

# Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District Regular Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2019  
Mt. Holly School, Library  
6:00 p.m.

## I. CALL TO ORDER:

**Board:** Paul Orzechowski, Katie Hollebeek, Brigid Faenza, Mary Alberty, Dan Buckley, Kelly Tarbell

**Staff:** Cheryl Hammond, Craig Hutt Vater, Karen Trimboli, Meg Powden

**Student Rep:**

**Public:** Marissa Selleck

Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

## II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of the approval of a warning (necessary if the board approves a budget), discussion of public high school choice, and transition funds for BRHS. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

## III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

### A. December 12, 2018

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2018 meeting. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

## IV. COMMENTS:

### A. Board Comments

Ms. Hollebeek reported that she heard back from the Village of Bennington regarding their school building. The town owns the building and the independent school leases it from the town. She is still waiting to hear more about the setup from the principal regarding the contents.

### B. Student Rep

The reps are playing basketball in West Rutland this evening.

### C. Public Comments

Ms. Selleck reported on the status of Black River Academy (B.R.A.) committee. They took a hiatus during the holidays and will resume meeting tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at BRHS library. They have developed a donation request letter that will be sent out soon to the communities. It will include information about the work that the committee has completed thus far. She had more info on the subdivision, but suspected it would be covered later in the meeting. She noted that the B.R.A. meetings are always open to the public and invited anyone to come, as well as to volunteer for various tasks of the committee.

## V. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

### A. Superintendent's Report

Ms. Powden reported that she attended the RVTC presentation and noted that Jay Ramsey presented the recently developed strategic vision for the Vermont Career and Technical Education Centers. She distributed the vision and strategic plan. She noted that she served on the steering

committee. She noted that they are aligning the programming and opportunities with the labor market and career opportunities. She reported that they had followed up with the fire marshal regarding the BRHS building usage if the B.R.A. and the TRSU both occupied the building. The fire marshal reported that it would be considered a mixed usage, more like a business, and therefore subject to various regulations. He will be coming this next week to provide the necessary building inspection. This will provide the necessary list of upgrades should they choose to become landlords.

Ms. Powden distributed information regarding the legislature designating January as school board recognition month. She thanked the board members for their service to the communities.

## **B. Principals' Reports**

Ms. Trimboli thanked the LES/BRHS custodial staff for their work on the fallen trees behind the building. They did the work during the weekend so as not to disturb students. She reported that there was a radiator leak in Mr. O'Neil's room and the crew was able to repair it during a time when school was closed so it didn't interfere. She noted that Mr. Tuomisto keeps spare parts on hand for times like these. There was also a leak in one of the LES toilets, and a plumber advised that it was a toilet seal, then advised that it was a larger problem. Mr. Tuomisto and his crew rented a jackhammer and found the leak a foot and a half down in a pinhole in a cap at the end of a pipe. They fixed it, replaced the concrete and repaired the cabinet that was in the way. They fixed the entire problem over a three day period. She reported on a boiler issue that the crew also repaired.

Ms. Tuomisto reported that the holiday concerts and holiday parties went well. She noted that there have been a lot of basketball games being held in the gym. She reported on the collaboration with the rec teams. They have set a date for Sweethearts and Heroes, the program sponsored by Benson's Chevrolet—January 29. They will be scheduling it so that both schools can participate, and they have broken up the presentation by grade level appropriateness. The 4<sup>th</sup> term is ending next week, and the guidance department is working with seniors to ensure that they are where they need to be with proficiencies. There was discussion about the 8 terms for the school year. The classes are yearlong for core classes and most electives. They are catching kids early with proficiencies. Winter carnival planning is underway. The school choice paperwork deadline is February 1. Discussion about the limits will be held later in the meeting.

Ms. Trimboli reported that the NAEP assessments are coming soon. She described the process for the testing and setup. On April 15, the Department of Health is coming to do a drill for the emergency distribution center.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that MHS held its holiday concert recently as well. There were hundreds in attendance. He thanked Mary Perron for her work on the concert. The PTA is working on raising money for the winter sports program. There are new and returning volunteers for the program. MHS is also prepping for the NAEP assessments.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that for the building in-service day, Peggy Manning and Margaret Dunne took the lead and shared a training they had taken from Ross Greene. The approach is based on the idea that kids want to do well, and when they are displaying a behavior, they are trying to communicate. The ALSUP is the assessment of lagging skills and unsolved problems. The team goes through a list of assessments to identify the issue, then they develop plans to resolve the issue. The plans include collaborative planning, and may need revision. The plans are also data-driven. The teachers are participating school-wide and it is interesting to see the ideas that the

students are coming up with. Ms. Trimboli noted that this feathers in nicely with students being leaders of their own learning, and of being a trauma informed school.

Ms. Trimboli reported that Okemo has revised its pricing for income challenged students. They also have advised that students with their own ski pass don't have to pay the mountain usage fee. She thanked Mary Davis Real Estate for their \$2000 donation to the program. They also thanked Vail for hearing the community concern about pricing and making adjustments.

Ms. Faenza questioned why the GMUSD schools were closed today and the LMHUUSD schools weren't. Ms. Powden reported that the SU region is so large, it is possible that each area is experiencing different weather patterns. She noted that they have one designated principal in each area to make that decision. Ms. Trimboli supported the decision because the weather was great by 10:30. Ms. Alberty noted that many of the students drive and live on a back road, and they could be in a dangerous position. Ms. Trimboli noted that students and parents are aware that if they feel unsafe driving to school, it is an excused absence. The schools also rely heavily on the town crews. Ms. Tarbell noted that regardless of the decision somebody will always be unhappy. When the weather clears earlier in the day, people get upset about having to make up an entire day in the summer.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

### **A. Second Read-Policies**

The board reviewed the policies. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve policies G-04, G-04C, G-07, H-03, and H-04 as presented. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Sub-Dividing LES property**

Ms. Hammond reported that the district did not receive any bids for the subdivision work. She reported that she did hear back from one engineer who felt that the timeline was too tight to get the work completed. She then re-issued the RFP with an open ended deadline and has heard back from a couple of people. One of the engineers reported that the land has been surveyed by Ralph Michaels a couple of times so another survey would not need to be done. Ms. Hammond will reach out to Mr. Michaels regarding the survey. There was discussion about where to subdivide the property. Ms. Trimboli reported that the town values the parcel in both buildings at approximately \$6.2 million. She asked for the breakdown. The town assesses the BRHS building at approximately 9,000 sq. ft., and \$1.8 million. The elementary building is assessed at about \$2.8 million. The rest is the land behind the buildings. There was discussion about who ever uses the building would want some parking. The elementary school will also want an easement to access their property. Ms. Trimboli reported that building rental like this would be about \$10 per square foot, but if they are planning to renovate, they will want to adjust up the rental cost to cover the renovations. There was discussion about them needing to recoup about \$9,000-\$10,000 per month, but they would need more to cover the maintenance of the building. The board discussed the renter having to cover some of their own costs, like utilities.

Ms. Trimboli reported that there is a conduit between the buildings that carries the computer system lines. The connection would have to be broken. There was discussion about when this work was done. Mr. DeLisle is getting a quote for that work. There was discussion about the building and grounds committee meeting.

Mr. Orzechowski reported that he did ask the select board if they were interested in the option of purchasing the building for one dollar. As of right now they are not interested in that purchase. The town does want to work with the school district and be involved, and is aware that the building will cost about \$10,000 to maintain. Mr. Hutt Vater questioned the community feeling

and if the town is going to conduct community meetings about the topic. The board discussed sending them an official letter and getting an official response from the town by the end of the school year. The board requested Ms. Powden to write that letter to the town of Ludlow. Ms. Tarbell noted that it's this board's decision whether or not they keep it or sell it to the town of Ludlow. The town of Ludlow has the right of first refusal. But she didn't feel that they should ask the town if they wanted it until this board makes a decision about whether or not they want to keep the building. She noted that they need to do the best they can for the community, but part of the decision will depend on the fire marshals requirements. There was discussion about the letter to the town of Ludlow saying "In the event the LMHUUSD decides to sell the BRHS building, the district would like an official decision from the town of Ludlow about whether or not they would like to purchase the building."

There was discussion about the building use and what renovations would need to be made to the building if they are to rent it out and if those renovations are different depending on the organization to whom they rent. Ms. Trimboli reported that currently they don't pay any taxes on the school building. However once they start renting it out it will be responsible for taxes. They already know that the upkeep of the building is somewhere in the \$10,000 a month range plus whatever they will be assessed by the town for taxes. There was discussion about the school board not being in the business of being a landlord and they would probably have to hire a building manager to appropriately handle that part of the business. There was discussion about the merger being to reduce costs and enhance education for the students not to make money on renting out the building. The board discussed selling the building and reserving those funds for capital improvement or some other big-ticket expense.

There was discussion about the school building having to be rented or sold for fair market value. There was discussion about the continuity of using the same building and about the value of the new science labs. There was discussion about the timeline to sell the building. Ms. Trimboli reported that the realtors in town, who deal primarily with home purchases, recommended a particular realtor in Rutland who deals with this type of commercial property. There was discussion about doing parallel paths, of researching a commercial sale as well as researching the sale to the town and possible rental. Ms. Selleck reported that it's possible that the BRHS building is going to be too big for their school to start with. Ms. Selleck also reported that the committee has discussed surveying the community to see how many people are interested in sending their children to B.R.A. There was discussion about having these results in before town meeting day so they could report at town meeting. B.R.A. also has its website updated at [www.blackriveracademy.org](http://www.blackriveracademy.org) and has a newsletter.

Mr. Hutt Vater shared his concern about the cost of maintaining the building, and the potential negative impact on the two elementary schools.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. Current Financials**

The current financial report was in the board packet for their review. Currently they are operating in a slight deficit as they are waiting for some revenues to come in. Ms. Hammond reported that the leased equipment line is over by about \$24,000. She explained that this is due to how the expense was budgeted. Mr. DeLisle budgeted it in equipment and supplies, but when the expense came in it was booked under leased equipment. The legal services line is over, but that has to do with negotiations which are now complete. Ms. Hammond noted that the central office assessment had been encumbered, and then a portion of it paid, but not dis-encumbered. There was discussion about the purchased services line item being for Ms. Edson's salary. Ms. Hammond has fixed that for the next budget. There was discussion about the ASP additional

support being over. This is for a student who needed additional supports outside of school that wasn't budgeted for. The district will receive some special ed reimbursement for these expenses.

The board discussed whether or not Ranger solar is operational now and when the income from that agreement should start being received. There was discussion about the paving project only being over budget by approximately \$18,000. Ms. Hammond noted that currently they are short about \$404,000 in revenues based on what has been paid, but they still expect more to come over the course of the school year. She noted that it is not a concern at this point.

## **B. Budget FY20**

Ms. Hammond distributed a new budget draft. She noted that just before she sent out the last budget draft she deducted something that she now realizes she shouldn't have been and added it back in. She noted that she also added some Title I expenses that were previously inaccurate, as well as used the correct oil tank replacement estimate. The negotiations are settled therefore those correct figures are included in the budget draft. The bottom line represents a 3.2% increase. She noted that the last draft was at approximately 0.9% increase now that she's adjusted those last few items. This has put them over the penalty threshold by \$26.98 per pupil. The threshold is just over \$18,000 per pupil. In order to get under the threshold, they will have to cut \$9610. She reported on the calculations for the tax rate. She noted that if they wanted to keep the budget at 3% they would have to cut approximately \$149,000. Mr. Buckley noted his concern with putting \$15,000 per school to reserve fund for total of \$45,000. He felt that putting any money into a reserve fund for the Black River high school building was unnecessary.

There was discussion about heating tank replacement. Mr. Hunt later had suggested looking into a different heating system since they have to replace the fuel tank. A different heating system might be more energy efficient. She suggested that maybe instead of replacing fuel tank this year they keep some of that money and look into a different heating system for next year, that might save them money in the future on energy costs. There was discussion about the age of the boiler as well. There was discussion about the environmental implications about leaving the old tank in the ground. The board discussed the capital reserve fund being approximately \$10,000 currently.

Ms. Powden reported that the TRSU board approved a budget last week, and then the GMUSD finance committee met on Monday and requested that the TRSU board reopen the budget. Mr. Orzechowski noted that the central office budget was level funded. Ms. Powden noted that the TRSU assessment in the GMUSD budget is currently 14.89% of their total budget and they have asked the SU to bring it down a percentage point which is approximately \$198,000. She suggested that if this board gets to the point of approving a budget that their motion say the budget amount or any lesser to accommodate for a possible reduction TRSU budget. Ms. Trimboli noted that the TRSU could say no. She was also concerned that any one entity could make such a demand on the TRSU which is made up of both the school districts. She noted that the LMHUSD may want some of the programs that the TRSU has put in their budget. Mr. Orzechowski asked the board their feelings on whether or not to support reopening the budget. There was discussion about the GM board not giving suggestions on where to cut but rather just giving a directive in the amount to cut. Ms. Powden noted that it comes back to the Act 46 merger and if they had merged the way Act 46 intended, they might be able to realize some more savings. But the GMUSD board is not realizing all of the savings that they had wanted to see.

Ms. Powden noted that if the finance committee doesn't recommend a budget to the GMUSD board they may have no choice but to reopen the TRSU budget. There was discussion about there being three members from each school district in the TRSU budget passed unanimously. It was also discussion about the timeframe of these changes. The TRSU board meeting is Monday at

Cavendish town elementary school. Mr. Buckley reported that he would not be able to make it to that meeting. Ms. Albery would also have a difficult time making that meeting. There was discussion about there not being a quorum for the meeting and the LMHUUSD not having adequate representation. There was discussion about the state Board of Education making a decision on alternates on Wednesday next week.

Ms. Hammond reported that there is currently \$20,000 in the reserve fund. It was originally saved from Black River but now belongs to the entire district. There was discussion about there being a hefty expense coming up in the next few years trip, so they don't want to reduce all of the funds. Ms. Hammond suggested that it needed to be listed as a capital reserve expense not as oil tank replacement because that's what the taxpayers will expect. She noted that with the changes the board discussed, this would be a bottom line figure of \$7,380,848 or 2.36% increase from last year. The per pupil costs is \$18,169.42. The tax rate is \$1.70, reduced by the 6 cents due to the merger, and impacted by the CLA in each town. There was discussion about the current tax rate being \$1.46, but that may be with some of the calculations backed out. There was also discussion about the final equalized pupil figures. Mr. Buckley noted that last year's budget approval set a tax rate of \$1.75 reduced by 8 cents due to the merger, or \$1.67, impacted further by the CLA in each town. Therefore this budget proposal is lower by about 3 cents on the tax rate.

There was discussion about holding a special meeting after the TRSU special meeting for budget approval. There was discussion about setting the budget and then if the TRSU assessment comes in lower, they will end up with a surplus. Ms. Albery **moved** to approve the budget in the amount of \$7,380,848, which represents a 2.36% increase from last budget and a cost of \$18,169.42 per equalized pupil. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hammond suggested that the board should put the bond payment into escrow, so that if they sell the building, the bond still gets satisfied. There was discussion about this relieving the restrictions on the building use. Ms. Albery **moved** to place the bond payments coming from the surplus funds into escrow with the bond bank as recommended by Ms. Hammond. Ms. Faenza seconded. This will leave approximately \$5,000 in the surplus. Ms. Hammond will have the board members sign the warning when she gets the exact numbers. The motion carried unanimously.

### **C. Announced Tuition**

Ms. Hammond reported that last year the announced tuition was at \$17,000 for both elementary and high school. Her calculations this year suggest that they should set the tuition at \$17,748 for the elementary school and just over \$20,000 for the high school. She recommended \$17,750 for the elementary school tuition. She hesitated to recommendation on the high school tuition to be \$20,000. There was discussion about the ability to bill back costs over 3% different from the announced question. There is discussion about what towns the tuition students the tuition students are coming from and whether the town is bearing the cost or the student's family is bearing the cost. Ms. Powden recommended setting the high school tuition at \$20,000 since that is what the calculations come to, but suggested possibly waiting until the TRSU budget question is settled before setting the tuition. Ms. Hammond noted that the announced tuition needs to be into the state by Tuesday.

Mr. Buckley suggested setting the high school tuition at \$19,500. Ms. Tarbell **moved** to set the 2019-2020 announced tuition at \$17,750 for elementary school and \$19,500 for high school. Ms. Albery seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **D. Limited School Transfer Program**

Ms. Powden reported that in the board packet are two documents pertaining to the limited school transfer program between elementary schools and middle schools within the TRSU. She noted

that this document is different from last year's in that it references the school year 2019 to 2020 and applications will be available from the supervisory union by March 1 and are due back in the supervisory union office by April 19. She noted that there was also a change given that the program is being operated by unified districts and it references the school in the town the student lives in. She noted that because it's one district if they have a student that lives in Ludlow attending Mount Holly they're not going to pay themselves for that student. However if a student from the LMH district attends a school in the GM district half of the ADM follows the student. There was discussion about the use of the word graduation in the middle school document and what that means as far as how long that student is "grandfathered" in that school. Ms. Powden clarified that this meant through the completion of eighth grade, because once a student is in ninth grade they are then eligible for public high school choice.

Ms. Tarbell noted that in a prior year, more students were allowed into the choice program due to an error and she wanted to be sure that the error was cleared up before approving the program again this year. Ms. Powden noted that that wasn't due to an error, but rather some parents had approached the Black River board and the Black River board had made a decision based on the parents' request. There was discussion about that decision having been made because there was some clause in the document that was somewhat unclear. Ms. Trimboli noted that there are students from Ludlow that are attending Green Mountain under the middle school limited school transfer program who have requested to attend the high school under the public high school choice program, but were not selected in the lottery process. The question arose as to whether the students would need to be part of the lottery choosing process to continue to attend Green Mountain under the public high school choice program or if they are automatically grandfathered in for the next school year. Ms. Powden noted that they have said that students will have to submit to the lottery process in order to attend GM after they have completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade and are no longer part of the limited school transfer program. Mr. Buckley read aloud from the document noting that the enrollment in that school is guaranteed until graduation (expulsion notwithstanding). Ms. Powden noted that this should state through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, not graduation. There was discussion about current annuity for the students. There was also discussion about there only being one more year that BRHS is open. This also affects the total number of students eligible for the public high school choice program this year. There was discussion about there only being about one spot available for students in the program this year.

There was discussion about no money following the students in the public high school choice program, however 50% of the yield follows the student in the limited school transfer program. Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve continuing the limited school transfer program for middle school, including the new language clarifying high school graduation. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

There was discussion about whether the elementary document needed to clarify enrollment until 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation or whether it would matter since there is no option for continuing in the program in middle school after next year. There was discussion about the program needing to be approved each year. Ms. Hollebeek **moved** to approve the elementary limited school transfer program. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **E. Financial Management Questionnaire**

Ms. Hammond noted that the questionnaire was included in the board packet for their review. She explained that the auditors require that it is distributed to board members each year so they know how the finances are handled on their behalf. She asked Mr. Orzechowski to sign off on it as the board chair indicating that the board has reviewed it. She noted that Uula Cook is the treasurer and reconciles the bank statement.

**F. Warning Approval**

There was discussion about the warning needing the final numbers for the bond escrow before the board can sign it. Ms. Powden read the warning aloud to the board. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the warning as read pending Ms. Hammond’s verification of the escrow amount to cover the bond. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**G. Public High School Choice**

Ms. Trimboli noted that they need to set their public high school choice numbers. She recommended allowing as many students in as want to come, and to set the limit out at the minimum. There was discussion about last year they allowed about 9 students out—the 6 minimum plus some additional exceptions. There was discussion about the students attending Green Mountain and Mill River. There was discussion about encouraging students to participate in the public high school choice program next year to save tuition money. There was discussion about the number of students they would allow out if they weren’t closing. There was discussion about the number of students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the limited school transfer program. The board discussed setting the number at the same amount that is currently in the limited school transfer program. The board discussed the number of students remaining in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at BRHS. There was discussion about the impact on the sports teams with letting students out.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to add 5 to the lottery to bring the number to 9. The motion wasn’t seconded so it failed. Mr. Buckley **moved** to take into account the 4 8<sup>th</sup> grade students that are currently enrolled in the middle school limited school transfer program, and add 3 more spots for a total of 7 students allowed out in the public high school choice program. Ms. Alberty seconded. There was discussion about the number of students left behind and one or two students having a major impact. The motion carried with one in opposition.

**H. Black River Transition Funds**

Ms. Trimboli reminded the board that she had asked the board at the last meeting to earmark \$10,000 of the \$50,000 transition funds to BRHS closing to help the teachers and students with the transition. Ms. Meringolo had asked for a breakdown of that \$10,000. Ms. Trimboli discussed career counseling and creating a voucher system for the staff that requested the counseling. The cost is \$150 for a two hour session. They will be offering refreshments at the high school fair. They will also be holding some celebrations for the end of the school and having motivational speakers. They will also be holding school visits and field trips. They will also be needing some funds for the ski program and the Mary Ann Gagner quilting project. They would like to create a personalized quilt for every graduating senior this year and next. There was discussion about the funds needing to be spent by June 2019. There was discussion about giving each of the students something, not just the graduating seniors. Ms. Alberty noted that they still need pricing on some of the survey work and subdivision. Ms. Tarbell suggested adding an underclassmen project and earmarking another \$2000-\$3000. Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve earmarking \$10,000 of the transition funds to be used for the transition projects as described by Ms. Trimboli. Ms. Faenza seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

**IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

None needed.

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



The next meeting will be on February 13, 2019 at LES at 6:00.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 8:39p.m. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary