

TRSU BOARD

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 6, 2018

6:00 p.m.

TRSU-The Roost

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Board: Joe Fromberger, Fred Marin, Mary Alberty, Paul Orzechowski, Dan Buckley, Marilyn Mahusky

Staff: Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Mary Barton, Lauren Baker, Lauren Fierman, Donna Hudkins, Michael Eppolito, Lilly French, Nancy Perry

Public: Shawn Cunningham

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to elect Mr. Orzechowski as the temporary chair for this meeting. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Orzechowski called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of retirements, transition funds, and teacher/support staff negotiations. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

III. APPROVE MINUTES:

A. November 1, 2018

Mr. Marin **moved** to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2018 meeting. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

V. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:

Ms. Powden reported that this past Tuesday, the staff held a professional development afternoon during the early release. Mr. Eppolito worked with the elementary teachers on social studies curriculum. Ms. Powden reminded the board about the continuous improvement plan as part of the educational quality standards adopted by the state. Last Friday, the teacher leaders and administration trained on moving into phase two, which focuses on needs assessments and problems of practice. They have developed an area that they need to address: increasing achievement for students living in poverty. Their focus is on closing that achievement gap in language arts and math. She described some of the processes.

Mr. Eppolito shared with the board the teachers' impressions of Ogment. The Ogment team came to the area, but there were problems with the location, projection system and the learning environment, but they did the best they could. Ogment conducted a survey and Mr. Eppolito shared the results. The first question was "what do you like about Ogment". He reported that the teachers had just enough time to log into the system. He noted that the staff has already started to see the possibilities with this program even after only about 90 minutes of training. He shared the results of the first impression of the program, which was in the middle of the road. The staff seems mildly interested in using the program at this point. Mr. Eppolito reported that he shared the responses with Ms. Mahusky and she can share the responses with the rest of the board.

Mr. Eppolito shared the concerns that the teachers have with Ogment. Mr. Buckley requested to see this same survey as the teachers work more in the program. There was discussion about the amount of time that the teachers were able to spend in Ogment. The staff was able to spend about 20 minutes experimenting in the program. The program includes the AOE suggested themes as well as the standards and performance indicators. The teacher takes the performance indicator and then builds out lessons and resources as well as assessments. If the teacher puts in a lesson plan, it can be shared with other teachers in other TRSU schools. There was discussion about the continuity between years of teaching. In the past the teacher before you developed their curriculum, but took it with them when they left. They have made attempts to provide continuity in the past, but it's been placed in a binder and sometimes abandoned. Mr. Eppolito noted that in the past the teacher felt that their curriculum was "theirs" and they take it with them if they leave. This program allows him as the curriculum coordinator to keep the curriculum with the SU.

Ms. Alberty questioned if other schools in VT use this program. Mr. Eppolito reported that no other VT schools use this program. He is unsure how many other school systems use this program. There was discussion about all elementary school teachers being required to participate.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Policies, Second Read/Approval

Mr. Marin reported that the policy committee recommends adoption. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve policies D01, D02, D10, E11, F01, F03, F11, F12 and F29. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Consistent Benefits-Non-Union Bargaining Staff

Ms. Hudkins shared information about the benefits for the non-bargaining personnel in the TRSU. Ms. Hammond noted that the goal is to make consistent benefits across classes of non-bargaining classes of employees. The classes of employee are administrative staff, specialty staff, certified professionals, and professional staff. Ms. Hammond explained that most of the employees will benefit from this alignment, and the few that will lose in this process could be issued a slightly higher raise. Mr. Buckley noted that dental is not listed as a benefit in this process. Ms. Powden noted that this wasn't budgeted for, and this process was aimed at aligning days off. Ms. Hudkins noted that from an administrative point of view, having different amounts of days off is an administrative nightmare. Mr. Fromberger noted that he felt that this was an attempt to equalize everyone up, not equalize toward the middle. Ms. Hammond noted that she has not yet determined what the financial impact is. Mr. Orzechowski noted that this proposal reflects 122 more days off. Ms. Mahusky noted that they would need to have more financial information before they could approve it. Ms. Hammond noted that she will bring that back at the next meeting.

Ms. Mahusky questioned how they would determine the financial value of the additional days and how they would develop the formula for compensating for changes. There was discussion about the urgency of this process and the business office would like to get these benefits aligned sooner rather than later.

C. Treasurer

Ms. Powden reported that she spoke with Emily Simmons at the AOE who directed her to title 17 section 2647 on incompatible offices. She brought it back to Ms. Simmons because it doesn't say that a board member can't be a treasurer for that board. She then directed Ms. Powden to title 16 section 324 which talks about the term of office being July 1-June 30 and the board members elect the treasurer, and section 325 that discusses removal of a treasurer. Ms. Simmons feels that

it is implied that a treasurer wouldn't be part of the board. Mr. Fromberger noted that he didn't intend to resign from the position. He noted that he understands one of the concerns being the treasurer signing their own orders for payment. Mr. Fromberger noted that he does not sign the warrants.

D. Transition Funds

Ms. Hammond shared the expended funds from the transition funds. There was discussion about the VSBA consultants Diane Watson and Steve Dale having been funded from the transition funds. Mr. Fromberger noted that the SU has received 2 payments from the state: \$20,000, and \$130,000. His analysis indicates that they have expended \$35,579.00 in funds from this \$150,000, which leaves 114,421 to be split between the districts.

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to authorize the expenditure of the funds in his analysis \$35,579.00 and instruct the administration to remit the balance of \$114,421.00 to the two school districts in equal parts forthwith. Mr. Buckley seconded. Ms. Hammond noted that the \$14,096.90 that the TRSU spent on ivisions was to build the new districts in the accounting system. There was discussion about the funds listed on Mr. Fromberger's analysis being assumed to be directly attributable to the transition. Ms. Mahusky noted that it seems that Mr. Fromberger feels that the ivisions expense is not directly attributable to the transition. Ms. Hammond advised that it is attributable because they needed to build the two new districts as a result of the mergers. They would not have had to spend those funds without the merger. If the \$14,000 were included, that would leave about \$103,000 to be split between the districts. Mr. Buckley noted that if the expense is out of the TRSU budget it will still be absorbed by the districts.

Ms. Hammond noted that each district is called a connection group in Ivisions and when a new connection group is built, there were expenses associated with that. She explained that they were already using ivisions. This expense is the cost to set up the new districts. Ms. Mahusky **moved** to amend Mr. Fromberger's motion to include the cost of the ivisions expense in the analysis (\$14,096.90), thus approving the expenditure of 49,675.90 leaving 100,324.10 to be split equally between the districts. Mr. Orzechowski seconded. The motion to amend the original motion carried with one vote against. The amended motion then carried with one vote against.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Recommendation for Hire

Ms. Powden noted that she and Ms. Barton have agreed to offer the position as an interim special educator. The autism special educator resigned and they shifted the special educator from LES into the autism program. They agreed to hire Eileen Guyette as the interim special educator at LES. Ms. Barton reported on her educational and teaching history. They are excited to offer this position to her.

B. Current Financials

Ms. Hammond distributed the summary financials to the board. She noted that there are no big changes or concerns at this point. She explained that next month they will go line by line for the detailed quarter-end report.

C. FY20 Budget 2nd draft

Ms. Hammond reminded the board that they had discussed moving Mr. Eppolito's position out of the grant and into the budget. She noted that for every teacher's position that is funded by a grant, they have to contribute 11.5% into the teachers' retirement fund, but she was just notified that this contribution will now be 19.5%. Ms. Powden noted that they are hoping to use the grant for instructional coaches for curriculum. There was discussion about these positions also having to

make that contribution. Ms. Powden noted that they weren't attempting to create a savings, but rather to move Mr. Eppolito into the budget funding and use the grant money to provide services that directly impact students. There was discussion about the grant funding being reduced two years ago and therefore the positions need to be funded locally. Ms. Powden noted that the only addition would be a half time literacy coach who would work in all the schools, and the increase of a .4 fte math coach to .5 fte math coach. They are projecting over \$350,000 in title 1 funds and over \$120,000 in Title II funds. Currently the grants are funding 60% of Mr. Eppolito's position, and .4 fte high school literacy coach and .4 elementary math coach. The proposal is to move Mr. Eppolito's 60% out of the grant, add a K-6 .5 fte literacy coach and increase the .4 fte math coach to a .5 fte math coach. There was discussion about the financial impact to the budget for the shift being almost \$53,000 for the 60% of the director of curriculum position. This amount includes the benefits as well. There was discussion about the math and literacy coaches coaching teachers, not students.

Mr. Orzechowski questioned the approximate 100% equipment increase in the superintendent's office. Ms. Hammond indicated that this figure was for new computers. She explained that they are working on a replacement rotation schedule. Ms. Baker indicated that the computers being replaced are over 5 years old. There was discussion about the liability insurance under the superintendent's office is general liability and errors and omissions. The property insurance is under another section. Ms. Hammond noted that the liability figure is based on what they spent last year. There was discussion about the telephone expense and the erate credits have dropped to 0 on the telephone portion. Ms. Hammond noted that the budget amount is reduced by the technology amount, but so is the revenue. She noted that without the technology in the budget it is an 8.65% increase. With the current budget and technology removed, it is only a .86% increase. Ms. Hammond reminded the board that there was an 11.78% increase in health insurance, as well as shifting \$60,000 out of the grant for Mr. Eppolito's position. The budget reflects an \$85,109 increase if they hadn't moved the technology out of the central office budget.

There was discussion about whether they can cut this budget anywhere. Mr. Orzechowski noted that teacher coaches are very helpful. Ms. Mahusky noted that these positions are directly related to student outcomes because it helps the teachers become better teachers. There was discussion about how many new teachers there are across the district. There was discussion about attrition caused by fewer students. Ms. Powden reported that over the years there has been a reduction in staff. Mr. Eppolito reported that 35% of the teaching staff has 1-5 years in this SU. Mr. Marin reminded the board that the new teachers aren't the only ones that need coaching. With the new mandates and curriculum and educational quality standards, even seasoned teachers need coaching. There was discussion about the erate expense going down.

The board discussed the technology budget shift to the local district budgets. There was discussion about justifying the expense. Ms. Mahusky noted that with the technology in the local budget, the GM budget is up 6% in the first draft. Mr. Fromberger noted that the boards have promised their voters less taxes and more efficiencies as a result of Act 46, but that isn't coming to fruition. Ms. Mahusky noted that they can answer the question of why these expenses need to be in the budget. Mr. Fromberger noted that that may be, but some voters will still vote no because they can't afford it. Ms. Mahusky noted that it is their job to sell it to the public and explain to the voters why it is important.

Ms. Mahusky noted that one of the reasons that they aren't receiving the fullest extent of the savings is because they didn't merge into one district. She noted that the biggest way to see the savings would have been a single district with one high school. The board discussed the CAES enrollment beginning at 197 last year and ending at 220, and this year they are at 240. There was

discussion about some decreases happening after BRHS closing. The board discussed the 130 students at BRHS.

Ms. Mahusky questioned if they wanted to advise the SU to cut the budget by a certain percentage. There was discussion about whether or not the technology should be moved out of this budget, and whether the budget could be level funded. There was discussion about the technology being moved out in order to give the voters more control of the expenditures. There was discussion about also reducing the technology budget.

There was discussion about what happens if one district doesn't approve a budget with the technology piece in it. There was discussion about what can be separated. Ms. Alberty **moved** to shift the technology back into the SU budget. There were no seconds, and the motion failed. Mr. Buckley noted that that shift would reflect an increase of 8.6% and suggested that the board should suggest a budget increase of about 2.5%. Mr. Fromberger noted that the CPI increase is 2.3%. There was discussion about what amount of increase could be "sold" to the voters. Ms. Powden noted that there is technology that is used every day by both school districts and suggested that they could keep the everyday technology expenses in the local budgets, but keep the Ogment expense in the SU budget since it is still new and being tested. Ms. Baker suggested that they could keep all of the newer software in the SU.

Mr. Buckley noted that they still want to see a reduction in this budget with or without the shift in technology. Ms. Mahusky suggested that they shift all but Ogment out of the SU and then level fund the budget. The board discussed how would this happen. The board discussed the districts seeing what their budgets are with the technology in it at the district level. The board needs to approve a budget at the next meeting. Mr. Buckley suggested that they need to agree on an increase to this budget based on the technology staying in the budget (even if it is then shifted to individual districts). Mr. Orzechowski suggested coming up with a number increase that they can take to the local districts for their budgets. Mr. Fromberger reminded the board that there is currently a placeholder in the local budgets for the SU assessments, so the changes at this board will not necessarily change the local budgets dramatically.

The board members polled themselves about whether they would like to keep the technology in the SU budget or not. Mr. Buckley felt it should. Mr. Marin felt that all of the known, everyday technology pieces should shift to the local districts and keep the new software at the SU level. Mr. Orzechowski and Ms. Alberty agreed. Mr. Marin noted that they have no choice but to pay for the technology whether it is assessed or billed directly. Ms. Mahusky noted that the only major increases in this budget are the shift of Mr. Eppolito's position, the .6 fte in Title coaches, and the health insurance increase. They can't do anything about the health insurance increase, and the other two pieces directly impact student achievement. Ms. Mahusky proposed that they take the technology out of this budget and shift to the local budgets, keep Ogment in the SU budget, and then level fund the rest of the budget. There was discussion about this shift to the local budget being absorbed by the transition funds. Mr. Fromberger supported this suggestion. Other members nodded in agreement. Ms. Hammond clarified that the board was referring to just the central office portion, because special education and transportation are separate.

The board reviewed the special education budget. Ms. Powden reported that Ms. Barton and Ms. Hammond worked very hard on the service plans and they worked in a fiscally responsible way to provide the necessary services to special education students. Ms. Hammond reported on the changes to the special education funding from the state. She also reported that the state special education numbers have not come in yet.

D. Strategic Plan

Ms. Mahusky noted that while this is an important topic, they will table this discussion for this meeting. It will be a priority for the January meeting.

Ms. Mahusky questioned if the superintendent evaluation committee has rescheduled their meeting yet. Mr. Marin will follow up with the committee.

E. Retirements

Ms. Powden announced that MaryAnn Bastian has officially announced her retirement as an SLP for the district. The board wished her well on her retirement. Ms. Powden also reported that Nancy Perry, a bus driver in Mt. Holly who has been driving bus for 53 years is retiring at the end of this month. The board thanked her for her service.

VIII. NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 3, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the Roost and will include discussion about the budget, strategic plan, discuss the Superintendent Evaluation Committee update.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION Title I V.S.A §313 (a)(1)(B):

Mr. Marin **moved** to enter executive session at 8:19 p.m. to discuss Compensation for Sick days After making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage, after determining that discussion in open session would put the board at a disadvantage, inviting Ms. Powden and Ms. Perry. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The board excused Ms. Perry at 8:27 p.m. and invited Ms. Barton and Ms. French into Executive Session to discuss a retirement request in the continued executive session after making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage.

The board excused Ms. Barton and Ms. French at _____ p.m. and discussed teacher and support staff negotiations under the continued executive session after making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage.

The board returned from executive session at 8:58pm.

[ACTION TAKEN]

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Orzechowski **moved** to adjourn at 8:59pm. Mr. Marin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary