



# Steering Group: Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont September 5, 2024, 8:30 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.

**Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting**

**Call In: 1-802-828-7667**

**Conference ID: 993 639 100#**

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## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Steering Group (SG) Members:** Ann Cummings, Senator Washington District; **Zoie Saunders**, Interim Secretary of Education; **Jennifer Deck Samuelson**, State Board of Education; **Nicole Mace**, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA); **Craig Bolio**, Tax Commissioner.

**Commission Member:** **Meagan Roy**, Chair

**AOE:** Rose Neddo; Jill Briggs Campbell; Suzanne Sprague

**Others:** Jeanne Jensen; Bob Thibault; Megan K; Shawn Cunningham, Chester Telegraph; Jeff Francis; Clare Buckley; +18022812649; +18025038120; Jeremy Little; Katrina Menard; Sue Ceglowski, VSBA; Karen Horn; Ryan Heraty, Superintendent, Lamoille South Supervisory Union; Meg Fuerst; Mike Woods; Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman; John Clifford; Julia Richter; Joey Caruso

### Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Roy called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. She took roll call: Cummings, Bolio, Conlon, Mace, Saunders, Deck-Samuelson and Roy. She reminded participants to keep their microphones and cameras off. There were no amendments to the agenda.

### Approval of [Draft Minutes from August 5, 2024](#)

Deck-Samuelson moved to approve the minutes from August 5; Mace seconded. There was no discussion. The minutes were approved.

### Public to be Heard

None

### Agenda Planning for September 9, 2024, Meeting

Chair Roy reminded Steering Group members of two agenda items that were discussed at a prior meeting: 1) Agenda Planning; and 2) Workplan framework for the full Commission meetings. She added that discussion would pertain to definition of terms and guiding principles and updating the draft workplan that will be presented to the full Commission. Chair Roy asked for an update on the Education Finance Subcommittee. Cummings said that Representative Kornheiser was voted in as chair. She added that discussion was based around available data and how to interpret it and

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perhaps using a consultant to assist in collecting and interpreting data. Mace said there was a sense of urgency because of district budget work and the short-term proposals due in December. The subcommittee agreed to an aggressive meeting schedule due to the complexity of the issue and looming deadline. The next meeting is yet to be determined. Secretary Saunders added that the AOE will share additional data on file. Chair Roy said a committee update will be on the agenda of the full Commission's next meeting and members should be prepared to provide an update.

Chair Roy began a discussion on definition of terms and defining "educational equity". The issue of guiding principles needs to be discussed to determine how to make decisions and the principles upon which the Commission will use. She asked about providing a draft to the full Commission and reminded the group of a previous presentation where "equity" was defined in various places in Vermont law. Discussion occurred around equity and the Vermont definition of "substantially equal educational opportunities", starting with Act 60 which provides substantially equal access to a quality basic education and is non-negotiable, "equity" being a complicated construct to define for the purposes of the Commission's work, that it would be instructive to establishing some core understanding and agreement of what "equity" means, access to opportunity and outcomes, non-negotiables, Education Quality Standards (EQS) and an operational definition of quality, how districts are held accountable to standards and District Quality Standards (DQS) and that the Listen and Learn Tour will help to evaluate the extent to which those standards have been implemented.

Chair Roy began the discussion of guiding principles and criteria the Commission will use to vet recommendations. The Commission's set of guiding principles may be that recommendations promote the core understandings of equity, and ensure students have access to quality education as defined in Vermont law. The Steering Group acknowledged that Vermont has defined education quality in Rule – in the Education Quality Standards – and that should be the definition that the Commission uses. Discussion followed regarding a financially sustainable system, using affordability, equity and educational best practices, affordability is a challenge to define, sustainability, full Commission conversation and helping to inform the Education Finance Subcommittee, services provided by schools, relying on property taxes to fund education and rebalancing the funding sources, tension between state and local control, equity means different things to different people, what outcomes are expected and the need for property tax relief.

Chair Roy suggested that at the next full Commission meeting, she will restate pieces from the Interim Secretary's presentation about statutory definitions in Vermont, add a high-level conceptual understanding of equity concepts and reference to EQS and frame the three components (sustainability/affordability, equity and education quality/best practices) and asked the group if that is enough to create a draft framework for the full Commission. Discussion followed to provide clarity that it is the state's responsibility to provide education, and it has chosen to delegate the responsibility to districts and adding authority to make four components. Chair Roy will provide the initial draft for discussion and feedback at the full Commission meeting.

Chair Roy moved the discussion to updates to the draft framework for the full Commission. She mentioned the concern of the full Commission around the work of the governance section and the delivery model section. She asked for discussion on a better way to represent that work in the current draft framework. There was discussion around the guiding principles clarifying the approach, education delivery system should be full Commission work, the role of the State Board of Education versus the Agency of Education, local control versus state control, Steering Group should sequence the conversations, using the fall to build collective conversations, seeing the work progress, delivery system conversation will come up in the legislature and the Commission needs to be able to respond, suggestion that lawmakers should postpone any action on delivery system this

year, school budget increases will put pressure on the legislature, communicating the intent of how we will work together and updating the visual, providing clarity on the timeline and when work is expected, public engagement sessions, getting an update from the Communication and Engagement Subcommittee, demonstrating progress and set clear expectations regarding FY26 budget process, being explicit with new or old ideas, getting concrete options, evaluating their feasibility within Vermont, and recognizing remaining questions/considerations before moving forward, and the work of the Education Finance Subcommittee.

Chair Roy asked if the preference is to discuss the updated draft framework as a Steering Group first or discuss it with the full Commission. Discussion followed on having something general for the full Commission to react to and then refining it. Chair Roy will draft an initial reframing document reflective of the conversation for the full Commission to react to.

Chair Roy asked the Steering Group about public comment received in the Commission's email and suggested that they should be sent to the full Commission alongside agenda materials. The Steering Group agreed.

### **Schedule Next Meeting**

Chair Roy asked the Steering Group for its preference on a meeting schedule. It was decided that a recurring meeting invitation will be sent for the third Monday of the month from 9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

### **Public to be Heard**

Karen Horn addressed the Steering Group and expressed her concern that no taxpayers were represented on the Commission. These are the people who are paying for the education system.

### **Adjourn**

Mace moved to adjourn the meeting; Cummings seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.