

**MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD (MVSD)  
MEETING MINUTES  
MVU SCHOOL LIBRARY  
September 3, 2019  
6:30 PM**

**Present: Board members:** Board Chairperson, Chris Shepard (Highgate), Vice Chair, Don Collins (Swanton), Terri O'Shea (Swanton), Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk, (Swanton), Steve Scott (Highgate), Jen Chevalier (Highgate), Devin Bachelder, (Franklin), Eric Beauregard, (Franklin), Peter Magnant (Franklin)

**Others Present:** Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, Business Manager, Joyce Hakey, Principal of Franklin, Dena St. Amour, Principal of Swanton, Jay Hartman, Principal of MVU, Jen Desorgher, MVU Curriculum Coordinator, Paul Gregoire, MVU Director of Buildings and Grounds, Kosha Patel, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Tania Hayes, Director of Student Services, Wendy Culligan, Director of Early Childhood Programs, Robert Gervais, Director of Technology, Community Members: Jim Sullivan, Jay Denault, Nola Gilbert, Jim Daly, Charen Fegard, VSBA Representatives Susan Holson and Sue Ceglowski, Channel 15/16 Cameraperson and Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary

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

**Agenda Amendments-** Chris Shepard removed the Hiring Update from the Agenda

**Correspondence and Public Comments**

Jay Denault introduced himself to the representatives from the Vermont School Board Association. Jay expressed his frustration and dismay that the Vermont School Boards' Association ultimately took the position in support of Act 46 and testified to the legislators against the Act 46 delay legislation which led to the reduction of school boards but protected the number of Superintendents. The forced mergers took Sheldon from our Supervisory Union so that we could merge our schools into one district driving up taxpayer costs. Other school boards have withdrawn their support of VSBA. Jay expressed his opposition to have the board pay the \$12,000 in dues to VSBA as a result of the position that they took with Act 46 and other subsequent legislation.

**VSBA**

Susan Holson introduced herself as the Director of Education Services for the Vermont School Board's Association. She is Vermont

Director of Legal and Policies for VSBA. She works with school boards on Superintendent's evaluations and she maintains model policy manuals. She works directly with boards on policies and updating them. She works at the State House during the Legislative Session and follows educational bills. She has been an attorney for the past 20 years in private practice and for the State of Vermont. She answers questions from school boards about the open meeting laws, Robert's Rules, publishes the Lawbooks, sends regular communications out to boards on different topics throughout the year via newsletter, legislative reports and usually communicates through representation on state wide task forces. If the legislators want a study committee when considering legislation, there is usually a VSBA representative such as Act 173, Hazing, Harassment, Bullying, VT NEA racial justice task force, student staff ratio study committees etc. Non-paying members can not submit resolutions or vote at annual meetings or regional elections. They can not serve on the VSBA Board. The board has adopted rate sheets and if a board did not belong, their rate would be higher. They rely on due paying members to staff the VSBA. Their mission is to represent the voice of school boards in the State. It is challenging to be that voice because not all school boards agree so the VSBA do their best to represent and hear from the majority of board members. There is a resolution process for boards to submit resolutions by July 15 and that guides VSBA policy direction. The resolutions submitted this year are reviewed by a resolution committee consisting of one member from each region and they make a recommendation to the full board to pass, not pass or take no position. Every single resolution is submitted to the annual meeting for the majority of the board to vote. Governance, resolution related etc. is formed from the ground up for our members. If there is a topic that the resolutions don't cover than there is 24 people on the board that will discuss the issue, and then they vote on the topic at the end of the discussion. Business meetings includes the election, content, Act 11 bargaining commission update, annual snapshot date etc. The agenda is formed from the ground up. Terri O'Shea commented that she has found the videos on their websites to be very helpful especially with budgets and understanding the property tax implication. Sue Holson said that VSBA does interpret education law for board members but does not represent the district. She said that VSBA supported effort to help boards navigate Act 46. They also send out newsletters to board members. It is important that they have up to date emails for the board members. They are willing to come to school board meetings or provide trainings/board retreats.

Jay Denault commented that VSBA filed unfair labor practices against the Vermont NEA because they wanted to name ten more members on the Act 11 Health Care Commission. The VSBA representatives explained that the VSBA has appointed representatives on the commission but it is the commission that is directing the action not VSBA. Devin Bachelder commented that Neil Odell provided testimony on March 14<sup>th</sup> against the delay of Act 46. Jay commented why we would we pay dues to VSBA who advocated for the dissolution of their own

members. The VSBA representatives stated that they encounter topics in with which VSBA members disagreed, but they followed the direction of the vote of the majority of their members. They asked that the board not let one issue stop them from becoming members of the VSBA. They urge that the board continues their membership so that they can continue to receive the benefits from VSBA such as the education, the training, the legislative updates, and other benefits.

Unfortunately, there are 24 committee members and not everything was unanimous in their decisions. Don Collins stated that Neil O'Dell and Nicole Mace were asked to appear before the legislators to testify based on the feed back of the majority of the board members. Susan said that because of the sensitivity and timing of the issue, each board member spoke at length on their opinions, took a vote and the majority of the board members voted to not extend. Meaghan Conly feels that the benefits outweigh this one issue and it may not be the best route to sever ties with an organization. Don Collins suggested that board members who can attend the next regional board meeting in Enosburg in October prior to making a decision.

### **Consent Agenda**

#### **Approval of the Minutes**

*Action: Eric Beauregard moved, seconded by Terri O'Shea to approve the August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting minutes. The board approved the board minutes on an 8-0-1 vote. Meaghan Conly abstained from the vote. Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to approve the August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 board minutes. Devin requested that a brief discussion occurred to use the Articles of Agreement to help guide the decisions prior to entering executive session. Eric Beauregard's name was twice in members attendance. The board approved the minutes as revised on an 8-0-1 vote with Steve Scott abstaining.*

#### **MVU Administrators Report**

Jen Desorgher reported that the MVU High School Open House took place earlier this year on August 21<sup>st</sup>. The Middle School Open House will take place on September 10<sup>th</sup>. There was a district wide in-service on August 21<sup>st</sup> with Eric Twadell as our keynote speaker. Dr. Twadell continued to work with MVU teachers during the day focusing on how to incorporate Social and Emotional Learning into classroom instruction. Homecoming at MVU will be from Monday, Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, the 21<sup>st</sup>. There will be under the lights games throughout the week with a firework display on the evening of Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a dance and games for the high school students. The renovations were completed on August 26<sup>th</sup>. New signage was put in place on Monday. This is the second year that MVU is offering flexible and accelerated options in our Science Department. Many students are taking advantage of this opportunity to personalize their learning and Science offerings. They have also seen an increase in enrollment for upper level Math courses. They are offering a SAT Prep class with 22 students enrolled. Chris inquired about the Trades. Jen stated that they met with the Ag

Advisory Board and the enrollment is up there as well. They have increased enrollment in mechanics, animal science, work-based learning and resource management. MVU can not offer courses that compete with Northwest Technical Center. MVU students can attend trade courses there if they are interested in what is being offered.

### ***MVU Project Update***

Paul Gregoire reported that as of August 26<sup>th</sup>, the MVU construction project is 99% complete. There is still some work that they must do in the boiler. It was a successful project with a safe entrance to J Pod protecting students against the winter elements, along with a safer front entrance. Visitors will need to be buzzed in prior to entrance to do the school. Eighty five percent of the dirt will stay in the front.

### **Plowing RFP MVU and Highgate**

Lora McAllister reported that Swanton is engaged in a two-year plowing snow and removal project. She will send out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for plowing, salting and sanding. Snow Removal vendors may bid on any or all. Lora would like authorization to move forward.

**Action:** Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to allow the business office to launch an RFP and award to the lowest bidder. **Discussion:** Don asked if we always award it to the lowest bidder? Peter thought it should include the language reject any and all bids. Lora said they would include this language and she thought in this case we could award to the lowest bidder. Eric suggested that he would like to see the bid go to someone local provided it was a competitive bid. Chris stated that he would like the bids to come to the board for review and decision. **Action:** Devin Bachelder amended the motion to remove the lowest bidder. Don Collins seconded the amended motion. The board voted 9-0 to amend the motion. Devin Bachelder moved, seconded by Don Collins to allow the Business Office to seek the Plowing bid RFP for Highgate, MVU and Central Office. The board approved 9-0 vote.

### **Highgate Tech Lease**

Lora tried to get on the same cycle as MVU but could not do it because MVU was already in a lease. Highgate has 55 Chromebook to purchase at a cost of \$11,776. She would like to solicit three-year leasing rates.

**Action:** Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to allow the business office to solicit three-year lease rates for Highgate Chromebooks and award to the lowest bidder. The board approved on a 9-0 vote.

### **Student Activity Account Signer**

Lora reported that she had asked the board to consider signers for operating accounts for the general fund, but she now has to get authorized signers for

student activity and hot lunch accounts. They do allow signatory authority to principals for student activity accounts. They will need to follow some procedures and have backup for checks issued. The reason that principals are allowed is because many times it is time sensitive such as fund raisers etc. She still would like the finance committee members to review the student activity accounts, but they do need to have someone who is building based. Lora said she looked at GASB laws around the management of student activity accounts. They would be using the same software management, the same checks and balances such as PO ordering and approval, signed by the principals. Due to the volume at MVU, she would like the MVU Principal or his/her designee to be authorized such as Ann Marie Fellows who is the Accounts Payable person.

**Action:** *Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to allow principals to be the signatory authority of the student activity accounts except MVU, the principal or the principal's designee. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.*

### **Check Warrants**

Steve Scott read the MVSD check warrants totaling \$3,573,306.37 for August 2019 with the totals broken down as follows: accounts payable 1,987,108.21, payroll checks \$35,586.75, payroll other disbursements \$919,087.36 and payroll deductions \$631,524.05. They have been reviewed by the finance committee.

**Action:** *Meaghan Conly moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the check warrants totaling \$3,573,306.37. The board approved on a 9-0 vote.*

### **Highgate Project Update**

Chris Shepard met with Scott Martin, Paul Gregoire, Lora McAllister and Julie Regimbal. They are moving forward with bond in Highgate. They are holding on a construction manager as other issues are emerging and unknown at this time. They are pursuing alternative ways to move forward. Lora McAllister explained that they are looking into performance contracting. They will work to come in to gain efficiencies. If the board decides to move in this direction, they utilize the performance contracting to find other issues within the school. The board can decide on starting to do just the parking lot. Meanwhile the company that the school district contracts works to see what projects are in the bond, see if they can help with saving funds and use these funds to do the work in other needed areas of the school. They would like to start with the parking lot and look at performance contracting. Don Collins said that usually will need money to provide green efficiencies. Lora said that they are trying to balance on what the Highgate school buildings need and what is affordable. Performance contracting is an option to get more projects done at the same time using the same amount of funds approved. Lora has talked with other respected Business Managers and this is being used in other places. Don Collins thinks this is a very good process and should explore thoroughly. Chris said that they did a facility assessment of the school. Lora asked the board if they wanted to explore this further. The school district could have an assessment completed for free. The school district would pay them

for today's facility upgrades over a period of 10-18-year lease and pay them with tomorrow's efficiencies. Lora reported that this is a way to improve the building and learning environment for the same amount of dollars.

*Action: Don Collins moved, seconded by Terri O'Shea to allow the Business Office to pursue performance contracting to gather more assessment information and report back to the board. Lora responded to a citizen's question that this process is legal through a tax-exempt lease. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.*

#### **Lease for Robin Hood Drive**

Julie Regimbal requested that the board determine a finding for negotiating a lease of Robin Hood Drive where premature public knowledge would clearly place the board or other party at a substantial disadvantage.

*Action: Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Steve Scott moved a finding for executive session for the purposes of negotiating a lease. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote. The board will wait until the end of the meeting to go into executive session.*

#### **School Choice Policy and Procedure Discussion**

Julie created a table for school choice policy and procedures for the board to review. She wanted to give the board a comparison of what other school districts are doing with school choice and process. She would like to discuss with the administration about the widespread elementary choice process. There are several options to consider such as timeline, how many slots available, place holders for kids that move into the district, siblings having priority or not, transportation provided or not etc. The school board is committed to complete this process in a thoughtful manner. Chris Shepard thinks it would be good to discuss this at our next meeting after everyone has had an opportunity to review the options. Don Collins suggested creating an ad-hoc committee and bring back recommendations to the full board. Julie explained that the board gets to set the enrollment areas for their schools, for example the town school boundaries is where the student goes to school with some parameters depending on what the enrollment looks like that year. Should we have a waiting list or not? Peter asked if the board is open to elementary school transfer as was included in the Articles of Agreement? Chris Shepard asked for a show of hands to get a straw poll on looking into allowing the transfer of elementary school students? The majority of the board raised their hands in the affirmative. Julie will work with the Administrative Team first to get their input and if the board wants to have an Adhoc Committee, the representatives from the board can meet with the Admin Team to work further into recommending procedures and policy. Julie will report back at the next meeting and the board can determine if they wish to set up a committee at that time.

VSBA (Vermont School Board Association) dues payment discussion

Chris Shepard commented that if we don't pay dues, there will be no representation on the VSBA Board. Julie explained that if the board chose not to belong, there is a nonmember additional cost for meetings and conferences. Don Collins suggested that the board not take action tonight and recommended that the board members go the regional board meeting in October prior to making this decision. Don wants the board to see how the VSBA can or cannot help us. They provide training for negotiations. Eric said that VSBA helps with the hiring of the Superintendent. He suggested exploring other options such as Vermont Alliance of School Boards. He felt like if we could hear from them, we can make a good responsible decision. Meaghan asked if all the school boards joining the Vermont Alliance of School Boards were comprised of boards who left because they were angry with VSBA for their position on Act 46. Devin didn't like the process that VSBA used in opposing the delay. He recommended that board members view the video of March 14, 2019 on the VSBA Website. Don Collins thought that the VSBA lost a lot of integrity when they got caught between the Vermont NEA Association and the Governor. VSBA should not be putting themselves in this position. The next VSBA board meeting is on October 7<sup>th</sup> in Enosburg Falls. Board members agreed to hear from the Vermont Alliance of School Boards. Julie will invite them to come to present at an upcoming school board meeting.

### **Other Business**

#### **Superintendent's Updates**

Julie reviewed the schedule for presentations at school board meetings. All her attempts to adjust the original schedule meant that administration will be attending two board meetings in a row. She would like to modify the schedule so that Central Office Administrators will attend the first meeting of the month at MVU along with MVU Administration. The second meeting of the month will be the Elementary School Administration and will be rotated at each elementary school. She did make a revision in February to change the informational meeting from Highgate to MVU and the first meeting in March will be held in Highgate. MVU and the Central Office administration will have a written report the first meeting of the month and the Elementary School Principals will have their written reports. She will have a couple of administrators present at each meeting. She will work on seating arrangements so that there are more seats at the table, allowing for at least enough seats for the administrators presenting.

Kosha Patel, Director of Curriculum, stated that during their administrative retreat on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the administrators worked on identifying their values and building a vision for MVSD based on them. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, they provided further training on supervision and evaluation model adopted last year providing coaching to support implementation. They had a district lead new teacher orientation on August 14<sup>th</sup>. They provided information on built in systems of support across the district. In the afternoon, Amy Irish talked about classroom management. There were four days of intensive in-service led by the district. Eric Twadell,

superintendent of Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois delivered an inspiring key note to all the District Wide staff and worked directly with MVU school staff. His School is cited as one of America's top high schools and the "birthplace" of the Professional Learning Communities at Work™ process receiving Blue Ribbon awards.

Swanton teachers received training on the NGSS and science instruction from Vermont Energy Education Program consultants.

Highgate and Franklin teachers received training from Stern Center consultant on early reading assessment and reading development.

Wendy Cunningham, Early Childhood Coordinator, reported that they had a successful licensing visit to approve the new Highgate Early Childhood classroom. The new Franklin playground had a successful licensing visit on August 15th and will be ready to welcome preschoolers when school starts. The Early Childhood Program educators went to district level in-services and had additional in-services to meet additional requirements of AHS (Agency of Human Services) regulations along with participating with Maple Run to train on tier one strategies and best practices. They worked on trauma resiliencies and handle with care practices. She went to all the schools to greet all the families.

Tania Hayes, Director of Student Services, went to work breaking down silos of general education, special education and build on using and tracking data to make good decisions for kids. The Stern Center is working with grades K-3 with general education and special education kids at various levels. They will focus in the area of utilizing evidence-based practices to promote self-sufficiency and independence for all students, particularly those who access additional adult support across their day. The goal is to ensure that we are using proactive strategies and approaches to build independence rather than inadvertently creating an over-reliance on adult support. They will be teaming within the context of the Social /Emotional Learning work in conjunction with other district administrators to address this priority.

Robert Gervais announced that they have hired Rusty Gregory as the new data manager for the district.

### **Future Agenda Items**

Truancy, Policies, budget process overview

### **Next Meeting Date**

The board's next meeting is on September 17th in Highgate at 6:30pm.

### **Building Tour**

The board left the room for the Missisquoi Valley Union Middle/High School Building tour with the MVU Administration at 8:55pm. The board returned to the library at 9:35pm. *(Meghan Conly left the board meeting at 9:30pm)*

**Anticipated Executive Session:**

Eric Beauregard moved, seconded by Terri O'Shea to enter executive session at 9:35pm for the purpose of negotiating a real estate lease. The board exited executive session at 9:50pm.

Don thanked Eric Beauregard for suggesting the Vermont Alliance of School Boards. He thinks it is important. He does believe that the Vermont School Board Association needs to review their process and have a restart. Jen Chevalier discussed the correspondence regarding the cell phone procedure. The board discussed the process and protocols for responding to emails as board members.

**Adjournment**

*Action: Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to adjourn at 10:05pm. The board approved 8-0 vote.*

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary