

Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2018
Black River High School, Library
6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Board: Paul Orzechowski, Katie Hollebeek, Mariel Meringolo, Dan Buckley, Chris Garvey, Kelly Tarbell

Staff: John Davis, Cheryl Hammond, Karen Trimboli, Melissa Ryan, Meg Powden, Craig Hutt Vater, Deb Harrison

Student Rep:

Public: Jim Heald, Marissa Selleck, Lisa Schmidt

Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Hollebeek **moved** to approve the agenda with the correction to the Minutes section (should be November 14 regular, November 29 special), and the addition of Teacher request in place of recommendation for hire and the addition of negotiations update under executive session. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. November 14, 2018

Ms. Hollebeek **moved** to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2018 meeting noting a small correction under board comments. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. November 29, 2018

Mr. Garvey **moved** to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2018 meeting. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. COMMENTS:

A. Board Comments

None.

B. Student Rep

The reps are at basketball practice.

C. Public Comments

Mr. Heald, a Mt. Holly resident, noted that Ms. Perry is retiring this year after 53 years of driving bus for Mt. Holly and he hoped that Ms. Perry will be recognized. He noted that she has been doing an admirable job driving the bus. Mr. Hutt Vater echoed his sentiments. There was discussion about what they could do to recognize that achievement and the board will discuss further in executive session.

V. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

A. Superintendent's Report

Ms. Powden reported on the continuous improvement plan process. Last year she distributed the education quality standards. She reminded the board of some of the work that they have done over the past year regarding language arts and math. They have been focused on closing the achievement gap between the FRL students and the non-FRL students. They have had a training with the AOE that the administrators and teacher leaders participated. She noted that each school has their own plan that is aligned to the SU goal. She explained the process that they will follow to achieve this goal. She compared the work to the action planning of the past, but noted that this plan is more fine-tuned and will be revised and adapted as it is implemented. Ms. Trimboli reported that she attended the training twice and the AOE emphasized that they need to focus on small changes first to see if it is successful, then assess the data and make changes if necessary or implement with more students if it is appearing successful. She noted that this process is very data driven and results-oriented. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they had given real examples from other SU's. Ms. Powden noted that the successful goal can generate its own momentum.

Ms. Powden reported that at 1045 last night, the teacher negotiations were settled. She reported that they held a transparent process with small group negotiations. She will be bringing the contract to the board for their review and approval next month. First it must go through the attorney. She noted that she was very impressed with the teachers that served on the committee. They did a good job advocating for themselves and their colleagues.

Ms. Powden noted that she has heard back from Pietro, the attorney consulted for the second opinion about the disposition of the building. He strongly recommended against becoming a landlord, however as a board, they can keep the building and lease it. The question would need to go to the electorate. She reported on the specific language that must be presented to the electorate.

Ms. Trimboli reported that in the high school, Fern Melville, will be retiring. She has been a para-educators for over 20 years. She will be missed. There are two para-educators who were hired recently who will not be returning after the break (one got a teaching position and the other is going back to school). Ms. Trimboli reported that Monday evening, the gym was dedicated to Sue Pollender, and the gym was filled. She noted that last night was the high school winter concert. Ms. Trimboli recognized the band, chorus and their instructor. She noted that there were 8 students who had never played before. Ms. Trimboli reported that the basketball season began this week. She also reported that the teachers are reporting that they are seeing an increase in the kindness from the students in regards to the upcoming change in BRHS's status. Ms. Trimboli reported on the reassessment days and many students working hard to score well on the summative assessments, in fact asking for more formative assessments to do so. She has held one Act 1 training so far to begin preparations for winter sports. The LES holiday concert will be held on 12/17. Ms. Trimboli reported on the students who are reading to animals at the Springfield Humane Society.

Ms. Trimboli reported that on May 2, they will be holding a High School Fair, inviting area high schools to come to this school to share what their school has to offer Ludlow and Mt. Holly students, including academics, athletics, extra-curricular and transportation. She also reported that they have produced a flier on school choice, including details about deadlines and the lottery. There was discussion about the lottery number. Ms. Trimboli also noted that Okemo will be running a ski program this year, but it will begin later this year and run 8 weeks. The cost factor increased substantially. It used to be \$10 to use the mountain and is now \$35. The ski rental used to be \$48 and was cut in half for FRL students, but this year it is now \$65 and there is no FRL reduction. She reported on the skate rental increase. Ms. Trimboli reported that the high school

faculty has discussed what this impact will be to many families. Ms. Trimboli reported that French Night is next Thursday night at 6pm.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that the MHS PTSA voted to cover the \$35 usage fee for the students. They will re-double their efforts on the rental scholarships. In order to do so, they will need to increase their fundraising efforts. He echoed Mr. Heald's sentiments about Ms. Perry. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they are currently conducting a search for new bus driver applicants. The position requires a CDL and school bus endorsement. Mr. Hutt Vater will be holding an early January Act 1 training. The date will be set shortly after the winter break. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that the 5/6 team has been experimenting on Flash Projects for students who have been meeting their proficiencies, they can develop a proposal and complete a project in areas that they are passionate about. Mr. Hutt Vater also noted that he hoped the board members who are up for re-election would run again.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Sub-Dividing LES property

Ms. Hammond reported that she has spoken to some people interested in bidding on the sub-division work, but they haven't submitted bids yet. The deadline is in January. The board can discuss it further next meeting. The board discussed that their options are selling to the town or leasing the building. It was noted that the property should be subdivided in either course.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Teacher Request

Mr. Orzechowski read aloud the letter from Laurie Edson requesting a .4 fte leave in order to cover the math coaching position. She is requesting the benefits and maintenance of her seniority. Ms. Powden noted that this is an annual request that Ms. Edson has made each year that they have had the math coach position. Ms. Schmidt noted that they had approved this in the past, but there was discussion about the amount of the position that needed to be funded out of the local budget. There was discussion about the fte coverage for the Title teachers last year when the grant was reduced. The board discussed Ms. Edson being able to help with the math coaching while having the security of knowing that she could return as a full time teacher. Ms. Tarbell noted that if Ms. Edson were to have requested a leave of absence to go elsewhere it would have had a time limit, and this leave the low person in seniority with some unknowns. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that this is basically an incentive to help and if she were to return to the classroom, another internal employee would likely request the same protections. The administrators all recommended approving this request.

Ms. Meringolo **moved** to approve the request as read and allow Ms. Edson to maintain her seniority while working a .6 fte position at LES and .4 fte for TRSU as a math coach. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Sweethearts and Heroes Anti-Bullying Program

Mr. Orzechowski shared information on the anti-bullying program that Benson's Chevrolet will sponsor with \$5000. He shared a video on the program. He noted that this program can be customized for the age group. The program teaches children skills so that those who observe bullying to jump into action and help the person being bullied. Ms. Trimboli will work with Mr. Hutt Vater to see if this program can be coordinated and implemented into these schools. The board and administration thanked the Benson's for this offer. The program would have to be held on January 22-24 since that is when the team is in Vermont.

C. Current Financials

The current financials are in the board packet. This is the summary and the full detail will be presented in January. Ms. Hammond noted that the major overages will bill in the parking lot and the gym which the board was aware of as they entered the current budget year.

D. Act 46 Transition Funds

Mr. Orzechowski reported that the board has approximately \$50,000 in transition funds to spend and it must be spent by June 30. There was discussion about the intent of the spending of these funds, but it is not in any statute how these funds must be spent. Ms. Trimboli requested that \$10,000 of those funds be earmarked to BRHS to assist in transitioning students and faculty to the next phase, including high school fairs and career coaches. She would like to do some wellness activities for both students and staff.

E. Budget Development

Ms. Hammond noted that the budget draft summary is in the board packet. She distributed a summary of things that have changed since the last draft. The changes include .75 fte Guidance position, the addition of athletic supplies, the removal of Town Revenue, LES library books, capital reserve fund, para-educator needed for a MHS student, the district substitute and the changes in assessment from the last draft. She noted that the threshold is \$18,311. The yield is \$10,366. This is where the tax rate is gathered. They do not yet have the equalized pupil numbers yet. She hopes to have them in the near future. She is using last year's numbers as place holders currently. She noted that after this budget, BRHS will have 6 years left to pay on their bond and MHS will have 2.

Ms. Hammond noted that she was tasked with determining the cost of maintaining this building as a landlord. They have discussed this with the fire Marshall. She noted that his feeling was that if the SU moved in, it would be considered a change of use and they would have to bring the building up to code. She noted that if they kept the building open, it would cost about \$98,000. She noted that the other impact of the building closing is on the LES budget since currently some expenses are split. She discussed the reduction of one custodian, the reduction in trash removal, fuel, electric and other expenses. She noted that if they keep the building open, they would only realize a savings of about \$88,000 due to the cost of maintaining the building and the impact on the LES budget. However if they do not have the building, the potential savings would be about \$187,000. Ms. Hollebeek questioned if the town owned the building and they had to pay for maintenance of the building, would the tax impact be spread over more tax payers. It will since it is a town expense, not a school expense. Ms. Hammond distributed information about the fund balance, including taking some of the fund balance to put it into escrow in order to pay off the bonds. This would be the best way to go about it in order to not have a budget impact for the next years. She noted that if they escrowed that amount and then assigned the remainder of the fund balance as revenue in the next budget. There was discussion about some potential to have to report the surpluses and deficits to the state.

The current budget draft reflects less than a 1% increase in the bottom line. There was discussion about the oil tank replacement. CTES got an estimate for theirs and it was about \$16,000 and they are still waiting on an estimate for the replacement. She noted that the state has given them a resource list of contractors for this work. She will be asking for a multiple site quote to potentially save money. Ms. Hammond also noted that she will need to review the finalized negotiations numbers in order to see the budget impact.

Mr. Garvey suggested seeking information to separate the electric service. Ms. Hammond noted that they are currently seeking that information. Mr. Buckley questioned the Ranger Solar funds that are expected. He suggested that they should use some of the funds to account for the deficit

on the gym renovation. He suggested that they could use some of those funds for the loan payment. There was discussion about the funds being available upon completion of the project.

Ms. Tarbell noted that they need to know the impact of the independent school on the financial numbers. She suggested that they need to make sure that them keeping the building won't negatively impact school programming. She also suggested that they need to make sure that letting the building go to the town won't necessarily impact the town letting BRIS occupy the building. Ms. Selleck noted that BRIS has some plans, but they are all pending resolution of the subdivision. There was discussion about BRIS being able to go through the town as the landlord. Ms. Tarbell suggested that they need to know if having BRIS rent from LMHUUSD will require a different set of requirements than having BRIS rent from the town of Ludlow. Mr. Garvey suggested that they should seek an answer from the head office in Montpelier, not just the local fire marshal. They also need to know what defines a "change in use". Ms. Meringolo noted that as part of BRIS's certification, they have to show a certificate of occupancy for their space for their entity for a certain period of time. As a result that would be a change of use. There was discussion about the fire door replacement.

Mr. Buckley read aloud the draft minutes from November 21, 2015 Ludlow Select Board, regarding the Ranger Solar project, including the \$75,000 to LES for the bleacher project upon completion of the project.

Ms. Hammond noted that when they return in January, they will need to vote on the budget or schedule a special meeting since the drop dead date is 1/18/19. Ms. Tarbell questioned the school to home liaison and whether that person has been hired. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that this is a 1.0 fte position and has been filled and that person is doing a great job. There was discussion about the .75 fte proposed guidance position at MHS and the current .75fte guidance position at LES.

F. Update of Select Board Meeting

Mr. Orzechowski reported that the Town of Mt. Holly agreed to pay \$11,000 to the town of Ludlow to cover these school expenses provided that the Ludlow Select Board agrees to pay the other half of that amount. The Ludlow Select Board meeting is this coming Monday. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that Ms. Alberty seemed to have swung that decision with her comments about trying to work together to take care of all of "our" children. There was discussion about the other \$18,000 that LES needs. There was discussion about the town of Ludlow possibly charging LES for the use of the LCC for the cafeteria. There was discussion about the equipment for the kitchen in the LCC having come from LES originally, that should likely need to be returned to LES if the town does begin to bill for the use of the cafeteria. The board thanked the team for presenting this question and the Mt. Holly public at the meeting. Mr. Buckley noted that there was a feeling that the school had a \$400,000 surplus, but as seen tonight, the surplus is down to \$53,000 and is committed to the next budget.

The select board meeting will be Monday at 7:00 p.m. at the Ludlow town hall.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Schmidt reported that the innovations committee was planning to meet in December, but then decided to begin meeting in February with the new budget plan. She reported that she has asked for Ms. Mahusky to help co-chair if she's interested. There was discussion about the size of this committee. There was discussion about the need for a grant writer. The next meeting is planned for a Tuesday, but they will revisit the meeting day.

Ms. Hammond noted that there are a lot of unanswered questions and they need to make a decision about the disposition of the building. There was discussion about the subdivision having to be done anyway, but the board needs to make a decision about the building. It would be helpful to know what Ludlow's plan is for the building. Mr. Orzechowski noted that it seems as if the select board is expecting the building. He will follow up with them about their intentions on Monday. Ms. Hollebeek questioned if they should seek help from Montpelier to help answer some of the fire marshal questions. There was discussion about the potential use for the building being the TRSU and the Academy, and both would be considered a change in use per the fire Marshall. Mr. Garvey suggested going to the top of that "ladder" to get the official decision. There was discussion about the town potentially deciding to rent the building to organizations other than BRIS. Ms. Trimboli is concerned with the transition for the people in this building. Ms. Meringolo noted that both the town and the district would need to lease for fair market value, so it shouldn't be a major difference. Ms. Selleck discussed some of the BRIS plans. There was discussion about the certificate of occupancy and if that person is the one that would make the final decision about the change in use.

Mr. Hutt Vater suggested making the list of the pros and cons of either entity renting the building. There was discussion about the new entity occupying the building requiring the upgrade of sprinklers. There was discussion about there needing to be a building supervisor, not the principal, and the rent would need to be at least \$10,000 per month in order to cover the cost of the building maintenance and the bond. There was discussion about the various options. Ms. Powden will follow up with superintendent of fire marshals about their options, to see if there is a difference in the upgrade requirements if the building is going to be owned by the LMHUUSD versus the town of Ludlow. There was discussion about the fire marshal needing to know the planned occupancy.

Ms. Meringolo **moved** to approach the Ludlow select board to determine if they are interested in purchasing the building for \$1. Mr. Hollebeek seconded. Mr. Orzechowski could approach the town to see what their plan is for the building—whether they plan to take the building for \$1 and what their plan is if they do—if they plan to rent to BRIS and/or TRSU. Ms. Powden noted that the TRSU board has decided to stay where they are for the next year, but will review their options going forward. The motion carried with one opposed. There was discussion about the board not being committed to releasing the building, but they are just gathering information.

There was discussion about the town of Ludlow also wanting the information. Ms. Powden will follow up with the fire marshal's office.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- A. Black River Teachers and Staff Jobs Ending 2020 (1 VSA \$313 (A)(1)(b))**
- B. Compensation for Leave Days**
- C. Teacher Negotiations**
- D. Secondary Personnel Issue**

After making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage, Mr. Buckley **moved** to enter executive session at 7:55 p.m. inviting Ms. Trimboli, Mr. Hutt Vater, Ms. Powden and Ms. Hammond to discuss Black River Teachers and Staff Jobs ending 2020, Compensation for Leave Days, Teacher Negotiations, and Secondary Personnel issue. Ms. Tarbell seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at _____ p.m. [action taken]

X. NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA:

The next meeting will be on January 9 at MHS at 6:00.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

_____ **moved** to adjourn at _____ p.m. _____ seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary