

Grand Isle Supervisory Union
South Hero School District
School Board Special Meeting
Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021, at 6 p.m.
Location: via Google Meet (meet.google.com/kjb-twdf-ibw)

MINUTES

Call to Order

1. Call to order at 6:05 p.m. (B. Chutter)

Introductions. In attendance:

-Board members: Tim Maxham, Bentley Vaughan, Bob Chutter, Erin Morse, Nathaniel Kouns

-Staff: Susan McKelvie, Michael Clark, Rob Gess, Julie Pidgeon

-Audience: Michael Wright (LCATV), Janet Yates, school clerk

2. Public Comments: none.

Board Business

3. Budget Discussion (B. Chutter)(Discussion)

T. Maxham made a motion to table the budget discussion. B. Vaughan seconded the motion. Approved on a voice vote unanimously. The board invited school clerk Janet Yates to discuss information dissemination and Town Meeting.

4. Information Dissemination and Meeting Discussion (B. Chutter)(Discussion): The board must schedule a remote annual meeting for the town no more than 10 days before Town Meeting Day. The town will not hold an in-person Town Meeting on Saturday, Feb. 27, due to the Covid pandemic. The board discussed holding its informational meeting on Thursday, Feb. 25, at 6 p.m. Superintendent M. Clark clarified that the annual meeting will be informational only, and all business that would be voted upon will be moved to the Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 2. Yates said the town will be sending information to citizens about the Town Meeting format. Chutter will be the contact for questions from town members about the informational meeting. The board discussed how to inform the town about the budget to take into account those who will be voting by mail. Superintendent Clark suggested an earlier direct mailing to town members that includes budget and absentee ballot information. Yates asked board members to come to the Town Office individually to sign the warning when it is ready. The warning will be posted on Jan. 28.

5. Budget Discussion (resumed): The board resumed budget discussion at 6:25 p.m.

R. Gess said he and principal Susan McKelvie reviewed the budget and made adjustments based on last year's spending. Gess said he increased the projected tuition for some high schools based on past tuition increases. Tuition is budgeted at \$814,000

Currently, the school budget warning would have a proposed budget of \$3,997,900. If approved, education spending would be \$18,049 per equalized pupil. This is 0.008 lower than the spending for the current year.

R. Gess offered an update on the equalized pupil determination. He has a meeting with the state Agency of Education on Jan. 8 to discuss this figure. M. Clark shared that the GISU special education service plan that was approved by the Agency of Education recently is higher than the one estimated for the GISU budget, which may change the amount South Hero owes. However, Clark said there are carry-forward funds at the GISU level that may be able to cover this difference.

B. Chutter noted that over the summer the board increased the funding for building cleaning. The increased spending is budgeted for the next fiscal year. Chutter asked S. McKelvie if she thinks it needs to continue. McKelvie said the budgeted amount is what used to be budgeted in the past before McKelvie's arrival. She did not know why cleaning spending was reduced in the past. She said the staffing size is now appropriate, if possibly low, for the square footage of the building. She said the school does not know when the Covid cleaning protocols will be ending.

T. Maxham asked about special education. He noted that the special education aide salaries are included, but the professional staff salaries are not included. Clark explained that the professional staff are employees of the supervisory union by law, and their salaries are budgeted in the GISU budget. The supervisory union members share the cost of the GISU budget through the GISU assessment. The special education assessment is based on the percentage of special education students. The towns individually budget for aides.

E. Morse asked how much more or less the town is spending for special education related to Act 173. M. Clark said that eventually all supervisory unions will receive a certain amount of money for special education with few exceptions, rather than receiving reimbursement for spending for individual students. Act 173's implementation has been delayed due to Covid.

B. Chutter said the increase in South Hero's budget for special education is based on changes in student service plans since the last budget. M. Clark added that these increases are primarily due to tuition and transportation to out-of-district placements.

E. Morse asked about the need to budget additionally for tutoring in the summer or for next year. McKelvie said the school has structures and staff to address the learning needs during the school year. She said if the Continuous Improvement Plan shows a need for summer tutoring, the school can access funding from Title 1. She expressed appreciation for Morse's concern about the learning needs of the students. McKelvie said traditionally student engagement in summertime learning is not as consistent as during the school year. M. Clark said federal grants will be available as well, and to access grants, the school cannot supplant an existing local program.

Clark and Chutter asked board members if they supported the proposed budget and received verbal affirmation. Gess will move forward to prepare the documents on the budget for the town report and will bring the warning to the next board meeting.

Chutter asked about revenue projections for tuition-paying students. Gess said the revenue projection of \$100,000 accounts for about 6 students. He recommends the board stay with that figure. S. McKelvie said the pandemic influenced some decisions this year, but she agrees with Gess in budgeting for 6 tuition-paying students. Both noted it is difficult to make projections this year.

6. Audit Engagement Letter Approval (M. Clark)(Action): Clark asked the board to authorize Bob Chutter to sign the Audit Engagement Letter. B. Chutter moved that the board approve the audit engagement letter and approve Bob Chutter to sign for the board. B. Vaughan seconded the motion. Discussion: T. Maxham asked for clarification about the cost of \$85,000 and how it is funded. Clark explained that each town is assessed for a portion of the cost of the audit by the GISU. The board discussed changing the approval process in the future to have the GISU board sign the audit engagement letter. Approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Closure

Agenda for Jan. 21

- formal approval of the budget warning
- discussion and possible approval of changing the process for audit engagement
- review of a budget presentation

7. Adjourn

The board adjourned at 7:13 PM on a voice vote. B. Vaughan made a motion to adjourn. T. Maxham seconded the motion. Approved unanimously on a voice vote.