

LAMOILLE NORTH MODIFIED UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2017

Board members present: David Whitcomb, Laura Miller, Jeff Hunsberger, Wade Chivington, Angie Evans, Bill Sander, Katie Orost, Heather Rodriguez, Angela Lamell, Bobbie Moulton, Patti Hayford, Lisa Barry, Andrew Beaupre, Jim Osborn

Others present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Deb Baker, Brian Schaffer, Sherry Lussier, Dana Jewett, Dylan Laflam, Melinda Mascolino, Kate Torrey, David Manning, Andrew Martin, Thad Tallman, Melissa Manka, Amy Day, Dana Crowley, Chrissy Wade

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. *Call to Order, Adopt the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment***

D. Whitcomb called the meeting to order at 6:05.

**B. Sander moved to adopt the agenda, B. Moulton seconded and the motion was passed.**

**2. *Discussion and Possible Action on Tuition of Students Outside of the District***

C. Gallagher said she wanted to update the board on some things that have happened in the past several weeks. People have asked whether the MUUSD board members who ran for 1-year seats need to run again. The answer is no. Their year starts July 1 and doesn't include the months before that when the board was working.

Waterville has a petition that has been turned in to the town clerk for a vote to consider consolidating. The petition had to be signed by 5% of registered voters and well over 5% signed it. The Waterville board has to set a date for that vote. Within 10 days of the vote there will be a public information meeting.

C. Gallagher said the will of our voters in large part was to consolidate. There have been many thoughts and feelings since then and there are many unknowns, but the bottom line is that there isn't any way to turn back. D. Clark was asked to research some options to help the board make an informed decision. She will talk about that, then C. Gallagher wants to talk more about what her responsibility is in disseminating information to the board and hearing the voices of community members. (*D. Manning arrived at 6:10.*)

D. Clark said she was asked to compare the cost of tuition to Waterville for Belvidere students to the cost for the same students to attend either Johnson or Eden and to the cost of reopening and operating a school in Belvidere.

Belvidere has 34 students in preK through grade 6. The cost to tuition them to Waterville is \$402,661. The current budget was built as if that were happening and includes that amount. Both Johnson and Eden have reported they would not need any additional faculty to take the Belvidere students. Eden felt they would possibly need a half-time para. D. Clark calculated the cost of supplies and equipment for the Belvidere students by dividing the supplies and equipment amount in the FY18 budget by the existing population of students and multiplying

by 34. The transportation cost would be \$15,750 for either Johnson or Eden – about \$90/day for 175 days. Johnson would have no additional cost for dining services. The Abbey Group can accommodate the additional students. Eden would have an additional cost for dining services of \$9,826 based on the average loss per student. There would be an educational technology cost of \$4K at either school to get Chromebooks for students. The total cost to send Belvidere students to Johnson would be \$26,577 and the cost to send them to Eden would be \$60,539.

J. Osborn asked, it would cost just \$60K to send Belvidere students to Johnson or Eden? D. Clark said yes. J. Osborn asked, but that doesn't include the cost for additional teachers? D. Clark said none would be needed. Both principals said there would be no need to add faculty for Belvidere students.

A parent asked, would that cost be in addition to the tuition rate per student? D. Clark said there would be no tuition. A parent asked, is that in addition to per pupil spending? D. Clark said \$402K would come out of the budget, the cost to send students to Johnson or Eden would be added in, and then per pupil spending would be calculated.

The cost to operate the Belvidere school would be \$845,008. That is \$252,173 higher than the current Belvidere budget. There would also be a one-time cost to reopen the school of \$86,500 (for permitting, supplies and materials, etc.) The total increase to the budget of reopening the Belvidere school would be \$338,673.

W. Chivington asked, did we just see that it is cheaper to reopen Belvidere than to send students to Waterville? D. Clark said no. The \$338,673 is in addition to what is in the budget now, which includes the cost of tuition to Waterville. (*M. Stebbins arrived at 6:18.*)

C. Gallagher said one question asked of her was about the makeup of Belvidere students. There are 34 of them. Those in preK count as .5 FTE and those in K-6 are considered full-time. There are 27 students in K-6 and 7 in preK. There are 5 fifth and sixth grade students.

D. Clark showed the effect on the tax rate of the changes in costs.

J. Osborn asked about the distance and travel time to send students to Johnson or Eden rather than Waterville. D. Clark said she doesn't have that information. J. Osborn asked how long Belvidere students spend on the bus now. K. Torrey said 25-30 minutes. A. Evans said her kids leave WES at 2:35 and get to her home in Belvidere at 3:00 or 3:05 depending on the road they take. D. Clark said the trip to one of the other schools would add about 15-20 minutes, more like 20-30 minutes in foul weather.

C. Gallagher said some parents have researched it and said it would be faster for their kids to go to Lowell or Montgomery. We are not just talking about tuitioning students from Belvidere to Waterville. We are talking about opening the possibility of tuitioning to any district outside LNMUUSD.

D. Clark said we need to look at the budget impact of Belvidere students and how we can best serve them within the confines of fiscal responsibility. C. Gallagher asked, if Waterville

decides to consolidate, what happens to this issue? D. Clark said it becomes zero impact. We have \$402,661 on both sides – an expense on one side and revenue on the other. If both are in the same district then it is a zero amount.

D. Baker asked, don't these budgets have to be passed in the next week or so? We can't change the budget amount after that. D. Clark said if on town meeting day Waterville votes to join LNMUUSD we would have to hold a special meeting and ask the voters to approve a new budget.

L. Miller said she has grandkids in Belvidere. If the board decides to tuition out students, does that mean they can go to Montgomery, which is closer? D. Clark said if the MUUSD board says yes to the amount of money currently in the budget it opens up the question of tuitioning. Parents can ask at any time to tuition their kids to another district. The board needs to decide on each appeal.

W. Chivington said we have talked a lot about money. He wants to bring the discussion back to the fact that this is affecting children and families. He feels \$400K compared to \$9 million is not much. It is about 1/23 of the overall budget. That doesn't seem like much when we are talking about literally destroying a community. He feels if we can do something, even if we only approve tuitioning Belvidere students to Waterville due to the geographic loophole and don't open it up for other tuitioning, it would be a show of good faith that would go a long way toward getting Waterville to join the MUUSD so the community stays whole. Allowing tuitioning to continue for just a year would be a good faith gesture.

C. Gallagher said she is a parent. She understands the issue from a multitude of perspectives. We need to look at the big picture. She has spoken to Waterville and Belvidere parents. She has been given an education in history. She had been under the impression that the Belvidere school had been closed for decades. She learned that Belvidere students have been attending WES since 2004, so we are not talking about generations of families. What she heard from some Belvidere parents was that some of them felt they had been shut down by Waterville. She thinks it is important to hear what everyone has to say but at some point we need to look at the facts before us. If Waterville decides to come in to the MUUSD now it is a smooth and easy transition. If they wait then every single town in the MUUSD will have to vote on letting them join and it will go to the State Board of Education.

W. Chivington said a vote on joining the MUUSD will happen in Waterville. He is asking for something to show Waterville it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing to join the union.

D. Clark said the budget needs to be passed next week. For LNMUUSD to pass a budget we need to answer this big question. We talk about the decision being to allow Belvidere students to continue at WES. But there is a bigger question. If Hyde Park parents want their children to go to Morrisville that has to be considered. Every student whose family might appeal for tuitioning outside the district has to be considered equitably.

A Waterville parent said for her and Belvidere parents this is a special circumstance. It is not about others wanting to tuition their children. It is about their towns. The old animosity

between the towns is dying. Their kids are best friends and go to school together. The two towns want to be sister towns.

D. Clark said under the law we can't say just Belvidere students will be tuitioned to Waterville. A parent asked if there can be restrictions or parameters. D. Clark said no.

A parent said ultimately the board has to approve a tuitioning request based on geographic considerations. There are checks and balances. She doesn't think parents will ask to tuition kids to Montpelier. The majority who make a tuition request will want to go to Waterville. It has to be based on geographic considerations and this board has to approve it. She doesn't think we need to be overly concerned that kids will want to be tuitioned all over.

D. Baker asked, wasn't it in the articles of agreement that Belvidere students will go to Waterville for 3 years? D. Clark said the articles of agreement talk about students continuing at their school of residence, but there is no school of residence for Belvidere.

A parent said Donna Russo-Savage said as she read it the intent of the articles was to continue to send Belvidere students to Waterville for 3 years. If the intent was to send them elsewhere there would have been an alternative shown in the articles. If the board is not going to go with the intent, which was to send Belvidere students to Waterville for 3 years for continuity for students, then it does say students can go to school in their town of residence. She would rather have students in holding in Belvidere than send them miles away when they will not be part of the community where they go to school. They won't be able to have quality lives with so much time on the bus. She would rather have them in holding and wait to see what happens.

A Belvidere parent asked, if the bottom line is that the state is going to force Waterville to join the MUUSD eventually, why would we uproot a whole group of kids and send them to a far off town? Her kids say if the board changes where they go to school they aren't doing it. Does it make sense to uproot kids if eventually the state will make Waterville join the union?

B. Sander said Waterville is part of LNSU. Do we have any figures on what it will do to Waterville's tax rate if Belvidere kids are not going there? D. Clark said she thinks the change would be drastic. They wouldn't be able to continue with the operational budget they have. B Sander said SU-wide we wouldn't save that much by not tuitioning because of the effect on Waterville. Does it carry any weight that curriculums are aligned across the SU so we could say we want kids to stay within the SU? D. Clark said she thinks we need to understand that the question is whether to tuition or not tuition. If the board decides to tuition, individual families can petition and the board must hear the request but doesn't have to grant it. She doesn't know that we would use the curriculum argument because schools are trying to align to best practices statewide.

Thad Tallman said kids will make new friends. He hates to stop the process of consolidation because parents are afraid their kids will not make new friends. A parent said that is the least of her concerns. It is a lot more than that.

**K. Orost moved to eliminate \$402,661 for tuition from the FY18 budget and to add \$26,577 to enroll Belvidere preschool and elementary students at Johnson Elementary, seconded by B. Moulton.**

A. Beaupre asked about how the Waterville vote could affect the budget. He believes D. Clark said that if Waterville joins the MUUSD then the budget we see today would be thrown out and another one would be approved. D. Clark said that is correct. The timing of the vote affects it. There might not be time to change the budget before town meeting. She can't imagine any way around it except to have a special meeting to approve a new budget.

A. Beaupre asked, Waterville's vote supersedes this decision, right? D. Clark said no, this decision is about tuition. The Waterville vote doesn't supersede that.

A. Evans said the board is only deciding at this point whether to tuition or not, not whether to send Belvidere students to Johnson or Eden, right? D. Clark said that is right. The board is just deciding what amount to budget.

A parent said the motion included the amount it would cost to send the students to Johnson, so with that motion the board is saying there will be no tuitioning and Belvidere students will go to Johnson. She said we didn't even go over the tax rate impact and we are not talking about the impact on families and kids.

D. Clark said she doesn't think the motion should specify a school, just a budget amount. K. Orost said she would like to amend her motion to say Belvidere students would be enrolled in the appropriate campus within the district, to be determined. W. Chivington said if that dollar amount is left in the motion it indicates the school they will go to is Johnson.

B. Sander moved to amend the motion to make the budgeted amount up to \$60,539, but C. Gallagher reminded him that as a member from Cambridge he could not make a motion on this issue.

**K. Orost moved and B. Moulton seconded to amend the motion by making it a motion to eliminate \$402,661 from the FY18 budget and to enroll Belvidere preschool and elementary students in the appropriate campus.** D. Clark said she will add an amount to the budget that she feels is appropriate and present it to the MUUSD board at the next meeting. **The motion to amend was passed. The amended motion was passed.**

3. *Adjourn*

**B. Moulton moved to adjourn at 6:48, J. Hunsberger seconded and the motion was passed.**