

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
March 8, 2021**

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

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Sue Prescott; Johnson: Bobbie Moulton

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Michele Aumand, Denise Maurice, Tommy O'Connor, Erik Remmers, David Manning, Jan Epstein, Diane Reilly, Jeremy Scannell

Others Present: Chasity Fagnant, Erik Hutchins, Heather Hobart, Bobby Blanchard-Lewis, Mark Scott

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Hayford, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Jeff Hunsberger read a statement that reflected the Board's thoughts:

"We'd like to take a moment to reflect over the past year's activities and acknowledge the many incredible teachers, staff, administrators and students who have braved these past twelve months with unmatched flexibility, creativity, resiliency and grace. To suddenly stop teaching and managing normal daily operations and pivot to an at-home learning milieu, to do meal prep and delivery, communications and develop online teaching and learning, transporting food for students, was no small feat. To begin managing the daily health and welfare of each student, teacher and staff during the hybrid learning, to manage food chain supply challenges, to prep hundreds of meals during school days, over holidays and all summer long.

To the building maintenance and management crews managing spaces, cleaning and monitoring air and HVAC systems constantly, setting up isolation spaces and acting on a moment's notice to tend to the needs of staff and students. To the administrators managing the occasional positive case and doing contact tracing and communicating fully with parents and students and having very few outbreaks. To our team who developed our budgets and was successful in the presentation thereof and the public passing of those budgets. Thank you all for what you do.

Thank you for your extra hours, your endless stress, your passion for teaching, for safety, and for managing the physical health and emotional health of our students, supporting yourselves and your peers, your own children and families, as well as your students and their parents. Most emergency operations are planned for. They are practiced. We train for those things in advance, but not this pandemic.

On top of that there were significant challenges involving racism and violence, significant and troubling political discourse, protests, natural disasters, and an insurrection of historic proportions. It's been a year of enormous change while hundreds and thousands of lives have been lost to COVID-19.

All of this had to be observed. We all were either actively engaged or spectators to it all. Our students were as well. Our school team together has rallied and managed, has addressed and continues to evolve forward with greater resilience and fortitude.

We, the Board of Directors, say thank you, bless you, and we are ever so appreciative of your daily efforts on behalf of the youth and communities. Because of your efforts we have managed to get through these

most troubling of times and there is light at the end of this tunnel. Tonight we want to recognize our teachers, our staff and our administrators and celebrate each and every one of you.”

Reorganization of the Board: Gallagher took over the meeting at this time in order to entertain nominations for the following positions:

Elect LNSU/LNMMUUSD Board Chair(s), Clerk:

Elect Chair of the LNSU Board: Hunsberger nominated Mark Nielsen to be the Chair of the Lamoille North Supervisory Union Board. There were no other nominations. The vote to approve Mark Nielsen was unanimous.

Elect Chair of the MUUSD Board: Hunsberger nominated David Whitcomb to be the Chair of the Lamoille North Modified Unified Union Supervisory District Board. There were no other nominations. The vote to approve David Whitcomb was unanimous.

Mark Nielsen then took over the meeting.

Elect Clerk: Jan Sander made a motion to nominate Laura Miller to be Clerk. The motion passed unanimously.

Discuss & Approve 2021-2022 Board Meeting Schedule and Date of Annual Meeting: The Board agreed to continue meeting on the second and fourth Monday of the month. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to hold the Annual Meeting on February 14, 2022. The motion passed unanimously.

Discuss & Approve 2021-2022 Committee Meeting Schedule/Membership: Gallagher noted the ongoing committees were the Curriculum Committee, the proposed Social Justice or Racial Justice Committee (formerly the Safety and Wellness Committee), the Finance, Capital and Facilities Committee, and the Technology Committee. Gallagher asked that Board members submit their first and second choices to Michele Aumand. There were two committees that met occasionally: the Board Negotiating Committee and the Personnel/Policy Committee. Members could sign up to be on those committees as well.

Discuss Hyde Park Open Board Seat: Gallagher stated there were a number of write-ins but none of them had garnered enough votes. Fagnant stated she would be willing to stay on the Board. Gallagher clarified this would be for one year until the next election.

LNSU/LNMMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the February 8, 2021, meeting; and Curriculum Committee Meeting; February 4, 2021, Personnel Committee Meeting: J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Miller stated she had approved the Board Orders up through March 5th. Bezio made a motion, seconded by Sweet, to approve the Board Orders. The motion passed unanimously.

Restorative Center Presentation: Gallagher introduced Heather Hobart, the Executive Director of the Lamoille Restorative Center. Hobart then introduced Mark Scott and Bobby Blanchard-Lewis. Hobart explained the Center had 42 years of experience providing services to youth and families in the community. The Center managed twelve programs across the justice continuum as well as a jobs program.

The present focus of the Center when working with the LNSU was on equity, more inclusive responses to behavior, particularly in older grades, and school engagement. This meant creating a culture of well-being and belonging, repairing harm using inclusive practices, and avoiding expulsions, suspensions,

detentions and planning rooms. This was part of a five-year plan. The first steps were to improve the feeling of safety and equity among students and staff. Hobart thanked the Board for approving the new position of Student Assistance Coordinator on the high school campus and Hobart expressed her appreciation for the work being done by the Safety and Wellness Committee for focusing on restorative practices.

Hobart then outlined the whole school initiative that provided support to students, families and staff with a focus on social and emotional well-being. Hobart noted that the LNSU was only one of three districts in the country selected as a Reclaiming Futures pilot site. The goal of this work was to screen young people for health and mental health issues, intervene when necessary and refer them to other resources as needed.

The Restorative Center had been working with several districts to support teachers and staff. Newsletters and bi-weekly meetings on self-care and resiliency were provided by the Center. The Restorative Practices Implementation Teams had been meeting in every one of the District buildings throughout COVID. The goal was to create different opportunities for students when things weren't going well that would create more space for problem solving and collaboration. Hobart provided examples of how they were addressing particular issues such as internet safety and vaping through restorative practices.

Hobart explained the School Engagement Program. A referral form would be sent to the Center after an absence of ten days. Cases were brought to court if the student was out for more than twenty days. Hobart outlined Emily Neilsen's role as the School Engagement Specialist (SES). Examples of the SES's range of work included working with the school nurse to address a child's health issue, meeting with a school team to develop an educational plan, visiting a student at school, and troubleshooting challenges related to remote learning. This community-based service model was very successful, with only 5% ending up in the court system. The reason Hobart thought it was successful was because it was an outside support system that connected families to the services that they needed.

Hobart stated the complexity of the referrals had increased as a result of COVID and families were struggling. Periods of absenteeism were more prolonged and reengagement with school was a greater struggle for students. There was greater poverty and instability in families, the anxiety was heightened for the health and safety of the children, an increase in substance misuse among parents, and internet connectivity and costs were a problem.

Hayford asked how Lamoille South asked for assistance if a child was absent from school. Hobart stated there was a referral form on the website. Miller asked for more information about the programs offered by the Center. Hobart stated information was available on the website or Board members should feel free to contact the Center.

Youth Employment Specialist Grant for LUHS: Jeremy Scannell informed the Board that Vocational Rehabilitation, a division of the Agency of Human Services, was offering to fund a Youth Employment Specialist for five high schools in the state. This would assist students with disabilities but the long-term hope was that it would also assist general education students as well.

If the application were to be accepted it would fund 100% of the position for two fiscal years, not to exceed \$80,000. It would start July 1. Year 3 of the grant would fund 50% of the position and year 4 would fund 25% of the position. Scannell explained the need for this position was great. He had canvassed the special education case managers and over the last two years less than 20% of the special education students had had success in starting and maintaining work experience placements. Out of that 20%, less than 10% of those work experiences evolved into paid employment. Those percentages were in stark contrast to the roughly 60% of students who currently had pre-graduation employment-related goals for themselves.

The first year budget would be 100% funded by the grant and was projected to be \$78,850. The second year would total \$80,000. Vocational Rehabilitation anticipated the first two years of funding to be seed money with the goal of transitioning to a fully funded position at the SU utilizing both special education and general education funds. The staff person would work with the students on their work readiness skills, self-advocacy skills, post-secondary exploration, and work-based learning opportunities. Scannell asked the Board for a letter of support. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Whitcomb, to accept the agreement and provide a letter of support.

B. Sander noted that in the past employment had kept students from coming to school. He asked if this situation had been explored. Gallagher and Scannell replied that this was not in lieu of school but in addition to school programming. Whitcomb stated this opportunity gave students a chance to see what work was like and he thought it was a great idea. Miller asked if this would be separate from the Tech Center employment opportunities. Scannell stated they were separate programs but there could be some connection in working with the Tech Center's employer contacts. Miller stated any time you could get a student to do actual hands-on work to get credits was valuable. Schaffer stated Lamoille Union fully supported this effort. The motion then passed unanimously.

Accept the FY'20 Audit: Clark informed the Board that accepting the audit merely meant that the audit had been received. Clark noted that the LNSU and LNMUUSD had both received clean opinions. Clark provided the Board with information on the balances remaining and noted that the Board members had been provided this information in writing last week. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to accept the LNSU and LNMUUSD audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

Central Office Updates: Gallagher reported the regional calendar would be disseminated on March 17th to the general public. However, there was a possibility that the State would create a state-wide calendar that would supersede the regional calendar.

Gallagher then stated they had received ideas about the ESSER allocations and it had been determined that they would be spending that money on the recovery plan which would go until September of 2023. The District would need to focus on academic recovery, social emotional wellness, and student engagement. They were in the process of developing a recovery team, which would have a maximum of ten individuals. Gallagher then outlined the structure of the recovery team. Gallagher noted that a summer academy would be front and center for this work.

There was a big push by the Governor for more in-person learning. For that to happen at the District distancing guidelines would need to be changed. Vaccinations had begun for educators. Gallagher was still waiting to hear about mass vaccination clinics that might be held. She encouraged staff to be patient. Gallagher gave special thanks to Flo Kelley who had gone above and beyond.

Gallagher informed the Board that the District had received pushback from some families about the quarantine guidelines, particularly around athletics. Gallagher stated the District would continue with the established protocols.

Clark reported that the finance reports showed that there were healthy surpluses at this time. However, with the COVID work that had occurred across the District, the total of over \$1 million of ESSER 1 grant funds had been expended. ESSER 2 monies were available and now plans were being put in place to use the funds on the recovery plan. The surpluses reflected in the finance reports would begin to be utilized. She noted that 2023 would be a challenging year and she had no concerns with the fact that there was a current surplus.

Gallagher informed the Board that Janet Murray was on leave for the rest of the school year. Jen Hulse would fill in with some of Murray's work.

Principal/Director Updates:

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein reported they were just coming back from break. Teachers were finishing up report cards and those would go out this Friday. Epstein said they had had a winter carnival before break and it had been a fun way for the school community to gather.

Cambridge: Anderson stated they had needed to hire a long-term substitute teacher and were able to hire someone who had just moved to Vermont from New York. Teachers and special educators were participating in professional development on intervention strategies for guided reading groups. Anderson noted the importance of having ongoing trainings and a common set of strategies in place. She thanked and congratulated the Cambridge Board for passing another budget.

Hyde Park: Reilly reported on Operation Valentine. Reilly then noted with 70 days remaining in the school calendar, she had put forth a challenge to her staff on how to set goals with individual students. The sixth graders were struggling with engagement and the staff was working on getting them to be more focused. The greenhouse was being built and they were looking forward to using it. She was also looking forward to the Recovery Project.

Johnson: Manning reported they continued to increase the number of students attending school four days a week. Over vacation, Wendy Savery had coordinated a tutoring program for students. Fifteen students took advantage of the program. Manning thanked Clark for her budgeting work for Johnson Elementary School. A trainer for Outright Vermont came to the staff meeting and trained the staff on a variety of topics related to LGBTQ students and staff. It was a rich discussion with the staff.

Middle School: Maurice reported that Team Infinity had invited four state representatives to speak with the team about state government. The transition process had begun bringing sixth graders to middle school. This year families would be receiving links to virtual meetings instead of school staff going to individual schools. Team Extreme had created COVID couture outfits in which they developed distancing outfits.

High School: Schaffer reported on INVEST EAP, a valuable service that was available to all school employees and their dependents. The staff of the EAP could help with any number of issues and Schaffer encouraged staff to reach out to them for assistance.

Green Mountain Technology: Remmers stated they had qualified candidates for the Culinary Arts position. They were struggling to find applicants for the Automotive position. Skills USA would be virtual this year. 37 students would be participating across seven programs.

Other Business: Nielsen, noting it was International Women's Day, thanked the women on the Board and the staff for everything they did. Gallagher reminded people to email Michele about Committee requests. Gallagher also informed the Board that Miles Smith, the Diversity Coach, would be presenting to the Board on March 22nd. Whitcomb thanked Board members for their support of him and Nielsen staying on as Chairs.

Adjourn: Whitcomb made a motion, seconded by Hayford, to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.