activities.

XII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. CAES Water Project update

Ms. Hammond reported that she has been in touch with the insurance company every few weeks. To date they have submitted \$270,000 in expenses to the insurance company. They have approved about \$140,000 thus far. The biggest obstacle is the boilers. The claim is being reviewed by a second tier at the insurance company. They are also having a problem approving the outdoor restrooms for the children at the school playground. There was also an issue with the laminator that was purchased for the Baptist Church. They have denied a few things like supplies, and the Dufresne Group bill, as well as the additional fuel tank usage. There was discussion about the school having paid all these bills. She has a goal to get this matter resolved before the end of the fiscal year. She reminded the board of the deductible and the denied expenses as well as the un-covered expenses (such as the underground work, and the ditching). The district was approved for the emergency fund from the state of Vermont, but they have to wait until the insurance process is complete. She is anticipating about \$114,800 from the general fund. She also reported

that there were some budgeted items in the current budget that are not being used completely so she can shift funding from those items to this expense. She will report on that figure a little closer to the end of the year.

B. Bus Buy Back Alternatives

Ms. Hammond reported that she and Mr. Parah spoke with the Cressy representative. The sales person is the same one that they purchased the buses from at DATCO. He was surprised that they would owe money at the end of the term given that the balloon payment is usually written to match the balance owed at the end. Ms. Hammond noted that she found some information regarding the \$60,000 that they were going to owe. She spoke with a former board member and he didn't remember that they were going to owe money. This was the same year that the reserve fund was begun, but his recollection wasn't to use the reserve for that expense, but rather to be able to begin the process of purchasing buses, rather than leasing. She also reported that the engine issue that Mr. Parah spoke of means that they are getting a better deal from DATCO than the buses are actually worth. There was discussion about the board having entered into a contract. There was also discussion about the budget not being able to afford the \$387,000 balloon payment, therefore they really have no choice but to absorb the unanticipated \$60,000 and continue with the initially approved plan of purchasing buses. Ms. Hammond reported that Mr. Parah supports that decision. There was discussion about the transportation reserve fund, and there still being \$37,800 left in the fund. There was also discussion about the amount they are allotting for the reserve fund each year.

Mr. Cunningham questioned how the paperwork was discovered. Ms. Hammond noted that the paperwork was at the office, but she is new to that position so locating it was a challenge. She has also worked with Sun Trust regarding the paperwork. This issue was discovered in January. Ms. Hammond reported that during budgeting, they still believed that the balloon payment would wash out with the return of the buses.

C. Transition Funds Update

Ms. Hammond reported on the balance of the transition funds. The lunch tables were \$29,497.32 and the hot water heater is \$8300.00. The pending fence project is anticipated to be \$16,000. The funds must be spent before June 30. The pending balance from the transition funds is \$12,365.18 which means they will need to take about \$3600 from the capital reserve fund.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Policies, First Read

The board reviewed the policies included in the board packet (C07, E1:001, H08, and H09) and will bring them back for a second read and potential approval at the next meeting.

B. CTES Library Agreement

Ms. Powden reported that the CTES library is also the town library and as such they have an agreement between the town and the school. There was discussion about the school Wi-Fi being used in an un-authorized way. Ms. Beaupre noted that they are discussing a plan to password protect the Wi-Fi. There was discussion about the school internet having a filter, while the library's Wi-Fi doesn't, and this means that the students at that end of the building can use that unfiltered Wi-Fi as well. The library currently has a password that changes every month. There was discussion about many public libraries not filtering their Wi-Fi connection for the public. There was discussion about suggesting that the town use filters on their library Wi-Fi connection. Ms. Beaupre noted that she found a prior unsigned contract, so perhaps there was just an understanding between the school and the town. The town is possibly concerned because the

district is not a town district. Ms. Beaupre reported that the library changed their hours and closed the library on Mondays so the students could have full access on Mondays.

Ms. Lamphere **moved** to adopt the agreement between the Cavendish Town Elementary School and the Cavendish Town Library and authorize the chair to sign the agreement. Mr. Marin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Truancy Policy Review

The policy was included in the board packet for their review. The protocol was given to the school by the deputy state's attorney and it has been being followed since August 2017. The school does not have a truancy officer, and therefore they contact the police in that area for Truancy. There was discussion about this policy being currently in place. Mr. Tyrrell also requested statistics regarding the truancy. He noted that he was looking for truancy for students over 10 days and the statistics for the 2017-2018 school year. Ms. Fierman reported that she has the numbers of truancy letters from the start of the school year. (60 5-day letters, 30 10-day letters, 19 15-day letters, 16 20-day letters have been sent). There was discussion about these letters being for unexcused absences. There was discussion about the criteria to qualify as an excused absence. There was discussion about the levels of the protocol being followed. There was discussion about the county resources and whether they follow up on the truancy absent a DCF intervention. There was discussion about the truancy levels 10 or 15 days and the schools sometimes helping the families with various resources to help them avoid these issues. Ms. Fierman noted that students at a secondary level at that level of truancy are often in another situation and often parents are trying to intervene. Mr. Tyrrell noted that this protocol applies to students under the age of 16 because after that point the student can legally quit school.

D. Public Relations Proposal

Ms. Powden reported that the PR committee has proposed the plan in the board packet. Ms. Lamphere reported that Ms. Fleming had created it and acknowledged that it is a lofty plan and they are going to try to focus on blogging/website updates/social media updates. There was discussion about the committee makeup. There was discussion about whether the work can be done more effectively by the PR coordinator, rather than by a committee who has to meet, make recommendations and get board approval. Ms. Lamphere noted that Ms. Moeykens was hired to do just that. The board reviewed the proposal and will discuss the PR committee at the next meeting.

E. Erate Contract

Ms. Powden noted that the contract with ENA (Education Networks of America) for their technical expertise and internet. The rate is \$20,416 which is approximately \$3800 savings. This plan includes the internet and the support and monitoring. There was discussion about the bid process that Ms. Baker had gone through, and the process of FRL affecting the erate percentage. The board requested a report from Ms. Baker on the process for selecting ENA as well as the erate process. Mr. Alexander **moved** to approve \$20,416 to be spent on the ENA contract for internet. Ms. Perlah seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

F. Food Service Director Job Description

Ms. Powden reminded the board that Mr. Carroll is retiring and they need to advertise for the food service director position for the whole district. There was discussion about how the direction of all three schools will work. The board also discussed Mr. Carroll's proposal. There was discussion about the work year and the salary not currently listed on the job description. There are 196 days and the current salary is just over \$45,000. There was discussion about the possibility of contracting with an outside food service group. There was discussion about approving the job

description and seeing what comes in for applicants while researching contracted options. Ms. Hammond noted that the support staff agreement has lunch staff in it. They ran into a similar problem with the transportation. She also noted that the process of contracting a food service provider would take more than a couple months. She suggested board members attend lunch in Ludlow and Springfield to try a couple vendors first. Ms. Hammond reported that with the per-plate reimbursement required, the food service vendors are having to charge more. The director position requires an advanced degree of some sort based on federal child nutrition and USDA rules. Mr. Studin **moved** to approve the job description. Mr. Alexander seconded. There was discussion about how the salary will be determined. Ms. Powden noted that they will look to the AOE for average salaries. There was discussion about whether or not this position needs board approval since it isn't a licensed position. The motion carried unanimously.

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Tyrrell questioned the truancy rate, dropout rate and other statistics for each school and what the timeline is for them. Ms. Powden reported that Ms. Baker is working in the state reporting system on this data that is collected from each school. She didn't know what the deadline is, but Ms. Fierman thought it was the end of April. There was discussion about the system not having the ability to upload currently. Mr. Tyrrell questioned what the process is to request a closed session with the board. Ms. Powden noted that he would contact her to be sure that it falls under the approved executive session reasons. Mr. Cunningham questioned if the labor relations discussion proposed for the executive session tonight is the same RIF discussions from the past.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A. Negotiations for Non-Bargaining Staff Title 313 V.S.A. 313

After specific finding that discussion of the matter in public session would put the public body or an individual at a disadvantage, Mr. Studin **moved** to enter executive session at 8:41 p.m. to discuss Negotiations for Non-Bargaining staff and Labor relations, inviting Ms. Powden and Ms. Hammond. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at 9:21 p.m. Ms. Lamphere **moved** to approve and increase of 2.75% to non-bargaining staff for the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Lamphere **moved** to allow a one time only sick day donation with a maximum of 35 days from GMUSD employees for a support staff employee, with the details to be worked out by the superintendent. Mr. Studin seconded and the motion carried.

XVI. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA ITEMS:

The next meeting will be held on April 25, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at CTES.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Studin **moved** to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. Mr. Alexander seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary