

Grand Isle Supervisory Union  
**Alburgh School District**  
School Board **Special Meeting**  
Thursday, August 5, 2021, at 2:30 p.m.  
Location: Alburgh Community Education Center

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## **Agenda**

### **Call to Order**

1. Call to Order (M. Savage)
2. Citizens and/or Staff to be Heard

### **Board Business.**

3. Clubhouse Committee updates (M. Savage)(Discussion, possible Action)

### **Closure**

4. Adjourn

Note: Executive Session: If discussion warrants and the Board so votes, some items may be discussed in Executive Session pursuant to VSA 1 §313(a)

***Discussion Items** - Issues the Board needs to discuss and deliberate, but upon which no action is taken at this meeting.*

***Action Items** - Issues that require the Board to make a decision by vote, may have been discussed over several meetings prior to this point.*

***Consent Items** - Routine matters that need no discussion by the Board, but require Board approval. They are grouped together as a single agenda item. Background materials are provided in the Board packet to be reviewed ahead of the meeting. If there are no concerns, they are approved with a single vote. Any member can request the Board remove an item to be discussed and voted on separately. This frees up time at meetings.*

***Information Items [Incidental Information]** - Matters the Board needs to know about, but for which no Board action is needed. The information flow is one way, from presenter to the Board. Questions for clarification are entertained as time allows.*

## Superintendent Notes For 8-5-2021 Alburgh Special Meeting

Unfortunately, the Special Meeting was scheduled at a time that I was booked to be at the South Hero Annual Board Retreat. Please accept this written document as my input from the GISU Superintendent's Perspective.

### **Item to be considered**

The purpose of the special meeting is to discuss and possibly take action on the hire of a construction manager for the Clubhouse Project. As a part of this process, my understanding is the members of the Alburgh School Board received a document titled "NRPC Preconstruction Services Contract Alburgh Childcare Final.doc", from Alburgh Board Chair Savage on Friday July 30, 2021 with the note "Good morning, The Clubhouse Committee is hoping for this to be approved on Monday. Please review and be prepared to vote on it. Thank you."

### **Superintendent's perspective and advice**

I first saw this email and document on the evening of Monday, August 2, 2021 when a board member forwarded it to me. Earlier in the evening the board had declined to take action on the Clubhouse agenda item as the members present did not feel they had enough information to make an informed decision. This came up in the context of building the next agenda. The board indicated that it wanted a Clubhouse Agenda item on the next regular meeting agenda (8-16-2021) which included a review of the contract, procurement summary, MOU, Title 16 requirements, and construction manager selection. I spoke with the Alburgh School District Attorney, Chris Leopold, on Tuesday August 3, 2021, and learned that he had not reviewed the Pre-Construction Contract, which the Alburgh Board was being asked to be prepared to vote on.

With just this information in mind **I caution the board in the strongest possible way not to move forward at this meeting.** At a minimum the Alburgh School District Attorney should review, suggest any edits, and approve moving forward before the Alburgh School Board makes any contractual commitments.

The school attorney will be better able to identify potential issues with the contract if they exist; however, it is important for me to point out that section 8 of the Pre-Construction Contract appears to obligate the Alburgh School District to hire the same contractor for the construction phase of the project. Title 16 has specific requirements for schools that are intending to "construct or purchase a new school, or make extensive additions or alterations to its existing school". Title 16 also has specific bidding requirements for projects which are of the size of the Alburgh Clubhouse. I believe section 8 of the Pre-Construction Contract may create a problem with these requirements.

Please see the following pages for my general thoughts about the project.

## General Observations and Potential Concerns with Clubhouse Project the Board May Want to Consider:

On the positive side:

1. I agree that the Clubhouse project can vastly improve childcare in Alburgh.
2. The building could create a more pleasing pre-k learning environment for our existing program which may produce some positive impact on our current program.

However, this is a major project and has incredible complexities including:

1. Funding- The project was to be funded through fundraising by the Clubhouse. To date, my understanding is that in early 2020 (pre pandemic construction surge) the project was estimated to have a 1.3 million dollar price tag. To date approximately 1 million dollars or 75% of the required funds have been raised. Of that 1 million dollars, approximately one quarter of the funds or 250 thousand dollars is committed to the project through funds granted to the Alburgh School District. Additionally, the Alburgh School District is making a contribution in kind of a building site. The Clubhouse is still approximately 300 thousand dollars short of its fundraising goals. At the meeting on August 2, 2021 it was explained that the Clubhouse wanted to move forward and charge the Pre-Construction Manager with bringing the cost of the project down through "Value Engineering" which was loosely defined as a change in design or materials. The Board may want to consider that throughout the pandemic construction costs have increased sharply and may want to investigate what effect that has had on the original projected cost. It is likely the gap that will need to be made up between the funds raised and actual cost of the project will exceed the current projection of three hundred thousand dollars.

2. Management clarity and 3. Title 16 considerations

These two areas are intertwined in significant ways which has contributed to making a Memorandum Of Understanding complex. There is not a written MOU in place describing the complex relationship between the Clubhouse and the Alburgh School District. This includes something as basic as how the licensing of the new building would work for the school's pre-k program and the Clubhouse childcare program. Without an MOU in place, the Alburgh School District is in significant danger of creating unintended legal and financial liabilities for the taxpayers of Alburgh. At the present time, the responsibilities for the Clubhouse project on Alburgh School District property are unclear as is decision making authority. Title 16 has specific requirements for school construction of this magnitude, including notification of the Agency of Education, RFP, and Bidding specification. I have never been a part of a project of this magnitude and as such do not have any clarity of what else we could be missing. From a school district perspective, we have moved to this point in the project without significant taxpayer resources. The current school district and SU allocation of resources has been the form of administrator, board member, and staff member time. I remain skeptical that the school district and/or the supervisory union currently has adequate expertise or resources to manage a

project of this magnitude. This skepticism is only magnified by the complexities which Covid 19 and recovery from Covid 19 has introduced for the school district and Supervisory union.

4. With the Clubhouse being responsible for pre-construction planning and the Alburgh School District taking over the construction phase of the project, any unforeseen cost overruns that exceed what has been fundraised could end up being borne by the Alburgh Taxpayers. The Alburgh School District may also be responsible for the future maintenance costs of the building. If a decision to use less durable materials due to cost-saving needs during the initial construction is made, it will likely result in higher maintenance costs.

#### 5. Timing

It is my understanding that the Clubhouse is targeting a beginning of actual construction of January 1, 2022 which is 5 months away and an opening day at the start of the 2022-2023 school year (approximately end of August 2022). While I have acknowledged I do not have expertise in a construction project of this magnitude, this timeline seems unlikely to be realistic given the post-pandemic surge of construction work and the limitations of resources related to building materials and labor force.

I am supportive of the goals of this project and believe that it will benefit the children and community of Alburgh. As the Superintendent one of my obligations is to protect and use the resources the taxpayers provide to ensure the best and most equitable education to all students possible. I look forward to our next regular meeting and talking about this more at that time.