

December 15, 2015

Strategic Goals: (1) Ensure that Vermont's public education system operates within the framework of high expectations for every learner and ensure that there is equity in opportunity for all.
(2) Ensure that the public education system is stable, efficient, and responsive to changes and ever-changing population needs, economic and 21st century issues.

MINUTES

Present

State Board of Education (SBE): Stephan Morse, Chair; Sean-Marie Oller, Vice Chair; Peter Peltz; William Mathis; Mark Perrin; Stacy Weinberger; Krista Huling; Dylan McDermott, Student Member; Rainbow Chen, Student member non-voting.

Agency of Education (AOE): Rebecca Holcombe; Donna Russo Savage; Rebecca Plude.

Others: David Younce, Superintendent RSSU; Vaughn Altemus; Julie Longchamp, Vermont NEA; Mill Moore, VT Independent Schools Association; Tiffany Danitz, VT Digger; Andy Pomeroy, Principal Mill River Union HS; Vaughn Altemus; Lola Duffort, Rutland Herald; Jonathan Wolff, Primmer; Ken Page, VPA; Jo Reynolds, Tinmouth; Mary Moran, Superintendent RCPS; Donna Leep, SVSU; Nikki South; ACT 46 Implementation; Josh O'Gorman, Vermont Press Bureau.

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM. He reminded those in attendance to sign the attendance sheet and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. The members of the SBE introduced themselves.

Item B: Public to be Heard

None.

Item C: Consent Agenda

Motion: Oller moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Peltz.

Vote: The motion passed.

Specifically, the items approved were:

1. Minutes of the November 17, 2015, SBE Meeting

Updates

Item D: Board Members Announcements and Student Representatives Emails

Weinberger noted that she attended the Champlain Valley Head Start 50th Anniversary Celebration. One notable statistic presented was: preschool children are three times more likely to be expelled from programs than their school aged peers. This was striking and supports Vermont's commitment to early education.

Perrin noted that he attended the house committee on education on November 18th to hear testimony on Act 46. On November 30th he attended the Vermont Financial Literacy Commission's first meeting; the Agency has a seat on the Board which he currently fills.

Mathis noted that he attended the Southwest Superintendent's meeting alongside local legislators. He also read extensive coverage on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has a webinar tomorrow at 4:30 p.m. which details the full act.

Item E: Chair's Report

Morse stated that on December 7th, he, Mathis, Huling and Perrin met with legislators from the senate appropriations committee. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss staffing at the Agency and for the SBE. Bill Talbott provided information regarding the amount of general fund contributions. These have decreased approximately 31% from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2016. During the same time frame the Agency has lost approximately 43 positions. Board members discussed the implementation of Act 46, and staffing positions for the SBE. They requested the return of three positions, and approximately 200K in general fund contributions. The appropriations committee chairs were encouraging and asked the Board to return with more information on which positions had been cut, what priorities these positions employed, and which program areas could be reduced.

St. Johnsbury Academy, and Burr and Burton Academy have both requested to host a future SBE meeting, in order to meet with the Board and further explain the role of Independent Schools in the Vermont Educational System.

Item F: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe spoke to the Board about the implementation process of Act 46. The Agency estimates at least 15 votes before July 1, 2016. Eight Supervisory Unions are pursuing accelerated mergers, 23 active study committees have identified themselves to the Agency, and several others are involved in merger studies but are completing this work locally.

Last week, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which re-authorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) - commonly known for Title I, Title IIa, Title III and various federal programs that support learning opportunities for the students most at risk of poor educational outcomes. As an Agency, we are grateful for the support of the federal government and our congressional delegation for keeping our most at risk students at the center of the policy decisions they are making. In Vermont, we agree with the federal government that we all share a commitment to education as a key civil right for our

students who live in poverty, have disabilities, are learning English, or who face homelessness or disruptions in their families¹. The federal dollars that come with ESSA provide extra services beyond the main educational program, so that all our Vermont children are able to thrive.

This week, the AOE will meet with the Vermont Superintendents' Association, Vermont Principals' Association, Vermont School Boards Association and Vermont NEA to begin planning the engagement strategy for launching this important work. Next week we will share with each of you a detailed plan for how all educators and members of the public can be involved in participating and offering comment on the State Plan.

Peltz commented that the Agency has truly been cautious and candid in their approach to interpreting the new law.

Huling asked if these changes will affect Agency staffing and workload.

Holcombe responded that it depends on the requirements and criteria that the new law requires, and whether any flexibility exists in how we are required to report. Several staff at the Agency are very well versed in these types of changes, and have much experience in this area.

Weinberger commented that she appreciates the Agency's 'lens', in which they see what's best for all students, not just Vermont.

Holcombe added that there will be an opportunity tomorrow for stake holders to participate in a question and answer session at the Agency regarding Act 46 implementation.

Item: G – Committee Reports

Mathis stated that the SBE should discuss the option of scheduling a meet and greet with legislators prior to the legislative session. An additional agenda item for the January meeting is to answer the question on how private schools are included in the Vermont Educational System.

Item: H - Timeline for revisions to 2200 series of the SBE Rules

Holcombe thanked Mill Moore and the Vermont Independent Schools Association for their input into this timeline. Between December 2015 and May 2016 the Agency will solicit stakeholder input as to the changes that are necessary. A draft of the revised rules will be presented to the SBE at their June 2016 meeting.

Holcombe will submit a proposed timeline to the Governance committee in order to more closely involve the committee in the revisions.

¹ We anticipate re-authorizations of IDEA (special education) and the child nutrition programs will shortly follow as well.

Item: I - Legislative Report

Secretary Holcombe updated the Board regarding the Agency's intent to coordinate with Superintendent's across the state, as well as legislators to ensure the workload for schools is not increased along with Act 46.

Career Technical Centers have been discussed specifically in relation to their locations.

The Agency is deciding whether they may ask the Legislature to review the number of reports we are required to submit. Staff will review these and inquire whether the report is necessary in order to free staff time for other important work.

The Agency continues to update lawmakers on implementation of the Longitudinal Data System (LDS).

Staff at the agency will continue to speak with lawmakers about capacity issues. Any additions through legislation of: reports, mandates, task forces etc.; will overburden Agency staff further.

Item J: Update on Act 46 Mergers – Donna Russo-Savage

Russo-Savage displayed a map of the mergers as they currently stand. The Governance Team at the Agency consists of Secretary Holcombe, Greg Glennon, General Counsel, Brad James, Financial Manager, Bill Talbott, CFO, and herself.

The meeting was recessed until 12:45 p.m. for lunch.

Act 46 Update - Approval of Act 46 Study Committee Reports

Rutland South Supervisory Union - David Younce, Superintendent

Superintendent Younce presented the RSSU Study Committee report to the Board. They recommend creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district. Although the proposal would unify the governance structures of all existing districts within the supervisory union within a short period of time, it is not presented as an Accelerated Merger pursuant to Act 46, Sec. 6.1. Rather, the Study Committee proposes to form a Regional Education District (RED) pursuant to Act 153 (2010), as amended. The new unified union school district (New Unified District), to be "named prior to incorporation and with public input," would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade. If approved, the proposal would unify five existing school districts and their supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating four elementary schools and one secondary school. The Tinmouth School District is identified as an "advisable" district pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706(b)(2); all other districts in the supervisory union are identified as "necessary" districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706(b)(1).

Motion: Huling moved that the State Board of Education find that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by the member districts of the Rutland South Supervisory Union is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and that the State Board vote to approve the attached report of the RSSU Study Committee. The motion was seconded by McDermott.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Addison Central Supervisory Union (ACSU)- Peter Burrows, Superintendent, Suzanne Buck, Ruth Hardy, Study Committee Co-chairs

Superintendent Burrows presented the ACSU Study Committee report to the Board. The ACSU Study Committee recommends creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district pursuant to the accelerated merger process and timeline created by Act 46, Sec. 6 (2015).

ACSU has been engaged in board-level and community-wide governance discussions for over five years, which have included a preliminary governance study report issued in 2010; a RED Study Committee Report issued in 2014 after a three-year study and community engagement process; and a strategic planning initiative culminating in a Plan accepted by the ACSU Executive Committee in June, 2015. The ACSU Study Committee's Report and its Worksheet that is currently before the State Board includes references and hyperlinks to each of these three documents. The Report also includes one appendix that analyzes the proposal under the stated goals of Act 46 and a second appendix that includes charts and tables of financial and enrollment data.

Motion: Oller moved that the State Board of Education find that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by the member districts of the Addison Central Supervisory Union is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and that the State Board vote to approve the attached report of the ACSU Study Committee. The motion was seconded by Huling.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously. One abstention, Mark Perrin.

Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union (RNESU)- Jeanne Collins, Superintendent, Brenda Fleming, Business Manager; Jennifer Cyr, Community Member

Superintendent Collins presented the RNESU Study Committee report to the Board. The RNESU Study Committee recommends (1) that two new unified union school districts be formed by merging the governance of the existing member districts of the supervisory union and (2) that the two new unified union school districts remain members of the RNESU. The Study Committee proposes to form these two new districts pursuant to the Side-by-Side Merger process set forth in Act 156 (2012), Sec. 15. A Side-by-Side Merger is a variation of a Regional Education District (RED) and its creation is governed in large part by the RED process set forth in Act 153 (2010), as amended.

The two proposed unified union districts are the Barstow Unified Union School District (serving the towns of Chittenden and Mendon) and the Otter Valley Unified Union School District (serving the towns of Brandon, Goshen, Leicester, Pittsfield, Sudbury, and Whiting).

RNESU currently provides its member districts with special education and transportation services pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261a. Its member districts have a long history of collaboration

in such areas as collective bargaining, curriculum development, and food services. Creation of the two proposed unified union districts is explicitly contingent upon voter approval of both new districts independently. Because of this contingency, this Recommendation addresses both proposals, but does so in two distinct sections.

Motion: Peltz moved that the State Board of Education find that the proposed formation of two new unified union school districts by the member districts of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and that the State Board vote to approve the attached report of the RNESU Study Committee, which

1. Incorporates:
 - a. The Report and Plan for Formation of the Barstow Unified Union School District; and
 - b. The Report and Plan for Formation of the Otter Valley Unified Union School District; and
2. Retains the RNESU as a supervisory union and includes the two new unified union school districts as its members.

The motion was seconded by Oller.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously. One abstention, William Mathis.

Adjourn

Motion: McDermott moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:07 PM. The motion was seconded by Weinberger.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Rebecca Plude