

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Special Meeting
July 20, 2020**

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

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Bernard Barnes; Eden: Jeff Hunsberger; Johnson: Bobbie Moulton
Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Charleen McFarlane, Michele Aumand, Denise Maurice, Brian Schaffer, Melinda Mascolino, Dylan Laflam, Flo Kelley, Tommy O'Connor, Diane Lepikko, Wendy Savery

Others: Jessica Bickford, Jean Santa Maria, Terri-Lynn Ayers, Heather Rodriguez, Ally Judkins, Renee McWilliams

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. Nielsen explained that Gallagher would be making a presentation on the reopening of schools and he encouraged individuals to contact Gallagher following the meeting with any questions or concerns. McFarlane asked that the agenda be amended by removing the High School Math Hire agenda item. B. Sander made a motion to approve the amended agenda. J. Sander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda:

Minutes of the June 22, 2020, special meeting, and July 6, 2020, Personnel Committee Meeting: B. Sander made a motion, seconded by J. Sander, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Miller made a motion to approve the Board Orders, seconded by J. Sander. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel Items:

Approve LUHS School Nurse Hire: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to hire Karen Wells as the Lamoille Union Campus school nurse at a salary of \$52,870, which was based on her nursing experience. J. Sander made a motion to approve the recommendation and added that she had been Wells' teacher and had kept in touch with her over the years. She stated Wells would make an excellent employee. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve HPES Grade 3 Teacher Hire: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to hire Patrick Rainville as the Grade 3 Teacher at Hyde Park Elementary School at a salary of \$41,170. Rainville was licensed and had done his student teaching at Hyde Park. Bezio made a motion to approve the recommendation, seconded by Fagnant. The motion passed unanimously, with Cambridge abstaining.

Update on LUHS Administrative Assistant Hire: McFarlane informed the Board they had hired someone who then had to decline the position. She announced they had now hired Sarah Cota, a Lamoille Union graduate.

Reopening of Schools – Discussion and “Where we are today”: Gallagher began by announcing that Sara Reed taught the first year of an AP Geography course last year. Lamoille Union had the highest passing score in the state at 90.9%. Globally the students who took Geography AP tests scored at a 58.9% and Vermont as a whole had an 83% pass rate. This was great news and said a lot about both the Lamoille Union students and their teachers.

Gallagher then stated they would be forming an equity task force in the fall. There were a number of parents interested in participating and four students had volunteered already to be part of it. In the

future, the Board's Safety and Wellness subcommittee would be working with the equity task force. There would be a lot more work done on this, but what was most pressing now was to talk about what the school situation would look like.

Gallagher then discussed the fact that there had been an article in the newspaper that referenced a personal donation she had made to a campaign. The way it was worded sounded as though Lamoille North was taking a stand. Gallagher had spoken with the newspaper and made it clear that she was not representing the Supervisory Union when she made that donation. It was a personal donation made by her family to someone that she thought was amazing in her ability to move social justice forward. The editors understood their error and Gallagher stated there would be a retraction in the newspaper next week.

Gallagher informed the Board that she had been holding District office hours twice a week. She had been holding an open meeting where anyone in the District could call with his or her concerns, successes, opinions, etc. She would be continuing this after the summer as it was providing her with valuable information. She was now hoping to have an office hour with each principal for that particular school's community. To that end, she and Melinda Mascolino would be scheduling a meeting where anyone from the Eden community could call in.

Gallagher then noted that there were now 47 participants in attendance at this meeting and the last meeting had 48 participants. This number was higher than any in-person Board meetings had had in decades. She had been questioned as to why Board meetings weren't held in public if schools were safe for children to attend. Gallagher explained there would be a no visitor policy at the schools. The biggest risk of transmission of COVID was among adults. At this time there was no way to properly socially distance a large group of people at a Board meeting. This online option was the best way to provide information to more people.

Gallagher explained that they had asked for parent, student and staff input on a survey as to what had worked and what hadn't worked with remote learning. There was a lot that didn't work and part of the reason for that was because of closing in an emergency situation. Now there was time to plan on making remote learning easier.

However, the District was also at the mercy of State guidelines. The word "guidelines" implied that the District could do what they wanted to, but that was not the case. For example, the use of masks was required by the State, not the Superintendent. Six foot distancing was not a requirement; it was a recommendation. The American Association of Pediatrics was saying three to six feet. The reason was because of the aerosols. Because sitting face to face was discouraged, it was best that students sit next to someone. Dylan Laflam had ordered thousands of PPE's: facial coverings, shields, gloves, sanitizing stations, sanitizers, and goggles for those who needed them, and transparent dividers for students sitting at tables. The key piece to student distancing was facial coverings and facing forward.

Results of a second survey showed that parents didn't want their child to have to wear a mask. Gallagher stated that as a District, this couldn't be changed. It was a State requirement. Gallagher stated that she would invite health professionals to comment on this during the parent forum being held in August. Parents stated in the survey that a half-day schedule would not work. Gallagher understood that and the option was now off the table.

Gallagher stated parents had asked about their children being in the same classroom. She explained that if a child was screened before coming into the classroom, they were screened to be safe for that day. At the elementary school level children would stay in their classroom and it was the intent that middle and high school students would as well.

Some parents had asked about whether students could participate in sports if they were placed in a remote learning environment. The answer to that was yes, because remote learning placement and in-school placement was considered attendance at the school.

Gallagher explained that superintendents had received opening guidelines from the State on June 17th. The information had not been specific enough and many superintendents had pushed for some flexibility on requiring in-person instruction. It was clear that some students would not be able to attend because they or a family member were medically vulnerable. On Thursday of this week updated guidance was provided to superintendents. Now the District was not compelled to offer in-person instruction. The District had the flexibility to offer it if, and only if, the system with its current resources could handle it. Preference would be given to those students for whom it was medically necessary. Gallagher asked that parents get in touch with the school principals to let them know who would like to participate remotely.

At this time, the strongest suggestions from the State were that elementary schools would meet for in-person instruction. The risks were considered minimal at the elementary level. The older the student, the easier it was to transmit. Children needed to have some social and emotional contact in addition to the academics. The survey results showed that 24% of the families throughout the District thought that remote learning might be what they wanted. Others were seeking in-person learning.

Therefore, the plan would be to have elementary students stay with their classroom all day and outdoor recess would be held. Students would eat their lunches in the classroom. Masks would be required but there would be some children for whom that was not developmentally appropriate and some with medical conditions that also made that difficult. The parents and child's educational team would be discussing that to make a decision. If for some reason there were students who could not participate, remote learning would be offered.

The District was aiming for in-person instruction for the middle and high school. The Tech Center was unique, given the nature of their program, and would offer in-person instruction. The District was not compelled to offer anything other than in-person instruction. However, they would be exercising that flexibility. Gallagher noted that it was important for parents to get on a list if they were interested in remote learning. She noted that it would look differently, as teachers who had taught all day would not go home and teach remote learning. That was not sustainable, not tenable, and not ethical. The local task forces, which included teachers, support staff and administrators, were all looking at survey results and options. The District leadership team and the Board would then review the options forwarded to them.

Gallagher reminded everyone that masks were a requirement and a State directive. It was clear that states around Vermont were on fire with increasing number of cases. Vermont was the single state that had done better than any other state. Gallagher stated it was important to look at the present situation and not be panicked by what was happening elsewhere. Every area was different. Gallagher noted that even in Vermont each community was different. Burlington was in a different position than the District because of their bussing situation, which included public transportation. Additionally, they were unable to accommodate the numbers of students that attend their schools. The District was not taking this lightly and would be following very strict guidelines. The next step was to incorporate as much as they could from the surveys, but at the end of the day they would rely on the health experts, facilities experts and teaching experts to make their decisions.

Gallagher stated they would have a large in-person forum in August with a Q&A being part of that. A specific number of people would be able to attend in person and others could attend remotely. The District would be following the established calendar. There was some discussion that the State would take over all regional calendars and create a state calendar with a later start date. That had not yet happened and as of this meeting date the District would follow the established calendars.

Flo Kelley stated they were aiming for best practices and following the guidelines from the Vermont Department of Health and the AOE. She stated that face coverings were required. Adults were also required to wear masks when dropping students off. Masks could be removed when eating, when napping, and could be removed when outside if students were able to maintain a six-foot distance. Pre-K children would need to be developmentally able to understand why masks were required. Clear masks would be worn when working with children who were hearing impaired.

Kelley reported that the summer sports program had received great feedback. The summer school program for drivers' education also had wonderful results. She interviewed the students to determine how they felt about the process of screening and the students had no changes to offer and thought the process was smooth and easy. Students stated they felt the District cared about them.

Kelley stated that health screenings would be done on busses and when walking students arrived at school. Temperatures would be taken and students would be asked if they had any symptoms. Communication with families and physicians about chronic health conditions would be key. For example, the list of symptoms consistent with COVID included headaches. If a student often had migraines and the school was aware of it then the student wouldn't need to be sent home. Students with asthma could have a small cough but knowing that information would allow students to stay at school. The bottom line was that students and staff should stay home if they were sick. This had always been the case.

They were working hard on the physical distancing strategies. The students would be facing in the same direction and sitting between three and six feet apart. This was because droplets project forward, not side-to-side. If students were facing in the same direction they wouldn't be inhaling anything. Students napping foot-to-foot rather than head-to-head would be best. This was based on medical information. Hand sanitizer would be available upon entering the building and the classroom. Students would be in cohorts and that would make things easier for contact tracing.

Miller asked how staff with chronic medical conditions would be kept safe. Kelley stated they should speak with their health provider and make a decision on whether to come to work. Kelley mentioned that she treated many of the staff and they would continue to be seen as in the past. It was entirely up to the staff member whether they felt comfortable working. Miller suggested they could be the remote teacher if they weren't comfortable working at the school. In response to a question, Kelley stated they would continue to educate students on hand hygiene, especially when sneezing.

In response to questions, Gallagher clarified that the District would be able to offer flexibility in remote learning. They would first take into consideration the students who were vulnerable or lived with someone who was vulnerable, but others could participate depending on current resources.

Schaffer stated that high schools would have the greatest challenge in terms of transitioning to a very fluid school year. The initial survey that went out to students, parents and teachers provided important information for the future. The biggest takeaway was that some purposeful time training students for this type of learning was required. Some students had been prepared and others were not. Protocols needed to be put in place on how to communicate with students. Students were getting a lot of emails and it was overwhelming. It was important to talk about workload and to not offer busywork. There needed to be some continuity of schedule and that was something that parents, students and teachers asked for. The school was also looking at the accessibility of keyboards. As far as communication, messaging needed to come from one individual and not a series of individuals. Maurice noted that too much messaging was also an issue at the middle school and it was clear that each student needed a point person.

Schaffer noted that they were looking at EPIC as a potential idea for the rest of the school. Students in EPIC were already in a cohort, focused on their learning, and learning how to navigate the system. They had restorative circles at the beginning and end of every day in order to decompress and to hear peer solutions to their work. This created more of a bonding situation. Schaffer stated the successful parts of

EPIC could be used. The concept would be to create a schedule that would start with a class in morning and one in the afternoon. This would reduce the emails and the classwork. Over the course of the year, if remote learning had to take place, students would already be linked in with a cohort and with a couple of key personnel. Schaffer noted that there were already additional online learning opportunities that had been taking place for a decade. Classes were intensive but could be offered to anyone. Schaffer then reported he would be holding a student forum on Thursday to outline the school's thinking. Student voices needed to be incorporated into planning for the fall.

Dylan Laflam stated they were working on establishing three months worth of PPE supplies at all schools in Lamoille North. At the beginning of the school year, each building would be fully sanitized. The District cleaning standards had been updated to include an entire COVID section. The plan was to disinfect bathrooms every hour on the hour in all facilities any time students were in the building. All common areas or highly touched areas would be disinfected when students were at recess. Every night they would disinfect all the buildings. They would be hiring additional custodians across the district to do this.

General-purpose cleaners would be switched out for mild purpose disinfectants. This was a change because the push several years ago had been to stop using disinfectants in order not to create a superbug. There would be heavy-duty disinfectant used at night when students weren't in the building.

Laflam stated they were reworking all the HVAC setbacks. Typically all HVAC shut down at 4 p.m. Now they would cycle all the air in all buildings a minimum of twelve times a day. This was a change from cycling air once a day. He noted that this could cause the HVAC system some problems when winter set in but they would deal with that when the time came. They had ordered a number of air purifiers for any classroom that might be suspected of having an issue. The air filter could filter the air in the room in three hours.

Laflam stated that per State mandate isolation rooms were being built in every building for any student with a temperature. The room would have plastic walls and an air filter. Once the student left, the room could be sprayed with disinfectant. There would still be construction happening and contractors would be at the schools. Each person would have their temperature checked and be asked a list of questions. All deliveries would be delivered to an outside tent. The goal was to limit any outside flow into the buildings.

Denise Maurice stated the team model that they'd had in place prior to COVID-19 gave them the beginnings of their cohort. Now they were defining the size of the cohorts and limiting the transitions. The teams were looking at having interdisciplinary projects. Many of the teams had already started using the Schoology model to enhance the connection between the school and technology at home and they were going to look at refining that for next year.

Gallagher added that some of the questions they had received from families had encouraged administrators to think about even more options. She encouraged parents to keep asking questions. Gallagher also commended Brian Pena for his work in providing technological accessibility to students. Now 86% of the District's families said they had reliable internet. There was far less at the beginning of the closure.

Gallagher informed the Board there would be afterschool programs available. They were planning for bussing to proceed as usual until they determined if enough students would be taking the bus. Routes may have to be revised. The afterschool programs were working on how to transition from pods to afterschool programs and were following the guidance offered to athletic groups and afterschool activity programs.

Other Business: There was no other business.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.