

# TRSU BOARD

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 2, 2019

6:00 p.m.

TRSU, The Roost

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

**Board:** Fred Marin, Mary Alberty, Paul Orzechowski, Dan Buckley, Joe Fromberger, Kate Lamphere,

**Staff:** Meg Powden, Cheryl Hammond, Mary Barton, Venissa White

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham, Dan Tyrrell

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

### II. APPROVE AGENDA:

Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the agenda with the addition of discussion of a recommendation for hire as well as a discussion regarding the change in fte at Mt. Holly. Mr. Marin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

### III. APPROVE MINUTES:

#### A. April 4, 2019 Regular Meeting

Mr. Orzechowski noted that return from executive session at 8:14 p.m., as well as the adjournment information. Ms. Alberty **moved** to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2019 meeting as amended. Mr. Buckley seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Tyrrell noted his concern for the composition of the TRSU board, given the population of the two school districts in the SU, and given that BRHS is closing next year. He reviewed the statute and has brought his concerns to the state. He questioned if the composition will be remaining as is after the BRHS closure and if so, how this would be a fair composition. Ms. Powden noted that they are hopeful that many of their BRHS/MS students will attend GMUHS and this board composition is a great representation of the two districts. She felt that having 3 members for each district is that the board is looking “system-wide” and all the board members care about all the students, not just the students from the district that they are representing. They are looking out for what is best for “all of our students”. Mr. Tyrrell questioned if there is an idea of how many LMHUUSD students would be attending GMUHS. Ms. Powden advised that they don’t know yet, but today BRHS/MS held a school fair where many area high schools were invited in to try sell their school to the various LMHUUSD students who would be looking for high schools in the future. Mr. Fromberger reported that he attended the school fair and felt that the GMUHS contingent did a great job preparing for this fair and gave an excellent presentation. Ms. Powden advised that there were many schools in attendance: GMUHS, Mill River, Woodstock, Springfield, Burr & Burton Academy, Long Trail to name a few. Mr. Buckley advised that Black River Academy, OMS, River Valley Tech Center, Stafford Tech Center were also in attendance. There was discussion about whether or not parents were in attendance. Mr. Fromberger suggested that LMH should get the parents involved since they ultimately make the decision. Mr. Buckley also suggested that the parent focused fair should be done next year, when it is a more immediate decision.

Mr. Buckley noted that he asked the Mill River representative if they were sending a bus to Ludlow and was advised definitely to Mt. Holly, but they are not yet sure about whether or not they will send one to Ludlow. Mr. Fromberger noted that he has been speaking with Mr. Parah, the GMUSD transportation director and he has plans to bring a bus to Ludlow and make a run up to Mt. Holly as well. He noted that GMUSD is making provisions to include all LMHUUSD students, not just those in one of the two towns. Ms. Powden noted that some of the BRHS students who visited the GMUHS booth questioned the bus and were advised that there would be a bus to Mt. Holly.

There was discussion about what date the students need to make a decision about what school they will be attending. The board discussed that it wasn't set in the articles of agreement, however it may be in statute. They also discussed that the receiving school may have a date by which they need to know all choice district students who will be attending, just so they can give proper preparation to staffing and scheduling needs. Ms. Powden will look into this in the future. Ms. Hammond noted that this would be helpful from a budgeting perspective.

**V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Ms. Powden reported that last month, she completed her course at the Principals/Supervisory Academy. There were 60 educators from across the country that gathered together. They looked at the cycle of inquiry and embedding that into a principal's evaluation. It is very similar to the state's PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycle. There are 5 goals in the continuous improvement plan. They are implementing different things, testing success and if successful keep moving it forward, and if not, regroup and do it again differently. She is looking forward to implementing this programming with the principals next year. She has been visiting the schools with Mr. Eppolito and completing the snapshot tool. She reminded the board about the core instructional practices and the process for reviewing those practices. She is in the process of interviewing finalists for open positions. This week she interviewed a guidance counselor candidate for CAES and there is a special meeting this week to finalize. Next week she will be interviewing assistant principals for CAES. She has also been interviewing speech language pathologists and will make a recommendation later in the meeting. There is also an open 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher position at Mt. Holly and interviews will begin soon.

Earlier this week she met with Scott Murphy, the Ludlow town manager. They discussed the recent select board meeting and whether or not the town will be accepting the building from the school district. The select board will be seating a committee to do factfinding to determine if this would be in the best interest of the town. They would be looking at both land and building. She understood that they will be looking for a board member to serve on that committee.

Ms. Powden reported that they have been working on the next version of the continuous improvement plan with Ms. Baker and Mr. Eppolito. They have narrowed down the goals from 5 to 3—continue to fully implement the proficiency-based education; focus on safe and healthy schools, including being trauma informed; and continue to analyze data relating to student achievement relating to math and writing to better inform changes in practice and programming.

**VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

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

Mr. Orzechowski noted that in the packet was multiple copies of the same policy E1-001. Mr. Fromberger noted that at the GMUSD meeting they had some concern about some of the language in some of the policies. He suggested that this board do the same. Mr. Marin noted that the policy committee is meeting next Tuesday. There was discussion about the procedure that was included in the board packet and whether or not the board needed to approve procedure. Ms. Lamphere noted her concern with approving a procedure when the policy didn't accompany it. Ms. Powden noted that the policy was approved previously. The board consensus was to table

discussion until the next meeting after the policy committee has the chance to review the language.

## **B. Personnel Handbook, Revised**

Ms. Powden reminded the board that they have reviewed various drafts of this handbook in prior meetings. She noted that the goal of this revision was to group similar job classifications together to better align benefits. She noted that this version is still draft form, and it will be reformatted. Mr. Buckley questioned if the changes were going to be revenue neutral. Ms. Hammond noted that this change would reflect about a \$500 increase to GMUSD and about \$800 for TRSU. She noted that because there are only 2 school districts, many of the employees are looking across to the other half of their own district questioning why someone gets a particular benefit when they don't. Mr. Buckley suggested that they shouldn't move everyone to the best of each classification. Ms. Hammond advised that they aren't. For example, someone is losing a holiday but gaining a personal or sick day. She noted that the overall expense of the change is minimal. Ms. Hammond noted that the handbook was previously for TRSU employees and the goal is to make it uniform across the SU. She noted that there are 4 different administrative assistants in the GMUSD and they all have different amounts of days off. There was discussion about this only impacting non-bargaining employees. Ms. Hammond also noted that some things would be grand-fathered, such as the TRSU employees having dental coverage, but the non-bargaining employees in the other districts do not. That is not planned to change at this time, nor is it addressed in the handbook; therefore, it would have to be addressed by the individual boards.

Ms. Lamphere questioned what the changes are from the last handbook to this one. Ms. Hammond noted that she would get a copy to the board. She is looking to get the handbook approved for July 1 and they would like to have the TRSU approve it asap so they can bring it to the individual boards for approval. Ms. Hammond noted that there are some employees who have 15 sick days and is going down to 10 to make it uniform. There is an employee who has 23 vacation days going down to 10 under this agreement. She advised that the administrative assistants have 6, 8 or 9 holidays and now everyone will have 8. They looked at school year versus full year and tried to align those. Ms. Lamphere questioned how the decisions were made. Ms. Hammond explained that they reviewed what everyone had and went with the majority. The board discussed this process and felt that it is important to ensure that the lower paid job classes weren't getting the lowest amount of benefits. They also discussed that it is challenging for the business office to apply the benefits when they are all different. Ms. Lamphere was in support of the idea, but wanted to be sure of the process. Mr. Buckley noted that he wanted to ensure that everyone wasn't moving all the way to the top in each benefit area. There was discussion about how this will be communicated to the staff. The personnel manual has a signature page that all employees will be required to sign. There was discussion about there not being a grievance process with this since they are non-bargaining employees.

Ms. Hammond noted that another change is they determined job classifications and defined them, as well as defined school year versus full year employees. This is outlined on page 5, and there is a chart on page 11 that further illustrates this. Ms. Hammond noted that they also eliminated the sick bank because that is challenging to administer. There was discussion about the recently passed union laws not applying to these employees because they are non-bargaining. Ms. Powden advised that the dues and state organizations mentioned in the handbook are for professional organizations, not unions. There was discussion about whether the dues to these organizations are paid by the employee or the SU or SD with which they are employed. Ms. Powden advised that the SU or SD pays their dues to the professional organizations. Ms. Powden gave an example of the business manager association that Ms. Hammond belongs to.

Mr. Fromberger noted that there is no longer a TRSU Executive Committee, therefore reference to it should be removed from the handbook. He also noted that the reference to COBRA coverage in the handbook needs to specifically state that this coverage is available at the employee's expense. The board discussed that while most people understand this, it should be made perfectly clear. The board discussed some examples of sick days for school year employees versus full year employees. There was also discussion about "consecutive years" being required to carry over unused sick days from one year to the next—the employee can't leave employee and come back and continue to carry their unused sick days. There was discussion about the TRSU and LMHUUSD non-bargaining staff having dental coverage, while those in the GMUSD do not. There was discussion about the disability coverage between the districts. Ms. Hammond noted that this is not proposed to change in this draft as that is a board decision and has a larger financial impact. Mr. Fromberger noted some of the GMUSD negotiations regarding coverage. There was discussion about transparency regarding other benefits, like dental and disability coverage. Ms. Hammond will continue to work on that. The board will review the handbook and discuss at the next meeting.

**C. Final Approval of the Superintendent's Job Description**

Mr. Fromberger questioned the prior approval with Ms. Ceglowski pending changes the board had requested. Ms. Powden advised that Ms. Ceglowski made the changes and also reviewed the description with the VSBA and there were a couple changes made. The board discussed the changes that they had made. The board requested highlighted changes from prior versions of edited documents. Mr. Buckley noted that one of the changes he had requested had been changed. Mr. Buckley **moved** to approve the superintendent's job description draft date April 2019 as presented with the correction to state May 2019 for the draft date. The motion carried unanimously.

**D. Meeting Location**

Mr. Fromberger noted that the three GMUSD representatives have been instructed by their board to ask this board to consider changing the location of the TRSU meetings to the schools in the district. He noted that their reason is that the Roost is small and doesn't allow a lot of public participation. This proposed move would also expose the work of the TRSU board to more members of the communities and expose the board to each of the schools. The board discussed the challenge of keeping track of where the meeting is being held, and sometimes meetings get canceled and it's hard to remember where to go. Ms. Lamphere noted that the process that the GMUSD board does is that once the location is defined for the month, that's where all meetings are for that month. If there are committee meetings, they are in that same school. If a meeting is postponed to the following month it is at the next school—they don't backtrack. Ms. Alberty noted that it is very difficult for the people that travel to make it from Rutland or Middlebury to Chester for example. Mr. Fromberger noted that the request was for a change in venue. It doesn't necessarily need to be rotated between all the schools. This is the same argument for community members who may have similar difficulty traveling from Brattleboro to Ludlow. The board discussed the size of the space. Mr. Buckley noted that moving the meeting to Cavendish isn't that much further than the Roost, but he was concerned if this additional monthly meeting incurred an additional expense for Cavendish. Mr. Fromberger noted that the GMUSD board wanted to try to get more involvement from the public. The board suggested Ms. Powden develop some options and present it to the board at the next meeting. The board discussed perhaps holding the meetings a little later to accommodate additional travel both for board members and community members. There was discussion about whether or not they need to move the meetings since their public involvement isn't very much. They discussed moving it and seeing if that increased public participation, and if not after a number of months revisit the question.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. Policies, First Read (C09, F32)**

The board discussed the policies. Mr. Marin reported that the policy committee reviewed these policies. He advised that the board that they streamlined the language in the board activity policy to show that activities will be in consultation with the superintendent. He also advised that the student medication policy has been vetted with the nursing staff. The policy isn't great and in regards to OTC medications, the school has to rely on the parent's statement that the student has had no adverse reactions to the medication in the past, but the only other alternative is to tell parents that they can't make decisions for their child. There was discussion about bug spray and sun screen and whether or not those counted in this policy. Mr. Marin noted that they need to have some policy and this policy protects the school and its employees and volunteers from liability if the parent agrees to non-prescription medication and asserts that there have been no adverse reactions. Mr. Marin noted that the policy committee recommends approval. There was discussion about what qualifies as "emergency medications" and the form that allows self-administration. There was discussion about also having a form for non-prescription medication versus just having a note from the parent in order to better protect the school district. There was discussion about the non-prescription medication being kept in the nurse's office, while the emergency medication will be kept with the child.

### **B. Current Financials**

Ms. Hammond noted that Q1 2019 financials are in the board packet and this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the fiscal year. The full packet was included at the board's request. Ms. Hammond discussed the highlights. She noted that special education is up in the air, since there are always many changes. She discussed the autism program having been planned to save money by bringing students back to the district, but then they added more special education students, so the savings may still be changed. The special education van purchase has saved money. She noted that they did a transportation arrangement with another district which should help the savings. She noted that cashflow with the supervisory union is impacted because of the way they get paid for special education. They have to pay out as services are used, but don't get reimbursed except in October and February. Ms. Hammond noted that at the end of the school year, there are bills that can't be paid until they receive money from various sources. She advised that school districts can borrow money but the SU can't.

Mr. Buckley questioned the \$13,000 expense for student evaluations when only \$4500 was budgeted. Ms. Barton noted that the cost increased from \$1200 per student to \$1800 per student. These evaluations have to be done every 3 years.

Ms. Hammond reported that she has been in a 3-day training on the new state-wide accounting software and advised that next year's financial reports will look different. She described some of the changes, including a report writer so they can personalize the reports for the board.

### **C. Ratify Support Staff Agreement**

Ms. Powden reported that the support staff negotiations have taken a long time. There was a correction that the GMUSD board brought up at their last meeting, but the attorney needs to run that correction by the union to make the change. There was discussion about change being a missing word and number, but it was also the same way in the prior agreement. There was discussion about the association covering both TRSU and GMUSD employees. Mr. Fromberger noted that this board's approval would have to be pending the changes/corrections to section 4.1—the first paragraph middle should be corrected to "between June 1 and June 15", not "between June and June 15". He also noted that on page 12 last sentence, "if ceases to be a district employee" should be "if an individual ceases to be a district employee". Ms. Hammond

noted that the changes will likely be made, but the attorney consult with the union is necessary first. Mr. Fromberger **moved** to approve the Support Staff agreement with the changes discussed in article 4.1 and on page 12. Mr. Buckley seconded. There was discussion about the union having ratified the agreement as is. There was discussion about the GMUSD special meeting necessary for approval of the agreement and the time it took for the union to approve the agreement.

#### **D. After School Program**

Ms. White gave a presentation on the After School Program (ASP). She advised that she has been in the position for the last 6 years and it has been a while since she presented to the board. She advised that the TRSU has met most of its ASP goals thus far. She shared what the program has accomplished and where it is headed. In 2013, there were only 2 schools with ASP's and \$86,000 in grant funding. Currently they have 4 fully funded ASP's. She noted that the TRSU ASP, isn't just a care program. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest entity within TRSU. They have 5 sustainable programs—one at each elementary school and the summer program. They provide equity and inclusion for all students, as well as out of district placement students returning to their home schools for ASP. They have 1:1 helpers and great relationships with the schools. They work with the teachers to extend the school day into ASP as well as providing family friendly care. She described the hours of the programs, including into the evenings, the half days in Cavendish and school holidays. The summer program has operated for 10 weeks, and this year will be 7 weeks. She noted that the ASP and the summer program run for 49 weeks per year. The ASP serves 320 students. They serve 70 students in the summer. She thanked Zoe, Shona and Julie, the ASP providers in the schools. She felt that they are irreplaceable, valuable and have been with the program for the past 6 years. She reported on the employees, included more than 50 people across the SU. The full-time staff participate in professional development. They have been participating in trauma-informed training.

