

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
September 14, 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: Mark Nielsen, Angela Lamell, Katie Orost, Allen Audette, Jr.; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: 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 Reilly, Wendy Savery, Brian Pena, David Manning, Erik Remmers, Janet Murray, Mary Anderson, Jeremy Scannell, Dylan Laflam, Jennifer Hulse, Jan Epstein, Bethann Pirie

Others: Darcy Fletcher, Diane Lepikko, Danielle Shoda, Eric Hutchins, Galen Reese, Jennifer Huffman, Maggie McGee

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Orost made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

LNSU/LNMMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items:

Minutes of the August 18, 2020, Special Meeting: Orost made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the minutes. McFarlane asked that an edit be made on Page 3 within the third paragraph. She asked that it read: "Therefore, Lamoille North employees with children in Lamoille North would be provided four days of in-session instruction." The motion to approve the minutes with the correction then passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Miller made a motion to accept the Board Orders of August 7th and August 21st. Sweet seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel:

LNSU Teacher Master Agreement: Prescott brought forward the LNSU, LNMMUUSD, CES Teacher Master Agreement Contract for ratification. There were two bargaining sessions with teachers prior to COVID-19 and they were able to resume bargaining after the school closure. Salary schedules were already on the table at the time of COVID and at the third meeting both sides came to a mutual agreement.

This was a one-year contract from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The wage settlement was an increase in the base by \$750 to a base salary of \$40,750, and each teacher would advance a step on the salary schedule. A step equaled \$1,170. This would result in an increase of \$1,920 for each teacher. The current health care insurance provision would sunset effective January 1, 2021 and be replaced with the benefits as required by the arbitrator award and the resolution of negotiations by the statewide commission on public school health benefits. The biggest change was that all teachers would be on-site 7.5 hours with a 7-hour contracted paid day. There was a language change for compliance as well as clarification that partial FTE teachers would be paid extra to attend all in-service days. Additionally, the Association wanted a letter of intent that a work group would be formed to articulate plans related to elementary teacher prep time and elementary supplemental pay to continue to create equity across the Supervisory Union to be used for discussion in the upcoming negotiations.

Orost made a motion to ratify the one-year Teacher Master Agreement for July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. J. Sander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Recommendation for Exempt Staff Salary Increases: Gallagher stated that typically when the teacher and support staff contracts were ratified, the Board then moved to what increases might look like for approximately 34 exempt personnel. Gallagher asked that a motion be made to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues related to personnel and their salaries. Prescott made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the salaries of exempt salaried staff and asked that Gallagher, McFarlane and Clark remain. The motion passed unanimously and the Board went into Executive Session at 6:13 p.m.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 6:40 p.m. Orost then made a motion to approve a 3% salary increase to the exempt staff across the board. Bezio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Recess: Cambridge Board members had been scheduled to meet during the recess. Miller asked that the meeting be postponed until the end of this meeting. Stebbins agreed to the change.

Appoint Authorized Representatives for both LNSU and LNMUUSD for the VEHI/VSBIT Annual Meeting: Clark stated the Board needed to either appoint an authorized representative to attend the VEHI and VSBIT meeting or to assign a proxy to both. The Board also needed to authorize the Chair to sign off on the choice. Prescott offered to attend both meetings.

Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Fagnant, to nominate Prescott to act as the Board's representative at the VSBIT annual meeting on October 22nd. The motion passed unanimously. Orost made a motion, seconded by Miller, to nominate Prescott to serve as the Board's representative at the VEHI meeting on October 20th. It was noted that Nielsen would now not need to sign off on the choice. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Award Snowplowing Bids for Belvidere, Waterville & Eden: Laflam noted this was the second time they had combined the three towns in a plowing bid in an effort to achieve efficiency and financial savings. The bid was for three years ending in FY23. The only company to bid for all three schools for three years was JMP Excavation. Bob Edwards Excavation supplied a bid only for Waterville and for two years and was not the low bidder. The Administration recommended accepting JMP Excavation's bid for a three-year period at a cost of \$75,275. The contract would run from the Fall of 2020 to the Spring of 2023. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the Administration's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Award Wood Chip Bids for Lamoille Union & Johnson: Laflam stated he had requested bids for wood chips for three years ending in FY23. Cousineau Forest Products was the sole bidder. They bid \$66 per ton for the first two years and \$67 per ton for the third year. Laflam noted they had been paying \$66 per ton for the last two years. The Administration recommended accepting Cousineau's bid. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Barnes, to accept the bid. The motion passed unanimously.

District Equity Policy – First Report: Gallagher stated she had been working with Galen Reese over the summer on a VSBA Equity Policy. Reese stated the attempt was to have a policy in place that mandated that every student in the District had access to an equitable education and experience. Reese explained that he would be working to coordinate more of a response from the student body in the high school. The first step would be to determine what the student population's views were on equity and what equity meant to students. This would provide information on what areas needed work and what areas they were comfortable with. The hope was to get a class in place within the curriculum to teach about the history of marginalized people in order to give students information from a broader lens.

Gallagher stated that she was impressed with the students she had met with on this issue, as they had all said they needed to make sure that all students had a voice. Gallagher believed this started with restorative practices and developing a safe and inclusive culture. She was appreciative that these

students recognized the importance of hearing everyone's opinion. The second reading of the policy would be next month. This was a very general policy, but there were procedures that would come from this policy. A quarterly report would come from Gallagher about the work being done in the schools and she invited the Board's Safety and Wellness Committee and students to be part of the reporting.

Huffman, a parent of a remote student, stated that many remote students were feeling left out and asked how to involve those students in this work. At the moment students felt they did not have a voice. Gallagher replied that the first step was to involve the building principal, the curriculum director, and the virtual academy coordinator. Gallagher wanted to discuss this further with Huffman. Reese stated he could be a contact person as well. Maggie McGee stated that should be a generalized conversation, with an invitation being sent to all remote students. Reese said he would talk with the Student Council. He explained that last year the Student Council had sent out a weekly email to the student body and he thought that would be something to start again. Gallagher noted that remote learning might also be isolating for parents and requested that Huffman contact her. Gallagher then informed the Board that Jennifer Hulse was now the District-wide Equity Coordinator.

Electronic Communications between Employees and Students Policy – First Reading: Gallagher stated this was a required policy that was developed as a result of the rush to emergency remote learning last spring. This was an attempt to regulate and monitor communications that happened between students and staff and was a protection for both. It was a way to put into policy what happened if there was an alleged breach of appropriate communications.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy – First Reading: Gallagher stated this was a required policy that pertained to students and staff, and pertained to working conditions or any school-sponsored activity where alleged harassment could occur. Once this was adopted, each building principal would need to hold a faculty meeting to discuss what the definitions were and what constituted actual harassment.

Central Office Update: Gallagher informed the Board it had been by and large a smooth reopening. Decisions by parents to have fully remote learning or in-person instruction sometimes changed daily. The District had to accommodate safety guidelines and would make decisions accordingly. Most of the individuals who had requested four days in-person had been accommodated. Bussing had been difficult at first. Fortunately, a Johnson driver had returned. Gallagher outlined situations that several Vermont Superintendents had encountered with COVID and the reasons for their different responses to the situation. One school district had students self-quarantine because they had been at a party with a person who had tested positive. Another school district closed their school because two students had tested positive and it was apparent, from the Department of Health doing contact tracing, that a number of people at the school had been in contact with those students. Gallagher noted that if LNMUUSD were in the same situation, Gallagher would do the same thing. Further, if the District were ever unable to staff the classroom or the buildings, school wouldn't be held. The schools had to adhere to the safety guidelines.

Gallagher reported that they had experienced an extraordinary outpouring of support. Families had been very understanding and gracious. The Board had been very supportive of the process and very trusting of the people in the system. This was not something that her colleagues were experiencing. Gallagher was very thankful for that. She then noted that the students had been incredible and had been wearing masks without a problem.

There were a number of rumors about COVID cases in Lamoille County. Gallagher explained that if there was a confirmed case, two people would be notified: Gallagher and Flo Kelley. Parents would then be notified that there was a confirmed case and the Department of Health would do contact tracing. There was no need to guess about cases, as the school would notify each parent. Finally, Gallagher talked about how exciting it was to be in the schools this week and to see the students who were excited to be back.

Clark stated they had just finished the second week of virtual audit fieldwork. As a result, she had a good handle on the FY20 surpluses. Some of the surpluses seemed extremely high, so Clark wanted to explain where they came from. The LNSU had a \$541,000 surplus, but \$218,000 was unused health reimbursement arrangement funds and unused dental because no one went to the doctor or the dentist over the last quarter of the fiscal year. There was \$121,000 in transportation savings. That was a result of the prior two years revenue coming in. Transportation revenue was two years behind and there had been a lot of unused transportation expenses this last quarter of the year. There was \$152,000 of revenues, mostly in special education reimbursement revenues and prior year tuition revenues. These, along with smaller unused supplementals, made up the \$541,000.

The elementary schools had a \$269,293 surplus. Again, this surplus was from unused transportation costs, savings in HRA and dental and some special education savings. GMTCC had a smaller surplus at \$34,752. The expenses were under budget by \$82,402. Their revenue was much more directly related to the services provided so their revenues came in under budget at \$47,000.

The Supervisory Union had a surplus of \$112,000. General operations actually showed a deficit of \$81,000 but special education showed a surplus of \$593,000. This was a result of unused health benefits and revenue reimbursements. Revenue reimbursements came in 8.5% higher than estimated. There were also two high cost students who were budgeted for who did not come to the District.

Those funds would be important in FY22 and FY23. Currently there were a number of homeschooled students. What that would do to the average daily membership and equalized pupil count, which directly related to the tax rate and per pupil spending, would be significant if the state didn't develop a waiver or modification of the ADM count. These funds could be applied to FY22 and FY23 budgets to help hold down tax rates and to hold down the per pupil spending.

Clark then reported there were three different COVID Relief Funds. The COVID relief grant for summer food had been applied for and gone out. The COVID relief fund grant for the local education authority (LEA) had just been submitted. They had applied for \$740,000 of reimbursement for non-budgeted COVID-related expenditures from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. A large portion of that was for IT and the additional costs for personnel. The third grant, ESSER, had not been applied for yet. This did not need to be completed until April.

Clark then discussed the social security tax holiday deferral plan. This plan was a deferral, not a waiver. From September 1 through December 31st, employers and employees had the option to participate. Clark explained that from January 1st to April 30th any money deferred would need to be paid back in addition to the normal tax. If an employee were to leave before the deferral was paid, the employer had to be sure the deferral was paid. At this time it was fraught with too many potential disasters and Clark was recommending strongly that the District not offer the tax holiday deferral plan. If the government were to waive the need for social security tax during this period, the District might consider it. B. Sander agreed with Clark and noted that the Republicans had been trying to destroy social security for years.

In response to a question, Clark stated that the surplus looked significant, however, if the ADM was decimated taxes would jump significantly. If the District went over the threshold, funds would go toward paying penalties and not operations. For students who fell significantly behind, the District was mandated to potentially provide additional services, which would be costly and would not necessarily be refundable through the CARES Act. As the year progressed the financial picture would get a little clearer. Clark stated this was not a windfall. The state had not yet said how they would make up the lost revenues in FY22. These funds would help to keep the taxes down next year.

Miller asked for an estimate of how many students were homeschooled and had no contact with any teachers. Clark stated that Johnson had twenty students more this year than last year. The State was

about five weeks behind on applications, so the State may not have the student on their list. Gallagher stated there were 107 as of today, which were double-digit increases. That would significantly impact the ADM.

Huffman stated it was great that lunch had been free for everyone. She asked how long this would last and what would happen when funds ran out. Clark stated the same program that provided the free meals for all children ages 1 through 18 during the summer would be provided through December 31st. It was unclear what would happen after that and it may be something that the Board would have to look at. The normal free and reduced program was still available.

Janet Murray updated the Board on a decision that had been made to the Waterville and Johnson Pre-K program. In August the Waterville and Belvidere program had an enrollment of eight students. Then a paraprofessional resigned. They placed an ad for a paraprofessional, but it put the program at risk because they couldn't run a program at Belvidere without two adults. In the meantime, the teacher contacted parents to determine interest and by the end of August the program was down to two students. An emergency plan was put in place to house some of the students at Johnson Elementary School in hopes of hiring a paraprofessional. Having only two students was not enough to warrant opening up a school for the school year. Murray explained that it would cost \$69,625 to operate the Pre-K program at Belvidere. Johnson was having an issue trying to accommodate students on a waitlist. The solution was to open up a classroom at Johnson two days a week to accommodate three students on the waitlist at Johnson and the two students who were able to attend the Pre-K at Johnson. Therefore, as of now, there were five students definitely attending. Her hope was that more students would attend. This was not ideal for the Waterville/Belvidere community and she was disappointed they couldn't continue the program there.

Principal/Director Reports:

Cambridge: Anderson stated that all the pre-planning had paid off and school was running smoothly. She expressed her appreciation to her team, to the central office, for all the work that had been done in planning workspaces, and for making beautiful dividers for the tables. Anderson thanked Laflam for ensuring there was enough PPE and other necessary equipment. It was wonderful to see children together again. Anderson reported students had to be sent home early the first day due to a clogged septic line.

Eden: Mascolino stated that she had only positive things to report. It had been a smooth start. The morning scanners were doing a great job and parents were patient and understanding. She was amazed by the fact that students were tolerating wearing masks. Students were happy to be back in a routine. Mascolino reported they had been able to accommodate any changes that parents wanted to make as far as remote or in-person classes.

Hyde Park: Reilly stated arrivals and dismissals were now running smoothly. Every person in the building had a job to do or a door to cover. Staff were enjoying being outside and meeting the families. Students were wearing masks. Several students stated they felt safe and were enjoying the smaller classroom sizes and the attention they were getting. Students enjoyed being able to do activities that they couldn't do in a larger class. The staff seemed to be doing well. Her only concern was about being able to maintain the level of energy it took for every single aspect of the day.

Johnson: Manning reported they had had almost perfect mask compliance. Recess had been successful. Four different zones were created on the playground so the groups didn't mix. The first day of school pick up was chaos; however, five days later it was working quite well. Having an extra bus was extremely helpful in this regard. A staff meeting had been held today and staff was asked to share something positive they had seen within the school, specifically about the work of their colleagues. There were about 30 responses, highlighting the work of paraeducators, teachers, lunchroom personnel, the recess monitor, etc. This spoke to how well the team was working together and embracing the need to

collaborate and support each other. When he asked if there were any problems there were only about five responses. Not many years ago those numbers would have been reversed.

Waterville: Epstein stated they had a smooth start and it was a testament to the staff and the pre-planning done this summer. Parents and community members had been supportive and patient and she appreciated that. Staff was happiest when they saw students coming in the doors and she could see the students smiling even with their masks on. Epstein stated they were looking to hire a paraeducator.

Middle School: Maurice stated that pick up and drop off had gone exceedingly well. iPad distribution and set up had gone well. Students were wearing their masks and they understood that this was how to take care of each other. Team building would be the greatest challenge but teachers were rising to the occasion. They had the pods getting to know each other over videos, streaming from one pod into the other and introducing themselves. Wednesday team meetings would be held virtually, which would give 7th graders an opportunity to meet 8th graders. Remote students would be invited to their normal team meetings to be included in those activities.

High School: Schaffer was very excited about how the school year had started. Schaffer presented photos to the Board of students in their indoor and outdoor classrooms. Students were very excited to be back in the facility. They were wearing masks and physical distancing measures were in place. The facility was completely clean. There was a good amount of space in the classrooms and people were ready to learn. They were finding new and creative ways to use the ample acreage at Lamoille Union. When holding a class outside, all students were following a circle structure. This allowed students to see one another and reinforced restorative dialogue.

GMTCC: Remmers stated that bus drop offs were going well. There had been some coordination issues with some sending schools because of the variety of different plans. Tomorrow would be the fifth day of in-person instruction. Remmers was going program by program to set expectations for the culture they wanted to have in the building for the remainder of year. The Perkins Grant had not been approved at this time and this was common across the entire State. The application has been a very long and different process than in years past with multiple submissions. GMTCC was on their third submission and were hopeful they would hear soon that they had been approved. Remmers stated that last spring student enrollment numbers had been discussed. Unfortunately, due to issues related to remote learning, enrollment had been diminished. They had anticipated student enrollment being in the 160's. Currently they were in the 130's. This number was still higher than last year but it was a bit disappointing. Many students had chosen to homeschool this year or had decided to wait until next year.

Gallagher expressed her appreciation to the technology team. This team made home visits and were working non-stop. Families were so grateful for the tech support being provided.

Other Business: There was no other business.

Adjourn: Orost made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.