

# Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District

## Regular Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2018  
LES-Band Room  
7:00 p.m.

### I. CALL TO ORDER:

**Board:** Paul Orzechowski, Dan Buckley, Mary Alberty, Brigid Faenza, Katie Hollebeek, Mariel Meringolo

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Karen Trimboli, Melissa Ryan, Craig Hutt Vater, Patty Rumrill, Trish Rafter,

**Public:** Lisa Schmidt, Angi Benson-Ciufo, Pam O’Neil, Tara Lichtensteiger, Chris Perrino, Sebastian Frank, Jessica Russ, Linda Roberts

Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 7:08. He invited the board members to introduce themselves.

### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Meringolo **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of discussion of a mindfulness/yoga class under new business. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

#### A. May 9, 2018

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2018 meeting. Ms. Faenza seconded. Ms. Hollebeek noted that she should be added to the roll call. The motion to approve the minutes carried unanimously.

#### B. May 16, 2018 B&G Committee

The board reviewed the minutes of the B&G committee.

### IV. COMMUNICATIONS:

#### A. Public Comment

Mr. Frank questioned the approval of the loan for the gym floor and asked the board to think about capital improvements for the gym is the best way to spend public funds.

#### B. Board Comment

Mr. Orzechowski read aloud a letter from concerned LES parents praising Rachel Karner and noting their frustration with the board’s decision to let her go at the end of this school year. They asked the board to reconsider their decision and make creative changes.

Mr. Orzechowski read aloud a letter from Shawn and Alex Racicot thanking the board for considering their request about the limited school transfer. They were disappointed with the decision but they appreciate that the board considered both sides of the argument. They urged the board to close the school at the end of 2019 or allow students to leave if they choose to. The board would like to think about this letter and discuss it at the August meeting. There was a clarification that they would have a discussion about the request of the parent letter. Ms. O’Neil questioned why they would begin that discussion because of a parent letter. Mr. Buckley noted

that the articles of agreement indicate that the school will close no later than June 2020 but allows the board to close sooner if there was a mass exodus of students and teachers. He noted that he felt that if they had planned to close early they wouldn't have voted in favor of the merger. Ms. O'Neil noted that it sounds like the board is opening this discussion based on the letter. Mr. Buckley noted that he felt that the board needs to make a firm statement.

Ms. Meringolo noted that she felt that this decision shouldn't be a knee jerk reaction to a parent letter. She acknowledged that this board would have to think about this decision at some point. She requested that between now and August it would be helpful to gather more data and input about the issue. Mr. Buckley noted that the students and the teachers are the most impacted.

Ms. Alberty suggested that some of the brainstorming led to developing a committee of community members and board members to discuss what they would like moving forward. Ms. Trimboli noted that they should review the data, including enrollment (which is very stable) and teachers (they've only lost one who will be replaced). Ms. Rafter noted that there are also parents whose parents are not capable of sending their students to other schools and are happy to have this school still open. Ms. Harrison noted that they need to give the decision the respect it deserves, but it would be good to go into the first day of the school year with a decision about whether the school will remain open for the following year, or if it will be their last first day of school. Ms. Meringolo suggested holding a meeting in July to discuss and then having a decision in August. Mr. Orzechowski also felt that the school should remain open until 2020.

Ms. Alberty also noted that they need to consider BRA and their ability to become operational. Ms. Rafter noted that BRA is private and therefore it is not necessarily an option for all students—there will be an application process. Ms. Lichtensteiger noted that the way they applied for independent school status at the state level, the Ludlow and Mt. Holly students wouldn't be denied access to the school. The regular meeting will be held on July 11 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss this topic and the food service contract with the only action to be taken on the food service contract.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Adopt Policies**

Ms. Powden reported that these are the policies the board received last month. The policy committee and Ms. Waite have worked long and hard on these policies. Ms. Hollebeek requested to add a comma on page 30—employee harassment—between gender identity and age.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve policies A i-xv (B3, D6, D8, D11, D12, D13, E8, F5, F7, F9-LMH, F9-TRSU, F9-Tech, F19, F21, F23). Ms. Faenza seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**VI. PROJECT UPDATES:**

**A. Mt. Holly Paving**

Ms. Hammond reported that the paving job was bid at \$32,000 by Fuller Sand and Gravel, and Springfield Paving bid at \$32,408. There was discussion about the content of the bids. Ms. Hammond noted that the Springfield Paving bid includes approximately 8 tons of paving more than Fuller. The Fuller bid also allows for a 2% fluctuation in price and doesn't include top soil and shoulder care. Mr. Buckley noted that Springfield Paving paved his difficult driveway and they did a good job. There was discussion about the budgeted amount of \$15,000 versus the bid amounts. They also discussed having the job complete by the time school starts again in the fall. There was discussion about Fuller being in the town, but not giving the school the benefit of that.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the Springfield Paving bid for \$32,408 as presented. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

##### A. Line of Credit—Tax Anticipation

Ms. Hammond noted that she contacted 3 banks seeking a line of credit for the GMUSD for \$750,000. She contacted Peoples and Citizens and neither wanted to bid. Community Bank offered the bid for 1.95% interest. The purpose of this loan is to carry over until taxes are received. Ms. Meringolo **moved** to approve the line of credit application as presented. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

##### B. Hot Lunch Prices

Ms. Hammond noted that the hot lunch prices are calculated by the usage and based on the reimbursement. They are effectively directed by the state at the price to set for hot lunches. Currently they are at \$2.90 going to \$3.00. Breakfast would go to \$1.75 from \$1.60. She noted that the adult lunch prices would increase from \$3.60 to \$4.00, but the adult breakfast would stay the same at \$2.00. There was discussion about how this figures into the hot lunch contract. Ms. Hammond explained that the upcoming hot lunch bid will be on a per-plate basis. She also noted that she put this information into the bid in anticipation of its approval so the bid will be accurate if these changes are approved.

Mr. Buckley **moved** to raise the student lunch price from \$2.90 to \$3.00, the breakfast from \$1.60 to \$1.75, and adult lunches from \$3.60 to \$4.00 for the upcoming school year. Ms. Faenza seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

##### C. Gym Floor

Ms. Hammond reported that she sought bids for a loan for the gym floor from 3 banks and only Community bank submitted a bid. The loan is for \$133,000 at an interest rate of 2.95% and is anticipated to be paid off by July 3, 2023.

Ms. Meringolo noted that they aren't talking about an improvement to a space that won't be used. It will continue to be used by LES. Mr. Buckley noted that because there weren't basketball games this year, they have acknowledged that there is a safety issue and if someone gets hurt there will be a liability issue.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the loan for the gym floor as presented. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

##### D. Approval of Window Replacement Plan

Ms. Hammond solicited 3 bids and received one from Claremont Glass. They budgeted \$22,000 and the bid came in at \$20,220 for the replacement. There was discussion about the window replacement on the bottom level. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the window bid as presented. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

##### E. VT Municipal Retirement Plan Options

Ms. Hammond reported that this was discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Buckley noted that everyone who is in the municipal retirement is currently in Plan A. If the board selected Plan B, all new people would have to go with Plan B, but current employees have the choice to stay in Plan A. Ms. Hammond reported that if everyone switched to Plan B it would cost the district about \$11,820 more.

Mr. Buckley **moved** to adopt Plan B going forward. Ms. Alberty seconded. Ms. Hollebeek acknowledged the split decision at the last meeting. She questioned if there was feedback from the staff about their preference. Ms. Hammond explained that there will be a calculation in the retirement benefits if someone switches between plans. The motion carried without opposition.

F. Heating Oil Bid

Last year they paid \$1.98 per gallon and this year it came in at \$2.73. Ms. Hammond reported that she solicited bids from 11 companies and only 1 submitted a bid. She isn't sure if companies just don't want to commit to a per gallon price. She noted that there is a "rate over rack" but that is not how they have committed in the past. There was discussion about the market rates. There was discussion about the Town bid. Ms. Hammond noted that when the TRSU merged they stopped being part of the town bid. She noted that the good side of the bid being together is economy of scale, however because GMUSD declined the bid, the bid is no longer valid, unless the company will honor the rate for the 3 schools in the LMHUUSD, which would be 35,000 gallons. She noted that one of the vendors would give them a bid if they chose to do rate over rack. She noted that they haven't done that in years, therefore she isn't sure what the range would be. She noted that Cota & Cota came in a \$2.99 for her residential group. But they didn't submit a bid. She will submit an RFP at the end of August for a decision in September. Ms. Meringolo suggested that there is a risk to the company of buying a larger amount at a fixed rate, so they might get a better rate with a lower gallon amount. There was discussion about resubmitting a bid for 35,000 gallons. Ms. Hammond can ask if they will honor the price for 35,000 gallons. She will look into the rate over rack and report back at the next meeting. She put out the bid for 92,000 gallons which would cover all 6 schools. The board will discuss this at the next meeting. The board consensus was to put out a separate bid at the end of August.

G. Black River Building Brainstorming

i. Building Contents

Ms. Powden noted that there was discussion about whether LMHUUSD can lease out the building. She sought legal counsel about whether it was possible for that to happen. Mr. Leopold submitted a legal opinion and she distributed it to the board for their review. She noted that the lens that the board has to use is to determine if the lease would be beneficial to the district. Ms. Powden reported that Mr. Leopold contacted Mr. French about his saying that the property could be leased to various organizations. Mr. French noted that he wouldn't have given that impression.

Ms. Meringolo noted that anything that was done with that building would be called into question if there is a legal challenge and if they can make the argument that the building is necessary to the operation of the district. She noted that having the SU offices there would be valid, or if they needed to use some of the building for educational programming, they could still make the argument. There was discussion about the cost factor and whether there would be a benefit to the LMH board to continuing to use the building. The board discussed the need to earn more money from the lease than it costs to maintain the building. There was discussion about the cost to maintain that building being around \$350,000. Ms. Ryan also noted that the board should consider the safety of the students and they are safer when they are in their own building that doesn't have public access.

Ms. Trimboli noted that they need to consider the need for storage of the building contents. They will need to have controlled storage of the technology. The custodians and the technology team are putting that list together. The staff has been working on purging old, obsolete items as well. There are some things that they will want to share

between LES and MHS and bring to BR Museum or stored for historical reasons. Ms. O’Neil noted that when the new banners were made, they saved the old banners, so there are a number of items that the select board and other entities would help support keeping. There was discussion about much of the memorabilia to remain in the town and within the public school system. Ms. Powden suggested having some things put at the state historical museum. Ms. Powden will research the maintenance costs for the August meeting.

ii. Property Subdivision

The administration is looking into splitting the utilities up between the two buildings instead of keeping them separate as they move toward closing the school building. Ms. Meringolo suggested that they may need a new waste water permit. Ms. Powden distributed information on the property subdivision. She spoke with Tammy Heffernon about the subdivision. They would need action by the board to hire her to research the subdivision. This would be an initial cost of \$1750, which includes a retainer and filing fees. Ms. Heffernon has experience with subdivisions, but there was discussion about whether she has experience with that in Ludlow. The engagement letter also mentions working with the board’s retained engineering expert, but the board doesn’t currently have one. There was discussion about whether there has been a conversation with the town (Rose Goings—the town zoning administrator) about whether the lot is even sub-  
dividable. Mr. Orzechowski will check with the town. There was discussion about there possibly being an Act 250 trigger. The board consensus was to thank her for her offer and let her know they will be in touch after some research.

iii. Timeline

The board consensus was that they can’t make a timeline until they have a bit more information—they will need to meet with the select boards and the zoning administrator, in addition to meeting with BRIS and gathering data about the utilities and the teacher and student counts before they can begin to develop a timeline. There was discussion about splitting the electric, the phones and the fiber connection for the internet. There was discussion about the age of the furnace in each building.

H. Policies

The policies were in the board packet for their review. They will discuss and potentially adopt at the next meeting.

I. Yoga/Mindfulness Program

Tara Lichtensteiger spoke about being a parent at the MS and HS. She is also a yoga and mindfulness instructor. She has spoken with some parents and they would like her to start a yoga and mindfulness program at the elementary school. She has been practicing for 20 years, but for the last 7 years she has been focused on bringing these skills to children. She has had training in instructing children (K-HS) with trauma. The program will help students with attention and focus and wellness. The program is fully accessible and secular. Ms. Trimboli noted that there is the possibility of having the program funded by a grant. She noted that it is great to include the staff and if it becomes a regular practice, they will likely see a difference. The research is evidence based and will give the children the tools to self-regulate. There was discussion about whether this program would be a weekly program or if it would be a 12 week program. She has done similar programs at MHS, BRHS and OMS. She noted that the longer the program the deeper the students can go. She will present this information to the LMH board for action.

Mr. Hutt Vater noted that she led this program at MHS and it had a tremendous impact on the students. Ms. Meringolo noted that she has also done this work at OMS with great results. Ms. Trimboli reported that she has applied for a grant because she feels that there would be great value in piloting this program and perhaps budget in the future. Ms. Trimboli would like this program available to every student, but that will depend on the grant funding. Ms. Schmidt questioned if any of the GM schools have this sort of program and suggested that this could be part of the innovations committee. She also noted that because some of her training is in trauma informed practice, there could be grants available. Ms. Powden noted that the SU has received grants for trauma informed instruction. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that at MHS the class was weekly and this also helped the teachers to be able to incorporate it into their daily work with the students. Ms. Lichtensteiger noted that it strengthens the program to have teachers participate. Ms. Harrison noted that it would also benefit the older students and the staff at the high school to assist with getting through the next couple years. There was discussion about the closing of the school being a traumatic event and the trauma informed practice will be helpful. Ms. Trimboli is just waiting for the grant.

Mr. Orzechowski will add the consideration to add BRHS to this program on the August agenda.

**IX. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:**

The school is still looking for a number of teachers—a half time Spanish teacher, a music teacher and a number of other positions, but they don't yet have recommendations for the board. There was discussion about the decision to make the foreign language position a Spanish teacher. There are 2 students looking to take French and a few higher level French students, but those might be able to be done with virtual learning.

**X. COMMUNICATIONS:**

A. Public Comment

Ms. Schmidt noted that she mentioned at a prior meeting that the SU needs a VSBA rep. Ms. Powden noted that she contacted the VSBA and they advised that the representative is from Windsor. There was discussion about how the rep from Windsor is elected. She noted that they are a powerful group that is looking to push through resolutions so this board needs a voice. She noted that with merged SU's there was only one vote, but there are 2 districts. She was advised at that time there was one vote per SU and there was concern about how that vote is determined. She felt that someone should be participating and reporting back to the board.

Ms. Harrison questioned if BRHS will be getting copies of agendas and minutes for the meetings on the school websites. Ms. Powden noted that Ms. Baker is developing the new web pages for the new districts.

Ms. Lichtensteiger questioned what the board might be doing regarding the art teacher letter. Ms. Powden noted that this is a personnel matter and would need to be discussed in executive session. There was discussion about the identity of the parents who signed that letter.

B. Board Comment

Ms. Hollebeek questioned if there is any onus on the board to develop a logo for the gym floor. The floor will take approximately 6 weeks to complete. Ms. Trimboli noted that the center will say BR and there will be Presidents on the end lines, and the court will be named for Sue Pollender. The lines on the court will be for basketball and volleyball.

Mr. Orzechowski asked for volunteers for the Innovations in Learning committee. Mr. Buckley described what the committee used to do, and gave some examples of some of the work. He noted that the committee worked on coming up with innovative ideas. This committee also guided the grant writer in seeking grants that would help all the schools. The committee also collected unique practices from each school to see if they could benefit other schools. There was a lot of student involvement. The principals support the idea. There was discussion about the representation of the former committee. It was noted that the GMUSD vision committee would like to join forces to encourage innovative ideas, while preserving the uniqueness of each of the schools.

Ms. Meringolo, Ms. Hollebeek, and Mr. Orzechowski will assist with this. Ms. Trimboli noted that there are 2 LES students who have been awarded a trip to Boston to participate in a STEM program. The board will discuss the personnel issue from the letter to the July 11 meeting.

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION (1 VSA § 313)**

**A. Non-Bargaining Support Staff Negotiations (a)(1)(A)**

After making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body involved at a substantial disadvantage, Ms. Alberty **moved** to enter executive session at 9:04 p.m. to discuss non-bargaining support staff negotiations inviting Ms. Powden, Ms. Hammond and Mr. Hutt Vater. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at 9:33 p.m. Ms. Alberty **moved** to give the non-bargaining staff a salary increase of 2.5% and to give Ms. Collins a salary of \$27,918 for the 2018-2019 school year. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**VII. NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA:**

The next meeting will be on July 11 at MHS.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary