

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District
Minutes of Board Meeting & Retreat
August 12, 2019**

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

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Mark Stebbins, Sue Prescott; Eden: David Whitcomb

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Charleen McFarlane, Michele Aumand, Jennifer Hulse, Brian Schaffer, Wendy Savery, Diane Reilly (arrived at 5:54 p.m.), Brian Pena, Jade Hazard, Chris Damato, Erik Remmers.

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Adopt the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Miller, to approve the agenda. There was no public comment.

Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the June 24, 2019, and July 29, 2019 meetings; July 3 and July 29, 2019, Personnel Committee Meetings; July 29, 2019, Finance & Capital Committee Meeting: B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Moulton, to approve all of the minutes. The motion passed unanimously, with Philie abstaining.

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

VSBA Update: Nielsen reported that the Executive Director of the VSBA was stepping down to take a job at a law firm. Nielsen thought she had done a great job in the position. Nielsen then talked about comments he had made during a VSBA meeting about Act 46. He stated the VSBA discussed a wide range of issues and reminded him very much of the LNMUUSD Board. The concern of the VSBA were students, families, and schools, in that order, and their goal was to make sure that everyone was taken care of.

Negotiation Update: McFarlane reported the negotiating team had met for a final time on July 8th. The negotiating group had initially been 10 members consisting of five Board members and five members of the NEA. However, the NEA decided they wanted alternates. The Board filed an unfair labor practice, which stalled progress and caused some bad feelings. They came back to the table on July 8th and came to an impasse. Therefore, they went to mediation on August 1st. They have thirty days to consider their options and if there were no agreement it would go to arbitration. McFarlane noted that at this point both sides were far apart in health care issues. If arbitration was required she hoped there would be a decision in mid-September. Gallagher reported that the Union was interested in negotiating their health care contributions based on income. McFarlane stated they had decided not to do that. Gallagher stated they should be prepared for that possibility.

In-District Transfer Policy and Procedure – First Reading: Gallagher stated that the current policy tied the administration’s hands. Policies should be broad and this one was extremely narrow. Gallagher highlighted the areas that she recommended the Board consider changing:

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 should be removed because those sections precluded students from transferring mid-year. Gallagher believed there could be situations where a student may need that option.

Section 4.1: remove the application deadline.

Section 5.5 should be removed. 5.5 tied the administration’s hands.

Section 6.1 should be revised by adding “for the relevant school year” at the end of the sentence.

Section 6.2: remove the application deadline.

Section 6.3: revise the first sentence to read “The school board shall review appeals during regular school board meetings.”

Section 7.3 and 7.4: remove.

The Board would vote on these changes at the next Board meeting.

JES Miracle 10-Foot Slide Purchase with Capital Funds: Clark stated this purchase was for a closed slide, which would replace an open slide that had been proven to be a falling hazard. Clark stated she might request at a later meeting that the money come from capital funds.

Award Food Service Contract for JES: Clark reported to the Board that bids had been solicited for food service management at JES for the 2019-2020 school year from three vendors: The Abbey Group, Sodexo, and Café Services. The Abbey group was the only company to bid on the one-year contract. The contract would change to a fixed price contract. After analyzing the potential meals served at the per meal price from the Abbey, less the current state and federal reimbursement rates, the FY20 cost to JES would be \$32,000. The cost to run the program in-house would cost more. Additionally, another year would allow Karyl Kent to explore more options. The State had approved the bid, noting that the bid prices were higher than the USDA School Programs Reimbursement Rate, which would require the SU to subsidize the program. Clark stated the Administration was recommending the Board accept the sole bid of \$275,951.76 from the Abbey Group for food service management at Johnson Elementary School with the understanding that this bid was a gross amount and would be offset by State support for school-based nutrition services. This would be a one-year contract with an option for four additional years. Hunsberger made a motion to accept the bid by the Abbey Group as presented by the Business Manager. Moulton seconded the motion.

B. Sander asked if the District would have any influence over the wages and benefits of the Abbey Group employees. Clark stated they had to meet minimum standards and the bid documents outlined the increases that the company expected to pay. The motion then passed unanimously, with Cambridge members abstaining.

Other Business: There was none.

Adjourn: Moulton made a motion, seconded by B. Sander, to adjourn the meeting at 5:54 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board Retreat began at 6:22 p.m. Gallagher began by outlining work that had been done recently at an administrative council retreat where discussion focused on committee work. Discussions included proficiencies and how to use data in a more intentional way. Jade Hazard had used her grant funds to host a course for administrators and teachers to attend Harvard for a week. By the end of this year all teacher leaders would have attended a session. They used a program called Data Wise and there were many pieces to it that provided other ways to look at data. Data Wise looked at trends and patterns, was reflective and not reactive, worked collaboratively to look at the data, and encouraged reflection and self-reflection. There were also discussions on negotiations and restorative practice work. LNMUUSD was on the cutting edge of that work and was a model SU for the state in restorative practices. Gallagher noted that Karyl Kent had been doing phenomenal work with the farm to table program and was securing funds to ensure students had snacks and meals.

Gallagher then asked that each Board member share what they stood for and how that was connected to the work they did in their role in the District. She asked each member why they had wanted to be a Board member and what they thought they brought to the Board. Finally, Gallagher asked what work each Board member wanted to achieve this year and how each member could help one another to achieve their goal.

Bill Sander stated he was a retired social worker and had wanted to get on the Board to improve the academic atmosphere at Lamoille. For many years it had had a poor reputation, with high dropout rates. He also joined to pay attention to the facilities. Sander was proud that the AP program had been expanded. He explained that the school used to charge students to take AP courses and that charge had been eliminated. Sander stated he had been on the Board for about 20 years. He was proud of the fact that they had addressed truancy and dropout issues and the graduation rate had gone from 65% to 95%. Gallagher stated the graduation rate was now at 92%. (Later, Gallagher stated 92% was a four year average. This year only one student hadn't graduated.) As far as what he'd like to work on this year, he addressed the fact that schools in the area were actively discouraging their students to attend the Tech Center in order to keep those funds. Gallagher stated they were working on that issue and looking at ways to use the Tech Center differently. She explained that they were awarded a grant to potentially develop an early education program at the Tech Center.

Mark Nielsen stated he wanted to make sure that when a student graduated they would be qualified to apply for any job they wanted to do. He appreciated this Board and said he thought it could be a model to other boards. Nielsen stated LUHS was a very good school and he wanted to continue working towards making sure that the District and school was recognized for the work that was being done.

Jan Sander stated she had been involved in education all of her life. She wanted to help students succeed in school, ensure that the school was welcoming towards students and was a place where they could feel comfortable while getting a good education. Her goals included working with the wellness committee to find ways to help students by providing shampoo, conditioner, showers, and clean laundry. There had recently been a discussion about installing washers and dryers for students to access. Sander said that it was important to her that

students felt they were a part of the community. She also wanted to work on having the Legislature fund breakfasts and lunches for all students regardless of income.

Jeff Hunsberger stated he joined the School Board before Act 46 and the town Board had three members. This was his second term and probably his last. He had a child at the school and had wanted to be a part of the conversation at a higher level. Hunsberger was a Master's level Social Worker and his primary perspective was fairness, equity, and making sure that everyone had as close to the same opportunity as everyone else, regardless of their income or family background. While many members of the Board were interested in the academics, his focus was the social services end of things. He wanted students to have great mental health supports, he wanted to address poverty, and equity issues around health care and food security. He wanted to be sure that teachers and staff felt that the Board supported them and helped them to deal with youth who were having a hard time. He noted that as the District became better at providing trauma-informed practices with staff and educators, better relationships would develop with youth and adults.

Katie Orost stated she was a mother of four and had been on the Board for ten years. She brought history to the Board. Her goal for this year would be to see there was follow-through on things like the on-line forms and making sure things didn't fall through the cracks. She also wanted to continue being involved with negotiations.

Bart Bezio stated he became involved during the Act 46 Waterville debate. He had three children in the school system and wanted to make sure that his children were set up to succeed. He stated he had a passion for working in athletics and was coach to a number of young athletes. He was frustrated with the number of students in Cambridge and Waterville who made the decision to go to Mt. Mansfield rather than LUHS. Bezio wanted to brag about the school and elevate people's perspectives because he thought this was a great school. His goal was to challenge the status quo and be innovative. He appreciated EPIC Academy and thought that was an exciting opportunity for students. Being a CPA he also wanted to be a good steward of taxpayer money while promoting equal opportunity and excellence.

Tina Lowe stated she hadn't necessarily wanted to be on the Board but was encouraged to run. One of her children was one of those students who fell through the cracks. He was not highly motivated. Before she was on the School Board she didn't know what she could do to ensure those types of students were on the school's radar. She reflected that once her child went to middle school, she lost touch with what was going on at the school. Lowe hoped to find a way to bridge the gap between parents, administrators and students, especially those students who were falling through the cracks. She also wanted to support Jan Sander with her efforts.

Angela Lamell stated she graduated from the Tech Program at Lamoille. Lamell joined the Board during Act 46 discussions. She stated she brought financial knowledge to the Board.

Patti Hayford stated she never wanted to be on the Board and was voted in by the town. Once she was on the Board she was glad she was on because she didn't like the direction the Hyde Park Board was going in. She believed that there was too much money being spent on education. She stated she would hear during the strike how bad the education was. When the Hyde Park Board tried to improve the building, her opinion was that it didn't matter what the

building was like, it was what was going on inside that mattered. She noted that the large board didn't have the intimacy of the small board. Her belief was that all students needed to be treated equally and offered the same academic opportunities. She hoped that other towns recognized that the School Board represented one district and no one town was better than another. She stated she didn't say a lot during Board meetings but she steamed a lot when she returned home. Her biggest issue was during negotiations. She stated insurance rates were going up. Real people had to pay a lot for insurance and she didn't believe it was fair for the union to negotiate low rates.

Gallagher stated this Board was a microcosm of the real world. She asked that all issues be framed in a positive way. She asked what the Board could do together to make some changes. Gallagher stated she had to push people away from the blame game and find common ground. Hayford stated the NEA had to realize that taxpayers could not keep sustaining what the NEA was asking for.

Laura Miller stated she had three children that had gone through the school system. They weren't high achievers but did find things they were passionate about, such as sports and dance. Miller waited until her children were out of elementary school and then began to volunteer and ultimately work at the Cambridge Elementary School in various capacities. Once she stopped working at Cambridge, she got on the School Board because she wanted to be informed about what was going on. Because she had done so many things within the school, she felt she brought that special knowledge to the Board. Miller agreed with Hunsberger's views, stating that she had gone into special education teaching because she wanted to help those children who had a learning disability or who had experienced trauma. Miller stated she was reviewing the Board Orders in order to ensure that the money was spent wisely and helped children. She wanted to make sure the bond went through the right way. She agreed with Jan Sander that she would love to be able to provide all students with a free lunch.

Stephanie Sweet stated she had been on the town Board prior to Act 46. She stepped down but then her daughter struggled with some learning disabilities in elementary school. Her daughter now had a great deal of confidence and, seeing this, Sweet was concerned that there were not enough teenagers with the confidence to speak up. Sweet advocates for the elderly and now she wanted to be able to advocate for children. To that end, she was interested in participating on the safety and wellness committee. Sweet stated she had missed being on the School Board when she wasn't on it and, despite her many other commitments, when there was an opening she decided to join again.

Lauren Philie stated she had two children in the school district. Previously she had been on the Johnson School Board and the Lamoille Union Board. She joined the Board this time because her son was a high flyer and he entered the lottery to go to MMU. She was annoyed that he felt that MMU was better. He was then put on the waitlist, at which point Philie decided to participate on the School Board. She joined the curriculum committee to see what could be done. She stated it was hard for her to advocate for a high flyer. There were students who struggled and there was just not enough energy or time left to really advocate for the high flyers. Therefore, her son spent a lot of time understimulated and bored at school. Only when she advocated for him were additional opportunities presented. However, many parents weren't able to advocate for their children at that level. Those students should still be given

the same opportunities. She was grateful for the AP courses but as a sophomore there was nothing left for him to take. Philie appreciated EPIC Academy and thought it provided a great opportunity. Philie works at NVU-Johnson and was happy to serve as a liaison with NVU. In the coming year Philie stated she believed they could do great things and implement opportunities. She was very interested in proficiency-based grading. That system was growing on her and she wanted to be sure that teachers felt supported in administering it and that parents understood it.

Bobbie Moulton stated he had been on the Board for a number of years. He joined the Board because he had a miserable school experience and wanted to make sure his son had a better experience. Moulton believed he brought an open mind to the Board. His goal for the year was to work together as a team to reach the Board's goals.

Lisa Barry stated she had been on the Hyde Park School Board during the strike. It had been quite difficult. She decided, however, to get on the Board again. Barry had three children who went through the school system. Barry spoke of her 32+ years in the educational field and thought that was a valuable piece that she brought to the Board. She agreed with other Board members who spoke of equity. Barry had been an advocate for her children because she knew what she could advocate for. Some parents don't know how to advocate for their children or don't feel comfortable doing so. Barry stated education had changed and veteran teachers sometimes had a difficult time changing. She was excited that George Kouros was coming to speak to the District staff, stating he would motivate the teachers.

Jade Hazard stated that George Kouros was going to be the in-service speaker next week and everyone was invited to attend. Innovation and equity were the two biggest things that Kouros brought to the table.

Chasity Fagnant stated she was persuaded to join the Board. When she joined, the Hyde Park school bond was being discussed and it was a very difficult conversation. She also was on the teacher negotiation committee. Fagnant had two children in the school system and she needed to be a very active advocate for one of them. Fagnant felt the staff needed more support. The teachers she had worked with were phenomenal in dealing with her child but it wasn't easy for anyone involved. She believed there were many students who needed assistance and she wanted to make sure the teachers had the support they needed to help the students. She also wanted to learn more about proficiency-based learning.

Gallagher noted that mental health first aid was offered to any staff member that wanted to attend. Participating in the first aid course would help teachers move through some of these difficult issues. Self-reflection was the theme this year. Gallagher stated if a person couldn't determine what they stood for and how that played out in the person's work it would be difficult to be as successful. Gallagher noted that she saw a different school board now than it was two years ago. She saw people from different towns sitting together, a group who knew what proficiency-based learning was, a group who stated they were willing to work on things. This was the only school board that did sub-committee work. Gallagher requested that the Board members not assign blame to any departments or schools within the District. Gallagher asked that members not hold toxic judgments and instead move forward with what the group believed were the right things.

Gallagher then reminded members about roles and responsibilities of Board members. Gallagher cautioned that everything a Board member said would be perceived as the voice of the Board. However, one town representative was not the Board. The Board was the whole body. Gallagher then requested that Board members familiarize themselves with what items could be brought to an Executive Session. Additionally, Gallagher requested that members review the information on confidentiality in their Board books.

B. Sander then spoke about the extreme importance of what the Board was doing. He spoke of the need to provide free compulsory universal education. Public funds were now going into private schools, which was anti-democratic and subversive. Public schools needed to be very well run and if the schools were doing their jobs properly it would allow students to be competitive. Sander also asked that Board members be willing to participate and speak up on other issues that affected education.

The Board then broke into three committees – the Curriculum Committee, Finance Committee, and Safety and Wellness Committee – to decide on their goals for next year.

Adjourn: The Board then adjourned at 7:40 p.m.