

State Board of Education

Draft Meeting Minutes

VIRTUAL Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference
Call in #: 1-802-828-7667, Conference ID: 331 291 034#

Date: June 29, 2023

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Jennifer Samuelson, Chair; Tammy Kolbe, Vice Chair
Muhamed Diop; Tom Lovett; Lyle Jepson; Kim Gleason; Jenna O'Farrell, Richard Werner,
and Heather Bouchey

Agency of Education (AOE): Pat Pallas Gray, Josh Souliere, Cassandra Ryan, Suzanne
Sprague

Others: Adam Walker, Kendra Rickerby, Gary Blodgett, Eric Warren, Tasha Ball, Kristen
Careau, Trevor Barlow

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Samuelson called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda. A roll call was taken.

Public to be Heard

None.

Independent School Approvals

Pond Brook Project, Bristol, VT

Lovett provided background information on the Pond Brook Project. Lovett moved that the State Board of Education grants initial general independent school approval to the Pond Brook Project in Bristol, VT, to serve students in grades 7-9. This approval is for two years, through June 30, 2025, which is the maximum term for an initial approval.

This approval is conditional on the requirement that the school reports to the Agency of Education within five business days whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing or administration during the approval period. Werner seconded the motion.

Discussion followed regarding posting the school's nondiscrimination statement on the school's website, attestation, the connection to Local Education Agencies (LEA) in the area is strong, serving students with special needs, new Rule 2200 in effect on July 1, open admission policy, challenges of timing with the new and prior Rule 2200, if the school is compliant under the current rule, fiscal implications, approval is for general education, new attestation required after July 1 in order to receive public funds and the school's balance

sheet is not reliant on public funds. Jepson called the question. There was no objection to voting by the members. Roll call vote: Yeah – Diop, Kolbe, Jepson, Lovett, O’Farrell, Werner and Samuelson. Nay – none. Abstention – Gleason. The motion carried.

Expeditionary School at Black River (ESBR), Ludlow, VT

Lovett provided extensive background information on the Expeditionary School at Black River. Lovett moved that the State Board of Education grants conditional initial independent school approval to the Expeditionary School of Black River, Ludlow, VT, to serve students in grades 7-12. This conditional approval is for one year, through June 30, 2024.

This approval is conditional on the requirement that the school reports to the Agency of Education within five business days whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing or administration during the approval period.

This approval is also conditioned on the Expeditionary School of Black River meeting the following conditions outlined in the visiting team’s report and listed below.

1. Content area staff must be hired prior to the first day of school and approved by the Agency of Education as meeting SBE Rule 2226.8.1. Qualifications for all school year 2023- 2024 staff must be submitted to the Agency of Education’s Independent School Team allowing for a minimum of five days to review (prior to the start of school).
2. ESBR must develop and maintain on file a plan for staff professional development and evaluation prior to the first day of school.
3. ESBR must develop and maintain on file a plan for serving all students pursuant to SBE Rule 2229 prior to the first day of school.
4. ESBR must have a plan in place for delivery of required state assessments by January 1, 2024.
5. ESBR’s direct instruction must be delivered by qualified staff to student(s) who are physically in attendance at the school.
6. ESBR must continue its assessment of all incoming students for literacy and math.
7. ESBR must develop or purchase a written curriculum to meet the Minimum Course of Study for age, grade and ability level. A written framework must be in place prior to the first day of school, with a more fully developed curriculum prepared for reapplication.
8. Prior to implementing a flexible pathway learning opportunity, ESBR must seek technical assistance. ESBR will reach out to Agency staff, no later than July 21st, to determine a date by which technical assistance will be scheduled, engaged in, and plans outlined as part of the reapplication process.

Werner seconded the motion.

Discussion followed regarding if there is enough time for the school to meet the conditions prior to the start of school, timeline line is aggressive but possible, notice to parents regarding conditions and a firm due date for completing the conditions, heaviest item is to hire content specialists, working plans are in place and need to be written in policy, preference to move

the due date back, ESBR is confident that they can comply with conditions, budgetary constraints caused delays in meeting conditions 2 and 7, concern that issues communicated at a prior meeting have not been addressed, AOE Team confirmed the school has plans in place and are requesting a structured plan be written and documented, foreign language taught virtually, distance learning is not eligible for public funds, literacy specialist is from Two Rivers Supervisory Union, assurance that service plans are met, 504 plans and individualized education programs (IEP) are being followed.

Further robust discussion continued regarding concern that there is no documented minimum course of study and not enough staff on hand, current proposal is not better than the one provided at the previous State Board meeting where the school was denied approval, AOE Team has seen progress and is requiring written documentation, difference between recognized schools and approved independent schools, 8 conditions and not agreeing with recommendation, staffing, 1-year approval and conditions expected should be able to be verified, adequate communication to parents regarding the conditions, fingerprinting can take 3 months to complete, conditions as the new normal with renewals and approvals, issues are being conflated, moratorium, consistency with renewals and approvals, AOE requiring formal documentation and ESBR's commitment to continuous improvement. Chair Samuelson moved to amend the current motion and update the deadlines to conditions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 to August 11, 2023. Kolbe seconded. Lovett accepted the friendly amendment.

Roll call vote was taken for the motion that included the friendly amendment. Yeah – Diop, Lovett, O'Farrell, Werner, Jepson, Kolbe and Samuelson. Nay – Gleason. Abstention – none. The motion carried. Chair Samuelson thanked all involved and wished the school well. Gleason asked for an update at the August meeting.

Public to be Heard

None.

Adjourn

Chair Samuelson moved to adjourn; Jepson seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.