

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
October 10, 2022**

Board Members Present: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Bill Sander (remote), Jan Sander, Denise Webster, Mark Stebbins; Hyde Park: Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Patty Hayford; Johnson: Angela Lamell, Mark Nielsen, Katie Orost, Allen Audette;

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Tommy O'Connor, Sue Prescott; Eden: David Whitcomb, Jeff Hunsberger; Hyde Park: Chasity Fagnant; Johnson: Bobbi Moulton; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Brian Pena, Wendy Savery, Dylan Laflam, Rene Thibault, Betzi Goodman, Jan Epstein, David Manning, Erik Remmers

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment: Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Board Negotiations item on the agenda was moved to the end of the meeting. B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Mark Stebbins, to approve the revised agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Nielsen informed the Board that Rene Thibault was the new Director of Communications. In this position, Thibault would move the Board's positive message of the school district forward. Gallagher stated that Thibault's expertise was in social media platforms. Therefore, he would be looking at the websites of each school and would upgrade those websites. Thibault noted he had grown up in Glover, had a journalism background, and would be bringing the community to the doorstep and announcing major things that were happening.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items:

Minutes of September 12, 2022, Meeting: J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Sweet, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: This item would be referred to the next Board meeting as Fagnant was not in attendance.

Bid Proposal: Central Office Lease: Laflam informed the Board that MSI had decided to move forward again with the PH Edwards building and that they had some interest in leasing to the Supervisory Union. Therefore, the District put out a public bid two weeks ago. Only one bid was received. The response from MSI provided options for a 5-year lease at an annual cost of \$88,000, a ten-year lease at an annual cost of \$84,000 and a 20-year lease at an annual cost of \$80,000. All scenarios would include a 3% per year increase. It would be roughly 6,000 square feet. That would be enough room to house all of the central office and three auxiliary spaces for future growth. The recommendation was to move forward with the bid with a twenty-year lease. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Sweet, to accept the recommendation.

Orost noted that MSI anticipated the space would be available in June of 2024, which was not what the District had asked for. Orost stated she had heard from several Johnson taxpayers that they would rather build rather than lease a building. She noted there was a very viable option in Johnson at NVU and outlined what was available at that location. Orost thought the RFP asked for too much and they could do with less space. Lamell agreed she would prefer to own rather than rent.

Laflam stated those were all options. He reminded the Board that they had distributed multiple RFP's. He noted he had looked at the Assisted Living property and that would be a very expensive option as it needed a lot of work. Laflam had reached out to NVU before and had asked about additional space that they may have. At the time they stated they couldn't accommodate the District. Building was always an option, with an estimated cost of \$2.7 million. The building would be on Cricket Hill and would require power, water and septic. A bond would also need to be passed.

Clark stated they had sketches for a potential build. They could go through the process of determining the bond cost, with the understanding that interest rates were going up. There was also a question of

whether to add some other items such as a track facility or a child care center for employees and incorporate a training into a program with the Tech Center. It would take time because it was changing the trajectory of the project.

Laflam noted that the Board had been discussing this for years and the current building was only getting worse. Sweet asked if they could rent the building for the short term. Sweet said she had recently been in the building for 20 minutes. She had an immediate asthma attack and it took hours to recover. She couldn't imagine working there and she thought the Board owed it to staff to protect their health. Clark stated they could lease for 5 years at \$88,000 year. Determining the proper scope, cost and bond estimates would take more time than they had before March Town Meeting.

Nielsen asked about the staff continuing to work remotely. Both Clark and Gallagher stated staff could not collaborate and the type of communication that took place when staff were in-person was significantly better. The schools that offered space to the Central Office staff currently needed the space for instructional space and for their own personnel.

Nielsen agreed with others that purchasing a building made more sense. He noted that he and Laflam had had conversations in the past about creating a new Central Office building, with a daycare on the side of the building for employees, and building a track. In the meantime, the need to fix the air quality at the current facility was important. Laflam believed that MSI wouldn't move forward with a 3-year agreement. The entire process to build a new building and create a track would take three years. The design and permitting costs would be at least \$200,000 which could then be brought to the voters. He stated there was no easy fix and no cheap option. He noted they had talked about the project for quite some time.

Laflam stated he could reach out to the design team to see if they could have a proposal on costs for the Board's November meeting. Laflam would also reach out to NVU. Stebbins noted they needed to take a path and move. The Board was in this same position a year ago. Stebbins withdrew his motion. The motion to withdraw passed unanimously. Laflam would provide more detailed information at the next meeting.

Bid Proposal: LNSU Heating Fuel: Laflam stated he had submitted an RFP for heating fuel and propane for all schools in the LNSU to four vendors. Fred's Oil was the only company to submit a bid. The proposed price was \$3.99 per gallon for #2 fuel oil and \$1.80 per gallon for propane. The annual cost was estimated to be \$177,000. The administration recommended moving forward with this bid. Sweet made a motion, seconded by Lamell, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

CEC Audiovisual Project: Pena reported they had gone out to bid for this project, submitting bids to eight vendors. One vendor responded. Clark stated they had had to amend the grant initiatives and that had been approved. This allowed the District to use ESSER funds for the project. The final purchase was contingent on final purchase approval from the AOE. An assistive learning system feature and an uninterrupted power supply had been added to the bid requirement. The recommendation from administration was to accept the bid of \$82,351.24 from Audio Visual Environments for equipment based on pricing. The administration also requested approval of an overage amount not to exceed 10%, or \$8,235, to cover unexpected parts and labor. Orost made a motion, seconded by Lamell, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

Meal Charge Policy Amendments: Clark stated that the policy had changed to read: "During School Year 22-23, our School Food Authority (SFA) will be offering meals at no charge to all students using the Community Eligibility Provision and Provision Two. The State of Vermont will provide a Universal Meals Supplement to cover the cost of any "paid" student meals. This meal charge policy will remain in effect for a la carte items and second meals." This was the first reading of the policy amendment.

Approve LNSU Continuous Improvement Plans (K-12) and School-Wide Plans (K-6): Savery reminded the Board that they had approved the LNSU's Continuous Improvement Plan last spring.

Additionally, there were K-6 schoolwide plans which was a condition for receiving Title 1 funds. This year each school principal wrote their school improvement plan. This outlined what the school did to support students who were at risk. Currently all of the plans had been approved by the AOE. The grant funding was approved as long as the Board agreed with the plan. Savery noted the principals did a great job aligning their school goals with the District goals around two areas: safe and healthy schools, which included restorative practices and a heavy emphasis on social emotional learning and meeting the needs of students. The academic side had a heavy emphasis on literacy, math, instructional strategies and flexibility. Savery asked for a motion to approve K-12 Continuous Improvement Plans and K-6 schoolwide plans. Sweet made a motion, seconded by J. Sander, to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Central Office Updates: Gallagher informed the Board that the group KNOT had written a letter on Front Porch Forum thanking the Earth and Science teacher, Chris Whitlock, and the students who had recently helped KNOT remove invasive knotweed at Cricket Hill. Gallagher then noted that the SBAC would be going away and would be replaced by COGNIA immediately. Educator input was not taken in this effort. Gallagher said the understanding was that the AOE in all of the states were getting a lot of pressure from the federal teams to do something different, as the SBAC was a monumental failure.

Gallagher reported that Anne McPherson, a retired counselor, would be coming back as a long-term substitute to cover for a FMLA leave. The contract would be for 63 days. It was good to have her back. There were 26 applications for the Community Advisory Board. Several were from Board members and Gallagher appreciated that they wanted to be involved. However, Gallagher wanted to offer spots to some of the newer families to the district who wanted to be involved. Johnson and Cambridge had the bulk of the applications.

Gallagher then stated that Wendy Savery would be retiring. A search would begin. This would be a hard position to fill.

Principal/Director Updates:

Johnson: Manning informed the Board that there were a number of field trips coming up, including a trip to Foote Brook Farm, to the Flynn Theatre, and to Robtoy Farm. There would be an assembly of chamber music, set up through Maria Davies. The school's partnership with ECHO continued to expand. Last week a representative from ECHO worked with the pre-school students and it was very successful. The school was currently having trouble filling a para position, primarily because the pay was not competitive with other industries offering similar jobs. Manning then explained that he and his staff had reviewed websites that had been created under Savery's leadership as part of their professional development day. Documents had been created for effective practices in teaching reading, writing, and math. It was impressive to see the comprehensive work that had been done over the last five years to create a resource of documents that a rookie teacher could use.

Eden: Goodman thanked Lisa Barry who coordinated a donation of water bottles. Some of them were in memory of Ellie Jones. There was a lot of positive feedback about today's professional development. The school's winter sports committee met to revive those activities. Speaking of field trips, Goodman remarked that those experiences outside the building built strong bonds between students, teachers and staff. Goodman reported that the building project was moving along. Friday would be the second PBIS celebration for students who were working together and being positive.

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein reported that there would be an Open House this week. The school held their Grandparents Day lunch and it was well attended. Epstein was substitute teaching a bit. Their school would be holding their second PBIS celebration.

GMTCC: Remmers invited everyone to the annual Spaghetti Dinner and Open House on October 26th at 5:30. They hadn't been able to offer this for the last two years. The dinner was put on by the Culinary Program.

Other Business: Gallagher noted that Laflam was in a situation where he always said yes to requests and he did the hard work. The administration had been excited in the past when NVU suggested a partnership or the possibility of renting one of their buildings. However, NVU never got back to the District. Gallagher appreciated that Laflam continued to move forward in pursuing opportunities with NVU despite this previous experience.

Thibault noted that the spaghetti dinner was a great event to advertise. Soon there would be a lot of communication of events at the Tech Center. He asked that Board members spread the word to get people to the events. The use of advertising events on social media still required that people share the content. He noted that in a District of approximately 2,000 students there were only 170 followers on the District's Facebook page. Orost stated there were requests to publicize the agenda.

Board Negotiations: Nielsen requested that the Board enter into Executive Session and asked that all Board members, Gallagher, Clark and Thibault participate. J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to enter into Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously and the Board went into Executive Session at 7:07 p.m.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 7:26 p.m.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.