

South Hero School Board

Meeting **Thursday, Nov. 30, 2017**, at Folsom Education & Community Center

DRAFT MINUTES

Call to order at 6:12 p.m.

In attendance:

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

-Staff: Susan McKelvie, Don Van Nostrand, Julie Pidgeon

-Audience: Buddy Meilleu (LCATV), Farryl Bertmann, David Hobbs

Adjustment of Agenda

-The board added to its discussion a clarification of its representation to the GISU Board.

-The board removed the need for an executive session

-The board added time for M. Henderson to share about a workshop on governance.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the Nov. 16, 2017, meeting were approved as amended on a voice vote. D. Cain made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. M. Henderson seconded the motion. The minutes were amended by M. Henderson to correct that the structure South Hero tried to join was a 3x1x1, not a 3x1x3.

Principal Susan McKelvie's Report

S. McKelvie investigated at the board's request instructional time in other schools. She said it was hard to make comparisons because of the differences in how schools are structured and how they determine which students engage in which unified arts and other classes. She shared a chart with data from 4 schools to compare to Folsom's instructional minutes.

She shared some observations. Some schools offer technology (STEM and/or STEAM) as an elective. One school does not offer band because it could not find a qualified band teacher. It was noted that music at Folsom is available to all students; additionally, students can take band and chorus. She said she found no one way to allot minutes for instructional time. D. Cain asked how she selected the schools. S. McKelvie said she went through a list of schools of comparable structure and size in our region. She reached out to six and heard back from four. She asked them to send her their master schedules. She noted that master schedules would not necessarily fully describe all the times that math is taking place, for example, because that instruction might have different names in the schedule, such as coaching. She noted that the differences extend beyond instructional minutes. For example, how middle school is configured can be different. In some schools, seventh and eighth grade is middle school; in others, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade is middle school. She noted there is a shift in language and expectations in the common core between K-5 and 6-8.

The board discussed technology education. T. Maxham noted the importance of providing technology instruction to prepare students for the workforce. S. McKelvie said technology does not necessarily need to be a standalone class and can be embedded into classroom instruction. She noted that the tools are there, and it's important for the school to be thoughtful about how technology is used instructionally.

D. Cain asked about recess and if it is typically one block in schools. S. McKelvie said that was the case and noted that Folsom's elementary students can take a movement break in the morning around snack time.

M. Henderson said she is not concerned about the Stem instructional minutes because it is embedded in the classroom. S. McKelvie said that currently the 8th graders don't have any separate tech instruction with librarian Conny Thoma. She wonders about that choice and whether that age group should be doing more than just what is in the classroom. She noted that other schools handle this instruction differently. For example, one school that divides the year into quarters has students rotate through a STEM class one quarter a year.

Public Comments

The public indicated it was interested in the topics for board discussion.

Board Discussion

1) Solar: There is solar farm in Cambridge, and Folsom's agreement was to buy 80 percent of its output. The problem was that it was more than Folsom needed. The board has reached an agreement to drop back to 60%. There will be clarifying language that Folsom owns the REC (renewable energy credit), and Cambridge Solar believes at the end of 2018, Folsom will have used up all the excess credits the school has accumulated so far. If the school has excess credits that would expire, Cambridge Solar will reimburse it.

2) Act 46 Proposal: M. Henderson received written feedback from T. Maxham and made some revisions that were clarifications as well as a correction. She said she made no major changes to the document. She highlighted the changes:

- Zooming in on the map.
- The fact that South Hero tuitions Pre-K was added
- The description of local farming was broadened
- The enrollment number was adjusted to 135 to note that Pre-K enrollment is not included in Folsom's number. M. Henderson clarified enrollment information in the graphs and tables.
- It was clarified that an increase in tuition results in a decrease in spending in the K-8 school or an increase in the tax rate.
- More context was added for the academic data.
- In the section regarding the history of merger discussions, M. Henderson read the language about the 3x1x1 merger option. The board members indicated approval of the language.
- T. Maxham suggested the board sign the document to indicate endorsement of the proposal.

M. Henderson said she had received positive comments in general terms from a few people. D. Cain asked her to provide a recap for the audience. M. Henderson said Folsom has pursued every preferred merger option under Act 46. The remaining and best option is to remain an independent district within the GISU. Folsom would retain its own school board and K-8 structure and high school choice while

working within the GISU.

D. Cain noted that M. Henderson's report is South Hero's request to the state to approve this approach. The next step is for the Secretary of Education to review the plan and make a recommendation to the state Board of Education. If it is approved, then South Hero would not be included in a statewide reorganization plan. The board will not know for a while what will happen with the small schools grant.

D. Hobbs ask if the small schools grant was going to disappear? M. Henderson said the grant will continue for the towns that merge. Towns that don't merge can apply for it on an annual basis. As Folsom's population slowly gets bigger, the grant decreases. M. Henderson said the town is guaranteed to get it in the next budget cycle, but then South Hero will have to reapply for it. It's not off the table but South Hero may have to work harder for it.

F. Bertmann asked if Folsom is better positioned to make its case for this option under Act 49? M. Henderson noted Act 49 was an attempt to make Act 46 more palatable to some communities. She said that it was always an option to have an alternate structure under Act. 46. F. Bertmann expressed appreciation for M. Henderson's work.

The board discussed whether the report should be signed or not. B. Vaughn said he was ok with signing it. T. Maxham complimented M. Henderson on her work and recommended the board take ownership of the report and as a group ask for the state's consideration in accepting the report.

F. Bertmann suggested letters of support from the community. J. Pidgeon suggested including the fact that the report was shared with the community. There was some discussion of the final wording.

T. Maxham moved, and B. Vaughan seconded that the report be signed. The motion was approved on a voice vote.

The board asked D. Van Nostrand to follow up on the next steps at the state level.

3) GISU Board Representation: At the GISU meeting last night, there was a question about South Hero's representation. The town has 3 representatives to the board. Earlier in the year, B. Vaughan and M. Henderson were chosen as the representatives, with RJ Sweeney as the alternate. D. Cain said his presumption was that he was also one of the GISU Board representatives by virtue of being the chairman of the South Hero School Board. M. Henderson moved that D. Cain be a representative to the GISU Board. T. Maxham seconded the motion. It was approved on a voice vote.

4) Governance: M. Henderson updated the board on a seminar she attended on policy governance. She shared what she learned about how board members are encouraged to clarify the way they work with a superintendent. Andy Julow of the Champlain Islands Unified Union School District (CIUSD) is going to try the recommended governance structure with the CIUSD to pilot it. D. Cain asked a question about how the principal and South Hero Board fit into the governance structure. D. Van Nostrand clarified that a hybrid model of governance is used. The superintendent supervises the principal, but the board hires the principal. He noted that he sees the amount of work board members do and said there is an advantage to shifting responsibilities from the board to the superintendent to accomplish the board's tasks. The board's responsibility would then be more to the electorate and to set policy, and the superintendent would be tasked with carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities. T. Maxham noted that

governance of schools is confusing to the public. He also noted frustration about how schools are funded and the financial communication from the state.

Board Action

1) Approve Bills for Payment: B. Vaughan moved and T. Maxham seconded that bills be paid. Approved on a voice vote.

Board Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Follow-Up / Old Business

B. Vaughn asked about payment to Cambridge Solar. D. Cain noted South Hero is following the agreement.

T. Maxham asked about the FY19 budget. S. McKelvie said she met with Rob Gess before Thanksgiving. He is generating a draft of the budget. D. Van Nostrand said the budget draft would be at the first meeting in December.

The board clarified that its next meetings will be held on Dec. 7 and Dec. 21 and will focus on the FY19 budget.

T. Maxham said he wants to see where spending decisions the board has made throughout the year show up in the budget as line items. He wants to know exactly what those items were, and what line item they went into. He noted that residents typically ask why line items are over budget at Town Meeting. D. Cain said the board will go through its budget and prepare for questions before Town Meeting.

M. Henderson asked if the board wanted to do any comparative checking on the rent proposed for the GISU offices in Grand Isle School. D. Cain said he would call South Hero resident Nate Heyward to seek his expertise.

Adjourn

The board adjourned at 8:20 p.m. T. Maxham made a motion to adjourn. B. Vaughan seconded the motion. Approved on a voice vote.
