

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
November 9, 2020**

Board Members Present: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Bernard Barnes, Laura Miller, Jan Sander, Bill Sander, Sue Prescott, Mark Stebbins, Eden: David Whitcomb, Jeff Hunsberger; Hyde Park: Chasity Fagnant, Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Patty Hayford; Johnson: Angela Lamell, Katie Orost, Allen Audette, Jr.; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: Johnson: Mark Nielsen, Bobbie Moulton

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Charleen McFarlane, Michele Aumand, Denise Maurice, Brian Schaffer, Melinda Mascolino, Flo Kelley, Tommy O'Connor, Diane Reilly, Wendy Savery, Brian Pena, David Manning, Erik Remmers, Janet Murray, Mary Anderson, Jeremy Scannell, Jennifer Hulse, Jan Epstein, Bethann Pirie, Dylan Laflam

Others: Yvonne Jones, Betzi Goodman, Denise Webster, Ashlee Rubinstein, SSgt. Leeann LeClair, SSgt. Olivia Furina, Heidi Kneeland

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: David Whitcomb called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. With Mark Nielsen absent and David Whitcomb able to connect only through telephone, Whitcomb nominated Mark Stebbins to be Chair of the meeting. Miller seconded the nomination. The Board approved unanimously of the nomination. Whitcomb then made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Bezio. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the October 26, 2020, meeting: Orost made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Air National Guard: SSgt. Leeann LeClair introduced herself to the Board, stating she was a recruiter for the Vermont Air National Guard. She stated there were over eighty jobs on base ranging from maintenance to administration. Due to COVID, it was hard to get into the schools to let students know of the many options available to them at the Vermont Air National Guard. There were a number of benefits, including 100% paid tuition to a lot of Vermont schools. SSgt. Furina spoke of her position as a maintainer on the F35. She stated the skills acquired in this position would easily transfer to civilian life. Her leadership skills would allow her to be a manager elsewhere.

Review FY2022 Budget Timeline: Clark reported that the Finance and Capital Committee had met and developed a timeline for meetings. The meeting schedule was as follows:

- November 23rd at 5:15 p.m. A very preliminary first draft would be presented to the full Board that evening;
- December 7th at 6:00 p.m.;
- December 14th at 5:15 p.m. A first pass of the budget would be presented to the full Board that evening;
- December 21st at 6:00 p.m.
- December 28th at 5:15 p.m., with a budget presented to the Board for review and possible adoption of the Supervisory Union budget at that time;
- January 4th at 6:00 p.m. was being tentatively scheduled;
- January 11th, the budget would be presented to the full Board for final adoption of the MUUSD. This date was the last possible date to adopt the MUUSD budget.

Central Office/Director Updates: Gallagher reported it had been an extraordinarily busy week. They were moving to have more conversations around social justice and, in particular, racial justice. The Equity Co-Directors would speak to this later in the meeting. Gallagher stated that she and Mark Nielsen had been working on a letter that they would like the Board to adopt. This had to do with recognizing all people, in particular people who have been marginalized, and would recognize the move in education and conversation around systemic bias and racial justice.

Some professional development was being planned. District representatives had met with individuals from Building Fearless Futures, as well as Miles Smith from NVU. Speaking with them had helped to reset priorities. The administrators had thought they should rush in and look at the curriculum. However, the feedback was that people needed to come from the same place in language and in ideology before looking at anything else. Therefore, professional development was being planned to do that with a SU-wide committee, a high school/middle school/Tech Center committee, and an elementary school committee. Gallagher noted that Eric Hutchins and Mark Nielsen had recently been voted on to the Johnson Committee in Equity and Social Justice.

Moving to student numbers, Gallagher reported that at the elementary level, it appeared that the District would be able to accommodate all requests for more in-person instruction at the elementary level. She was pleased to be able to accommodate that. In order to accommodate the requests, they were now ordering furniture and removing almost everything from the classrooms except for individual desks. This was being done gradually and as a result of survey requests. The District was sticking to the guidelines that were put in place by the State. The middle and high school levels required a six-foot restriction and therefore they were not able to accommodate everyone who wanted four days of in-person instruction.

The District had their first confirmed case of an individual in the school community. This case was at the Tech Center. Erik Remmers called Gallagher on Sunday because he had heard there was a positive test. Gallagher immediately called the Department of Health. The Department of Health was aware of the case. Flo Kelly, Remmers, and Gallagher met with the Department of Health team and went through the process of identifying all potential individuals who might have been in contact with the person. Gallagher was impressed with the questions the team asked. She was more impressed by the fact that by the time the team started to ask about what the District was doing about their facilities, the items had already been done. The Department of Health was impressed as well and said people didn't come to the meetings with seating charts or attendance records. All of the necessary information could be provided promptly. The next meeting with the Department of Health would be Tuesday, the 10th. Gallagher noted that Remmers had been phenomenal with messaging. The Tech Center would be remote for the rest of the week because with five sending schools from other towns it took longer to do the contact tracing.

Remmers stated there was a lot of anxiety about this. He was attempting to make sure to speak with the families with students who may have been in close proximity to the individual involved. The Department of Health was sticking with contacting the people who were in close proximity to the person, not those who were further away. Gallagher noted that the Department of Health said that schools were the safest places to be when it came to following protocols. The District schools had been aggressive about making sure that they were following protocols. Gallagher noted that the people who had sent aggressive emails early on stating that COVID was like a cold were the same people emailing her now and asking how she could have let this happen. The schools had done everything they needed to do. Additionally, she stated that it appeared that people felt they were anonymous on social media. She had directed her teams to ignore Facebook posts that were based on ignorance. The schools had been vigilant about adhering to the safety standards and the Department of Health acknowledged the work done by the school.

Flo Kelley agreed and stated that both Gallagher and the team were very thorough. There was a sense that the school was able to do this quickly because people were well prepared and informed. Gallagher stated the State was ramping up their concern level. Some of what the District was trying to do might be

moot as far as bringing in more and more people. The Department of Health and COVID Coordinators made the decisions as to who needed to be tested.

Gallagher thought it was important to recognize that it was considered best practices for students at the elementary level to be in school full-time. This year, and this year alone, parents could say no. It was important for Board members to know that.

Clark provided the Board with a technology update. The tech team was making great progress on rebuilding the servers. They had hoped to be able to go back to full user live access on Infinite Visions, their accounting system, by December 1st. It looked as though they wouldn't be able to meet that date, but the process was still moving forward. The time clock decision still wasn't clear, as they needed to decide what kind of investment they wanted to make. Finance reports were still on track for some preliminary FY21 budget reports.

At Gallagher's request, Brian Schaffer reported to the Board that a coalition of teachers, counselors, administrators and students were coming together weekly for a racial justice discussion. Schaffer introduced Ashlee Rubinstein, one of the teachers leading the conversations. Rubinstein stated that this work began at the beginning of last spring, with a more formalized action plan having been developed this fall. Many students and teachers in the high school saw the need for real change to happen in the schools. The weekly meetings now incorporated the other schools on campus and worked to promote racial justice conversations, curriculum, etc. They were about to distribute a survey for teachers of the three schools to determine where the faculty stood on topics of racial justice and what teachers needed from the school in order to help them be more successful in the endeavor. That information would be used to look for professional development and training opportunities, specifically related to racial justice. Rubinstein stated this work needed to begin as soon as possible. There was also a subcommittee that was looking into a community read for teachers and another community read for both teachers and students. It was clear that teachers had work to do before bringing this information to the students. A student committee was brainstorming on how to have a group for students that could drive the interest in promoting change at the school.

Janet Murray informed the Board that the early education team was very invested and having many discussions about racial justice and equity. She attended a conference of the Vermont Association of the Young Child in conjunction with the National Association of the Young Child. They ran a statewide conference on health, equity and racial justice. She would be incorporating some of the information into the work at the early education level. Murray stated the speakers were inspiring. She outlined the common themes: creating a safe space to have brave and open conversations, turning outrage into practice, creating partnerships to address issues, and the need for leaders to take the topic of racism to the next level through conversations, resources and collaboration. Murray complimented Gallagher for taking this issue to heart, taking leadership, and creating teams to work on this very important issue. One of the speakers spoke to using the classrooms as tools, and emotional intelligence was a highlight of conversations. Teaching children empathy, compassion, how to deal with conflict, and having positive conversations were the big takeaways from the conference. Murray also acknowledged this team for taking initiative. They were very invested and were volunteering their personal time to do a book group with the book *My Grandmother's Hands*. The book was on racialized trauma and the pathway to mending hearts and bodies. She noted that as the District began to look at curriculum, there was a national consultant who offered a diversity and anti-bias curriculum series as well as workshops for early education.

Jennifer Hulse reported that she and Bethann Pirie were the Co-Directors of Equity for the Supervisory Union. Their focus was to ensure that the District was moving in a cohesive manner and with the same goal. Initially, Hulse and Pirie had reached out to building principals and had asked them to identify an equity partner in each building to assist with the work. As an administrative group, they had decided to read *How to be Anti-Racist* together. Several administrators continued to attend the REAL school

meetings. Gallagher, Savery and Hulse had met with several representatives from Building Fearless Futures. Remmers from the Tech Center had been meeting with this group as well. Their mission was to mitigate racial tension in schools and communities. Hulse reported they had met with Miles Smith from NVU and had a very inspiring conversation with him. He provided some great ideas about collaborative opportunities they could have with NVU. This work was new to many at the school and they would need guidance on having conversations with families, students and teachers.

Savery stated that as the Director of Curriculum she saw her role as bringing all of the information from community groups such as the Restorative Center, the 100% Campaign, Building Fearless Futures, REAL, Lamoille County Mental Health and NFI together around the umbrella of healthy school climate and culture. She wanted to be able to build a strong foundation of respect and strong facilitation skills, understanding the problems and how to move forward. She was working on how to support all of this with possible grant funding as well as finding tools and resources that could be used for curriculum that eventually could move toward a K-12 plan.

Dylan Laflam then reported that he had provided Board members with a memo outlining the custodial cleaning and COVID procedures. They were in good shape and new air purifiers had just been put in. In response to a question, Laflam stated the gym was amazing. He wanted to bring Board members in to look at all the work that had been done sometime with the next two weeks. He stated it had been a tough but successful project.

Principal/Director Updates:

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein reported they were able to offer most families the opportunity to have their students attend school four days a week. They would be moving some furniture in order to add additional students. Seven students chose remote learning and eight students chose home schooling. The school was able to open their playground this week, with rotations and zones designed for safety. Staff had been meeting with the PBIS team and coach. Relationship mapping had been done for students, with the result being that some students were partnered with a mentor in the school.

Cambridge: Anderson informed the Board that those parents who responded to the recent survey stated they felt that things were going well and that many people would like to have their student come back to school four days a week. The school was able to accommodate some students because of the classroom size, but other rooms required new desks and tables. Anderson expected that after the Thanksgiving break the school would be able to accept all four day requests. There were just a few families who wanted to continue two days a week and the school would honor that. There were 50 children participating in remote learning. The school was doing all they could to stay safe and were very diligent about keeping children in pods. They do not mix outside of their classroom group.

Eden: Mascolino reported there had been 23 requests for students to come back from either remote learning or from two days to four days a week. The school would be able to honor all but two of the requests. They hoped to add those two students next week. Furniture was immediately available so students were invited back this week. All students would be coming back, with the exception of eight students who were choosing to continue with two days. There were 10 students who were home schooled. Teachers were excited to have students at school and students were excited to be returning.

Johnson: Manning stated that 32 students applied to come to school four days a week. 31 of those students were already attending two days a week. Manning was working with Laflam to determine how to get those students into the classrooms. He wasn't completely confident he'd be able to accommodate all of the students, but they were working very hard to see if they could rearrange rooms to honor each request. There was also a team working on changing what recess looked like so that students could use the structures. They were looking at rotating pods every third day so students could play outside.

Middle School: Maurice expressed her appreciation to Kenny Grenier and Danielle Peveril for keeping drama alive at the middle school level. They were going to be hosting the streaming of the Seussification of Romeo and Juliet, which could be viewed online. Both remote and hybrid students were able to participate. Maurice also thanked Wendy Savery for her help in coordinating science curriculums across teams. The teams worked very hard to bring back as many students as possible to a four-day schedule. About 57% of the students would be coming to school two days a week, 14% would be fully remote and 29% would attend school four days a week.

High School: Schaffer applauded the work done by the Facilities team for the work they did to accommodate the 6-foot requirement. With second quarter starting soon and the new requirements of spacing, the Facilities crew moved all the furniture this past weekend. Schaffer appreciated everyone's effort to make sure the high school was safe. Schaffer stated they were holding community forums each week. This enhanced communication and both staff and parents were participating.

GMTCC: Remmers explained to the Board that the Tech Center would have access to funds from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) program over the coming months. These funds came from a portion of the CARES Act that had been set aside for technical centers. Through an allocation formula based on poverty level and level of connectivity in a local community, Green Mountain Tech now had access to \$315,000. This was to support the needs of the Center during COVID. GMTCC would need to apply for the funds and articulate how they would use the money. It was meant to enhance and improve technology and access and about one-third of the funds would be spent on technology. This money would also be used to improve programming.

GMTCC was also reviewing next year's academic offerings, given some new expectations that tech centers across the country were going to have related to academic targets and goals and a new standardized assessment. They would be looking at how to enhance their math, reading and writing instruction in each of the programs.

GMTCC was also part of a community wide grant application called the Working Communities Challenge and Lamoille was one of four Vermont communities to receive funding. The funds would be used in the Lamoille region to establish an information hub, as well as a navigator position that would help connect people to resources and groups across the region. There were a large number of great support systems across the Lamoille region. However, people had trouble knowing what resources they could use and how to access them.

Other Business: Gallagher wanted to let Board know that they were given a waiver by the State in the event they wanted to substitute teach. The District needed substitute teachers.

Adjourn: Orost made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.