Ms. White reported that currently they have over \$260,000 in grant funds for the program. They have \$160,000 in revenue from parent fees and subsidies, and another \$50,000 in local money (GMUSD budget for CAES and CTES; and funds from the town budgets in Ludlow and Mt. Holly). The TRSU budget doesn't financially support the program, however all the funding flows through the TRSU. Between the grants, parent fees, subsidies and local funding, that is over \$2,000,000, which is put back into the schools to help the students and serve families.

Ms. White noted that in order for schools to improve test scores and close achievement gaps they have to provide equity. The ASP is helping in this endeavor. They worked as a SU-wide program to open opportunities to each school. She advised that many people think of ASP as a day-care in order to help with after school care and for the kids to have fun. She advised that while they do do that, they also spend a lot of time with the administrative leadership team and Mr. Eppolito to help close achievement gaps. They look at the things that teachers are trying to accomplish but don't have enough time in the day for all of it. She described the current ASP learning goals at the LMHUUSD schools. She shared the goals developed between Mr. Hutt Vater, Ms. Trimboli, Mr. Eppolito and herself. She also reported on the data and the plans to reach those goals. She reminded the board that ASP is an extension of the school day and they are working to take advantage of that additional time to help learning. She outlined some of the programs that the students participate in.

Ms. White reported that because the program is federally funded, they report directly to the AOE 3 times per year and to the feds once. They also have DCF inspections. The AOE does periodic audits of financials and site visits to view every system. The employees have annual evaluations. She noted that the ASP also participates in team evaluations at each site, as well as student, parent

and teacher surveys. She reported on the benefits to the programming including tutoring and snacks.

Ms. White discussed equity and noted that she agreed with the idea that they don't have an achievement gap, they have an opportunity gap. She felt that ASP was a place to give students equity to be exposed to the same things that their counterparts in other communities are—for example fencing, dancing, tae kwon do, ukulele, and coding. She noted that ASP has a sliding scale for parent fees.

Ms. White reported that the ASP is continuing with the farm to school initiative. They have gardens and someone teaching cooking and nutrition. She shared information on the students snowshoeing and mountain biking. CTES has mountain bikes and helmets for the ASP. The ASP also teaches responsibility. CTES kids are whittling and learning hunters' safety. She noted that there is one system and each school has its own flavor based on the community. She also reported that each school is working on STEM. She also reported that ASP takes students on field trips every year to experience things they can't get in the classroom. The ASP is also bringing multi-culture exposure to the students—with cooking, flag making, studying other countries. They also work on art and engineering projects, as well as learning through play.

Ms. White reported that there are many healthy adult/student relationships being built in ASP. It isn't just about whether they got their homework done. There has been work on the opioid crisis and other traumas being created by a lack of good relationships. This program helps to build those relationships to better avoid the crises. Ms. White reported that the next step for ASP is to build the summer program. Currently there are 4 communities and 1 program. The students are dropped off at their home school at 7:30, get breakfast and then go to the summer program in Ludlow by 9am. The camp is \$90/week versus the Okemo camp that is almost \$300. Ms. White noted that there will be no swimming at West Hill this year because of the damage to the bottom of the West Hill Pond from TS Irene a few years ago. The ASP is currently partnering with the Town of Ludlow to get the building and restrooms up to code, which will then improve community participation there, which could then get the community to approve tax payers dollars to dredge the pond to all swimming there again in the future. There was discussion about the signage near the rec area.

Ms. White shared the registration sheet and noted that they are focusing on mindfulness, social justice, teambuilding, arts, sports, physical health. They may have kayaks, fishing and other water activities besides swimming, but will get the water tested. She held a community dialog night and each community has some concerns about the changes in camp. She noted that CAES was used to swimming every day but now they are going to Ludlow, LES students were used to field trip Fridays, but now they aren't going, but the students get to be outside every day. She noted that transportation costs for the summer will be close to \$10,000 just driving to Ludlow. They are hoping to invite organizations to Ludlow—VINS, Grafton Nature Museum and others. Ms. Lamphere noted that she was very impressed with the summer program last year and is excited for it again this next year. Ms. White shared the registration link online. The board members asked to have Ms. White present to the individual boards as well.

#### **E. Recommendation for Hire**

Ms. Powden reported that they have interviewed a speech language pathologist that they would like to recommend for hire. Ms. Barton reported that Marion Brody is an SLP who has been working in Springfield and previously worked at WSWSU. She has a masters from the University of Massachusetts. She has also worked in RWSU and has done EEE services. Ms. Powden noted that together with Ms. Barton, they are recommending the board approve hiring Ms. Brody for a

speech language pathologist position. Ms. Lamphere **moved** to approve hiring Ms. Brody for the SLP position as recommended. Ms. Alberty seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**F. Change in FTE**

Ms. Barton reported that they have a special educator in Mt. Holly who is currently .6 fte and in order to serve the students appropriately, they would like to increase her fte to .8 fte. This would be a cost of about \$11,845, but they will be reimbursed \$6,680 for that increase, for a net increase of \$5,165. There was discussion about there being a need for this increase due to increased student need (increased students and more intensive need) than originally planned. There was discussion about this not having been planned in the budget due to the unexpected increase in student need. This expense would be part of the special education assessment which is split by child count, not by specific students. Ms. Barton noted that the other elementary schools have full time special educators, while this position would still be only a .8 fte. Ms. Alberty **moved** to increase the Mt. Holly special educator fte from .6 to .8 as recommended by Ms. Barton. The motion carried unanimously.

**VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: TITLE I 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 7:50 p.m. to discuss Labor Relations under Title 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(B) inviting Ms. Powden. Mr. Cunningham questioned if this executive session was in regards to a labor agreement because if it isn't it is in violation based on the exemption cited. Ms. Powden advised that it is cited properly and the board isn't obligated to provide further information. Mr. Cunningham questioned if anyone on the board is aware of what this discussion is about and if not, how could they make the finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. He noted that they need to make a finding, but if no one knows what it is about, he felt that it isn't a proper use of executive session. Ms. Lamphere noted that she wasn't comfortable with this without having a bit more information. Ms. Powden advised that she would be happy to follow up with Mr. Leopold on this citation. She noted that a couple years ago Mr. Cunningham voiced his concern with inappropriate executive sessions and upon advisement of the attorney have made that change and in fact provide more information than necessary. Ms. Powden advised that only the reason is necessary, not the title and subsection. Ms. Lamphere again noted her concern with voting to enter executive session after making a finding when she wasn't aware of what the subject involved. She suggested changing the process so that the board is aware of the basic content so they can make an informed vote. Mr. Powden advised that she will seek legal advice on that. Ms. Lamphere asked to see the legal opinion when it is available.

The motion carried unanimously. The board waited for the public to leave the room and then entered executive session at 7:57 p.m.

The board returned from executive session at 8:18 p.m. No action was taken.

**IX. NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be Thursday June 6, 2019 at the Roost. Future meeting location will be discussed at this meeting. The board also discussed the July meeting falling on July 4, therefore they will not have a meeting in July, unless necessary and then it would be a special meeting.

**X. ADJOURNMENT:**

Ms. Alberty **moved** to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.



Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary