

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board**
Remote Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2020

Board Members Present: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Laura Miller, Jan Sander, Mark Stebbins; Eden: David Whitcomb, Jeff Hunsberger; Hyde Park: Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Patty Hayford; Johnson: Bobbie Moulton, Mark Nielsen, Angela Lamell, Katie Orost; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: Johnson: Allen Audette, Jr.; Cambridge: Bill Sander, Sue Prescott, Bernard Barnes; Hyde Park: Chasity Fagnant

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

Others: Eric Hutchins, Nicole Chauvin, Jeremy LaClair, Erin Car, Maggie McGee, Daniel Silver, Donna Cullivan, Betzi Goodman, Terri Ayers

Minute Taker: Donna Griffiths

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment

M. Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:01. D. Whitcomb moved to approve the agenda as written and the motion was seconded and passed.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the September 14, 2020, meeting; minutes of September 29, 2020 Personnel

Committee Meeting: B. Bezio moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 14, 2020 and the personnel committee meeting of September 29, 2020, D. Whitcomb seconded and the motion was passed.

Board Orders: L. Miller was not present, so this item was postponed.

Adjust LNSU/LNMUUSD Board Meeting Schedule

M. Nielsen said some people have expressed interest in having two meetings a month. Due to COVID issues there are probably a lot of members of the public who have questions. If the board had a second meeting, each meeting could be kept to about an hour. Everyone from the public would have direct access to C. Gallagher through board meetings and board members could have direct communication with her at meetings. He would like to propose that the board have two brief meetings each month.

C. Gallagher said she thinks a number of people feel increasingly disconnected while meeting remotely. Her once-a-week office hours have been successful. Once a week she opens up a meeting to anyone in the community. She thinks that has been meaningful to people who attend those meetings because they feel a sense of connection. When the board meets once a month it is hard

to stay on day to day happenings and she thinks it has been lonely and isolating for many. Meeting more frequently is a way to keep us all connected, at least during this time.

It was agreed to return to meeting on second and fourth Mondays.

District Equity Policy – 2nd Reading

J. Hunsberger moved to adopt the District Equity Policy and the motion was seconded. J. Sander asked if in the last line of the policy when it refers to preparing students for career, college, etc. we could add “other post secondary education.” J. Hunsberger withdrew his motion. K. Orost moved to adopt the District Equity Policy with the addition of “other post secondary education” to the last line, and the motion was seconded and passed.

Electronic Communications between Employees and Students Policy – 2nd Reading

C. Gallagher said the Electronic Communications between Employees and Students Policy is a required policy that serves as protection for both employees and students. She received a question about the statement in the policy that there should not be communication between teachers and students between certain hours of the night. Some teachers are fully remote and there are times when they need to work outside what we consider typical hours. She would like to look at how the policy can be made a little more flexible and bring it back for adoption at the next meeting. She feels uncomfortable telling teachers they can’t reach out or take an email if they have a scheduled time with a student per family request. The board agreed to postpone adoption of this policy until the next meeting.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy – 2nd Reading

J. Hulse, district Title IX coordinator, said there have been some changes to Title IX. The process for investigations has become quite complex, requiring all districts to have a Title IX coordinator and individuals trained in investigation. So far Erik Remmers and Deb Clark have been trained and Charleen McFarlane and Wendy Savery have participated in training. All principals will be trained in investigation in the future.

C. Gallagher asked J. Hulse to talk about the various layers of appeal. J. Hulse said she coordinates the investigation. We have to determine who the initial decision maker will be and we have to have an appellate decision maker. The superintendent will not be the initial decision maker. More than likely it will be the building principal. J. Hulse does not make decisions around reports and findings. C. Gallagher said the last layer of appeal would be her and after her it would be the board.

D. Whitcomb moved to adopt the Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy, J. Hunsberger seconded and the motion was passed.

Vermont Electric Co-op’s Request for Utility Easement on Eden School Property

D. Laflam said Vermont Electric Coop has asked to extend their electrical easement on ECS property. They already have one easement and they want to come off an existing pole westward toward the road. It looks like they would add another pole. D. Whitcomb moved and M. Stebbins seconded to authorize C. Gallagher to sign permission for the easement requested by Vermont

Electric Coop on Eden Central School property. D. Whitcomb asked if this is the same as the existing easement. D. Laflam said they are adding additional wires, making it larger. The motion was passed with K. Orost abstaining as she is a Vermont Electric Coop employee.

IT Update

D. Clark said in light of recent events the impulse is ask how this happened and where we went wrong, but what we have discovered is that many things have been done right. The work that has been done in the last 4 years has made this less negatively impactful than it could have been. The updating and upgrading of our systems to include redundancies was helpful. Tertiary backups have helped immensely. Historically there has been resistance to going to cloud-based computing but because of our work moving towards the cloud our education services have not been interrupted. We never lost our email because in the last few years we had moved to Gmail. We were able to rapidly move to a secondary internet service. We never lost the ability to meet our obligations.

We are working with 2 firms – RSM, a cyber forensic firm, and The Tech Group, which is working with our tech teams on the rebuild. In the rebuild we will do a lot of items that were in our 5 year plan that we hadn't been able to do yet. We have learned from outside agencies that you don't prevent this type of event – you position yourself to mitigate damage and quickly respond when it happens. The tertiary backup on the finance and HR systems is solid and sound and over the weekend B. Pena was able to work with the company that runs the finance system to get it back up on clean servers. Everything is back where it was Monday before this happened. Through it all, the tech team and all of the LNSU community has maintained their demeanor. It hasn't been easy, but the tech team was there to support us. They have made it a priority to get us back and functioning. Since Thursday over 450 devices have been set up with the new anti-virus that is part of our rebuild. We have cyber event insurance so we should be okay financially. We talked with our insurance company, lawyers and auditors. While it is a significant event, the auditors are not concerned about the financial impact because we have insurance. The forensic group says there is no indication of any data breach or exfiltration. It looks like this is an older variant of TimisoaraHackerTeam which is not associated with data exfiltration. D. Clark thinks over the last 4 years we positioned ourselves well to recover from this event. She thanks the IT team and the public.

Central Office/Director Updates

C. Gallagher said she has been given permission to talk about the health of an administrator and to give out information about another administrator. David Manning had a neurological issue. He saw a specialist today and thinks they will allow him to work remotely beginning Monday until he sees a neurosurgeon. Filling in for him right now are all of central office staff, Woody Belt, Joe Garceau, Jenny Goyne, Kelly Hickey, and Janet Davis. C. Gallagher will try to have a presence at JES every day. D. Manning will be working, but remotely. His big priorities will be communicating with staff and parents. The central office team will be there for bigger issues.

Denise Maurice is out for a couple of days or maybe longer because her brother passed away over the weekend and she is with her family in New Hampshire.

There is a new academic calendar. The student day count is now 170 vs. 175. That decision was voted on by legislators to give staff more time to plan. We got the wonderful news that our ADM count will not be any less than what it was last year. We have 155 students homeschooling and we will not be penalized for that. We have been given guidance around inclement weather days. We may use those days as remote learning days as long as we have at least 51% attendance. If we have an inclement weather day on Wednesday, students will be expected to work remotely. If we have one on another day the expectation is that the day will model what it would be if it were a typical day.

C. Gallagher said we will look at our travel guidelines in conjunction with F. Kelley. We need to make sure staff and families understand their responsibilities when they travel to and from Vermont. We will send out guidelines. People are expected to have up-to-the-minute guidance from the Vermont travel map. We cannot tell people they can't travel. That is their personal business. But we do expect the guidelines to be followed.

Next week our local task teams and the SU-wide task team will meet to look at data so far. Superintendents and school districts in Vermont have been given flexibility for the entire year to go in and out of any instructional model. She can't tell people who chose the remote option that they must come back. They have flexibility to stay remote. M. Aumand recently pulled up statistics on Vermont, New Hampshire and New York COVID cases. They have all gone up in a fairly steady climb, which was predicted. It is not safe to say we should keep things status quo if Lamoille is fine. One reason Lamoille has done so well is that we have followed guidelines. Step 3 does not mean a pre-COVID state. C. Gallagher said she will ask M. Aumand to email case count data to the board. She can imagine it will become more of an issue as holidays and colder weather approach. The trajectory is going up. Our athletic teams are playing all over the state. She has heard from one parent that they sent their child to school because they thought only 5 kids would be in the classroom and now there are more. She has heard a parent say their kid doesn't do well in person. Some kids are thriving remotely. Some who have had a difficult time in school are doing well with more attention and smaller class sizes. Everyone has an opinion and not all will agree.

Two pieces of data recently came out on the same day. Dr. Levine put out information paraphrasing the CDC acknowledgement of airborne transmission. You can get infected if you are farther away than 6 feet from an infected person or when the infected person is no longer in the room. The 6 foot spacing and masking is still terribly important. What also becomes important is avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated spaces. Then interim guidance came out saying maybe 3 feet is actually okay for grades PreK to 6. It doesn't feel right. It feels to her like people are succumbing to pressure. Her job is not to think about pressure but about safety of students, staff and families.

C. Gallagher thinks it has made people very happy that the tech center opened up 4 days a week at the start of the year. They had the space and they move around a lot. The rest of LNSU started with 2 days in person and 3 days remote. That doesn't mean 2 days of education. We are providing 5 days of education. We are honoring every request for 4 days as long as we can adhere to the safety guidelines. She asked D. Laflam to measure capacity in every classroom at 3 ft. and 6 ft. Last week the high school sent out a survey asking if people want to change their instructional

model and their requests will be honored if we can do it safely. The middle school and elementary schools are also sending out similar surveys. That information will be part of what we look at. She thinks it is prudent to do what we are doing. Our principals and teachers have been identifying students who are not engaging and encouraging them to enroll for 4 days in person.

At JES, 85% of students are hybrid and of those 41% attend 4 days a week. At CES 82% of students are hybrid and of those 32% attend 4 days a week. At WES 70% of students attend 4 days a week. At HPES 88% are hybrid and 34% of those attend 4 days a week. At ECS 60% of students attend 4 days per week. At LUHS 80% of students are hybrid. At LUMS 84% of students are hybrid. What we are hearing about in-person instruction is that it is important for elementary students. If we can accommodate it, we will. But there is no rush to have a massive move until we see a little more about what this looks like.

F. Kelley said she thinks C. Gallagher is right about the fact that this is now thought to be aerosol spread. This means people walking by an infected person can become infected. The closer you are to someone releasing the virus the more likely you are to breathe in a larger amount. Now we are looking at even further distances than 6 ft. for being infected. Last week was the first time an algorithm was released for parents, nurses and physicians to work with on return to school. We have been diligently communicating with the physicians in our area. We have put some practices in place so every day school nurses are following up and communicating with families of students who are absent so they understand what the students need to do to return to school. Communication takes a great deal of time. She appreciates what principals and school nurses have done to get information out as quickly as they did to families. We are still doing it. We still have multiple questions, including questions about travel. The guidelines we have only go so far. It takes a great deal of time to read the information and have an understanding. We shouldn't let our guard down even though the state is saying we are at step 3. Step 3 outdoors doing sports activities seems reasonable but indoors we have a lot of things to face other than just the fact that we need to educate our students. That is the priority and we are doing it with what we are doing now. The town meeting coming up this week will be vitally important. She is anxious to find out what the discussions will be there. We are still learning about this virus and we need to be cautious.

C. Gallagher said she knows there is pressure but we have to do what we think is right. She defers to our health experts. Teachers are eating with kids in classrooms with no one wearing facial coverings. With more students there will be more risk. Maybe we can experiment with having a pod or two in the cafeteria with supervision to keep numbers in classrooms down. We will continue to honor 4 days requests if we can do it safely based on D. Laflam's data. She thinks it would be a big mistake to make a major move. Every district is unique and we shouldn't measure against others. There will be more communication after our task force teams meet and report.

Eric Hutchins praised administrators, F. Kelly and D. Laflam. At the high school the cooperation from students has been unbelievable. He can't think of one discipline incident. Kids have been cooperative with public safety guidelines, grateful to be back in school, and eager to learn at a level he hasn't seen in his teaching career. All his colleagues are experiencing the same thing.

C. Gallagher said we have about 12 full-time remote teachers. For us to open up other classrooms we would need to hire, because those who have chosen to be remote can stay remote for the entire year. W. Savery said there are 11 remote teachers. Most are teaching two different grade levels. She has been impressed by their willingness to collaborate and problem solve.

C. Gallagher said we want to make sure that we have social/emotional supports in place for staff. A survey was sent out to assess their needs. It is anonymous but asks people to indicate their school. We will look at the results in a week. We have had a huge response to the survey. We will begin to put in place supports for our teachers.

C. Gallagher noted that the board has supported this all the way. This is not the experience her colleagues have had. She thanked the board.

Principal/Director Updates

M. Mascolino thanked C. Gallagher, central office staff and F. Kelley for their decisions. She thinks all the teachers appreciate that we are going cautiously forward. It feels safe, secure and thoughtful. ECS has 85% of its students in hybrid mode. There are not many homeschool or remote learners at ECS. Her daughter is in E. Hutchins' class and the challenging and thoughtful work being given to his students is remarkable. Students are wearing masks, even those in preK and kindergarten. There are zero complaints from kids. If they need a mask break they ask for it. There has been no letup on academics. ECS has a lot of new staff. They have been incredibly flexible. During the recent glitch she has been grateful for the IT department.

J. Epstein said there have been no discipline issues about mask wearing. She is amazed at how well kids do. Teachers have done a great job giving kids mask breaks. There are tents outside and kids spend a lot of time outside. The tech people have been amazing. Teachers and interventionists have pretty much wrapped up the first round of assessments. They have seen little regression. Students have been having some fun. They did a fun kite flying activity as a behavior award celebration. WES is working with a PBIS coordinator this year and they hope to do more things like that. They are really focusing on everyone's emotional well being. They took advantage of EAP and had someone come in to spend an hour with staff talking about stressors and strategies to reduce stress.

D. Reilly thanked C. Gallagher, central office, IT, F. Kelley, D. Laflam, W. Savery and T. O'Connor. Her peers have been a huge asset. They connected a lot over summer and in early fall. Her teachers and staff are amazing. They are not seeing discipline issues. They are seeing children enjoying school and being engaged. Even with the hybrid model they have time to spend on special activities they couldn't do in a larger class. They are now getting into a system and a flow. She feels it is important for us to continue what we are doing. We are doing it well and taking kids in as they need to come back.

M. Anderson said all the support of everyone in leadership has been very effective. Parents are now feeling comfortable and many are wanting their kids to attend 4 days. She thanked C. Gallagher for not getting on the bandwagon. She thinks her approach is really smart and in the best interest of students and staff.

E. Remmers said his written report this month included a lot of details about what is happening in tech center programs and safety measures taken.

J. Brown, the new dean of students at the middle school, said he and D. Maurice made a point to go to every classroom. They met all students as they came in. Students have been great with masks. The middle school has a new Facebook page.

Other Business

D. Clark said on Friday we got excellent news – free meals for all kids 1 to 18 will continue through June 30.

C. Gallagher thanked the entire IT team for their herculean effort.

Board Orders

L. Miller moved to approve directors' orders as listed on the agenda and the motion was seconded and passed.

Adjourn

K. Orost moved to adjourn at 7:09 and the motion was seconded and passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED