

Grand Isle Supervisory Union

CIUUSD Regular Meeting

School Board Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Minutes

To view the recording, please [click here](#).

Board present: Michael Inners, Amy Thompson, Brad Blanchette, Chet Bromley

Admin present: Michael Clark, Rob Gess, Amanda Ellison

Public present: Sylvia Jensen, Selby Turner

Call to Order

1. Call to Order - Michael Inners called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.
2. Citizens and/or Staff to be Heard - none
3. Adjust the agenda - Michael Clark would like to add an informational item regarding a tuition lawsuit. Michael Inners indicated this can be added to the end.
4. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approve the minutes from 11/3/2020 - Chet Bromley motions to approve the minutes as presented, all in favor, motion passes.
5. Reports
 - a. Superintendent's - Michael Clark shared his written report from the packet. November was a busy month and we continue to move along routines, practices, and procedures. These have been shown as effective in preventing transmission based on the experience with the positive COVID cases within the campuses. The most recent executive order from the governor prohibits multi-household gatherings. Michael Clark encourages community members to review the order within the packet. Michael Clark highlighted the staffing challenges and the lack of substitutes to cover teachers requiring quarantines and sick days. GISU has participated in surveillance testing - there were 91 participants in our district and we had no positive tests come out of this. At a state level, the surveillance testing showed only 20 cases in testing completed in schools throughout the state, less than 1% - all of whom were asymptomatic. We are appreciative of the nurses and health assistants who helped with the testing in our district.
 - b. Principal - Amanda Ellison shared updates around the quarantines and lessons learned during November and made it through until the break. Parents have been great about keeping the school informed to ensure they are meeting the guidelines to keep the learning community safe. Michael Clark commended the systems in place and the great job both CIUUSD principals did in being able to work with the DOH for the contract tracing. Amanda Ellison thanked and commended the teachers for adhering to the guidance and ensuring they are entering the information to allow the principals to have the info at their fingertips.
 - c. Financial - Rob Gess shared the budget to actuals provided in the board packet. At this time, do not anticipate any budget exposures. The AOE has finally provided new accounting guidance to request reimbursement for COVID expenditures. This will require to redo the accounting codes for corona relief funds breaking it out. This will require journal entries in order to qualify for reimbursement. This is a massive task and there is a time crunch. The team is working hard to complete and submit by the deadline. The GISU passed the budget, there is an 8% reduction in the budget and this saving will be passed along to the districts and reflected in the budget for CIUUSD. Chet Bromley indicated that Rob is doing a good job.

Board Business.

6. Approval of bills for payment - Michael Inners shared that he reviewed the bills sent out earlier. This included payments for tuition and health insurance. Chet Bromley motions to approve the bills and allow Michael Inners to sign on behalf of the board. The warrant amount is \$674,768.73. No further discussion, all in favor, motions passes.

7. Budget Review - Rob Gess shared the budget presented, he highlighted that this is a positive budget. Michael Clark shared that Rob, Amanda, and Lauren have done a fantastic job with this budget. It shows an expenditure increase of 2%. There is still some question about what will happen with the tax rate, but we are still waiting for information from the state. The earliest we could have all the info on December 15 - in Michael's experience as a superintendent, unlikely to have all the information at that time. Michael Clark recommended the board hear the budget - this is a level-staffed budget and have the board ask questions. Rob Gess indicated the budget offers a 1.97% increase from the FY20 budget. Rob outlined the format of the budget used. He highlighted that when factoring wages, benefits, and tuition into the budget, it accounts for approximately 75% of the budget. These are set amounts based on Union negotiations and set tuition rates. The benefits account for the statewide health negotiations - this is approximately a 9.8% increase that all school districts are having to account for. There is little "wiggle room" in the budget because of the fixed costs. There is an addition of a health assistant for the North Hero campus based on needs. There is also increased spending on PPE and custodial supplies to be conservative of spending based on the environment. There is also an increase in plant improvement based on the needs of improving the woodchip boiler. Amanda shared the reasoning behind the need for a health assistant at the North Hero campus. She also shared the addition of a .2 FTE for the PE position for the North Hero campus, this would allow for the addition of a health class. Michael Inners asked about the increase in tuition costs. Rob Gess shared that based on the student population, there is a net increase of 4 students for FY22. Further discussion took place regarding individual line items. The board indicated that it may be best to wait until the other information that affects the tax rate is available to have a more in-depth conversation about the budget. Amy Thompson expressed concern about an increase in the budget. There is a perception that the CIUUSD cost per pupil is double other districts. Michael Clark and Michael Inners verified that the CIUUSD cost per pupil is equivalent to other districts. Discussion took place around presenting possible cuts. Michael Clark shared the amount of work involved and the conversations that would need to be had with individual staff members. Brad Blanchette highlighted that this is a morale killer or a fuel for staff members to jump ship. Brad Blanchette suggested a communication campaign around the budget and cost per pupil in comparison to other districts. Michael Clark indicated that if the board wanted a \$150,000 reduction to the budget, similar cuts that were proposed last year that the community advocated against would again be on the table. Having conversations with staff that may be affected by budget cuts unnecessarily would not be in the staff's best interests given the circumstances and the already fragile staff. The board agreed to wait, but expressed concern about turnaround time. Michael Clark indicated that if the board defined the parameters of an acceptable increase, that would make it easier. Either way the CLA will cause an increase in the tax rate. Board established a parameter of 7% being too high a difference, would give a cushion of a 5% increase, but would prefer to stay around the 2% increase. Board understands that they cannot make enough cuts to make up for the increased CLA.

8. North Hero & Isle La Motte Building update - Michael Inners suggested starting with an Isle La Motte building update. There is a proposal for asset dispersal and the town of Isle La Motte has interest in leasing the space for the town offices. Amanda Ellison shared that Sarah Noble and she completed a walk-through of the building - many of the assets would need to be cleared. Michael Inners also completed a walk through and highlighted that nothing has been determined yet. Michael Clark clarified that the board will need to decide if they are wanting to work with the town select board to lease the space to the town. Selby shared there is also a question about moving the vault and hoping to complete

that prior to snow flying. The town is interested in making a transition and entering an agreement sooner rather than later. The intention is to assume the operational expenses and management of the space. The spacial needs of the town were discussed and moving the school's property was discussed. The board expressed interest and encouraged the transition to occur sooner rather than later. Michael Inners suggested he and Chet collaborate to create a lease agreement with a committee from the Isle La Motte select board. Sylvia Jensen expressed concern that this has not been discussed at any town select board meetings. Michael Inners clarified that this was out of the scope of the CIUUSD board and allowed Selby to respond to Sylvia. Selby outlined the process for Sylvia. Selby indicated that it will be a topic of discussion at the Isle La Motte select board meeting tomorrow. Michael Inner motions to appoint himself and Chet Bromley as a sub committee to meet with the Isle La Motte town representative to create a proposed lease to bring back to the board, all in favor, motion passes. Amanda Ellison shared the status of the North Hero gym and other possible solutions. She summarized the letter sent out. This included: updates from the fire marshall and the needs to be compliant. Because of quarantines, some of the contractors have been unable to keep the appointments. Work to establish the potential costs is in process. The estimated potential cost so far is \$50,000 minimum, not inclusive of the extra costs associated with staffing the space. The space will have its limitations and it has its shortcomings as an educational space. Based on the information, Michael Clark recommends against using the space as it would not be the best educationally for students. If there are families that are interested in a four day per week model, they could go through the CIUUSD choice process. The board expressed thanks to the administration for looking into this, but think this would be a waste of money at this point in the school year as it is not educationally beneficial to students.

Michael Inners suggested that based on the hour to skip to the informational item and set the next agenda.

13. Other - Tuition lawsuit - informational item - Michael Clark informed the board that he has received a summons amending the tuition lawsuit case going on in the Islands. Angela and Chad Ross have joined the suit. The case has been assigned through VSBIT to McNeil, Leady & Sheehan. There is nothing the board needs to do other than if any board member has had a conversation concerning tuition with Angela or Chad Ross to please get that communication to Michael Clark to send to the attorney.

Closure

14. Setting the next agenda -

Budget, Isle La Motte Asset dispersion process, (C12) Prevention of sexual harassment as prohibited by Title IX, (F24) Prevention of conflict of interest in procurement, (B8) Electronic Communications, Isle La Motte update. Michael Clark also advocated for the board to review the Equity policy as it is a recommended policy. Michael Inners suggested putting policies before the budget on the agenda.

15. Adjourn - Brad Blanchette moves to adjourn, Amy Thompson second, all in favor, meeting adjourns at 8:50 p.m.