

LAMOILLE NORTH SUPERVISORY UNION
ACT 46 STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES
GTMCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
FEBRUARY 16, 2016

Committee members present: Bill Sander, Ken McPherson, David Whitcomb, Peter Ingvaldstad, Raven Walters, Pierre Laflamme, Angie Evans, Jeff Bickford
Others: Edith Beatty, Marilyn Frederick, Michelle Aumand, Thad Tallman, one other community member

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Announcements*
P. Laflamme called the meeting to order at 7:14.

P. Ingvaldstad moved to approve the agenda, J. Bickford seconded and the motion was passed.

2. *Approval of Consent Agenda Items (Board Committee Minutes 1-26-16)*
B. Sander moved to approve the minutes of January 26, 2016, K. McPherson seconded, and the motion was passed with J. Bickford abstaining as he was not at that meeting.

3. *Public Comment*
No members of the public wished to comment.

4. *Review Warnings and Petitions*
M. Aumand passed out town-specific petitions and warnings. P. Laflamme said he understands that they have been vetted by our attorney and by AoE and that they are not something we are changing.

D. Whitcomb asked when someone who wants to run for the new union board can start getting names on a petition and when petitions are presented to the town. P. Ingvaldstad said people can start getting names on petitions tonight. M. Frederick said central office can print all the ballots for all the towns. She is planning to invite town clerks to stay for a short time after the LUSD annual meeting next Tuesday to give them information about the April 12 vote. She is not sure if we want to start sending these out before the town clerks and boards of civil authority have looked at them.

E. Beatty said Pietro Lynn's office reviewed the petitions and warnings and checked out any questions with the Secretary of State, so they should be fine. We are not making any changes. The petitions and warnings do not require formal approval by this body. The plan was to distribute them to town clerks on February 23. We could do it before or after that. There needs to be a mechanism in each town for people to pick them up and return them signed. Each district board needs to vote to approve its warning, then sign it and deliver it to the town clerk. The window for clerks to post the warnings is March 3 to March 13. Clerks can post then any time after March 3. The date, time and place of the public hearing and of the actual vote need to be on each warning. Public hearings need to be within 10 days of April 12. The voting times need to be the same across all towns – 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. Some towns normally only have voting from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

The Board of Civil Authority for those towns will probably need to approve the change of voting time.

K. McPherson asked if petitions need to be picked up from town offices so the clerk knows who is running. Should we mark the petitions distributed tonight void? M. Frederick said she wondered that. She wanted to ask the town clerks. E. Beatty said in her experience the town clerk keeps track of who takes out and brings back petitions. We need to get a proper answer. She thinks maybe the town clerk needs to be informed of who has petitions.

D. Whitcomb said all you have to do is notify the town clerk you have the petition. You can start getting signatures any time. M. Frederick said that is not fair. Anyone in this room who starts getting signatures immediately would have an unfair advantage. She personally thinks committee members should pass them in and not use them so they are not accused of having an unfair advantage. D. Whitcomb said he is not going to. He said you can get a petition any time and start getting signatures. You have to make copies of the original form to have room for the 30 names. P. Ingvaldstad said the number of signatures needed is different in different towns. You need 5% of the population. D. Whitcomb said he believes it is 30 names no matter which town you are in. B. Sander asked if there is a prohibition against someone signing two petitions. P. Ingvaldstad said no. B. Sander said then someone who starts earlier has no unfair advantage if people can sign another petition too. M. Frederick said she still thinks if one person has more days to get names they have an unfair advantage.

5. ***Review Community Engagement Communication Draft***

M. Aumand passed out a rough draft of a brochure. R. Walters said K. McPherson did a lot of the work to prepare this, as did central office staff. The goal was to present basic facts voters need and where to go for additional information. She walked the committee through the brochure, describing areas where the work group thought edits might be needed. She said the work group decided that the brochure should probably not be mailed out. There are other avenues to distribute it.

D. Griffiths suggested adding a simple explanation of what the vote is about on the front of the brochure, for those who are still not clear about what Act 46 is. There was some agreement with that idea.

R. Walters said suggestions and corrections should go to M. Aumand. M. Aumand said she would like feedback from the committee. Is this format what people want? She would like more ideas about questions and answers that should be included.

J. Bickford said he thinks the format is really good. He especially likes that there are FAQs. There are two big questions he has heard. One is "What is Act 46?" An explanation, as suggested by D. Griffiths, would be helpful. The other, which he now sees is included in the draft, is "What will happen to our buildings and grounds?" There isn't full understanding that school boards are the owners of the schools and that the new school board will become the owner. There is a lot of confusion and anxiety about that among those he has talked to.

P. Ingvaldstad said one question he has heard several times is why Cambridge is going to pay Hyde Park's debt or why Hyde Park is going to pay Cambridge's debt. He suggested we address that or have a link to a place with more information.

J. Bickford suggested we could get a QR code for the brochure, allowing some mobile phone users to go directly to the website on their phones.

R. Walters said one question she hears is "Where are my kids going to go to school?" We need to let people know that no school closures or big imminent changes are anticipated.

R. Walters said it seems like there is consensus to go forward with this for town meeting. M. Aumand said suggestions for the brochure should get to her by 4:00 on February 19.

P. Ingvaldstad asked how many we need to print. M. Frederick said as many as there are households. P. Ingvaldstad said he would like one for each seat in the gym at Cambridge's town meeting. He would hope others would do that also. He said it could be included in the digital newsletter for Smuggler's Notch employees and K. McPherson had also suggested maybe information could go to Stowe Mountain Resort employees. E. Beatty said she thinks the brochure could be available in schools, libraries, and town offices. She thinks it is the job of Act 46 study committee members to get it out in their towns. K. McPherson said some places, like Hannaford, have a place to display a single page only. Maybe we could have another single page information sheet that would say the vote is coming up and have a URL to get more information. R. Walters said we also talked about putting information in the News & Citizen. She expects they will be happy to work with us. We can also use Front Porch Forum. P. Ingvaldstad said he thinks B. Schaffer has the ability to post information on all the Front Porch Forums.

D. Whitcomb said when he was at the meeting in Lake Morey they cautioned against using Front Porch Forum because a community member could respond and multiple board members could respond back and end up having a meeting. K. McPherson said we could probably get one of those ads on Front Porch Forum that people don't respond to. R. Walters said D. Whitcomb is right. We have to avoid public discussion. That can be done by just posting announcements and not responding to any replies. B. Sander said no matter how clearly we put something on Front Porch Forum, a lot of people will misread it, but he thinks we need to do it anyway.

6. *Confirm Public Hearing Dates*

Johnson's public hearing will be April 11. Hyde Park's will be April 4. Eden's will be April 7. Cambridge's will be April 6. A. Evans will get back to M. Aumand about Belvidere's date and M. Aumand will check with B. Penberthy about Waterville's.

E. Beatty reminded board members that boards must vote to approve the warnings, which must include information on the public hearings. Town clerks will need to post the warnings from March 3 to March 13.

7. *Act 46 Grant Update*

E. Beatty said we have a \$20K grant for the study committee. A couple of times the Act 46 Implementation Project has wanted to change the terms of the grant and she has said

no. That has all been straightened out. We haven't spent all the money in the contract. Steve Sanborn's contract and assistance will carry forward through April 12. If there is a successful vote we will qualify for a grant that is \$130K minus what we have spent. M. Frederick said she thought it might be \$150K minus what we have spent. E. Beatty will check. She said if we don't have a successful vote, she is not sure what we qualify for.

M. Frederick said she thinks S. Sanborn found out that the warning for the vote only has to be published in the paper once, not 3 times like a bond vote.

P. Ingvaldstad asked, should we be talking to S. Sanborn about whether he is willing to help guide the process through the next phase if consolidation is approved? Is there consensus that we would like that? Some people said yes. M. Frederick said it depends on what P. Ingvaldstad means by the next phase. He might not be the right person for all the work that needs to be done before consolidation. E. Beatty said one thing that has been clarified is that we are not obligated to go through the Act 46 Implementation Project when we get the grant. She knows a couple of SU's that hired someone on their terms after a positive vote. She agrees with M. Frederick. If the time comes, we may want to think about what we need assistance with and who the best person is for that.

K. McPherson asked when this committee goes out of business. E. Beatty said she thinks with the vote. P. Ingvaldstad said he thinks the committee should meet one time after the vote even with a negative vote to debrief and decide on next steps.

K. McPherson asked, if this committee no longer exists and doesn't have any authority, where does the authority sit to ask S. Sanborn to come in and help? M. Frederick said she thinks it would be up to the LNSU board. Or the new board, said E. Beatty. P. Ingvaldstad said if there is a negative vote then the LNSU board would choose whether to reinstate this committee.

P. Laflamme asked for a show of hands indicating how many people agreed the committee should meet again once after the vote. The majority said yes.

8. ***Town Meeting Day – Exchange of Communication Plans***

E. Beatty suggested committee members from each town could share their plans for addressing Act 46 at town meeting.

D. Whitcomb said it is warned for the Eden meeting for discussion only, no action. The article will be for information purposes only.

P. Laflamme said it is also warned that way in Johnson. They plan to reserve about the last hour of the school board part of the meeting for Act 46 discussion.

P. Ingvaldstad said he was hoping to give the same PowerPoint presentation E. Beatty gave to the State Board of Education. Then he hopes to facilitate discussion of pros and cons with school board members and other citizens.

R. Walters said the Hyde Park board imagined an amplified version of the information in the brochure. She likes the idea of using E. Beatty's presentation.

A. Evans said she might use that presentation as well.

T. Tallman asked if anyone is hearing of any changes to Act 46 going on in Montpelier. Will there maybe be some surprise after the vote?

E. Beatty said she thinks the only changes that have been discussed are those around the threshold. There is really no talk of changing anything else.

P. Ingvoldstad said his understanding is that changes are just being made to the thresholds and that is only for two years. Something different could happen with them to encourage consolidation in the future.

E. Beatty said she is hearing that some of the architects of Act 46 are really committed to it and want to give it time and see what happens. There have been several successful votes so far. They are seeing it is being passed in some communities. They are wanting to give it a chance before they change it.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked if people will be able to vote by absentee ballot. M. Frederick asked how much earlier ballots need to be available for absentee voting. B. Sander said he thinks people can pick them up any time and bring them back any time. M. Frederick said they definitely all get opened up at the same time, but she is not sure if in statute there is a particular time they have to be available. B. Sander said he thinks there is. M. Frederick said all the boards have to approve the warnings first. B. Sander said he thinks we could have the ballots ready before that. M. Frederick said she has never put a ballot out before the board approved the warning. She thinks ballots may need to be available for absentee voting 20 days before the vote.

R. Walters said when the work group met the suggestion came up to list Act 46 committee members and their contact information on the brochure. Several committee members indicated they would be okay with that. R. Walters said as there are no objections she will have M. Aumand include that. E. Beatty suggested just listing names; then people can look up the contact information. R. Walters said she thinks that is a good idea.

It was agreed to schedule the next meeting for March 22.

9. *Adjourn*

D. Whitcomb moved and B. Sander seconded to adjourn at 8:26 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths