

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
December 19, 2022**

Board Members Present: Cambridge: Denise Webster, Mark Stebbins, Tommy O'Connor, Sue Prescott (phone); Eden: Jeff Hunsberger (phone); Hyde Park: Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Patty Hayford, Chasity Fagnant; Johnson: Angela Lamell, Katie Orost, Allen Audette; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Jan Sander; Eden: David Whitcomb; Johnson: Bobbi Moulton, Mark Nielsen

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Rene Thibault, Erik Remmers, Melinda Mascolino, Valerie Sullivan

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment: Orost, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. The agenda was amended in order to remove the Principal/Director Updates. Stebbins made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Bezio. There was no public comment.

LNSU/LNEMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of December 5, 2022, Special Meeting: Bezio made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Appoint New CES Member to the LNSU/LNEMUUSD Boards: Gallagher reported there had been no applications for the vacancy. The position would remain open. A person could be voted on during the March election.

Recommend Hire of Curriculum Director: Gallagher was thrilled to recommend that the Board hire Valerie Sullivan as the next Curriculum Director. O'Connor made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the hire. Gallagher stated that Sullivan was widely known to be the best curriculum director in the state. Gallagher outlined Sullivan's experience and educational background. Sullivan had been working since July as the learning development facilitator, working to realign the Pre-K through Grade 12 curriculum. Sullivan was from Johnson and knew the community well. Gallagher stated that Sullivan would be a great addition to the current team of superstars. The motion passed unanimously.

Model Policy on Nondiscriminatory Mascots and School Branding: Gallagher noted that the Lancer name was not considered to be offensive. Pirie would likely be working with a group of students to see if the Lancer picture was considered offensive. This was the second reading of the policy. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the policy. The motion passed unanimously.

LNSU Board and LNUEA MOU: Clark explained to the Board that in the 2010 master agreement negotiations, when they merged six unique master agreements into one, teachers were placed on the new merged master agreement based on where their salaries were. Now, with this merged master agreement, there were a handful of very senior teachers who were not lining up with their direct peers who had been here the same amount of time. Basically, they started fifteen years ago at step 1 and they progressed at different rates in their different master agreement until the merged master agreement came into play. There could be a teacher who was now 8 steps behind a teacher with the exact same time on the job. A realignment needed to be considered.

The Association would like a formal MOU to be developed and for the Board to support the work. There would be no retroactive action and new hires wouldn't be affected. Clark didn't know the exact number of individuals involved but didn't think it would be many. Gallagher noted that possibly Prescott was present during those negotiations but otherwise no one else in the administration had historical information on this matter, so they had been asked to look into it further. Fagnant stated she thought the request was to ask the Board to let the BNC build the MOU. Clark agreed.

Fagnant then made a motion to direct the BNC to work with the Central Office and Association to work on the MOU to investigate potential disparities. Stebbins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

GMTCC Budget: Remmers informed the Board that the budget being presented had been recommended by the Regional Advisory Board (RAB). This year there would be an increase of \$250,000 from the prior year, an increase of 7.45%. However, the per pupil tuition increase would not be as much because of the increase of funds from the state. The primary drivers for the increase was an increase in health care costs, a significant increase in staff salary, and the cost of supplies used at GMTCC going up significantly.

There was a \$90,000 surplus coming out of FY22. The RAB decided they wanted to place half of the funds into the capital reserve fund to prepare for future equipment costs. The other half would go to the tuition reduction reserve fund; a fund that was created two years ago. The FY24 budgeted expenses were \$3,619,429. The FY24 expected revenue was \$2,332,568. The FY24 per pupil tuition would be \$9,644.

Remmers informed the Board they were slightly down in student numbers compared to last year. This year 127 students were participating. Last year they started with 143 students but there had been some attrition. Remmers stated the RAB Board had a larger conversation about bringing more students into the program. They were working on agreements with partnering schools to ensure they were bringing students to visit and tour the facilities. When entire grades came to visit it seemed to impact the numbers of interested students.

O'Connor made a motion, seconded by Barry, to approve the FY24 GMTCC budget as presented with reserves. The motion passed unanimously.

Preliminary FY24 Budget Presentation (LNSU & LNMUUSD): Clark provided a high-level report of the LNSU budget. There was a General Education Assessment increase of about 20% and a Special Education Assessment increase of 125%. That 125% increase was because they were moving the paraeducators out of the school district accounting and into the SU-level accounting. Without the paras moving, the combined amount was an increase of about 12.42%.

Clark stated that the overall budget considerations for the SU and the schools were:

- An increase in the yield from the state which helped to drive down the common level of appraisal tax rate. However, the common levels of appraisals were expected to also decrease which would drive the tax rate back up.
- The health insurance rates were expected to increase 12.6%.
- Property insurance should go up.
- The Vermont State Teachers Retirement System (VSTRS) had two items that generally put pressure on the general fund. One was the employer's contribution to other post-employment benefits which would increase \$107 per new teacher. The retirement system would also now take a contribution of 25.64% in FY24 for each licensed individual working under a federal grant. That would eventually put pressure on the general fund to cover the

activities that the grant was paying for because 25% of that grant would now be going to retirement.

- General inflation pressures on supplies, personnel, utilities and fuel.
- It was unclear how universal meals, if approved, would impact the budget.
- Act 173 was the block grant for special education. The reason to bring paraeducators over was to be able to match them directly with the block grant.
- In general, the FY24 budget should see a reduction in net transportation costs. Transportation revenue was always two years behind, so FY24 revenues would be based on FY22 expenditures.
- There was a surplus of \$811,000 coming out of FY22 at the Supervisory Union. \$660,000 was currently being considered for FY24. As information on the CLA came in, the FCC may decide to apply more of the surplus to FY24.

Clark then moved on to the LNMUUSD. She stated:

- The combined change in education spending at the elementary and secondary level was 9.64%.
- The State was estimating an 8.54% increase in education spending.
- Coming out of FY22, the MUUSD had a surplus of \$816,000. 100% of that was being applied to this budget.
- The projected budgets at the elementary level would see a 2.63% increase in expenses with education spending of \$13,800,000. This would be an increase of 13.78% per equalized pupil.
- The projected budget at the secondary level would see expenses budgeted at \$16.8 million, a 9.32% increase. With the paras coming over it created an anomaly this one year of the weighting of the special education expense of paraeducators.
- The secondary level budget would increase 13% per equalized pupil.
- Clark noted the State was considering removing the legal requirement to post the per equalized pupil numbers.

Without having common level of appraisals and missing some poverty information, the District was looking at a decrease of \$40 per \$100,000 of the base tax rate. There would still be a moderate increase in taxes. There was a lot of surplus at the State level and that was helping to keep the base rate down. However, across the state they were looking at an 8.5% increase in the education fund.

There were a lot of great initiatives in this budget. In FY25, Act 127, the new pupil weighting, would go into effect. It was a more involved weighting with a few more elements to it. The intention of it was to move resources around the state to districts that needed it. The equalized pupil count had intended to do that but it had become antiquated. They would be moving to a weighted long-term average daily membership. The MUUSD would gain about 80 students in the count. There was a good likelihood that the yield would drop. This would increase the MUUSD taxing capacity but it was unclear how much.

Full details on the budget would be presented at the January 9, 2023 meeting.

Other Business: Gallagher expressed appreciation to Michele Aumand for all she did for the District and wished her a happy birthday.

Gallagher then noted the District had received some very good feedback from the community at the recent Community Forum. Themes that attendees valued included relationships, communication, support for students and staff. Things they wanted the Board to consider was school safety. They

wished to have more consistency in the curriculum at the elementary schools. Housing for staff and competitive pay scales came up repeatedly.

R. Thibault said he was happy with the turnout. Between 60 to 65 adults attended and about five children used the child care service. The fact that this was a chance to re-engage with people and that the District valued community members thoughts and perspectives would hopefully help to increase the numbers the next time. He received about 18 responses on a post-event survey, which was about 1/3 of the people who attended. 90% stated they got something valuable out of the evening and they enjoyed the small group discussions.

Adjourn: Stebbins made a motion to adjourn at 7:21 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.