

Grand Isle Supervisory Union
South Hero School District
School Board Regular Meeting
Thursday, Dec. 19, 2019, at 6 p.m.
Location: Folsom Education & Community Center

DRAFT MINUTES

Call to Order

1. Call to order at 6:02 p.m.

Introductions. In attendance:

-Board members: Melanie Henderson, Tim Maxham, Bentley Vaughan, Bob Chutter, Erin Morse

-Staff: Susan McKelvie, Michael Clark, Rob Gess, Megan Grube, Julie Pidgeon

-Audience: Jim Jones (LCATV), Tom Nolan, Alison Perry, Samantha Cantell, Jenny Degree, Guy Maguire

2. Adjustment of Agenda

-Added conversation about board recruitment

3. Public Comments

T. Nolan read a statement that said morale among faculty is strong at Folsom. He expressed appreciation for the job Principal McKelvie and the board are doing. Superintendent Clark and M. Henderson both thanked T. Nolan and faculty attending the meeting for taking time to share a positive perspective.

The text of the statement is as follows:

“Dear Board Members,

“I’m speaking to you today after discussion with my teaching colleagues to address a false perception some of us have heard about tension here at Folsom. I would like to share that in recent discussions many faculty members expressed a desire to let the board and community know that things are good at Folsom.

“Working in any professional community, and especially a school, always involves some amount of healthy debate and disagreement, and Folsom is no different. However, the main message I would like to share this evening is one of continued support for our school and Principal McKelvie and gratitude toward the South Hero Community.

“Susan McKelvie is an involved, supportive, and devoted principal of our school. Susan is committed to ensuring the success and happiness of staff and students and fostering positive, strong working relationships to accomplish our school’s goals.

“Our small school continues to grow and change and there will always be more work to be done. However, in spite of any challenges we see, morale in the Folsom Community is high and we continue to feel proud and privileged to work in this wonderful place.

“As we close the calendar year, we just wanted you all to know that we appreciate the work of the board and the work of our principal to give our kids the best education possible.

“Thank you.”

T. Maxham expressed appreciation for the middle school concert he attended and the support of the faculty in performing with students.

4. Consent Agenda (Action)

A. Approve minutes from Dec. 5, 2019. B. Chutter made a motion to approve the minutes of the Dec. 5, 2019, meeting as presented. T. Maxham seconded the motion. Approved on a voice vote.

5. Reports

A. Principal’s (S. McKelvie): S. McKelvie referred the board to her report. She noted that Steve Berard completed water testing, and the school did not expect results until next year.

E. Morse asked about the elementary musical. S. McKelvie said it would be happening, but it was evolving as it had in the past. She said a letter would be going home to families from music teacher Karlie Kauffeld outlining the plan.

Data Update: S. McKelvie shared data on the lunch program. She said Folsom has 40, or about one-fourth, of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. She shared data from food services manager Ariana Middlemiss regarding the number of lunches sold and told board members that Middlemiss can provide other data if requested.

S. McKelvie also shared data from the Trimester 1 report cards. She posed some guiding questions for the board members to think about: 1) What is the purpose of the report card? 2) What does it mean to students and families? She noted at Folsom there is a difference in numeric v. letter grades between elementary and middle school. She said teachers set their own criteria for their classes, and the score on the report reflects a cumulative calculation. She said the report card data cannot be compared to Smarter Balanced standardized assessments or other assessment tools because they don’t align. She said the report cards are not helpful to evaluating the effectiveness of the school’s programs, but they can be helpful when looking at individual children.

She shared that conversations are taking place in the district about revamping the reporting system. This move toward a more effective reporting system will put the school more in alignment with proficiency-based assessment.

M. Henderson asked a clarifying question about the Common Core and whether it provides guidance about proficiency. M. Grube said the Common Core gives the standard of knowledge or skill expected by grade level but does not provide measurement scales. The district is working on developing those scales. The board and principal discussed conference attendance. J. Pidgeon shared that middle school parents

have access to student progress online, and report card information is available online. B. Chutter supported the movement to have a standard reporting format.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment: Folsom will soon start its Comprehensive Needs Assessment to set its goals for the next school year. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment has the school take stock of where it stands in relation to the Education Quality Standards (Academic Proficiency, High Quality Staffing, Personalization, Investment Priorities and Safe, Healthy Schools). M. Grube reviewed the process. She noted that the GISU has been talking about how to move the planning process so that it better matches the budgeting cycle.

M. Henderson clarified that during this six-month planning process, the board will review data and be asked to approve the plan.

B. Chutter asked M. Clark how the district can systemically ensure this process continues even when staff and board members change. M. Clark shared that data reporting will be a regular agenda item to help board members engage in the continuous evaluation and goal-setting process. M. Henderson said she would like to hear examples that show outcomes from the goals. S. McKelvie said she will continue to periodically report to the board on progress toward the school's goals.

Board Business

6. FY21 Budget (M. Clark/discussion/possible action): M. Clark reported issues with equalized pupil data from the state that informs budgeting. The state's numbers did not include 40 high school students that the district had confirmed. The error had to do with another district decertifying its data because of errors. M. Clark noted he is working on correcting the number. M. Clark said the board has a level expenditure budget. He said that was notable since the state is predicting budgets are going up 5% statewide. He said the board will not know the tax implications of that budget until it gets accurate data from the state. The superintendent noted the effort his office is making to scrutinize tuition bills and confirm that the town is receiving an accurate count for its high school students. M. Henderson said last year the board had to warn a budget that was based on an estimated number, and it would be great if the state's number for equalized pupils was final before the budget warning.

S. McKelvie answered board questions from the last meeting

-Field Trip spending: The amount was raised last year. It was less than \$2,000 in the past. She advocated raising the amount then, and she said the line item would be spent down by the end of the year.

-Library renovation: She said last year Conny Thoma presented a plan to transform the school library into a learning center, and the board supported the plan and decided to spread that cost over three years. She said the school will spend all the money budgeted for this year. Dan Fouts, library media specialist, just finished auditing the book collection and will be working on updating the book inventory. She advocated the board continue the three-year plan and keep the budgeted amount at \$17,000 for year 2 of the plan. T. Maxham asked if the amount for book purchases should be moved to a different line item. S. McKelvie said she is fine with how the library renovation is budgeted currently. She noted that the school plans to hold a Scholastic Book Fair to raise money for books. B. Chutter asked if based on the audit the board should consider spending more than budgeted on books. S. McKelvie said she will gather data from D. Fouts and investigate. The board increased the spending for library renovation to \$17,000.

-Addition of 2 paraprofessional special educators. S. McKelvie confirmed that the school had added 2 paraprofessionals to meet the needs of students' special education plans. She acknowledged the difficulty in budgeting in that area without necessarily knowing the future needs of the student population.

-Coaching Stipend: S. McKelvie said the stipend for coaches and the athletic director was increased last year. She said the board could choose to increase it again. E. Morse asked how Folsom compared to other schools. S. McKelvie said Folsom is competitive with other island schools, but Chittenden County schools pay more (up to \$2,000). S. McKelvie said many staff had stepped up this year to ensure the sports programs could continue. She noted the need for coaches also fluctuates based on the number of students.

The board discussed budgeting for improvements to the facility given the flat budget for the second year in a row. B. Vaughan said the facility recommendations he and Steve Berard came up with were a replacement burner for the boiler, paving, and attic insulation. S. McKelvie said there are also smaller purchases such as energy efficient lightbulbs and shades. B. Chutter noted the board could take advantage of the financial situation to fund building improvements. E. Morse asked about the energy audit. B. Vaughan said he participated in the audit and the recommendations were smaller items. S. McKelvie asked if the board would like a proposal for spending on the building. M. Clark said he learned of an organization that helps create building maintenance plans. He will share the contact information with S. McKelvie.

T. Maxham shared that at a recent meeting, the South Street parking spots were discussed and the question was raised whether the school should change the angled parking to parallel parking for safety. There was some discussion of parking.

M. Henderson asked where Folsom's budget stands in comparison to the other island communities. R. Gess said CIUUSD's budget and Alburgh's budget are higher than Folsom's. M. Henderson said she does not want to go overboard with spending due to the unexpected increase in taxes last year. B. Vaughan said Steve Berard has recommended the replacement burner, and it could be extremely expensive if the part failed without a replacement. S. McKelvie said the quote a year ago was approximately \$18,000. The board decided to add that to the budget. R. Gess added \$20,000 to plant improvements with a note that it was for a backup burner.

With the changes, the budget increase was 1.23%.

7. January meeting schedule (M. Henderson)(Discussion/possible Action): Thursday, Jan. 23, is the deadline for information to the town report, and a budget warning is due prior to that. The board will meet Jan. 2 and Jan. 16; its regular meetings.

8. Town Meeting Preparation (M. Henderson)(Discussion): M. Henderson said she has a template for the presentation. She also said she reread David Cain's town report from last year that explained budget changes by line item. The board will follow the same format, and R. Gess said he would help provide details. M. Henderson recommended the board review a draft of the letter for the town report at its Jan. 2 meeting. T. Maxham confirmed Town Meeting will be Feb. 29. Board members were encouraged to submit petitions by the January deadline should they wish to run for re-election.

9. Board Recruitment: M. Henderson said she plans to post a notice to Front Porch Forum encouraging South Hero residents to join the board. She also suggested posting information in the Patriot Press and the Islander. Petitions are due Jan. 27, 2020. B. Chutter said he was interested in completing a petition for one more year to allow recruitment of other citizens. There are 2 two-year seats and 2 three-year seats up for re-election. E. Morse said she was willing to do a longer term.

8. Mission Statement Update (M. Henderson) (Discussion): M. Henderson said 9 people provided feedback on the mission statement. She shared the comments. M. Henderson clarified that the job of the school board and the job of the school are different. M. Clark said the job of the school board is to make sure the school is well run, not to run the school. The board decided to reflect on the feedback and reconsider the mission statement language in February.

10. Other

Executive Session (if needed pursuant to 1 V.S.A. sec. 313)

Closure

11. Setting the next agenda

Jan. 2: Review draft letter for the Town Report, FY21 budget discussion

12. Adjourn

The board adjourned at 8:05 PM on a voice vote. B Vaughan made a motion to adjourn. B. Chutter seconded the motion
