

MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD (MVSD)

Remotely VIA Google Meet

May 5, 2020

6:30 PM

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

**Others Joining Remotely:** Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, Business Manager, Jen Desorgher, MVSD Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Dan Palmer, MVU Co- Principal, Kosha Patel, Dir of Curriculum, Tania Hayes, Dir of Student Services, Wendy Cunningham, Dir of Early Childhood Services and Homeless Liason, Robert Gervais, Director of Technology, Lisa Hango, House Representative of Highgate and Franklin, and Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary

**Call the Meeting to Order-** Chris Shepard called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

**Agenda Review-**Chris Shepard added correspondence from Ty Choiniere.

**Correspondence**

Ty Choiniere sent correspondence to Chris Shepard thanking the staff at Highgate and MVU for the great job of distance learning. He would like to use the MVU Grounds to use as a place of exercise with his child and wondered why is it locked? Dan Palmer responded that MVU has been operating with reduced hours with the gates closing at 5:30pm and being closed on weekends. Their reasons are the worry about a bunch of students/community individuals coming on the school grounds to play a game of soccer or baseball and break the social distancing and congregation rules. He did ask for direction from the board if they would like MVU to continue with this practice or do something differently. Don Collins felt that MVU should stay with the current plan due to the negative potential if they kept the grounds open with no supervision or school staff present. Chris agreed and wants to give it more time before opening up the MVU School grounds. Chris will send a response to Ty directly.

Lisa Hango, House Representative of the Town of Highgate and Franklin reported that the House Education Committee has been working on the education budget and some preliminary plans on how to overcome the shortfall. They are looking to pass a three month budget so that they may have a better idea at a later time on revenues and expenditures. Municipalities have been given an extension and leeway on collecting taxes. If the board has any specific questions, they are welcome to email her.

## Consent Agenda

### Approval of the Minutes

Action: Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 board minutes as presented. The board approved the minutes on a 9-0 vote.

## Presentations

### MVU Administrative Updates

Julie reported that the administrators have provided a report in the Board Drive. Jennifer Desorgher reported that they surveyed the teachers regarding student participation, office hours attendance and weekly advisory meetings. Fifty nine teachers took the survey. They found that the teachers are concerned of about 25% of their students and they are seeing a variety of student needs currently. The teachers are reaching out frequently to their students and have systems in place to contact homes. Most parents are supportive and the families that they can not reached are being reported to the principals. Dan Palmer stated that some parents are having difficulty and he provided ways to keep in touch. About 75% of teachers say that most of their students are submitting learning activities. What are some positive things that have happened during remote learning? Lots of positive feedback from parents about how much they appreciate what we're doing and how we're supporting students. We are working to increase Office Hour participation for students. Most students report using email to access teacher help with about 48% of the students not calling during "office hours". NEST/Prime Group participation varies greatly by grade level.

They sent student surveys out on Friday, which marked two full weeks of new remote learning. There was about 300 students responding. There are a range of responses, student needs vary greatly. They asked about:

- Work load
- How they get help
- Challenges
- Motivation levels
- Ideas for improvement
- If they or their family need anything.

Most students think that the work-load is just right and it depends on the class and the day. What about Remote Learning is working well for you right now? The answer was mixed from nothing to liking the flexibility. When you need help with your school-work, what do you do? The majority of the students email their teacher, contacting a friend or asking a parent. What are some things that make school-work challenging right now? The responses included organization, staying focused to unreliable internet. About  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the respondents report that they are now much less motivated to do schoolwork than before the dismissal. How can we help improve Remote Learning for you? The students responded felt they need more explanation and clearer direction along with reluctance to ask questions during office hours in front of other students. Peter Magnant commented that working from home is not a preferred method for him so he can envision that motivation and time management can be the challenging for students. Jen Chevalier asked how teachers are providing feedback to students on how they are doing. Jennifer Desorghers replied that they have

provided comments to the students but do need to work on providing more direct feedback.

### **Superintendent's Updates**

Julie Regimbal provided an update on next steps. They are still waiting for guidance from the Agency of Education regarding graduation and end of the year activities. The Agency of Education will provide the school districts with information on Friday. They will be finding out the parameters regarding graduation. Indicators that we are receiving is that Graduation will not be traditional. They will also receive information about summer school and summer programming. They will do a think tank regarding summer school with a few administrators and the After School Program Coordinator. The AOE has advised that we should be using the summer to target and intervene with kids that are struggling. They don't know what the expectation will be in the Fall without a vaccine. They will believe that school in the Fall will look different. Our leadership wants to plan and it is very difficult when we do not know what the State will be telling us.

The education funding is looking pretty dire so they have been watching the hiring carefully although due to the cuts already made in this budget, they do not want to understaff the school. They will continue to pay attention to the fiscal situation. Cares Act funding is going directly to the school districts and so if the Special Education revenue comes in short, they may be able to use Cares money. They are getting guidance every single day.

Julie Regimbal reviewed the eight applications for the first Elementary School choice process. Fifty percent chose Franklin and the other fifty percent chose Swanton. The majority were for Kindergarten. They were able to approve all the school choice applications because they fortunately were for classrooms that had space in the classroom. The process went smoothly and the families were happy to be approved.

### **Director of Curriculum Update**

Kosha Patel reported that the grades K-6 students and a majority of the parents are finding that the work is manageable and they have received a good response from them. The teachers are still concerned about some students that were struggling prior to school closure and interventionists are reaching out and working with the kids. Principals are reaching out to families that are totally not responsive. Teachers are especially concerned about grades K-2 students as they were just learning to read and do math. The priorities remain to ensure that children are fed and feeling safe and healthy. Teachers are planning together at grade level teams. The teachers are doing the best they can to meet the students' academic need. Kosha has reached out to Tiffany Renaudette to poll what interests she may find with teachers providing tutoring over the summer which may be held virtually or limited one on one in person tutoring.

### **Homeless Update**

Wendy Cunningham provided a homeless update to the board.

Wendy Cunningham reported that during regular times students experiencing homelessness is difficult but it is even more challenging now. They have reached out to families so that they know how to access meals. They have reached out to each teacher on students that have been identified as homeless and ask them to connect with the students. The teachers are getting things for the students and responding to the families on things they need. They are still receiving referrals on homelessness and relationship issues amongst parents. Referrals are being handled quickly and resources are going out to the families.

### **Technology Director Update**

Robert Gervais reported that Cyber criminals are loving COVID 19 times. He wants to encourage everyone to change their passwords using phrases that are misspellings in it and do not use the same password in multiple places. He recommended that everyone consider using a password manager such as Last Pass. He advised not to click on links that you don't know or are not familiar with the person. The school district's financial software has been hit by brutal force attack so they have added a VPN (Virtual Private Network) to everyone using the remote desktop to access the software. He advises everyone not to save their password and make sure their virus and malware protection is up to date. Robert thanked Lora McAllister and her team for their patience. He thanked Sue Day who worked nights and the weekend to get payroll completed and for remaining on standby on when we were able to allow her to go on the system for limited hours at a time. He thanked Sylvia Gagne for all her extra work and level of expertise as she navigated through a lot of this at MVU where the server is housed. He thanked Josh Rollet who is part of the Tech Group that monitors and back up our information off site.

### **New Business**

#### **Educational Support Staff Agreement**

Julie Regimbal thanked Jen Chevalier, Peter Magnant and Terri O'Shea for the hours spent working with the Association. They finalized the agreement at 5pm today. The Association will ratify the agreement shortly. Julie is pleased to settle with them but the details are confidential until it is ratified by both the Board and the Association. Jen Chevalier thanked Lora McAllister, Julie Regimbal and Pierrette Bouchard for their help. Terri thanked everyone for treating one another with respect. Chris Shepard requested going into executive session to discuss the details prior to approving the agreement.

#### **Stormwater Parking Lot Project Update**

Lora McAllister is moving forward with stormwater parking lot project in Highgate using the Ruggiano Engineering Firm. She sent Chris the \$130,000 grant agreement for his signature. There is no local match for the grant. As soon as the agreement is

signed, the Request for Proposal (RFP) will be launched. Chris explained that that the plans drawn were based on once a year rainstorm events instead of a ten- year event. There may be some ponding during this event, but the water should go away within 24 hours. Ruggiano assured us that ponding will occur during these extreme events but will go away.

### **Resignation**

Carol Lizotte has resigned from the Director of the After School Programming. She has retirement plans that have shifted because of the pandemic. They have hired Beth Ann Miller to replace Carol and will do some overlap with Carol over the summer as a transition. We will miss Carol for growing the program and wish her well.

### **Old Business**

#### **Warrants**

##### *Action*

*Meaghan Conly moved, seconded by Don Collins to approve the following breakdown of the check warrants for the month of April: Accounts Payable \$518,225.18, Payroll Checks \$47,746.64, Payroll Disbursement \$1,445,389.65, Payroll Deductions \$508,970.61 totaling \$2,520,332.08. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.*

### **Financial Update**

Lora McAllister provided the board with a financial report. The first few pages are revenue broken down by location They have received most of the revenues with \$200,000 more than anticipated. They are working hard to reconcile the expenditures. The staff members are working remotely because of Covid. At this time, they are under-expending by about 2.2 million. NCSS has reduced some service contracts and transportation costs. They are only purchasing items needed for FY20. They are hoping for a waiver of flexibility on using the carryover. Lora would like more information before we do anything. The Town must turn over the taxes collected within 30 days to the school and this year, if the taxpayer has not paid, they have 120 days. She is concerned that the school district may have to borrow money as the interest charges may increase costs.

They had not issued spring coaches contracts yet so when school was changed to distance learning, they froze the process until they heard on whether or not there would be any spring sports. Without the agreements, they are not paying coaches.

### **New Hires**

Julie Regimbal has been meeting with the new teachers. She said this is the best part of her day. She thinks that going forward, she will continue to meet with them remotely because she does not have to wait until they are in town to schedule a meeting. They all have wonderful ideas on how to form relationships with students even if it means that they might not have a traditional classroom in the Fall. Swanton has filled all their positions. She feels like they have a great group of people coming

in next year. Chris Shepard has been signing contracts electronically and the process has worked well.

### **Other Business**

#### **Superintendent's Contract**

Meaghan Conly moved, seconded by Terri O'Shea to approve the contract for the Superintendent. Don Collins would like to discuss in executive session regarding a one-or two-year contract. Don Collins moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to table the previous motion. The board approved 9-0 vote.

#### **Future Meeting Dates**

The next school board meeting has been scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm to be held virtually.

#### **Executive Session**

Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to enter executive session for negotiations and invite Julie Regimbal and Lora McAllister with the discussion of the Superintendent's contract will have only presence of the board. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote to enter executive session at 8:00pm. *Devin Bachelder left the executive session during the professional negotiations update.* The board exited executive session at 8:32pm.

#### **Action after Executive Session**

*Meaghan Conly amended her tabled motion, seconded by Terri O'Shea to offer the Superintendent a two-year contract with the salary as budgeted and discussed. Motion passed 9-0 vote.*

*Motion was made by Peter Magnant, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the 2020-2023 Master agreement with the Educational Support Staff. Motion passed 9-0 vote.*

#### **Adjournment**

##### **Action**

*Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to adjourn at 8:35 PM. The board approved on an 9-0 vote.*

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary