

# Grand Isle Supervisory Union

## CIUUSD Special Meeting

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

### Minutes

**Board Present:** Mason Malatis, Michael Inners, Chet Bromley, Nathan Robinson

**Admin Present:** Michael Clark, Rob Gess, Lauren Thomas, Amanda Ellison

**Public Present:** Mike Donoghue, Deborah Bumgardner, Sarah Noble, Sara Zuanich, David Hardin, Laken Hardin, Desiree Maltais, Caryn Zambrano, Amy Thompson, Jaime Short, Tanya Retz, Ryleigh Combs, Kaitlyn Young, Lindsey Stanhope, Nick Stanhope, Stephen Joachim, Jessica Ochs, Stacy Beaulieu, Kelsey Buchanan, Jeri Frank, Megan Walker, Julia Goldman, Michael Atwood, Lisa Cassidy, Barb Larvey, Jo-Ann Tier

#### Call to Order

1. Call to Order - Mason Maltais calls to order at 3:35 pm
2. Citizens and/or Staff to be Heard - Mason Maltais asks that the discussion about the budget occurs and then open to citizens and staff to be heard. No objections.

#### Board Business.

3. Budget - Michael Clark thanked everyone for attending. There have been meetings with faculties and staffs since the last CIUUSD meeting. The administrative team has reviewed the budget to find reductions that do not negatively impact students, staff, or community- believe this has been accomplished. Highlights are contained in the seven page document available at this meeting. Looking at a combined budget for the three school buildings. The vision for the new district is to create more opportunity for students, create equity and create cost efficiencies. The challenges with this budget boil down to total proposed spending, subtracting the revenue and dividing this by an equalized pupil count. The weighting of the equalized pupil counts were shared. This equalized pupil count is taken over a two year rolling average. The CIUUSD has lost 10 equalized pupils. The other thing working against this budget is the common level appraisal (CLA). Houses are selling for slightly more than they were appraised. The CLA is adjusted based on this. This has negatively impacted Grand Isle, North Hero, and Isle La Motte. Vermont also sets an excess cost threshold so that if spending per equalized pupil were above \$18,756 - then it starts getting taxed at a higher rate. At the last meeting, the cost per pupil was above this threshold. Looking at a reduction of 1.0 FTE at the Isle La Motte school. This building is projected to have 13 students in grades k-6, with not all grades having students. This saves \$50,000-\$83,000. Scheduled to complete a renovation of the North hero kitchen - took \$10,000 out of general budget and allocated these funds to the King Trust Fund. The third reduction is a change in the HRA funding projection. The state has mandated health insurance be negotiated at the state level. Had originally planned to fund the budget at 100% based on data; based on board input, reduced funding this line item to 65%. Next reduction is a technology reduction. In a conversation with tech director and both principals, have been able to replace tech with grant funds and are ahead of schedule and can reduce spending. The after school budget is anticipated to be underspent this fiscal year, and was reduced based on this. Deferred maintenance also decreased - could slow down projects. Tuition students in grades 7-12- always a guess and cushion is budgeted. Initially the cushion was 4 students and have reduced to 3 students. Instructional supplies are on track to have money left over this year, and so this line was reduced. These are the reductions are in the proposed budget and accounts for what the board indicated they wanted to see. 1.53% higher spending than this year. Creates an increase of .15 cents to CIUUSD tax rate and then apply CLA to each town and see what the impact to each town is. There is concern that this increase would be unacceptable

to community. Administration has other reductions available in case board would like a smaller tax rate increase. Other reductions include: scenario 1 - currently, Grand Isle's 4th and 5th grade classes have 23 students that are split, creating a 3 class rotation and works for teacher rotation. Recommendation would combine one of them - would become 45 students between 3 teachers (15 students per teacher). Next is to take an addition FTE at Isle La Motte - become operation of grades 3-4-5-6, 12 students over 4 grades or 4-5-6, 9 students over 3 grades - this gives 1.0 FTE at the ILM campus. There is a classroom para at the Grand Isle campus that can be cut- it is not part of an IEP. The home school coordinator position for the ILM/NH campuses, anticipate not needing this position with less students at the ILM campus. This is a .9% decrease, and creates a 10.5 cent increase on the tax rate. There are more scenarios that are proposed that impact students more. Scenario 2 - combine second large Grand Isle class. There are also cuts in the renovations to the library in the North Hero building. CIUUSD currently has 1.3 FTE of music, can cut down to 1.0 FTE of music - cutting 4 classroom sections. Currently have a 1.7 FTE of library and this scenario cuts to 1.0 FTE. this creates a 2.2% reduction from this years' budget and an 8 cent tax base.

Mason Maltais thanked Michael and asked for initial thoughts from board. Nathan Robinson thanks administration for their work based on the guidelines from last week. Nathan Robinson does not want to see opportunities diminished. Looking to provide the same or better opportunities than the previous year. Understand this comes with a cost. Goal is to keep education standards as high as we can but keep cost reasonable. Scenario 1 provides this. The second scenario does not allow for the arts and music well. Mason Maltais shared that he agrees with Nathan Robinson, this takes into account the comfort of the kids and has minimal impact to tax payers. Mason Maltais highlighted the availability of world language, increased library media, and afterschool program. Scenario 1 does not impact the additions from last year. Michael Inners shared that he feels scenario 1 would also be best. The cost per student is out of control of the board as are the property values. Property values going up should not mandate cut to education spending. Scenario 1 is proportionate to the decrease in students based on the equalized pupils. Chet Bromley shared his biggest concern is the Isle La Motte school and keeping it as viable as possible.

Mason Maltais asks for input from citizens and staff.

- Jessica Ochs asked about the cost and the budget and salary. Mason Maltais clarified this is based on the newer teacher cost
- Tony Peitricola - asked about education quality standards and where this is posted? Mason Maltais clarified that this is within scenario 2, which most of the board is not looking to go with this scenario. Michael Clark shared that there is not a time limit within the current standards, but it represents a reduction of what the students currently have.
- Debbie Bumgardner - shared a thought - if board can't close Isle La Motte for x numbers of years, Isle La Motte kids are going to North Hero. could ILM parents be encouraged to send their kids to North Hero to raise the standards by taking the Isle La Motte teachers and allocate their resources to North Hero? Closing Isle La Motte would be a savings in water, heat, electricity, and insurance rates.
- Amy Thompson - looking for an Act 46 update, heard much from word of mouth and heard about cost savings. Is there thoughts on closing buildings and creating efficiencies? Mason Maltais shared that Act 46 allows for efficiencies to be found in resources, allows for the flexibility to share resources to provide the same educational quality. Consolidation allows for increased pupil count to utilize and access more resources. Allows administrators to oversee larger areas - and more efficiencies in administration, gives more time to find grant funding. As the district has more historical data, can allow to reshape the district and allocate resources appropriately to best help students and create monetary efficiency. Michael Inners also addressed that every student has inter-school choice. There is an obligation in original articles to maintain the Isle La Motte school.

Michael Clark shared that Act 46 clarifies that every building part of Act 46 must have an educational function for 4 years.

- Jamie Short - between the two scenarios, combining the second large class should not be considered. Michael Clark clarified that it would become two functioning classes. The current rotation prepares students for middle school where there is a standalone model for class. Administration is trying to bring changes incrementally. Most class sizes are 15 students within the Islands. Administration has split the difference in class size in this scenario.
- Tanya Retz - Don't want to see a small school close, but it seems like education standards have dropped. Mason Maltais asked that if there are concerns about an individual teacher, to follow the process by discussing with the teacher, principal, superintendent, then board.
- David Hardin - want to be extremely careful in making it attractive to live and stay in the Islands. Taxes going up continually make it harder to invest in home ownership and push people away from moving here. Is there a ballpark figure to run Isle La Motte school per year? Michael Clark shared that prior to merger, Isle La Motte had a \$1.1 million, approximately \$750,000 to operate the school itself without paying the tuition. Nathan Robinson agrees that the current rate of increase is not sustainable. Michael Clark shared that it is important to realize that a number of students from Isle La Motte are attending North Hero - when calculating the education per student, should the cost of the students in North Hero be put back into Isle La Motte? Merging allows for unification and 3 towns working together. Michael Clark highlighted the additions to staffing during the merger.
- Marie Maillet - asked about the French addition, students getting maximum 45 minutes per week, is this really impacting kids? Mason Maltais shared that it is not the intent to cut this since it was specifically requested by the community. Marie Maillet also asked for a second clarification in scenario 2 - what would the combination class be? Michael Clark clarified that would combine the four sections into 2 sections, keeping the single grades, just making a larger class. Mason Maltais shared that this is in the scenario 2 to keep schedule similar and continue the average class sizes.
- Lisa Cassidy - asked about Isle La Motte school, is there a possibility of separating grades into different buildings? Like k-2 in one building, 3-4 in North Hero and 5-6 in Grand Isle.
- Erin Oliver -has been part of district restructuring, possibility and optimism in restructuring. Need to have conversation that seizes opportunity for higher quality for all. Michael Inners indicates that budget restricts and fiscal responsibility limit some of the conversation.
- Desiree Maltais - noted that there has been a decrease in school spending each year and taxes are still going up
- Sara Zuanich - want to consider and be mindful of changes that staffing in scenario 1 still has impacts on the staff. This impacts children and staff - it is a difficult area we live in to get quality teachers. There is benefits in continuity of staffing to school morale and students.

Mason Maltais asks the board to consider budget scenarios. Mason Maltais supports scenario 1 as brought forward by administration. Mason Maltais motions to adopt budget of \$8,335,174. This leaves library and music in tact. Chet Bromley seconds. Any further discussion? Michael Inners asked about the value of the home school coordinator if it is not full time? Michael Clark clarified that it is likely the applicant pool would decrease. Amanda Ellison clarified that she feels there is value in the position. Mason Maltais said the important thing to remember that it is a one year budget and the position could be added in FY22. Nathan Robinson asked about if the position is likely to be filled. Lauren Thomas clarified that it would need to be filled with an effective person since it is relationship driven. Michael Clark also shared that the board is voting on a top-line number and there can be shifts, it is not definitive, but a general idea to a degree. Mason Maltais calls for vote. All in favor, motion passes 4-0.

4. Annual Warning - Mason Maltais read the warning with language required in statute. Discussion took place regarding the meeting date in 2021. Date was settled as: March 1, 2021 6:30 at North Hero School. Mason Maltais motions to approve warning as presented. Chet Bromley second. No further discussion. All in favor, motion passes 4-0.
5. Support Staff Negotiations Committee - position previously held by Jane Zera, board will need to replace this position. Mason Maltais motions to nominate Chet Bromley, Nathan Robinson second. All in favor, motion passes.
6. Other - none

**Closure**

7. Setting the next agenda - no discussion
8. Adjourn - Nathan Robinson motions to adjourn, Michael Inners second. All in favor, board adjourns at 5:51 pm.