

# TRSU BOARD

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 6, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Hybrid Meeting: CTES Art Room and Zoom Access

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

**TRSU Board:** Paul Orzechowski, Steve Perani, Jeff Hance, Kelly Tarbell, Dave Venter

**Other Board Members:**

**Staff:** Lauren Fierman, Cheryl Hammond, Anne Gardner, Julie Parah, Amber Wilson, Emma Vastola, Mary Barton, Cathy Farman, Keith Hill

**Public:** Shawn Cunningham

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

### II. ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR:

Ms. Williams **nominated** Mr. Orzechowski as board chair. He accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. Mr. Orzechowski was elected without opposition.

### III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Williams **moved** to approve the agenda. The motion carried without opposition.

### IV. APPROVE MINUTES:

#### A. March 9, 2023, Regular Meeting

Mr. Perani **moved** to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2023, meeting. The motion carried without opposition and with Ms. Williams and Ms. Tarbell abstaining.

### V. COMMUNICATIONS:

#### A. Public Comments

None.

### VI. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Ms. Fierman reported that there has been a bit of activity in TRSU, including a great deal of administrative turnover. Four of the five principals will not be returning next year for a variety of reasons. She reported that Ms. Farman was offered what she called her "dream job" and wasn't particularly looking to leave. She reported that they had held an open forum for Ms. Farman's replacement and will likely complete the hiring process within the next couple weeks. She reported that Ms. Fogg announced her retirement several months ago. She also reported that Ms. Bohren has announced her resignation in order to stay closer to home in Killington and keep her family's needs a priority. Both the GM principal and assistant principal announced their resignation this year. Ms. Donohue came to GM from NY as an elementary principal and is returning to that type of position again in NY. Mr. Hill is moving quite a distance from Chester and pursuing family and personal goals. She noted that while there will be several new administrators, Ms. Luz, Ms. O'Neil, Mr. Hutt Vater and Ms. Fierman will be returning in their current administrative roles. She assured the board that all these principals have advised her of their reasons, and they didn't indicate any trouble with the districts or administration.

She reported that the last student day will be June 16, which is the same day as the GM graduation. She reported that teachers need to work one more day which would be the following Monday, which will be difficult enough, but because that day is a federal holiday, she will be asking the boards to allow the teachers to not come in that day, but rather engage in some level of professional development over the summer to make up that 8 hours.

The school climate surveys went out earlier in the week. She assured everyone that the surveys are anonymous unless the respondent enters their name on the survey. She encouraged everyone to respond so they can look at trends. The survey is open until April 14. She reported that there were 11 pay periods where there was no payroll clerk, but the work got done by Ms. Hammond working an additional 10-20 hours per week during payroll weeks. She requested that the board consider paying Ms. Hammond an additional stipend for that extra work. There is a savings of about \$13,000 since that position wasn't filled, and she suggested paying Ms. Hammond a \$10,000 stipend. Mr. Venter **moved** to approve paying Ms. Hammond the \$10,000 stipend as recommended. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **VII. BUILDING, GROUNDS, AND SECURITY DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Parah is unable to attend the meeting since the Harlem Tricksters are performing at GM tonight and they are hosting about 300-400 spectators. She reported that the state is considering putting the remaining PCB test issues on hold until the state completes the building inventories that they are doing throughout the state. Ms. Fierman noted that CTES and LES had their testing done, but had no issues. GM has had their test, but they have not received their results yet.

#### **VIII. CURRICULUM DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Ms. Gardner shared some highlights of the MLSS initiative which goes hand in hand with Act 173 which deals with special education, and therefore also impacts general education teachers. She reported that it is fundamental that the teachers believe that every student can learn and the art of teaching is to find what that way of teaching is for each student. She also reported that they need a well developed system that provides comprehensive education with equity to every student. She reported that the teachers will be working on this throughout the next year or so, and it will impact the way the teachers teach, the way that they will include everyone. She also reported that Ms. Holderness has created science regression that aligns practices and is working with teacher stakeholders on this process. The goal is to not lose the progress they have made on STEM.

