

# TRSU BOARD

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 4, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Zoom Access

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

**TRSU Board:** Rick Alexander, Dan Buckley, Joe Fromberger, Jeff Hance, Paul Orzechowski, Dave Venter

**Other GMUSD Board members:** Wayne Wheelock

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Lauren Fierman, Michael Ripley, Mary Barton, Angela Hurd, Sue Willis, Jennifer Parks, Deb Beaupre, Karla Waite, Craig Hutt Vater, Lauren Baker

**Public:** Eric Chatterjee

Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mr. Orzechowski **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of Election of TRSU treasurer under new business. Mr. Fromberger questioned if the SU has received the approval of the AOE to finalize offering the contract to Ms. Fierman. Ms. Fierman noted that her updated license was waiting on the background checks, but they were updated last week and the contract has been sent to her. The motion to approve the agenda as amended carried without opposition.

### III. APPROVE MINUTES:

#### A. May 7, 2020 Regular Meeting

Mr. Buckley **moved** to approve the minutes from the May 7, 2020 meeting. Mr. Orzechowski discussed the time of the meeting having been called to order. It was after the joint meeting with the LMH and GM boards. The motion carried with no opposition.

#### B. May 13, 2020 Special Meeting

Mr. Buckley **moved** to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2020 special meeting. Mr. Orzechowski noted the correction to the title to reflect that it was a special meeting. The motion carried without opposition.

### IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Orzechowski thanked all the employees of the TRSU, GMUSD and LMHUUSD for all the hard work that they have been doing during this crisis.

### V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Ms. Powden advised that this is her last TRSU meeting. Earlier she asked Mary Moeykens to send out the letter on race and equity that the VSBA, SBA and VPA had jointly created. She also advised that she recently received a letter from Secretary French with similar concerns about addressing racial equity. She noted that there is legislation relating to ethnic and racial equity standards. This act recognizes the contributions of diverse ethnic and social groups and reviews the history. The various agencies want the school districts to be cognizant of what is going on in the nation, and to be sure that they are delivering instruction that is inclusive of all students. There is programming that may not be inclusive and there are data that show that students of color are more apt to be disciplined than white

students. They need to develop curriculum and modify instructional practices to be more inclusive in nature.

The last day of school is June 15. PD for the teachers and staff will be provided on June 16, 17 and 18. She described some of the work that would be done during the in-service days. They will also be looking into what the plan is for the coming school year, including looking at a hybrid learning model. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduations are fairly firm. Senator Sanders will be speaking at BRHS's graduation. She thanked those responsible for getting him to be the speaker. She discussed the need for mentors for the professional staff, including for Ms. Fierman.

Mr. Buckley questioned the discussion about testing students in August. Ms. Powden advised that they expect to talk again with Secretary French in the coming weeks and hopes that this will be discussed then. Mr. Venter questioned if there are any decision points about the plans for August for school. Ms. Powden advised that the Whole School/Whole Child committee met recently to talk about the conditions for learning in the fall, and what they need to make sure are in place for students and staff to return to school safely. She advised that there are only 4 COVID-19 cases from 0-9 year olds and 31 cases for 10-19 year olds. The schools will follow the guidance regarding social distancing and cloth masks.

Mr. Hance questioned what is happening with the graduations. Ms. Powden advised that for the BRHS group, there will be 2 families in each classroom, socially distanced from the other family group. Senator Sanders will have recorded his speech, then the salutatorian and valedictorian will walk to the podium separately to deliver their speeches. The students will then be called one at a time with their families to come to the stage. The ceremony will be streamed.

Ms. Fierman advised that Mr. Ripley is taking the much of the lead on this planning for this. The plan is to maintain no more than 25 in a single space. The students will walk across the stage. Each student can bring 2 car loads, up to 25 people, with them. Each set of 2 cars will be 6 ft from each other. Each student will be given a number for their order. The cars will drive up to the front of the circle. The students and family will exit the car. The student will walk across the stage and the family will stand in front of the car. Then they will re-enter the car and drive back. There is a 2<sup>nd</sup> option for the students to walk from the school. They are assigning parking spaces. The ceremony will be live streamed. There will be speakers on the stage who will be live streamed. The students will also be giving a speech. There was discussion about the senior awards. There was discussion about the seniors possibly getting to choose their "walk partners"—another student that they get to park next to someone. Ms. Fierman advised that the class officers will be parked together, and they will be discussing ways for other students to be able to park near each other. There was discussion about the graduation plan having been developed by students and administrators. Ms. Fierman advised that the most important thing for the students was to be able to walk across the stage to receive their diploma.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. Election of TRSU Treasurer**

Mr. Fromberger advised that he would be willing to serve again if his colleagues feel he is deserving. Mr. Buckley **nominated** Mr. Fromberger as the TRSU secretary. There were no other nominations. Mr. Fromberger was elected without opposition. Mr. Fromberger thanked the board for the honor.

### **B. Recommendation for New Hires**

Ms. Powden advised that she has a recommendation for the English Language Learner (ELL) teacher position (.4 fte). Mary Sell is currently a .5 fte ELL teacher in Orange Southwest, so Ms. Barton felt that she will work well in this role. Ms. Powden gave some information about

her education and teaching background. Ms. Barton advised that she has some good experience in this area and has relations with the AOE in this area. There are currently 7 students in the SU who will qualify for this position. Mr. Venter questioned if this was a replacement position. Ms. Barton advised that this is a replacement position for someone who resigned. Ms. Powden advised that this is a \$21,494 position. The last person in this position was making about \$20,094 in this role.

Mr. Alexander questioned if there is a reason that this position needs to be filled right now. Ms. Powden advised that there are students who have English as their 2<sup>nd</sup> language that need to be served. Ms. Powden questioned what the scope of the job is. Ms. Barton discussed how this teacher will help the student and will assist the teacher in teaching to an ELL student. Ms. Fierman advised that the school is required to provide these services to ELL students. There is a scale that students are measured against to determine this need. When they test out of this program, they no longer need the ELL services. Ms. Barton advised that there is annual testing for these students. There was discussion about these services being mandatory. Mr. Venter questioned who would provide these mandatory services if they didn't hire someone to do it. Ms. Powden advised that without Ms. Sell, there wouldn't be anyone in the district qualified to provide the services. There was discussion about the ELL students having Chinese, French, Russian and Japanese backgrounds.

Mr. Venter **moved** to approve hiring Ms. Sell as a .4 fte ELL teacher. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **C. Financial Update**

Ms. Hammond advised that she is expecting to have a savings in central office and transportation, but an overage in special education. She explained that they will have to wait for the time studies to determine the reimbursement. She discussed the para-educators who provided other services during the early days of COVID still being eligible for reimbursement.

Ms. Hammond advised that the CARES funding has been discussed at great length at the state level, but they still haven't finalized this. There was about \$24,000 in technology, as well as expenses in transportation, food service, cleaning and child care. The business manager association is pushing to receive the funding by the end of the fiscal year, but that is still up in the air. There was discussion about what the money can be used for. There will be some expenses for the reopening of school, but those are not finalized just yet.

Mr. Wheelock questioned how much money was saved by refinancing the loan on the buses. Ms. Hammond hasn't received all of the paperwork yet. She anticipates being able to share this information for the next meeting.

#### **D. Cash Flow Concerns**

Ms. Hammond advised that last April she was concerned about this and is bringing it to the board's attention again. They are looking at the last pay period, which is the largest payout. There is about \$32,000 in the bank and about \$160,000 in receivables, and payroll is anticipated to be about \$210,000. The cash flow will be tight and the biggest reason is due to special education. They don't receive the last reimbursement until September. The only funding they will have is from assessments.

Mr. Fromberger questioned if the towns have remitted all of the moneys that they owe the school districts. Ms. Hammond advised that the statute indicates that the towns are required to submit all their collected funds within 20 days of the tax collection date, and up to 120 after

that date for delinquent funds, but no later than the end of the school year. She has been working with the towns and some of them are not submitting their final payment until June 30. The towns are following statute. Mr. Fromberger advised that if the towns withholding the funds causes the district to have to borrow funds, the interest from this loan falls to all of the towns, including those that have paid in a timely manner. Ms. Hammond clarified that the school districts won't have to borrow, the towns will. Ms. Hammond advised that the SU will assess the school districts. They will then hold the AP payments until the June 30 payments from the town come in.

Ms. Hammond suggested meeting with the town managers to discuss payments, such as what Ms. Hance had suggested at a prior meeting so that neither the school districts nor the town are burdened with paying moneys they don't have yet, except as is unavoidable.

Mr. Buckley noted that Ludlow paid the U39 board early on a tax bill at one point in the past. Ms. Hammond advised that there are some towns that will work with the district and others that won't. Ms. Hammond felt that Mr. Johnson and Ms. Cook will help with the LMH district. She advised that she will be calling in every payment due up to the payroll date.

Mr. Venter noted that the MHS board took out the tax anticipation loan every year. He questioned if there any way that the SU can do that. Ms. Hammond advised that the SU can not borrow money, only the school district can. Ms. Hammond advised that Cavendish is the town that is waiting until the end of the school year. Ms. Hammond advised that she is unsure that there is anything that can be done short of assessing the school districts to cover any shortfalls in payroll.

There was discussion about the options if Cavendish doesn't pay the school district. Ms. Hammond advised that as long as she can cover payroll, she can hold accounts payable. She advised that the cash flow is a struggle at the SU. Mr. Fromberger advised that this is an ongoing problem with payments from Cavendish. He is concerned that this kind of behavior causes the towns that pay the bills on time to incur an additional expense due to the behavior of others. Ms. Hammond will be setting up a meeting between herself, Ms. Powden, Ms. Fierman, the Cavendish Town Manager and the Cavendish Town Treasurer, and the Board Chair.

#### **E. Director of Curriculum**

Ms. Powden reminded the board that Mr. Eppolito has resigned his position at the end of the year. She thanked him for his work and highlighted some of the things that he has helped with regards to moving the curriculum forward. She has met with Ms. Fierman and they anticipate moving forward with the job posting this week. They would like to look for someone who has experience with distance learning or who is willing to learn more about it. Ms. Fierman advised that they didn't automatically determine that they needed to fill the position. They discussed the needs of the SU. She reminded the board that her background is as a curriculum director. She is not comfortable leaving this position open. The SU needs someone who has (or can develop) an expertise developing a K-6 proficiency-based curriculum. This is not something that she can take on with the other duties that she is taking on. She also advised that having someone in each building working on this isn't feasible since they are trying to develop the curriculum that is coherent between each school. The other piece is that the teachers all need to have continued assistance in becoming the best possible remote educators. This needs thoughtful and intentional planning. The interview questions will include specific plans on how to develop the teachers' and students' skills with remote learning. Ms. Fierman will be developing the search committee within the next few weeks. She discussed the proposed composition of the search committee.

Mr. Orzechowski asked that the position posting be shared with the board members.

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There was discussion about the superintendent mentor position and the contract needed for the position. Mr. Orzechowski will sign the contract assuming the board consensus was to agree. There was discussion about the need for the mentor, and the role. Ms. Fierman advised that the mentor that was recommended is Jacqueline Wilson, the BRSU superintendent who is retiring this year. There was discussion about the mentor position being a stipended position--\$2000. Ms. Powden advised that it is an expectation that any incoming superintendent (or other professional staff) should have a mentor. The individual to fill that position was recommended to her and she has met with the individual. Ms. Fierman advised that the stipends run from \$2000-\$6000. The decision of what to offer for the stipend was up to the SU, and based on the budget, they felt that this was an appropriate amount. Mr. Fromberger **moved** to approve the mentorship contract in the amount of \$2000 for the superintendent, and for the chair to sign the contract on the board's behalf. The motion carried without opposition.

**VIII. NEXT MEETING:**

There was discussion about whether or not to hold a July meeting. The board members felt that with all the things changing in the SU and the districts and with the various funding challenges that they should have the meeting. The next regular TRSU meeting will be Thursday July 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., via Zoom. There is a possibility that the Director of Curriculum may be a discussion at that meeting. There was discussion about doing a salary survey and interviews quickly. This discussion may end up requiring a special meeting in late July depending on the candidate pool.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Venter **moved** to adjourn at 7:09 p.m. The motion carried without opposition. The board members thanked Ms. Powden and wished her luck in her next chapter.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary