

State Board of Education Independent School Approval Review Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference

Call in #: 1-802-552-8456, Conference ID: 128 469 68#

1 National Life Drive, Davis N532

Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Date: January 10, 2022

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members: Patrick Brown, Lyle Jepson, Tom Lovett

Agency of Education (AOE): Patrick Halladay, Cassandra Ryan, Emily Simmons

Others: Oliver Olsen, SBE Chairperson; Susan Aranoff

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

SBE Chairperson Olsen convened the committee at 9AM and called the roll; Mr. Brown, Mr. Jepson, and Mr. Lovett were present. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Review committee's charge

SBE Chairperson Olsen provided an overview of the committee's charge; namely, to ensure that the SBE has a more effective mechanism to fully vet the Secretary's recommendations pertaining to independent school approvals (including any adverse recommendations, such as denial of approval/renewal and revocation and suspension). Olsen shared that he wants to see the committee closely evaluate all recommendations to ensure compliance with rules and regulations, particularly with consideration of:

1. Civil rights, including compliance with Vermont's Public Accommodations Act
2. Use of public funds, viz-a-viz quality of educational programs
3. Impact on students, including health and safety matters

When the SBE approves a school, we are putting our stamp on it – we need to ensure that we have full confidence that schools we approve meet all applicable requirements.

Discussion of committee process to vet recommended approvals

The committee and AOE staff discussed high level approach to its involvement with the approval process. General understanding is that the AOE would continue with existing internal process, leading to recommendation from the Secretary, but that the recommendation would then go to the committee for evaluation. Roughly 90 independent schools with 5-year renewal terms, so in a normal environment the

committee would be handling an average of 1 to 2 renewals per month. The committee will review all materials and use meetings to discuss concerns and ask questions of AOE staff and schools. A representative of a school would be invited to meeting and be prepared to answer questions from committee members. The committee would ultimately bring fully vetted recommendations to the full SBE for formal action. This could be a recommendation to adopt the Secretary's recommendation or a recommendation to take some other action. This approach will allow the committee to undertake a more rigorous evaluation of each matter than is possible at a meeting of the full board. The committee will also be involved with matters where an issue with an independent school results in a recommendation for suspension or revocation. The SBE is holding off on handling approvals and renewals until the Rule Series 2200 amendments have been adopted – this will ensure that important revisions pertaining to the health, safety, and civil rights of students are in effect. Until then, the committee will use upcoming meetings to further define the details of how it will function.

Committee Leadership

Brown indicated that he would not be in a position to serve as the chairperson of the committee, due to other time commitments. Lovett wanted to ensure that there wasn't ever a conflict due to his position as an independent school teacher and coach. Olsen suggested that there would be a conflict if the committee was handling a matter specific to a school that a member was involved with, and that it would be appropriate for the member to step aside from any discussions pertaining to that particular school. Jepson suggested that he could take the minutes, and that Lovett could chair the committee, with the understanding that Brown would step in as acting chairperson in any matter where Lovett had a conflict. Jepson moved, and Brown seconded a motion to elect Lovett as the chair of the committee. Brown and Jepson voted in favor; Lovett abstained. Lovett was elected chair of the committee. Lovett took over as chair of the meeting.

Public to Be Heard

Susan Aranoff introduced herself to the committee – represents the interests of individuals with developmental disabilities. Expressed appreciation for the committee and highlighted her interest in seeing Act 173 changes implemented.

Other

Committee had some preliminary discussion of future meeting schedule. Lovett will work with AOE staff to find a time for the next meeting, expected to be later in January or early February.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10AM.

Minutes prepared by Oliver Olsen