

Meeting of the
Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
January 13, 2025

Board members Present: Johnson: Mark Nielsen, Kyley Hill; Cambridge: Mark Stebbins, Amy Listenik, Nancy Guyette, Susan Prescott; Hyde Park: Tina Lowe, Phillip Kiely, Patty Hayford, Lisa Jones; Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Eden: Jeff Hunsberger, David Whitcomb; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board members Absent: Cambridge: Denise Webster, Jan Sanders; Johnson: Monica Sterns

Administrators Present: Rene Thibault, Kim Hunt, Catherine Gallagher, David Manning, Dylan Laflam, Deb Clark, Paula Beattie, Betzi Goodman, Christopher Hennessey, Diane Rielly, Erik Remmers, Bethann Pirie, Jan Epstein, Jennifer Hulse, Blake Nemeth, Mary Anderson, Jeremy Scannell, Cole Hayes, Michele Aumand

Others Present: Danielle Sweet, student Representative, community members

Minute Taker: Savannah Droney

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Nielsen

Approval of Agenda A change to the agenda is we will not Appoint an LNMMUSD Board Member to the RAB Board. Sweet made the motion to approve the agenda with the change, seconded by Bezio. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: Jennifer Hulse read her resignation letter, she will be resigning as of June 30, 2025, as Director of Student Support Services. Betzi Goodman read her retirement letter, she will be retiring as of June 30, 2025, as principal of Eden Central School (ECS). David Manning read his resignation letter, he will be resigning as of June 30, 2025, as principal of Johnson Elementary School (JES). Gallagher shared statistics regarding principals and teacher turnover. Nielsen shared comments on being the board chair and thanked everyone leaving for all their hard work. There are two open seats for school board for Johnson. Clark shared comments on how great of a job Gallagher has done for the community and students and thanked the board and senior administration. Hunsberger thanked Betzi, Jennifer, David. Beattie wished Betzi, Jennifer, David all the best, and shared kind words for Gallagher. Hunt, Hayes, Reilly shared words for David, Jennifer, Betzi, Gallagher.

Vanessa Tourangeau wants to be part of the solution and read a letter she wrote to the board. She has spoken to Manning and Gallagher. Her daughter attends JES and has experienced behavioral issues. She doesn't agree with the way these behaviors have been handled. The behavioral management at JES is getting tweaked. She is looking for more transparency. She worries about learning. There are phenomenal teachers at JES. She thanked Manning for setting up a meeting on Thursday for parents to come together.

Kara Rosa stated there is an investigation at ECS regarding safety. She will follow through on asking for an investigation at JES if needed. She feels the administration is not addressing these issues; behaviors are being minimized. She has reached out to Vermont Family Advocates.

A parent spoke and stated she spent the weekend in the ER with her child because of the stress and anxiety within the schools.

A parent spoke about her children's experience at JES; shared concerns regarding her children. She teaches preschool, she appreciates what everyone does. She is asking that the parents be listened to. Parents don't know what to do anymore.

Chris Turner has a student at JES, at Lamoille Union Middle School, and Lamoille Union High School, and is the school resource officer. All three of his children have attended JES. He has been in this role since January 2024. When he hears the schools are not safe, he has a hard time not taking that personally. He tries to keep the schools safe. He is present at JES, Hyde Park Elementary School (HPES), Lamoille Union campus. He meets with principals regularly; they do everything they can to keep the schools safe. He is here to share laws and will share what he sees in the schools. He is at HPES and JES Tuesday and Thursday; Monday, Wednesday, Friday, he is at the Lamoille Union campus. If he hears of incidences of bullying, he talks with students and works with them. He has gone to families' homes to make sure everyone is safe. He takes this job seriously. He continues to take training on mental health and safety issues.

Hayford, board member from Hyde Park, states she is sorry it has gotten to this point. She said if we don't know what is going on, we can't fix the problems.

Darcy Fletcher, Facilities Coordinator, goes to each school in the district and feels everyone does their best. She shared experiences of great things done within the schools. We are trying to do our best and hold these kids accountable.

Andrew Iwaskiewicz is speaking as an educator and knows that we can all come together.

Bethann Pirie, LUHS principal, invites anyone into the school; come check out the hallways, check out the school. She cares about your kids.

Eric Hutchins, educator, feels for the parents struggling with behaviors in the school. He talks with educators around Vermont, and this is a global problem. He feels teachers are doing the best they can. Eric is also part of the teacher negotiations. The Board listened to the teachers' concerns and they have come to an agreement.

Nielsen stated he hears everyone and will be at the community meeting at JES Thursday night in the school library from 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm.

Consent Agenda Items – Minute from the SPECIAL LNSU/LNMUUSD Board meeting on 12/16/24 and meeting on 12/2/23; minutes from Finance & Capital Committee meeting on 11/25/24: Bezio made the motion to approve these minutes, seconded by Kiely. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Bezio has reviewed the board orders and recommends the board approves. Hunsberger made the motion to approve the board orders, Kiely seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Updates: Bezio shared the legislative updates. The Governor recommends a student-centered funding formula; promised a policy for simpler governance. The Governor also highlighted that if school boards can stay to the 5.9% increase projected in the December first letter, his budget would lower that with a goal of eliminating it.

Policy Review: Gallagher asked that everyone read through these policies and review next meeting.

B-5 Employee Unlawful Harassment – First Reading

B-7, Tobacco Prohibition – First Reading

C-9, Pupil Privacy Rights – First Reading

D-5, Animal Dissection – First Reading

Belvidere Central School Status: Earl Domina is the chair of the Belvidere Selectboard, but is really attending this meeting as a concerned resident of the town. He would ask that we all review the Articles of Agreement that were part of Act 46 in order to determine how we go about discussing and acting on the disposition of the Belvidere Central School building. The building has been closed for the first time this school year. Information will be gathered and shared at the March school board meeting. Bezio requested to get testimony from Jan Epstein at March's meeting as to how things are going at Waterville Elementary School since the PreK program was moved there this year.

Ratify Teacher Master Agreement- Discussion & Possible Action, Possible Executive Session: The Board Negotiation Committee (BNC) has met the last few months, they appreciate the hard work of the teacher's association. For year one, there will be an increase of \$4,100 to the base salaries. Year two will increase \$4,120 to the base salaries and one step to the grid. Kiely is asking the board for approval. Sweet made the motion to approve the Master Agreement, Bezio seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Data Discussion: Hunt shared the VTCAP results. The Education Quality Standards will go into effect in July 2025.

LNSU FY'26 Budget Review & Possible Adoption – Discussion & Possible Action, Possible Executive Session: Clark stated the bottom line is good. The Finance & Capital Committee (FCC) started the budget process early this year. Overall, the non-special ed is a 2.36% change in the assessment. Salary increases are at 5.53%. Benefit increase is 6.23% due to a premium increase. There is a huge shift of IT services. Special Education is looking at a 1.45% change. Hulse is working to bring services in-house. Bezio made the motion to adopt the LNSU FY26 budget as presented, seconded by Kiely. There was discussion with the community about how the budget works. The motion then passed unanimously.

LNMUUSD and GMTCC FY'26 Budget Review & Possible Adoption – Discussion & Possible Action, Possible Executive Session: LNMUUSD FY26 Budget: Administrators developed budgets based on needs of their schools and landed with moderate increases over the current year's budget. Used surpluses to hold Education Spending to no more than 2%. Revenue increases of 20.72%, the bulk of that is surplus coming out of 2024. There was a lot of facilities work that was budgeted that was not done. There are positions that have not been filled. Expenses are up 3.40% at the elementary level and 1.54% at the secondary level. The estimated increase to education spending is at 2.0%. The middle and high school have an increase of 21% in general fund revenue. Interest, state aid and grants is strong. The estimated increase to education spending is .93%. Most of the budget is student centric. There is a 2.5% increase to student counts at the elementary for the MUUSD; a decrease of less than 1% for the MUUSD secondary students. Spending per LT ADM (per pupil) changes of .57% reduction at the elementary level, .87% increase at the secondary level. District tax rate decrease of 11.19%. See 12.87% increase in the yield and basically level spending per pupil. Base rate change per \$100,00 property value is (\$195.21). A slide of the town rate change for FY26 was shared.

Hunsberger made a motion to adopt the elementary schools' budgets as presented, seconded by Sweet. The motion passed; Cambridge abstained.

Hunsberger made the motion to approve the secondary budget as presented, second by Bezio. The motion passed unanimously.

Remmers presented the GMTCC budget. This year's budget is \$4,191,823. The percent change is 5.5%, per pupil tuition is \$13,914 which is a tuition increase of \$1,715. Salaries are up. The total increase over FY25 is \$218,638. There is less funding from State aid for all CTE. FY25 was \$11,365 per pupil, FY26 \$11,021 per pupil. With a six-semester average of 127 students, that equates to a loss of \$62,00 in State aid. This is the first time we have seen this happen. The current enrollment at GMTCC is 157 students. Unfortunately, it takes time for increased enrollment to impact state aid. Tuition trends should reverse after FY26 if we continue to see similar enrollments to FY25.

There is an unallocated fund amount of \$89,127 stemming from previous year's supplies that needs to be decided on. Portions or all of it can be applied to FY26 revenue (caution: this will artificially suppress tuition in a way that tuition costs may rebound next year). Portions or all can be placed in the Capital Reserve or the Tuition Reserve. A fund could be created to help absorb the substantial costs of participation in national CTSCO events.

Remmers asked that the Board approve the GMTCC budget. Hunsberger made the motion to approve GMTCC's budget, seconded by Stebbins. The motion passed unanimously. The RAB recommends that the Board approve a new "Contingency Reserve Fund" to be established to help support numerous difficult to budget for expenses. The RAB recommended that the \$89,127 in unallocated funds be split to reserves as follows: \$44,563.50 be placed in the Tuition Reduction Reserve Fund, and \$44,563.50 be placed in the Contingency Reserve Fund. The motion to accept as presented was made by Bezio, seconded by Kiely. The motion passed unanimously.

Prepare Annual Meeting Warning- Discussion & Possible Action: The annual meeting warning was prepared by Clark and the Board.

Announce 2025 -2026 Tuition – Discussion & Possible Action: Clark discussed the current year and projected tuition rate. The recommendation for elementary schools is \$14,500, Union school \$12,275, GMTCC \$29,369.

Clark asked for a motion to set tuition for LNMUUSD Grades K-6 at \$14,500. Hunsberger made the motion to approve Clark's recommendation, seconded by Bezio. Motion passed; Cambridge abstained.

Clark asked for a motion to set tuition for LNMUUSD Grades 7-12, \$12,275 and GTMCC \$29,369. Hunsberger made the motion to approve Clark's recommendation, seconded by Bezio. Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business/Adjourn: Hunsberger made the motion to adjourn at 8:34 pm.