

# Green Mountain Unified School District Board

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 25, 2019

Cavendish Town Elementary School, Art Center

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, Doug McBride, Deb Brown

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Lauren Fierman, Deb Beaupre, Katherine Fogg

**Student Reps:**

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham, Wayne Wheelock, Michelle Messina, Leigh Dakin Stacy Babbidge, Nan Nanfeldt, Sherry McCabe, Lori Wright, Dan Tyrrell, Justin Osher, Denise Hughes, Cheryl Bastrum

Mr. Fromberger welcomed the board and the many visitors. He acknowledged that many of the visitors were present for a particular discussion and assured the audience that the board would listen with respect to both sides. He invited the board members to introduce themselves.

### II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Hance questioned why the public comments were moved to the end of the meeting. Mr. Fromberger explained that this was his doing. The Secretary of State has indicated that public comments can occur either before or after any substantive board discussions, therefore he chose to put it after the action items so that the public can make comments after the action is complete. He welcomed the board to move them earlier in the meeting if they chose.

Ms. Powden noted that Ms. Muther has resigned from the board and it will be discussed under item G under New Business. The board approved the agenda with the addition of discussion of the board member unanimously. [There was no formal motion or second on the recording 1:22-3:20]

### III. MINUTES:

#### A. March 21, 2019 Regular meeting

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2019 regular meeting. Ms. Lamphere seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### IV. OLD BUSINESS:

#### A. Policies, Second Read, Approval

The board reviewed the policies that were introduced at the last meeting. Mr. Fromberger noted that on policy C-07. He noted that the policy states that “individual board members will take advantage...” He felt that the board couldn’t mandate individual board members to do certain things. He suggested the word “may” instead of “will.” He suggested that the policy be returned to the policy committee for a new revision.

Mr. Fromberger also suggested on policy H-08 that the last sentence indicates that the board delegates the superintendent to be responsible for developing a community relations program and that language indicates that the board has no role in adopting such a program. He suggested changing the language to “direct the superintendent to develop such a plan subject to board

approval.” He again suggested that the policy be returned to the policy committee for revision. Ms. Lamphere questioned why the board needed to be responsible for approving the community relations plan rather than delegating it to the superintendent with their expertise.

The board consensus was to table further discussion and approval until the next meeting after the policy committee can review the suggestions.

**B. Committee Assignments**

Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that at the last meeting they deferred committee assignments until this meeting. In the meantime, he sent board members a suggested list of committee assignments.

Ms. Lamphere recommended that as the current chair of the PR committee, that the committee still remain in existence, however shift to an ad hoc committee and delegate the PR duties to the PR Coordinator hired by the supervisory union, keeping aligned with the PR plan previously approved by the board, with the committee meeting as needed. There was discussion about the PR committee being made up of Ms. Lamphere and a representative of the LMHUUSD board.

Mr. Studin noted that any committees and appointments that Ms. Muther was on will need to be replaced. Mr. Fromberger suggested waiting on those replacements until her seat has been filled. There was discussion about an audit committee and Mr. McBride and Mr. Alexander were appointed to it. Mr. Studin volunteered to be part of the negotiations-support staff committee that Ms. Muther had served on.

There was discussion about the food service committee and whether one was needed now. There was discussion about the board not being able to hire a food service company because of the support staff contract. The district will be hiring a food service director for the entire GMUSD and an ad hoc food service committee may be needed at that time.

The board consensus was to approve the committee assignments as suggested by Mr. Fromberger with the changes discussed here.

**C. Adopt Robert’s Rules of Order**

Mr. Fromberger advised that as part of the board reorganization, they are required by the state to adopt rules under which the board will operate. He noted that Robert’s Rules are recommended but there is a provision for small boards that allow motions to be made without seconds and all the chair to vote on any issue. He reminded the board that under the standard Robert’s Rules, the chair only votes to make or break a tie. Ms. Brown **moved** to adopt the standard Robert’s Rules of Order for the GMUSD board meetings, not the small board rules. Mr. Marin seconded. There was discussion about the differences between the small board rules and the standard rules. There was discussion about the board members not necessarily knowing the finer points of Robert’s Rules. The motion carried without opposition.

**V. COMMUNICATION:**

**A. Student Representatives**

Ms. Fierman noted that there are no student representatives tonight as it is difficult for them to come to Cavendish with their other obligations after the meeting. She advised that the students did give her their comments and she can include them with her administrator’s report.

**B. Board Comments**

Mr. Studin reminded the board members that at the last meeting he had requested a presentation on Proficiency Based Education (PBE) and grading, and a few other board members agreed that they too would like such a presentation, but it isn't on the agenda. Ms. Powden advised that Mr. Eppolito will report on the PBE under her administrator's report. There was discussion about keeping the reports short due to the length of this meeting. Mr. Studin suggested that rather than having a too brief discussion of PBE at tonight's meeting that Mr. Eppolito come back for the next meeting and give a presentation on PBE then.

Mr. Fromberger noted that he has asked that the superintendent include the vice chair in all communications to the chair so that there is continuity and she has agreed to do so.

Mr. McBride **moved** to ask the superintendent to work with her team on coming up with a plan to honor Dr. Gene Bont who recently passed away for his many years of service to the schools that are now part of the GMUSD. He served on the school board for this school and GM as well as schools that aren't here anymore for many years and felt it was appropriate for the school district to honor him. Ms. Brown seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McBride distributed information about having a standing report by the superintendent to the board. He asked that the board members review it for discussion at the next meeting. The standing report would not take over what the superintendent wants to share, but would include information on the details that most boards want to know about their district, such as any threats of law suits or active law suits, if the district is going over in expenses, if there are teacher, staff, student or safety issues. The goal is for the superintendent to spend 5 or 10 minutes discussing the items that are relevant for that monthly meeting. Mr. Fromberger suggested that Ms. Powden also review the list to determine how feasible this request would be. Discussion about this topic will be held at the next meeting.

Mr. McBride also suggested that the board consider directing their TRSU representatives to make the motion at the next TRSU meeting to request that the TRSU board to cease holding TRSU board meetings at Fletcher Farm, and instead hold TRSU meetings at member schools on a rotating basis. He advised that the Roost is such a small place and it is not inviting to the public. The idea would be that a change in venue would invite more public participation. It would also have the additional benefit of keeping everyone in touch with their schools. He requested for this discussion and action on the May agenda. Mr. Fromberger suggested he could make that motion at this meeting. Mr. McBride **moved** to direct the GMUSD representatives to the TRSU board to request that the TRSU board consider changing the location of their meetings and cease holding their meetings at the Roost and instead rotate the meetings through the member schools. Mr. Alexander seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Ms. Lamphere questioned how this would be brought to the TRSU board. Mr. Fromberger requested that Ms. Powden add this topic to the next TRSU meeting agenda.

Mr. McBride suggested that the GMUSD annual meeting should no longer be held independently, rather it should be held immediately before or after the annual town meeting of the constituent towns on a rotating basis. He requested that this topic be reviewed for discussion and potential action at the next board meeting. He felt that there is low community turnout for the stand-alone school district meeting. He felt that there would be more participation and community involvement. Ms. Lamphere noted that if the annual school district meeting was held in Cavendish one year for example, then anyone not from Cavendish who wanted to attend the school district meeting would have to miss the town meeting in their own town, including the board members.

Mr. McBride felt that the finance committee process needs work. He felt that the finance committee did a lot of hard work with the budget but the timing ended up that the full board only had one meeting to review the budget and decide on it. He suggested that the board review the dates he sent out in an email and set a schedule for the budgeting process that starts much earlier. The process would start with a report from the superintendent on how the current budget is being implemented and how the board goals are being met within that current budget. He advised that the board would articulate their goals to the superintendent for her to develop a budget based on those goals. He then suggested that the budget could be presented to the board by November 30 so they are not up against the tight deadlines. Mr. Fromberger noted that he and the superintendent have spoken about this topic. He suggested that the board review a proposed budget by October 31, which would give the board 3 months to review it and come up with an approvable budget by the deadline. He requested that he be allowed to work on this proposal with the superintendent to come up with a budget schedule and plan that will be sufficient enough to eliminate the “crunch time” at the deadline.

Mr. McBride noted that he remains concerned with the bus buyout liability and would like it reviewed in more detail with the board. He is confused why the auditors didn’t find it and report it on their audit. He felt it was common for an auditor to review contracts as part of their audit. The contracts were in place for several years before the school districts joined together and he questioned why the auditors or the people preparing the budget didn’t find this anomaly during several budget and audit cycles. He questioned why when they learned about it in the spring of 2018 which it wasn’t put into the budget at that time, and why the auditors weren’t notified of it at that time. He requested that the board review this at the next meeting. Mr. Fromberger requested that he be allowed to review this topic with the finance director.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORTS:**

### **A. Superintendent’s Report**

Ms. Powden noted that Mr. Eppolito will be discussing the request for professional development time. Mr. Eppolito distributed a draft professional development plan to the board for consideration. He has backup evidence of work if the board would like it, but it would require additional explanation if the board would like it. He is requesting that the board consider again allowing the 5 half days through out the course of the year as they have for the past 3 years. The in-house PD time would be dedicated to working on priorities. He noted that it is the first Tuesday of 5 months out of the year. This is 15 hours of extra time out of approximately 1225 hours that the students attend school. This time is to continue working on the standards-based curriculum re-design as they have been. He described work being done at the high school level and work being done at the elementary level. There was discussion about CTES currently having a half day Tuesday every week already, therefore the impact to CTES students for this plan is null. Mr. Studin questioned if there is feedback from the teachers on whether they feel that this time is beneficial and productive and whether they feel it is too much time or not enough or just right. There was discussion about the board taking action on the days, not the content. There was also discussion about this being the same as it is in the current school year. Mr. Eppolito needs action on this topic tonight so that the schools can develop and distribute their school calendars next year. Ms. Lamphere noted that this is becoming a standard request for the PD time. Mr. Eppolito advised that he can explain why the decision was made to request this time and demonstrate the evidence about why he is making this request.

Mr. Eppolito distributed the packet with the data and evidence supporting this request. He gave a basic overview of the work they are doing and why it takes so much time. He explained that the first step is to develop standards and then develop a rubric for what it looks like to be successful in those standards. They then need to develop the means to assess students on those standards,

and how will they instruct students on the standards to help them meet the standards. His packet showed the beginning work on the framework of the standards. He noted that it takes more time than originally anticipated. He discussed the performance indicators and explained how they are aligned from PreK through graduation. He also reported on the standards that students will have to meet in order to graduate. Part of the reason that this takes so much time is that identifying the standards is difficult—ideally the things that students should know by graduation is too much for them to be taught in two lifetimes. Therefore, the teachers have to identify the standards that they want to be sure the students should know and that prioritization is challenging. Then they have to be able to outline what it means to be successful in that standard. This process is iterative and they have to define it, assess it and refine it. Then the instructional design takes some time to plan. He described all the work that an elementary school teacher will do in the area of social studies in addition to all their other work with math, English, science and health. There was discussion about the students being graded based on a system that isn't fully developed yet. Ms. Fierman explained that the standards have been developed but with the implementation of them, the teachers are constantly revising and changing and bettering the curriculum. They are revising the assessments with those standards as well. She felt that they are in the first year of implementing the proficiency based grading and other schools that are participating in PBE are recommending 3-5 years to be fully implemented.

Ms. Lamphere **moved** to accept the recommendation of the curriculum director and approve the request for 5 early release days. There was discussion about the standards being “living documents” and continually evolving. Ms. Lamphere noted that Mr. Eppolito will be coming back next month to report on the PBE, but she felt that this is a big enough project that the teachers need the time and space to continue to work on this, hence her motion to approve the 5 early release days. Ms. Brown seconded. Mr. McBride questioned why they are approving these extra days when there are already ski days that are early release days. Mr. Eppolito reported that two years ago he made that request but it put an undue burden on many of the schools since the schools often participate in school-based PD during those ski days. Mr. McBride also questioned why the SU didn't look at other schools in Maine to begin this work so they weren't starting from scratch. Mr. Eppolito advised that he did. He started with the schools in Rutland who had already begun this work. The work began about 5 years ago in high schools and at that time there weren't a lot of examples. He noted that at the time Rutland had written and organized their standards differently from the way the state was recommending.

Mr. Eppolito reported that he was very proud of the work that the teachers are doing. He shared an example of a first-grade civics standard, the performance indicator, the assessment rubric, and the instructional trajectory. Ms. Lamphere's motion carried without opposition.

## **B. Principals' Reports**

Ms. Beaupre reported that the early release Tuesdays at CTES help them hold staff meetings. Many of the staff work for the after-school program so after school time for staff meetings wouldn't include every teacher. They use the half day Tuesdays to discuss staff needs, become trauma-informed.

Ms. Beaupre thanked Deb Brown, Jeff Hance and Fred Marin for their donations at the recent fundraising event. She reported that she has met with the assistant town manager to plan the upcoming Memorial Day ceremony and parade. She welcomed anyone who has served in the armed forces to come out and help celebrate. She reported that they have received a request from Chaos and Kindness to help the community and school with their presentation, but the charge would be \$5000, so she declined. Instead they are getting a presentation from a group from Plymouth State College on kindness. They perform a show and then do work in each classroom.

Then on May 17, they will have the first annual “Bring your Grown-Up to School”. There will be a photo booth and everyone is encouraged to dress up the way they would like.

Ms. Fogg reported that the spaghetti dinner went well and she thanked everyone for their donations. They raised \$1500 for the Keewaydin trip. She is working with the Grafton Nature Museum and Jaime Maloof to help create an outdoor education program. They will try to do a workshop in the summer with the goal to get every classroom outside for part of a day every week and continue the education outdoors. She reported that Mr. Spaulding is working on getting estimates for the work for the safety grant for the double entry doors. The outer doors will remain unlocked and allow people to get out of the weather while they wait to be admitted in the inner locked doors. She doesn’t anticipate having to go to bid for this.

Ms. Fogg reported on the additional playground pieces still coming to the school. She also showed the board a picture of the outdoor classroom. There are several interviews for new positions happening soon: assistant principal, guidance counselor, and a long term second grade substitute, a 5/6 teacher. She explained how the teaching positions are being changed for the next year based on class size moving through the grades.

Ms. Fierman reported that the drama department held their spring show: Beauty and the Beast. It was held on April 4,5 and 6. They had a dress rehearsal for the elementary school students on April 3 with over 500 in attendance. She reported that Kelly Goodrich and the seniors held a Royal Court fundraiser where elementary students could come in dressed as their favorite prince or princess before the Saturday matinee. There was crown decorating, face painting, and snacks. The cast also came out in costume to greet the students. There are between 40 and 50 cast members and techies who work on the production. That group will be taking a trip to 6 flags to celebrate that achievement. The senior art exhibit was held recently. Both Jacob Pailey and Cassie Spaulding exhibited their work. She reported that on May 16, the art show, pops concert and empty bowls dinner are all being held. She explained what is being done with the empty bowls dinner. She also reported that a GM 8<sup>th</sup> grader, Chloe Jenkins was the winner of the 2019 Vermont Green Up Day poster contest.

Ms. Fierman reported that softball, baseball and track have all begun. The early part of the season has had several reschedules so she recommended checking the website. The school also held its second lip dub event yesterday and it will be up on the website soon. The junior class took the SAT tests this week through a grant. The AP exams will be taken in May. The school has formed a capstone/portfolio committee which will begin piloting this program for next year’s seniors but will be fully in place for the class of 2022. The primary objective is to show that the student knows how to learn and that they are a valuable member of the community. She also reported on the work that the GM staff does on the early release Tuesdays. She noted that they use every minute of every one of those days and there is always a tremendous amount of work to do. In fact, if she could make more time for the teachers without taking it away from the students she would. She reported on some of the curriculum work that the teachers do.

Ms. Fierman reported that Ms. DeLorenzo has submitted her letter of retirement after many years in the science department. She read aloud Ms. DeLorenzo’s letter. They will be advertising for the position.

### **C. Superintendent’s Report (continued)**

Ms. Powden reminded the board that earlier this year a board member expressed concern about a directive that was given at one of the schools regarding staff members having a “gag order”. She has investigated the matter and let the board know that there was a lot of confusion about the

directive that was given. Because she feels that it is important that the lines of communication are very clear, and because she feels that if a staff member approaches a board member rather than the staff member with whom they may have an issue with or that person's supervisor, it undermines the work of the school, and because the board is the governing body and it isn't acceptable that the board has prior knowledge of a particular issue that may come to them for a decision, she is recommending and requesting that if staff members want to approach board members with celebrations or points of pride that they do so, however if a staff member wants to approach the board member about a concern, that the board member remind the staff member about the chain of command. She noted that it is the same with the parents—that the board recommends that the parent bring their concern to the teacher first, then the principal, then the superintendent.

Ms. Lamphere questioned what the directive actually was. Ms. Powden noted that in the particular school, there are a lot of staff members who live in the town and so the goal was to clear up any confusion on what's appropriate to talk with a board member about. She noted that sometimes the staff members are approaching board members as community members or as parents, but it is impossible to make that distinction since they are also staff members who should be following the chain of command. She advised that since there was confusion about the directive, she provided the staff with a flow-chart to help with the clarity, and there was still confusion. She is asking the board to accept her recommendation throughout the entire district. Ms. Lamphere questioned if there are standards or boundaries outlined in the teacher's license (or elsewhere) about dealing with boards. Ms. Powden reported that there are professional standards for teachers but interacting with board members is not one of those standards. She clarified that this is standard practice in board/staff relations and widely applied. Ms. Lamphere felt that this is quite rigid. Mr. McBride noted that in his professional life, a chain of command works well in a non-confrontational and non-emotional issue where there isn't a chance of retribution; but otherwise it doesn't which is why most organizations have a more open-door practice. He is worried that adhering to a rigid chain of command is sending a message to the school community that isn't what is intended. The chain of command gives clarity, however he wondered if they weren't giving up a lot of important information that would make the GM district better. Ms. Powden noted that if a parent was uncomfortable going to a teacher, it is certainly acceptable to go above the teacher. Ms. Lamphere acknowledged being neutral in a situation until they are at the end of an investigation. Mr. Studin requested to see sample policies similar to this from other schools, as well as examples of the open-door policy. Ms. Perlah noted that based on Susan Holson's recommendation when she came to the board to discuss board relations, this topic tends to be overreaching. The board noted that these were recommendations, not requirements.

Mr. Fromberger noted that while the VSBA helps with recommendations, the board gets its power from state law, not from the VSBA. The board will discuss this topic further next month.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. CTES Principal Contract Recommendation**

Ms. Powden reminded the board members that in last month's executive session, the board discussed the non-bargaining staff salary increases as well as the principal's contracts. When they came out of executive session, there was a motion to increase the non-bargaining staff salaries by 2.75%, but there was no action on the principal's contract. She is recommending issuing Deb Beaupre a one-year contract as the CTES principal with an increase of 2.75%.

Ms. Brown **moved** to accept Ms. Powden's recommendation and offer Deb Beaupre a one-year contract with a 2.75% salary increase. Mr. Studin seconded. Mr. McBride noted that he felt that it would be inappropriate to act on the motion until they have heard from the audience. He felt

that acting on the motion without hearing from the audience sends a message that the board won't listen to what they have to say. Mr. McBride **moved** to table discussion on the motion until later in the meeting. Mr. Studin noted that most of the board members were part of the hiring process. He noted that he felt concerned for Ms. Beaupre coming into a school going through a difficult situation replacing a principal who had been at the school for a very long time. He felt that she is "doing great" and finds her very informative, passionate and dedicated to her job, the school and the community. He has confidence that the administration will deal with the situation that the public is likely going to report on and he supports tabling the motion until the community can speak. Mr. Studin seconded the motion to table the discussion. Ms. Powden noted it is inappropriate to discuss personnel matters in open session. Mr. Fromberger noted that the board will listen to public communication, but the board will take no position on any of the comments that are made, and he hoped that the public comments will be respectful and civil and not hurtful. Ms. Lamphere echoed Ms. Powden's concern for personnel related matters that should be discussed privately with Ms. Powden or in executive session. She wants to hear the community input, but she is not interested in a public bashing session and felt that it was not appropriate to hold it in open session. She felt that the board's responsibility was to protect its employee from being exposed to several people wanting to say terrible things. She suggested that if people have specific experiences that they want to share with the board, they should do so in executive session one at a time or send it in writing to the board.

Ms. Powden reminded the board and the audience of the social contract discussed earlier. If a parent has a concern with a principal, they should talk to that principal directly. If they are uncomfortable doing so, they can go to the superintendent, or if the problem is not resolved after conversation with the principal, they can go to the superintendent. She reported that she has not met with any Cavendish parents regarding their concerns. There was discussion about the survey circulated by some Cavendish parents and Ms. Powden was waiting for those parents who signed it to meet with the principal or to request to meet with herself. She is aware that three parents have met with the principal so far and none of them has requested to meet with Ms. Powden beyond Ms. Beaupre.

Ms. Lamphere noted that she has read the petition and some of the comments, but felt that many of them were not constructive and were abusive. As a parent of a child in this school, she has not had any concerns with Ms. Beaupre, but feels that it is unwise to let the public speak about Ms. Beaupre in public when they are unsure how it will be delivered. Ms. Brown questioned if there was a way to hear what the public had to say in a manner that wasn't publicly offensive. There was discussion about the public having the right to speak under public comments, but the board has an obligation to protect its employees. Perhaps the board could take each individual into executive session to hear their concerns. There was discussion about needing a legal valid reason to enter executive session, such as employee performance. Ms. Powden advised that if this is the case, the parents should speak with the principal first and then with her if the issues aren't resolve or if the parent's concern is not resolved, before it would come to the board. The board can certainly accept a petition if the community members want to present it to the board.

Ms. Dakin suggested that the community members don't need to have such rigidity and it would behoove everyone if the board held an executive session and hear from anyone on this matter who felt they had information to share. Mr. Fromberger noted that under article 313, there is no provision to allow for public participation in an executive session. He noted that all the board members have seen all of the comments, so the board members are not unaware of the concerns. However, to have the comments shared in a public forum sanctioned by the board is not acceptable. There was discussion about this topic being employee related and therefore covered by executive session. Ms. Lamphere reported that she is aware that 70 people signed a petition



and that there is a single incident that has been complained about, but she is unsure if that is the only concern or if there are others. There was discussion about the executive session being held between the board and Ms. Powden regarding the findings of the petition. However, they don't have that. She noted that they have an assertive outreach from the community that is being met with a passive response from the board. She felt that they need to have a formal information gathering and an informed executive session. Ms. Powden advised that they are not giving a passive response. She reported that neither she nor the board have been presented with the petition formally. The board discussed that the process would be that the community present information to the superintendent and/or the board and then the board can act on it after a thorough investigation. Mr. Fromberger noted that the board can enter executive session to discuss Ms. Powden's reasons for recommending Ms. Beaupre's contract, but that is it.

There was discussion about the process that the members of the community should follow if they are concerned with Ms. Beaupre. First, they should address those concerns with Ms. Beaupre directly. If they don't get the resolution they are seeking, or if they don't feel comfortable with speaking with Ms. Beaupre, they can bring those concerns to the superintendent. Ms. Powden will address it and present those findings to the board. One community member asked what they are supposed to do when they don't feel comfortable bringing their concern to the superintendent. Mr. Fromberger noted that the board is responsible for running the schools and it does that by hiring the best teachers it can find, the support staff to support them and the administration who has the expertise in administering the education and running the day-to-day work of the school, as well as the superintendent who has the educational knowledge and the obligation under state law to report to the state all of the happenings that are happening in the SU and the school districts. Mr. Fromberger noted that the board does not investigate complaints, they have a staff that does that and presents facts to them.

Ms. Powden noted that if the community member doesn't feel comfortable approaching her with an issue, she would recommend bringing an advocate that would make them feel comfortable approaching her. Mr. Fromberger suggested that if the person doesn't feel comfortable doing that, they should request a meeting with the superintendent, the board chair and the board vice chair. That will give them comfort in not dealing only with the superintendent. Mr. Studin noted that this would be a bad precedent that would be being set. He suggested that the community member should follow the procedure, and if they don't like the response from the superintendent, then bring the concern to the board. He noted that if they skip the step of working with the superintendent, they aren't giving her the chance to perform in the way they think she should or the way that they are saying she is not. He suggested that if they are dissatisfied with the response, then they can bring the concern to the board.

Ms. Messina reported that there was an incident that was brought up the chain of command. She felt that this incident was a safety concern as well as being against the law, and her 8-year-old daughter could have been endangered. She noted that she and Ms. Beaupre have met and she has thanked Ms. Beaupre for the things she has done for her daughter in the past. She feels bad that there are some parents saying bad things on the comments, but felt that it was appropriate to bring up the details of the incident because it wasn't addressed and it was brought up the proper chain of command. Ms. Powden advised that Ms. Messina hasn't requested a meeting with her yet so it hasn't gone up the chain of command. She reported that Amy Davis did request and have a meeting with Ms. Powden, Mr. Parah, the bus driver and Ms. Beaupre. Ms. Powden reported that Ms. Davis asked her only if she had followed up on the incident and she responded that she had, but no meeting was requested.

Mr. Fromberger noted that the board currently has a motion and a second to table discussion of the contract until later on in this meeting. The motion carried with 2 votes in opposition.

**B. Policies, First Read (C09 and F33)**

Mr. Marin reported that policy C09 was considered briefly before and the issue was the language regarding the self-evaluation activities recommended by the superintendent. There were concerns about whether this was putting the correct relationship between the superintendent and the board. The committee modified the policy to read “self-evaluation activities in consultation with the superintendent”. The policy committee recommends adoption with the new modification.

Policy F33 is regarding student medication and it is important to have very clear methods of handling, storing and delivering the medication. The policy has been reviewed by the nursing staff. Mr. Marin noted that there was a concern with non-prescription medication and the potential concern that there have not been prior adverse reactions with that medication. The policy committee also recommends this policy for adoption.

The policies will be brought to the next meeting for adoption.

**C. Articles of Agreement-Typographical Error**

The board credited Shawn Cunningham for finding the error that was missed by the merger consultant, the attorney, the state board of education and the secretary of education. The mistake is on article 14. It states that the voting will be conducted by Australian ballot based on title 17 § 5513b. There is no chapter 5513b in the statute. The administration has consulted with the AOE and their recommendation is that it was the board’s place to correct the error, not theirs. They checked with the attorney and he agreed that making the correction will be the way to proceed.

Ms. Brown **moved** to change the articles of agreement such that it reflects the following change: The articles of agreement were approved by the electorate of the Green Mountain School District in 2017. In March 2019, we were informed of a typographical error in Article 14. The original approved articles specified that in the new district “The vote on the annual budget and public questions will be conducted by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 5513b.” There is no chapter 5513b. The intent of the wording was to simply read “pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 55. The typographical error is hereby corrected by vote of the Green Mountain Unified School board such that Article 14 is modified to read “The Unified District Board of Directors shall propose annual budgets in accordance with 16 V.S.A. § 11. The vote on the annual budget and public questions shall be conducted by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A § 55. The ballots shall be comingled.” Mr. Studin seconded. There was discussion about the difference between title 16 and title 17. Ms. Powden confirmed that this motion has been fact checked. The motion carried unanimously.

**D. Audit Meeting**

Ms. Powden reported that before the several districts transitioned to the two new districts the former boards were still operational through December 31, 2018. Their purpose was to receive and approve the audits, however the auditor did not get the audits to the business office in time. The audits will be presented to the GMUSD and LMHUUSD boards and the proposal is to meet on May 23, 2019 to review the audits and have each district board review the audit and presentation and approve the audits of the prior districts. The meeting would be at CTES and would be properly warned. Mr. McBride questioned why the auditor did not get the audits to the business office in time given that he was aware that the boards were dissolving. Ms. Powden noted that both she and Ms. Hammond asked that same question and they felt that the auditor may have been over extended. Ms. Hammond reported that the auditor also implemented a new

software that didn't work as well as they had planned. She noted that a year and a half ago, another auditor stopped performing audits and this auditor took on all those clients, which put them behind.

Mr. McBride questioned if the auditor was recently offered a new contract with TRSU. Ms. Hammond confirmed. She also reported that the contract has a November 15 deadline in it. There was discussion about there not being many companies that do school audits. When she went out to bid, she received only 2 bids and one of the companies had never done a Vermont state school system audit, and were more expensive as well. Ms. Hammond reported that she had a conversation with the auditor and he is aware that there isn't another chance if he misses the deadline again.

#### **E. Current Financials**

Ms. Hammond distributed the CAES water project summary. The insurance company has finished going through every item. She advised the board of the items that were and weren't covered, many of which they were aware of going into the project. There were \$278,167 in expenses and damages. The insurance company approved \$276,949 of that expense. Some of the items not covered were things like teacher supplies. There is a \$5000 deductible, so they will be receiving a check for about \$271,949. She anticipates receiving it in the next week and will apply for the state emergency aid.

Ms. Hammond clarified her numbers on the water project sheet, indicating that the numbers were right but the titles wrong. They had \$142,807 of expenses not covered by insurance, which when added to the \$5000 deductible and the \$1218 in denied claims means that they are responsible for \$149,028. They are planning on receiving \$33,000 from the state emergency aid, which leaves about \$116,000 to be covered by the general fund. There was discussion about the figures that were anticipated being about \$100,000-\$120,000. Therefore, there will need to be some money added to the next budget to make up for this deficit. Ms. Hammond is hoping for some savings in the current budget to make up for some of this.

Ms. Hammond reported on the current financials. She advised that she is concerned with the hot lunch program. The revenue is about half of what they had anticipated and they are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the year. There are some savings with the nursing position because of the change in staffing. They are over budget in the legal line item due to negotiations. There have been some savings in tuition because of the way that Springfield handles their tuition for Baltimore students. There was also some savings in the world language area because of the coordinator position not having been filled for this year. There is also some savings in health insurance since not everyone took the health insurance as anticipated.

There was discussion about the issues with the hot lunch being a repetitive problem. Ms. Hammond explained that this is a universal problem with any school and even outsourcing to a food service company carries with it an expense to the school. There was discussion about raising the price of hot lunch, but then it can become unaffordable to students. There was discussion about possibly partnering with other districts to get more buying power for food purchases. Ms. Hammond reported that Mr. Carroll belongs to a food co-op to help keep those costs low. She reported that the largest expense is personnel. Mr. Fromberger advised that when the first GMUSD budget was being created, the board had requested that the food service budget be deeply cut and Mr. Carroll was able to make some changes in personnel as well as food purchasing to save about \$25,000, but the program is still not self-sustaining and never has been. There was discussion about the revenue streams for the hot lunch budget, including student fees and federal funding program. Ms. Hammond reported that raising the price of the student lunches

affects only those students who are currently paying for lunch. Mr. Fromberger suggested establishing an ad hoc food service committee to investigate options for food service when they get into the last year of the support staff contract.

Mr. McBride questioned if there is a sense of the quality/quantity/value of the food served at GMUSD schools versus other schools. Ms. Powden reported that she felt that the food at the GMUSD schools is above par compared to other schools. There are a number of locally sourced and farm to school foods. Ms. Hammond reported that she is looking at the current budgets and purchasing for the year is essentially closed except for those things that they knew in advance had to be purchased at the end of the year.

#### **F. Ratify Support Staff Agreement**

Mr. Fromberger noted that he read the agreement and found some missing information or typographical errors. Under Article 4.1 indicates that the agreement can be revoked in writing between June and June 15. He questioned if that should be June 1 and June 15. Ms. Powden will follow up on that with a correction. He noted that on the bottom of page 12, it states “if ceases to be a district employee,” but doesn’t clarify if *whom* ceases to be a district employee. Ms. Powden indicated that this should state “if the employee ceases to be a district employee” and will follow up with that correction.

Mr. McBride questioned if there is a problem with holding off on the approval until the next meeting since it was delivered to the board so late. Ms. Hammond noted that it does cause issues because this contract will result in retroactive pay for the employees and she receives calls weekly from employees looking for that retroactive pay. There is also an issue with dealing with this new contract during the month of June because that is a very busy time for the business office. Mr. McBride felt that this board suffers from often receiving information close to the meeting dates and still being expected to approve it without having had a reasonable amount of time to review the documents they are expected to approve. Mr. Studin echoed Mr. McBride’s comments. Ms. Hammond noted that they have been working on the contract for close to a year and the contract was technically complete in December but they have been waiting for the attorney and the union to finalize everything. Mr. McBride suggested that they wait until the May 16 meeting to ratify the agreement. Ms. Lamphere agreed with that suggestion. There was discussion about holding a special meeting for the sole purpose of approving the contract. Mr. Fromberger will work with the business office about whether a special meeting will be needed or if they can wait until the May 16 meeting.

#### **G. Resignation of Board Member**

Mr. Fromberger read aloud the letter from Kathy Muther resigning from the GMUSD board. He noted that the legislature gives the power to replace the board member to this board, rather than to the Select board of Baltimore. However, they do need to consult with the Select board for their input. He requested that Ms. Powden publicize the vacancy and ask people from Baltimore to apply for the position. Mr. Wheelock reported that Ms. Muther has already given that notice to the Select board in Baltimore, and he has already made them aware that he is interested in the seat. Mr. Fromberger noted that the state statute indicates that they have to find a replacement within 30 days of notification, but he isn’t sure that will be possible with the advertisement and coordinating a recommendation from the Select board.

### **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mr. Fromberger outlined the logistics of the public comments. He advised that this board has not adopted a time limitation for public comments, but he suggested that common practice indicates that a single person speak on a single topic for no more than 5 minutes, and the entire comment period for

everyone will be 15-20 minutes. Mr. Studin also suggested that if the comment should be directed to the superintendent prior to bringing it to the board that the community members proceed with that process. He felt that the board has already discussed how it will deal with the issues surrounding the petition. Mr. Fromberger reported that the board will hear public comments on any topic except those that have already been addressed and that need to be properly addressed to the superintendent.

Mr. Cunningham advised that statute doesn't support that decision and the board can't regulate public comment. Mr. Fromberger advised that he is asking people to be mindful of what they say and how it can affect other people and to be courteous and respectful. Ms. Lamphere suggested that the community members should police their own comments and if their comments are more appropriately given to the superintendent, then the board would appreciate it. Mr. Studin suggested that if the public really wants their issue addressed, they should bring the issue to the superintendent rather than just publicly complain about the issue in a meeting, because the board will be limited in its responses to the public comments. He felt that if they really wanted a solution to their concerns, they should follow the proper procedure that the board has already outlined.

Sherry McCabe noted that there is a concern with para-educators and pay increases. She noted that there was a report of contracts being offered with pay increases, but para-educators at CTES were being cut or let go because they weren't being offered health care since there was no budget for it. She felt that para-educators are essential to every classroom because of special needs, IEP's, and 504 plans. She questioned why there were para-educators let go because there wasn't the budget for it, yet the Chester Telegraph reported on a significant increase in pay for the superintendent. Mr. Fromberger noted that the board will listen to the concerns of the public.

Nan Nanfeldt of Chester spoke of bus safety. She reported that she doesn't know Ms. Beaupre or any of the details of the incident or any of the families involved in the controversy. She felt that as a school principal for 31 years, she felt that she knew something about children, school buses, and principal's responsibilities for school bus riding safety. When a parent or concerned citizen or bus driver or a student notices unsafe bus riding, and they bring it to the attention of the principal, it is the principal's job to take action. Sometimes it involves stopping behind a school bus or getting on the school bus or even riding on the school bus. When the principal is proactive about these things and sends a message about bus safety, it ensures the community that the principal is paying attention and that the principal is being proactive about ensuring and promoting safe bus riding.

Stacy Babbidge, a parent of a CTES 4<sup>th</sup> grader, reported that her mother was hit by a car at the age of 3 and her other siblings don't speak of that day and her mom has memory problems as a result. She is also the niece of a man who accidentally killed a woman with his snow plow. She reported that she has done research on traffic laws and it is legal to pass on a double yellow line. It is also legal to pass a school bus. She is looking to change that law, but felt that no one should pass on a double yellow line or pass a school bus. She was concerned with what would have happened to the children on the bus if there had been another child in the road way that was unintentionally hit.

Michelle Messina noted that her daughter waits at the bus stop where the incident happened. She has to cross the road in front of the bus. She advised that what happened was that Ms. Beaupre passed the bus and stopped in front of it to get on the bus. She felt that if her daughter had been out for the bus that day, she could have been injured or killed because she trusts that when the bus is stopped and the lights are flashing that it is safe to cross.

Justin Osher questioned where the chain of command is posted. Mr. Fromberger noted that there are procedures in place and some of it is outlined in state statute. He felt that the board and administration can make sure that it is well-known what the chain of command and proper procedure

is structured so that there is accountability throughout the system. He asked the staff to publicize that and make sure that it is well-known.

Lori Wright, the parent of a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, advised that her daughter has severe epilepsy and can have up to 20 seizures a day. She noted that Ms. Beaupre has welcomed her in her office while she's having a seizure so she can be safe. She felt that she doesn't let other peoples' rumors cloud her judgement. She also felt that as a community it is easy to pull out "pitchforks and torches and crucify someone". However, she felt that it is important to look at our own interactions with other human beings and realize that they are also human.

Dan Tyrrell suggested that given that they are postponing the vote on the support staff agreement, it would be wise to postpone the vote on the CTES principal's contract to allow Ms. Powden time to investigate this complaint and allow people to follow the proper procedure. He noted that the chain of command in the military is dictated by the UCMJ—uniformed code of military justice—regulations that apply to the military but not to regular citizens. He felt that the chain of command is a great organizational model, as is the open-door policy, but there are blurred lines. His wife, for example, is a parent, a tax payer and an employee. He noted that she doesn't have a "gag order" per se, but does feel uncomfortable speaking in a public forum when it relates to her job or her child. There is a certain freedom of speech that every American can exercise. His feeling is that if anyone, even a teach, wants to approach a board member, that it's ok. He also noted that there are challenges with evaluations prior to approving a contract, particularly in regards to approving the superintendent's contract. He suggested that the three GMUSD reps who serve on the TRSU board should be representing this board's feelings and felt that they should share with the other board members their vote on the superintendent's contract. He felt that they are looking at approving a contract for someone in their first year who doesn't have an evaluation when just last year, it was proposed that Ms. Fogg be the principal of both schools and there be a dean of students to cover both schools. He questioned if there was a change in the teachers contract that is reflective of the changes discussed. He suggested bringing in the teachers' union rep to executive session to discuss that.

Cheryl Bastrum, a parent of 2 students, one at CTES and one at LES, noted that there is a community that fought long and hard to make sure that there is a principal at CTES, not just a principal and dean of students shared between 2 schools. She advised that the principal is stepping into a position that was held for over 30 years. Anyone stepping into a position held by someone for 30 years will have a transition period and she felt that for the principal to be judged on someone else's performance or history is unfair. She noted that her child that attends LES does so because of a long history of suffering from bullying, much of which happened on the school bus. She hasn't spoken publicly about this issue, rather they quietly transferred their student to Ludlow with a waiver from the superintendent, and she is thriving at the new school. She felt that Ms. Beaupre was supportive in this transition and wanted to know what she could do to help this student as well as others. She felt that things have changed in that classroom as a result. She felt that Ms. Beaupre is instrumental in that change.

A community member spoke about the language the board used toward the public about limiting their public comments and felt that it was insulting to the community members who took the time to come out and speak about their concerns. Justin Osher spoke about the directive to not speak about the incident unless it was kept in a civil manner. He understands that this can be a heated matter and he felt that they have heard adequately from one side of the story, but not the other due to the actions of the board.

Denise Hughes, a parent of a CTES student and of a CTES staff member. She echoed Cheryl's comments that the community worked very hard to hire Ms. Beaupre. They went through two rounds

of a selection process. She noted that Ms. Beaupre was aware that this transition would be difficult for the community and she would do what she could to ease that transition. She felt that Ms. Beaupre has been a breath of fresh air since the first day, and advised the students that she wanted the school and the staff and the families to be a family. She advised that her child also suffered from bullying and Ms. Beaupre addressed it and it was the first time in a number of years that her child felt safe coming to school. She felt that in her experience with Ms. Beaupre, she hasn't made mistakes, however it is important to realize that she is human. She encouraged the board to vote on the contract tonight. She suggested to the community members present that if they want change, they need to show up, volunteer at the school and be part of the change, not just complain on social media. She has been part of several projects at the school that she couldn't have been part of without Ms. Beaupre's support. She reported that she has a full-time job and 4 kids at home and she still makes a point to be part of the school, part of the change and part of the growth of the school.

Mr. Fromberger noted that he was impressed with the astuteness, respectfulness and civility with which people have expressed their concerns. He felt that the arguments being made on both sides are respectful and to the point and he felt that the board is fortunate to have that kind of community input. He thanked the community members for taking the time to visit and speak to the board.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS (continued):**

### **H. CTES Principal Contract Recommendation (continued):**

Mr. Marin **moved** to take from the table the previous motion regarding the CTES Principal's contract Ms. Brown seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Studin noted that his characterization of what some of the comments might have been was more hoping that they would be respectful. He is supportive of Ms. Beaupre and is also supportive of the public's right to voice their opinion. He is not making the judgement about whether their comments either for or against Ms. Beaupre are right or wrong, but rather just hoping that the public comments section would be respectful and productive. Ms. Lamphere echoed those thoughts noting that she was concerned with the tone that she heard and saw that they might be exposing their employee to harm in a public meeting. She is thrilled with how everyone conducted themselves and she wanted the values that she knows are true of this community to be expressed, and not the values that she saw on social media. Ms. Brown reiterated that if the community members feel that there are issues that need resolving they need to bring them to the superintendent and then if they still feel they aren't being resolved, then they can address them to the board. Mr. McBride asked what the next steps would be for the public and if they can go to Ms. Powden. Ms. Powden suggested that she would like to have a conversation with Ms. Beaupre regarding the comments. Mr. Fromberger noted that if the community feels that their voices aren't being heard by just the superintendent, individuals can meet with the superintendent and the board chair and vice chair. There was discussion about the issue getting resolved shortly after this meeting.

Mr. Fromberger reminded the board of the motion: to accept Ms. Powden's recommendation to approve a one-year contract for Ms. Beaupre as the CTES Principal with a 2.75% salary increase. The motion carried without opposition. The audience gave a round of applause.

## **X. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

### **A. Student Academic Records or Suspension or Discipline of Students Title 1 V.S.A. § 313 (7)**

After specific finding that discussion of the matter in public session would put the public body or an individual at a disadvantage, Ms. Brown **moved** to enter executive session at 9:05 p.m. to discuss student academic records or suspension or discipline of students, inviting Ms. Powden and Ms. Beaupre. Mr. Cunningham questioned if this executive session has to do with specific students or with a policy. Ms. Powden noted that she wasn't going to speak regarding students. Mr. Cunningham noted that if this is in regards to a policy that is not exempt to the executive

session rule, but if it is in regards to Ms. Beaupre's discipline or evaluation that is a different exemption. Ms. Powden explained that the topic is specifically cited on the agenda. Mr. Cunningham noted that if the discussion becomes a policy discussion, that is not allowed. Ms. Powden advised that she was aware of that. Ms. Perlah seconded Ms. Brown's motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at 9:42 p.m. No action was taken.

**XI. 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 may be a special meeting TBD prior to the May 16, 2019 meeting.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Brown **moved** to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. Mr. Studin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary