

Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District Regular Meeting Minutes

February 13, 2019

Ludlow Elementary School, Band Room

6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Board: Paul Orzechowski, Katie Hollebeek, Brigid Faenza, Mariel Meringolo, Kelly Tarbell, Dan Buckley (arrived 6:27 p.m.)

Staff: Cheryl Hammond, Craig Hutt Vater, Karen Trimboli, John Davis, Deb Harrison

Student Rep:

Public: Marissa Selleck

Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the agenda with the deletion of policy-first read, and addition of the TRSU update, discussion of Transportation and TRSU Alternate under New Business. Ms. Meringolo seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. January 9, 2019

Ms. Faenza **moved** to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting. Ms. Meringolo seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. February 5, 2019, Special Meeting

Ms. Hollebeek **moved** to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2019 meeting. Ms. Meringolo seconded. Ms. Meringolo noted that she wasn't present at that meeting, but was mentioned in the minutes. It was clarified that the minutes in that reference were referring to a discussion Ms. Meringolo had had at a prior meeting, not at the February 5 meeting.

IV. COMMENTS:

A. Board Comments

Ms. Tarbell felt that there needed to be a more efficient way for things to go from the board meetings to the SU office so they don't need to be re-done so many times. She felt that it isn't a specific person because there have been many people in many different roles, but it has happened for several years. She suggested adding a "to-do list" as an agenda item as a possibility, or having the recording secretary bold the action items. She noted that she didn't have a specific solution in mind but would be happy to sit with someone in the SU office to help come up with a solution.

B. Student Rep

Ms. Trimboli thought that the reps would be coming, but aren't here yet.

C. Public Comments

Ms. Selleck reported on the status of Black River Academy (B.R.A.) committee. They began their capital campaign at the beginning of January. They have gotten a good response so far. They are also beginning to plan their bigger fundraising events, such as a Social.

V. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

A. Principals' Reports

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that both elementary schools had school-wide student led conferences. They are pleased with the results—they are seeing a lot of student engagement and growth. The schools also held the Sweethearts and Heroes program about anti-bullying. They have received a lot of student feedback and the program was powerful. The program included K-8th grade students, as well as the after school program (ASP). The presentation was very flexible and geared toward each age range.

Ms. Trimboli reported that the NAEP testing was yesterday at the middle school (and at LES at the end of January). The students enjoyed taking the tests on the Microsoft Surface devices. She felt that the students did their best and took the testing seriously. The admin council and teacher leaders also did a follow up from the summer retreat. They reviewed the work that they have been planning out, including giving feedback. They have focused their work on core instructional practices. Ms. Trimboli discussed the snapshot tool that administrators have been using to see if many of the 9 instructional elements are being used in the classroom. They have been looking to see if they are being used in all 6 schools. Some of the teacher leaders have also been using the snapshot tool. The teacher leader input that they have been receiving is invaluable. The feedback has been honest and helpful. This is part of the continuous improvement plan that each school has to do. She noted that each school has developed their own focus. For example one LES goal is to close the achievement gap in math and language arts between FRL students and non-FRL students. She discussed some strategies that the teachers are using including the snapshot tool, multi-tiered systems of success, ELL and Math coaches and any other teacher that can help with the remediation. They are also using data to drive the decision making. They have been working with Mr. Eppolito on the proficiencies and aligning the curriculum. She discussed the LiFT program and personalized learning. They are also moving toward developing students to become leaders of their own learning. Mr. Hutt Vater and Ms. Trimboli reported that the schools have been collaborating as a team in implementing these initiatives.

Ms. Trimboli reported that the ski program is up and running currently. There was some stress in beginning the program this year, but there has been a lot of support, financial and volunteers. Ms. Trimboli reported that she recently testified at the state regarding lead testing at schools and daycares. She reminded the board of the LES pilot lead test. She reported that on 2/25 at 5:30 in the high school library will be the high school choice lottery. The application deadline is tomorrow for grades 9-12. There are 3 new slots available—students currently enrolled are all set.

The limited school choice for middle school and elementary school deadline will be coming up in April. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they will be having an artist in residence in the last week of February for 2 weeks at that school. Otis Gray, a podcaster and radio personality, will be holding a story hour. Ms. Trimboli reported that winter carnival starts next week for BRHS.

B. Business Office Report

Ms. Hammond reported that this has been a busy January for the business office. Ms. Martel produced 877 W-2's out of 2 systems (due to the merger). She is averaging 450 "pays" every 2 weeks. She reported that the office has been working on the health care coverage report for the state, including all the 1095 paperwork. The office has also been working on audits, announced tuition and migrating to a new state mandated accounting software. She has not heard good things about this software. She reported that there are two SU's that went live on January 1 and neither is going well. She has requested a split from the state—to get AP on board (and the kinks worked out) before they transition payroll.

There was discussion about the fire marshal meeting that was scheduled for February 7. The fire marshal didn't show on February 7, and called on February 8 to say that they wouldn't be able to make it that day and asked to reschedule, but wasn't able to actually reschedule a specific date at that time, so they are still waiting.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Sub-Dividing LES property

Ms. Hollebeek reported that Ms. Powden had written a letter to the Ludlow Town Manager regarding the property. The issue is on the April agenda for the town.

Ms. Hammond reported that they have received two bids that are extremely different. There was another consultant that asked a lot of questions but didn't submit a bid. She had asked him questions to try to determine if the two bids they did receive were what they were looking for. She included a comparison of the two bids for the board's review. Ms. Hammond noted that she was asked about using the old surveys for this process. She reported that she tried to contact Michael Engineering to let them know about the surveys. She explained the differences in the bids, including the permitting process and representation at the public hearings. There was discussion about the deadline. She noted that the choice isn't only about the price, it's about getting what they want in the timeline that they want. Ms. Meringolo reported that she has worked with Ted Reeves before with OMS and felt confident in his work. She also noted that the permitting process as well as the representation at the DRB is an important part of the process. She noted that she hasn't worked with Steve Mungeon before, but felt that if Mr. Reeves were recommending him, that was good. Ms. Tarbell reported that Mr. Mungeon did her personal surveying and they were happy with the work.

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the bid from Steve Mungeon for the subdivision of the LES property between the elementary school and the high school. Ms. Hollebeek seconded. There was discussion about how the decision gets made about the location of the property division. Ms. Trimboli suggested that it will be a collaborative decision based on a recommendation from Mr. Tuomisto based on his knowledge of the buildings, the property and location of utilities and tanks; as well as from Mr. Mungeon based on his expertise in subdivisions and easements. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. TRSU Update

Mr. Orzechowski reported that the TRSU board would like the local boards to discuss the TRSU updates so they can be kept up on what is happening at the TRSU level each month. Mr. Orzechowski reported that the board decided to receive the financial reports quarterly rather than monthly. The board also agreed to approve a 2 year contract for Ms. Powden at the recent meeting. He noted that the decision for 2 years was based, at least in part, on the board being able to implement the evaluation process. Ms. Trimboli reported that she was glad that it was a 2 year contract due to them having to close BRHS in June of 2020. It will help having someone familiar with the situation still on board after the closure. Mr. Buckley noted that another discussion at the TRSU was the development of the evaluation tool based on the job description.

B. Annual Informational Meeting

Mr. Orzechowski noted his concern with the warning of the annual informational meeting prior to the board discussing it. Ms. Trimboli noted that the decision was made to hold the informational meeting in Ludlow because the annual meeting will be held in Mt. Holly this year. Mr. Orzechowski reviewed the notes from last year's meeting. There was discussion about the decision made last year to hold only one informational meeting so that there isn't different

information being shared at one meeting versus the other. It was noted that the informational meeting last year was in Ludlow, so this year it should be in Mt. Holly. The informational meeting will be held on Thursday, February 28 at Mt. Holly Elementary School at 6:30 p.m. There was discussion about this being a new process that is confusing to all involved, and different from each of the 3 prior boards. Ms. Tarbell clarified that there will be a single informational meeting on 2/28 at Mt. Holly Elementary School, then Australian ballot voting will be on 3/5 at the usual polling places in Mt. Holly and Ludlow, then the annual meeting will be on 3/13 at 6:00 p.m. with the regular board meeting immediately following. Mr. Orzechowski noted his concern with the warning having gone out without consulting the board. Ms. Trimboli reported that the admin team had discussed the informational meeting and that's likely how the warning had gone out. There was discussion about this being a learning year.

There was discussion about the presentation for the informational meeting. Mr. Buckley suggested including a slide on the closing of BRHS, the progress on the subdivision, the school choice fair and other information that the board is aware of but the public may not be. Ms. Hammond reported that the state has not yet frozen the equalized pupil rate or the yield which may impact the tax rate. The state average is up 4.2%.

C. Ludlow Lunch in the School Building

Mr. Orzechowski noted that this topic came up recently given some challenges with the LCC space. Ms. Trimboli reported that the food service committee met prior to this meeting and started this discussion. They are considering moving the program back to LES when BRHS closes. They are looking at what equipment is owned by the school district versus by the town. One of the reasons for the move was due to the population they were feeding versus the size of the stage. She noted that there will be no problem fitting the entire elementary school on the stage. This move would allow them to serve lunch without being charged by the town. The smell of food cooking in the building will also increase the participation in hot lunch. Additionally having the kitchen in the building will help with the collaborative cooking projects for certain classes. The committee will be discussing the equipment that was given up with the initial move to the LCC. They will also discuss refrigeration and freezing needs. The next meeting is in June.

D. Current Financials

Ms. Hammond reported that there is nothing new to report since they discussed the full financials last month. She noted that TRSU opted to go to quarterly reporting. Mr. Buckley noted that the board is looking for significant over-spends or under-spends each month, but having the full financial report quarterly is sufficient.

E. Public Relations Proposal

Ms. Hollebeek reported that she was asked to bring the PR proposal to the board. She thought that the plan would be included in the board packet for their review, but it wasn't. She reported that there are 16 activities that are in the report and the plan is to begin with one or two of them until they become proficient at them. The plan is to increase the social media presence sharing highlights of each school as well as through a blog. This would include upcoming events as well as highlights in each school. She reported that Franklin West does a daily blog, and this PR committee's goal is to do a weekly blog shared with each of the schools. The goal of this is to draw more families to the area. The purpose of the action item was to adopt the plan, but she felt that the board should have the plan in order to consider it. There was discussion about the committee composition. The committee is meeting about once per month. There was discussion about who is in charge of the blog posting. Ms. Moeykens is the lead for posting the blog, but the content is expected to come from the administration of each school.

F. Ratify Teachers' Master Agreement

Ms. Hammond advised that the summary page lists the major changes in this contract. Essentially year one is a 2.5% increase, while year 2 is a 3.75% increase. The reason that the year 2 increase is so high is due to them having 3 more school days than in prior years in order to make there be equal school days between the GMUSD and LMHUUSD—going from 175 to 178 days. There is a salary schedule included in this agreement, as well as a hiring schedule. She reported that the GMUSD is getting dental coverage instead of their 2.5% increase. She advised that some of the changes is in wording regarding transfers and seniority. She advised that clarifying language was added to the professional development section. Mr. Buckley noted that the TRSU opted to go with Met Life for the dental coverage rather than continue with the self-insured plan they had been using. There might be some surplus funds from the self-insured plan ending. The change to Met Life will affect teachers on the LMH side of the SU. Ms. Hammond reported that the teachers have not yet approved the agreement, so she suggested that if the LMH board wants to approve the agreement, they do so pending the teachers approving the contract. There was discussion about working toward similar benefits and days off.

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the 2018-2020 teacher agreement pending ratification by the teachers' union. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hammond will send out communication on the dental program once it becomes official. There was discussion about the three boards (LMH, GM and TRSU) having approved the agreement pending the teacher approval. The teachers are holding informational meetings in February but won't be voting on the agreement until March 6.

G. Transportation

Mr. Orzechowski reminded the board that they will have to provide transportation for Ludlow students beginning in August of 2020. He wasn't sure how to begin approaching this topic. There was discussion about finding out how many students the school would have to transport. Ms. Trimboli advised that this will depend on what the school decides to offer—whether it is door to door or some regional stops. There are currently 3 buses and participation varies greatly based on the bus and based on the day. Mr. Orzechowski questioned if the district wants to purchase buses or lease them or use a bus service. There was discussion about finding bus drivers being difficult so it might be best to contract. There was also discussion about the wear and tear on the buses due to the travel on back roads. There was discussion about contracting bus service impacting the ability for field trips and similar bus needs. There was discussion about the GMUSD board purchasing 8 new buses. Mr. Buckley suggested having a 12 passenger van to avoid the school bus endorsement requirement. Ms. Hammond advised that the school's liability requirement is that the drivers have a school bus endorsement. She also reported that Mr. Heald didn't recommend that the school purchase the town's buses because there have been so many modifications that the cost to convert them back to a standard school bus would be less cost effective than purchasing new buses.

Ms. Hammond noted that she had talked with Butler Bus a while back, but they don't have anyone in the Mt. Holly area so that might be a bit difficult. However if they are looking at both Ludlow and Mt. Holly, they might be able to get a contract for around \$55,000 per bus. There was discussion about the transportation being provided by both GMUSD and Mill River for transportation from Ludlow and Mt. Holly to each of those high schools. Ms. Trimboli reported that Long Trail has also committed to providing transportation from Ludlow and Mt. Holly to their school. Ms. Meringolo questioned if BBA has been contacted about transportation. Ms. Hammond noted that BBA originally thought that LMH had designated a school but they have now been advised. Ms. Tarbell questioned if any of the schools have set a minimum for the

transportation. Ms. Trimboli advised not yet. She also advised that the majority of school choice applications thus far are Mt. Holly students wanting to attend Mill River. Ms. Faenza reported that there are new families moving into the area.

Ms. Hammond advised that they need to come up with a plan so that they can build it into the budget at the end of this year. There was discussion about the current Ludlow transportation coordinator and seeking guidance from them. There was also discussion about how the high schools will coordinate their transportation. Ms. Tarbell noted that they might consider summer versus winter routes. Ms. Trimboli also noted that they can choose to only bus the students who live outside walking distance from school.

There was discussion about the next step being to work with Pam Cruikshank and Mr. Hutt Vater on bus routes to determine how this will happen. There was discussion about the transportation being handled by the SU, but since it ultimately comes out of the school district budget, it should still be a local decision. Mr. Hutt Vater advised that the intent of the law is to create SU-centered transportation so that all the schools are covered if there are needs. There was discussion about the GM transportation coordinator becoming an SU position rather than a district position.

H. TRSU Alternate Board Member

Ms. Hammond reported that Ms. Powden had gone to the state board of education regarding the districts' ability to appoint an alternate on the TRSU board. The state board of education has approved the waiver to appoint a single alternate with voting power. Mr. Buckley reminded the board that their previously was a 17 member board that is now a 6 member board and if one person is unavailable, that can make a significant difference in a vote. The TRSU board meets at the Roost on the first Thursday of every month and the alternate would only be needed if one of the three can't make it.

Ms. Faenza **nominated** Ms. Tarbell as the alternate to the TRSU board. Ms. Hollebeek seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. Ms. Tarbell requested that any board member send her a specific text message if she is needed at a board meeting. There was discussion about the emails needing to be specific with the agendas and location.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Harrison questioned when the next PR committee meeting will be held. There was discussion about the committee composition. Ms. Hollebeek reported that Ms. Moeykens will be sending out a doodle poll to seek the best date for everyone involved. She will let Ms. Harrison know when it is scheduled.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None needed.

X. NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA:

The next meeting will be on March 13, 2019 at MHS at 6:00. It will be the annual meeting followed by the regular meeting. There is also an informational meeting scheduled for February 28 at MHS at 6:30 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to adjourn at 7:38 p.m. Ms. Meringolo seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary