

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Regular Meeting
November 9, 2020
Fair Haven Union High School
6:30 p.m.

Participation Will Be In Person or Virtually Connect By Going To:
meet.google.com/iso-hvnh-hhy
Or by Calling (US)+405-656-0082 PIN# 628 068 926#

Approved Minutes:

Name	Role/Term	Town Representing	In Attendance
Pati Beaumont	Board Member	Benson	X
Rebeckah St. Peter	Board Member	Benson	X-Virtually
Becky Spears	Board Member	Benson	X
Toni Lobdell	Board Member	Castleton	X
Tim Smith	Board Chair	Castleton	X
Julie Finnegan	Board Member	Castleton	X
Christin Pouliot	Board Member	Hubbardton	X
Joshua Hardt	Board Member	Hubbardton	X
Vacant	Board Member	Hubbardton	-
Tanya Tolchin	Board Member	West Haven	X -Virtually
Angela Charron	Board Member	West Haven	-
Vacant	Board Member	West Haven	-
Tara Buxton	Board Member - Clerk of Board	Fair Haven	X
Mike Bache	Board Member	Fair Haven	X
Rick Wilson	Board Member	Fair Haven	X
Peter Stone	Board Vice Chair	Orwell	X-Virtually
Glen Cousineau	Board Member	Orwell	X
John Wurzbacher	Board Member	Orwell	X
Brooke Olsen Farrell	Superintendent	Slate Valley UUSD	X
Cheryl Scarzello	Director of Finance	Slate Valley UUSD	X
Chris Cole	Director of Operations	Slate Valley UUSD	X
Casey O'Meara	Director of Curriculum I&A	Slate Valley UUSD	X
Kris Benway	Director of Special Services	Slate Valley UUSD	X

Audience Attending: Amy Roy, Amy Munger, Sandy Perry, Margaret Hayward, Rebecca Armitage, Jeff Hayes, Kim Jones, Cory Buxton, SweetStuff, Jeremy VanDerKern, Jen Clement, Jill Christiana, Sara Mason, **56, **16, **98, Walter Ripley, **64, Phil Hall, Katie Hart, Jennie Reed, Max Carrabino, Ann Niklasson, Kim Lucci, Jessica Adams, Dennis Perry, Lindsay Marcy

Pledge of Allegiance: Tim Smith, Board Chair led the Board in the Pledge.

Call to Order - 6:30 p.m.: Tim Smith called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: Julie Finnegan made a motion to amend the agenda to discuss Winter Sports after Approval of Minutes #3. This was seconded by Glen Cousineau.

Approval of SVUUSD Minutes of October 12, 2020: Julie Finnegan made a motion to approve the minutes of October 12, 2020 with no changes, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Motion carried by the full Board.

Approval of SVUUSD Minutes of October 26, 2020: Julie Finnegan made a motion to approve the minutes of October 26, 2020 with no changes, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Motion carried by the full Board.

Winter Sports Discussion: Brooke Olsen-Farrell, Superintendent began discussing the recent memo from the VPA and AOE regarding Winter Sports. Brooke mentioned that the Leadership Team finds ourselves very conflicted by this guidance as we are not having the same standards set forth for PE classes but are being told we have to hold winter sports for grades 5-12. The very same activities recommended for Winter Sports are not allowed in our schools during the day for our students and PE Teachers to participate in. Brooke mentioned that the Leadership Team does not support this, and the SU Covid Coordinator has advised against winter sports. However, as a district we have always followed the guidance put out by the Agency of Education so this would not be any different. We will take all the necessary precautions to implement the guidance to the best of our ability. Brooke shared that it was not our intent not to provide Winter Sports. Our priority has been to assure student safety for all and for staff and to keep our schools open for in person instruction. The Superintendent shared she will work with both AD's and Principals as well as the Covid Coordinator to see that we follow all guidance as safely as possible. It certainly will look different per Brooke. We can assure you our coaches, staff and students will follow all protocols. There will need to be extra time devoted to cleaning everything right down to the basketballs used, and this will be an extra burden on our custodial staff. While other teams will be permitted to travel to our schools, we will try to assure they follow strict guidelines but know already many schools around do not have the same strict protocols that SVUUSD employs. There will be no spectators allowed at these events.

Peter Stone, Board Member spoke up and said he is not sure it is worth the risks with all the impending COVID cases in the area. It is inviting trouble. Someone asked if we go remote will there be winter sports, no per Brooke. Brooke reiterated that her biggest worry is about whether or not other visiting schools or schools we visit have safety protocols in place. Brooke noted that if people travel over the breaks we can't ensure everyone's safety.

Public Comment: Eric Ramey spoke up and said we need to make this happen for our athletes, he added that while football was a lot of work, it was worth it for our kids to have sports. Eric also mentioned that he hopes we get creative for our other students that are not involved in winter sports this year as he knows there are 50-75 sets of snowshoes. Luke Vadnais spoke up about at least letting them play against one another at the younger grade levels even if they can't play other schools.

Correspondence: None

Committee Reports:

- Finance Committee: Glen Cousineau gave an overview of the Finance Committee meeting. He shared they had not seen a budget yet but had some preliminary budget discussions and were asked to give Cheryl some direction. They talked about the following items:
 - Staff reduction was discussed for potential savings of \$374,000.00 with reorganization plan.
 - There were a couple of Social Emotional Positions and others that were slated to be added to the budget.
 - Athletic Coordinator Positions to be redefined to one position.
 - Assumptions by Cheryl of Insurance Benefits increase of minimally 10%
 - Assumptions of Cheryl of Workmans Comp increase of roughly 10%
 - Assumptions of Cheryl of Unemployment Increases of roughly 10%
 - There are 2 Negotiations happening Teacher Salaries and Support Staff Negotiations
- Warrants: Total Payments: \$1,849,080.76: Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve total payments in the amount of \$1,849,080.76, this was seconded by Julie Finnegan. Motion carried by the full Board.
- Food Service: \$48,867.87: : Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve total payments in the amount of \$48,867.87, this was seconded by Julie Finnegan. Motion carried by the full Board.
- Grants: \$25,415.61: GlenCousineau made a motion to approve total payments in the amount of \$25,415.61, this was seconded by Julie Finnegan. Motion carried by the full Board.

UPK Presentation: Kris Benway and Katie Hart present on Universal Pre-K Program throughout Slate Valley. Jill Chirstiana and Sara Mason were also participating virtually to support the presentation. They shared the hours of the three programs and shared a power point of the programs held within the three sites of BVS, FHGS and CES along with the hours of operation. Kris spoke about the Act 166 regulation that was passed in 2014 making 10

hours a week for U-Pre-K available to all, 3-5 year olds. Katie Hart showed the audience how to navigate through the district U-Pre-K page and shared examples of work that is on there for families to access and even showed some of the Tool Kits that had been made for families to use during remote learning times. The SVU U-Pre K programs currently are serving 55 students. Ms. Hart covered the curriculum areas and programs used to provide these children with a comprehensive program. Mike Bache asked if there had been a direct impact to the program attendance based on Covid 19 Pandemic? We do have fewer students this year due to COVID 19, which is understandable. Tim Smith asked if we get reimbursement for U-Pre-K kiddos. Kris said we get a prorated ADM based on the number of hours they participate.

Job Description-5-12 Athletic Director: Glen Cousineau made a motion to accept the new job description of the 5-12 Athletic Director, this was seconded by Pati Beaumont/Julie Finnegan; Motion carried by the full Board.

District Reorganization Update: Brooke gave a brief overview of the District Reorganization Plan. She had arranged for a meeting with Benson parents of the upcoming 7th and 8th grade to discuss these students going to a different middle school starting in the fall of 2021. No parents showed up with concerns about this part of the reorganization. A letter was also sent out to all middle school parents about the two year plan for reorganization of all 7th and 8th graders to the FHUHS campus by fall of 2022. Brooke had one response to this parent letter from a parent who was in support of the move. She also has scheduled board meetings with individual communities for the week of November 30, so that they could receive feedback and answer any questions about the reorganization plan. We also will do another round of this in January. On December 7th at the Board meeting the Board will have to take action on re-organizing the BVS School from Pre-K-6, this would have to be approved by 75% of the Board. This is not a vote of the community members. Brooke reviewed the Communication Plan and her efforts to be transparent for all. The Central Office team is working on some floor plans of how the FHUHS would have to re-configure to try and make an autonomous (as possible) middle school within the high school. Brooke noted that there will need to be another board vote on May 24th 2021 about re-configuring all of the other schools. If we move forward with closing CVS and not educationally repurposing it there will need to be a vote of the towns of Castleton/Hubbardton in the spring of 2022.

Resignation: Tim Smith read a resignation letter from Fair Haven Grade School's Library Media Specialist, Margaret McGarry, effective November 24, 2020. Peter Stone made a motion to accept the resignation, and this was seconded by Mike Bache.

Central Office Report:

Superintendent's Report

We continue to find success with in person learning in the context of COVID in Slate Valley. COVID has put a tremendous amount of strain on our staff, students and families and like everyone in the country, pandemic fatigue has begun to set in. While we are still in person we are carefully planning for the possibility of needing to be remote at some point. We are especially worried about the holiday season and encouraging families and staff to follow the guidelines so everyone can remain healthy.

Staffing is starting to emerge a huge concern in the district. We have staff becoming ill with routine illness such as colds and this is keeping them out of school for extended periods of time due to the Vermont Department of Health regulations. Many of our retired teachers that would have normally substituted in the district are no longer willing to do so due to COVID. Coupled with all of this we have an usually high number of maternity leaves (so far 7) that we need to fill this spring and we currently have unfilled full-time positions within the district due to a lack of applicants.

Some of our schools are experiencing an increase in new student enrollments. Given classroom size and social distancing requirements we have some grade levels in some of our schools that are unable to accommodate any more students. However, we do have room in other schools within the district. We will assign students to schools/classrooms that have room and offer transportation. The alternative would cause certain classrooms to need to be hybrid.

I sent a letter to all parents in the district explaining the district's thoughts on reorganization. I only heard back from a single parent with support for moving forward with a district middle school. I have drafted a [communication plan](#) for the district in terms of reorganization. As you know it is important that we offer ample opportunity for the community to weigh in on the plan.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Teaching socially distanced (wearing masks, with constant handwashing and use of sanitizer) is an undertaking that requires all of us to continue learning.

The in-person experiences PreK-12 educators create define teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic for students and parents in Slate Valley. Slate Valley's COVID-19 in-person experience has passed 40 consecutive days!

Kristen Whitman, a Slate Valley Learning Coach, developed this [site](#) to recognize educator's work through Placed-Based Learning. Place-Based Learning is an example of experiential learning with a focus on "place". Kristen honed her work in place-based learning a year ago with Northeastern University. Check out the pictures under "projects", they're amazing! See more images like that which is below (Nate Morris with Orwell Village School's 4th grade) on Kristen's site!

Director of Operations

Operations staff continue to work diligently to implement our districtwide cleaning procedures in order to support our district's reopening plan and maintain a safe and healthy environment for in-person instruction. The installation of the new generator at the Castleton Elementary School is nearing completion. At the Fair Haven Grade School, we have been working with the Agency of Natural Resources to develop a delineated map showing where the wetlands begin and end on our property located behind Dollar General to explore the creation of expanded outdoor learning opportunities. Finally, at the Fair Haven Union High School, we are continuing the planning required to look to relocate the main electrical room now that we have been able to complete the work of getting the main supply lines rerouted and out of the underground steam tunnel.

In the realm of technology, last week marked the end of the fall sports season and the streaming of games that we have been working on in conjunction with Ali Morgan, the FHUHS Activities Director. Given the recent guidance from the state regarding winter sports we are actively looking to identify ways to hopefully support the streaming of both middle school and high basketball games this winter so that the community can watch games via live streaming. Lastly, the district's Tech Integrationists, Lisa Cacciatore and Rodney Batschelet, just completed an initial series of Parent Tech Nights for each school covering a list of topics developed in their work with Casey O'Meara and the district's Instructional Coaches, Abby Wald and Kristen Whitman.

Director of Special Services

This month I have invited the Universal Preschool Teachers to our board meeting to share additional information about the operations of our early education opportunities in Slate Valley. We have been working hard since the inception of [Act 166 of 2014](#) to ensure that we are offering programming to meet the needs of our youngest students and their families. We are currently serving more than 92 students ages 3-5 years through our district programming and our private community based preschool partnerships. Of these 92 students, 23 of these participants have identified needs that are supported through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which affords them access to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. ECSE was formerly known as Essential Early Education (EEE). We look forward to sharing some highlights of our current programs.

Director of Finance

As I wrote in October, I would like to take the opportunity of this report over the next few months to review various components of Vermont's education funding system as we begin our budget cycle for fiscal year 2022. Much of the information that I will share is available on the Agency of Education website and the Vermont Department of Taxes website. This month I will be covering the homestead property yield, the non-residential tax rate and income yield. The homestead property yield, the non-residential tax rate and income yield are set by the Vermont Legislature annually during each legislative session. On December 1st the Tax Commissioner provides the legislature with forecasted rates and yields that are intended to set tax rates so that all taxpayers statewide experience the same average change to their tax bills from the previous year. Typically, the legislature recalibrates the rates and yields based on updated education fund data that is gathered by the Agency of Education. School districts provide the AOE with preliminary budget data in early February after most school boards have signed their budget warning. The Tax Commissioner's letter, the preliminary budget data and the condition of the education fund are considered by the legislature when they set the yields and the rates. Typically, when I start forecasting tax rates I use the amounts recommended by the Tax Commissioner and as I receive guidance from the AOE about what the legislature is considering, I modify the amounts that I am using. Often the legislature does not set the rates until the end of the legislative session which is after budgets have been voted on in March.

School districts are primarily focused on residential tax rates which are affected by the property dollar equivalent yield which is often called the homestead property yield or just the yield. Despite its name, there is no connection between how much revenue is raised from a \$1.00 homestead (dollar) tax rate and a per pupil spending amount. The yield represents how much \$1.00 of homestead property tax rate would yield in spending support per equalized pupil. The non-homestead tax rate and the homestead property tax yield are set to generate enough property tax revenue to support the anticipated statewide education spending after all other education fund revenue sources are accounted for.

Slate Valley's specific equalized homestead property tax rate will be higher or lower than \$1.00 depending on the level of spending per equalized pupil relative to the amount yielded by the \$1.00. So for example, if a \$1.00 tax rate would yield \$10,000, and the district presents a budget with education spending per equalized pupil of \$15,000, the equalized homestead tax rate would be \$1.50. There is an inverse relationship between the homestead property yield and tax rates. When the yield is increased, tax rates will decrease. The legislature has stated that they do not want taxpayers to bear the burden of the effects that COVID-19 has had on the Vermont economy. Their intent

is to set the yield for FY22 based on would it would otherwise be despite COVID-19. I will keep you updated over the course of our budget development cycle if the legislature changes course with regard to setting the yield.

Other Business: None

Executive Session for Purpose of discussing Legal Issue: John Wurzburg made a motion to go into Executive Session at 7:57 p.m., this was seconded by Julie Finnegan . Tara Buxton made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:31 p.m., with no action taken. This was seconded by Rick Wilson..

Agenda Building:

1. Budget
2. Update on Reorganization Plan
3. Covid Update
4. Policy Committee Report

Adjournment: Julie Finnegan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31p.m., this was seconded by Pati Beaumont. Meeting adjourned.

SVUUSD Board Mtg. - November 23, 2020 - 6:30 p.m. - FHUHS
SVUUSD Policy/Building & Grounds Committee Mtgs. - November 23, 2020 - 5:30 p.m. - FHUHS