

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of SPECIAL Meeting
March 12, 2024**

Board Members Present: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Mark Stebbins, Jan Sander, Denise Webster; Eden: Jeff Hunsberger, David Whitcomb (phone); Hyde Park: Philip Kiely, Patty Hayford, Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe; Johnson: Allen Audette, Katie Orost, Kyle Hill, Monica Stearns, Mark Nielsen; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: Cambridge: Sue Prescott, Christy Liddy

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deb Clark, Michele Aumand, Rene Thibault, Betzi Goodman, David Manning, Jan Epstein, Denise Maurice, Bethann Pirie, Mary Anderson, Diane Reilly, Dylan Laflam, Erik Remmers, Blake Nemeth, Valerie Sullivan, Jennifer Hulse, Jeremy LeClair

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Public Comment: Nielsen called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Sander made a motion, seconded by Orost, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously. There was no public comment.

Reorganization of the Board:

Elect LNSU/LNEMUUSD Board Chair: Hunsberger nominated Mark Nielsen. There were no other nominations. The Board voted unanimously for Nielsen to be the Chair of the LNSU/LNEMUUSD Board Chair.

Clerk: Orost nominated Bezio to be Clerk. There were no other nominations. The Board voted unanimously for Bezio to be Clerk of the LNSU/LNEMUUSD Board.

Vice Chair: The Board voted unanimously for Orost to be Vice Chair of the LNSU/LNEMUUSD Board.

2024-2025 Board Meeting School and Date of Annual Meeting: Clark stated the recommendation was for the Annual Meeting to be on February 17, 2025. The information meeting would be held on February 24, 2025. Board members agreed to these dates. The Board meeting schedule would remain the same.

2024-2025 Committee Meeting Schedule: Gallagher stated the Committee meeting schedule would remain the same. There would be a reorganization at the work retreat in August. Gallagher asked Hill, a new member of the Board, which committee she might be interested in. Hill stated she would like to be on the Curriculum Committee.

LNSU/LNEMUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Special Board Meeting Minutes of February 19th: Bezio made a motion, seconded by Sweet, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Bezio made a motion to approve Board Orders of January 9th through January 31st. Sweet seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the Board Orders.

Appoint New Cambridge Board Representative: Stebbins reported that Amy Listenik's name was left off the warning for the election so she was not able to be voted on as a Board representative. Stebbins asked that the Board appoint her to the Board. Orost stated that they should follow their normal procedure when a vacancy occurred. The position should be advertised. Stebbins stated he agreed with Orost. While he was fairly certain no one else was interested in the Board position, he was happy to go through the process of advertising.

FY25 Revised LNEMUUSD #058A Budget Vote Discussion: Clark informed the Board that the FCC met prior to this meeting. Orost stated that the Committee had decided they needed to offer a meaningful change to bring back to voters. The target was a \$500,000 reduction. Gallagher asked if

there was an understanding that the \$500,000 cut would have an impact on student programming. Orost stated that they had discussed that. Clark stated a \$500,000 cut was the equivalent of a 3.16% reduction in education spending for the MUUSD elementary schools. Hunsberger asked if there were any other options discussed. Orost outlined some of Clark's budget presentation, stating that \$200,000 was when student impact would begin to take place. Orost stated there were many complaints about the budget increase at town meetings and she believed cuts needed to be significant.

Nielsen stated he had a call in to the Vermont Department of Taxes. He wanted to be able to explain the process to voters. When a taxpayer heard of a 23% budget increase, the taxpayers would want to vote that down. However, as the Board knows the increase was actually about 2.5%. Nielsen wanted the Department of Taxes and the school to educate the taxpayer on what they would have to pay. They would be able to see what they would get back in taxes. Nielsen noted that it didn't help when the Governor announced publicly that he had voted down his own school budget.

Clark informed the Board that because this was a revised budget, not a revote, it had a more truncated timeline. If these cuts involved certain contractual obligations on the part of the Board, it was important to know on Monday. Administration needed to have a special board meeting on March 18th. The Board would work with administrator to find out what the cuts meant and make a decision at that time. That would then be the revised budget moving forward.

The Administration wanted to have a Board meeting on Tuesday, April 9th to warn the vote. The vote would then have to happen within seven days, on Tuesday, April 16th. There also had to be an information meeting, no less than five days after the warning. That would mean April 15th. The information meeting had to be warned at least ten days before the information meeting. A warning of the potential information meeting would go out before the Board even warned the vote. That would allow the Board the time and opportunity to talk about this and educate communities.

There would be a 30-day certification period. If both the budget vote and the certification period passed, they would meet the tax anticipation note timelines. If the budget did not pass, there would be another opportunity in May to have another vote and still meet the tax anticipation timeline before the end of June. If a budget couldn't be passed before June 30th, there was an austere option of cutting 20% to the current year budget that could be borrowed against. The school couldn't operate without a budget and this option would be extreme.

A lawyer had been consulted on the timeline and because this warning was a bit different, Clark would be asking the lawyer to draft the warning.

Gallagher stated that because there would be a meeting on April 9th, there wouldn't be a meeting on April 8th.

Sweet asked if \$500,000 was too much to cut, considering that the budget failed by so few votes. Clark stated that next Monday everyone would come back and explain what cuts they proposed, what the impact was, and the Board would discuss about how much to cut.

Barry stated the FCC had discussed that the decrease needed to be noticeable enough. The no voters would come out to vote.

Webster stated that about twenty years ago Cambridge voted their budget down twice. After the second vote failed, the PTA sent out a notice to all voters outlining what the cuts would mean to their students. The previous meetings had been attended by mostly older, retired individuals. The last meeting that was held had about 500 people, mostly parents, and they ended up passing the

original budget. She believed that information was key. Otherwise a few people that had the wrong information would talk the loudest.

Hunsberger stated that there was no conversation at all about the school budget at the Eden Town Meeting. However, a state representative was there and talked about the large school budget increases across the state. That was all he had to say for the voters to vote against the budget. Hunsberger was cautious about cutting the budget too much and losing significant personnel. It would impact the students.

Orost made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss issues that might involve contract negotiations the prior public knowledge of which could place the District at a disadvantage. Sweet seconded the motion. Board members and Thibault were asked to remain. The Board went into Executive Session at 6:29 p.m. The Board then came out of Executive Session at 6:38 p.m.

Accept FY23 Audit: Clark reported to the Board that LNSU received a clean unqualified opinion. That was the best opinion you could receive. The financials were very healthy. Orost asked if the audit results were posted online. Clark stated they were and could be found on the Finance Department section of the website. Clark then reported that LNMUUSD also received a clean unqualified opinion. Clark expressed her appreciation to the staff. Bezio made a motion, seconded by Barry, to accept the FY23 audit. The motion passed unanimously.

In-District Transfer Policy: Gallagher stated the only two changes made in this policy were due dates and the statement that considerations would not be made after the start of the school year. Applications would be accepted up until April 30th. The review period would be a month. People could appeal to the Board. Applicants who submitted an application after April 30th and before the start of the school year could appeal the decision to the School Board and the decision would be considered final. No applications would be considered after the start of the school year.

Gallagher explained that occasionally the District needed to consider a student's wellbeing and transfers would be considered. That was not through the in-district transfer policy. That would be through something like the bullying, harassment, or hazing policy. This was the first reading of the policy.

Class Size Policy: This policy was changed substantially. The District would now have parameters for class size. However, what needed to be considered were things like the size of the school building. The State Board of Education recommendations for class size were in the policy. This was the first reading of the policy.

Central Office Updates: Gallagher informed the Board that Mary Anderson was the State's Elementary School Principal of the Year. Gallagher then noted that it was very easy to get mired in what was not going well. It was important to remember there were good things happening every day. Sara Reed was enjoying her sabbatical based on the fact that she was accepted as a Fulbright. Her classes held the highest AP scores in the United States due to her coursework. Rigorous courses were being added to the high school. Gallagher thanked Pirie for her leadership and thanked Sullivan for bringing new courses to the classrooms. Gallagher reported that the schools heard every day from students how the schools were helping to save them. The work that everyone was doing was so important. The students depended on the Board to make the right decisions on their behalf.

Principal/Director Updates:

Eden: Goodman stated that before vacation the school had a community meeting in which classes shared the different work they were doing. The 6th graders hosted the meeting. There was a PBIS

celebration as well. This week UVM Extension representative Lisa Black began working with kindergarten and 1st graders on nutrition enrichment for six weeks. This involved reading a book about healthy living and nutrition, and then providing a recipe to make and then take home. Cognia testing was beginning next week with 5th and 6th graders.

Johnson: Manning reported that in partnership with ECHO, the school would be holding STEAM night on Thursday. There would be booths with activities. Last year 100 community members attended this event. Johnson was in the middle of their hiring process. Two people hired were current teachers at other Vermont schools. He was happy to see that people were leaving their jobs to come to Johnson.

Waterville: Epstein reported they had had several PBIS celebrations. They had completed their winter sports day, a program that was always well received. Watching how students developed in their chosen sport was gratifying. The school had received grant money that Epstein hoped to use on this program next year. There was a writing celebration coming up with the younger grades.

Middle School: Maurice stated they were now beginning the 6th and 8th grade transitional period. Teachers would be convening at the end of April to begin team placements. The 8th grade step up date had been scheduled. Cognia testing would begin next week. Practices for Beauty and the Beast were going phenomenally. There were 22 students attending the District Music Festival. It was a wonderful program that continued to grow. This year the school had been partnering with Healthy Lamoille Valley for the Youth Leadership Coalition and they recently went to Montpelier to speak on vaping and how vaping was affecting their generation. Students encouraged legislators to do the right thing.

Cambridge: Anderson expressed appreciation to Gallagher for nominating her for her award. She was honored and appreciative. Cognia tests were taking place now. Anderson wanted to recognize and thank the Cambridge community for their support on Town Meeting Day during a tough budget year. Anderson offered her support to the other elementary school principals. It was important to communicate to people what they would lose in supports for the students. For the second year, teams competed at the Junior Iron Chef Competition. Two teams competed from her school and there were over 40 teams represented from schools across Vermont. One of the teams won the Lively Local Award, which went to the team that best highlighted Vermont foods. Anderson recognized Kelly Shortsleeve who volunteered her time for this competition. Fifth graders were starting the Star Base Program. The drama club was also starting up.

High School: Pirie stated that Cognia, SAT and AP exams were taking place. They were now in the process of meeting with each grade level separately to talk about course offerings for next year. Pirie encouraged the Board members to look at the course bulletin on the school's website. A number of courses were approved tonight at the Curriculum Committee including four AP courses across three different departments, a television and video production course, and American sign language to name a few. They were opening up offerings for 9th and 10th graders by providing some of those new courses. School counselors were going into classrooms to speak with students individually to determine what courses they might be interested in.

Winter sports had wrapped up. Pirie stated that the Green Mountain Access television station did a tremendous job covering events. Events from the dance teams to basketball games were covered. She expressed appreciation to the coaches, many of them were also teachers. They were putting in the time and building a community. The numbers in programs were growing. Eight of the students were accepted in the All State Chorus. There was now a new math team and the robotics club was growing. The volunteering club was meaningful and students were volunteering and supporting the community.

Hyde Park: Reilly stated the house system being used at Hyde Park was guiding everything they were doing. The school received a grant of \$10,000 from Healthy Lamoille Valley to support the program and activities. Each house was assigned to do one community event with people outside of their classroom. Reilly outlined additional details about the house program. The school was participating, alongside Cambridge Elementary, in the Chill program with Burton. This program had built confidence in the students who participated.

GMTCC: Remmers expressed his appreciation to the Board for their thoughtful engagement in approving the GMTCC budget. Difficult conversations earlier in the year had moved people to a place where their budget could be approved. This was the time of year when they were extremely busy with student competitions. SkillsUSA was coming up in a few weeks. The Future Business Leaders of America was happening at the end of this week.

The Allied Health students, as part of Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA), participated in their competition last week. Yesterday was the convention and students received their medals. GMTCC students were the highest medaling school in the state, with six gold, four silvers and a bronze. The students had been unable to go to the convention because of a snow day, however, they were able to watch the filmed presentation in the allied health classroom. More than half of the Tech Center came to watch the presentation. GMTCC was a mid-sized tech center in comparison to other tech centers in the state. As an example, Burlington and Essex fielded two full allied health programs the size of one of GMTCC's program and GMTCC outmedaled everyone. The students were excited about that. Now they would be going on to nationals.

Remmers also informed the Board that two automotive students qualified to participate in the Heritage Automotive Challenge. Only twenty students statewide qualified to do this. They would spend a day in competing for a significant scholarship. One of the largest technical Honor Society classes would be coming through this year. The induction ceremony would take place on March 27th with thirty students being inducted, which was 25% of the student body.

Remmers reminded the Board that adult education continued to be offered with consistent programming. The second adult LNA course began tonight and the third welding course would begin tomorrow. GMTCC would also be offering an introduction to auto technology this summer.

Gallagher then noted that the child of a Board member, Jessica Orost, was moving on to be a future marine biologist. Hunsberger noted that Pirie's daughter was selected to be on the All State basketball team. Two students from the high school chorus went to the American Choral Directors Association Eastern Regional Choir conference. Hunsberger then mentioned that elementary school students recently came to the high school to sing with middle and high school students. The elementary students loved it.

GMTCC Director: Gallagher stated that Remmers' contract was up at the end of the year. The maximum recommendation was for a three-year contract. Gallagher stated she would offer that, however, Remmers was more interested in a two-year contract. Gallagher stated she couldn't say enough good things about Remmers' work. Gallagher highlighted some of the accomplishments that Remmers had done including bringing a new program to the Tech Center. Another accomplishment was teaming with Castleton to make sure instructors, who came from industry and were not teachers, knew what to do in a classroom setting.

The Tech Center was always trying to increase enrollment and one of the reasons for the lower enrollment figures had to do with the funding mechanism. The average daily membership figures were important to the sending schools and this inhibited the incentive to refer students. Remmers

had removed the stigma from a vocational program or a trades school to a true technology and career center. Lamoille Union had its highest number of sending students to the Tech Center. Some of the reason for that was due to proximity but the students were also so willing to be a part of everything. Other districts didn't seem to have the same desire to send their students to the Tech Center and, in fact, were not even exposing them to the Tech Center. Remmers was working very hard to change that. Hunsberger made a motion, seconded by Sander, to renew Remmers contract for two years. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business: Sweet seconded Pirie's comment about GMAT. Family members from all over the country were able to watch school events because of them. Sweet also praised the course material that was being provided to students. Hunsberger asked that people remember the flood victims. The Rotary Club would be holding a fundraising event, the Polar Plunge, for flood victims. The event would take place on April 13th at Elmore State Park. Hunsberger asked that people consider creating a team and participating.

Adjourn: Hunsberger made a motion to adjourn at 7:26 p.m.