

# TRSU BOARD

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 7, 2019

6:00 p.m.

TRSU, The Roost

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

**Staff:** Cheryl Hammond, Mary Barton, Amanda Tyrrell, Katherine Fogg (arrived 6:03 p.m.)

**Public:** Dan Tyrrell

Ms. Mahusky called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the agenda. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### III. APPROVE MINUTES:

#### A. January 3, 2019 Regular Meeting

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2019 meeting. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### B. January 14, 2019 Special Meeting

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2019 meeting. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Tyrrell noted that if the board isn't already aware of the issue regarding his son and his truancy, they will be soon. He reported that his son has missed 25 days so far this year and has 30 tardy days. He reported that he has been working with the school to encourage him to go to school, but the troubling part is that it seems that the school is not following the policy regarding this issue. He advised that they will be having a second coordinated service program meeting on Monday in order to gather all the necessary resources to encourage his son to attend school more regularly. Ms. Mahusky advised Mr. Tyrrell that by discussing this matter during open session that he is effectively waiving his right to privacy regarding his child. Mr. Tyrrell acknowledged that, noting that it is a difficult situation. He felt that it was ok to "air a little bit of dirty laundry" in order to elevate it to the board level in order to more quickly resolve the issues. There was discussion about this issue being a GMUSD issue, not a TRSU issue because it is the GMUSD that approves the GMUHS student handbook. Mr. Tyrrell noted that if he is dealing with an administration that is not following policy, he has concerns with the superintendent influencing the school board. He feels that the TRSU board's role is more of a governing body.

Ms. Mahusky asked for clarification about what policies were not being followed. Mr. Tyrrell noted that policies C08 and C09 were not being followed. Ms. Mahusky noted that these policies are on the agenda for a first read at this meeting. Mr. Tyrrell advised that he was offering his comments as a means of public input on the policy. Ms. Mahusky clarified her understanding of the concern being

that the discussion and pending later approval of these policies will have an impact on the outcome of his son's issue and how Green Mountain is handling the situation. Mr. Tyrrell noted that there are two separate issues that he is concerned about. Ms. Mahusky encouraged the Tyrrell's to share their concerns with Ms. Fierman and then with Ms. Powden in that order. Mr. Tyrrell suggested that the board familiarize themselves with the student handbook and the current policy in place that indicates that the school board is notified after 15 unexcused absences. Mr. Buckley clarified that this again would be the GMUSD board, not the TRSU board.

Mr. Fromberger noted his confusion because it seems that Mr. Tyrrell is concerned with the policies under consideration. Mr. Tyrrell noted that he is concerned with Ms. Powden's intent regarding the policies. Mr. Tyrrell thanked the board for the time that they put in for the board.

## **V. BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT:**

Ms. Hammond noted that she wanted to give the report on some of the things that the finance department is working on. She reported that Ms. Hudkins spent about 30 hours in January on the VSA/NEA report for the bargaining for the health insurance coverage. She has also been working on the ACA reporting for the health insurance reporting regarding dependents. She reported that she not only has to add this information for the TRSU, GMUSD and LMHUUSD, but also for all the old districts as well. She reported that Ms. Martel processed 877 W-2's for the various employees. She is also processing about 350 payrolls on a bi-weekly basis. She reported that part of the reason for the 877 W-2's is due to the pay from the old school districts prior to merger. There was discussion about the coaches, the subs, the board members all receiving W-2's for each districts that employed them. She also reported that accounts payable processed about 65 1099 forms, 702 invoices, 431 checks, 181 PO's and reconciled 16 bank statements. Ms. Hammond reported that she has been working on the audits and the budgets. She has finished her research on the announced tuition. She is continuing to work on budget entries and salary schedules. She also reported that the office is now using the new account software. Ms. Hammond reported that the training is Webinar based. They are listening to 6-7 hours of webinars per week. They are still waiting on the state to upload the chart of accounts.

There was discussion about whether each of the former boards will need to meet to approve their audits. Ms. Hammond advised that she was probably going to have an audit meeting night with the auditors present and then every 20 minutes rotate in a new board for the report so they can have the opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Hammond will be distributing the audits electronically to the board. She will print those as requested by board members, but will save expenses by not having them bound.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

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

Mr. Marin advised that policy C08 is a VSBA recommended policy, while C09 is a VSBA "to consider" policy. These policies will be new for the boards. He reported that the policy committee reviewed the policies and felt that they expressed the state and VSA requirements for boards. The copies were included in the electronic board packet. There was discussion about policy C09 indicating that it will be considered for adoption by the TRSU and the two school districts, but he wanted to be clear as to which board(s) is responsible for the superintendent evaluation. There was discussion about the TRSU board being responsible for hiring, and supervising the superintendent, and firing if necessary. That then begs the question if the other boards have the need to adopt this policy. Mr. Buckley noted that the TRSU board formed an evaluation committee that will be reporting back to all the boards, but then questioned who would put input into the evaluation process. Ms. Mahusky noted that that is a different question than who approves the policy.

Mr. Fromberger reported that the TRSU board appointed a committee to evaluate the superintendent. Ms. Mahusky clarified that this board did not appoint a committee to do that. They appointed a committee to develop a process by which this board would evaluate the superintendent. Mr. Fromberger and Ms. Mahusky recalled the charge of the committee differently. Ms. Mahusky noted that that goes back to Mr. Buckley's question about who will evaluate the superintendent which was triggered by the observation that the policy is expected to be considered for adoption by both the GMUSD and LMHUUSD boards. Ms. Mahusky noted that they haven't yet adopted a process by which to evaluate the superintendent. The question before the board right now is whether the two SD boards need to consider this policy. Ms. Mahusky suggested that they send this policy back to the policy committee for review and further clarification.

Mr. Fromberger noted that his recollection was that this board appointed a committee of 4 specific members and charged them with the evaluation of the superintendent. He felt that there was no ambiguity about it and that they were engaging the VSBA with how they were go about the process of meeting that charge. Mr. Buckley read aloud from the 10/23/18 minutes. He also noted that the policy appears to need approval by all three boards, but then goes on to say that the board will develop goals and self-evaluation with the superintendent, but doesn't clarify which board or if it means to say all three boards. He felt that as written it seems that all three boards are part of the evaluation. Ms. Mahusky noted that it seems to be written that the board will be setting its goals for itself and evaluating itself, not the superintendent. Ms. Mahusky questioned how the superintendent helps the board to set goals and evaluate itself. She felt that the policy committee needs to provide further clarification about which boards this applies to and how the board will set goals with the superintendent.

Mr. Fromberger questioned why the VSBA feels that policy C08 is recommended. Ms. Mahusky noted that there are some districts that operate by policy governance. She suggested that since these policies had more to do the board-superintendent relations than to do with operating the schools, she suggested having a conversation while Ms. Powden is present to clarify why the administration is recommending them. Mr. Fromberger noted that he would be happy to listen to Ms. Powden's reason for recommending the policy, but wanted to know why the VSBA was.

There was discussion about the two SD boards either not adopting the policy (perhaps review only) or change the board evaluating the superintendent to the TRSU board evaluating the superintendent. Ms. Mahusky suggested that there are other parts of the policy that do impact the two SD boards. The board suggested tabling further discussion until the next meeting so the policy committee can provide the requested information and clarification.

#### **B. Recommendation for Hire**

Ms. Fogg reported that the administration is recommending hiring Christine Keklac for the Title I math interventionist position at CAES. There was discussion about the GMUSD board having approved her hire, but Ms. Fogg clarified that this is a school-wide position and therefore falls under the TRSU purview. Both Ms. Waite and Ms. Fogg will supervise this position. She reported that she worked with her in Bennington and was impressed with her work then. She reported that Ms. Keklac had left teaching a few years ago and when they couldn't find anyone to fill the role, Ms. Fogg reached out to her. She reported that Ms. Keklac wanted to stay where she was at for a little while but said if Ms. Fogg couldn't find anyone to let her know. She felt that she would be an asset and she has a lot of experience with both math and science.

Ms. Mahusky noted that this was a position that is in the current budget with federal funds but they weren't able to find someone to fill the position yet. Ms. Fogg noted that they have always

had this position, but a couple years ago they added some local funds to help support this position. She advised that Laurie Birmingham previously held this position, but recently moved into the third grade teaching position, leaving this role vacant. Ms. Mahusky requested that when the boards are being asked to consider people for hire, in addition to receiving the resume, it would be helpful if the boards also received more detail about the position, where it is funded, the history of the position, etc.

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to approve hiring Christine Keklac as recommended for the Title I math interventionist position at CAES with salary and benefits according to placement on the salary schedule in the master agreement. Mr. Marin seconded. Ms. Hammond reported that for the remainder of this year (79 days), the salary would be \$25,017. The full year would have been \$58,584. The motion carried unanimously.

### **C. Current Financials**

Ms. Hammond reported that the summary version is in the board packet for their review. Mr. Fromberger noted his concern with the format. Ms. Hammond explained that there is an account code and then a description of each item. Ms. Mahusky reminded the board that Ms. Hammond had given them a key code for the GL accounts. The report includes the approved budget, the range to date (the activity in the month they are reviewing) and the year to date (the activity since the beginning of the budget year). The report includes the balance column that is the budget minus the year to date. There was discussion about figures in parentheses on the revenue side are positive. She noted that the bottom line of \$169,000 indicates that they are still “to the good” for revenues. She reported that the bottom line of the special education budget is also “to the good” about \$149,000. Ms. Hammond explained the function of the encumbered column—money that they haven’t had to pay yet, but that they know they will, such as payroll. Then the budget balance is the balance less the encumbrances. Ms. Hammond advised that there are a number of expenses that they don’t encumber in the special education. The board noted that their reason for seeing the report is to see if there is a number that is significantly “out of whack”. Ms. Hammond advised that the summary report won’t do that for them. There was discussion about getting the full financial report each month or just requesting that Ms. Hammond come to them whenever there is something that is significantly “out of whack”. The board agreed that a quarterly full financial report, plus monthly reports of anything that is significantly “out of whack” or will significantly affect the budget in an unanticipated way.

### **D. TRSU Updates at District Board Meetings**

Ms. Hammond reported that she and Ms. Powden had conversations after the last GMUSD meeting when many board members kept referring to the TRSU board as “they” and Ms. Mahusky clarified that “we” are “they”. Ms. Hammond noted that part of that disconnect is the need for the TRSU members to regularly report back to the district boards about what is happening at the TRSU meetings. She suggested that the boards put the TRSU updates on the SD agendas much like a committee update. Mr. Orzechowski reported that he has always felt that if there is something major at the TRSU board, then he will share with the SD board, but not on a regular basis. He advised that the LMH board seems to be ok with the updates as they need. Ms. Hammond reminded the board that the TRSU expenses are a major portion of the SD budgets and the SU seems to be the stranger. Mr. Fromberger felt that it is this board’s responsibility to report back to the local board. He advised that other than budget season, this seems to not be a problem. Mr. Buckley noted that a majority of the TRSU budget is special education and they have no choice about that—it is based on the students’ needs. He felt that some of the district board members don’t seem to understand that such a large portion of the SU budget is special education. He also noted that that was a state mandate to shift special education to the SU budget, along with transportation. The board discussed the SU decision to shift technology to the SU

budget in a prior year and then back again this year in order to be more transparent and to give the voters more control over their budget (as a result of concerns voiced during last year's budget discussions). There was also discussion about the Title I positions.

Ms. Alberty recommended that the TRSU update be placed on each agenda and the TRSU reps on the SD boards can share what is happening at the TRSU. If there isn't much to share, they can say so.

#### **E. TRSU Board Meeting Location**

Ms. Mahusky noted that at the last GMUSD meeting, there was a comment made that perhaps more people would attend the TRSU meetings if they were held in a larger space. Ms. Alberty noted that there aren't very many people present at tonight's meeting. There was discussion about the board considering changing the location if there are a lot of people coming to the meetings. At that time, they could consider alternating between CTES and LES as central locations but still meeting in each district. There was discussion about confusion about meeting locations at the SD level and the desire to not add further confusion for the SU meetings. Ms. Mahusky suggested tabling this discussion until there is a need for additional space. She also suggested that if there is a major issue that the board will be discussing that they anticipate a lot of attendance, they can move that particular meeting. There was also discussion about holding the meetings at the schools burdening the custodial staff with cleanup.

#### **F. Approval of the New Dental Carrier**

Ms. Mahusky noted that the teachers' negotiations have concluded. They were done in December, but the delay has been due to the district attorney and the NEA attorney finalizing everything. The districts finally received a final draft this week. The attorney has signed it on behalf of the board. They are waiting for Jenn Harper to sign it on behalf of the teachers. She will be meeting with them soon to ratify it. The GMUSD board approved the agreement pending the teachers' ratification of the agreement and Ms. Harper's subsequent signing. She advised that the major change to the agreement is the addition of dental coverage for the GMUSD teachers. That will not affect the budget. The contract includes a 2.5% increase and the dental benefits will be paid from that increase for this year. That amount was included in the contingency fund in the budget the board approved. As a result of this change, the next salary increase will be 2.75%. There was discussion about the discrepancy between the two districts (LMHUUSD had dental coverage). Ms. Mahusky reported that the LMH school days have been extended so they are now equal between the two districts. An additional increase for the LMH teachers was negotiated as a result. She advised that there were some changes to the professional development language that didn't have a monetary impact. The negotiations also include an approved uniform salary schedule. The existing teachers will be placed on the salary schedule in their column of education, at the step that is closest to their current salary (without losing money).

There was discussion about the placement of a new teacher coming in who has a number of years of experience. There was discussion about the objective criteria used to determine placement on the schedule. There was discussion about the salary increases being based on the base salary schedule. There was also discussion about the placement on the schedule for next year since there is the 2.75% increase next year. Ms. Mahusky advised that part of the reason for the larger increase for next year and the two year contract is due to following this new schedule. Mr. Fromberger questioned what the difference between the teachers' current pay would be versus the new salary schedule. Ms. Hammond advised that they will sign up for dental in April. The 4 months of the premium will be subtracted from the 2.5% salary increase. The remaining money left will be divided by the fte's. The teachers will receive a flat one-time payment that will not be added to their salaries because that is intended to cover their dental coverage for the next year.

The district will provide 100% dental premium coverage, but employees can opt out if they choose. Then as of July 1, the 2.75% increase will take effect. Mr. Fromberger noted that he has been asked how much more the teacher contract is going to cost. Ms. Mahusky noted that these expenses are already in the budget. Mr. Fromberger requested information about how much more this contract costs over the former contract.

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to approve the master teachers' agreement as it pertains to the TRSU teachers. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fromberger **moved** to authorize the board chair to sign the master teachers' agreement on behalf of the board pending ratification by the teachers union and subsequent signing by Ms. Harper on behalf of the teachers' union.

Ms. Mahusky advised that part of the need to approve the contract was in order to make the dental coverage available to the teachers. Ms. Hammond advised that the current dental policy is through CBA Blue. The policy carried over from the former RWSU. It is a self-insured policy where they pay \$6.35 for the plan to administer the plan for them. They then set a single, double and family plan rate that they collect from the employees. This pays for the claims from the employees. She advised that when the plan is first being set up, because they haven't yet collected the premiums from the employees to build up the fund, they may "take a hit" on it. She advised that currently they have almost \$39,000 in the fund. Her concern is adding about 60 new people to the plan who haven't had dental coverage may "break the bank", and she explained how that could happen. She advised that they could stay with them, but there is a risk. They could also go with other vendors.

She shared information about the vendors. The comparison includes the benefit coverage. The three companies being considered are Ameritus, Met Life and Delta Dental. Ms. Hammond advised that while many people are familiar with Delta Dental, they may be a bit out of financial reach. She advised that they have even review their rates through VeHi and the rates are still high. They have gathered some comparisons between the companies. Ms. Hammond advised that she has some concerns with the coverage of Ameritus and their coverage language. She felt comfortable with the Met Life coverage. Ms. Hammond explained the anticipated numbers of singles, doubles and families under the new contract. She advised that Ameritus is holding their current rate until 2020, effectively a 15 month plan, and then open enrollment will follow the fiscal year. She compared the costs based on the projected enrollment. Ameritus would be the least expensive while Met Life would still be a projected savings of about \$1800 over the current plan. Delta Dental would cost approximately \$504 per month more than the current coverage. She felt that while Ameritus is the cheaper option, she has reservations about their coverage. Mr. Buckley questioned what happens with the \$39,000 in the CBA Blue fund.

Ms. Hammond didn't know the answer, but felt that they could probably use the funds toward the TRSU budget. There was discussion about the prior GM dental coverage and the self-insured fund in the budget year ago. There was also discussion about the risk associated with adding 60 new dental covered employees to a self-insured plan. Mr. Buckley questioned what Ms. Hammond's reservations are about Ameritus. Ms. Hammond advised that her dentist advised that Ameritus seems to require more substantiation when paying claims than other providers. She also noted that there were some language ambiguities in their coverage, such as no apparent coverage for root canals. She also reported that Ms. Hudkins had read reviews on them and most of the complaints were about claims not covered. Ms. Hammond noted that the insurance company needs to make money and perhaps one of the reasons that the premiums are so low is that they

don't pay a lot of claims. There was also discussion about them only paying 95% of usual and customary charges (UCC) and the \$10 flex claim payment, while Met Life pays 99% of the UCC.

Ms. Mahusky questioned if the office had reviewed Standard Dental. The board members discussed their individual coverages with Met Life, Guardian, Standard and Delta Dental. There is a time crunch to get this approved by the time the contract is finalized to give them time to get both sides of the SU signed up by April 1. Ms. Hammond recommended the Met Life plan.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve authorizing the administration to move forward with selecting Met Life for dental coverage to employees eligible for the coverage. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION-TITLE 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(B)**

**A. Labor Relations**

After finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage, Ms. Alberty **moved** to enter executive session at 7:30 p.m. to discuss Labor Relations under Title 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(B). Mr. Marin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The board returned from executive session at 8:08 p.m.

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve offering a 2-year contract to Ms. Powden with the terms of the contract to be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Orzechowski seconded and the motion carried with a vote of 3-2 with the chair not voting.

**VIII. NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be Thursday March 7, 2019 at the Roost.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary