

Green Mountain Unified School District Board

Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 9, 2019

Chester Andover Elementary School, Library

6:30 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER:

Board: Fred Marin, Jeff Hance, Joe Fromberger, Rick Alexander, Lois Perlah, Doug McBride

Staff: Meg Powden, Lauren Fierman, Katherine Fogg, Leslie Kenney, Angela Hurd

Student Reps:

Public: Wayne Wheelock

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He invited the board members to introduce themselves.

II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. McBride requested to add discussion of a safety matter under new business item C. Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Ratification of Support Staff Agreement

Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that they had begun discussing this topic at the last meeting. They had discussed the two typographical errors in the agreement that needed to be reviewed and approved by the association before the board approved it. The agreement has been amended accordingly. He questioned if the association has approved the changes and signed the agreement. Ms. Powden confirmed that they have. She shared the highlights about what was different. The support staff raises are 3% and next year will be 2.75% in this two-year contract. She noted that if a support staff individual is asked to be a substitute teacher, that individual can only teach for a maximum of 3 hours and must be paid an extra \$2.50 per hour for doing that work. The support staff members were offered a single health insurance plan. Some of the GMUHS employees have a different health insurance and are grandfathered under their prior plan. This offer in the contract was to try to bring the benefits to as equitable as feasible under one contract. They are anticipating that there may be a state-wide health insurance plan in the coming years, but if not, they will revisit the insurance offered and change everyone to be comparable to Green Mountain's. She reported that another item that needed to be unified was the number of holidays. GMUHS had the most, therefore CAES had one more day added and CTES had two more days added to make an equitable amount between the three schools. Mr. McBride clarified that no one lost any holidays in this negotiation, rather employees in two schools gained.

There was discussion about who qualifies as a full year employee (custodians, for example) and who qualifies as a school year employee (para-educators, food service workers for example). Mr. McBride questioned if the school year employees received their benefits based on a pro-rata level of the full year employees, except the vacation days which are specifically spelled out. Ms. Powden felt that that was not the case with health insurance or some other benefits. He questioned the clause about staff members getting paid for a full day on early release days. He also noted that at GMUHS and CAES, there are 8 early release ski days and generally the staff

works the rest of those days. He questioned the employees at CTES who have every Tuesday as an early release day. Ms. Powden noted that the GMUHS and CAES employees will also have 5 early release professional development (PD) days that they will also be paid the full day for, for a total of 13. Mr. McBride noted that at CTES, the staff is regularly working 4.5 days per week but getting paid for 5. Ms. Powden explained that the para-educators are participating in PD on these days each week. There was discussion about the students leaving early, but not the para-educators on those days. There was clarification that the clause is included in the agreement to cover the emergency early release days, such as those due to weather conditions.

Mr. McBride questioned the raises and steps. For example, the support staff received a 3% raise in year one, at the beginning of the year, they also get to go up a step in addition to the 3% raise. He noted that the steps appear to be year based, not educationally based. He felt that 3% is understating their raise because both the 3% and the step are automatic. There was discussion about whether the step is automatic. Ms. Powden advised that the step is negotiated. Ms. Kenney explained that this contract is combining a few steps and they are placing the para-educators on the closest step to where they are at in order to achieve that combination. She noted that the first year, the employee could possibly only receive 2% based on their placement on the step schedule. Ms. Hurd explained that there is a pool of 3% new money and not every person is receiving the 3%--it is all dependent upon where they are placed on the step schedule. Ms. Powden explained that the 3% is considered "new money" which is then distributed across the step schedule. Ms. Powden advised that the step is negotiated. Ms. Kenney explained that there could be employees placed on the step schedule who only receive a small portion of a raise based on their placement on the step schedule. Ms. Kenney noted that in some cases people didn't get a step increase if they were already at a particular step. There was discussion about this step schedule being new in this contract.

Ms. Perlah questioned if this step schedule was done since they blended 3 districts with different salary schedules. Ms. Powden confirmed that was the case. Mr. McBride requested clarification that the principals are not part of the support staff contract. Ms. Powden confirmed that no administration members are part of a negotiated contract. Mr. McBride noted that they are almost one year into this 2-year agreement and felt that practically this board would be strained to make any changes to this agreement. He felt that being delivered a 2-year agreement almost a full year into it ties the board's hands if they were troubled by anything in the contract. Ms. Powden advised that that is why there are board members that serve on the negotiations committee. Mr. McBride felt that it is the superintendent's responsibility to keep the negotiations on track. He felt that whatever is being done is not being done correctly when they are agreeing to a contract halfway through the contract. Ms. Powden noted that this is an assumption that the management is delaying the agreement. She didn't want to speak for the association. Mr. McBride felt that was a fair statement and wanted to correct his statement, but felt that the board should be cognizant of this problem. He felt that they can begin negotiating the next contract at the beginning of the next school year, and felt that they should do so. He requested that the superintendent make every effort to begin the negotiations at the earliest possible time in order to help facilitate timely completion. He understood that there are two parties to the negotiation.

Mr. McBride **moved** to approve the GMUSD 2 year support staff agreement as presented from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020 with the proviso that the superintendent shall at the earliest time allowed by section 2.1 of the support staff agreement notify the Green Mountain School Staff Association/Vermont NEA/NEA that the GMUSD desires to begin negotiation for the 2020 support staff agreement, and shall use her best efforts to begin negotiations as soon as allowed under the agreement and reach a new agreement prior to the June 30, 2020 expiration date of the current staff agreement. Mr. Fromberger noted that this agreement was finalized in December.

He advised that it took all this time for the attorneys and the association to finalize the language in the agreement. He felt that they couldn't hold Ms. Powden responsible for that delay. He felt that it is necessary to have the best legal advice, but sometimes that comes with delays. Mr. Hance felt that the next negotiations will likely not be as difficult since they are normally pretty smooth, but this time was three groups coming together into one contract. Ms. Powden noted that sometimes they try for a one-year agreement, but this time tried for a 2-year agreement due to the potential change in the health insurance. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried without opposition. Mr. Fromberger will sign the agreement on behalf of the board.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Appoint New Board Member, Baltimore

Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that at the last board meeting, Ms. Muther tendered her resignation from the board. The GMUSD has notified the select board from Baltimore to participate in the selection process. State statute gives this board the responsibility of selecting a replacement in consultation with the select board. The select board has recommended Mr. Wheelock as the replacement and he has expressed an interest.

Mr. Marin **moved** to appoint Mr. Wheelock as a member of the GMUSD board from Baltimore. Mr. Hance seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Wheelock will get sworn in at his earliest convenience.

B. Recommendation for Hire

Ms. Powden reported that Ms. Fogg held a search committee for the guidance counselor position at CAES. She advised that the current counselor requested a transfer to Mt. Holly now that that position has opened there. She approved the transfer. Ms. Fogg reported that there were 10 candidates for the position and they interviewed 4 of them. They are recommending MacKenzie Thurston as the guidance counselor for CAES. She reported on her education history—she is graduating from the College of St. Joseph this month with her master's degree in school counseling and has an undergraduate degree from the University of New York. She is currently finishing her internship in the Neshobee School in Brandon. She felt that Ms. Thurston would be a good fit for the school. Ms. Powden was impressed with her enthusiasm.

Mr. Fromberger noted that Brandon is 52 miles from Chester and questioned if her enthusiasm would carry her through that commute. Ms. Fogg noted that many of the staff drive about an hour to the school. Ms. Powden confirmed her recommendation to hire Ms. Thurston.

Mr. Wheelock **moved** to approve hiring MacKenzie Thurston as the CAES guidance counselor as recommended. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Safety Concern

Mr. McBride noted that at CTES there have been small issues with the flashing lights reminding people to slow from 35 mph to 25 mph. He felt that because that road is VT Route 131, many people feel 35 mph means they can drive 40 mph. He noted that the flashing lights at the sign have been broken at both ends for at least 2 weeks. He felt that the problem is further compounded in the winter with the markings on the road having faded, therefore it is difficult to see the crosswalk. He also noted that there used to be a marker at both ends indicating that it is a school zone, but those are both not there. He felt that this is an urgent safety issue. He felt it was inappropriate to ask the principal to take care of this, and asked the superintendent to do so. Mr. McBride **moved** that the superintendent shall, with urgency, address the safety issues at CTES: (1) get repaired the non-working flashing school zone lights that when flashing reduce the speed limit from 35 mph to 25 mph, (2) get repainted the school crossing road graphics (or contact the

appropriate parties to do so), (3) get repainted the crosswalk road graphics (or contact the appropriate parties to do so), (4) get repainted the line marking the non-raised sidewalk where students walk near the school (or contact the appropriate parties to do so); in addition the superintendent shall, on a non-urgent basis, research the feasibility of installing safety lights at the CTES parking lot and playground; and the superintendent shall report to the GMUSD board at the next meeting when the budgeted safety gates will be installed at CTES. Ms. Powden advised that he could just ask her, that she didn't need a motion to take care of that. Mr. Spaulding noted that CAES is responsible for its flashing lights and questioned if CTES is responsible for its lights. He suggested Mr. Beamon could take care of the lights. Mr. Spaulding noted that he would be happy to help Mr. Beamon if he wasn't familiar with the lights. There was discussion about Mr. Beamon perhaps not being aware that these are an issue. Mr. McBride felt it wasn't appropriate for him to approach Mr. Beamon with an issue without going through the board. There was also discussion about the road markings likely being the responsibility of the town highway. Mr. Fromberger suggested that it was appropriate for Ms. Powden to follow up on each piece to make sure that the appropriate party was caring for each piece.

Mr. Fromberger noted that the safety gate discussion will be held at the next meeting. They have received a bid on the work. Ms. Powden noted that now that they are aware of the issue, they would notify the town manager for the town highway portion. Mr. Alexander seconded Mr. McBride's motion. Mr. Alexander requested that with regard to the safety lighting, he would like to be involved and recommended LED lighting. The motion carried without opposition.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Fogg thanked the board for signing the support staff agreement. Ms. Kenney felt that starting the negotiations as early as possible will be better for the next contract. There was discussion about combining cultures of schools to treat everyone the same.

VI. NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA ITEMS:

The next meeting will be held on May 16, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at CAES. There will be an audit meeting at CTES on May 23, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. There was discussion about the CTES location of the audit meeting since LMHUUSD will also be attending.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Perlah **moved** to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Mr. Marin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary