

MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD (MVSD)

SWANTON SCHOOL LIBRARY

March 17, 2020

6:30 PM

Present: Board members: Board Chairperson, Chris Shepard (Highgate), Vice Chair Devin Bachelder, (Franklin), Don Collins (Swanton), Steve Scott (Highgate), Peter Magnant (Franklin), Joanne Johnston, (Franklin), (Terri O'Shea (Swanton), Meaghan Conly (Swanton) and Jen Chevalier (Highgate) joined the board meeting remotely).

Others Present: Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, Business Manager, Dena St. Amour, Principal from Swanton, Jim Daly, District NEA Vice President, Northwest Access Cameraperson and Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary

Call the Meeting to Order- Chris Shepard called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

Agenda Review-

Correspondence, Visitors and Public Comments

Jim Daly was present to report a summary of the outcome of a District NEA Executive Council meeting held today. The NEA feels it is important for them to support kids with continuity of learning and delivering of food. The volunteerism amongst teachers to pull this off has been great and they want to do what they can to support. They want to make sure that education is maintained, and income is protected especially for the hourly wage earners. Salaried employees are concerned about depleting their sick time and would ask the board if they are open to having a temporary sick bank especially for those who have a compromised immune system. They are concerned about the work schedule and would like a schedule and remote work-day expectations. They are ok until April 5th but would like some semblance of continuation of education. After that date, they will need a new plan and clear expectations. They do not want a judgment passed upon those who need to stay home as a result of compromised immunity. Please clearly communicate to the staff any messages of importance. When they receive messaging through the principal group, they often get different direction, so they want one communication from the Superintendent. They are trying to see this as a positive opportunity to unify the district. They want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Currently, the professional negotiations are on hold. They have come together as a staff and worked hard to get bags of Chromebooks, online activities and schoolwork together for students. Don Collins suggested getting together three or four members from the Association and three board members along with the Superintendent and Business

Manager to have one more exchange. He would suggest a smaller group. Jim Daly will take suggestion back to NEA. *(Jim Daly left after the presentation).*

Approval of the Minutes

Action: Devin Bachelder moved, seconded by Steve Scott to approve the February 25th, 2020 board minutes as presented. The board approved the minutes on an 8-0-1 vote. Don Collins moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the March 5th minutes. Steve Scott suggested re writing paragraph 5 under Jen Desorgher's report so that it flows better. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote as revised.

Presentations

Elementary Administrative Updates

Julie reported that the administrators have reported in writing and in the interest of keeping the numbers down for this meeting, they have been asked to not attend.

Covid-19 Update (Superintendent)

Julie Regimbal reported that changes are happening fast and furious around closure of schools and the responsibility of the schools. Schools were not closed on Friday but in the afternoon on Sunday, schools were closed. These are unchartered times and she worked with the administrators and principals to get through this. The principals met with staff yesterday to go over procedures. No student is required to attend school Monday and Tuesday, and no one will be penalized for keeping the students' home. They are preparing packets for continuity of education for students. They are setting up systems for ensuring maintenance of education and develop remote learning plans. They are working on a plan on continuing services for students with special needs. All schools remain operational and their priorities are continuity of education, maintenance for students and feeding children. Tania Hayes will work with the Special Education teachers around Special Education plans and getting guidance from Agency of Education. Robert Gervais is getting platform opportunities for education. He is surveying the internet and device availability in students' residences. There are many variables and are putting together a plan to meet the needs of all students. Childcare request is being worked on and they are starting with the childcare centers that exist and are licensed. They are trying to streamline those that need daycare and are considered essential workers. They were told that 100 people was a large gathering, reduced to 50 and now no more than ten is the recommendation. They have been meeting with the administrative team to discuss logistics for staff. Those who have a medical condition may be working remotely. They had a long productive administrative meeting yesterday. Kosha Patel will work with the Math and Literacy coaches defining maintenance of learning and bringing the information back to the staff. The governor has announced that it is expected that hourly staff will be paid as well as salaried employees which means that the motion to pay

hourly employees is no longer necessary. The expectation is that they want some support staff and teachers to help with food delivery and continuity of education. Those who are vulnerable will be approved to work remotely. Peter Magnant suggested that the board still vote on paying the hourly employees. Don Collins wanted to support the Superintendent in moving forward with her school plan on food delivery and maintenance of instruction. Don Collins moved, seconded by Steve Scott to move forward to support the Superintendent in the plan to maintain education and feeding the children. Lora McAllister stated that they are able to use the summer food service plan with Highgate and Swanton and are allowed to feed the children under the age of 18 for free. Franklin is not area eligible and will only be receiving reimbursement on free and reduced-price meals. Lora said that they will deliver meals by using the bus company to deliver the meals by following their usually bus routes to drop off breakfast and lunch. They will prepare enough meals for the most amount of participation and back off the numbers if we need less. Franklin's eligibility for reimbursement is different than Highgate and Swanton and wanted the board to know that it may become an expense to the district later. They are trying to get the State to reimburse all meals. Julie Regimbal wanted to thank Lora and Marnie Carlton for working all day coordinating with bus companies, to principals for coordinating staff to get this started, the food service management and staff for their assistance. This is a great example of collaboration amongst staff in different schools. The meals will start on Thursday and there is a memo on the MVSD website page along with a COVID link. Please contact your school administration or 868-4967 for Central Office for questions around the meals. On the website, there will also be designated areas and times for each school to pick up food if you are not on a bus route or prefer to pick up your food.

Action: Don Collins again made the motion, seconded by Steve Scott to support the Superintendent's plan for maintenance of education and feeding the students moving forward. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote. Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Don Collins to support paying the entire professional and hourly staff on contract during school closure. The board approved the motion on a 7-0-2 vote (with Devin Bachelder and Jen Chevalier abstaining).

Chris Shepard asked if the school district will be making up these days? Julie said she believes if we are providing education remotely, then we should not have to make up those days. Attendance will not be counted in the same way. There will be either a waiver or this will be counted as school days. She feels confident that the State will count this either way. The State has not come forward with a decision yet. Chris expressed his concern about losing twelve weeks of instruction time if this should continue until the remainder of the school year. There will be modifications of expectation of learning. They may need to plan for continuing education, and they are working hard on remote education. They are following guidance from the Agency of Education and Special Education. Steve Scott stated

that this is not a vacation and concerned that kids will go back to school at different levels. Julie is concerned about this across the State and we will do our level best during this emergency to provide equitable education. Peter Magnant said that Vermont is not in a bubble that the whole country is experiencing this emergency. We are all in this together. Julie stated that we have an incredible commitment from the administration, teachers and staff. Dena St. Amour said that the principals and staff are taking into consideration the families and respect the time they will need to support their children in the area of education. Joanne Johnston suggested that perhaps we can reach out to have a senior help a younger student, because as a community we need to work together.

Chris Shepard thanked Julie, Central Office, and administration for their dedication during this challenging time. Chris added that he wanted to include the teachers and entire staff with his appreciation.

Julie reported that they are using the Messenger message system to send out information along with the website and email.

New Business

MVU Bid Awards

i. Wood Chip Boiler Platform

Lora McAllister explained that they sought bids for the wood chip platform for servicing the makeup air and air handler for the boiler. They emailed three fabricators and advertised for the bid. They received only a bid from DMS Machining and Fabrication, and Paul Gregoire recommends accepting this bid which is under budget.

Action: Don Collins moved, seconded by Peter Magnant to approve the recommendation of DMS Machinery Fabrication in the amount of \$21,943.00. Lora explained that they don't use the wood chip regularly because right now it is cheaper to use natural gas. The wood chip boiler is used as a backup. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.

ii. J Pod Floors

Lora explained that this bid is for the demolition and removal of floors and replacement flooring and coating. This project was advertised, and we received two bids, one from Garage Outfitters in the amount of \$117,150.00 and Vermont Protective Coatings in the amount of \$110,267.22. They recommended the bid from Vermont Protective Coatings which is under budget.

Action: Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to award the contract to Vermont Protective Coating in the amount of \$110,267.22. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.

Terri O'Shea suggested that the board form a buildings and grounds subcommittee to meet with the facility directors and administration to address questions and

help streamline the board meetings so that they don't finish so late. Chris said that this is something that is being discussed.

iii. North Fence

Paul Gregoire advertised and received two bids for fencing along the north property. They don't want ATV's to go on the track and property and would like to use the fencing to keep them out. They received a bid from Middlebury in the amount of \$24,997 and Arny Hill Fencing in the amount of \$21,252. Paul Gregoire recommended awarding the bid to Arny Hill Fencing. They will need a small amount of money to clear trees. Don stated that they talked a lot about this at the MVU Board meetings. He wished that the board had been asked for permission to bid.

Action: Devin Bachelder moved, seconded by Steve Scott to award the contract to Arny Hill Fencing in the amount of \$21,252. The board approved on a 7-0-2 vote.

Don wanted to point out that it is important that with the savings of approximately \$15,000 that this does not belong to the maintenance department to spend as they wish. Julie said it should go to the highest level of needed priority.

Teacher Contracts Authorization

Action: Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Steve Scott to authorize the board chair or vice chair to sign the teacher contracts. Julie reported that they would like to get them out by March 30th so that their return is due before April vacation. The contracts will go out as the current contracts marked "under negotiations". Discussed shortly the conflict of interest with the board vice chair. The board approved on an 8-0-1 vote.

Side Letter for Probationary Contract

Julie Regimbal explained that they drafted a side letter to add one more year to an educator's probationary contract as outlined in the master agreement. The educator, the Association, the Superintendent and the chair of the board should sign the side letter.

Action: Don Collins moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to authorize the Board Chair or Vice Chair to sign the side letter for the probationary contract side letter of agreement allowing the extra year of probation. The board approved on an 8-0-1 vote.

Employee Resignation

Julie is looking for the board to accept the resignation of the educator as presented in the board shared drive. Julie is recommending accepting the resignation.

Action: Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to accept the letter of resignation from the employee. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.

Old Business

Approval to seek grants

a. *Action: Devin Bachelder moved, seconded by Peter Magnant moved to authorize the Missisquoi Valley School District administration to seek grants, adopt plans, administer programs in compliance with all laws, assurances, requirements, policies, and regulations; establish written agreements, and to act as the representative of the School District for all federal and state funds and collaborative agreements, including but not limited to:*

- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (I.D.E.A.) Amendments of 1997, Local Education Agency, Parts A and B, PreSchool Flow-Through*
- *Consolidated Federal Program Grants; Title I, Title II A, Title IV*
- *McKinney-Vento*
- *Early Childhood Programs (EEE, Early Education Collaborative, Success by Six, etc.)*
- *EPSDT*
- *Medicaid*
- *21st Century*
- *Transportation*
- *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable*
- *Department of Public Safety*
- *Rise VT*
- *VEHI*
- *Grants from Private Foundations*

The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.

b. **Authorize the board chair to sign grants**

Don Collins moved, seconded by Steve Scott to authorize the Board Chair, Vice Chair if the Chair is not available, to sign federal grants as needed. The board approved 8-0-1 vote.

c. **Board Meeting Time Discussion**

Julie stated that the board had wanted to revisit the meeting time from last month's meeting. Terri O'Shea welcomes the 6:00pm time. Her issue is more about the time the board meeting ends instead of the time we start. She would like to see the board meetings get done earlier. Don Collins said if it is inconvenient for some of our board members that it is his position to have the board meeting stay at 6:30pm. Chris said it is a challenge to try to keep the agenda shorter as more things get added and it ends up taking a lot of time. Terri thought that in the board's planning, perhaps this could be discussed during their retreat. Peter Magnant agrees that they should stay with a time

that works well for everybody. Jen Chevalier agrees that if others consider going earlier a hardship, then we should keep the 6:30pm time.

Action: Peter Magnant moves, seconded by Don Collins to keep the meeting time at 6:30pm. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.

Finance Committee

Julie reported that Steve Scott, Devin Bachelder and Meaghan Conly are on the finance committee. Meaghan said that now she is working at St. Michael's College, she is finding it harder to get to Central Office at a reasonable time. Devin suggested in order to address the challenges, he wondered if the board would be willing to allow an electronic approval of bills. They can approve the detailed listing and if there is a question and they need to see the invoice; they can request a copy to be scanned to the board member. Steve Scott likes to see the administrative approval and would like to continue to go on site. Lora McAllister stated that this would be something that the business office can accommodate without any additional inconvenience. Chris Shepard would like to try the electronic approval of the bills to be sent to the board committee.

Action: *Meghan Conly moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to allow the board finance committee to approve the check warrants electronically based on the voucher detailed listing on a temporary basis while we are going through Covid-19. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.*

Other Business

a. Weighting Study

Don Collins suggested that we pass over this item because the legislators are not in session.

b. Audit Contract

Lora McAllister reported that the FY 19 audits have been finalized and submitted to the State of Vermont as is required. She has started an audit folder in the board shared drive. She reported that RHR Smith has been auditing for the district and recommends continuing the services with the same auditing firm for an additional year. Due to the merger activity, and a new chart of accounts, it would be easier if they continued the services with the same auditing firm. They have hired an attorney who is a great resource for us. The firm has quoted a \$265 minimal increase for a total of \$36,500. We do not have to go out to bid provided the increase stays within the accepted inflation index.

Action: *Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Steve Scott to do a contract extension for one year with RHR Smith Auditing Firm and authorize the board chair to sign the contract. The board approved the motion on an 8-0-1 vote.*

c. Parent Enrollment Request

Julie Regimbal reported that there is a parent request to remain enrolled in Highgate for the end of the school year although the family has moved out of the district. If the board is interested in any identifiable information, this will need to be discussed in executive session. She has told the parent that the student can temporarily stay until Friday unless the board approves the request. The board felt there was only a few months left in the school year and were supportive of the request.

Action: Don Collins moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the student remain in Highgate for the remainder of the school year. The board approved on an 8-0-1 vote.

Future Agenda Items

Facility Maintenance, Weighted Students, Negotiations, How Decisions are Made, Other Board decision making process.

Peter suggested that we should be thinking about doing some online remote board meetings in the future. Julie said we have this capacity through Google Hangouts.

Future Meeting Dates

The board's next regular meeting is April 7th at the MVU School Library at 6:30pm. The professional negotiations are postponed. They have scheduled a Support Staff Negotiations' session for March 24th and April 14th at 6:30 PM in the MVU School Library. (The board meets at 5:30 PM in the MVU Conference Room) The April 21st board meeting has been changed to April 16th.

Don Collins thanked Pierrette Bouchard for including the budget debriefing in the board minutes.

Executive Session None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn moved by Steve Scott, seconded by Peter Magnant. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:47pm on an 8-0-1 vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary