

**Minutes for the Thursday, April 6, 2017
South Hero School Board Meeting at Folsom Education &
Community Center**

Called to Order:

Meeting called to order at 6:04 pm

In attendance:

David Cain, RJ Sweeney, Bentley Vaughan, Melanie Henderson, Board members; Barbara Burrington, Superintendent; Lenny Badeau, Principal; Lynn Carpenter, GISU Business Manager; Beth Hemingway, GISU Director of Student Support Services; Kari Banas, Bill Banas, Jenny Degree, Julie Pidgeon, Alison Perry, Tom Nolan, Mary Ann Fisher, Helen Bishop, Peter Gregg, Sandy Gregg, Robert Althoff, Steve Trombley, Heather Trombley, Kristin Marcotte, Liese Reagan, Windy Heyn, Alicia Poquette, Amy McGettrick, Laura Myler, Megan Bessette, Sue Bumbeck, Maia Skutel Jensen, Adam Wilson, Caley Wilson, Jessica McAllister, Tim Maxham, Mike Wickenden, Kerri Hoag, Linda Perry, Tara Couture, Hannah Morrison, Elizabeth Nicholson, Melissa Hood, Fred Heslop, Chad Pidgeon, Farryl Bertmann, Andre Bertmann, Kathy Robinson

Adjustment of Agenda:

- Move Appointment of New board Member to First Item
- Delay Board Vision Planning and Establishment of Standing Board Subcommittees until next meeting

New Board Member Appointment:

- Mark Naud and Tim Maxham both volunteered for the open position
- Mark Naud is the father of Lucia (10th grade) and Lucas (8th grade), and has many interests in the community. He offers both board managerial skills and fiscal responsibility. He has seen the challenges of previous years, and would be happy to help with the challenges at hand and ahead until the end of the 1-year term
- Tim Maxham has been the Town and School Moderator for 30+ years, is an alumnus of Folsom, and moved to South Hero in the 60's. He has 4 children, all of them former Folsom students, and has been attending school meetings regularly for the past 3 years. Understands there are issues, but comes without a personal agenda. Several community members have asked him to come forth.

Superintendent's Report:

- The GISU Board met on March 23rd to elect officers, review the GISU Tech Audit, review the 2017/18 school calendar, and hear the outcome of the Integrated Field Review Study by the Vermont Agency of Education.
- This year, all 5 GISU schools have piloted a 30 min intervention block 5 days a week. The SU is close to formalizing this practice with a concentrated focus on long-term planning and on-going professional learning. Grant funding will allow the purchase of Tier I & II intervention materials to support the program

- The final whole SU in-service will be on April 21st, and will focus on strategies to help students when they have a traumatic response to their environment. These tools will allow teachers to be more proactive and empathetically responsive to all of our students.
- Learning Adventure, a partner preschool program, will receive five years of coaching, funding, and training from the Vermont Agency of Education. The goal is to improve early learning, social and emotional well-being and competence for Vermont's young children birth thru age 8. If successful, the program will be implemented at CIPCC and North Hero's PreK program as well. As part of the program, students from Learning Adventure visited Grand Isle School to talk with their United Arts teachers.
- The GISU delivered our Special Education Expenditure reports to the Agency of Education
- Teachers will have an opportunity for paid professional development this summer (June). Details will be shared with the Staff in April
- This school year, the GISU Truancy Officer (Grand Isle Sheriff, Ray C. Allen) has delivered ~25 letters to GISU parents/guardians of students in grades 1-12. T.Maxham asked how many days a child must miss before the Sheriff gets involved. B.Hemingway explained that after 10 days absence, the Sheriff delivers a notice to parents. Additional letters and actions occur after 15 days, 18 days, and again at 20 days. Currently there are 4 Truancy Hearings occurring at the North Hero Courthouse, and 2 pending affidavits that will be submitted to the State's Attorney. The intention is to get kids back to school. If a family goes on vacation or a student has an injury (an explained absence), a family may still receive notification. However, those days do not count towards truancy. Truancy issues are generally at the high schools that are farthest away and with the earliest start times (for example, buses leaving at 5:45am). B.Hemingway appreciates Doug DiSabito's involvement, and states that we are lucky to have a state's attorney who understands the importance of school attendance

Principal's Report:

- Folsom celebrated Dr. Seuss week, which highly engaged students in reading. There were games, prizes, costumes, and a final game of mad-libs including several teachers
- The Middle School play is making great progress, with Gina Fern grooming Justin Gardner to be master director. L.Badeau stressed that acting develops interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, and forges lasting memories
- SBAC practice tests and ELA testing will happen in April, while Math testing will happen in early May
- The PBIS team attended a 2-day training to calibrate on a consistent vision, and identify short- and long-term goals for the program.
- The K-2 team participated in a Math Workshop (professional development) to allow teachers to explore and refine ways to deliver engaging and differentiated mathematical instruction
- L.Badeau attended the monthly "Understanding the Principalship" class, which provides training and support on evaluation, Hazing/Harassment/Bullying procedures, effective communication strategies to foster trust with and within the

staff, developing leadership capacity within the school, and methods to initiate and sustain school improvement.

- The GISU administrative team attended a 2-day training that focused on Instructional Coaching models, school improvement practices, and strategies to engage in conversations that build empathy, respect, trust, and solutions
- Cynthia Hutchins has resigned, and Nicholas Neil is now the full time custodian
- The Book Room is being developed between T.Seekamp's office and the Teacher's Lounge. It is meant to store multiple copies of the same book, so that teachers will have all copies available when needed. In addition, efforts continue to outfit each classroom with a mounted projector, smart board, or mimio capabilities.
- Projected kindergarten class for FY17/18 is close to 20 kids. B.Hemingway will send us the exact number.
- The County Music Festival (April 19th & 20th) poses a problem for parking. D.Cain asked if the blacktop area can be opened for parking. L.Badeau will speak to Steve Berard to see if there are any restrictions (since students will be in the building). He will also ask the South Hero Congregational Church if we can use their parking lot.

Board Discussion:

Teacher Feedback:

- D.Cain read the following statement regarding the recent teacher feedback:

Recently, the school board gave the teachers at Folsom an opportunity to communicate to the board their perspectives on employee morale. We did receive teacher feedback and we thank those teachers for sharing with us.

The issues raised are currently being considered by the board. The board takes all employee concerns seriously and has made addressing these issues a top priority in order to ensure the issues are fully evaluated as expediently as possible. To that end the board has responded to the teachers with a letter to let them know we are working to address all the issues raised. That letter was copied to the administration and the superintendent.

The issues raised were related to personnel matters, so the board is limited in what it can discuss publicly about them. We can tell you that the board has a plan to address the issues raised in the feedback. These plans include requesting investigations into some of the issues. They also include having the superintendent look into other raised issues and drive conversations regarding their resolution. Finally, the plans include taking steps to support a deeper culture of collaboration, professionalism, accountability and trust at Folsom.

We want to assure the community that there has not been any concern raised about student safety or serious misconduct. However, we consider the teacher's concerns to be important and in need of addressing.

Budget Review (Budget to Actuals):

- The Robinson trust has now been spent down completely, and may possibly have been over-assigned. Expenses originally intended to be paid from the Robinson's trust may need to be paid from the General Fund instead,

- The General Fund shows \$4k remaining, but in reality it will be in the negative. For example, the School Nurse Assistant's salary has been encumbered, but the School Nurse's salary (shared through the GISU) has not been accounted for
- L.Carpenter and L.Badeau are working together to minimize the deficit
- L.Carpenter stated that revenues seem to be coming in as expected, and there are no anticipated short-falls
- D.Cain asked if L.Carpenter could guess of how large the final deficit will be. L.Carpenter mentioned that there are stipends (~\$1700), but that she's not sure what additional funds may be needed to pay the electric bill or teacher supplies
- B.Burrington mentioned that Folsom will get some revenues for the first time from the Net Metering project (All Earth Renewables). B.Burrington can research the anticipated revenue. T.Maxham asked what impact the solar panels have had, but T.Nolan believes that the solar roof panels were purchased a while ago, and may not be producing much. Barbara suggests inviting All Earth Renewables to give us an explanation of the Net Metering project.
- B.Hemingway and L.Carpenter confirmed that our tuitioning line in the budget is already over by ~\$60k (roughly 4 secondary students).

Board Secretary Resignation:

- The Board Secretary, Emily Bowser, has submitted her resignation.
- D.Cain proposed that the Board take our own minutes for the rest of the fiscal year, since we're on a spending freeze. All agreed to take turns.

Late Bus, Usage and Cost:

- L.Badeau researched the after school bus, and mentioned that only 3 kids are currently using it (none of them middle school students). He suggests improving the after school program offering next year to increase ridership.
- K.Robinson asked if CIDER could provide school bus functions. M.Naud believes that CIDER's charter prevents them from acting as a school bus. B.Burrington mentioned that CIDER has assisted in the past with students that require medical assistance, and she's willing to reach out to them again. B.Hemingway mentioned that CIDER owns other cars that they may be able to use to transport students. B.Burrington also suggests reaching out to community members to provide transportation, providing they have adequate insurance and are willing to be fingerprinted.
- RJ Sweeney stated that he would like to be able to save money, while also offering an opportunity to local community members. B.Vaughan also suggested reaching out to parent volunteers
- L.Carpenter and L.Badeau confirmed that the remaining 6 bus days will cost ~\$700 for the remainder of the year. The board agreed that \$700 is worth the convenience to those few families

Board Actions:

- B.Vaughan made a motion to approve the Minutes from March 16th and March 28th. All voted in favor.

- B.Vaughan made a motion to appoint Mark Naud to the school board. B.Vaughan voted in favor, all others abstained.
- RJ Sweeney made a motion to appoint Tim Maxham to the school board. All voted in favor.
- Sharon Roy, Town clerk, swore Tim Maxham in to the appointed position
- B.Vaughan made a motion to pay the bills, and all voted in favor

Correspondence:

- The School Board received the following lovely letter from Steve Berard, Building Maintenance:

Dear School Board,

Just a note to say thank you for my pay raise last summer. (I had this on my to-do list since then.) It's been really busy this last year, with the new gym floor, lunch tables, main ELE panels, lighting and stage work, science labs, and moving so many rooms for new and old staff.

I know that your job is a thankless one. Can't make everybody happy. I want you to know you should be proud of yourselves for getting your school fixed up the last 3 years. I felt like I was talking to a wall since 1986 about the water drainage problem. I understand some of you will be leaving the board soon. To you who listened to me and got the town to take action on these big building problems, thank you so much. You will never realize what you have done for your school, but I do!!!

Steve Berard

Public Comments:

- W.Heyn expressed concerns that the new Custodian may need some instruction on how to properly interact with students. She believes that his behavior makes some students uncomfortable, and she wants kids to follow their instincts regarding strangers. A.McGettrick agreed, and confirmed that some adults feel the same way. L.Badeau has already begun an intervention and performance review with this individual.
- B.Banas suggests employing parking guides or crossing guards to help with the parking situation during the County Music Festival. D.Cain asked L.Badeau to look into the cost of parking facilitators. M.Hood asked if lighting could be added to the Middle School side of the building for evening events, since it's extremely dark on that side. D.Cain recalls an issue related to lighting the new sign, but T.Maxham believes the issue was specific to the sign. M.Hood offered to ask the selectboard whether additional lighting is allowed. T.Maxham suggests using a utility light on a pole (similar to the one used for the skating rink). D.Hobbs thinks the town may have one available, and will speak to the town.
- The following statement was written by the Folsom staff, and read by J.Pidgeon on behalf of the staff:

A majority of the Folsom staff is here tonight because we care about the children, the community and Folsom School. Many of us live in the community, send our kids to this school or have worked here long enough to see a generation of the town grow up. We are invested in the future of our school. We are concerned about its future.

We have the impression there are some myths that might need to be dispelled, and that is why we have decided to speak as a group. We feel it's

important for the community to know we have expressed privately our concerns about the climate and the leadership and direction of the school to the principal, to the principal's mentor and then, at the board's request, to the board via letter.

Second, our concerns are not the grievances of a vocal minority. In fact, the majority of the staff is concerned enough to speak up though many fear retribution to ourselves and our children. We are sensitive to the need to be private and respectful, and we have tried to use private, professional means to address the concerns. We are saddened we feel we need to take more formal steps to address our concerns that impact the climate of our school.

Time is running short in the school year. We respectfully request that the board inform us what actions you will be taking to address our concerns.

- M.Hood expressed her concerns that if the climate is not addressed, teachers will leave (and some have already asked parents for recommendations). She expressed that the town supports the school, loves the teachers, and asks the board to address the problem to retain the teachers.
- W.Heyn expressed her concern that the climate has changed this year, and that the teachers seem to feel less comfortable conversing with parents. She feels that this change is not the teachers' choice.
- F.Bertmann wanted to say that she stands in solidarity with our teachers, and also wants to support them.
- M.Hood feels that the school culture issue has reached such a climax that if we do not address the problem quickly, we may be too late. She hopes that the Board understands that expediency is of the essence. D.Cain wants to assure the public that we fully understand the urgency, and have been meeting weekly in the 3 weeks since the issue was raised to the Board.
- F.Heslop also wants to say that he wholeheartedly supports the teachers, and asked what options are available to the Board. D.Cain said that we're trying to understand our options know. He said that there's a limit on what we can do before we get clearance from the SU lawyer.
- W.Heyn is concerned about a lack of support in the classrooms when teachers need assistance with behavioral issues. She is not sure who is responsible for providing that support, Dean or Principal, but feels that more needs to be done.
- D.Cain explained the process for submitting complaints. Community members should first bring their concerns to the staff member involved or the Principal. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the community member can then bring their concerns to the Superintendent or a School Board member.
- K.Marcotte asked for clarification on the timeline, since teacher contracts will be going out very soon. She expressed her concern that if we can't address problems quickly, teachers may choose to leave
- B.Banas asked if there is a plan to meet with the SU lawyer. D.Cain said that the teacher's concerns are being investigated, and when those results come back, we will meet with the lawyer.
- F.Heslop asked who is conducting the investigations. D.Cain explained that some are being done by the Superintendent, some will be done by an outside consultant, and some by the principal. Those investigations have been going on for a week, and we expect to get an update at tonight's executive session.

- F.Heslop asked if the deadline on teacher contracts can be extended. B.Burrington and T.Nolan confirmed that can be done, but that individual teachers must make those requests. D.Cain expressed his concern that if contracts are extended too long, we may not be able to hire teachers to fill positions.
- B.Banas asks that the Board seriously consider any requests to extend a teacher contract. D.Cain confirmed that if teachers request extensions, the Board will certainly consider those requests.
- M.Hood explained that in her 11 years in the Folsom community, this year has been completely different in its feeling. She said that the current climate is extreme, and not part of the normal cycle of ups and downs
- M.Hood asked if the job description for the Dean of Students position had been written. L.Badeau explained that he's been speaking to Alburgh and Grand Isle, and hopes to have that ready for the next meeting.
- B.Banas asked for a "flow chart" to help parents understand the responsibilities of the Dean of Students, and where to direct questions

Executive Session:

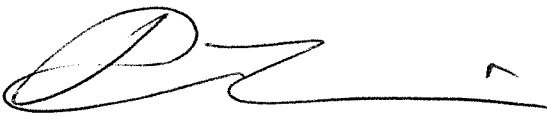
RJ Sweeney made a motion to go into executive session at 7:46pm

Adjournment:

- D.Cain made a motion to exit executive session at 10:41pm
- D.Cain made a motion to adjourn at 10:42pm. All voted in favor

Next Meeting Date:

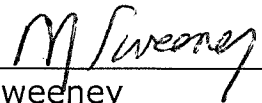
- Thursday, April 20th at 6pm, at the Folsom Education & Community Center



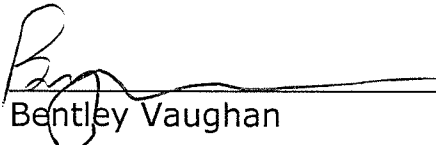
David Cain



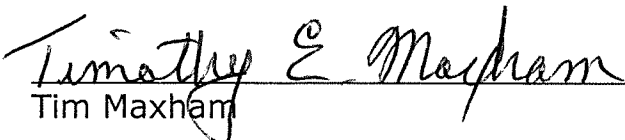
Melanie Henderson



RJ Sweeney



Bentley Vaughan



Tim Maxham

