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Minutes for the Thursday, March 16, 2017 South Hero School Board Meeting at Folsom Education & Community Center

Called to Order:

Meeting called to order at 6:10pm by Barbara Burrington, GISU Superintendent

In attendance:

David Cain, RJ Sweeney, Bentley Vaughan, Melanie Henderson, Board members; Barbara Burrington, Superintendent; Lenny Badeau, Principal; Lynn Carpenter, GISU Business Manager; Sharon Roy, School Treasurer; Tim Maxham, Bob Buermann, Fred Heslop, Lisa Pendolino, Sue Bumbeck, Melissa Hood, Bill Banas, Kari Banas, Helen Bishop, Kaight Althoff, Katherine Hayward, Mary Ann Fisher, Alison Perry, Julie Pidgeon, Samantha Cantell, Tom Nolan

Adjustment of Agenda:

- Brief Act 46 update under Superintendent's Report
- Discussion of teacher concerns and feedback under Board Discussion
- Acceptance of Kris Bowser's resignation under Board Actions
- Pushed minute approval from 03/02/2017 to Board Actions
- Review and approval of 7/8 overnight field trip at year-end
- Added an executive session for a personnel issue

Superintendent's Report:

- Celebrated the inception of the Champlain Islands Unified Union School District on Feb. 23rd. B.Burrington noted and appreciated the large representation from South Hero at their first meeting
- B.Burrington would like to explore ways to save money that is often spent on consultants (for example), and instead leverage the skills and passions of our existing and talented teachers and administrators
- The legislature has also proposed changes to Act 46 that, if passed, may offer new opportunities to South Hero. B.Burrington believes that the State is approaching a paradigm shift in Act 46 (since so many towns are isolated). However, South Hero will still be required to submit a proposal (either to stand alone or merge) to the State
- Tim Maxham asked for an update on the \$25,000 grant given to the original Grand Isle Act 46 Study Committee. B.Burrington explained that ~\$6k remains, since ~\$19k was spent on legal fees for the original merger report, as well as consultant fees paid to Mike Deweese. In the original grant, \$20k was provided by the state, and \$5k was provided by the GISU towns. B.Burrington explained that we are required to spend the local money first, and that any remaining state/federal money must be used or returned. B.Burrington suggested that the remaining ~\$6k be used for legal fees when Alburch and South Hero write Act 46 reports
- B.Burrington also explained that grant money may be available from the state if an "orphaned" district is pulled into an existing merged district. For example, if

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the Central Islands District admitted Fletcher (a K-6 school), they could be eligible for the grant. The Central Islands district will also be given an introduction to the new district structures created by Act 46 mergers across the state

- GISU Administrators attended a conference in February to learn about coaching, with the long-term goal of offering coaching services to support our teachers
- Standardized testing (SBACs and final year of NECAPs) will begin soon. The tests are online and adaptive; the difficulty of the questions will be adjusted for each student in real time, based on their prior answers. The tests provide feedback on each student's existing knowledge, as well as next steps for their learning plan. Teachers and principals will explain to students the importance of putting their best effort into the tests
- The GISU is providing information to the Agency of Education regarding our Special Education programming. Two reports have been submitted and well-received. The final report will be submitted in April
- The GISU Payroll Specialist position was reopened, with some promising applicants
- South Hero has six new secondary students that will need to be tuitioned. However, there are no buffers in the budget, so this may result in a deficit

Principal's Report:

- Lenny Badeau would like to celebrate the passing of the school budget. He is deeply appreciative of the community's support for the school
- L.Badeau thanked the PTO for providing dinner for the teachers during Parent/Teacher conferences
- L.Badeau confirmed that SBAC's are coming, and that we have a 10-week window in which to complete them. B.Burrington added that because the SBAC's are taken online, having onsite IT support is crucial to success. However, the GISU has few IT resources, and has therefore created a rolling schedule that will allow an IT support person to travel to each school. Folsom originally drew the week after April break, but teachers are concerned that testing after a break may affect student's ability to focus. Therefore, Folsom is working with the GISU to adjust the schedule
- Report cards were supposed to go home on Wed. 3/15/2017, but were delayed by the blizzard and snow days. Instead, report cards were sent home on Thursday or handed out at Parent/Teacher conferences
- Roughly 10 parents met with L.Badeau on Monday, 3/13/2017. They discussed ways to improve communication and develop unity between the school and community, and between the administrators and teachers. L.Badeau appreciated the diverse perspectives (such as business owners, and parents of both older and younger children). He proposed offering "office hours" for parents to come in and talk with the principal. They also discussed ways to identify challenges and address them, and find ways to grow and support each other. There has been a lot of staff turnover and several principals in recent years, and work will need to be done to turn the Folsom staff into the family that it can and should be. L.Badeau is planning to discuss what he learned with the staff, reach out to mentors, and hopes to explore ways to improve communication during the PBIS training at the end of the month

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- Julie Pidgeon prepared an information packet regarding the proposed 7/8 field trip to Boston. Students will explore the Museum of Science, visit several Revolutionary War historical sites, and see a show (Blue Man Group). They will stay at Emerson College, which will save money and allow them to explore a college campus. (Boys will be on one floor, girls on another.) The trip will be fully funded through fundraising efforts throughout the year, such as the flower bulb sales, antique show, spaghetti dinner, bottle box, as well as some grants and donations. Chaperones will need to pay for their room (\$68/night).

Board Discussion:

Positions and Schedule:

- D.Cain announced that Kris Bowser has resigned from the school board, and thanked Kris for her many years on the board and contributions to the school
- B.Vaughan nominated David Cain as Board Chair, and the motion passed unanimously. D.Cain requested assistance from other board members, especially with school events that take place during the day
- D.Cain proposed holding two Folsom School Board meetings per month, on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays
- D.Cain asked for nominations for the Vice Chair. B.Vaughan nominated Melanie Henderson, and the motion passed unanimously
- RJ Sweeney feels that the board needs a note-taker, and that the Board Clerk processes the official letters. Bill Banas requested that the note-taker show their screen through the projector, so that the audience can follow along with visuals. RJ Sweeney nominated B.Vaughan for the position of Clerk, and the motion passed unanimously
- D.Cain asked if the truancy officer is the sheriff. B.Burrington confirmed
- B.Burrington stated that three Folsom board members are also required to serve on the GISU board. She said that it was difficult in past years to get participation from South Hero. The GISU typically holds 4 meetings per year, although extra sessions may be needed during the budgeting phase. RJ Sweeney asked if any of the positions could alternate, and B.Burrington said she would check.
- D.Cain nominated M.Henderson and B.Vaughan as GISU representatives, and RJ Sweeney as an alternate. Motion passed unanimously
- D.Cain and B.Vaughan will serve on the Teacher Contract Negotiation committee. All approved
- D.Cain recommended waiting until the next board meeting to nominate representatives for the Hiring & Personnel committee. All agreed
- B.Burrington explained that additional committees can be created or populated at the GISU level as needed
- Locations for posting the agenda will include the town hall, school, and post office. M.Henderson would also like to post the agenda on Front Porch Forum, and will take responsibility for posting the agendas
- The Board also requires an Authorized Board Member to Sign Bills. This position can sign checks when the Board Chair is unavailable, but the Board Chair must officially sign the bill at the following meeting. RJ Sweeney nominated B.Vaughan and the motion passed unanimously

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- With Kris Bowser's resignation, the board must appoint someone to the open seat. Although Kris was elected to a 3-year term, the board appointment will only be for a 1-year term. Sharon Roy confirmed that the position will be up for election at the next Town Meeting day
- B.Burrington informed the board that we have 30 days to appoint a replacement. M.Henderson recommended Stephanie Breault, a Folsom parent and bank manager, who has assisted the Parent Child Center with their recent financial difficulties. D.Cain suggested that since we currently have 4 Folsom parents on the board, it may make sense to appoint a community member with a different perspective. However, he is happy that we have our first volunteer
- Tim Maxham suggested explaining the required time commitment to volunteers. D.Cain agreed, since in addition to the 2 board meetings per year, there are also committees, and larger meetings with the SU
- Bill Banas asked if the board would list desired qualifications when seeking volunteers for the open seat, so that interested candidates can fully explain their background. Lisa Pendolino suggested finding a job description for school board member, and Bob Buermann suggested interviewing candidates to determine whether we will be able to work with the next person. D.Cain expressed his concern that feelings may be hurt, and suggested reviewing any candidate's qualifications and then voting without discussion. B.Burrington believes there is a process in the VT School Board handbook for appointing members, which should help with this process
- D.Cain pointed out that 4 out of the 5 board positions will be up for re-election at next town meeting (all except M.Henderson's seat)
- B.Burrington really wants this board to create a vision for Folsom's future, and suggests spending our next session hashing out our goals as a board

Budget Review (Budget to Actuals):

- Lynn Carpenter reviewed the actual expenses to date, and how they compare to the predicted amounts in the FY17 budget
- High School Tuition (Line 22) is over-budget by ~\$45k, due to the six additional secondary students mentioned by B.Burrington
- Instructional Furniture & Fixtures (Line 54) is over-budget by ~\$27k. Lynn explained that \$15k was spent in the last budget period, and included retrofit tables and benches purchased from W.B.Mason. L.Badeau stated that the cafeteria tables should have been paid from the Robinson Legacy. Lynn will investigate further
- Operation/Maintenance of Plant Equipment – Equipment Maintenance (Line 209) is over-budget by ~\$21k. L.Badeau explained that those funds were spent to repair the switch gear for the boiler
- D.Cain asked if the funds needed to pay salaries and health insurance had already been set aside (encumbered). Lynn Carpenter confirmed that they have been set aside
- Sharon Roy stated that the cost to upgrade the gym floor, stage, lighting, and climbing wall came out of the General Fund, and that the General Fund will need to be reimbursed from the Robinson trust

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- D.Cain asked if the remaining (unassigned) funds in the Robinson trust could be used to offset some of the overages. Lynn stated that the usage of the trust is not specified, so the board can use it as they see fit
- D.Cain suggested using the remainder of the Robinson trust to pay for the switch gear, since that was a valuable upgrade and corrected a safety issue
- RJ Sweeney suggested using the remaining funds to purchase any supplies that will be used by the children, in the spirit of the gift. Lynn thought that most supplies have already been purchased, but L.Badeau was unsure
- Kari Banas stated that the PTO has a strong budget this year, and may be able to assist with purchasing classroom supplies
- Lynn Carpenter stated that there is ~\$9k in unassigned (unencumbered) funds left in the General Fund, but that PreK salaries will also have to be paid (~\$20k). D.Cain concluded that we will be over-budget at year-end, unless other line items come in under-budget
- Lynn recommends a budget freeze for anything that is non-essential. D.Cain agreed that a spending freeze makes sense. B.Burrington suggests discussing any funding requests, and determining whether those purchases are urgent (needs vs. wants). She recommends brainstorming to find creative ways to fulfill requests beyond pulling money out of the budget
- Julie Pidgeon mentioned that the late bus ridership may be light. It was reserved for use by the middle school play performers, but since their rehearsals typically go until 5pm, many students will not be able to take the 4pm bus. The late bus is paid on an hourly basis, so L.Badeau will research ridership and costs

Audit Review:

- Lynn Carpenter repeated statements from the GISU Auditor, Randall Northrop, including his concern that he did not receive all bank statements from the school accounts. Sharon Roy stated that she provided Mr. Northrop with all statements that were available at the Town Office, including the bank account numbers for the small accounts. She also stated that she sends a copy of the bank statements to Ellen Norris at the GISU every month. She believes that some accounts are held at the school, and that those statements are only available from Folsom
- Lynn Carpenter stated that she and Sharon have a path forward and will work together to gather everything that the Auditor requested
- Sharon Roy wanted to express her frustration with the statements made by the Auditor at the meeting on March 2nd, 2017. She feels that the Treasurer was maligned and misrepresented
- Lynn continued to list the findings of the audit, and how each item will be addressed:
 - Co-mingled cash (student activity fundraising, school donations, rental fees all in one account) is an issue throughout the SU. Other than student activity fundraising, all financial transactions must go through the Treasurer. A GISU-wide meeting will be held on April 5th to start the work of separating those accounts
 - Since no documentation can be found describing the intended purpose of South Hero's smaller trust funds, we must go to court (and incur legal fees) to open these funds up for general use
 - All technological equipment will be inventoried, and their values will be tallied. B.Vaughan asked if the equipment will require insurance.

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- A motion will be needed to allow the Business Manager to move money from one fund to another, such as reimbursing the General Fund from the Robinson trust
- The fiscal years will now have a firm cutoff, so that financial statements received in one year cannot be paid from the previous year's budget. The cutoff date is Aug. 1st. Once the accounts are reconciled for this year, it will be done on a quarterly basis going forward
- Folsom holds some funds in banks that are over \$250k, and therefore not covered by FDIC. Those funds must be collateralized to cover that uninsured value
- Postage and petty cash must be removed from student activity accounts
- The results of these audit findings will be sent to the Agency of Education. The AoE will send a team to scrutinize the financial activities of the GISU next year.

Teacher Communication:

- The teacher's union representative (Tom Nolan) contacted D.Cain regarding rumors of dissatisfaction amongst teachers. D.Cain asked T.Nolan to collect feedback from teachers, and bring them to the board anonymously. B.Vaughan asked for clarification on that process, and D.Cain suggested that the letters go to the Board Chair, Principal, and Superintendent first to ensure that there's no identifying information. After that, it could be discussed by the Board. Fred Heslop asked if it would be discussed in the open meeting, but RJ Sweeney said that any information that would identify an individual must be done during executive session
- Katherine Hayward asked if feedback could be solicited in an online format to preserve anonymity. B.Burrington mentioned a recent 360° assessment on L.Badeau. She explained that the online survey is made up of several multiple-choice questions, with no comments section (so that respondents cannot be identified). The results are then tabulated electronically, and a coach will present them to L.Badeau on April 17th. The coach will then help L.Badeau with areas that require improvement, and those areas can be rolled into his performance goals for the following year.
- B.Burrington noted that most Folsom teachers declined to fill out the online 360° assessment because they were concerned that their responses would be identifiable. Julie Pidgeon asked why so few teachers were asked to take the survey. L.Badeau explained that he selected 12 individuals to assess him, including parents, teachers, admin, etc. However, he was unaware that 12 was the minimum number, and that he could invite more people to assess him. L.Badeau stated that he did not intend to cause stress amongst the staff by selecting only a few individuals, and genuinely hopes to gather feedback and improve his own performance
- L.Badeau intends to show an example of the survey output at the next staff meeting, and B.Burrington will show L.Badeau how to re-open the survey and send it to the full staff. Katherine Hayward asked if the results could be shared with the school board. Bill Banas suggested soliciting comments from teachers as well.
- Lisa Pendolino feels that teacher morale should be the highest priority for the principal and admin. She believes that we've attracted an amazing group of teachers, and must let them know that we've got their back.

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Board Actions:

- RJ Sweeney made a motion to accept Kris Bowser's resignation; motion passed unanimously
- M.Henderson made a motion to approve the proposed 7/8 Overnight Field Trip to Boston; motion passed unanimously
- B.Vaughan made a motion to pay the bills; motion passed unanimously
- M.Henderson made a motion to authorize the Business Manager to make interfund transfers between school budget funds; motion passed unanimously
- RJ Sweeney made a motion to approve the Minutes from 3/2/2017; motion passed unanimously, and minutes were signed by the current board members who attended that meeting (RJ Sweeney and B.Vaughan)

Public Comments:

- Bob Buermann stated that there were a number of questions about the budget on Town Meeting Day, but those questions were deferred. He wanted to review those questions again with Lynn Carpenter present
- B.Buermann stated that the school Audit Report included revenues, the surplus, and the Bower Fund and Donald Robinson Estate Fund, but that the Annual Report (Town Report) did not include these sources of income. D.Cain agreed that they should have been included in the Town Report and that this was an oversight
- B.Buermann also stated that there were questions regarding the budget itself. For example, the growth in health care cost was ~\$54k, but that was higher than salary increases. Lynn Carpenter explained that principals interview staff to estimate health care needs, and that just a few additional people on the health care plan can greatly increase costs
- B.Buermann stated his frustration that board members were unable to answer detailed budget questions on Town Meeting day. RJ Sweeney responded that Board informs policy, and employs a Business Manager to account for the financial details. B.Burrington suggested showing annotations on each budget line in the Town Report to explain why dollar amounts have increased or decreased
- B.Buermann also suggested that the Board prepare an explanatory letter for inclusion in the Town Report
- B.Buermann also mentioned the question on Town Meeting day regarding the need for the newly created Dean of Students position. The explanation given on Town Meeting Day was that the Dean would replace individual para positions. L.Badeau clarified that the Dean's role is to reimagine our approach to special education, to prevent the need for hiring additional paras in the future.
- Melissa Hood asked if the position requires a licensed special educator. B.Burrington clarified that licensed special educators typically create curricula, rather than developing education plans
- Kaight Althoff expressed her confusion around the role of the Dean, and asked for increased clarity and communication with the town.
- L.Badeau explained that the definition of the role has changed. The original intention was to facilitate coordination between parents and educators. Now the Dean of Students will be responsible for reimaging the schools approach to behavior management, and working with our increasing population of students with more intense needs (IEP student, 504 plans, and even homeless students)

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- Melissa Hood wondered whether the role should be opened up to rehiring, since it may require different skills than originally imagined.
- Katherine Hayward asked why there was a raise for the Dean of Students. L.Badeau explained that the role changed from hourly to a salaried position to allow more flexibility when working with families and administrators, and to account for the additional time
- Tom Nolan asked if the Dean of Students would be an Administrative position. L.Badeau explained that the role is "quasi-administrative", since it's a salaried, 225-day position. However, that role will not be responsible for reviewing teacher performance.
- Kaight Althoff asked if the Dean is the 2nd in Command when the Principal is out of the building. L.Badeau confirmed that, and that the Guidance Counselor is 3rd in Command
- Melissa Hood explains that although the role has existed for nearly a year, the parents and students really don't understand it. L.Badeau and B.Burrington will look for any documentation regarding the role as it exists today, and prepare an explanation for the community
- Kaight Althoff asked for information on the newly hired special educator. B.Burrington explained that she is a licensed reading interventionist, and provides reading instruction. She also has a provisional license in special education

Executive Session:

Moved out of Executive Session with the following actions taken:


- L.Badeau will create an organizational chart and job description for the Dean of Students, with a detailed list of ways that the position is intended to aid students, parents, and teachers

Adjournment:

- D.Cain made a motion to adjourn at 10:07pm, and the motion passed emphatically

Next Meeting Date:


- Thursday, April 6th at 6pm, at the Folsom Education & Community Center




David Cain



Melanie Henderson



RJ Sweeney



Bentley Vaughan