

Minutes for the Thursday, June 30, 2016 South Hero School Board Special Meeting  
At Folsom Education & Community Center

**6:04 p.m.** Meeting called to order by Kris Bowser, Board Chair

**In attendance:** Kris Bowser, Dave Cain, RJ Sweeney, Bernie Toth, Bentley Vaughan, Board members; Emily Bowser, Board Secretary; Kari Banas, Melanie Hendersen, Tim Maxham, Julie Pigeon, Chad Pidgeon, Ethelyn Dubuque, Everett Dubuque, and Bob Mayhew

**Adjustment of Agenda:**

- Under Board Action: Minutes for June 2, 2016 were approved June 14, 2016 so do not need to be approved today
- Under Board Discussion, "Sign Warning for Special School Meeting on August 9, 2016" will be moved to the next meeting on July 14, 2016 as it is not ready.

**Public Comments:**

- Kari Banas presented her survey results, as it closed 6/20/16: diverse group of participants, 78 in total. The responses were varied and innovative. The surveys had been edited only to remove attacks on Board members and IP addresses. She provided two copies to the Board and is looking into making the results available more widely to the public.
- Kari Banas reported that her petition has received 330 signatures thus far and is still being circulated
- Kari Banas spoke about the Act 46 Community Board meeting she attended. She asked about a non-preferred model where GI, NH, ILM pursue K-6 and SH and Alburgh stay K-8. She felt that she got a positive response from Alburgh about that suggestion. At that meeting Bart Wilcox also presented his figures, and, after speaking with Barbara Burrington, Mrs. Banas felt those figures were a good baseline and could be used by the Board for its informational sessions prior to the vote.
  - Dave assured her that he does have both Mr. Wilcox and Andy Julow's numbers to present to the South Hero voters
- Members of the VFW attended, and they would like to hold their fundraiser at Folsom. They approached the Board about costs and expenses, wondered if the Board could make an exception and charge a flat fee of \$200, which is what the Catholic Church charges. Board agreed to make exception.

**Superintendent's Report:** *given to all Board Members as Barbara Burrington is on a well-deserved vacation this week and could not present.*

**Highlights:**

- Congratulations to Beth Hemingway, Director of Student Support Services! She has joined the Vermont Council of Special Education Rules and Regulations Committee. This committee works collaboratively with Agency of Education personnel on upcoming proposed Vermont Special Education Rules and Regulation changes

- GISU is officially in compliance with all of Title I, Part A and no longer on probation.

**Board Discussion:**

- Act 46 Non-Binding Referendum Vote Presentation Planning
  - David Cain proposed an outline for the informational sessions: 1) Explain what Act 46 is, 2) Explain what the vote actually is, 3) Review benefits, 4) Present figures, with the caveat that those figures rely heavily on estimates and speculation, 5) put those figures in context of budgeting and taxes, 6) segue into what Folsom 7-8 can offer versus what another option might be able to offer students.
    - RJ Sweeney proposed that one of the opening slides about Act 46 include the fact that the State has been at best unhelpful and at worst adversarial in the process of understanding just what Act 46 actually means, so that people can understand why this process is so involved and consumes so much time.
    - The Board expressed concerns about how to handle the public comments portion of the meeting. Ultimately decided to limit the immediate time after the presentation to questions, which Tim Maxham will moderate, and then the Board will leave their position at the front of the room and the floor will be opened to public comments for community members to make their voices heard, with a time limit on how long they can speak for (time limit to be determined).
  - RJ Sweeney proposed using an outside moderator to try to keep the tone of the informational meeting civil. The Board asked Tim Maxham if he would be willing to act as moderator and he agreed to perform that role.
  - Kris Bowser brought up the new communications planned by the State Agency of Education regarding clarifications of acceptable alternative structure mergers that might be considered and maintaining small school grants and hold harmless that will be coming out in August and October. This information may provide further clarity but unfortunately will come after the South Hero vote.
    - Board to consider a handout for the informational meeting with these new announcements, as well as (a link to) the recent article from Vermont Digger about Act 46. to put something together for the public
  - Bentley Vaughan expressed concerns about the Board maintaining neutrality in the presentation, Board members all agreed that that was important. He went on to press the rest of the Board to see if, after the vote, they will fight for the K-8 option.
    - RJ Sweeney replied that the Board doesn't have all of the information from the AOE, so while he's open to all information, it's just all in the air right now so he's trying to keep all options available.
    - Dave Cain replied that if South Hero really doesn't want to go for K-6 by a large margin, he's going to propose at Act 46 committee that they shift to

a K-8 so that South Hero maintains all of its options, would like to keep ILM/NH/GI from merging without South Hero.

- Follow-Up on Library Board Representative
  - The Board has not come up with anyone willing or interested in serving.
  - Board opting to follow the path of the Selectboard, which has a community member as their representative, who reports back to them quarterly. Library Board has indicated that they have several people willing to step into that role.
- K-8 Options Sub-Committee Follow-Up
  - Melanie Hendersen, Jen Horn-Lyon, and Barbara O'Reilly have expressed interest in being on the committee. Bentley Vaughan will be the Board representative
  - Kris Bowser presented to the Board information about School Board subcommittees to familiarize themselves with the scope and responsibilities so that they can define the purpose of the committee as a Board before it moves forward:
    - What is the purpose of the committee: Explore viable options to maintain PreK-8 in a preferred structure.
    - What is the authority of the committee? Explore other options and bring back recommendations, but not act on behalf of the School Board without clearing this action with the Board \\\\\\\ Research/Gather information from all sources (town clerk, superintendent).
      - Bentley Vaughan asked, in light of that decision, what happens if the subcommittee brings back an option and the Board says "no"
      - Kris Bowser expressed that she feels Bentley sees himself on one side and the rest of the Board as antagonistic to him. The Board is setting up the subcommittee to acquire information, and she couldn't foresee a situation where they would say "no" without a good reason, which would be discussed by the Board as a whole.
      - Bentley Vaughan replied that he feels that the Board is unwilling to see where other towns are at in the Act 46 process, such as Georgia, and the rest of the Board is constantly shutting him down. He does feel that they're on the other side of the table. There is polarization on this Board.
      - Kris Bowser reminded him that Georgia was a town that had already been reached out to, and that their initial conversations included the possibility of moving towards creating a high school. In follow-up conversations with the State she brought information to the Board that it's unclear as to whether South Hero would be allowed to pursue an alliance outside of the islands. When this information was shared with the Board, the Board with input from the public who were in attendance decided in light of that we would instead put our energies into the GISU merger.

- Dave Cain wanted to clarify whether the subcommittee members could attend an Act 46 committee meeting: the Board agreed that they absolutely could, though not in any 'official' capacity.
- Kris Bowser pointed out that there is a lot of information to be gathered before the committee even gets to that point from websites and town clerk offices.
- Chad Pidgeon asked if the subcommittee would be authorized to speak to AOE and the Dept of Ed, and the Board agreed that they absolutely should be.
- Julie Pigeon voiced her support for the Board having assistance in information-gathering, as it's a huge undertaking.
- Melanie Hendersen, who will be on the subcommittee, clarified that she could call town clerk offices or supervisory union offices as a private citizen to look into things; Board agreed yes
- Bentley Vaughan asked for clarification that the subcommittee would be able to go to other school board meetings; Board agreed that yes, but only to gather information. It would not be permissible to actually reach out to that Board, or identify yourself as part of the South Hero subcommittee at that time.
- Kari Banas suggested that the Act 46 committee join other committees across the state in trying to get the legislature to make changes in the law itself. Board agreed that that was something that could be considered down the line.
- The Board agreed that the subcommittee will decide whether it wants to go with majority rules or consensus rules
- A term of office will stand as a one year committee, to be reassessed
- The filling of vacancies will be handled in the same way the original committee was put together
- The subcommittee will report at the second meeting of the month (on the 3rd Thursday).
- The subcommittee has a budget for legal, to be used at the discretion of the Board.

**Board Action:**

- Bernie Toth made motion to pay bills, seconded by Dave Cain. Motion passed unanimously.
- Bernie Toth made a motion to deny teacher request for additional funds to reimburse for a conference (see section **Board Correspondence/Sharing**), Kris seconded, Dave voted for, RJ abstained, and Bentley voted against. Motion to deny funds passed 3-1 with 1 abstention.
- Bentley Vaughan made a motion for the VFW July 27th event be a \$200 flat fee, RJ Sweeney seconded. The Board passed the motion unanimously.
- Dave Cain made motion to create a committee called the PreK-8 exploratory committee, whose job it is to explore alternative merger structures with the authority to gather info

from state, town clerks, and superintendents for a period of one year. Kris Bowser seconded, motion passed unanimously.

- Approval of Minutes of June 14, 2016 tabled until amendments requested by Bentley Vaughn can be made for the next Board meeting
- Dave Cain made motion to accept former Principal Perry's proposal to replace the tables and all 12 pockets. Kris Bowser seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
- Kris Bowser made a motion to accept the gym audio proposal, RJ Sweeney seconded; the motion passed unanimously
- Kris Bowser made a motion to accept the gym stage curtains proposal, RJ Sweeney seconded; the motion passed unanimously
- Kris Bowser made a motion to accept the gym stage lighting proposal, RJ Sweeney seconded; the motion passed unanimously
- Bernie Toth made a motion to deny the request for the first day of school to be a half day due to the fact that the Board previously voted to accept the Supervisory-Union-wide schedule. Dave Cain seconded; motion passed unanimously.
- Motion to adjourn made by RJ Sweeney, Bernie Toth seconded at 8:44 p.m., motion passed unanimously.

**Executive Session:** none

**Board Correspondence/Sharing:**

- Received a letter from Folsom Staff for first day of school to be a half day.
  - Superintendent Burrington sent the Board clarification that the calendar is not set the way it used to be; Board doesn't have the same leeway. GISU board accepted the calendar as it was presented, and if South Hero wants to grant the request, the Board would need to petition State for a waiver and justify it.
- Request from Teacher for reimbursement for a conference
  - Superintendent Burrington denied the request already due to the fact that contractually teachers are allowed \$900 for conferences.
  - The board was concerned about setting a precedent that could have an impact on Folsom's budget.

**Follow-up/Old Business:**


**Maintenance spending update**

- June 30, 2016 is last day for POs need to be signed so there has been a lot of last-minute work done by Steve Berard, especially as Folsom is currently without a principal
- The tables presented an issue: with the floor being raised 0.5 inches, the pockets currently housing the tables will not function properly. On the advice of Jenny Perry and Steve Berard and serious concerns about the functionality and overall safety of the current tables, which he deemed "dangerous", the decision was made to replace the entire units. Julie Pigeon, during the meeting, agreed with that assessment.
- The switch gear PO has been completed and work will be done over the summer.


- The stage renovation estimates finally came through and there was enough in the Robinson endowment to apply, so the installation of new audio system, curtains, and lighting will proceed.

**Meeting officially adjourned at 8:44p.m.**

**Next meeting will be July 14, 2016 at 6:00p.m., Folsom Education and Community Center**

  
Kristina Bowser

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RJ Sweeney

  
Dave Cain

  
Bernadette Toth

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Bentley Vaughan