

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
January 11, 2021**

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

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Bernard Barnes; Hyde Park: Chasity Fagnant; Johnson: Bobbie Moulton, Angela Lamell;

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

Others Present: Eric Hutchins, Denise Webster, Greg Stokes, Galen Reese

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. McFarlane asked that the Approval of the JES Distance Learning Teacher Long-Term Substitute Hire item be removed from the agenda. Orost made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the amended agenda. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the December 28, 2020, meeting; December 14, 2020, Joint FCC/Technology Committee Meeting; and December 28, 2020, FCC Committee Meeting: J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Miller made a motion to approve the board orders through the end of December. J. Sander seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Winooski School Lottery: Gallagher stated this item was reviewed every year. It involved the agreement to join the Winooski Valley and Statewide Choice of Public High School Collaborative for 2021-2022 school year under Act 29. The statute stated that the total number of transferring students in any year could not exceed 10% of all resident high school students or 40 students, whichever was less. 10% would be close to 50 students, therefore, the District would allow 40 students to transfer in. J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to have Chair Nielsen sign the document. The motion passed unanimously.

Announce Tuition: Clark informed the Board that the 2019-2020 tuition had been \$13,000 for the elementary schools and 15,500 for the secondary level. The tuition for 2020-2021 was \$13,500 and \$15,500. Clark recommended that tuition for 2021-2022 be increased to be closer to the spending per equalized pupil rates of \$18,466 for elementary school and \$16,569 for secondary school. While these amounts did not need to be billed if the costs were lower, they would not be able to bill more once these rates were announced. The secondary level was only increasing \$1,000 and brought the amount closer to the equalized per pupil spending amount. Orost made a motion, seconded by J. Sander, to approve the recommended 2021-2022 tuition of \$18,466 for Grade K-6 and \$16,569 for Grades 7-12. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel Matters:

Approve ECS Kindergarten Teacher Long-term Substitute Hire: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to hire Heidi Fortin for the kindergarten long-term substitute position at a salary of \$50,770, prorated based on the number of days worked. Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Central Office/Director Updates:

Gallagher stated there had been a rollout of the first dose of the vaccine and those nurses who had chosen to receive it had been able to do so. Mental health providers and physical therapists were now receiving their vaccines. Gallagher was disappointed that educators were not part of the vaccine program. The State was instead looking at the people most seriously impacted by the virus, i.e., the elderly and those who were immunocompromised. The positivity rate in schools was very low at 0.17%.

They were now seeing a rise in cases throughout the state and locally there was a case in Johnson and one at the high school. The contact tracing was relatively easy for those cases. Gallagher explained that quarantining meant not leaving the house. Some people didn't understand that. Further, Gallagher noted that the schools could only take care of what they could control within the schools. Outside of school they could not enforce what people did in their homes and in their lives. She asked that anyone with a fever, a cough or a stuffy nose stay home. Gallagher then expressed her appreciation to the administrators who had been available and ready to help.

Gallagher stated they were preparing their letters for the annual report. The information would report on how the District was meeting the call for equity, access and opportunity during a pandemic. Information on work being done on racial justice and social justice would also be presented in an Equity letter and a Curriculum letter. Gallagher then reported that she had been invited to sit in on a presentation from a student at the EPIC Academy and outlined the work that the student had done in producing a music album. Additionally, she reported on a very creative Johnson student she had met with.

Principal/Director Updates:

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein reported that everyone had started the year back well. The school ended 2020 with a PBIS celebration. Assessment windows were opening up toward the end of January. Epstein stated that they had almost all of the learners back, with the exception of five. Teachers were happy to have their students back in school.

Cambridge: Anderson reported that they were seeing more and more students coming back to four-day instruction and she had had a few inquiries from home-schoolers about returning. They were trying to do things that would bring joy to the students and they had had a cookie decorating party before the break. They had had great professional development recently with their literacy and math consultants who were working directly with teachers in their classrooms and going through the lesson study process.

Eden: Mascolino reported that three people at Eden Central School had tested positive for COVID but that had happened over Christmas break. Therefore, no contact tracing had been required. She had been meeting with leadership and they were starting a new PLC round with all of the teachers. They were breaking into wellness groups and teachers were selecting the groups they wished to be in. They wanted to dig into teaching math skills. Mascolino was happy to have almost all of the students back in the building.

Hyde Park: Reilly stated that thanks to Karyl Kent the school had received a grant to construct a greenhouse that would be used at the beginning as an outdoor classroom and then in the spring they would start planting. This had brought joy to the building. Six students who had been hybrid students would be returning full time and two home-schooled students would be returning next week. Reilly noted that the remote students would probably continue to stay remote as they were seeing success with that.

Johnson: Manning informed the Board the school had had their second positive COVID case. The room logs had helped tremendously when doing the contact tracing. The nurse had been very busy and everyone was doing their part to follow protocols. They were ready now to roll out the Data Wise program. This program helped teachers work together in an effort to improve student outcomes. There continued to be a high level of anxiety and stress among educators, both from their fear of contracting COVID and their varied work schedules. The Employee Assistance Program had made a

presentation to the full staff and it had been well received. Four home-schooled students would be returning to school by next week.

Middle School: Maurice stated the faculty was starting to discuss the need for putting together an assessment package of data. Maurice had also asked teachers to review next year's schedule to see what they would like to continue or to outline what hadn't worked.

High School: Schaffer shared that his written report explained what was happening in athletics. There had been a COVID case at the school over the weekend and the pod had moved to remote learning.

In response to a question about the gym walkthrough, LaFlam explained it had had to be rescheduled because of the Governor's mandates at the time. He hoped to reschedule it for the beginning of February.

Annual Meeting Discussion: Clark stated the Town Meeting would be held on March 2, 2021. The last date to post warnings was January 31st. Clark then informed the Board that due to COVID-19, Act 162 allowed school districts that normally voted from the floor at their annual and special meetings to instead use the Australian Ballot voting method in 2021. This required approval by a vote of the School Board. When using the Australian Ballot system, an in-person polling place was required on the day of the election. The polling place had to be open from 5:00-10:00 a.m. and could close at 7:00 p.m. Under this system there would be no moderator and no floor votes. The District Clerk and the District Treasurer would be present.

Stebbins made a motion to conduct the LNMUU School District's 2021 annual meeting using the Australian Ballot voting method for all articles. Sweet seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Adopt LNSU FY '22 Budget: Clark explained that the Finance and Capital Committee (FCC) had met and voted to utilize more surpluses to reduce the general assessment. Additionally they revisited the budgets for Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRA).

Clark explained that the FY22 costs for Central Office included transportation costs, special education costs, and new investments in SU-wide personnel. In response to mandated increases and changes to data filing systems and requirements at the State level, this budget would increase the part-time Data Manager position to a full time position. There would be money set aside for finance supports to support the continuation of the mandated conversion to the Statewide Uniform Chart of Accounts and the Statewide School District Data Management System. This proposed budget also increased the SU-wide IT systems supports. These funds would not be spent on a person but would be spent on content filtering, JAMF (iPad support) on-site backups, and Zoom and Google services.

The FY2020 Uncommitted Reserves were at \$664,406. Clark was recommending that \$4,406 be put in the already established Maintenance and Repairs Fund. Additionally, Clark recommended that \$660,000 be applied to the FY22 budget to reduce the general assessment. These unused surpluses were not just FY20's, but previous year surpluses had been budgeted and then not used due to the pandemic. Because of the State's proposed 9.5-cent increase, these funds were being used now.

The LNSU, without special education, was looking at a total budget of \$3,882,259. After applying reserves, transportation and services to schools, and miscellaneous revenues, the total FY22 non-special education assessment costs were \$1,411,835. This was a 5.78% decrease from the current fiscal year.

The LNSU FY22 special education costs were \$6,363,040. Minus the estimated revenue of \$4,008,521, the special education assessment was \$2,354,519. Combining that total with the non-special education

assessment of \$1,411,834 brought the total FY22 assessment to \$3,766,353, or a .80% decrease from FY21.

The general assessment budget expenses of \$3,882,259, a 3.47% increase, combined with the special education assessment budget of \$6,363,040, a 2.44% increase, resulted in a total assessment budget before revenues of \$10,245,299, or a 2.83% increase. Subtracting the \$660,000 in reserves, interest, grant administration and billed services, resulted in a total assessment of \$3,766,353, or a .80% decrease. Clark explained that the FY22 state offset for transportation costs was based on FY20 actual reimbursable expenses. In March, the transportation reimbursable expenses dropped. Therefore, the estimated FY22 transportation revenues from the State would also fall and it would take a few years to catch back up.

Allocation percentages had not changed since the last Board meeting in December. However, the final assessments had. The MUUSD elementary assessments combined, general and special education, were down by \$42,000. The MUUSD secondary assessments were down \$48,000, GMTCC was down by \$7,800 and Cambridge elementary school was down by almost \$21,000.

Clark made a recommendation to approve the Lamoille North Supervisory Union to expend \$10,245,299 of general funds, which was the amount determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year. Further, to apply \$660,000 of the LNSU FY2020 uncommitted reserves towards lowering associated assessments. It was estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, would result in total assessments to member districts of \$3,766,354. Projected assessments were 0.08% lower than the assessments for the current year.

Clark then made a recommendation to commit \$4,406 of FY2020 uncommitted reserve to the already established reserves for Repairs and Maintenance.

Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve both recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Adopt LNMUUSD FY '22 Budget: Clark then moved on to the FY22 budget for LNMUUSD. Clark noted that the FCC had decided to make some reductions to the HRA budget and also added additional surpluses. That work, along with the assessment decreases, created a total net reduction at the elementary level of \$108,673 and at the secondary level of \$206,759. Key items to note were:

- An increase to the Pre-CLA Homestead rate of 5.662 cents.
- A comprehensive decrease to education spending of .08%.
- The Elementary School budget, before assessment and revenues, was \$8,773,216, up 5.13%;
- The Secondary School budget, before assessment and revenues, was \$10,789,873, up 3.06%;
- The Special Education budget, before assessment, was \$1,580,411, up .68%;
- The Operations and Maintenance budget was \$2,783,360, up 4.42%;
- The Information Technology budget was \$582,772, up 14.26%.
- The Board and Treasurer Budget was \$56,290, a 0% increase;
- The Long Term Debt Budget was \$678,302, down 31.61%. This would be a one-year decrease. A long-term high school bond would be retired this fiscal year and additional principal payments at the Hyde Park bond would not come on until FY23.
- The Total Assessment from the LNSU was \$2,988,274, down .97%. The General Expenses Assessment was \$1,060,970, down 6.58% and the Special Education Assessment was \$1,927,304, up 2.41%.

Clark explained the key factors in building the FY22 budget. In particular, Clark pointed out that the State property yield, at \$10,763, was down over \$200. This could drive the tax rate up. However, the anticipated deficit in the non-property tax revenues that went toward education funds was lower than

originally forecast in early December. There was potential for the yield to go up which would help drive down the tax rates. The forecasted average state property tax rate would be \$1.54, which was a 9.5-cent increase over the prior year or 6.17%. The excess spending threshold, currently at \$18,756, would be increasing to \$18,789. No LNSU or MUUSD schools were subject to threshold penalties in FY21 or anticipated in FY22. The adjusted combined reserve funds being applied had increased from \$600,000 to \$800,000. The audited June 30, 2020 combined unassigned fund balance was \$1,073,680.

The proposed budget for the combined education spending was \$25,574,226, a decrease of \$21,556 or .08%.

The non-special education elementary school expenses, before revenues, would increase 4.38% to \$11,548,205. The special education elementary school expenses, before revenues, would decrease 1.67% to \$1,784,954. Total expenses were \$13,333,159, an increase of 3.53%. There was a 4.46% increase in the salaries line item. As far as elementary revenues, an additional \$68,394 in reserves had been added to the \$300,000 in reserve funds already being applied. This had been done in order to hold the tax rate down. The non-special education elementary school revenues were up \$26,500 or 9.28%. The special education elementary school revenues were up \$46,539 or 10.12%. The total revenues budgeted were \$1,186,680, an increase of \$330,958 or 38.67%.

The Union School non-special education expenses would increase \$31,072 or .24%. The special education expenses would increase \$86,346 or 5.28%. The total proposed FY22 expenses would be \$14,854,293, a 1.03% increase at \$150,729. As far as secondary revenues, an additional \$131,601 of reserves had been added to the \$300,000 in reserve funds already being applied. This brought the total Union School revenues to \$1,426,366, an increase of \$295,513 or 26.13%.

The total education spending at the elementary schools was budgeted at \$12,146,299, an increase of 1.02%. The education spending at the secondary level was budgeted at \$13,427,927, a decrease of 1.07%. This resulted in a combined budget of \$25,574,226, a decrease of .08%.

Clark then reviewed the tax calculations, noting they were looking at a homestead rate of \$.9249, a change of \$.0397 at the elementary level or a 4.48% increase. It was possible that the equalized pupil numbers would remain at 657.77. If the number were to go down, tax rates would increase. At the secondary level, the equalized pupil numbers were 810.43 and they were looking at a homestead rate of \$.7096, a change of \$.0169 or a 2.44% increase. This year's budget no longer included any Act 46 incentive rate. Therefore, of the combined .05662 change in the tax rate, \$0.02 of that was the result of the loss of the incentive. Clark reviewed the tax rates after applying the common level of appraisal.

Clark made a recommendation that the Board approve the FY22 Elementary Budget of \$13,333,159, with an estimated per equalized pupil spending of \$18,466, which was 1.02% higher than the per pupil spending for the current year. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Clark made a recommendation that the Board approve the FY22 Union School Budget of \$14,854,293, with an estimated per equalized pupil spending of \$16,569, which was 1.07% lower than the per pupil spending for the current year. Orost made a motion, seconded by Hunsberger, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Clark made a recommendation that the Board hold the amount of \$273,680 of the LNMUUSD #058B unassigned audited fund balance as of June 30, 2020 in the LNMUUSD Capital Reserve Fund. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Adopt GMTCC FY '22 Budget: Remmers first explained to the Board what the function of the Regional Advisory Board (RAB) was in relation to GMTCC. Remmers then discussed GMTCC's proposed budget. The proposed FY22 budget was now \$4,450,760, an increase of \$92,213 or 2.83%.

Based on the RAB's decision on how to use available revenues, the per pupil tuition amount would now be \$8,695, a \$448 decrease from last year.

The primary drivers for the 2.83% increase were an increase in health care costs and the yearly increase in staff salary. Program expenses had been level funded understanding that these levels met most program needs. Those needs not met through the budget were being met through grant funding.

There was \$393,219 in unreserved funds that needed to be applied towards FY22 or placed in the GMTCC capital reserve funds. The RAB Board chose to apply \$200,000 to revenue for next year. \$193,000 would be placed in the capital reserve fund.

Remmers made a recommendation that the LNSU School Board designate \$3,350,760, an increase of 2.83%, for the operations and functioning of GMTCC for FY22, and apply \$200,000 of unreserved funds to FY22 revenue in order to reduce per pupil tuition costs. Orost made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Clark then made a recommendation that the GMTCC establish a special reserve fund for use for future tuition reduction needs and transfer \$193,219 from the unassigned audited fund balance to that reserve fund. Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the recommendation. Orost then asked if this had been done before and Clark stated it had not. The capital reserve fund currently had \$153,207 available. That amount was not at risk of retiring. Remmers reminded the Board that GMTCC was receiving a lot of grant funding right now. They expected to receive \$315,000 of GEER funds, with a substantial amount of that going toward rebuilding technology infrastructure in the entire facility. His and the RAB Board's bigger concern was what would happen with the Education Fund over the next two or three years. Putting money aside to keep down future spikes in tuition seemed important. The motion then passed unanimously.

Clark reviewed the Warning, going through each of the articles listed with the Board. The annual meeting would be held on February 15th, would be a virtual meeting, and would be under the supervision of the Clerk of the District. The meeting would then recess to March 2, 2021. The informational hearing would be held virtually on February 22nd at 6:00 p.m.

Donna Griffiths would be running for District Clerk for a term of one year and Kim Moulton would be running for District Treasurer for a term of one year. Compensation for the Chair(s) of the Board and members of the Board would be the same amount as the current year. There would be no need for a moderator for the informational meeting because no action was to be taken. Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the Warning. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business: There was no additional business.

Adjourn: Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Orost, to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.