

March 21, 2017

*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.*

State Board of Education Draft Minutes

Present:

State Board of Education Members: Krista Huling, Bill Mathis, Mark Perrin, Peter Peltz, John Carroll, Stacy Weinberger, Connor Solimano, and John O'Keefe.

Agency of Education (AOE): Clare O'Shaughnessy, Judy Cutler, Suzanne Sprague, Maureen Gaidys, Stephanie Brackin, Donna Russo-Savage

Others: David Schoales, Brattleboro; David Kelley, Greensboro; Daniel MacArthur, Marlboro; Margaret MacLean, Peacham; Emily Rosenbaum, Stowe; Mike Beidowski, Plainfield; Carin Ewing Park, Barnard; Linda Treash, Barnard; Dorothy Naylor, Windham; Nancy Dyke, Windham; Jerry Dyke, Windham; Kathy Scott, Windham; Richard Bland, Stowe; Scott Thompson, Calais; Susette Bollard, ONSU; Laurie Gossens, WSSU; Rama Schneider, Williamstown; Bruce Sterling, Westminster; Cheryl Charles, Westminster; Alan Small, Orange; Lee Gardner, Washington; Marilyn Mahusky, Chester; Joseph Trombley, Andover; Christopher Leopold, World Jones; Rachel Navaro, Reading; Lauren Baker, Chester; Hilary Linehan, Strafford; Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; Jeff Francis, VSA; Ken Page, VPA; Emily Bradbury, Stowe; Tiffany Donza, Stowe; Cara Zimmerman, Stowe; Meg Powden, TRSU; Katherine Fogg, Chester-Andover; George Thompson, Cavendish; Tom Ferenc, GMUHS; Alison DesLauriers, GMUHS; Mill Moore, VISA; Sebastian Frank, Mount Holly; David Delore, Times Argus; Steve Dale, Act 46 Consultant

Item A: Call to Order

Secretary Holcombe called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

Secretary Holcombe began by swearing in the two new members of the State Board of Education, John Carroll and John O'Keefe, with the Affirmation of Allegiance, followed by the Affirmation of Office.

Item C: Roll Call and Introductions

Secretary Holcombe asked Board members to introduce themselves and where they are from: Stacy Weinberger, Burlington; Connor Solimano, Rutland; Peter Peltz, Woodbury; Bonnie Johnson-Aten, Montpelier; Krista Huling, Jeffersonville; Rebecca Holcombe, Norwich; Bill Mathis, Goshen; Mark Perrin, Middlebury; Rainbow Chen, Winooski.

Secretary Holcombe shared that Chen was recently accepted at Middlebury College.

Items B: Elections of Officers

Secretary Holcombe opened nominations for the Chair of the State Board of Education.

Motion: Johnson-Aten nominated Krista Huling for Chair of the State Board of Education.

Perrin seconded this motion. There were no other nominations and no discussion. Secretary Holcombe closed the nominations and called a vote.

Vote: The vote to have Huling serve as Chair passed unanimously.

Secretary Holcombe turned the gavel over to Chair Huling. Chair Huling opened nominations for Vice Chair of the State Board of Education.

Motion: Weinberger nominated Mathis for Vice Chair. Perrin seconded this nomination. There were no other nominations and nominations were closed. Discussion: Carroll offered an observation. As a new Board member, he acknowledged his newness and expressed concern for both the clumsy process of Rules Series 2200 and for the candidate in nomination because of his very significant involvement in the leadership of Rules Series 2200. He indicated that he would vote no, with a heavy heart, based on process and perception and asked the Board to consider if there were other members who might serve the Board better in this role. O'Keefe echoed Carroll's comments and said it was not a personal issue, but a matter of conscience. He indicated that he too, would cast a no vote and encouraged other members to consider a Vice Chair that could build consensus. Mathis responded that the Rules Series 2200 are on the agenda for 3:00 p.m. and agreed that there has been a lot of controversy and that things could have been done better. He talked about what these rules imply: quality of opportunity for all children regardless of where they come from, quality of opportunity for special education children and accountability of public funds in a public fashion. Mathis stated that is what he stands for and has always stood for – and directed the group to vote for him if you like where he stands, and if not to vote against him. There was no further discussion.

Vote: Chair Huling called a vote to have Mathis serve as Vice Chair of the State Board of Education. The vote passed 5:2.

Chair Huling reminded participants to sign in and shared that in the interest of time, comments from the public would be strictly limited to 2 minutes.

Item D: Public to be Heard

The following members of the public were heard:

- 1) Dave Kelley, Chair of Hazen Union School
- 2) David Schoales, Brattleboro, VT
- 3) Cheryl Charles – Westminster, VT
- 4) Rama Schneider, Williamstown, VT
- 5) Bruce Sterling, Westminster VT
- 6) Dan McArthur, Marlboro, VT
- 7) Margaret MacLean, Peacham, VT
- 8) Dorothy Naylor, Calais, VT
- 9) Carin Ewing Park, Barnard, VT
- 10) Scott Thompson, Calais, VT
- 11) Linda Treash, Barnard, VT

Chair Huling thanked the group for their enthusiasm/passion for education. She encouraged the public participants to lend their voices in Montpelier on their way home as this topic is being discussed today at the State. Secretary Holcombe encouraged the group to consider the fiscal constraints, and consider on how to work together toward a positive future for their towns. She added not doing anything is not an option for any of us. Secretary Holcombe clarified that in response to a claim that the Secretary would merge districts in secret that she has limited authority, any proposal is deliberated in public and she is not a voting member of the Board.

Item E: Consent Agenda

Chair Huling asked if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda. Chen commented that she had edits for the minutes. There was commentary after Item L on page 5. She asked to have "New Americans" struck and replaced with "all students are prioritized regardless of identity."

Motion: Mathis moved to approve the consent agenda. Johnson-Aten seconded this motion.

There was no further discussion.

Vote: Chair Huling called a vote to approve the consent agenda. The vote was passed; O'Keefe abstained.

Chair Huling called a five minute recess at 11:12 a.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 11:18 a.m. and suggested moving the agenda around to accommodate the merger proposals and proceeded with Item L-1.

Item L-1: Two Rivers (Green Mountain USD)

Russo-Savage introduced the merger proposal and the study committee members introduced themselves: Meg Powden, superintendent, Two Rivers Supervisory Union; Sebastian Frank, Chair of Act 46 Study committee; Chris Leopold, Legal Counsel and Allison DesLauriers, Chair of GMUHS/subcommittee. Frank asked other supporters present to introduce themselves: George Thomson, principal of Cavendish Town Elementary School; Tom Ferenc, principal, GMUHS, Kathleen Fogg, principal, Chester-Andover USD; Lauren Baker, Tech Director at TRSU, Marilyn Mahusky, chair of Chester-Andover School Board; Joseph Robert, represents Andover; Steve Dale, Act 46 Consultant.

Frank and his team shared a Power Point presentation detailing their merger proposal and the dilemma of which passion is worth pursuing and which needs to be let go. He offered several pearls of wisdom – one being that this is not just about losing local control, but gaining control over another location.

Perrin acknowledged the study committee members for the numerous hours of work that went into their proposal over the last year. Peltz commented that this is the only merger that resulted from Act 153. Weinberger commented that it is exciting that the merger proposals that have come recently have been creative and shown excitement about increased opportunities for students. There was discussion about those districts that would be left out, PK districts, and options for Ludlow and Mt. Holly to merge with GMUSD.

Motion: Mathis moved to approve the merger proposal. Perrin seconded this motion and questioned the ADM requirements. There was no further discussion.

Vote: Chair Huling called a vote to approve the merger proposal for Two Rivers (Green Mountain USD). The vote passed unanimously.

Item L-2: Orange North/Washington South (Central VT UUSD)

Russo-Savage introduced the merger proposal and the merger study committee introduced themselves: Peter Evans, Northfield committee member; Laurie Gossens, superintendent, Washington South SU; Susette Bollard, superintendent, Orange-North SU; Rama Schneider, Williamstown study committee member.

Schneider shared a Power Point presentation and shared current challenges. Both schools are seeing increasingly difficult and complex challenges in students. Declining enrollment has resulted in reduced offerings in both schools. Their two main guiding principles are: 1) not just a new framework for the same old stuff to happen and 2) they did not want to define what was going to happen because they don't know what/how education will be delivered in the future – and they wanted to enable the future. There was discussion on grade configurations and public input on any proposals to change this, increased opportunities, increase diversification, shared commitment to fiscal responsibility and improved accountability/assessment.

Weinberger commented that she was excited that summer and after school opportunities were addressed. O'Keefe offered that the opportunities for students more than double when enrollments increase from 300 to 600. Chen was pleased to hear that there was student input into the plan. Johnson-Aten gave praise to the vision statement of the work, recognizing that can be a difficult task.

Motion: Perrin moved to approve the merger proposal. Peltz/Johnson-Aten seconded this motion. There was no further discussion.

Vote: Chair Huling called a vote to approve the merger proposal for Orange North/Washington South (Central VT UUSD). The vote passed unanimously.

Item L-3: Orange North (Orange Washington USD)

Russo-Savage introduced the merger proposal and the study committee introduced themselves: Alan Small, Orange, Chair of the 706 B committee, Lee Gardner, Washington; Susette Bollard, superintendent Orange-North SU. Small thanked the huge committee involved in this. Small shared a Power Point presentation and said the major point was to keep high school choice; they also wanted to increase performance on state testing. Of note – the study committee headed into this with a good amount of acceptance, perhaps because the demographics in both schools are similar. Savings would be returned via reduced tax rate and be re-invested into educational opportunities. The consensus is both communities want more bang for their buck; they are less concerned with tax relief. The discussion covered the guiding principle that schools are an important center of the community, maintaining the Town Meeting style model to determine budget, children first, maintenance of services and hopefully an increase, greater coordination between teaching groups, isolation. Proposal is to keep both buildings open, with an upper (PK-4) and lower school (5-8). This will help better prepare and transition students to high school.

Motion: Mathis moved to accept the recommendation of the green sheet. Perrin seconded this motion. There was no further discussion.

Vote: Chair Huling called a vote to approve the merger proposal for Orange North (Orange Washington USD). The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Huling adjourned for lunch at 1:12 p.m. with a plan to resume at 1:50 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 2:01 p.m.

Item N: ESSA Update

Patrick Halladay and Chris Case, AOE Project Managers, introduced themselves and explained that at its core, ESSA is a Civil Rights law. There was discussion on the difference in NCLB and ESSA, the coordination of goals and organic alignment with the Governor's goals of equity, alignment, affordability, public input and what was learned from the process, continuous improvement, and the AOE's plan for submission to US ED on April 2, 2017 and next steps. Secretary Holcombe offered to send additional information to O'Keefe and Carroll to help bring them up to speed on ESSA.

Item P: IFR Update

Josh Souliere, AOE, introduced himself and shared a Power Point presentation. He shared that there will be a celebration at the end of these pilots at the Double Tree in Burlington on May 25, 2017. Reports are shared with the superintendent and they can share them as they wish. In the future, the results will be published. It is systems level report, not school specific. It is only a snapshot – one day in a school. The visits are structured by the entity participating in the IFR, so there is buy-in from the get-go.

Souliere encouraged those interested and wishing to have a better understanding of the process to view the four video series on the AOE website, under EQS.

Item R: Proposed Rules on Alternative Structures

Russo-Savage shared a map showing the present status of mergers. She also shared some statistics of what happened on Town Meeting Day 2017. Due to the shortage of time, Chair Huling suggested that Russo-Savage share a brief explanation of the potential revisions to the proposed rules on alternative structures. Russo-Savage shared the handout that she had previously distributed. She discussed the 5 goals of Act 46 (educational and financial), isolation, phases of voluntary mergers, Act 153, timelines/deadlines, statewide plan, re-drawing SU boundaries, public comments received and responses.

Chair Huling asked if the SBE would like to postpone these for one month to give it real justice, due to the time shortage and the fact that we have two new appointees. Russo-Savage added there were a few themes: 1) things that they want changed, that the SBE has no authority to change, 2) timelines that are set by the Legislature and cannot be changed by the State Board of Education, 3) things that would be premature to decide upon, 4) dislike of Act 46 and 5) a real fear of the unknown. The new revisions change the language and are more welcoming. Russo-Savage commented that the quality and depth of proposals has increased as time has gone on. Today's proposals were a little different in that we know what these committees have gone through to get where they are. For transparency, the study committee meeting minutes are all

on public record. Any Secretary would want robust proposals to get a clear understanding of local preferences and what is going on in the field.

Russo-Savage shared that Washington West SU came here last spring and that they are going to become fully operational this summer. There have found two typographical errors in their articles of agreement: 1) there is an incorrect statutory reference and 2) initial terms printed do not reflect how they described their terms to be. Russo-Savage asked Chair Huling to sign the letter of understanding that these changes to the articles will be made.

Item K: Resolution of Appreciation for Stephan Morse and Sean-Marie Oller

Chair Huling suggested that Item K be moved until the April meeting.

Item S: Rules 2200 Update on moving forward

Chair Huling said that agenda item S cannot be rushed. She provided handouts that are available on the AOE website., Huling stated that she needs to fill vacancies on the 2200 subcommittee. Next meeting there will be a full discussion on this topic. Chair Huling would like the new Rules 2200 subcommittee to work on the process for a path forward. Mathis and Peltz will continue to serve on this subcommittee; Johnson-Aten will also join them and another subcommittee member will be added at a later date.

Huling apprised the Board that the Miscellaneous Education Bill version 9.1 talks about the Rules 2200 study committee to consider recommendations of the criteria to be used to approve independent schools. Secretary Holcombe offered to have the link sent out to SBE. It also says that the AOE has to provide this subcommittee administrative, legal and technical assistance. Chair Huling will speak with new members and see if one of them will serve on this subcommittee following this meeting.

Item H: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe encouraged people to take a deep breath and to understand that the "Skinny Budget" overview that she was sharing is a political document and the beginning of a negotiation. She reminded the group that initiatives like Act 46 help figure out how to withstand economic shocks and build resilience. Secretary Holcombe added that the AOE needs to stay laser focused in Vermont, regardless of what happens in Washington, D.C. She shared a few details on the Administration's "Skinny Budget" and that it is a broad brush statement. Secretary Holcombe said DeVos was not involved and couldn't answer many questions in detail. President Trump has boldly shifted the funding mechanisms. She mentioned that the overall shift is from non-defense to defense and said the specific proposed cuts to education are: ESEA Title II-a federal grant funding (supports PD in private and public schools), 21C, TRIO/Gear-UP, Federal Impact Aid (in some towns this is 50% of their funding – inconsequential to other areas). Secretary Holcombe added that the Skinny Budget includes proposed new money in new funds for school choice and is silent on Title IV, Perkins, and CTE. She said she doesn't know where additional programmatic cuts might happen and reminded the group to be mindful of efficiency. Secretary Holcombe continued that Vermont cannot meet state requirements without federal dollars. She will continue to discourage legislature from giving us additional work and say no to work that is not required.

Item F: Board Announcements

Postponed until next meeting.

Item G: Interim Chair's Report – Krista Huling, Interim Chair

Postponed until April meeting.

Item I: Committee Reports

Postponed until April meeting.

Item J: Student Reports

Postponed until April meeting.

Adjourn

Perrin acknowledged Chair Huling for doing a great job.

Motion: Perrin moved to adjourn. Johnson-Aten seconded this motion. There was no further discussion. Huling called a vote to adjourn.

Vote: The vote to adjourn passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys
