

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Minutes of Meeting
May 4, 2020**

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

Board Members Absent: None.

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Charleen McFarlane, Michele Aumand, Janet Murray, Denise Maurice, Brian Schaffer, Jeremy Scannell, Diane Reilly, Jennifer Hulse, Jan Epstein, David Manning, Melinda Mascolino, Wendy Savery, Dylan Laflam, Mary Anderson, Erik Remmers (6:55 p.m.),

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call Special Meeting to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Bezio made a motion, seconded by B. Sander, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the April 13, 2020 Board Meeting, April 20, 2020 Finance and Capital Committee

Meeting: B. Sander made a motion to approve both sets of minutes, seconded by Stebbins. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: The vote on this item was postponed until the next meeting.

Personnel

Approve GMTCC Computer Networking and Cyber Security Instructor: McFarlane informed the Board that the recommendation was to hire Michael Sibenaller at a salary of \$52,870. B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Moulton, to approve the recommendation. In response to a question from Miller, McFarlane stated this hire was to fill the position of a retiring teacher. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve HPES School Counselor: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to hire Fern Aguda-Brown at a salary of \$44,500. Orost made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed, with Cambridge members abstaining.

Approve ECS 4th Grade Teacher: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to hire Carolyn Richards at a salary of \$40,000. Moulton made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to approve the recommendation. Bezio asked for more information on the predecessor in this position. Later in the meeting, Mascolino explained that the 3rd grade teacher had taken a position as literacy interventionist and the 4th grade teacher had been moved down to 3rd grade, thus opening up the position. The motion passed, with Cambridge members abstaining.

Approve JES 3rd Grade Teacher: McFarlane reported to the Board that Sarah Pray, a current Lamoille North special educator, was moving to the position of a classroom teacher in LNMUUSD. The salary would remain the same. Moulton made a motion, to approve the lateral move, seconded by Bezio. The motion passed, with Cambridge members abstaining.

GMTCC Tractor Bid: The Administration recommended that the Board accept the bid from Harvest Equipment with all add alternates of \$48,476.26. Clark informed the Board that this purchase would be funded through the Perkins Grant. Clark noted that John Deere held its value, and parts and service were available through local dealerships. The tractor would be used for teaching sustainable agriculture

activities at the Robtoy campus in Cambridge. B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to approve the recommendation. Both Whitcomb and B. Sander expressed their enthusiasm with the decision to purchase the John Deere over the other tractor options, as they believed it was a superior tractor. B. Sander cautioned Laflam to be sure they received everything from the dealer that they had paid for.

Miller asked if this tractor was replacing another one. Laflam stated it was new equipment and was just for Green Mountain Tech. Laflam explained they had gone to bid three years in a row but had never brought it forward to the Board. Miller noted there were very few students in the program last year. She wondered if the tractor would still be purchased if the program did not continue. Remmers was not available to comment. However, B. Sander stated if GMTCC was having a problem with enrollment it could be because of the lack of proper equipment. Gallagher noted that enrollment next year was increasing from 129 students to over 200.

Lamell asked if the Perkins Grant was paying the entire purchase price. Laflam reported it was. The motion to approve the purchase of a tractor from Harvest Equipment was approved unanimously.

Discuss Potential Economic Impact of COVID-19 on FY20 & FY21 Operations and Budgets and Possible Response Strategies: Clark reported that the State was projecting a deficit of \$54 million. Adding mandatory reserves to that figure brought the deficit to \$58 million and needed to be made up in this current year. Going into FY21, between the loss in taxes and in order to refill the reserve, the shortfall was projected to be \$153 million. Property taxes was the only place for the State to make up the lost consumer taxes.

Clark informed the Board that she had been on a call with the Joint Fiscal Office, Secretary of Education, and Peter Welch's office. An effort was being made to determine how to use some of the CARES funds. They were working on how to make up lost revenues, to find ways to put money in taxpayers' hands, and to work at the federal level on smoothing the deficits out for states, municipalities and schools. There was still no definitive answer on how to fund the deficit. At this point, they would need to raise the tax rate to 26 cents per \$100,000 property value. Clark stated this has put the District in the position of determining how to come out of this year without a deficit and to position the District to be financially healthy in FY21, knowing there would be high taxes for the next few years. To bring a deficit into those years would be even more devastating to the taxpayers.

Gallagher stated that initially the District had been told not to touch mental health and special education services because there would be a need for those services. Therefore, administrators were asked to look at who was in their building, what their needs were, and whether to renew contracts or not. Those decisions didn't rise to the Board level, as administrators each year made those types of decisions. However, any decisions made would impact everyone, including the Board. Gallagher stated that the administrators had until May 15th to determine what their needs were. These decisions were compounded today by the State saying that class sizes might need to be smaller next year. Gallagher wondered who would be in the classroom if class sizes were reduced. Gallagher stated they were temporarily holding off on making decisions on positions that had not been filled. It was unclear at this point what the need might be on the support staff level. Decisions would be made on student need and what the District was able to do without clear guidance from the State.

B. Sander asked if there was enough classroom space available to have smaller classroom sizes. Gallagher stated there was enough space. Gallagher stated they recognized what was important to the taxpayers and also recognized what needed to be done for the students. Without clear guidance, it seemed safer to hold on filling positions, unless they were core content positions. Gallagher noted the health modeling suggested slowly easing restrictions. An increase in cases would then occur. Even if classes were to resume, it was unknown which classes would be necessary and when they would be in session. Modeling

would be required and the District would take guidance from that modeling. The Health Commissioner, the Secretary of Education and the Governor would make that particular decision.

Central Office: Gallagher informed the Board the District had joined the Racial Equity Alliance Coalition. She explained that she had received a letter a few months ago asking to talk about racism in the District. The letter was sent to all superintendents and principals in the Lamoille region. The LNMUUSD was the only one to reply. Gallagher stated there was a report that would be distributed to Board members about a racial harassment event and the subsequent investigation that had occurred. The report commended the administration in how the situation was dealt with and commended the investigative process. However, in speaking with the parent, it was noted that the child had experienced this type of situation since 7th grade. The student and parent felt there was still a lot of bigotry in the system. While the school was doing the right thing, the situation didn't seem to change.

The District was now talking to the Racial Equity Alliance Coalition and families and looking at ways to provide training to staff, students and families about what this meant and what could be done. It was one thing to follow process, but that didn't address how the person was feeling. Gallagher noted that the clinical definition of harassment was if the student felt an event was harassment, it was considered to be harassment. The District would be looking systemically at ways to address inequity. Inequity could be seen now in those who have and those who have not, in identity issues, and in racial issues. The District needed to do something about it. Gallagher noted that she had sent an invitation to administrators to meet with the Coalition. Every single administrator attended, not because they felt they had to but because they thought it was important.

Gallagher then reported that last week was Lunch Hero Week and tomorrow was Teacher Appreciation Week. Gallagher expressed appreciation to the District's teachers who were working so hard at this time.

Clark reported the current fiscal year was on schedule to end strong with a decent surplus. This would be helpful when going into FY21. All non-essential spending had been frozen.

Principal/Director Reports:

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein informed the Board her school had celebrated Lunch Super Hero Week. She expressed her appreciation to the staff for the incredible amount of work being done to provide food to the students. Epstein stated the staff had an automobile parade for the families. Staff made signs for their cars and students wrote signs to their teachers. She also thanked the parent organization for distributing gift cards to the staff. Epstein stated there would be a 2nd and 3rd grade opening that she was advertising for now.

Cambridge: Anderson reported they had a large meals program with approximately 19 people contributing to that in some way. These individuals would be recognized on Wednesday for their efforts. The PTA would recognize teachers through notes that they asked the students to write. Anderson had been busy with hiring for next year. She had already filled five positions. Anderson thanked IT for helping with the IT needs of the students. Anderson also expressed appreciation to the Truancy Project for their work with several of the students who were now participating daily in school activities.

Eden: Mascolino reported to the Board that her school had celebrated Lunch Hero Day and had taken balloons and flowers out to the Eden/Waterville team who were working in the kitchen. Friday they would hold a reverse Teacher Appreciation Parade. Mascolino stated the teachers were feeling more settled this week. The team was eager to start planning for next year.

Hyde Park: Reilly expressed appreciation to the Board for the guidance counselor hire who had experience in restorative practices and equity issues. Reilly stated that things were settling down and teachers were getting used to distance learning. The creativity and innovation of the staff was astounding

and Reilly provided examples of the types of learning experiences being offered. Reilly applauded the IT group for the tremendous amount of work they were doing to ensure that students had wifi and working computers.

Johnson: Manning stated there were a number of small group meetings being held between teachers and students on specific topics. Support personnel were also having small social-based meetings with students. It had become clear that a child's social world revolved around school and recreational activities, none of which were happening now. Some special education hiring needed to be done.

Middle School: Maurice stated the teachers were hitting their stride and using Schoology more effectively. Team Extreme has found a way to bring their projects online and they still had an interdisciplinary feel to them. They have been trying to create more of a community feel with their morning announcements. There was currently an opening for a science teacher. They were continuing to find ways to reach students who were not in touch with the school and the last few weeks had seen success in that regard.

High School: Schaffer stated this was a difficult time. Systems had been put in place to work with students and families when they were physically present. Working to replicate those systems in a virtual way was problematic. He stated that while he appreciated the rosy pictures being presented by his peers there were a lot of children and families who were struggling right now. Schaffer then highlighted responses provided by students which reported that 74% of the students found remote learning to be difficult, 60% of the students thought there was too much work, only 60% of the students had been able to focus on getting things done, and 77% of the students reported they had more responsibilities now that they were at home.

Schaffer reported the school had had a great plan coming into the school year and a great way for students to make their way through the work, but the bottom line was that things has changed in an exponential way and the guidance that the Superintendent and Curriculum Director were providing were key for getting through to the next year and beyond. The administration wanted to put students first, do new harm, and focus on learning over grades. The school was boiling down all the work that had happened over a six-year systemic change to now identifying several proficiencies and performance indicators and focusing on workload. Students were in some very challenging situations right now. Some who had been on an upward trajectory were now experiencing failure. This was a serious situation and things were tough right now. Multiple positions were open and he had yet to hear back on letters of intent. Additionally there were vacancies that he wasn't sure whether to fill. Not being certain of things was a difficult position for him to be in.

Barnes thanked Schaffer for his candid report. Mascolino noted that two weeks ago she had been having a difficult time and she wondered if things were going to ebb and flow. Gallagher agreed with Mascolino and noted that some individuals were comfortable with change and some were not. Students, teachers and families were struggling and then some had great days. It was important to stay in touch with each other and she was confident they would get through this.

GMTCC: Remmers thanked the Board for approving the purchase of the tractor. He stated he would echo what others had said, as staff and students were experiencing both good and bad days. Offering technical education on an online platform was tricky. They were, however, finding ways to move students forward toward their industry certifications and working with organizations and companies to do that. Orost asked that Remmers provide next year's program numbers by program at the next meeting.

Other Business: There was no other business.

Adjourn: Moulton made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.