



Vermont State Board of Education

*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.*

Draft Minutes

Meeting Place: Agency of Education

Address: 219 North Main Street, Room 304, Barre, Vermont, 05641

Date: October 20, 2016

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE): Stephan Morse, Chair; Sean-Marie Oller, Vice-Chair; William Mathis; Mark Perrin; Krista Huling; Stacy Weinberger; Bonnie Johnson-Aten (left at 11:33 a.m.); Rainbow Chen; Connor Solimano

Agency of Education (AOE): Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary; William Talbott; Donna Russo-Savage; Clare O'Shaughnessy; Judy Cutler; Haley Dover; Suzanne Sprague

Others: Ken Page, Vermont Principals' Association; Jonathan Wolff, Primmer/Lyndon Institute; Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; David Chabot, Vermont School for Girls; Julie Longchamp, VT-NEA; Davis Delcore, Times Argus; Alice Farrell, Barre Supervisory Union; John Pandolfo, Superintendent, Barre Supervisory Union; Brian Schaffer, Principal, Lamoille North Supervisory Union; Jeff Francis, VSA; Nicole Mace; VSBA; Tommy Walz, Barre Supervisory Union; Connor Vandagriff, RETN.

Item A: Call to Order

Chairman Morse called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and requested that each board member do a self-introduction.

Item B: Public to be Heard

None.

Item C: Consent Agenda

Oller moved to approve the consent agenda. Johnson-Aten seconded the motion. Oller asked that the minutes reflect that she left the last meeting at 2:30 p.m. and was not present for the last vote. Chair Morse asked for a vote which passed unanimously.

Item D: Board Announcements and Student Representative Emails

Mathis said he attended a federal legislation webinar where non-academic indicators were discussed.

Chen said that many people around the state have been impacted by the Harwood tragedy. Many students, school administrators and faculty wore Harwood gold and black ribbons to show support.

Huling said that the State Board of Education sent condolences and flowers to Harwood Union High School.

Item E: Chair's Report

Chair Morse updated the board that he followed the Vermont State bidding process and has hired Attorney Chris Leopold to represent the State Board of Education through the Rules 2200 process. He continued that the Attorney General reviewed the contract.

Chair Morse said that he, Leopold and Mathis went to ICAR on Tuesday, October 10th to introduce Rule 7300 to both gain experience and learn the process. Rules 2200 will be introduced at ICAR on Monday, November 14th. Chair Morse added that Russo-Savage was at ICAR on October 10th and introduced the new rules that the board passed on Act 46.

Chair Morse said that part of the process with rules is there must be at least one public hearing. He said that it is decided that there will be three public hearings for Rules 2200. The dates and locations so far are Tuesday, November 29th, at the Barre Auditorium. The second one will be on Tuesday, December 6th, at St. Johnsbury Academy. He added that the third is yet to be determined and will be in the Bellows Falls area.

Chair Morse said he was invited to speak on Act 46 at the upcoming VSA/VSBA conference on Thursday, October 20th, at Lake Morey.

Item F: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe thanked Chen for bringing up the terrible events at Harwood Union High School and said that the response was a good example of student voice. Secretary Holcombe said that over 40 schools have donated food and flowers. She continued that people have been reaching out from all branches of government to try and support them. Secretary Holcombe said that one of the first jobs of schools is to teach kids to be human and to learn to cope with these kinds of human events. She was very proud of the educators and students.

Secretary Holcombe updated the board on ESSA and focused on what measures the state will put into federal accountability. The federal standards are rigorous, reliable and statewide. Secretary Holcombe continued that the Agency of Education is engaged and trying to tie in the state's vision for equity and accountability so there are strong outcomes for all children.

Secretary Holcombe updated the board on some of the decisions that have been made with respect to ESSA and noted that most are affirmations of existing decisions made by the State Board. The plan is recommitted to using the standards as approved by the State Board of Education as well as the assessments. Secretary Holcombe added that the ESSA plan will adopt the SBE's Education Quality Standards as the definition of a well-rounded education. The

Agency of Education has committed in the plan to maintaining the greatest flexibility for schools to use federal funds across different functions. Secretary Holcombe said the Act 166 definition of PreK was added as the federal definition. She continued that the agency is going through ESSA and state statute with the goal of finding where there are differences between the two that need to be reconciled. Secretary Holcombe added that part of the legislative agenda will be to bring definitions like homelessness and displaced students in line with federal definitions.

Secretary Holcombe said the agency maintained their current efforts so the most vulnerable youth are taught by equally prepared and effective educators. In addition, she added, the agency has made several decisions that enable the AOE to operate at current capacity. Secretary Holcombe continued that the capacity is strained and this is not the right time to take on new initiatives that have cost implications. The agency will forego unfunded projects.

Secretary Holcombe said the agency's goal is to have the draft plan finalized in December 2016 to allow for public comment and will then submit it in March 2017.

Secretary Holcombe mentioned that the proposed guidance on alternative education systems that was brought before ICAR on October 10th requires that there be data to support any proposals. She said the AOE data division is working hard to make it easy to pull together data and will have it available in the next few weeks as required by people working through the proposals. Secretary Holcombe added that some of the data is very difficult to pull together or there is no way to gather the data and subsequently, the AOE will suggest a few changes to the rules as well during public comment.

Item G: Committee Reports

Chair Morse asked the Legislative Committee to begin thinking about what they are looking for in the upcoming new legislative session. Secretary Holcombe suggested that there be an agenda item on next month's agenda that specifically addresses legislative priorities. She said the AOE will be happy to have a discussion with anyone from the Legislative Committee about some of the AOE's priorities.

Item H: Teacher of the Year Announcement

Chair Morse advised there has been a delay and so unfortunately, the announcement will not be today and that this agenda item will be moved to the November 2016 meeting.

Item I: Small Schools Grants/Status Report

Russo-Savage stated that the criteria for which small schools grants are awarded will change on July 1, 2019. She continued that the changes are very specific and will be more qualitative. Russo-Savage said that the State Board of Education is required to supply a metric by 2018 and the board decided in June 2016 that it would like this completed earlier and asked the AOE to prepare draft metrics. She said that there is not enough information at this time to begin drafting the criteria.

There was a discussion by the board regarding lengthy bus rides, inhospitable routes, nearest school with capacity and tradeoffs of lengthy bus rides.

Chair Morse said he didn't think the board will be able to provide the information the AOE requires. He suggested that the AOE come back with suggestions to the board that are reasonable and then the board would respond to the suggestions. Russo-Savage said that she will have to ask her colleagues for assistance. Secretary Holcombe said that these will include some of the trade-offs but at some point the AOE will ask the State Board to own this work. Chair Morse said that if there is a need for a sub-committee further down the road then the State Board will create one.

The board took a recess at 10:16 a.m. and reconvened at 10:27 a.m. Chair Morse asked that the board address Item M.

Item M: SBE Budget Update

Chair Morse mentioned that the budget form seems very old and not reflective of the current board and its duties. He said there should be a budget line showing legal expenses now that the SBE has hired its own legal counsel. Chair Morse continued that perhaps the board could go to the legislature in the hopes of attaining more staffing. Deputy Secretary Talbott shared the SBE budget to date. He said that the board did not use all of the funds from last year's budget. Talbott said that none of the money was carried over and that the board is starting with a brand new budget.

Talbott agreed to create a budget document that shows greater detail and that shows the true costs.

Item J: Merger Proposals

Chair Morse invited the Barre Supervisory Union to present to the Board. The presenters of the merger proposal included John Pandolfo, Superintendent, Alice Farrell (Barre Town) and Tommy Walz (Barre City), both committee co-chairs.

Mathis made a motion to approve the merger proposal. Oller seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Morse called for a short recess at 11:03 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 11:50 a.m.

Item L: VSG Report/Findings

Judy Cutler, AOE Investigator and Review Team Leader, said that there were some alleged sexual assaults at the school which resulted in a formal investigation that included three site visits, interviews and a review of policies. She continued that the school fully cooperated with the investigation. Cutler explained that the SBE's authority is over the educational programs. She said that Department of Children and Families licensed VSG as a Residential Treatment Facility. Cutler added the authority is set out in statute.

Cutler explained the investigation in detail. She said that in conclusion there is no evidence that would support an SBE action to suspend or revoke VSG's approval to operate as an independent school.

Chair Morse advised that there should be a vote to accept the report. Oller made the motion to accept. The motion was seconded by Perrin. The vote passed unanimously.

Item X: 2016 NASSP High School Principal of the Year Award

Huling recognized Brian Schaffer, Principal of Lamoille Union High School, as the 2016 NASSP High School Principal of the Year.

Adjourn

Chair Morse recommended the meeting adjourn. Perrin made the motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Huling. The vote passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague
