

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and  
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board  
Minutes of Special Board Meeting  
September 11, 2023**

**Board Members Present:** Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Mark Stebbins, Sue Prescott, Amy Listenik, Christy Liddy (phone), Denise Webster; Eden: Jeff Hunsberger, David Whitcomb (phone); Hyde Park: Patty Hayford, Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Phil Kiely; Johnson: Allen Audette, Katie Orost, Angela Lamell, Mark Nielsen, Monica Stearns; Waterville: Bart Bezio

**Board Members Absent:** Cambridge: Jan Sander

**Administrators Present:** Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark (phone), Betzi Goodman, David Manning, Jan Epstein, Denise Maurice, Bethann Pirie, Rene Thibault, Dylan Laflam, Jeremy Scannell, Diane Reilly, Erik Remmers, Jennifer Hulse, Michele Aumand

**Others:** Eric Hutchins

**Minute Taker:** Sue Trainor

**Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements and Public Comment:** Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Nielsen welcomed two members to the Board and introductions were made. The agenda was revised by deleting both the personnel matter item and the FY'24 VACTED Consortium Agreement item. A motion was made by Stebbins, seconded by Bezio, to approve the amended agenda. The motion passed unanimously. There were no public comments.

**LNSU/LNMOUSD Routine Business - Consent Agenda Items:**

**Minutes of August 14, 2023, Meeting and Minutes of Special Meeting on August 31, 2023;**

**minutes of Personnel Committee meeting on August 22, 2023.** Bezio made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the minutes. Lamell noted a change to the Special Meeting minutes, noting that Mark Nielsen had been in attendance. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Orders:** Nielsen informed the Board that the Board Orders reflected on the agenda were from June. Fagnant had approved them. The Board approved the Board Orders unanimously.

**Review Three-Year Heating Wood Chip Bid for Lamoille North (Johnson and LU/GMTCC):** Laflam informed the Board that every two years a bid proposal was sent out for wood chips for Johnson Elementary School and the middle/high school campus. Laflam noted that most chip providers in the state had gone out of business. The District received only one bid. Cousenau Valley Chipping had provided wood chips to Lamoille North for the past three years and Laflam was very happy with the product and delivery time. The proposed cost was \$74 a ton, delivered to both sites for three years. That was a \$6 increase over the last three years. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Sweet, to approve the FY'24 - FY'26 heating wood chip contract to Cousenau Valley Chipping at \$74 a ton. The motion passed unanimously.

**Review Heating Fuel Bids for Lamoille North:** Laflam personally contacted Fred's, Bourne's, Suburban and Jack F. Corse to request a proposal for the annual heating fuel for the entire SU. The RFP was also advertised. Fred's was the only company to bid. The proposal from Fred's was \$3.09 per gallon for fuel oil and \$1.71 for propane. That was a \$0.90 decrease from last year in fuel oil and a \$0.09 decrease for propane. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve Fred's as the provider of propane and fuel oil for FY'24. The motion passed unanimously.

**Central Office Updates:** Gallagher reported to the Board that the VSA, VCSEA, and VSBO were looking at coming under one umbrella. The goals were relatively similar, the two organizations provided similar professional training, and it would be more efficient. The Agency of Education has espoused the virtues of concentrating on academic rigor, student engagement, and mental health, with safety being included under mental health. The other discussion taking place was whether there would be a Director of Education. There was an interim person in that position but there didn't seem to be much momentum to appoint her as a regular director or whether to continue on as is. The big push from the state was in CTE's.

Gallagher then discussed new trends they were seeing in the schools. Elementary level students under the age of 8 were having a significant amount of trouble compared to past years. There were common themes: students who didn't see their biological mothers, students who were either victims of flooding or impacted by the flooding. Students were running out of the classroom in droves. The schools were also seeing mental health situations that didn't feel like mental health. It was more that people were in need. Parents were anxious in ways that Gallagher hadn't seen before and were coming to the office to talk about it. The good news was they were comfortable coming to the office.

One of the things Gallagher would be applying for on behalf of the Supervisory Union was called Project Serve. It was funding from the Department of Education and was anywhere from \$14,000 per district to over a million dollars and it concentrated on mental health supports. The funds could be used on assessments, overtime for teachers, counselors and other staff, emergency transportation, technical assistance to deal with a natural disaster. This money could be used to help families in ways the District hadn't been able to do before.

Gallagher then noted that one of the things being focused on in the work being done with restorative practices was to capitalize on an individual's strengths rather than coming from a deficit level. This was an important concept because everyone needed to know what they contributed to the school community.

Gallagher then spoke about AI in the classroom, distributing information to Board members on the subject. There was no way to run from AI and there was a way to use it responsibly. The Curriculum Director, teachers and staff would be developing a comfort level with ChatGPT.

Gallagher informed the Board about the Harvest Gathering. Schools had become the focus of bad events, whether they were active intruder situations, vaping, or cyber bullying. People tended to think it was strictly a school problem when, in fact, it was a community issue. The District intended to develop more community events. The first event would be held October 23<sup>rd</sup> at Jenna's House. Each grade in every school would have an assignment that would respond to questions such as what it meant to be part of a community and why community was important. Questions would be age appropriate. The Harvest Gathering would display responses to these questions. Karyl Kent would provide the food. The jazz band, the choir, some athletes, community partners, and athletic directors would participate.

Thibault added the event would be a chance to celebrate highlights, thank the partners that made Lamoille North what it was, and shed some light on the organizations that help the communities.

Gallagher thanked Jen Hulse for stepping in to help when some members of Central Office had to be out to attend to family matters.

Laflam reported on safety issues. There were active emergency response plans at all sites now. There was also a working emergency operation plan at the SU level. The District was in full compliance with Act 29. The plan was to offer a walkthrough to Board members at a future date. Some information was confidential and some could be shared. The first District-wide drill was going to be held tomorrow.

**Central Office Temporary Housing:** Laflam explained that because the bond had been put on hold, the District needed to look at short term options. There were four options:

1. Continue as is. If the decision was to stay in the building, air quality would still need to be addressed. Roughly 50% of the Central Office staff had moved to GMTCC and this had helped with carbon dioxide. Laflam recommended having a third party do an air quality test which would cost about \$1,000. This wasn't a long-term option because more programming would be coming online at GMTCC.
2. Minimally renovate the Central Office building to improve air quality. The benefit of this option was that half of the equipment being used could be removed and used elsewhere. This would cost \$75,850.

3. Laflam looked at several MSI properties. There only one that was viable and it was the Hawkeye Building in North Hyde Park. They would be willing to lease a portion of the building to the District. The lease cost would be \$35,000 annually and wouldn't include any utilities, such as heat, electricity, garbage, recycling and custodial services. It would cost an additional \$10,000 to retrofit.
4. The second option for leasing was at NVU. Looking at turning fifteen dorm rooms into offices seemed fairly easy, but the cost would be \$82,500 annually. This figure included utilities. IT would be the only cost to the District.

In response to a question about the current cost of utilities at Central Office, Laflam stated the heat and electricity cost was approximately \$10,000.

Orost asked what Gallagher's suggestion was. Gallagher stated they had a very nice situation right now with the finance team working at the Tech Center and this option was good for at least a year. Gallagher thought they should continue with the current configuration, with the air quality being tested by a third party. Laflam and Clark agreed with Gallagher.

#### **Principal/Director Update:**

**High School:** Pirie stated that despite several challenges, this had been the best start to the school year since she started at Lamoille. The energy and joy being felt from students and adults was wonderful. Pirie thought this was attributable to the work that had been done over the summer, when staff reviewed safety issues, systems and supports for the students. Teams were now ready to respond to issues that came up and it allowed everyone to remain consistent with fewer interruptions.

Last year the school limited the use of cell phones in the classroom. While it needed ongoing attention, it was going really well. Pirie thanked the teachers for being consistent because it was hard work. The school recently held their club fair and there were so many clubs and activities available to sign up for. The Blue and Gold newspaper would be coming back, as well as Lancer TV. Athletics were going well. The school was looking forward to Homecoming and making sure it was a community event.

**Eden:** Goodman informed the Board that the school had a celebration and community meeting on the first day of school. One of the positives from the educator meeting last week was having a timekeeper, everyone arrived on time, used one voice, people were considerate and helpful, and there was a lot of collaboration. Having the first educator meeting end with those bullet points made her feel that a lot of amazing work would be accomplished at the school.

**Middle School:** Maurice stated the Lancer Pride kickoff took place last week. Audience behaviors that weren't always present over the last few years seemed to be coming back. Having parents in attendance at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade breakfast set a stage that brought the school back to a feeling of normalcy. Maurice expressed appreciation to parents for supporting the no cell phone policy. Parents hadn't been supportive in the past but this year they were onboard.

**Johnson:** Manning reported that the school year had started at a District-wide in-service where a speaker advocated a model of love, inclusion and trust as the three central values that drove their work. Manning has started including a message of love in the morning email. Fifty percent of the messages have been about loving kids, being kind to kids, and having compassion for them. In past years, dysregulated students were angry, flipping chairs, and swearing. This year they were running out of class but they weren't angry. They were looking for a hug. Manning believed that this was due to the work the staff was actively doing to make the school a place of safety and love.

**GMTCC:** Remmers first wanted to highlight the great work that the high school staff were doing. It was very noticeable. The cell phone policy was serving as a model for all. Last year GMTCC was awarded several grants. The first one funded electric vehicle programming to be added to the automobile program. The auto teacher went to Switch Lab to bring an EV kit into the auto program. This will be phased in mid-winter through the rest of the year. This will be the next evolution of the auto program. Eventually there would be an opportunity to have EV stations to work on.

GMTCC was also awarded a significant grant for the engineering program of about \$130,000. The first step was to hire someone to run the program, with January being when the individual would start building the program. That program would be housed in the computer networking room which had been moved recently.

Remmers stated the forestry program would not be operating this year. There were no applicants for the program. The RAAB Board would be discussing the future of this program.

The Legislature funded a study on CTE governance in Vermont last year. There were several strong recommendations. The first concerned participation as it pertained to students who went to a high school that was conjoined with a CTE Center versus those that were not on the same property. As was demonstrated at this campus, the bulk of students in attendance at GMTCC came from Lamoille Union while the numbers from other school were less. The study showed that coordinating times for access to CTE's was problematic in that all the high schools were on different schedules. The recommendation was to align high school schedules around CTE structure. Another recommendation was to pull CTE's out of districts to create a larger centralized CTE district. This would mean one to three different career and tech education districts that would be managed by its own supervisory office. That would then impact the funding mechanisms and would move toward a block grant.

**Hyde Park:** Reilly stated that over the summer teachers spent hundreds of hours working together to prepare for this year, to make sure the systems were changed in order to meet each child's needs so that they could be independent learners focusing on joy, student engagement, community engagement and academic rigor. The school year started out very well. The first Friday barbecue took place and 160 family and friends showed up. Trust, family, and love were the three things the school was focusing on.

**Belvidere/Waterville:** Epstein reported that a teacher had written and was awarded a grant to receive the Lego Robotic Kit. There were a lot of new students this year. The community meeting on the first day of school celebrated the new students and everyone was excited to be back together. A Grandparents Day lunch tradition would take place on September 15<sup>th</sup>. A PBIS celebration would be coming up next week. It had been a great start to the year.

**Executive Session:** Nielsen called for a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss a matter, the premature disclosure of which could place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Nielsen invited Gallagher and Clark to remain. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Prescott, to enter into Executive Session. The Board approved unanimously. The Board went into Executive Session at 6:50 p.m.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 6:56 p.m.

**Adjourn:** The Board adjourned at 6:57 p.m.