Mr. Perani asked if parents would be involved with the individualized learning. Ms. Gardner noted that they are at the beginning stages of the MLSS process to develop the methods to support the teachers in this process. They will then include every constituent who has a stake in this process—teachers, students, families, community members, etc. She reported that ultimately the SU's responsibility is to educate the students well which can't be done in isolation or without input. Mr. Perani asked about the teacher buy-in to the new approach. Ms. Gardner shared some information about the personal experience of her own child regarding literacy to illustrate how the instruction will be inclusive and engaging. She discussed some of the conference work and evidence that has been presented on this topic to guide acceptance and adoption of the practice. She explained that there are teachers who are more open to change and those who are more resistant and they have made it clear that this is not optional. Ms. Williams questioned if more classroom support will be provided for teachers to implement more personalization. Ms. Fierman noted that this concept is not entirely new, and there will always be a need to address students and organize the groups in certain ways depending on the information being delivered. Therefore the teachers need to plan in such a way that some students get the additional enrichment they need while other students get the additional supports that they need.

Ms. Vastola discussed the effective collaboration portion of the MLSS and the time that they are spending building collaboration time into the teachers' schedules to meet the students' needs. In this way they can know more about the learner and collaborate on instructional strategies that will work for the particular student. There was discussion about aiming for inclusion wherever possible.

Mr. Venter questioned what success will look like for the students. Ms. Fierman noted that in each subject area and grade level there are standards about what the expectation is, and the assessments measure how well the student meets the standards by demonstrating the specific abilities in specific ways. Ms. Parah noted that while there is a benchmark for neurotypical students, there is also a growth metric that is reviewed and integrated into the collaboration and instruction.

Ms. Gardner noted that they are the first recipients of the SEDG grant which provides coaching for all educators for the next three years.

## **IX. FINANCIAL UPDATE:**

Ms. Hammond reported that the central office budget is at about 74% spent so it is on track. She discussed the administration of grants, noting that they have about \$18,000 more than expected available to them and they are using that to help cover Ms. Bebo-Long and Ms. Waite's grant-writing costs. She reported on the transportation budget, noting that the GM repairs were over budget, but overall under budget because there weren't enough bus drivers. There have been discussions between the LMH and GM boards about the replacement of an LMH bus and the options available. She discussed the special education time study that happens about three times per year. There was discussion about the unbudgeted special education para-educators and teachers.

Ms. Hammond reported that the teachers and other staff members have long term disability. They have been working with a company called Alliance. She hasn't been happy with that company for a while, but they offer some voluntary life and disability insurance and she didn't want to take that opportunity away from those that wanted it. She noted that she has received an offer for new LTD through VEHI which will save them about \$5000 and still includes the voluntary life and disability available for employees.

## **X. OLD BUSINESS:**

### **A. Policies, Second Read**

#### **1. F7 Student Alcohol and Drugs**

Mr. Venter **moved** to approve the policy. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **2. F27 Pupil Privacy Rights**

Mr. Perani **moved** to approve the policy. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **3. F17 Student Freedom of Expression**

Ms. Williams **moved** to approve the policy. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **4. F18 Student Distribution of Literature**

Mr. Perani **moved** to approve the policy. The motion carried without opposition.

#### **5. G11 Acceptable and Responsible Use of Electronic Resources and the Internet**

Mr. Perani **moved** to approve the policy. The motion carried without opposition.

## **XI. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. New Hires**

#### **1. Special Education Teacher (LES, CAES, TRSU)**

Ms. Fierman reported that there are 4 special education hires to consider. TRSU handles all education of special education teachers regardless of the school in which they work. The information is in the board packet.

She reported that Ms. Ryan has been an LES classroom teacher for many years. She also holds a special education certificate and is looking to transition to special education. Ms. Barton shared information on her employment and education background. Ms. Fierman advised that one of the LES special educators is moving away which opened the position. Mr. Venter questioned if this would leave a vacancy in grade two which will need to be filled. Ms. Fierman advised that they are right-sizing the classrooms and combining grades 1 and 2 following the previous discussion of not hiring new classroom teachers unless class size requires. There will be 17 students in the combined classroom. Mr. Venter **moved** to hire Melissa Ryan as the LES special educator. The motion carried without opposition.

Ms. Fierman reported on Darren McIntyre. Currently there is a 1.5 fte person who is handling out of district placement. Mr. McIntyre would cover the .5 fte. Ms. Barton shared information about his current and former employment and education background. Ms. Williams **moved** to approve hiring Darren McIntyre for .5 fte as an out of district coordinator.

Ms. Fierman reported that one of the CAES special educator is moving to GMUHS to take a position vacated by someone retiring. Carolyn Comley has applied for the CAES position. Ms. Barton shared information on her education and employment background, noting that she will be an extreme asset for the school based on her background. Mr. Venter **moved** to approve hiring Ms. Comley as the CAES special educator. The motion carried without opposition.

Ms. Fierman reported that Maria Gelsemine has applied for a position that has opened by the person in that position moving to take Ms. Root's position as the out of district LEA due to her retirement. Ms. Barton was excited that she has applied and the staff is happy to have her back. Ms. Williams **moved** to approve hiring Ms. Gelsemine as the CTES special educator. There was discussion about all the open positions being full, but they are still waiting on some contracts to be returned.

### **B. Policies, First Read**

#### **1. E13 Travel Reimbursement**

#### **2. G14 Class Size**

The board reviewed the policies noting that the policy committee has reviewed the policies. They will warn it for a second read and possible adoption at the next meeting.

### **C. Reorganization**

#### **1. Elections**

##### **a. Board Vice Chair**

Mr. Hance **nominated** Ms. Williams as vice chair. There were no other nominations. Ms. Williams was elected without opposition.

##### **b. Treasurer**

Ms. Hammond discussed the work of the treasurer, noting that Mr. Wheelock does the work at GM, and Ms. Cook does that work for the town of Ludlow. There was discussion about electronic signatures. Discussion was tabled until they can discuss the position with Ms. Cook or Mr. Wheelock.

**c. Board Clerk**

Mr. Orzechowski **nominated** Mr. Perani as clerk. There were no other nominations. Mr. Perani was elected without opposition.

**d. Adopt Code of Ethics Agreement**

Discussion was tabled until next month.

**2. Board Meeting and Rules:**

**a. Set Meeting Date, Time and Venue**

Mr. Orzechowski noted that the board has been meeting on the 1st Thursday of each month at 6pm rotating between LES and CTES. Mr. Perani **moved** to set the meeting date, time and venue on the 1st Thursday of each month at 6pm rotating between LES and CTES. Ms. William seconded and the motion carried without opposition.

**b. Adoption of Roberts Rules of Order for Small Boards**

Mr. Orzechowski suggested that the board adopt Roberts Rules of Order for small boards but will require a second on motions. He noted the value of having a motion followed by a second before voting and being continuous across the three boards. Ms. Williams **moved** to adopt following Roberts Rules of Order for Small Boards but with a second required for motions. Mr. Perani seconded, and the motion carried without opposition.

**3. Board Appointments**

**a. Appoint Warrant Signers**

Mr. Orzechowski **moved** to appoint Mr. Perani as the warrant signer. Ms. Williams seconded. The motion carried without opposition.

**b. Appoint Recording Secretary**

Ms. Williams **moved** to appoint Amber Wilson as the Board Recording Secretary. Ms. Tarbell seconded, and the motion carried without opposition.

**c. Financials**

The consensus was to continue using Community Bank at Ms. Hammond's recommendation.

**d. Newspaper of Records**

Mr. Perani **moved** to set the Vermont Journal and Chester Telegraph as the newspapers of record. Ms. Tarbell seconded, and the motion carried without opposition.

**XII. POLICIES APPROVED DURING THIS MEETING:**

The policies adopted at this meeting were **F7 Student Alcohol and Drugs, F27 Pupil Privacy Rights, F17 Student Freedom of Expression, F18 Student Distribution of Literature, and G11 Acceptable and Responsible Use of Electronic Resources and the Internet**

**XIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

- XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER VSA §313(a)(1)(A)Contracts** for non-bargaining employees  
Ms. Williams **moved** to find that premature general public knowledge of contracts would clearly place the board at a substantial disadvantage because they risk disclosing negotiations strategies if discussions were held in open session. Mr. Perani seconded. The motion carried without opposition.

Ms. Williams **moved** to enter executive session under the provisions of VSA§313(a)(1)(A)Contracts for the purpose of discussing contracts for non-bargaining employees including the superintendent, inviting Ms. Fierman and Ms. Hammond. Mr. Perani seconded. The motion carried without opposition and the board entered executive session at 7:07 p.m.

The board returned from executive session at 7:36 p.m. Mr. Perani **moved** to apply a raise to all non-bargaining employees' salaries, including the superintendent and business manager by 5.5%. Ms. Williams seconded, and the motion carried without opposition.

- XV. NEXT MEETING:**  
The next regular TRSU meeting will be May 4, 2023, at via hybrid meeting at CTES Art Room. The agenda will include policies, appointment of a treasurer, and discussion of the code of ethics.

- XVI. BOARD SELF-EVALUATION:**  
Mr. Orzechowski reviewed the self-evaluation questions, noting that the majority of responses were mostly positive.

- XVII. ADJOURNMENT:**  
Mr. Orzechowski **moved** to adjourn at 7:39 p.m. Ms. Tarbell seconded and the motion carried without opposition.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson  
Board Recording Secretary