

LNSU/LNMUUSD BOARD MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2022

Board members present: Cambridge – Tommy O’Connor, Mark Stebbins, Denise Webster; Eden – Jeff Hunsberger; Hyde Park – Lisa Barry, Patty Hayford; Johnson – Mark Nielsen, Katie Orost, Angela Lamell, Allen Audette; Waterville – Bart Bezio

Student representatives: Ellie Neckers, Rosie Daley, Jessica Orost, Alyx West, Sophie Hunsberger

Board members absent: Belvidere – Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge – Jan Sander, Sue Hamlyn-Prescott; Eden – David Whitcomb; Hyde Park – Chasity Fagnant, Tina Lowe; Johnson – Bobbie Moulton

Administrators present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Dylan Laflam, Jennifer Hulse, Diane Reilly, Betzi Goodman, David Manning, Denise Maurice, Melinda Mascolino, Bethann Pirie, Brian Peña, Valerie Sullivan, Rene Thibault

Others present: Robert Fredette, Sophie Hunsberger

Minute taker: Donna Griffiths

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment

M. Stebbins moved to approve the agenda as presented, B. Bezio seconded and the motion was passed.

C. Gallagher passed out copies of Bill Sander’s obituary and board members signed a card for Jan Sander. C. Gallagher said J. Sander is going to take some time away from the board but still be involved in board business. There was a moment of silence in honor of B. Sander.

LNSU/LNMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

K. Orost moved to approve the board minutes of November 14, 2022 and the November 14, 2022 minutes of the Curriculum Committee Social/Racial Justice Committee, M. Stebbins seconded and the motion was passed.

K. Orost said C. Fagnant was unable to be here, but she recommends approving the orders. K. Orost moved to approve the board orders as printed on the agenda, M. Stebbins seconded and the motion was passed.

LUHS Business Students’ Presentation/Visit Booths

R. Fredette said the business program now has over 50 students. They are going to open up a campus store. They made tote bags for board members. Board members went into the lobby to visit the tables business students had set up to sell items and speak with students.

Model Policy on Nondiscriminatory Mascots and School Branding – First Reading

C. Gallagher said this is the first reading of a required policy. The board always has two readings of a proposed policy before taking action on it. This policy is intended to provide a welcoming, positive, inclusive learning environment for all students by prohibiting discriminatory branding. She encouraged board members to read the policy and come to the next meeting with any questions. She said D. Maurice and B. Pirie

have discussed what “Lancer” means. One meaning is a type of bird, but our mascot does not indicate that. We need to adopt this policy by January 1, whether or not we change any mascot or branding.

Eden Central School Project Update

D. Laflam said the Eden Central School project is scheduled to be completed by the end of this month. There are a couple of essential pieces of equipment – a heating coil and part of the fire alarm system – that were not shipped on time and hopefully will arrive soon. All exterior finish work will be completed in the spring.

Central Office Updates

C. Gallagher said many LUMS, LUHS and GMTCC staff and students are out right now with an influenza-like illness. Everyone is being encouraged to practice good hygiene and stay home if they are sick. We are not seeing the numbers of COVID cases that were predicted.

WCAX released news today about the homicide in Eden. The police have a person of interest who lives in St. Johnsbury.

C. Gallagher asked D. Maurice to talk about a theater event on December 9 at LUMS. D. Maurice said 8th graders are working with NVU theater students on a project called In My Voice. Students are sharing their stories, creating characters and writing scripts that will be performed by NVU theater students at the middle school and at NVU. It is a way for kids to express their thoughts and feelings about what it is like to be in middle school today. C. Gallagher said there will be a dance recital Thursday at LUHS and a concert at CES on Wednesday.

C. Gallagher said there will be a community conversation on December 12. We have 32 registrations. She thanked R. Thibault for designing flyers and Matt Neckers for printing them. The community advisory group will help facilitate discussions with participants, who will be asked to tell what they value about our school system and what they think the board needs to know in preparation of the budget. There will be question and answer discussion and some Amazon gift cards provided by an anonymous donor will be given away to community members at the end of the night. Child care will be provided by high school volunteers and there will be food. Board members are encouraged to attend. It says something when we have board members there. It means there is support from board members.

C. Gallagher welcomed the student representatives to the board, Alyx West, Rosie Daley, Ellie Neckers, and Jessica Orost, as well as student Sophie Hunsberger, who was also present.

C. Gallagher said the FCC met this evening and looked at a first draft of the budget. They will meet again before the next board meeting. We are still on schedule to present and adopt a budget in January. We are in good shape with the current budget. Nothing concerning is happening.

R. Thibault asked anyone planning to attend the community conversation to register on the website before leaving tonight and also asked people to take a few flyers and try to find people in their communities to give flyers to and invite to the community conversation.

Principal/Director Updates

Johnson: D. Manning said it makes him happy that 3 of the 4 student representatives went to JES. He and Maria Davies met with some artists who are planning a mural at JES – the same artists who were involved with a similar project at HPES. JES will have a STEM night in spring. He told a couple of positive anecdotes illustrating how things are at JES. Today a little over 20% of staff were out so he had to cover all lunches. Two different staff members offered to give up their lunch to help him. He observed a child having behavior issues in a classroom and later talked to the student in the student support center and found that despite his behavior he had been listening to the lesson and had learned from it.

Eden: B. Goodman said 2 students here tonight are from ECS. It is important to have student voices at these meetings. Some people from the Shelburne Museum came to work with 5th and 6th graders at ECS on preparing the garden for winter and to help them learn about plants. The ECS student council has started a food drive. Donations will go to the Johnson food shelf. An Upward Bound student will come to do a program with some students that involves acting out the story of a book. The ECS staff has been incredibly flexible with people being out, adapting to what needs to happen. She appreciates their perseverance and flexibility.

LUMS: D. Maurice thanked D. Laflam and his employees for their work cleaning and disinfecting the building due to all the flu-like symptoms. The middle school has very flexible staff. Coverage has been spread thin but teachers have stepped up, combining classes and covering for other teachers during their prep periods. The Kindness Council (a group of students working with adults) has been working on themed Fridays. There will be a school dance on December 16. The Kindness Council is trying to rebuild the community and spirit that were lost for a few years. The teachers working with the Kindness Council are Amy Whitlock, Shannon Sinclair, Danielle Peveril, Angela Spencer, Diane Lepikko and Carol McNair. During skills blocks, the applied academics teachers are working with community members around food insecurity and how to give back to the community. Students are learning how to reach out to her to ask permission for things like food drives or to have a professional dialog. Students are planning to sell cookies to staff.

Waterville: J. Epstein said WES did a Thanksgiving food drive. GW Tatro provided turkeys and 6 Thanksgiving baskets were given out. They will do the same for the upcoming holiday. The K-3 group is learning about different cultures. The librarian has been providing resources. Their learning will incorporate writing and crafts. She has a lot of new staff this year and she has been doing observations in classrooms. The WES art teacher is on an emergency license. She has been wonderful. J. Epstein just observed her doing a well thought out and presented lesson on Dia de Los Muertos. The teacher is considering getting her license. The PBIS group is growing stronger and stronger. The 6th grade teacher has spearheaded a student group to participate in that process so students can have more voice in what kind of celebrations there will be and how the program can be improved.

Hyde Park: D. Reilly said Lucie delaBruere is at HPES for an art residency. Fifth and sixth grade students were learning about community and their own identity and L. delaBruere integrated technology by having each student make an artifact representing who they are. They also used technology to create journals with LED lighting. Teachers were with the kids the whole time and it got them interested in learning to use the technology and designing technology integration projects in their content areas. L. delaBruere is at HPES through a Vermont Arts Council grant. The HPES building is 3 years old now and shelves and

bookcases are finally being installed over winter break. D. Reilly thanked D. Laflam for bringing that together. At HPES there are people who are sick or have serious things happening in their families but staff lift each other up and take care of each other and the kids. There is a spirit of joy that she would say is profound even though people are facing tough things.

LUHS: B. Pirie invited the student representatives to introduce themselves. They each described the extracurricular activities they are involved in and their reasons for wanting to participate on the school board. R. Daley said the winter dance show will be December 8 at 7:00 pm. It is free, with donations accepted. E. Neckers said classes of all levels will be performing and middle school dancers will be participating as well. There will be a raffle with proceeds going towards replacing shoes and costumes.

B. Pirie said many students and staff are not feeling well. Coming back from the last break the high school saw a bit of rise in problem behaviors around lunchtime and restrooms. They are addressing it, getting to students to understand that their actions are impacting others. It is much better than last year. Fall sports are wrapped up and winter sports have started. LUHS has students participating in ice hockey this year. One of the new teachers is the Stowe ice hockey coach. LUHS participates in indoor track as a club. One thing these student representatives made B. Pirie realize is that we are having an impact on kids when they are in elementary school and it is shining when they get to high school. Last week in the News & Citizen there was an article about our student athletic council that went to a conference in Burlington. Ten students from all over the state were invited to speak and Lamoille had 2 of the 10. We have so many student leaders because they are given opportunities starting in elementary school. The National Honor Society just had an induction. Quarter one just closed. After each quarter, teachers nominate students for awards and 251 student awards were given out. Students also recognized staff. Even with the restroom and cafeteria behaviors there are positive things that keep everyone motivated to do better and keep working for a better culture.

Central Office Building Options

D. Laflam reviewed the pros and cons of two options for administrative facilities: purchasing McClelland Hall and constructing a new building. The pros for McClelland Hall are that the building/property is connected to JES, there is plenty of space for future growth, there is plenty of parking, the building would include an early ed/day care program and a performing arts program space or community center space, it has existing town water and sewer, there are no known Act 250 considerations, it is central to all towns within the SU, it is the quickest option for a central office move, JES plowing, salting and sanding can be extended to the property, and it allows for individual and multi-user offices.

There was a question about the possibility of a joint venture with NVU. D. Clark and D. Laflam said there are some large spaces that might accommodate outside users. A joint childcare program is a possibility.

D. Laflam reviewed cons of McClelland Hall: It is a large building with a subpar insulation package, it would need a full HVAC renovation to meet indoor air quality standards, it is a challenging location for providing additional maintenance and custodial services and it would have a higher annual operating cost.

The pros of a new building are that it could be high performance construction with lower annual operating costs, it could be built as big or small as we choose to fit administrative and programming needs, it maintains cohesion with the main campus (helpful for maintenance and custodial services, programming and to

serve as a campus evacuation point), the project could support early ed/day care (GMTCC program) and athletic programming (track and athletic facility for school and community use), it would be on our own property where we have space to expand, and it allows for individual and multi-user offices.

The cons are that it would be an additional water/waste water system to maintain, permitting including Act 250 would be necessary, there is limited growth potential without additional construction, and it would be at least 30 months before the building could be occupied.

D. Laflam reviewed costs for the two options. The base cost for McClelland Hall is \$3,500,000. That includes a childcare center and performing arts studio. Potential project additions are track & athletics, LU campus walks & drives, LU campus bathroom renovations, LU campus roofs, and LU campus second floor office additions. The combined total if all those projects are included is \$8,100,000. That does not include costs for design, permitting, project contingency or interest.

For a new build, the base cost is \$2,700,000 (central office space only.) Potential project additions are a childcare facility, track & athletics, LU campus walks & drives, LU campus bathroom renovations, LU campus roofs, LU campus performing arts studio, and LU campus second floor office additions. The combined total if all projects are included is \$8,290,000, not including costs for design, permitting, project contingency or interest.

The difference between the costs of the two options is \$190K. They basically have the same cost.

T. O'Connor asked what the location of the new build would be. D. Laflam said it would be on Cricket Hill in a level spot on the same side of the road as the garages. Locker room facilities to go with a track could be part of it.

D. Laflam reviewed timelines for both options. He estimates McClelland Hall could be occupied in April 2024 and a new building could be occupied in April 2025. He urged the board to make a decision because of the length of either timeline. He said picking an option means moving to getting engineered estimates and hard numbers, not definitely committing to a project.

B. Bezio asked what the annual operating costs of a new building would be. D. Laflam said the estimated annual operating cost for McClelland Hall would be \$43K and the estimated cost for a new building would be \$12K. For a new build, he prefers a high performance building because it will pay for itself over time. If the board chooses not to do high performance construction that will make a huge difference in annual costs.

D. Laflam said with a new building, equipment storage, locker rooms and bathrooms would be included. If we do not build new administrative space but put in a track on Cricket Hill, we would also put in bathrooms and an equipment storage shed. D. Clark said a pro of a new building is that everything is one centralized location vs. having a track built here and other work being done at McClelland Hall. D. Laflam said it makes it easier for the construction manager.

D. Laflam reviewed answers to some frequently asked questions. Utility cost estimates for McClelland Hall were based on utility data provided by NVU, but they are not very accurate because the data only included one year when the building was occupied.

D. Webster asked why a performing arts center is not included in the list of optional projects for McClelland Hall. D. Laflam said because there is already space for one in the basement of that building.

D. Laflam said some walls would probably be taken out at McClelland Hall. But it would be light demo, not a gut rehab. We would probably reduce ceiling height to provide a place for new HVAC infrastructure, but the space would still be within the envelope so we would still have to heat it and there would not be huge utility savings.

For a new build he estimated utility costs based on the per square foot cost at HPES. There could be multiple heat zones in the building.

J. Hunsberger asked about taxes with the two different options. D. Clark said we don't pay property tax. She doesn't think NVU pays taxes to the Town of Johnson. K. Orost said they make a payment in lieu of taxes each year.

D. Clark noted that McClelland Hall is linked with the president's property, which NVU also wants to let go, and the septic and water are linked to the main campus. D. Laflam said NVU is receiving another proposal for McClelland Hall but he thinks they would lean toward us because the building would still be used for education. Money isn't really a consideration for them. They want the sale to better the local community.

M. Stebbins said the reason behind the project is that we cannot continue to occupy the current central office space. But there is a full year's difference in potential occupancy dates between the two options. Does an extra year matter?

D. Clark said central office staff have already started a rotating remote work schedule. In 6-8 weeks there will be 3 classrooms available at the tech center. We can move the finance team and possibly one or more HR personnel there. That space can be used as long as the tech center doesn't need it for programming. If they need it, staff will go back to a rotating remote schedule, which is difficult but manageable. She feels we should not rush into one decision or another just because of the timeline. It needs to be the right project for the district overall.

K. Orost asked what administration's recommendation is. D. Clark said personally she likes the idea of a new build contiguous to the existing property for ease of maintenance and custodial service. Even though the JES plow truck could handle snow at McClelland Hall, it would be difficult to have maintenance and custodial staff going back and forth and the building would not need one custodian for a full day. She likes the flexibility of building the spaces the way we want them. McClelland Hall is a beautiful old building right by JES. It was cold when she and the FCC walked through it. If NVU has 2 or 3 different entities interested in buying it they will ask us to put a proposal together. There is always the question of whether they will be patient enough for us to go out to a bond vote. D. Laflam said they could shoot down our proposal after we have spent money on a design. D. Clark said if we are considering a track and field it would be nice to have the building on the same property. D. Clark said a \$10 million bond for 30 years adds about \$812K to the annual budget. If we do everything we want to do, we would need a bond of about \$10 million.

M. Nielsen said a bond has a cost to taxpayers. There is public support already for a new track.

D. Clark and D. Laflam said if we built a track it would be the only track in the area that is certified for varsity-level competition. D. Clark said it would be a huge draw. NVU and Stowe could also use it.

There was a question about how much allowance was made for extra space in the new building projections. D. Laflam said he included two additional offices beyond what central office is currently occupying. There are also conference spaces that could potentially be used for something else.

D. Laflam said we can tighten up all the numbers once we get engineered estimates, which will cost about \$65K. That will give us a hard number for each line item so we know what to bond for.

D. Clark said we need to start focusing on one option or the other and moving forward. They have different but equal pros and cons.

B. Bezio said one question we need to ask ourselves is how important the track is. If it isn't that important, we probably should have gone with the MSI option. He likes the idea of the efficiency and scale of a new building and the ability to have locker rooms. It would be a shame to build a track and just have bathrooms there. He is leaning toward a new build. He likes the certainty of operating costs compared to a building built in 1942 that has 18K sq. ft.

A. Lamell said we don't know some costs that might come with McClelland Hall. That is one of her worries. If there is asbestos there might be more cost. We have to decide exactly what to include in new construction. She is leaning toward a new build, but is not set on it.

P. Hayford said she thinks we need to think about the health of the people in central office now and not make them suffer another year. D. Clark said central office will be able to use some space at the tech center and rotate remote work. D. Laflam will order another round of indoor air quality tests. He said we have air purifiers running, but they don't handle carbon monoxide. P. Hayford said she is on the fence.

L. Barry said she is leaning towards going with McClelland Hall. She has been in education for 30 years and she is sick of conversations about needing more space. It would be a dream to have that much space available for conferences, workshops and professional development opportunities. There is tech equipment already set up there. There are a lot of unknowns with a new build. She leans toward having more space and not having to have this conversation in the future.

K. Orost said she could go either way but she thinks her vote would be for a new building.

A. Audette said he prefers a new building.

J. Hunsberger said he is on the side of a new building. We would get the track and associated facilities while taking care of the health and welfare of administrative staff. Staff would get the opportunity to create their space. The costs are about the same. The new building would be next to the existing campus. He thinks we would be throwing money into the wind by purchasing a new building off this campus. He appreciates the space issue but the new build provides us with opportunities for athletic and performing arts facilities and we would not have to have students drive or find rides to another location.

D. Webster said she favors a new build. Our track team does amazingly well running around the parking lot. Imagine what they could do with a real facility! It would be valuable to have the new building as an evacuation point. And administration can plan their own space.

T. O'Connor said he favors a new building. He thinks it will be cheaper over time because it will be up to date and have less maintenance costs. McClelland Hall was falling apart when he graduated from Johnson State in the early 2000's.

M. Stebbins said he was originally in the same camp as L. Barry. McClelland Hall is a great space that is already there. There are many different things we could imagine using it for. He also appreciates the idea of being able to build a highly efficient building. After seeing that the new building options would include part of what we imagined using McClelland Hall for, like a childcare facility and performing arts space, and even some additional offices, he has flipped to the other side. He likes the idea of a new building.

M. Stebbins moved and T. O'Connor seconded to proceed with design and cost estimates for a new building.

K. Orost asked at what point we will decide which options to include in a construction project. D. Laflam said we will get better cost estimates for all the options and then the board can decide. Hopefully at the February or March board meeting we will have those estimates and then the board will decide what should be in the project and how much of a bond to ask for.

The motion was passed with L. Barry and P. Hayford opposed.

D. Clark said LNSU has about \$160K in funds to help with this project. About \$20K of that might be used to get temporary offices established at the tech center. She suggested that the board approve using those funds for the design process.

D. Webster moved to approve use of available LNSU funds for design and cost estimates, J. Hunsberger seconded and the motion was passed.

Adjourn

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 7:44 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths