

# TRSU BOARD

## Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 13, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Cavendish Town Elementary School, Art Room

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

**Board:** Wayne Wheelock, Fred Marin, Joe Fromberger, Mary Alberty, Dan Buckley, Kelly Tarbell

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Mary Barton, Katherine Fogg, Lauren Fierman, Deb Beaupre, Lauren Baker, Craig Hutt Vater, Todd Parah, Karen Trimboli, Mike Eppolito, Venissa White, Mary Moeykens

**Other Board Members:** Rick Alexander

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham, Dave Johnson, Eric Chatterjee

Mr. Fromberger called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He invited those present to introduce themselves.

### II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Buckley **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of superintendent comments under new business. The motion carried unanimously.

### III. APPROVE MINUTES:

#### A. January 2, 2019 Regular Meeting

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes from the January 2, 2019 meeting. The motion carried with all in favor except Ms. Tarbell who abstained.

### IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Eric Chatterjee advised that he works for Okemo Valley TV but his comments were his and not the opinion of OVTV. In his work with OVTV, that puts him in the schools. In addition, he volunteers with the After-School Program and has for some time. He is opposed to the requirement that he be fingerprinted in order to continue volunteering unless the administration can guarantee that no one will keep his biometric data on file after he is done volunteering with the district. He advised that he has not been fingerprinted in all his time volunteering for ASP since he isn't ever left alone with students.

Ms. White advised that VT State rules require that only those who will be alone with students to need to be fingerprinted. They ensure that non-fingerprinted individuals are not left alone with students. He requested an assurance that his fingerprints will not remain in the SU's or law enforcement's databases after he is done working with the SU. Ms. Powden advised that she will work with him and the SU's human resources department on those records. Ms. Moeykens advised that the SU doesn't receive a copy of his finger prints, they just get a record of him not having a record. He noted his concerns with the police station having his fingerprints. His domestic partner is a fingerprint expert and he is aware that latent prints can be read incorrectly.

### V. NEW BUSINESS:

#### A. Superintendent Comments

Ms. Powden advised that she has submitted her letter of resignation today effective June 30, 2020. Ms. Alberty thanked her for her hard work and helping them through this difficult year. Ms. Alberty **moved** to accept her resignation. Mr. Buckley seconded. Mr. Marin expressed his regrets and thanked her for her service. The motion carried unanimously.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

### **A. FY20/21 Budget**

Ms. Powden advised that the last draft of the budget was approximately 9.5% and the board asked them to bring it down to 5%. She commended the administrative team for their work in getting the budget down to that level—5.32%. Ms. Powden advised that in the packet, there is a summary sheet which cuts personnel and some services.

There was discussion about closing the Roost which would save \$9000 (\$6000 in rent and \$3000 in utilities). She has asked the principals to look at their spaces to see where some displaced people could be moved to. Mr. Buckley advised that LMH may be considering adding transportation back into their budget, which will increase this transportation budget. He advised that it would be directly billed back to the LMH district. Ms. Hammond advised that even if there is an offsetting revenue, it will still impact the bottom line of the budget. Ms. Hammond explained how the budget bottom line is calculated and how it would still show an increase even with offsetting revenue.

There was discussion about a special education student who required transportation who has since moved out of the area since budgeting began. Mr. Fromberger noted that the GMUSD board has requested to see this budget before the TRSU board approves it. There was discussion about the timing in order to get the district budgets approved. He suggested that the finance committee is meeting tomorrow evening, and if the finance committee is satisfied with those numbers this board can approve the budget after the local boards approve theirs. He advised that statutorily this board doesn't need to have a budget in place until June 30, but the districts can use this as a base for their budgeting purposes. Ms. Hammond advised that this board's decision significantly impacts the LMH budget and whether they can add transportation back into the budget or not, and delaying this decision has a significant impact on that board.

Ms. Hammond advised that there is another proposed budget draft that allows them to purchase a bus for Ludlow (whether new or from the town of Ludlow). This budget draft shows a payment of \$18,000 for the bus as a "middle of the road" amount. The \$140,000 in the budget represents 2 buses—both with morning and afternoon transportation. Ms. Trimboli advised that they will look at the budget numbers that are approved and work within them to determine how many routes they can do. Ms. White advised that there are 5-10 students who are not accessing ASP because they don't have access to transportation since Ludlow has cut transportation. Ms. White advised that ASP is looking at other options, such as a van for these limited students. She has concerns about emergency transportation to get students from West Hill to the school during a thunder storm. There was discussion about there being anywhere from 35-60 students at ASP at any particular day. Mr. Buckley advised that he was questioning to see if a smaller bus would work for them.

Ms. Hammond noted that the board had asked about the savings in the programs. She reported that they purchased the van for \$37,000, but if they had to hire out that service, they would have paid over \$70,000. The intensive needs program that began last year has 4 students in it anticipated for 2021. Tuition would be \$500,000 plus \$140,000 transportation, and this tuition doesn't cover an OT/PT/SLP or a para-educator. With this program in the budget, they saved over \$380,000 in the budget. There are 3 students aimed for the social emotional program next year.

These students are out of district this year. When they come back to the program, they will save about \$75,000 from paying the tuition and transportation to serve these students in other locations. Ms. Hammond advised that there are 2 new out of district placements, and there are ODP services for them which adds to the SU's costs. These special education costs are the responsibility of the SU, not the town, based on the assessment methodology. Ms. Barton advised that the SU is billed for all of the special education costs. Those are assessed to the districts based on child count. Ms. Hammond advised that this normally happens with all the districts, but with BRHS closing, it is a bigger number this year. Ms. Hammond shared information about the expenses that were mandatory versus discretionary. Ms. Hammond discussed the portion of the budget that is counted as building usage and utilities which is assessed back to each district along with the other expenses.

Ms. Tarbell questioned the cuts to the staff that are listed in the summary page. These cuts are being presented new at this meeting. The data specialist position was at a .5 fte and they had originally asked for a 1.0 fte increase and now they are cutting it completely. Ms. Powden advised that they had given the board the best budget at the last meeting, but the board needed additional cuts. She suggested that the board needs to have a discussion with the new superintendent about the expectations with only 4 days of work per week.

Ms. Powden advised that they are bringing the budgets that the board requested. She recommended that the board approve the budget that has the LMH transportation in it. She believes that transportation is a matter of equity. She also feels that the boards need to have this budget in place before they can approve their district budgets. There was discussion about the Ludlow transportation situation with Mt. Holly. Mr. Buckley advised that if the budget with the transportation is approved and the town of Ludlow decides to provide transportation for another year, there would be a surplus. He also noted that transportation will likely cause LMH to go over the penalty threshold.

Ms. Tarbell **moved** to approve the budget draft version 4.1 for \$6,757,713 which represents a 7.08% increase. Mr. Buckley seconded. Ms. Fogg noted that the principals would like to express their concern with a part time superintendent. There is one less school, but they are far apart. She felt that they wouldn't have enough support with a part time superintendent. Ms. Fierman agreed and understood the rationale. Ms. Fierman noted that if they are looking to reduce costs, they can still do that with a full-time position but keep it at .8 of Ms. Powden's salary. She suggested that the board consider a lower salary for a full-time position. Ms. Moeykens noted that she can't comprehend the superintendent doing their job with less hours. She also noted that the new superintendent won't have the same support needed with the cuts they are making to her position as the executive assistant. Mr. Fromberger advised that he would hope that the hiring committee and board will keep that in mind when considering who they hire in the future.

Mr. Fromberger advised that he will not be voting on the budget because he has been directed by his board to not do so. Mr. Marin advised that he didn't see how it could be cut any further. Mr. Fromberger advised that he felt that they might have a better version if they wait. Ms. Alberty advised that she wouldn't be able to support this budget until the LMH board has seen it. Ms. Powden advised that they will not make the deadlines unless this board approves a budget tonight. The motion failed with a tie—Ms. Tarbell, Mr. Buckley and Mr. Marin voting in favor, and Mr. Wheelock, Mr. Fromberger and Ms. Alberty voting it down. Ms. Powden advised that without a TRSU budget, the administration will have to bring a couple different versions to each board meeting to approve the budget. There was discussion about the board members having the opportunity to come to the TRSU meetings and view the budgets. There was discussion about the GM Finance committee meeting tomorrow, the LMH board on Wednesday, then the GM board

meeting on Thursday. Ms. Alberty suggested that this board could approve the TRSU budget on Thursday evening after the LMH board and the GM finance committee has reviewed the budgets. Some board members will have to participate via Zoom. This board will meet at 5:30 p.m on 1/16 at GMUHS.

Ms. Trimboli questioned if this board will be prepared to deal with this budget if the GM finance committee doesn't support this budget. She noted that she was disappointed with this board for not taking action on it tonight since it is holding up major decisions at LMH. There was discussion about both boards having representation at this board meeting and the other board members having the ability to attend the meeting.

Ms. Hammond noted that they will be presenting the GM board with the lower budget (without the LMH transportation) since it is not their decision about the transportation and the LMH transportation will have no financial impact on GM.

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Trimboli appreciated everything that Ms. Powden has taught her. She felt that Ms. Powden has been a model mentor to her and has pulled all the principals and directors together so that they are now thinking about "all students" rather than "my students". The public gave a round of applause. Mr. Eppolito thanked her as well for doing this thankless work that the public doesn't get to see, particularly during a difficult Act 46 process. He advised that the board and public rarely gets to see all the work that she does with kids at the center and making sure that our kids get the best education. She was given another round of applause. Ms. Moeykens advised that she was sad to see Ms. Powden leaving and she has heard some bad mouthing in the communities. She felt that this is uncalled for and that Ms. Powden does everything that she can for the children. She was thankful for the opportunity to work with her. She asked to be able to sit in on some interviews given the closeness with which she will work with that person. She asked the board to consider not cutting the PR piece out of the budget, even if they have to cut the amount of pay, because it will be important to focus on the PR with a new superintendent. Ms. Fierman advised that she took this job because of the connection she felt with Ms. Powden during the interviews and her unwavering focus on the students in all her work. She felt that the boards don't often get to see the teaching and learning side of the superintendent work.

**VIII. NEXT MEETING:**

The next special meeting will be Thursday, January 16, 2019 at Green Mountain Union High School at 5:30 p.m. The next regular meeting will be Thursday, February 6, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. location LES.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 7:08 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary