

South Hero School Board

Meeting **Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017** at Folsom Education & Community Center

~~XXXX~~ MINUTES

Call to order at 6:05 p.m.

In attendance:

-Board members: David Cain, Melanie Henderson, Tim Maxham, RJ Sweeney, Bentley Vaughan

-Staff: Don Van Nostrand, Julie Pidgeon, Rob Gess, GISU business manager

-Audience: Jim Jones (LCATV), Andy Julow, Bill and Kari Banas, Andre Bertmann

Adjustment of Agenda

-Andy Julow of the new Champlain Islands Unified Union School District will speak after public comment

-Memorandum of Understanding for Little Tot's Academy in Colchester

-Additional item regarding a student issue added to the executive session

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the Oct. 19, 2017, meeting were approved after amendment on a voice vote. T. Maxham moved and RJ Sweeney seconded the motion to approve the amended minutes. The minutes were corrected as followed: On page 2, the word "everyone" was changed to "anyone" in section 3 on public comment. On page 3, the word "student" was changed to "school" choice in section 4.

Superintendent Don Van Nostrand's Report

The district experienced network challenges at the beginning of October. Director of Information Technology for the Grand Isle Supervisory Union Dave Brisson is exploring questions raised about the network and will determine what can be fixed and what needs to be replaced.

T. Maxham requested detail on where Islands students are attending high school.

Principal Susan McKelvie's Report

The board reviewed Principal Susan McKelvie's report and M. Henderson noted that a long-term substitute music teacher, Suzanne Tall, has been hired for Ms. Kauffeld's planned professional absence this winter.

Public Comments

- 1) Bill Banas asked the superintendent to clarify the problem the district is having with its network. D. Van Nostrand noted that the web filters are working well. The issue has more to do with cyber-security and the risk of hacks.
- 2) Kari Banas expressed satisfaction with the job the current board is doing and encouraged board members whose positions are open in the next election to run for re-election.
- 3) Andy Julow of the Champlain Islands Unified Union School District addressed the board about a proposal for use of Grand Isle School for offices of the Grand Isle Supervisory Union. This proposal will be submitted to the GISU Board for action at its Nov. 29 meeting. A. Julow presented a drawing that showed a repurposing of part of the Grand Isle School for the Central Office. The space will be greater than current office space. The Champlain Islands Unified Union School

District plans to charge GISU member districts the same amount of rent that they are currently paying. A move in supervisory union offices to Grand Isle School should be cost-neutral to South Hero.

B. Vaughn commented that he thought one of the goals of moving the Central Office to Grand Isle School was to save money. He noted that it does not save money if the rent is the same. A. Julow replied that it is a cost savings to the Champlain Islands Unified Union School District because it will own the Grand Isle School building under unionization, and rent money will come back to it. A. Julow mentioned that Grand Isle School will need to be renovated to build a secure wall, an outside entrance and some expansion to the parking lot. The Champlain Islands Unified Union School District will pay for renovation.

Superintendent D. Van Nostrand said it would be beneficial to have curriculum and IT in the same office as Central Office staff. He is neutral on the move.

M. Henderson noted that the transition to the new space would be summer 2019. D. Cain asked when the lease with the current office was up. D. Van Nostrand said he has asked but not received a lease.

The proposal will be before the GISU Board for action at its Nov. 29 meeting at 6:30 p.m. in North Hero School.

Board Discussion

1) Act 46: Former Superintendent Barbara Burrington provided the board feedback on its Act 46 proposal. M. Henderson would like to put the document out for public review with a goal of submitting it to the state by Dec. 1. Some of B. Burrington's feedback included as follows:

- The school is considered K-8 because it tuitions its pre-K students.

- Include an aerial photo of South Hero to show the school's location geographically in relation to other communities.

- Reiterate that South Hero should be granted an alternative governance because it meets all the goals of Act 46, including educating students in a cost-efficient manner. South Hero would be an "independent partner" in the islands. It was noted that South Hero was deemed advisable unanimously when the Champlain Islands Unified Union School District proposal was put to vote last fall in recognition that it was deemed unlikely that Act 46 merger would pass in the town.

- Soften language or remove language describing the 3-by-1 merger proposal and emphasize instead the spirit of collaboration in GISU. (D. Cain noted the point was to emphasize South Hero did everything it could to pursue that option. The board discussed whether to include that information. T. Maxham asked for a copy of the document to review. He noted that South Hero tried legislatively for a 3-by-1-by-~~3~~ district, but a 3-by-1 district was what the Legislature passed.)

- Include the Champlain Islands Parent Child Center in the report because Folsom collaborates by sharing its space for after-school care.

M. Henderson revised the report to take into account B. Burrington's suggestions. In addition, M. Henderson noted that B. Burrington provided a detailed list of the ways that South Hero collaborates with GISU, including centralizing curriculum, professional development, busing, special education and including several cost-sharing structures.

The board will publish the document for public review on Front Porch Forum, *The Islander*, the Patriot Press, and provide printed documents at the town hall, the school and library.

was noted that the document is a legal document. B. Banas asked than an executive summary be included.

D. Cain proposed that the 3-by-1 discussion remain in the document for now, with the plan to remove it after the board has had time to review.

2) Policy Code D9 – Resignations: D. Van Nostrand noted that the policy has licensed employees and unlicensed employees and resignations are determined by licensure. The board only manages licensed employees. Typically, licensed employees submit a resignation to the building principal and superintendent, and the board needs to take action. With an unlicensed employee, the resignation goes to the superintendent and is effective upon acceptance by the superintendent; it does not go through the board. Once the resignation has been submitted to the superintendent, it cannot be withdrawn unilaterally by the employee. It was clarified that this policy refers to employees under contract and does not apply to an employee choosing not to sign a contract. This policy mirrors the GISU policy.

3) FY19 Budget: R. Gess updated the board on its financials. He is working on the GISU budget and waiting for information on technology needs. He has sent the school budget templates out to principals and has met with Principal Susan McKelvie about Folsom’s budget template for FY19. He and McKelvie have reviewed the discretionary expenses. R. Gess noted that wages, benefits, and high school tuition make up 72% of the budget. He has looked at FY16 and FY17 actual expenses and compared them to FY18 to provide data for the FY19 budget. The goal is to “flat budget” FY19 to be close to what it was in FY17 and FY18. He plans to have a budget for the board in the first week of December.

RJ Sweeney said it would be helpful to have a financial person at Town Meeting on Saturday, March 3. The superintendent noted that the goal is to provide the board with the knowledge to answer the public’s questions, and it may not be possible for the Supervisory Union to staff all town meetings. D. Cain noted the board will aim to provide more information in the town report. M. Henderson said it’s important for the board to include information about educational outcomes. T. Maxham noted that South Hero will know what the state has decided regarding the Act 46 report and what the school needs to work on for educational standards. He noted that educational requirements are changing frequently, and the school is called upon to support families in many ways.

T. Maxham asked about last year’s actuals. R. Gess noted that South Hero has an \$83,000 to \$85,000 overrun in the FY17 budget, prior to auditing, primarily due to unexpected tuition costs. The district is still waiting for equalized pupil data from the state. M. Henderson noted South Hero will have the small schools grant for one more year.

The board discussed general trends in state education spending and pressures this year.

A. Bertmann asked about energy costs. B. Vaughn noted he was researching options to reduce those costs. D. Cain asked a question about the cost of electricity and how it’s billed, and B. Vaughn noted that the electrical bill is around \$32,000. One consideration would be to look at an energy audit. A. Bertmann asked about the heating (oil).

4) Budget to Actuals: R. Gess reviewed the report. They are looking at tuition bills from the high schools. They are hoping for as accurate a tuition count as possible for the next budget. He reviewed ways that the district is trying to work on volume discounts on items such as technology and paper, for example.

A. Bertmann asked about the quality of the Chromebooks. R. Gess noted that the purchasing is done by the school districts. He said there might be an opportunity to do bulk purchasing for the Islands. The individual districts are responsible for ensuring the quality of the equipment purchased and how they are maintained. A. Bertmann mentioned Dell as more expensive but possibly offering better quality. D. Cain asked if Dave Brisson could attend a future South Hero board meeting to provide a technology update after the budgeting process.

D. Cain noted questions about the Food Service line items and how it is budgeted. R. Gess said he would provide information at a future meeting. D. Van Nostrand noted it is difficult for the food service program to be cost-neutral unless the board increases the price of meals. It was noted that when the board attempted to increase the prices last

year, it learned there are regulations about how much food prices can be increased. M. Henderson asked if the board should expect to be subsidizing the food service program. D. Van Nostrand noted that many districts do. D. Cain said the board appeared to not be budgeting for that accurately in the past.

Board Action

-Approval of bills for payment. B. Vaughn reviewed the bills. B. Vaughn moved, and T. Maxham seconded a motion that the bills be paid. The motion passed on a voice vote.

-Little Tot's Academy in Colchester: The board considered memorandum of understanding for a pre-kindergarten partnership with Little Tot's Academy for 2017-18. T. Maxham moved the board approve the partnership. M. Henderson seconded the motion. Approved on a voice vote.

Board Correspondence / Sharing

None.

Follow-Up / Old Business

None.

Executive Session

RJ Sweeney made a motion, and T. Maxham seconded a motion to go into executive session at 7:40 p.m. to discuss the solar contract and a student issue. Approved on a voice vote

The board came out of executive session at 8:25 p.m.

Adjourn

The board adjourned at 8:30 p.m. T. Maxham made the motion to adjourn. M. Henderson seconded the motion. The board voted in favor to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.








