

March 20, 2019

Draft Minutes

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE): Krista Huling, Chair; William Mathis, Vice Chair (left at 1:06 p.m.); Peter Peltz; Oliver Olsen; Callahan Beck; John O'Keefe; John Carroll, Mark Perrin; Kyle Courtois

Agency of Education (AOE): Daniel French, Emily Simmons, Emily Byrne, Maureen Gaidys.

Others: Emilie Knisley, Groton/OESU superintendent; Judy Murray, BMU/OESU Board Member; Kelsey Root-Winchester, BMU Board, Wells River; Nicole Bell, OESU; Lola Duffort, VTDigger; Donna Waelter, BMU Special Education Director; Tracy Puffer, Groton/BMU Teacher; Angeline Alley, BMU Board Chair.

Item A: Call to Order, Roll Call/Introductions/Welcome

Chair Huling called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and asked members to introduce themselves. She shared that the agenda was revised because it was learned that new board member appointees would not be in place until after this meeting. She invited Superintendent Knisley to welcome the group. Knisley welcomed the group and thanked them for visiting Blue Mountain. She shared an update from the previous night's board meeting: the board was able to approve the SU budget and the assessments that will centralize special education and transportation that will start on July 1. This has been a work in progress since September.

Item C: Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Huling asked to amend the agenda to move the break from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30/10:45 a.m. since the meeting started a little late. There was agreement to do this.

Item D: Consent Agenda, Board Announcements, Student Reports, Chair's Report

Consent Agenda: Chair Huling asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Carroll moved; Perrin seconded. There was discussion on the closure of Charis Learning Center over a year ago. Chair Huling called the vote. The vote passed unanimously to approve the following consent agenda items:

1. Minutes – February 20, 2019 Meeting
2. Other Educational Program (Teen Parent Education Program)
 - Brook Street Family Literacy Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Barre, VT
3. Approved Independent School Closure
 - Charis Learning Center, Jericho, VT

Board Announcements: Carroll shared details of his recent trip to Western Kenya. He spoke about the educational projects he was involved in, a school for marginalized children PreK-8, that it is completely Kenyan-run, that these students do better on their national examinations than most other schools in Kenya, that this catapults them into their high school careers, that there are scholarship funds that guarantee any student who goes on to high school will be able to pay for it. O'Keefe shared that last month he visited Carroll's alma mater, Harvard, and visited former board member, Connor Solimano, and reported that he is thriving and happy. Peltz asked about education in Africa. Carroll spoke about it being quite similar to the British system of organization, with examinations at grade 8 and 12 that determine the course of their future, empowering them to do well is really a ticket for them that affects their life expectancy, that his school provides two meals a day and is the only school in the area that does that. Carroll continued about how Kenya wants what we have and that they understand that bringing girls into the education scene benefits them all. They have a fund that guarantees payment for any student that is admitted into one of the top schools, which are very expensive.

Mathis announced that he will be leaving early and that he will submit his comments before he leaves.

Student Report: Beck shared that she submitted a survey of 5-6 questions to Blue Mountain students who were actively involved in the Act 46 process and shared these comments/themes with the Board: getting help in understanding the process from teachers, that as a smaller school there is concern about having their school closed, that student voice was encouraged, that student council is the primary means for expressing student voice, frustration around community not hearing student voice, and students starting to attend board meetings. She summarized that some of the issues that they are concerned about in their school are mostly around building trust between students and teachers and that it is a small school and that they are always together. Beck spoke about civic engagement and the need to keep students informed on education-related legislation in an understandable, accessible way.

Courtois said he had information similar to Beck and spoke to some of the difficulties with proficiency-based learning (PBL) and connecting this to curriculum. He reported that the freshmen are doing better at this as it is the first year of implementation for them. The next few years will be spent helping students and teachers to better understand PBL. The K-4 is using all PBL and grades 5-12 is starting to make that transition. The goal is to have it fully implemented by next year.

Chair's Report: Chair Huling said new Board members are coming soon and should be at the next meeting. She thanked Perrin for attending. She discussed the Act 173 draft rules and how these would go to the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group first and then come before the Board and that there would be an update later, but no draft rules. Chair Huling has communicated with the Legislature that the Act 173 timeline is tight and that it is important to get it done right, not just get it done. She spoke about Southern Vermont College closing and being unsure what to do with their records. She also spoke with the Legislature about post-secondary closures and maintaining the physical records. She further suggested that it might be better for AOE to take administrative control over these physical records. There was discussion

on expecting additional post-secondary closures and having a discussion as a Board about how to fill that void. There was further discussion on the closing of colleges, how to address this issue of concern, and how to involve CCV, state colleges, UVM and some economists or demographers in this conversation. There was a request for a list of all colleges and universities in the state, their course offerings, their endowments and costs. There was further discussion on the role of dual enrollment, having a day-long conference dedicated to this issue and including various partners/stakeholders, creating fora that are different from the regular Board meetings, that a small convening of higher education stakeholders has already convened, and that Secretary French will work to expand this out to Board members. Chair Huling asked for an update in April from Secretary French on the status of Vermont post-secondary institutions.

Item F: Strategic Planning

Chair Huling asked members to review a document from February 21, 2018 titled "Vermont's Strategic Vision for Education." Chair Huling spoke about definitions of historically marginalized and CTE. Chair Huling talked about examining the three dimensions (excellence, equity and efficiency) individually and working on this in April, May and the June retreat, assessing what is available from the AOE and what is needed. There was further discussion on limiting the vision statement to PreK-12 or including post-secondary, equity in dual enrollment, and a different view of job preparation. Chair Huling suggested breaking into three groups to discuss each dimension and for Board members to give her their first and second choice for which group they would like to join. There was discussion on not seeing "opportunity" explicitly as a dimension, both breadth and depth of opportunity, not being so focused on outcomes, not losing sight of the work done on small schools, working on this at the retreat, and updating the Education Quality Standards.

Chair Huling called a short break at 10:26 a.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 10:43 a.m.

Item G: Orange East SU Board, Teacher and Student Panel – Quality and Equity, Proficiency-based Graduation requirements and student experience

Chair Huling invited panel members to introduce themselves: Tracy Puffer, teacher; Judy Murray, BMU/OESU board member; Nicole Bell, OESU Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Emilie Knisley, superintendent; John Barone, high school teaching principal; Scott Blood, principal.

Knisley gave some background and history on the SU. Barone shared some information that he had prepared on: where they are on PLPs, standardized PLP format being used for grades 7-12, updated graduation requirements consistent with Act 77, the hybrid model, and different proficiencies.

Chair Huling asked student panel members to introduce themselves: Willow Schaefer, Devonte Gilmore, Davis Parker, Lauryen Alley, Antonia Munson and Morgan Beck. All students are members of the junior class and participating in dual enrollment and a few of them are looking at early college.

Barone continued with the 5-year improvement plan and the format following the MTSS framework and the decision to move to one comprehensive improvement plan. He explained that the leadership team reviews this plan on a regular basis and next year will focus work on the MTSS system. He said that proficiencies were a priority this year, next year it will be MTSS.

There was discussion on outreach beyond the campus, that a variety of options off-campus are available and encouraged, transferable skills, content proficiencies, the use of VT Virtual learning, content mapping, embedded proficiencies and transferable skills as part of a senior exit, increasing early college trends, AP course participation, first generation college students, curriculum and graduation requirements at the SU level and how this transition is progressing, making a cohesive system between Blue Mountain and Oxbow, siloed elementary schools with individual and different curricula, SU turnover, sharing of resources, school choice, teachers' contracts, and centralization on special education and transportation.

Angeline Alley introduced herself, Blue Mountain board member, and spoke about how new Knisley is to this and that she has only been on board since November and that she is doing good work. There was discussion on addressing the issue of equity, equity being the focus of special education, and distributing the special education resources among the SU. There was further discussion on momentum for moving toward a coordinated curriculum, determining equity, inventory of resources/expertise, accessibility of options, elimination of prerequisites, high participation in extracurricular activities (70% of high school population), larger sense of community, historic strength of governance, leadership turnover and longstanding compliance issues, support or lack thereof from the Vermont School Board Association, policy audit in progress, improvement in SU board's ability to work together, mentality of partnership vs. consolidation, identifying strengths and eliminating redundancies.

Chair Huling thanked panel members for hosting the Board and encouraged them to think about the student experience and doing what is best for them. She further acknowledged the staff for helping the students to engage their civic voice around the Act 46 mergers.

Chair Huling shared that the opportunity for public comment had been inadvertently left off the agenda, so she wanted to add that back on and offered for any members of the public to give input at this time. There were no members of the public to be heard.

Item H: Elections

Chair Huling shared that timing of the election of officers might seem awkward, but that the two new Board members will not be in attendance until next meeting. She spoke about the need to have biennial elections. She asked if Board members would be comfortable tabling the vote until next meeting, when all members would be present. Perrin moved to table elections until at least next month; Olsen offered a friendly amendment that the current leadership continue until such a time as new officers are elected. Beck seconded. There was no discussion. The vote passed unanimously. Chair Huling asked if there was anything needed prior to the next meeting regarding elections of officers. Carroll suggested elections be at the end of the next meeting or even at the May meeting. There was discussion on when to have elections.

Perrin asked if Mathis had anything to be discussed before lunch adjournment. Mathis said he would wait until after lunch.

Chair Huling adjourned for lunch at 11:59 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 12:36 p.m.

Mathis distributed a paper titled, “Budget Book Review and Comments” – and spoke about financial quality standards, this system needing to be looked at, contradicting numbers, and Vermont’s spending compared to other states. Mathis raised questions on categorical statements missing evaluation data, public input, and lack of reconciliation with research literature. Chair Huling invited members to think about this and offer comments if appropriate. There was discussion on the design approach vs. representative approach and a proposal soliciting feedback/reaction.

Item H: Act 173 Update

Emily Simmons, General Counsel, introduced herself. She explained that at the last Board meeting there was concern with the original timeline and the draft rules going to the Board before they went to the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group (CBFAG). The CBFAG decided to delay the process by a month so that it could review and give feedback first on the draft rules. The draft rules would then come for review by the Board at the April meeting and be voted on at the May meeting. Simmons continued that the rules would be a public document and could be received by Board members, but that it was not appropriate to have these discussed today. She detailed the revised timeline.

There was discussion on the public comment period, theoretically that rules need to be adopted in November, that public comment would start in June, revised rules would be received in September to be voted on at October meeting, significant impact of the rules, need to be prepared for contentious discussions, phased implementation of Act 173, starting with a small chunk of rules, difficulty of a blended a series of rules (funding and practice), the importance of launching the financial constructs, modelling of how to address the funding of independent schools, sub-granting to non-public entities, the Board getting a summary/synopsis from the CBFAG, increased flexibility with the block grant system, rule revision will continue on a rolling basis for the next 18 months, and the plan to collect public comment.

Item J: Review Agency of Education Budget

Chair Huling invited Emily Byrne, CFO, to address the Board. Secretary French reiterated Mathis’ report that there is a statutory requirement that the Board review and comment on the Budget Book. Secretary French spoke about Agency capacity, having to prepare a budget without a full understanding, framing the introduction for the audience (legislature), complexity of significant policy initiatives, what we have done to ourselves, organizational changes, future resources, distinction between the Education Fund and the General Fund, school construction, lack of coherence in education policy at the state level, opportunity to leverage our best thinking, and recycling and reusing materials presented to the Legislature.

Byrne started with the presentation titled “VT Education Fund Budget Presentation.” She started on page 5 and discussed the Appropriations Act, federal funds vs. grants, the AOE’s operating budget, special funds (licensing and Medicaid), Agency capacity, position funding by source, tobacco funds, the 2018 creation of the Agency of Digital Services(ADS), effect of federal funding on capacity, new positions in 2019, the Pay Act, components of the 2020 Budget Request, ongoing funding for the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and the Statewide School District Data Management System (SSDDMS), rationale for paying for these programs, challenges with SSDDMS, education services, termination of federal grants, assumption of level funding, lifetime of federal grants, vacancy savings, and the reorganization and rebalancing of divisions. Secretary French spoke about ideally giving the Board time in advance for input to be included, but that was not possible as it is part of the state budget and turnaround is short. Secretary French said he would collect comments and feedback and pass this on to the Legislature and staff. Chair Huling asked about page 50 and the increase in public school enrollment and wanted clarification on the increase in actual students. Secretary French spoke about the timing of this report and that the data collection was not frozen and that might affect confidence in this data. Chair Huling praised the data that was provided in the report. There was discussion on Connecticut’s organization compared to that of Vermont, comparison to prior year’s data, per pupil costs, consistency in reporting of students, need for a conversation about ratios, making communication clear to the public, budgets not being based on a democratic process, the Board’s role (per statute) in the budget process, the Boards’ role to understand vs. giving praise or criticism, and separating the Board’s budget from the AOE’s budget.

Chair Huling called a recess at 2:19 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 2:38 p.m.

Item K: Legislative Update - SBE Responses to Pending Legislation

Chair Huling shared that Ted Fisher was not able to be present due to testimony required at the Legislature, but that Secretary French and Simmons would be available to discuss the handout titled, “Legislative Update for the State Board of Education.” Simmons discussed various legislation and its progress in the Legislature: H.39 – an act relating to extending the merger deadline (factual update), H.140 - an act relating to the State Advisory Panel on Special Education. Chair Huling shared that she had never heard or been advised by the Advisory Council on Special Education and that there is some disruption/dysfunction on this council. Olsen suggested another board/council, perhaps related to CTE, that is required to report to the State Board and has never done so. There was discussion on re-energizing and redefining the State Advisory Panel on Special Education, concern with greatly expanding the membership of this council, that AOE will be providing testimony, and advocating that the references to the State Board be eliminated. Carroll suggested that the Board ask the Legislature to change this requirement. There was consensus on this.

There was further discussion on Act 173, H.521, lead in drinking water, radon, asbestos and a broader conversation about what to do with school facilities. There was discussion on the closure of private post-secondary institutions, the study on campus sexual harm, the study/pilot

of Vermont Technical College certificate and degree programs at CTE centers and the potential last day of this legislative session.

Item L: Technical Corrections to State Board vs. Agency of Education roles

Secretary French spoke to the challenges of this process and praised Simmons for her exemplary work. There was discussion on the inappropriate references to Board handling reimbursement, turning everything over to the AOE except for explicit Board responsibilities, technical vs. policy changes, eliminating everything except § 164 and a proposal to rewrite this section, getting it started this session, using the miscellaneous education bill to advance it, having it completed by December and ready for annual report in January, further discussions at the June retreat, writing to Representative Webb and Senator Baruth and using examples discussed today.

Item M: Secretary's Report – Designing our Future/SLDS Update

Secretary French shared that there are several phases to the SLDS and that the AOE is committed to turning the report card on in May. To do that, the AOE needed to shut down the vertical reporting, and are now arranging the data. The final data will be submitted to the vendor (Battelle) in about 4 weeks. There was discussion on centralizing student information systems, training on implementation of data, suppression issues, and shifting accountability to the SU level.

Secretary French shared a presentation on “Designing Our Future” that reviewed a document he wrote titled, “*Designing Our Future: A Blueprint for Changing Vermont’s Education System.*” He further explained that he volunteered to give his impressions on the existing system after serving for a short time and as part of a larger discussion at the Governor’s Cabinet. He asked his administrative team to provide input to this and that is where version two came from. He continued that the document was leaked to the press and that this worked out well. Secretary French explained that this is being developed into a blog post and will continue to evolve. He shared that there have been suggestions about how a simplified system could improve how we feed students and how higher education is accessed. Secretary French shared that the idea is to see if his theory of action is viable. He spoke about how his observations are based on experiences and his conclusion that the system is overly complex and that we are struggling with collecting good data. He discussed design strategy, specific design elements from Version 1.0, intentionality of supports, investment in teacher quality, quality data, access to broader resources, supporting broader social and economic development of the state, and having a nimble, efficient, effective system. Secretary French continued to discuss the immediate process going forward, questions that need to be considered, that he shares these questions when he travels the state, that rural development is crucial, adaptive challenges, the need for greater policy coherence and better intentionality and metrics.

Carroll applauded French for his work on this plan. There was discussion on fully implementing the meaning of Brigham, if we would create a system as it exists today, reducing complexity and duplication, importance of challenging ourselves with these questions, not retreating from this idea too quickly, remembering that the people want/need to be heard, sense of urgency, fragility of the current system, Richard Cate’s white paper, insulation of district

leadership, autonomous operation of districts, Finland's model, infrastructure issues, how to move this with collaboration and not division, there is not capacity for a process/experience similar to Act 46, if the Board could consider design elements as part of their strategic planning, adding specificity to the standing document, regions as a critical lens to designing structure, resistance to change of the education system, that Vermonters understand the importance of education, current inequities in the state are intolerable, need to think about things differently, abolishing the State Board of Education, concern with multiple entities directing policy, redefining § 164 to specify State Board responsibilities, time it takes to affect change, and complacency with situation.

Chair Huling asked Perrin if he had any final comments as this is likely his last meeting. Perrin offered praise for the idea and the positivity of the Board in considering this blueprint. He spoke about the irony of having this discussion as the last agenda item, statewide calendars, the importance of being sensitive to where we are, recognizing that there is a personal stake in schools, that urgency is important and real, what was learned through the Act 46 process, that people do not necessarily know what is happening in their schools, desire for a system that can react to changes in our society, need to educate taxpayers and citizens, and evolving definition of education. Perrin said he is looking forward to being cleared by the blog screener to participate in this process and is looking forward to the future work and leadership of the current State Board, Secretary and AOE. He expressed pleasure in serving with this current Board and past Boards.

Item N: Adjourn

Chair Huling asked for a motion to adjourn. Perrin moved; Peltz seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.
