

## Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified Union School District

### Regular Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2018

Mount Holly School, Library

6:00 p.m.

#### I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

**Staff:** Meg Powden, John Davis, Cheryl Hammond, Craig Hutt Vater, Melissa Ryan

**Student Rep:** Ryan Boyle, Aaron Merrill

**Public:** Ralph Michael, Marissa Selleck

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

#### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Faenza **moved** to approve the agenda with the removal of recommendations for hire. Ms. Tarbell seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

##### A. October 10, 2018

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2018 meeting noting some corrections to attendance, and adjournment. Ms. Tarbell seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### IV. COMMENTS:

##### A. Board Comments

Mr. Buckley noted that he will not be able to meet the Innovations in Learning committee meetings on Tuesday. Ms. Hollebeek noted that the meeting dates are being discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Buckley cannot do Mondays or Tuesdays and Ms. Hollebeek cannot do the first Tuesday of the month.

Ms. Hollebeek reported that she reached out to the Bennington Village School but has not heard back yet. Ms. Tarbell noted that they spoke about Ranger Solar and inquired if they had any final information yet. Mr. Buckley reported that they are expected to go operational in December. Mr. Buckley noted that Mr. Schmidt, the select board chair, felt that the money from Ranger Solar was going to be earmarked for the school. Mr. Orzechowski suggested that they be added to the select board agenda in December. Mr. Buckley noted that it is likely that the Ludlow Select board will likely not be paying for many of the programs that they are currently. Mr. Hutt Vater advised that Ludlow is likely removing this support because it isn't fair that Ludlow subsidizes programs when Mt. Holly doesn't. He suggested approaching Mt. Holly for similar support.

Mr. Orzechowski reported that on 11/19 at 5:00 p.m. there will be an RVTC open house. He described some of the events happening in the classes.

##### B. Student Rep

Mr. Merrill reported that soccer is over and basketball will start after the Thanksgiving break. Today and yesterday were the reassessment days for the proficiency based education. Mr. Boyle

reported that the new PE teacher has been integrating well. Ms. Powden questioned what happens on the re-assessment days. Mr. Merrill reported that students that aren't proficient come in and work with the teacher to become proficient.

**C. Public Comments**

None.

**V. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:**

**A. Superintendent's Report**

Ms. Powden reminded the board about the core instructional practices introduced at the last meeting. Tonight she distributed the snapshot tool that the leadership team and administrative team developed this tool to help the teachers see what needs to be worked on in the classrooms. Mr. Davis reported that Ms. Trimboli and he have used it a few times and it is easy and efficient. He explained that it is not an evaluation, it is just a snapshot. It is effectively anonymous because it doesn't have a teacher or classroom listed. Each school will collect their data and use this data as a school evaluation so they can see what the trends are and if certain things may need to be reinforced. The principals determine their own walk-through schedule. It is primarily principals, but also teachers are invited to do so.

Ms. Powden reported that they are still in teacher negotiations and are currently in small group negotiations. She described this process with the 3 teachers, Mr. Leopold, Ms. Hammond, Ms. Powden and Ms. Mahusky representing the boards.

Ms. Powden reported that she has received a letter of retirement from Nancy Perry effective December 31. She has been working for MHS for 53 years. Mr. Hutt Vater thanked her for her many years of service on behalf of the students, families and community.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that Shelley Townsend is also retiring after over 30 years. She is done officially as of 11/1. The board gave them both a round of applause. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they are amazing people.

Mr. Buckley questioned if Ms. Powden had sought a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion about the ability to rent out the school building. Ms. Powden noted that she had sought that out, but hasn't heard back. There was discussion about only the voters being able to change the articles of agreement. Mr. Buckley requested that she also seek the proper language to put out to the voters to allow the district to rent out the school to an independent school as a possibility. Then the board can consider whether or not to present the voters with that question at the next town meeting. Mr. Orzechowski added this discussion to the next agenda. Ms. Powden will seek the language. Ms. Hammond noted that they also have to consider what is required to bring it up to code since they are currently grandfathered. There was also discussion about getting the cost of maintaining the building to determine the rent. Mr. Buckley noted that this is basically just getting the authority to make that decision.

Ms. Selleck noted that it would be beneficial for the students for continuity sake. She noted that there are a few different models for various enrollment levels. She also noted that the SU office renting some of the space would also be helpful for the independent school. Mr. Buckley noted that the updated science lab is a benefit to the building.

**B. Principal Reports**

Mr. Davis reported that the Veteran's Day program was well attended by all 3 schools. He thanked Andrea Sanford for her dedication to this project. The MS students held presentations on

equity, tolerance and acceptance and also did art presentations to promote caring, kindness and anti-bullying. The Women's Freedom Center, AWOD, Deb Harrison, Brittany Merrill and Marcia Dockum were instrumental in these presentations. As Mr. Merrill reported, the high school held re-assessment days to help students meet proficiencies. The MS and Elementary schools held parent teacher conferences.

He reported that he and Ms. Trimboli attended training on Harassment, Hazing and Bullying prevention. Ms. Trimboli also attended the Crisis Prevention Intervention recertification training. They are both working on teacher observation and evaluations. He reported that Ms. Trimboli and Mr. Hutt Vater have been conducting interviews for the guidance position and are now checking references. LES had an author visit (Michael Caduto) provided by the CLiF Grant awarded through the Fletcher Library. Mr. Hutt Vater and Ms. Trimboli visited Farm & Wilderness to explore possible program opportunities for the schools. Ms. Trimboli has also been attending Trauma Informed School workshops with David Mentlik.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that recently the school developed a damp smell. He was advised that it was a dead rodent. He has consulted with the VT Department of Health and they felt that it was the garden right outside the window and the plants that were removed are no longer absorbing the water and perhaps this was leeching into the foundation. Al removed that area and the smell seems to have dissipated, but sometimes it returns.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they could take off siding from the outside or take off sheet rock from the inside to investigate the wall cavity. There was discussion about the foundation and the slab and the crawl space in and near that area. Al has also dug in a trench with a perforated conduit to help with drainage.

There was discussion about the odor issue in the past at the kindergarten room. He described how they remediated the problem. He also discussed another odor issue that was caused by a small leak in the pipe in the boy's bathroom that was intermittently emitting septic gases.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that they have had student-led conferences for the parent teacher conference in the past. Part of the book study that the staff has been doing shows that students need to take an active role in their learning but leading the conferences. He advised that students beginning at age 4 are leading their conferences. Ms. Hollebeek described how her parent teacher conference was run with her pre-school student. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that the teachers worked with the students ahead of the meeting to determine how they would present it. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that there is a focus on growth mindset because everyone is different and the students are taking ownership of their learning.

Mr. Hutt Vater noted that they did receive some critical feedback from some parents indicating that sometimes there is a need for the parent and teacher to speak openly without the student there. He discussed some of the collaborative ways that parents and teachers and students can work together to surpass challenges. There are 2 parent teacher conferences per year. Mr. Hutt Vater noted that he would like to see a culminating conference at the end of the year. He suggested balancing exhibitions with conferences.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

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

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the policies as listed on the agenda (D01, D02, D10, E11, F01, F03, F11, F12, and F29). Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. Orzechowski introduced Ralph Michael who can help with the subdivision. Mr. Michael explained that they will have to follow the town zoning ordinance. He noted that he didn't know if the LES property has ever been surveyed specifically in regards to the Black River portion. He noted that they can't get a permit for subdivision without a survey of the entire parcel that is being subdivided. He also reported that they will need easements for access. He noted that they need to have a hearing after the survey and that takes a few months to do so. He also noted that surveys are difficult to do in the winter.

Ms. Powden reported that she had followed up with Ms. Goings and she recommended Mr. Michael, among some other engineers. They will have to put out an RFP for the engineering. She showed the board an illustration of the two parcels on the property.

Mr. Buckley noted that if they did get permission from the voters to rent the Black River building, they wouldn't need the subdivision, and doing so would also avoid significant engineering and subdivision costs. Mr. Michael noted that if there is a change in use of the building, it does need a state permit.

Mr. Michael noted that he could put together an estimate for the board, but that would be different from a bid. He noted that this process normally takes a few weeks. The field work is the shortest portion of that but also will account for about half the cost. There is also deed work to be done. Ms. Powden questioned if the board would like to seek bids for this work while they are also working out the language about the articles of agreement. There was clarification about whether they are seeking a land survey or a professional engineering bid. Mr. Michael can do both. He noted that some people are only land surveyors and others are just engineers. Ms. Hammond and Ms. Powden will work on developing an RFP. Ms. Tarbell questioned if it needs to be noted as an anticipated project. Ms. Hammond explained that the RFP states that the district has the right to refuse any and all bids.

Ms. Ryan questioned if the maintenance of the building will push the budget to a level that will require that they make other cuts in programming and staffing to avoid the penalty. She asked the board to consider the consequences. Ms. Hammond will review that information for the next meeting. The board consensus was to go out to bid as well as look into the language so they can review all options. Ms. Hammond also noted that if they have to put in a sprinkler system, it would be about \$200,000 and they would need to look into how long it would take to recoup.

There was discussion about the building not having to be brought up to code if they sell it, but the town gets the right of first refusal on the sale of the building. There was also a question about the "use of the building" and if it is used by the independent school for the same "use" if they would have to bring it up to code. There was discussion about renting to the SU and about the need for climate controlled storage. It was noted that if the SU offices were moved into the BR building, the use of the building remains the same and it wouldn't need to be subdivided. There was discussion about the realistic time frame for completion of the survey and engineering work being springtime. They discussed still moving forward with the bid soon for information purposes as well as to get in the queue if they choose to go that route. There was discussion about the bids for splitting utilities. Ms. Tarbell suggested having a meeting with a small group of people who can help develop a plan for the board to consider with an educated background. She suggested Mr. Tuomisto, someone from the town select board, someone from Ludlow Electric, an engineer, and others. Ms. Hammond noted that they should have that meeting sooner rather than later because they need that for budgeting purposes. Ms. Alberty suggested holding another Buildings and Grounds meeting that is specifically focused on the closing of Black River.

Mr. Buckley noted that in his informal discussions with Mr. Schmidt, it seems that the select board is somewhat in favor of accepting the building if offered.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. Policies First Read**

The board reviewed the policies included in the packet. Mr. Buckley noted that in H03 it covers many of the things that were discussed at the last meeting. He also noted that the policy states certain requirements and that the superintendent must create a fee schedule for the use. There was discussion about the school having a form for the building use. There is a fee for the use that is based on the custodian's time and a custodian must be on site during the use. There was discussion about the insurance coverage required for the building. The board requested a copy of the form for the next meeting.

The policies will be brought back at the next meeting for review and/or approval.

### **B. Current Financials**

Ms. Hammond noted the current financials were not included in the packet, but were emailed to the board members. Mr. Buckley questioned the operations having a \$21k deficit, and another line having a \$140,000 deficit. Mr. Buckley will email Ms. Hammond for the explanation of the various deficits. Ms. Hammond noted that the financials were a summary, and the details will come in January.

### **C. Budget Development**

Ms. Hammond explained the pie chart included in the packet, explaining that salaries and benefits account for the most of the budget. There was also discussion about the SU assessments including central office, special education and EEE services. She explained the summary of how things change from FY19 to FY20. There will be additional information from the state on 12/1 and 12/15 to finish those portions of the budget. There are some expenses that are currently unchanged, but will likely change over time. She explained the expenses that are being moved from the SU to the district budgets. She also discussed some of the new items in the budget—guidance to Mt. Holly (50/50 split with Ludlow) and a district sub.

Ms. Hammond also noted that there are some considerations for the budget, such as the underground oil tank (the current one was installed in 1956), Mt. Holly's request for a music room, BR/LES sub-division. BR/LES electrical work and a capital fund.

Ms. Powden distributed information that she received from Scott Murphy from the town of Ludlow. The expenses currently add up to about \$60,000, which is currently not in the budget. There was discussion about the select board meeting next Monday to discuss appropriations, so if anyone from the board can attend to represent the board in those discussions, it would be helpful. There was also discussion about the concern for equity for the towns subsidizing the schools.

There was discussion about the building use line since the rec used to use the gym, but this use was prior to the armory coming into use. The town offered to subsidize many of these things to help with the tax rate. There was discussion about the budget including the top four items on the list (Treasurer, Rubbish, Crossing Guard, Annual Booklets), but there is an offsetting revenue. The other items are paid for directly by the town and not included in the budget. There was discussion about some of the services that the town of Mt. Holly used to provide for the school that they aren't currently. Ms. Hammond also noted that for the Black River expenses that

Ludlow contributes, she used to send Mt. Holly a bill for their portion of expense, but they stopped paying it a few years ago.

Mr. Hutt Vater reported that he and Ms. Trimboli have discussed the guidance position. He explained that the services that Wendy has been providing are very important to Ludlow and instead of dropping Ludlow's down to .5 fte from .75 fte, they might want to consider both schools having a .75 fte guidance counselor. He discussed some of the clinical services that are being provided. There was discussion about creative ways to provide clinical services.

There was discussion about the changes in the technology assessment. In the past many of the technology components were in the SU budget and then assessed to the operating schools. This year, they reviewed where the various software programs are being used. Ms. Baker broke down the various types of software. This gives the schools a little more control over the use of the software. She reported that last year there was over \$29,000 budgeted for this portion of the assessment. This year it is listed directly in the budget under the various portions of the local budget.

Mr. Buckley questioned the \$10,000 increase in technology supplies. Ms. Hammond noted that Mr. DeLisle is recommending a significant amount of work on the Mt. Holly network to bring them up to where they need to be. There was discussion about the middle school now being coded with the high school as a result of the state wide chart of accounts change, which will also include a change of software. There is \$5000 planned for smartboards, printers, Chromebooks, headphones, printers, etc.

Ms. Hammond explained the state transportation aid going to the SU. The transportation is in the SU budget so the aid now goes there as well. This will reduce the transportation assessment. Ms. Powden noted that the merger support grant is anticipated to remain the same at \$173,000 per Brad James. Ms. Hammond also explained the change in the special education reimbursement (from 56% for the first \$50,000 to 60% for the first \$60,000).

Mr. Hutt Vater noted that between the three buildings, they have difficulty finding subs. One model they have looked at is hiring a baseline sub who is expected to be available every day and can also fill in in various interventions when not needed for substitution. There was discussion about how much the schools spent on substitutes in the past. Mr. Hutt Vater reported that this proposed salary is based on a licensed teacher.

Ms. Hammond reported that the health insurance is anticipated to increase 11.8%. The nursing expense is centralized in the budget. There was discussion about sharing her services. There was discussion about the central office assessment changing. There was also discussion about the contingency for teacher negotiations. Ms. Hammond reported that the technology staff is 1.8 fte and they work for all three schools. She noted that the budget in technology is a bit higher because of the work that needs to be done at Mt. Holly. She noted that the property insurance is billed to the district not to each school.

Ms. Hammond discussed the gym floor expense as well as the Ranger Solar revenue. She also reported on the food service program budget expense. She reported that the special education assessment is going to change. There was discussion about the PE and music split at MHS and LES. Ms. Hammond noted that she is shifting the math coach from salaries to purchased services since she is paid from TRSU and billed back to the SD. There was discussion about the school choice expense (under the limited school transfer program).

Ms. Hammond reported on the CPI strategy to provide interventions to help close the achievement gap between the general population and the FRL students. Ms. Hammond also reported on the mental health expense. There was discussion about the shared principal and assistant principal positions. There was discussion about the board reviewing the budget and presenting Ms. Hammond with questions. Ms. Hammond noted that the per pupil expense is currently \$17,678 with this draft. She explained that it will change as the state numbers come in. The budget is up 1.95% based on the state support grant, but down .4% based on the bottom line of expenses.

Ms. Tarbell noted that when expenses shift from the SU to the district it causes tension in the public. Ms. Powden reported that this was an intentional move in order to foster transparency. Because voters can't vote on the TRSU budget, this shift gives the voters more control over these expenses. There was discussion about how they articulate these changes in the budget to the public. The board suggested Ms. Hammond add in the \$60,000 from the town as a potential expense, as well as an amount in the capital fund. They would also like to see the 2 guidance positions (at .75 fee each). There was discussion about the administration developing the priorities from the consideration list. There was also discussion about the tax impact of the budget. The board discussed the oil tanks at each school.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Ryan noted that she appreciates that the board considers the students "all our kids", not LES students and MHS students. Mr. Hutt Vater echoed that sentiment and felt that the admin team works well together.

Ms. Selleck reported that the next BRIS committee meeting is tomorrow at 6:30. Anyone is welcome to come. They are having a professional fundraiser come to give guidance. The committee will be tomorrow evening by 6:15.

**IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**A. Black River Teachers and Staff Jobs Ending 2020 (1 VSA \$313 (A)(1)(b))**

This is tabled until December.

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

The next meeting will be on December 12 at BRHS at 6:00. The agenda will include the BR building. The B&G committee needs to meet before then.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 8:16 p.m. Ms. Hollebeek seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary