

Grand Isle Supervisory Union  
**South Hero School District**  
School Board Regular Meeting  
**Thursday, Oct. 15, 2020**, at 6 p.m.  
Location via Google Meet  
meet.google.com/jcn-guaz-snh  
Join by phone  
(US) +1 513-666-7379 PIN: 476 044 895#

## **MINUTES**

### **Call to Order**

1. Call to order at 6:03 p.m. (B. Chutter)

Introductions. In attendance:

-Board members: Tim Maxham, Bob Chutter, Erin Morse, Nathaniel Kouns

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

-Audience: Buddy Meilleur (LCATV), Cara Soper, Regan Henry, David Hobbs

2. Adjustment of Agenda

None.

3. Public Comments

-Cara Soper and Regan Henry requested time to address the board regarding plans to return students. The superintendent's report will include that information.

4. Consent Agenda (Action)

A. Approve minutes from Sept. 17, 2020 and Oct. 1, 2020. T. Maxham made a motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 17, 2020, and Oct. 1, 2020, meetings. N. Kouns seconded the motion. Approved on a voice vote unanimously.

5. Reports

A. Financial (R. Gess) (Action): R. Gess reviewed the financial report and said he would bring a revenue report to the next meeting. He said the state Education Fund is in better shape. The district has not seen high school tuition invoices yet. He also provided an update on Covid reimbursement. He said the paperwork to request reimbursements has not been distributed. He reviewed the challenges in accounting for this funding. He updated the board on the migration to the new financial system mandated by the state. South Hero's data have been migrated, which will be helpful when preparing the budget. He notified the board that the USDA has extended the summer food service program through the end of the school year. That means all children under 18 will have free meals through the end of the school year. He noted South Hero will be billing the

districts of tuition-paying students next week, and that the number of tuition-paying students is higher than budgeted.

T. Maxham asked R. Gess his view on whether South Hero has budgeted adequately for the number of high school students. R. Gess said he just received the residency verification information, and he will be looking at budget exposures. He will report back at the next meeting. T. Maxham asked for the final audit report, and R. Gess said he would contact the auditors for an update.

T. Maxham made a motion that the board received and reviewed the budget-to-actuals report for FY21 of Oct. 8, 2020. N. Kouns seconded the motion. Approved unanimously on a voice vote.

- B. Superintendent's (M. Clark): M. Clark noted he sent board members a written report and would focus on the plans to return students to school. The superintendent visited Folsom recently and reported that students he observed in the elementary wing were doing well with the new safety rules. He said the district is working on a return to school for K-2 students. All K-2 will return on Oct. 26 at Folsom, in line with other school districts. He said no two schools in the Islands operate in the same way because they have different grade clusters, which makes the transition back to school different across the GISU. Principal McKelvie has enlisted the help of an architect to assess the space. The superintendent shared that although there have been several cases of Covid reported in individuals who are in Vermont schools over the past week, the cases did not originate in the schools. The mask-wearing, temperature checks, distancing and cleaning measures continue to be important.

Cara Soper shared in the Meet chat: "It is frustrating to not even have a plan yet, when all other area schools have had plans for weeks. Waiting two weeks to receive our plan is tough to swallow."

The superintendent said he has confidence Folsom will have a plan for 3rd and 4th grade students soon. He noted the 4th grade class is large at Folsom, and it presents a challenge for social distancing. He shared that some community members at the community meeting earlier requested information on winter sports. The district has not received guidance from the state yet. B. Chutter said he attended a Vermont School Boards Association meeting, and board members from around the state were impressed with the level of communication in GISU. B. Chutter said the board's priority is safety first; he noted the principal and superintendent have acknowledged that in-person education is best and a priority.

Regan Henry named several Chittenden County towns that have published comprehensive plans for return to school and inquired why GISU has not published its plans. The superintendent said GISU has a comprehensive plan for operation on its website; it has not yet published its plans for bringing back certain grade levels. He also

said the examples she cited are single district supervisory unions. Cara Soper said that although she doesn't want the district to rush to return students, she doesn't feel the GISU is communicating that the return to school is urgent. South Hero students are missing out on valuable education compared to area schools, she said.

M. Clark said Essex and Mount Abraham started back with students on Oct. 5, but the majority of districts are starting on Oct. 19. He noted they are able to return their 3rd and 4th grade students back more quickly than GISU. B. Chutter asked for clarity on a timetable. M. Clark said the district will report on its plans no later than Nov. 2. S. McKelvie said the school is trying to figure out how to restructure the classroom spaces to safely accommodate the large numbers in 4th grade. Nate Hayward was in measuring the space and will be offering suggestions on how to redesign the classroom for safety. She said this model of hybrid education is not best for kids, and the staff would like to bring students back as soon as it can be done safely. She noted there are parents who have communicated their concerns about doubling the number of students in the classroom. She said she feels a tremendous sense of responsibility for the safety of the students and staff, and the school is trying to get it right.

Regan Henry said she chose to send her children to private school this year. She said the private school hired an architect in July to reconfigure its space. Henry questioned why South Hero delayed. S. McKelvie said in August the state was not talking about sending students back full-time in October; rather, the information from the state was to prepare for fully remote learning. Soper requested a date for return. M. Clark said he will provide the date as soon as they have it. C. Soper thanked the board for its time and offered any help. S. McKelvie expressed appreciation for the tent the Sopers provided for music classes.

- C. Principal's (S. McKelvie): S. McKelvie referred the board to her report. She talked about the planning challenges within the hybrid model and lauded the professionalism of staff in striving to provide quality instruction for students who are learning remotely. She reported that the new burner for the boiler has been installed. She shared that the water samples from Folsom were finally returned, but the water is being resampled and retested for lead levels because the samples were in storage for 8 months.

N. Kouns asked for clarification about the requirements for reopening. M. Clark said the plan to reopen is at the district level. S. McKelvie said Folsom can make a decision to reopen independent of the other GISU schools. N. Kouns said health and safety is paramount. He asked if there are multiple plans being considered for reopening. McKelvie noted the building space requirements and said individual education plan services are considerations that vary by grade. She said the school is looking at ways to reduce the number of kids and adults in the 4th grade by using the space creatively. She said splitting the 4th grade class into two grades is not an option; the school does not have an additional teacher. B. Chutter encouraged discussion among administration about how to sustain staff who are continuing to teach students in person and remote.

S. McKelvie agreed and said she continues to brainstorm options. Board members concurred about the challenges for parents and school.

### Board Business

6. Update on state reimbursement for transportation (R. Gess) (Discussion): R. Gess researched the question about the budgeting of transportation reimbursement, and he learned that in 2018, transportation costs were moved to the supervisory union level. R. Gess said it was a budgeting error in the South Hero budget, and it will not be repeated in FY22.

7. Budget timeline (R. Gess): Gess is preparing to start the FY22 budget. He has wage and benefit information; health insurance information has not yet been provided by the state. He also has the special education data. His goal is to have a GISU budget ready to review for the GISU Board's November meeting. He noted he cannot complete the South Hero School District's budget until he has the assessment from the GISU budget. He will send a budget template to S. McKelvie soon. He expects the board will have a draft budget by the December meeting. B. Chutter asked for a revenue report to be included with the draft budget.

8. October data report (S. McKelvie): S. McKelvie shared her report. She presented enrollment data. Enrollment has been in the 130 student range. She shared data on numbers in hybrid, full remote and home school. She noted that given the numbers, Folsom would exceed state recommendations if it combined any grade levels. She pointed out that Folsom has 7 tuitioning students from Grand Isle, as well as 3 students from Alburgh. She said the full remote option resulted in some families selecting Folsom rather than sending their students to private schools. Folsom's free and reduced lunch is 27% (based on 2019-20 data). Special education is 19% of the population, an increase of 2%. She noted staffing has stayed the same. The school attempted to hire a world language teacher but has been unsuccessful. The funding for the literacy interventionist is 80% funded locally, 20% funded by the federal government. Six teachers have dual licenses.

E. Morse asked if the school is still trying to hire a world language teacher. S. McKelvie said it would be a priority for next year. N. Kouns asked about the pool of substitute teachers. S. McKelvie said the pool is down to about 3 people who have specific requirements. In a typical year, Folsom has a pool of 6-8 substitutes. She said the school may need to pull paraeducators, or home school coordinator Silas Saxer and McKelvie to sub if needed. She said it would be a challenge if there were long-term absences.

S. McKelvie reviewed Folsom's Continuous Improvement Plan, which is continuing from the 19-20 year per the Agency of Education. B. Chutter asked when student achievement data would be reported. S. McKelvie said that data would be available in December and again during the Continuous Improvement Plan process. She highlighted some trends from literacy testing. E. Morse expressed her view that literacy support is a priority.

9. Approval of Bills for Payment. B. Chutter made a motion to pay the bills in Batch #5922 totaling \$97,563.09. T. Maxham seconded the motion. Approved unanimously on a voice vote.

10. VEHI and VSBIT Annual Meeting Proxy (M. Clark)(Action) M. Clark said the VEHI (Vermont Education Health Initiative) and VSBIT (Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust) meetings are coming up, and the South Hero School District has voting rights. He said he anticipates nothing controversial at those annual business meetings. He said the board's options are to attend, to assign the proxy or to assign the proxy back to the VEHI and VSBIT boards. He noted the meetings are remote and on Oct. 20 and Oct. 22. B. Chutter moved the board to assign its proxy to the VEHI and VSBIT annual meetings to Superintendent Michael Clark. T. Maxham seconded the motion. Approved unanimously on a voice vote. B. Chutter gave M. Clark permission to sign the proxy permission form electronically for him.

11. Calendar 2020-2021 Discussion (M. Clark)(Discussion): M. Clark said there are 3 inservice days remaining in the calendar. Some community members had wondered about moving inservice days to Wednesdays. Clark said he looked at the remaining inservice days and the days remaining are connected to parent conferences and vacations. He noted the other Island districts have decided not to make changes in the calendar. The board took no action on the calendar.

12. Proposed Board recruitment communication (B. Chutter)(Discussion): B. Chutter sent board members a draft communication to the community regarding Board recruitment. He will finish the draft and distribute to Front Porch Forum. M. Clark said Megan Devinny could also help distribute the communication.

13. Tuition Lawsuit (information only - please see packet): M. Clark told board members the case, A.H., et. al., vs. French, et. al., in U.S. District Court is on the agenda as an information only item. M. Clark said the information packet includes a summons that names the South Hero Board of School Directors, Superintendent Michael Clark and Secretary of Education Dan French in the case as defendants. The plaintiffs are A.H., James Hester, Darlene Hester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington. Clark notified the district's attorney, and the case has been assigned to McNeil, Leddy and Sheahan. He has consulted with them. They are working on a response to the summons. VSBIT will be handling the legal expenses related to the case after the deductible. B. Chutter confirmed there is nothing for the board to do. Board members need to make M. Clark aware if they have any records related to this case and maintain them.

14. Other  
None.

### **Closure**

15. Setting the next agenda  
-Budget update  
-Audit update

16. Adjourn

The board adjourned at 8:20 PM. N. Kouns made a motion to adjourn. T. Maxham seconded the motion. Approved unanimously on a voice vote.