

LAMOILLE NORTH MODIFIED UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2016

Board members present: Bill Sander, Andrew Beaupre, Mark Stebbins, Mark Nielsen, Lisa Barry, Katie Orost, Bobbie Moulton, David Whitcomb, Patti Hayford, Chasity Fagnant, Sue Hamlyn-Prescott, Angie Evans, Jim Osborn, Laura Miller, Jeff Hunsberger, Bill Sander, Jan Sander

Others present: Catherine Gallagher, Michele Aumand, Marilyn Frederick, Deborah Clark, Wendy Savery, Sherry Lussier, Brian Pena

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

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

A. Call to Order – 7:30

B. Adopt the Agenda

B. Moulton moved to adopt the agenda as presented, L. Barry seconded and the motion was passed.

C. Public Comment

M. Aumand said Wade Chivington had sent a letter to the board which was included in the board packet. Belvidere resident Melissa Manka also wrote a letter, which she wanted to be read aloud as public comment. M. Aumand read the letter. In the letter, M. Manka stated that there has been growing concern among Waterville and Belvidere residents about the fate of their schools and students. There have been many questions and shock that these possibilities were being weighed without community members' knowledge. She feels any decisions that will alter the current structure of schools and school populations must be fully researched to ensure that short-sighted decisions are not made that will greatly impact multiple towns for years to come. Residents of any towns involved in any discussion regarding the movement of student populations need the best available information and data in order to make informed decisions. (*B. Sander and J. Sander arrived at 7:32.*) They ask that LNSU and LNMUUSD provide budget and tax implications for the towns implicated in the multiple scenarios being discussed and that non-financial implications be fully researched and addressed through publications and public meetings in the affected towns. They ask that a fact sheet/Q&A be provided on the LNSU website to better inform residents, that public meetings be held in the affected towns to inform and gather input, and that Front Porch Forum be fully utilized to disseminate information in addition to the traditional print form and the LNSU website. She asks that the board foster positive working relationships and trust by granting Belvidere and Waterville 3 years, or until the state forces a merger, in order to gain answers to outstanding questions and concerns, understand the financial and non-financial implications of each scenario, allow time for a Waterville petition to be circulated if they desire to hold another vote, and to allow time for sufficient public outreach and education in the affected towns. She feels the current uncertainty and unrealistic timeline to make a fully informed decision is creating stress and anxiety in the communities. It would be greatly appreciated if the board gave assurance that tuitions

would be protected and schools left whole until matters can be fully resolved and the best long-term solution can be achieved.

M. Aumand read a letter from a Belvidere parent who did not want their name revealed. The parent prefers for their child to remain at Belvidere at least through the 2018-19 school year when the state will decide who each district will merge with. The parent expects LNMUUSD will make a good decision. There is a lot of increased emotion and among certain groups there is rhetoric that non-merged towns can remain stagnant as long as the board can be convinced not to pull Belvidere children. The parent firmly believes that Belvidere made the best choice and doesn't want Belvidere children to be used as political pawns to keep non-merged towns from facing the repercussions of their decisions.

2. *Approval of Minutes of the October 17, 2016 Meeting*

K. Orost moved to approve the minutes of October 17, 2016 and the motion was seconded and passed.

3. *Other Business*

M. Frederick said we just got information on how the state would look at Belvidere under Acts 46 and 153. Act 153 allows grandfathering if students would be allowed fewer options after a merger. The state confirmed that Belvidere would still have the same number of options so there would not be a reason for grandfathering. Operating schools in the town of residence are grandfathered but there isn't an operating school in Belvidere. The state did say that Article 17 of our Articles of Agreement doesn't include grandfathering language applicable to Belvidere but the intent seems to be to provide continuity for all elementary students for the first 3 years. They also indicated that statute gives the LNMUUSD board the authority to tuition students to an adjacent district upon parent request and a parent can appeal to the Secretary of Education if they are not satisfied with the board decision. Statute says terms can be negotiated for tuition that are different from those outlined in statute provided that the receiving school is consistent for all.

M. Frederick said we also asked about alternate structures. They said it is not always cut and dry. We need to consider Acts 153 and 156 and all pre-existing laws in addition to Act 46. And we need to consider the guidelines the Secretary of Education put out this summer about preferred vs. alternate structures. An alternate structure is an exception. It is not what is preferred. The guidelines list the goals a structure is supposed to meet. One is sharing and transferring resources, which definitely includes staff resources. A better student-staff ratio is a goal.

State legal assistance has offered to speak to the board on challenges and possibilities – alternate structure vs. single district structure, etc. But we should remember that the preferred structure is a single district. The Act 46 committee recommended a single district to the state board. There would definitely be challenges in looking at an alternate structure. But the state offered to have a legal person come and answer questions for this board or elementary boards.

J. Osborn asked, because voters from his district rejected consolidation are they no longer part of the SU? Or are they not part of the single district? M. Frederick said they are part of

the SU but not the single district. Act 153, Act 156 and statutes relating to union high schools still apply through the SU.

J. Osborn asked who has broader authority, the SU or the single district. M. Frederick said it depends on the question. She thinks it is important to have a legal person from the state talk to the board.

J. Osborn asked who from the state answered our questions. M. Frederick said the Agency of Education. J. Osborn asked if the person who answered was someone who helped write the law or someone independent. M. Frederick said she is not sure if the person helped write the law. She said VSBA can also offer legal advice.

M. Frederick said we would not have to pay to have a legal person from the state come talk to the board. D. Whitcomb asked how soon we would have to have them come with budgets being prepared. M. Frederick said one of the main things we needed to know for budget building we learned today. One question we had was whether it would even be allowable to pay tuition to Waterville. She thinks the questions we need answered to build a budget have been answered. C. Gallagher suggested maybe we could try to get them to come on December 19.

M. Stebbins said Josh O’Gorman at VSBA deals with Act 46 as his full-time job. D. Whitcomb said he doesn’t want to pay anything to VSBA. We already pay dues. Does the board want legal people to come here? C. Fagnant said absolutely. She thinks we should have both someone from the state and someone from VSBA. M. Frederick said she is not sure how many she can get. **M. Nielsen moved to authorize D. Whitcomb, C. Gallagher, and M. Frederick to invite state and VSBA legal representatives to a board meeting and the motion was passed.**

J. Osborn asked, if this board decides to send Belvidere kids to Waterville and pay tuition, what can the state do to us? M. Frederick said she doesn’t have those answers.

D. Whitcomb suggested that board members talk to their legislators.

C. Gallagher said she thinks everyone went into this believing in educational continuity. She believes in it philosophically. Because we are still awaiting information about what the law says we can and cannot do she recommends we don’t change much and ease into change in a thoughtful way. But we do need to hear from the attorneys.

4. *Subcommittees Meet*

The finance, operations/facilities/technology, communications/PR and policy/legal committees met.

5. *Subcommittees Report Out*

A. Finance Committee

L. Miller said D. Clark showed the finance committee the general ledger. It will have different codes showing which campus a line item refers to, which will help us determine where the expense is. Each campus will have a different code.

There are 1490 students on 5 campuses. Not including special ed the cost per student is roughly \$13,154. GMTCC, Cambridge and Waterville are separate.

At the December 19 meeting hopefully we will have all boards' preliminary budgets. We expect to vote on the budget on January 16. Schools that are not in the MUUSD need to have their own budgets approved by their local board. We plan to hire a lawyer to set up tax ID numbers, etc. to make sure it is done right.

B. Operations Committee

M. Stebbins said the last time the committee met they requested information on the current state of facilities, IT, and transportation. This evening the committee got a packet of information on all three. There was an IT breakdown for each school except HPES outlining where each school is now with its IT needs and giving a rough plan for where it will need to go in the future. The committee will need to see what kind of licensing benefits we can get by combining resources.

The committee received a packet on bus routes. They discussed some benefits of consolidation, like Eden kids being picked up by Hyde Park. Things like that can possibly be addressed under the new structure.

The committee talked about the idea of sharing facilities resources between different facilities and what might be the best model to use. That will take some discussion. Everyone agreed it would be a great idea to pool resources, but we need to figure out how we can maximize efficiency.

C. Communications/PR Committee

P. Hayford said the committee would like to do two public meetings after the holidays. At the next meeting they will discuss where they should be held. M. Frederick gave them some common questions about Act 46. They need to read the document and talk it over and make sure it is what they want to put on the website. D. Whitcomb suggested that the next meeting be recorded to put on GMATV. M. Aumand can look into that. The board needs to vote on a "doing business as" name.

D. Policy/Legal Committee

K. Orost said the committee went over all the required VSBA policies and modified them with any language we want to keep from current LNSU or LUSD policies. The next step is to have legal review them. The committee will also look at recommended policies to see if they want to use any of them. C. Gallagher said after legal review the policies all need to be warned.

6. Board Negotiations Update

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNCs are in active negotiations with the Teachers Association and ESP committees. This week there will be a second negotiation session with each. Healthcare and salary proposals will be exchanged. The BNC is entrusted to work toward a contract. As board members interact in our communities we need to remind ourselves that the same message should be given to all. The BNC has agreed that S. Hamlyn-Prescott should be the main spokesperson and contact person for any questions from board members, teachers, community members, or administrators. Board members who are asked questions should have people contact S. Hamlyn-Prescott. This is important because we want consistent information and don't want negotiations to be compromised. Negotiations

meetings are in open session. Minutes can be found on the LNSU website by going to For Our Community, then School Board Info, then Agendas and Minutes.

L. Miller asked when the current contracts end. Do both end at the same time? S. Hamlyn-Prescott said yes, they both end June 30 of this year.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said board members should direct any questions to her and should not say any more than that negotiations are ongoing.

7. Finalize Name/DBA

P. Hayford said the board needs to vote on a “doing business as” name. The two that have been suggested are Lamoille North Unified School District and Lamoille North Union School District.

B. Sander asked, don’t they both describe something that legally we are not? M. Frederick said she doesn’t think “unified” describes what we legally aren’t. “Union” is already used at the state level for union high schools or other union districts. That one might be in conflict but “unified” wouldn’t be. The legal name would not change. For the state we will always be Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District. This is a DBA. W. Sander said calling ourselves “unified” when we are a modified union might be a problem. That might be calling ourselves something we aren’t.

M. Stebbins asked, is the purpose just to shorten the name? Can it just be Lamoille North School District? W. Sander said that’s not claiming something we aren’t. L. Miller suggested Modified Lamoille North Supervisory Union.

A. Beaupre asked what the process is for filing a DBA. M. Frederick said it is pretty simple. You file a form. She has never done it for a school district so she would rather see an attorney do it.

A. Beaupre said this is something we will expect the community to get behind. Why not ask them? L. Barry said if we put it out to the community it will go on for a year. She likes M. Stebbins’s suggestion. In Essex they combined Essex Junction, Essex Town and Westford and they are doing business as Essex-Westford School District.

K. Orost asked if anyone has checked whether the domain we would want is available. M. Frederick said we already bought a few different domains we might want. B. Pena listed domains we own. L. Miller wondered if the state could refuse our chosen name if it is too similar to another name someone else has. Could that happen because we purchased a web domain for a similar name? C. Fagnant said maybe we should have two options just in case. D. Whitcomb said he doesn’t think the state will get involved if Lamoille North is in the name.

P. Hayford moved to adopt a “doing business as” name for LNMUUSD of “Lamoille North School District,” B. Moulton seconded and the motion was passed.

8. Budget Update

D. Clark said the budget update was presented already through the finance committee. Local boards still need to approve their budgets.

9. Other Business

K. Orost and B. Pena said Insd.org and Insd.net are taken by someone else. M. Frederick said our registration may have expired. They will get it worked out.

D. Whitcomb urged board members to talk to their legislators. He said they need to be educated. They are not self educating themselves on issues.

10. Adjourn

B. Moulton moved to adjourn at 8:46 and the motion was seconded and passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED