



# Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

Monday, January 6, 2025, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Virtual via Microsoft Teams**  
**Call In: 1-802-552-8456**  
**Conference ID: 375 196 178#**

## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Commission Members Present:** **Meagan Roy**, Chair; **Peter Conlon**, Representative Addison-2 District; **Ann Cummings**, Senator Washington District; **Zoie Saunders**, Secretary of Education; **Jennifer Deck Samuelson**, State Board of Education; **Craig Bolio**, Tax Commissioner; **Oliver Olsen**, Vermont Independent Schools Association; **John Castle**, Vermont Rural Education Collaborative; **Michael Lechliter**, Vermont Superintendents Association; **Jeff Fannon**, VT-National Education Association; **Jay Nichols**, Vermont Principals' Association; **Elizabeth Jennings**, Vermont Association of School Business Officials.

**AOE:** Rose Neddo, Ryan Bjerke, Emily Simmons, Jill Briggs Campbell, Maureen Gaidys, Suzanne Sprague

**Others:** Marcy Harding, Julia Richter, Allen Gilbert, Katrina Menard, M. Kendrick, David S., Mill Moore, John Clifford, Justin Silverstein, Alison Novak, Bridget Burkhardt, 18022726395, Amanda Brown, Ken Fredette, Elizabeth St. James, Jeanne Jensen, Chelsea Myers, Bill Edgerton, Margaret MacLean, Bud Meyers, Jeanne Albert, Ezra Holben, Chester Telegraph, Ryan Heraty, Sue Ceglowski, Rebecca McBroom, Colin Robinson, Donald Tinney, Darren Allen, Heather Bushey

### **Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda**

Chair Roy called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and took roll call: Roy, Nichols, Deck-Samuelson, Olsen, Conlon, Saunders, Lechliter, Jennings, Cummings, Bolio, Fannon and Castle. Chair Roy asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Olsen asked for a discussion on the Commission's workplan for the new year. Chair Roy said the workplan will be discussed during the Steering Group's update and during the "Input for Workplan" item.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 16, 2024**

Nichols moved to approve the [meeting minutes from the December 16, 2024](#); Olsen seconded. Fannon asked that the word "upcoming" be added to Mace's comment on page 3. Chair Roy called the vote; the motion carried. The minutes were approved.

## **Public to be Heard**

Marcy Harding, Richmond, said the General Assembly (GA) will be considering several items this session. She said that one may be the common level of appraisal (CLA) that will be made moot, and it is not moot at this moment. She was curious to know if the AOE did the outreach required in H.887, an act relating to homestead property tax yields, nonhomestead rates, and policy changes to education finance and taxation. She said it is unfortunate that the Commission did not identify that item as a recommendation in its report and hopes the Commission will elevate it to the top of the priority list.

Mill Moore, Hartland, addressed the Commission and provided [this comment](#).

## **Subcommittee Update and Reaffirm Charge**

Conlon provided an update on the Steering Group's work. He said the bulk of the prior meeting was spent on agenda setting for the current Commission meeting. The Group's consensus was to become informed on issues that will be coming up while the Commission waits for the legislative process to be worked out to see if any changes will be made to its charge. Conlon added that at the next Steering Group meeting the hope is to have input from the GA and have a clearer workplan for February's full Commission meeting. Samuelson said the Steering Group decided to meet virtually because the community engagement consultant's contract is not final.

Discussion followed regarding the short timeline with the December deliverable and lack of clear plan, speed of the GA and the role of the Commission, not wanting the Commission's work to be wasted, status update on the community engagement consultant's contract, the next Steering Group meeting date may be too early in getting a sense of what the GA plans to do, process in the Senate for naming committees, risk of having parallel processes with the GA, administration's plan and the ongoing work of the Commission.

Chair Roy asked the Commission what role it wants of the Education Finance Subcommittee. The subcommittee meets next week and the Commission may decide to prioritize the order of discussion on some of the items that appear on the [Education Finance Brainstorm document](#). Discussion followed regarding affirming the charges of the Commission's subcommittees and advising that the brainstorm document does not include all the ideas that have been surfaced from public comment, evaluating all the options so as to not be criticized for not doing so, sharing ideas that are missing with the Education Finance Subcommittee so they can be added to the brainstorm document, cross referencing public comment to assure it is in the brainstorm document, AOE providing further clarification on underlying assumptions of some of the ideas on the brainstorm document, pausing on the committee structure until alignment is made around next steps, analyzing public comment, and if the Education Finance Subcommittee should continue.

## **Foundation Formula Presentation**

Chair Roy said the Steering Group identified foundation formula as a topic that the full Commission should understand. The Education Finance Subcommittee received a similar presentation. Secretary Saunders said that 48 other states implement a version of a

foundation formula. The Agency's consultant, Augenblick, Palaich & Associates (APA), walked through the evolution of the foundation formula over the last couple of decades to a student-centered funding approach.

Justin Silverstein and Amanda Brown, APA consultants, shared this [presentation](#) with the Commission. Silverstein said that the term foundation formula is being shifted to student-centered formula. He reviewed and defined school finance terms, components of a funding formula, common themes for changing formulas, types of formulas by state, components of a student-centered formula, explained a student-centered formula, funding a student-centered formula, the Vermont context and implementing a student-centered formula in Vermont.

Questions and discussion occurred and included if any other states have a similar state mandate to provide education such as Vermont's Article 68, if other states adjust for weights and categorical aid, concern with local option and equity, setting the base and reevaluating weights, state would set the budget and available dollars would be set through the formula, decision to supplement with additional funding would be with the voters, concern with equity for all students so it is consistent with the Brigham decision, the possibility of a financial crisis and exacerbating the inequities, compliance with the Brigham decision, decisions about what is factored into that base amount, local revenue generation and its intention, tax payer capacity and the variability in spending per pupil, differences in facilities, most states do not have a specific facilities adjustment for deferred maintenance, Vermont's history with foundation formula and inflation, districts that spend less than the Act 127 target, taxpayer equity, transition process, transparency and predictability, balancing weights with categorical aid, if any states do not have a local option, methods states use to arrive at their base amount, equity of funding and what students actually receive, decision making and delivery system component with a student-centered formula, property tax and non-property tax revenue, offramps for people during the transition, assumptions built into base amount, reducing education spending and raising other taxes, ripple effect, statewide or regional contract for salaries or benefits, inequities with educator pay, variations in pay exist with other states, income taxes, equitably distributing tax burden, roll the cost of living might play, modeling and the Joint Fiscal Office's (JFO) role in modeling if/when the legislature expresses interest.

Chair Roy called for a recess at 2:55 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:05 p.m.

### **Agency of Education Presentation on the Listen and Learn Tour Findings**

Secretary Saunders shared this [presentation](#). She said that a full report will be released this week. Secretary Saunders reviewed why the AOE conducted the Listen and Learn Tour, Listen and Learn Tour timeline, Listen and Learn Tour by numbers, Listen and Learn Tour participants, AOE in-person visits, Listen and Learn Tour key takeaways, Regional Planning Session with education leaders key takeaways, regional profiles, academic performance and accountability, college and career readiness, mental health costs and systems of support, data review and budgeting for school boards, educator focus groups key takeaways, academic support, non-academic supports, educator supports and additional AOE supports, public engagement key takeaways, attendance at public

engagement sessions, key indicators of student success, student opportunities and experiences, budget sustainability, youth engagement key takeaways, school strengths and challenges, resources needed in schools to support student success and next steps.

Discussion followed and addressed that Listen and Learn themes are the same as what the Commission has heard, AOE's role and current capacity to meet the AOE vision, aligning work to meet the needs of the field, rich data collection, inconsistencies with discipline as noted by students, additional support around behavior management, open questions that have not been answered, disconnect with theory and action, collaborative approach, being data driven, action oriented and focused on results for students.

### **Input for Workplan: Prioritization of Ideas on the [Brainstorm Document](#)**

This item was briefly discussed during other agenda items.

### **Next Steps/Agenda Items for February 3, 2025, Meeting**

Chair Roy asked for input on what the Steering Group should consider for the next few meetings. Discussion followed regarding the Commission being independent, striking a balance and not being seen as an extension of the Administration, neutral examination, setting realistic expectations on what can be delivered by October, Commission's role going forward, reshaping the structure or the committee structure may be necessary, parallel process, stakeholders and groups to consult with, update on the community engagement consultant, and any edits to the brainstorm document should be sent to the Education Finance Subcommittee.

### **Public to be Heard**

Allen Gilbert addressed the Commission and provided [this comment](#).

### **Adjourn**

Chair Roy adjourned the meeting at 3:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.