

LAMOILLE NORTH MODIFIED UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017

Board members present: Belvidere – Angie Evans; Cambridge – Bill Sander, Laura Miller, Mark Stebbins; Eden – David Whitcomb, Jeff Hunsberger; Hyde Park – Chasity Fagnant, Patti Hayford, Andrew Beaupre; Johnson – Katie Orost, Bobbie Moulton, Mark Nielsen, Angela Lamell, Heather Rodriguez; Waterville – Amanda Tilton-Martin. Others: Catherine Gallagher
Others present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Kate Torrey, Janet Murray, Wendy Savery, Diane Reilly, Brian Peña, Sherry Lussier, Marilyn Frederick, Charleen McFarlane, Jade Hazard, Jen Stevens, David Manning, Heidi Rich, Allie Judkins, Kevin Judkins, Mary Kennedy, 1 other member of the public

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 6:30.

It was moved and seconded to change the agenda to move Petition for 3 HPES Residents to Attend JES for FY18 before Routine Business. The motion was passed.

2. *Petition for 3 HPES Residents to Attend JES for FY18*

C. Gallagher read the letter Hyde Park resident Allie Judkins had written to the board, which serves as a petition. A. Judkins explained her request. She has 3 children who attend HPES. She learned that HPES will not offer preschool next year due to renovations so she has looked for different solutions for her youngest child. She and her husband have chosen to send him to preschool at JES, pending availability. Hyde Park students in grades K-5 will be relocated to the former Plaza Hotel. She would rather that her children all be in the same location and she feels the temporary HPES location will be unsafe, so she requests that her older 2 children be transferred to JES for the next school year. She attended JES herself and she loves the teachers and the academic atmosphere. On February 14 she made David Manning aware of her intention to send her children to JES with the possibility that they would complete their elementary education there. He supported her decision and said he hoped they would be attending JES this fall. A. Judkins would do all the transportation. She thinks it would be a great opportunity for her children to get new experiences and meet new educators.

P. Hayford asked what her concern is with the Plaza Hotel location. A. Judkins said Hoagies is next door and serves alcohol and you never know what will happen in the parking lot.

L. Miller asked what the articles of agreement say about sending students to other schools. C. Gallagher said there are restrictions on when the board can make a change to a student's school assignment but at any time a family can petition for a different assignment. The board is not required to make that change but is required to hear the request.

M. Nielsen said this creates precedent because this is the first request of this kind.

In response to questions from the board, A. Judkins said if her children excel in their education at JES she hopes they would continue there. Currently she feels they are not where they should be academically.

C. Gallagher said every year A. Judkins wants her children to attend JES she will have to come before the board.

It was moved and seconded to approve the request for the three Hyde Park children to attend Johnson Elementary for one year and to review the situation the next year. The motion was seconded.

M. Stebbins said A. Judkins makes a good case. As M. Nielsen said, this is setting a precedent. He asked D. Manning, if there were an influx of similar requests from Hyde Park residents, does JES have the capacity and how would D. Manning handle those requests?

D. Manning said JES did a study of whether there was capacity for the 34 students from Belvidere. That showed they did have capacity to absorb those students. He believes there is capacity to absorb 3-5 kids in each grade level. He thinks there would have to be some language saying requests would be granted based on space available. JES couldn't take all Hyde Park students but they have capacity for a good number before they will be full.

B. Sander asked how administrators feel about it. He is a little concerned it might be a race to see who gets in the game first. What if 50 other families didn't know this option was available and they want it?

C. Gallagher said if Waterville votes to rescind the decision to join LNMUUSD we would still have 34 Belvidere students that would attend Johnson or Eden, most likely Johnson. A. Judkins is the first person who came to the board with a request to change a school assignment. Is it the board's will to wait to see what happens with Waterville or to approve the request? Because Hyde Park doesn't have its own preschool next year that makes this not necessarily a precedent for all requests. There will be one student attending preschool in Johnson who has 2 siblings. It makes sense to keep them all in one place.

B. Sander asked if that would be C. Gallagher's recommendation. C. Gallagher said yes.

A. Evans said if there is a revote in Waterville, there are several parents who want their kids to go to Waterville. Could they petition for their kids to go there? C. Gallagher said if Waterville ends up staying out of LNMUUSD, that would be a tuition question, so it would be different.

A board member asked if there are a lot of other people in the same situation who may want to do this. J. Murray said there are 11 children in the 3 year old preschool program at HPES. We haven't had other requests like this. There are 2 or 3 Hyde Park preschoolers on the list to attend Johnson. Some families are interested in partner programs.

L. Miller asked if this is going to set a precedent for open enrollment. C. Gallagher said she doesn't think so. She thinks it will be important for the board to articulate well what is unique

about every situation. That gets the board away from setting a precedent it may not want to set. It is important to look at these requests on a case by case basis.

M. Stebbins read Article 17 from the articles of agreement:

For at least the first three years that the Unified School District is fully operational and providing educational services, students may attend the elementary school in the town of residence. However, with parental consent, the Board of School Directors may adjust student enrollment based upon individual student circumstances and needs of the Unified School District. After July 1, 2020, the Board of School Directors will have the authority to adjust school building designations, school attendance and school configurations throughout the Unified School District.

D. Manning said he is the JES principal and also a Hyde Park resident who has a child at HPES. One goal of having a unified district was getting people to see elementary education, not town by town, but the way they see high school education, not focused on the town of origin. If there is a Johnson family that is unhappy with Johnson education and thinks their child can get a better education at HPES he wouldn't want to stand in their way. He would want to embrace the concept that all of our students are all our students. Multiple families might request this. Do we want to say that if a family wants to make a move we will support it? It is an important question. Do we want to allow people to freely move between elementary schools as long as they follow the process? Or are we going to continue to go with the model where people are going to be tied to where they live? H thinks either is okay, but that is what the board should grapple with.

C. Gallagher said she feels it will be important to take each situation as a unique situation. She thinks it is important to articulate that this is a unique situation.

M. Stebbins said he doesn't believe accepting this request would set a blanket precedent.

A. Beaupre moved to amend the motion to say that in light of parental concerns about the temporary Hyde Park school location and the desire to keep the family together at one school the board approves moving the students from the temporary Hyde Park location to Johnson Elementary School for one year. W. Sander said he would be okay with that as long as it is also stated that this is not to be construed as precedent setting. A. Beaupre agreed to that friendly amendment. The motion was seconded.

D. Reilly said she is fully in support of A. Judkins sending her children to JES. But language in the motion indicating the board acknowledges there are safety concerns with the Plaza location would concern her. That facility has been vetted. The fire marshal, maintenance director and teachers have been there. The superintendent approved it. She doesn't want anyone to misconstrue that anyone on the board feels there are safety concerns.

C. Gallagher asked A. Judkins if it is fair to say that she would like to keep her 3 children together for continuity. A. Judkins said yes.

By unanimous consent the amendment was withdrawn.

A. Beaupre moved to amend the motion to say that in the interest of keeping the family unit together at one school the board would approve the family's children moving for the term of one year from Hyde Park Elementary to Johnson Elementary. The motion to amend was seconded and passed with D. Whitcomb and H. Rodriguez abstaining.

A. Judkins asked if it could be included that if the children are excelling at Johnson they can remain. C. Gallagher said she thinks we need to take it a year at a time. K. Judkins asked, if the children do excel is the board going to approve letting them remain at JES? M. Stebbins said there is no guarantee. If they do excel, it does help the family's case. Board members agreed that the family will have a right for their request to be heard.

The amended motion was passed with D. Whitcomb and H. Rodriguez abstaining.

3. *Routine Business*

A. **Consent Agenda Items (Minutes of the February 20, 2017 Meeting)**

B. Sander moved to approve the consent agenda and the motion was seconded and passed.

B. **Superintendent Updates**

C. Gallagher said there is thought to be a petition circulating in Waterville to rescind the vote to join LNNUUSD. It would need to be submitted within the next 3 days. She welcomed Amanda Tilton-Martin, the new Waterville representative to the LNNUUSD board. She is also chair of the Waterville board.

Interviews for the WES principal have started. Six applicants are being interviewed. She thinks the interview process will be completed this week. K. Torrey is leaving to go to Morristown Elementary, which is sad for us.

Some erroneous information has gone out. Someone sent C. Gallagher a snippet of legislation that reads: "The school district proposing to withdraw from the union high school district operates a school or schools for all resident students in prekindergarten through grade 6 and pays tuition for resident students in grades 7 through 12." Some information was circulated to various people that this could include Cambridge as being able to opt out of the union without significant discussion or perhaps permission by the union. But in fact this would not apply to any district in LNSU. It does not apply to Cambridge at all.

Last week C. Gallagher saw elementary, middle school and high school students all practicing together for band and choir concerts. It was a thing of beauty, showing how we are all one school community.

D. Whitcomb said he attended a one-act play at the high school and it was great. He encouraged others to see plays here.

K. Orost asked about the process of hiring a Waterville principal. C. McFarlane said staff have reviewed applications and determined who they wanted to interview. Six applicants are moving forward. Staff will narrow down to a few finalists who will move forward to the next phase. On March 30 candidates will come to WES to have lunch and mingle with staff and students. On April 6 there will be a public forum and then the Waterville board will

have a special board meeting to interview candidates. Then the superintendent will interview candidates and recommend a principal to this board.

B. Sander asked, if there is a revote in Waterville, when will it occur? C. Gallagher said if a petition is turned in on Thursday, the last possible day, the board will have to call a special meeting not less than 30 or more than 40 days from then. B. Sander asked what that does for our planning for Belvidere students. C. Gallagher said it puts everything on hold. B. Sander said if Waterville reverses its decision then it will be out in the cold just as Cambridge is now, with no easy way to do anything until the Secretary of Education tells them which district to join.

L. Miller asked, if there is a revote in Waterville will the principal contract not be handed out until after 30 days? C. Gallagher said the local Waterville board will need to look at what they want that position to look like. The budget is the budget. Maybe they will look at a teaching principalship. It is premature to speculate.

4. *Sabbatical Leave Request*

W. Savery introduced Heidi Rich, a middle school teacher on Team Nova. This is her 21st year teaching. H. Rich submitted a sabbatical proposal late last fall when we were planning for the budget. W. Savery put money for anticipated approval of the request in her budget. If her sabbatical is approved, under the current contract she would get 60% of her salary and we would hire a long-term sub. The budget including those funds was approved. H. Rich is here to answer any questions. It is important for her to get approval as soon as possible as she needs to make arrangements and look into grant opportunities. The sabbatical would start in the fall.

B. Sander said he thinks we all need to recognize that our faculty, especially our long-term faculty, are assets and not liabilities. **B. Sander moved to approve Heidi Rich's sabbatical request and the motion was seconded.**

L. Miller asked, her insurance and everything will be as she has it now during her sabbatical? C. McFarlane said in the current negotiations the BNC has put forth language that removes the 60% of salary and benefits for those on sabbatical. This request is for next year. Currently language in the contract says teachers on sabbatical get 60% of their salary and benefits. The BNC is putting forth the proposal that sabbaticals can still happen but without pay and benefits. That hasn't been ratified. W. Savery said H. Rich is aware that she may not get salary and benefits during the sabbatical if the proposed change is negotiated.

L. Miller asked if H. Rich will be given the same position when she comes back. C. McFarlane said she believes the contract says she will be given a comparable position. W. Savery said that is her understanding. She currently has a 1 year science teacher covering for a maternity leave who has agreed to cover H. Rich's position and then H. Rich would return to her current position. L. Miller said she agrees with B. Sander about people who have worked here for many years. It is important for them to know they have a job when they come back. A teacher who took a leave at CES was given a position that she felt was too different when she came back (6th grade vs. 1st grade) so she left.

B. Sander said he thinks this sort of thing ought to be encouraged. It is good for the school as well as for the faculty member. He would like clarification on whether the existing contract language on sabbaticals will apply if the board approves the request tonight.

H. Rich said although she won't be here during her sabbatical she will be working at least 60% of the time for her students and with her colleagues to make sure the products she comes up with are useful to her colleagues. She could not be making money doing something else. If the sabbatical took place under different rules than the current rules she might need to radically re-look at things.

M. Stebbins said the proposal is very well planned out. He likes all the ways H. Rich spells out what she could bring back to colleagues and students. Would she be able to provide any project based learning for kids next year or would that happen after she returns? H. Rich said it is up to her colleagues what they implement. Any new project based work for students would be light, if any, during the year she was on sabbatical.

B. Sander asked for clarification about whether the proposed new rules or the rules in effect now would govern this sabbatical. He would advocate for the current rules. C. McFarlane said the master agreement will dictate it. If the board approves the request tonight, then whatever is in the contract in effect at the time of the sabbatical will apply. If the language doesn't get changed in negotiations it will remain at 60% salary and benefits. B. Sander asked, we can't specify that anything approved before the new contract is in effect is under the old rules? C. McFarlane said no.

The motion was passed.

5. Budget Update

D. Clark said on March 7 voters approved an elementary budget of \$11,468,866. If we add in the Waterville budget that will add an estimated \$1,376,896. She and K. Torrey still need to work on fine tuning that. The new total will be an estimated \$12,845,762. The combined tax rate including the high school will go from 1.451 to 1.475. The high school and GMTCC budgets have been voted on and approved and they will not be revoted. Only the elementary budget will be revoted. When we add in CLA, Belvidere's savings on a \$100K property will go from \$179 to \$143 with the new budget figure. Eden's savings on a \$100K home will go from \$201 to \$177, Hyde Park's will go from \$46 to \$23, and Johnson's \$6 savings will change to an increase of \$16.57. Waterville can save \$193.83. Waterville is bringing in additional expenses with not very many pupils.

K. Orost asked what the Waterville budget includes. D. Baker said it includes a full-time school with all the Belvidere students. It eliminates rent for preschool and returns Small Schools Grant revenue. There is some fund balance being applied towards expenditures. If a petition for a revote is not submitted, a new budget figure will be presented to the board at the next meeting. There is a 2/3 rule in statute for revotes. On February 21, Waterville voted 126 to 58 to join LN MUUSD. To reverse that, 2/3 of the prevailing vote count has to be in the opposite direction. So there would need to be at least 84 no votes as well as more no votes than yes votes. In theory, there could be 50 yes votes and 80 no votes and the original vote would not reverse.

If a petition isn't brought forward there should be a vote on the new budget figure at the next LNMUUSD board meeting. If there is a petition and it gets too late in the year she will request a special meeting just for the budget. Once this board approves a budget it will still be 30 days before it can be voted on.

C. Gallagher showed a map of districts in the state, showing which districts have had successful merger votes, which are voting April 11, which haven't yet pursued anything and which are in study committees.

6. *Negotiations Update*

K. Orost read a statement:

Negotiations are ongoing. The Boards greatly value their Teachers and Staff and are working toward a fair outcome for all. We have met with both Teachers and Support Staff and exchanged proposals. The biggest change is that there will be new health plans beginning January 2018. The new health plans provided by BCBS offer the same great comprehensive medical coverage and the same extensive network of providers, with each having different cost sharing options. Presently, both the Teacher and Support Staff Associations have proposed 85/15 cost sharing of health care premiums for the CDHP Gold plan, requesting that the Board contribute 100% of out-of-pocket expenses toward an HRA. The Board Negotiations Council has proposed the equivalent in dollars to 80/20 cost sharing of health care premiums for the CDHP Gold plan, with the Board contributing \$1,750 toward either an HRA or HSA for single and \$3,500 for multi-person plans, which makes all employees whole for health care costs and coverage. The Teachers have proposed a salary increase of 6.44% and Support Staff 5.5%. The Board Negotiations Council has proposed 1.64% for Teachers and 2.5% for Support Staff. All negotiation meetings are held in open sessions (and the minutes can be found on the LNSU web site).

She said any questions should be directed to BNC chair Sue Prescott and gave her phone number.

B. Sander asked if there is any chance that any of the governor's proposals on imposing health insurance costs on the teachers will go anyplace that will short circuit our negotiations. C. Gallagher said she doesn't know that that will be as impactful as seeing what districts around us are doing. We have had a neighboring district (LSSU) settle. That will be a comparable that will impact what happens in our negotiations.

7. *Administrative Contract Renewals*

K. Orost moved to go into executive session for a personnel matter, inviting administrators to remain, the motion was seconded and passed and the board entered executive session at 7:40. The board came out of executive session at 7:50.

K. Orost moved to approve the superintendent's recommendation for a 2-year contract renewal for David Manning at Johnson Elementary School with compensation to be decided when contract negotiations are complete, M. Nielsen seconded and the motion was passed.

B. Sander moved to approve the superintendent's recommendation for a 2-year contract renewal for Wendy Savery at Lamoille Union Middle School with compensation to be decided when contract negotiations are complete and the motion was seconded and passed.

B. Sander moved to approve the superintendent's recommendation for a 2-year contract renewal for Sherry Lussier at GMTCC with compensation to be decided when contract negotiations are complete and the motion was seconded and passed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the superintendent's recommendation for a 2-year contract renewal for Diane Reilly at Hyde Park Elementary School with compensation to be decided when contract negotiations are complete and the motion was seconded and passed.

8. *Set Ongoing Agendas for Committees and Appoint Personnel Committee*

D. Whitcomb said he would like to wait to set committee agendas and give people time to think about it. We also need to decide if we are going to meet during April break.

There was a question about when the personnel committee acts. C. McFarlane said when it is difficult for the full board to meet. The LNSU and LUSD boards have authorized their personnel committees to act on hiring decisions. We are going into hiring season. This is a bigger board making decisions on more personnel. Waiting until the next board meeting and getting a quorum is difficult. We need to act on hiring decisions more readily.

M. Frederick said when this board started up her recommendation was that the negotiations committee and the personnel committee be the same group but the board never acted on that recommendation. C. Gallagher said most merged districts have the negotiations and personnel committees together as one group. C. McFarlane said the BNC group is well-versed in the master agreement.

L. Miller said she wasn't able to be on the negotiations committee because her husband is a bus driver but she doesn't think that should make it so she can't be on the personnel committee. B. Sander said he is not sure those from Cambridge and Waterville could be on the personnel committee, though he would like to be. C. Gallagher said members from those towns could recuse themselves from elementary decisions. A board member commented that not all the BNC members are on this board. M. Frederick said the concept was that the committee would consist of those on this board who are on the BNC. We don't need a representative from each town. C. Gallagher said those from Cambridge and Waterville could make recommendations.

D. Whitcomb asked if the board wants the negotiations and personnel committees to be the same people. There was general agreement, but L. Miller said she would like to be on the personnel committee. D. Whitcomb said that is an HR decision. Anyone can attend the meetings. C. McFarlane said the HR director doesn't have authority to say who is on the committee. That is a board decision.

C. McFarlane said the next hiring decision will be the Waterville Elementary principal. There will be a public forum, then the Waterville board will interview finalists and let C. Gallagher know their feelings. C. Gallagher will interview the finalists and narrow it down to one finalist. Then the personnel committee would make a decision.

After some discussion it was agreed to change the date of the next full board meeting from April 17 to April 10 at 6:00. So the full board will be able to approve the Waterville principal hire.

9. Acknowledgement of Assumption of Debt

M. Frederick said the board needs to acknowledge assumption of debt taken from the merging school districts. There is a lot of paperwork that needs to be done before July 1 in order for the debt to be assumed. This is debt that has already been approved by the other districts. The debts to be assumed include one from Waterville. Their revolving water fund is the only debt they have. It costs nothing. The government pays for it. If a petition for a revote is submitted in Waterville she will bring new documents to the next meeting. She will not submit anything regarding Waterville's debt to the bond bank if a petition is submitted.

B. Sander moved to acknowledge the assumption of debt from the Lamoille Union High School and Middle School and GMTCC, to accept the resolution necessary for M. Frederick to move forward with assumption of the debt and to authorize the resolution to be signed by a majority of school board directors. The motion was seconded and passed.

It was moved and seconded to acknowledge the assumption of debt from the Town of Belvidere, Eden Central School, Town of Hyde Park, Johnson and Waterville school districts, to accept the resolution necessary for M. Frederick to move forward with assumption of the debt and to authorize the resolution to be signed by a majority of school board directors. The motion was passed.

10. Administrative Contract Renewals (continued)

C. McFarlane said the board sets salaries for 9 administrators including the food service director, facilities director, athletic directors and assistant principals. The superintendent recommends that the salary increases for those administrators be contingent on negotiations. There are also a couple of non-union administrative assistants in the MUUSD and the superintendent recommends that their salaries be contingent on negotiations as well. The 9 administrators need to be issued contracts before the board meets next.

It was moved and seconded to approve the superintendent's recommendation that mid-management and other non-union salary increases in LNMUUSD be contingent on negotiations. The motion was passed.

11. Set Future Board Meeting Dates

C. Gallagher said from now to July she recommends the board continue meeting on the third Monday of each month. Beginning July 1, does the board want to meet on the nights the LUSD board currently meets – first and third Tuesdays – or stick with first and third Mondays? Board members discussed their preferences. It was agreed to schedule meetings for second and fourth Mondays after July 1.

12. Adjourn

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 8:18 and the motion was passed.