

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
December 13, 2021**

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

Board Members Absent: Johnson: Bobbie Moulton

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Charleen McFarlane (remote), Dylan Laflam, Brian Pena, Jeremy Scannell, Wendy Savery, Jan Epstein, Bethann Pirie, Denise Maurice, Jennifer Hulse, Betzi Goodman, Diane Reilly, David Manning (remote)

Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Orost made a motion, seconded by Lamell, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the November 8, 2021, meeting; November 30, 2021, Special Meeting; November 8, 2021, Curriculum Committee Meeting; November 22, 2021, Finance & Capital Committee Meeting: Orost made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the Board Orders. The motion passed unanimously.

New Required Policy D7, Special Education – Second Reading: Hulse explained that the Vermont Agency of Education was supposed to have developed the Vermont Special Education Procedures and Practices Manual by this time. However, the manual had yet to be completed. The Board agreed to hold off on the second reading until the manual was available.

Approve GMTCC FY23 Budget: Clark explained the mission of GMTCC was to promote the mastery of the essential academic, technical, and employability skills for secondary/adult students to be successful in the workforce and to continue professional learning.

The FY23 budget proposal was an increase of 2.88%, with a per pupil tuition amount of \$9,255. This was an increase of \$560 over FY22. The primary drivers for the increase were an increase in health care costs and the yearly increase in staff salary. Program expenses were level funded with the understanding that these levels met most program needs. The needs not being met through the budget were being met with grant funding. Last year the Board had set aside \$193,219 in reserve funds for the purpose of offsetting tuition increases. The RAB decided to apply \$75,000 of that reserve to the FY23 revenue in order to offset FY23 tuition increases.

With the \$75,000 applied, they were looking at budget expenses of \$3.3 million. FY23 expected revenues were almost \$2.1 million. Tuition being raised would be \$1.2 million. With an estimated six semester FTE average of 134, this brought the tuition to \$9,255. Clark stated this was the third highest tuition in the last four to five years but Remmers and the RAB considered it to be reasonable. Clark noted that the current CPI for November was 6.8%.

Following questions about the amount of reserve being applied, Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Lamell, to accept the GMTCC FY2023 projected budget as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

FY2023 Budget Presentation, First Draft: Clark started by presenting the Lamoille North Supervisory Union FY23 proposed budget. The budget for Central Office included transportation and Special Education

costs, excluding para-educators, accumulated at the SU level. Salary and benefits were increasing modestly due to being able to remove a \$30,000 investment in the prior year for an anticipated mandatory conversion to eFinance. This statewide project had been postponed. There was an increase in SU-wide IT systems supports. They were continuing the work to consolidate SU-wide IT function, supplies, and supports into the SU budget. FY23 had an increase in supply costs and a decrease in contracted services.

There was \$779,000 in uncommitted reserves from FY21. The proposal was to apply \$652,726 to the FY23 budget to control growth in the general assessment and place the balance of the funds into the Maintenance and Repairs Fund or to support moving Central Office to a new location.

The total budget without Special Education was \$4,028,237. Minus the transportation and services directly provided to schools and billed based on their usage of \$1,864,729 and miscellaneous revenues of \$51,500, the assessment expenses came to \$2,112,008. Subtracting the \$652,726 of reserves resulted in \$1,459,282 of non-Special Education assessment costs. This was a 3.36% increase from FY22.

Special Education costs had decreased. The FY23 costs were \$6,047,128. Minus the estimated Special Education revenue of \$4,133,241, the Special Education assessment was \$1,913,887. This was an 18.71% decrease. Adding the non-Special Education assessment of \$1,459,282 resulted in a FY23 total assessment of \$3,373,169, or a 10.44% combined decrease from FY22.

Transportation costs were increasing 7.33%, to \$1,099,658. This was a result of having to rebid. There was only one bidder and the bid exceeded the budget.

The final note was about the possibility of relocating Central Office. If LNSU were to move to a rental agreement, the potential increase to the FY23 budget would be \$33,037.

Clark informed the Board that they had received their preliminary tax letter. However, there was no equalized pupil or common level of appraisal information available.

Moving on to the Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District (LNMUUSD), Clark stated factors in building the FY23 budget:

The forecasted statewide increase in education spending was 4.28%. The forecasted decrease in equalized pupils statewide was -0.4%. The forecasted statewide growth in equalized pupil spending was 4.74%. The forecasted statewide property tax rate was \$1.40. The budget the LNMUUSD was currently projecting was \$1.3933. The forecasted average state announced income sensitivity was 2.35. The state property yield increased from \$11,317 in FY22 to \$12,937. The state income yield had increased from \$13,770 to \$15,484. The excess spending threshold jumped significantly to \$19,977 and no penalties were anticipated for FY23. The state non-residential property tax decreased from \$1.612 in FY22 to \$1.482 in FY23. The June 30, 2021 available unassigned fund balance was \$940,434 and the proposed amount being used in this budget would be \$714,000.

The FY23 projected budget for the combined elementary level was \$13,993,456, a 4.95% increase. The combined education spending was \$13,108,456 and per equalized pupil spending amount was \$19,375, a 5.85% increase. Clark explained that based on the debt management plan established in 2016, FY23 included the first year of the Hyde Park construction bond principal payments. The projected budget for the combined secondary level was \$15,344,171, a 3.30% increase. The combined education spending was \$14,039,171, with per equalized pupil spending amount of \$16,490, a 3.14% increase.

Elementary general fund expenditures were up 4.95%. The elementary level revenues were down 25%. The application of the reserve funds could change this number. The secondary general fund expenditures were up 3.30%. The non-Special Education expenses were up 5.01% but the Special Education costs were down 9.72%, bringing the expenditures down to 3.30%. Revenues on the secondary level were down 8.51%.

Tuition, transportation, and repairs and maintenance were the main drivers of the increase. Before adding the Hyde Park bond, the change in combined education spending was 4.67%. With the bond principal added, the increase was 6.15%.

Clark provided details on the capital and health benefit reserves. The capital reserve available as of June 30, 2021 was \$859,197. The HRA/HAS reserve was \$151,414.

The estimated decrease in the pre-CLA tax rate was 12.833 cents or a decrease of \$128.33 per \$100,000 of property value. While the yield had increased significantly, it was anticipated that the sharp increase in property values would drive CLA rates down, thereby offsetting some of this tax savings. The blended LNMUUSD FY23 rate, before CLA, was 1.3933, a change from FY22 of -1.283, or -\$128.33 of property value. However, estimating a 10-point change in all CLA rates, the estimated FY23 tax rates after the CLA would change as follows:

- Belvidere, a change of \$46.30 per \$100,000 of property value
- Eden, a change of \$42.30 per \$100,000 of property value
- Hyde Park, a change of \$43.40 per \$100,000 of property value
- Johnson, a change of \$28.00 per \$100,000 of property value
- Waterville, a change of \$45.30 per \$100,000 of property value

Central Office Updates:

Central Office and Major Infrastructure Issues: Laflam reminded the Board that the Central Office building had carbon dioxide issues. The first air quality tests were done in 2014 and repeated every other year. The building was overcrowded. In the last 18 months they started reviewing the possibility of renovating the building but the costs were prohibitive. Putting in a new HVAC system would require that they bring the building up to code. This would mean adding an elevator, ADA access, etc. and would result in over \$1 million in costs. Another option was to relocate Central Office to other schools. However, there was not enough available space to do that. The third option was to build a new building, but again the costs would be high and there was no viable site in which to put a building. Costs would run over \$2 million. The fourth option was to lease space within the Lamoille North School District area. A building that was promising was the PH Edwards building in the Village of Hyde Park. There was not a firm offer to present to the Board at this meeting but Laflam wanted to know if the Board supported the direction he was moving.

Orost asked if Central Office really needed 5,000 square feet with so many people working remotely. Clark responded that remote work was not ideal for the work that Central Office did. They made it work because they had been forced to make it work. There were 23 people that work at the Supervisory Union directly. Only 19 were in the building right now, which resulted in gaps. Much of what they did was team-oriented. They could limp along until space was available. Clark stated they looked at temporarily locating elsewhere. It was a six-week process to relocate. To do it twice in 18 months seemed excessive. It would make more sense to reduce the number of occupants in the building for a year than to do a full move out twice. Laflam noted that HR services weren't available either. Hiring and termination was difficult to do remotely.

B. Sander asked if a current board could commit beyond ten years to a lease. Clark stated they could. He also wanted to know if the PH Edwards included all the ADA compliance items. Laflam stated it was a full renovation and the lease numbers included a complete outfit. Laflam stated that while all the details had not been worked out, it appeared that heat, water, plowing and trash would be paid by MSI. The District would be responsible for internet, phone, and electricity. B. Sander thought this was an extremely good deal and the rent was reasonable. There would be adequate parking as well. Laflam noted that they had paid \$58,058 for 5,000 square feet at the Manosh building in 2017. B. Sander asked what they would do with the existing building. Laflam suggested using it for storage. Miller asked what the square footage was at the current building. Laflam stated there were 2,800 square feet. However, adding the ADA compliant square footage required more space.

Fagnant asked about individuals who were Central Office employees that were actually housed in other locations. Laflam stated personnel would be brought back to Central Office if there were room. Orost asked how Laflam had found this location. Laflam stated he had called every contact to find available space. Manosh had offered a property but it was outside of the SU. He stated he could contact more companies. When asked about Cambridge, Laflam stated he did not have a lot of contacts in that area. Orost stated the FCC had asked that he make more phone calls in case there were other locations. Clark asked Board members to let them know of other properties that would retrofit the building. Laflam stated he would reach out to real estate agents. Miller stated she wanted to be able to say the Board had done their due diligence before selecting a final location.

Stebbins stated he thought that Laflam had done a terrific job researching this to this point. The PH Edwards rental property appeared to be far and away the best option. Stebbins stated this should have been done years ago. This location was available to the District, but if the Board waited too long the District could lose this property. He suggested the Board should be wary of spending too much time chasing other locations down. Others on the Board agreed. Clark stated that Miller's suggestion was a good one. Clark thought they could put an ad in the paper for the next few weeks stating they were looking for properties.

Hunsberger asked whether they could use Belvidere Central School. Laflam stated the internet was not good there and the building would need a complete retrofit.

Laflam stated the numbers from MSI were projected to be available in mid-January. He would contact people in the meantime.

Belvidere Central School Air Quality Issue: Laflam informed the Board that mold had been discovered in a classroom. The building had been shut down for a year with the ventilation turned off. An indoor air quality test found the building was infested with mold. A remediation company provided a quote of \$60,000. To bring the building back on line, the total cost was projected to be \$75,000. Belvidere had \$42,000 in capital reserve. The work would take almost 16 weeks. Orost made a motion, seconded by Hunsberger, to approve an expenditure of \$75,000 out of capital reserve, with the first \$42,000 coming from Belvidere's dedicated reserve.

Orost asked what the long-term plan for the building was. Laflam stated there was no long-term plan at this point. Orost asked why the District would put this money into a building that the District didn't know if they would use again. Laflam stated the District couldn't give it back to the town in this condition. Miller asked if insurance or ESSER funds would cover the cost. The insurance wouldn't cover it because it was due to the ventilation being turned off in order to reduce costs. Clark stated it would be hard to justify using ESSER funds for a school that the District didn't use. Fagnant asked if this was something that would cost more down the road if the District didn't deal with it. Laflam stated it would. At this point it wasn't in the exterior insulation. If that were to happen it would be significantly more expensive to fix.

Prescott asked for clarification on where the funds would come from. Laflam stated it would come from Belvidere's dedicated capital reserve of \$42,760 and the remaining balance, \$29,260, would come from the LNMUUSD's capital reserve. Before voting, Orost stated that she wanted to make sure that a long-term plan was developed. The motion passed, with Orost voting against and Cambridge members abstaining.

GMTCC Underground Heat Lines: Laflam reported to the Board that the underground heat lines that connect GMTCC to the boiler plant had sprung a leak. 120 feet of heat line needed to be replaced. Laflam had received a quote of \$13,000 to replace the lines. They were currently scheduled to do the work during Christmas break. He would be coming back to the Board at the end of January and asking that the total cost of the project be paid out of capital funds.

Wireless Access Project: Pena stated he had informed the FCC last week about Phase 2 of the wireless access point project. With the delays since March by USAC, the costs for materials had increased 100%. USAC also decreased their funding commitment, due to their use of this year's enrollment numbers. The out of pocket costs would now be \$208,000. The concern was that the access points would be unsupported after May 2022 and security updates would no longer be available. This amount had been submitted to the AOE for ESSER funds. Unfortunately, this would take away from other IT items. Currently there were plenty of devices available to students and Pena felt comfortable using the money in this way. Clark stated they were now waiting to hear from the AOE to see if this would be considered an equipment purchase or a supply purchase. There was \$300,000 budgeted in the ESSER 2 funds for IT supplies or devices. Pena felt they were in a cycle with devices that they could maintain. Clark stated she hoped to hear within the next few weeks from the AOE.

Principal/Director Updates: Gallagher commended Waterville and Hyde Park for being recognized as exemplary PBIS schools. Indoor sports and other events had occurred. There was a basketball game between Lamoille Union and People's and people adhered to all the guidelines. The Community Advisory Group met and decided to send a survey to families in January that would ask about their feelings of engagement with the schools they were affiliated with. They would be asked what they considered to be special about the school and what opportunities they saw that could be improved upon.

Sam Prevost was the new Student Resource Officer. He had two children at HPES and he knew the community well. In the past when they didn't have an SRO, any altercation required a call be made to the Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department would then choose to provide whatever presence they wanted. With Prevost in place, they didn't have that same need. Prevost was working with the students, knew many of the families in the community, made home visits, and the students enjoy him.

Following recent events, Gallagher stated she had spoken with administrators and asked them to have explicit conversations with their staff to identify anyone in the school they may have concerns about and to address it immediately.

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein stated the teachers had finished report cards and sent them home. The school was continuing to celebrate the PBIS recognition from Dan French. Epstein stated they had a great team that had dedicated a lot of their time and energy to supporting children and it was making a difference. Epstein then reported on an unfortunate headline that was in the News and Citizen. Epstein read the following to the Board:

"For the record, I would like to address the headline News and Citizen decided to attach to the recent Waterville column that is written by Susan Davis, who is a long time Waterville resident.

First, it should be clearly known that for many years, long before my time as Principal of WES, the citizens of Waterville and Belvidere have organized a trip for the 6th grade students at the very end of the school year. This tradition has always been a completely separate function from the school. People don't meet at the school to discuss the trip, WES does not help to advertise any fundraisers or any publications, we do not handle any money transactions, we do not organize transportation, in short, WES is absolutely not involved in any way with this longstanding tradition of the Waterville and Belvidere communities.

I spoke to Mrs. Davis on the phone yesterday. She stated that News and Citizen had "done this before", in which she meant, had misconstrued her words. She wrote a new article, which she submitted last evening to the News and Citizen, which will state that this group of citizens completely acted outside of the school. In fact, she recalls participating in this tradition when her own children were 6th graders at WES. She also recalled that this has never been a school related event.

The lack of fact checking combined with purposely writing a very incendiary headline for this article is unbelievably irresponsible for a news publication. It has caused much harm to Waterville Elementary School,

the communities we serve, Mrs. Davis and myself and perhaps beyond. I truly hope that News and Citizen will recognize the considerable impact this has had and be more careful in future reporting.”

Epstein apologized for any distress this may have caused.

Gallagher stated that Epstein was not the one who caused distress. Gallagher said that schools would never sponsor this type of raffle, not because they didn't appreciate and respect the traditions and culture and what townspeople believe were important to their lives. In this case, hunting was an important aspect and no one was saying a word about that. However, the District did not condone having schools and firearms in the same sentence.

Eden: Goodman reported that the 5th and 6th grade Student Council members had coordinated a food drive, both monetary and non-perishable food items. When students did this type of work it was quite powerful. The students came up with the idea and coordinated their efforts.

Hyde Park: Reilly expressed appreciation to everyone who was contributing with COVID support to keep the Hyde Park community healthy. The first vaccination clinic had been held at the school and everything went smoothly. Booster shots were available for teachers. It was a very calm and positive experience. The Department of Health was very helpful as well. Currently, there were no substitute teachers available, so everyone on the staff was filling in. While this couldn't be maintained forever, people were doing well. Reilly thanked the Board for the early release on December 23rd. The news had lifted everyone's spirits.

High School: Pirie stated Deputy Prevost had been at the school for the week and had hit the ground running. He was already building relationships with students in the middle and high school and was such a friendly face to have around the building. Another new addition to the school was Haleigh West, the school based clinician. West had already reached out to families and was meeting the needs of the students who had been waiting for her. Pirie was appreciative and felt that those two additions would make a difference. There was a great deal happening at the high school. Recently there had been a clothing swap between students that had been very successful. There were teachers from both the middle and high school who spent time working with substitute teachers and getting feedback from them so that the schools could provide substitutes what they needed to be successful in the schools.

Middle School: Maurice stated that as part of that effort, Pat LeClair had been putting resources into a handbook for any new substitute. Deputy Prevost had been in the middle school, making connections, offering advice and getting to know the students. He was a friendly and welcoming person. Maurice stated that this week all of the teams would be starting the groundwork for 100% Respect lessons and building the expectations for the whole school. Each of the core classes would have a Respect representative that would be chosen. There was already a small group who were working on equity and inclusion. Teachers were starting their monitoring of Quarter 2 progress to ensure that no one was falling through the cracks. Additionally, they were continuing their work with the Restorative Center on restorative conversations between staff and students so that everyone felt they were being heard.

Johnson: Manning reported staff was experiencing stress. One reason was the lack of people to work in the school. Two para-educator positions were open. This meant that others in the school needed to fill in. They were also having a challenge finding substitutes. Thirteen staff members were absent today out of a staff of sixty. Manning was impressed with the staff who, despite being shorthanded, were coming in with a good attitude and doing their best to meet the needs of students. The school was now implementing the Datawize training. The staff member in charge of the training was meeting weekly with each teaching team to implement the programming. By the spring everyone would be trained. Manning then informed the Board that the Morrisville Rotary had given all of the third graders dictionaries.

Ratify Support Staff Master Agreement: Prescott introduced the Board members of the negotiating team (BNC): Katie Orost, Mark Nielsen, Chasity Fagnant, Bill Sander, Laura Miller and Sue Prescott. On behalf of

the BNC, she asked for a motion to ratify the two-year Support Staff Master Agreement. J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Hunsberger, to ratify the agreement.

Prescott stated the BNC went into negotiations wanting to recognize all of the hard work of the support staff especially in these unprecedented times. They also wanted to note that the wage increase offered was non-precedent setting. This two-year contract covered FY23 and FY24. Over the past few negotiation sessions they had tried to reach a base rate of \$15. Therefore, the base rate for new hires for FY23 would be \$15. The current support staff would receive an increase on \$1.50 an hour on July 1, 2022. The base rate for FY24 would go to \$15.70. The support staff would receive \$1.00 per hour increase as of July 1, 2023. There were no language changes. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Non-Represented Hourly Staff Increase for FY23: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to approve an hourly rate increase for current non-represented staff for July 1, 2022 in the amount of \$1.50. The non-represented staff included most of the administrative assistants, as well as Central Office, HR, and Finance staff. It also included the new Youth Employment Specialist at the campus. Prescott made the motion, seconded by J. Sander, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Administrative/Exempt Staff Increase for FY23: McFarlane stated the recommendation was to approve the administrative and exempt staff salaries increase by 3.5% for July 1, 2022. The staff members included in this was the senior level administrators in the buildings and Central Office administrators. Other exempt staff included the Facilities, Technology, and Nutrition Directors, the Tech Coordinators, the Deans of Students, the Coop Adult Education Coordinator at GMTCC as well as the Counseling Coordinator. It included two OT's and PT, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, the MTSS Coordinator, the Finance Coordinator and the Cambridge Transportation Coordinator paid for through the LNSU budget. For point of reference, the teacher salary increases were 3.85%.

Miller asked for the total dollar amount of all of the increases combined. Prescott made a motion, seconded by Lamell, to approve the recommended increase.

Nielsen reminded the Board that the administrators worked weekends doing contact tracing. This was not a forty-hour week. Orost stated her question was why the increase was only 3.5% and asked where that number had come from. McFarlane stated the administrators were a modest group and were here to serve. They felt that was an appropriate increase to ask for. If it was the Board's wish to raise that, it was up to the Board.

Clark stated the 3.5% increase totaled \$114,000. Orost then asked to amend the previous motion. She made a motion to approve an administrative/exempt staff increase of 4%. Fagnant seconded the motion. Miller stated that everyone had had to rework their world and this would be a good way for the Board to show their appreciation. The amended motion passed unanimously.

Gallagher expressed her appreciation. Speaking on behalf of her team, she stated this meant a great deal to so many people who had been thinking about their futures.

Other Business: McFarlane thanked the Board for their vote and all of the approvals showed great respect to the entire staff. McFarlane especially thanked Sue Prescott for working tirelessly on the negotiations and for working very hard on the Statewide Healthcare Negotiations as well.

Adjourn: Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Prescott, to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 pm.