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**Minutes Thursday, September 15, 2016 South Hero School Board Meeting
At Folsom Education & Community Center**

6:01p.m. Meeting called to order by Kris Bowser

In Attendance: Kris Bowser, Dave Cain, RJ Sweeney, Bernie Toth, Bentley Vaughan, Board members; Lenny Badeau, Principal; Emily Bowser, Board Secretary; Everett Dubuque, Ethelyn Dubuque, Doug Patterson, Peter Gregg, Sandy Gregg, Jessica McAllister, Peter Bowser, Christel Nase, Gareth Hunt, Liese Reagan, Kari Banas, Bill Banas, Fred Heslop, Cathie Merrihew, Robert Merrihew, Mike Bishop, Peter Siegfried, Tim Maxham, Chad Pigeon, Katherine Hayward, Matt Jensen

Adjustment of Agenda:

- Bill payment and contract signing moved to when the minutes are approved.
- VFW discussion of use of the gym added to "Old Business"

Principal's Report, presented by Lenny Badeau, Principal

Highlights:

- Gym Floor Update: Could not be the same as Alburgh's due to the gym having a floating tile; Alburgh has hardwood. Principal Badeau reached out to former Principal Perry, who said that based upon the needs of Folsom's flooring the installation company recommended that particular floor. The initial concern about the sensitivity of the floor was overstated and Principal Badeau does not recommend any changes to the building code in light of these findings.

Board Discussion:

Amending Building Use Policy

- Not necessary given Principal Badeau's recommendation.

Act 46 Update

- Kris Bowser is going to make a motion when in Board Action to go onto the ballot in November. Has been approached by people in town, including selectboard members, who felt the August vote was too close to call and that people didn't understand that there was any repercussion to waiting on the vote.
 - Kris Bowser attended the Georgia School Board meeting last week, and chatted with three Board members informally, along with Jen Lyon-Horne, Melanie Henderson, Tim Maxham and Bentley Vaughan. Felt while there is definite interest in Georgia about South Hero, it is still very early in their process, and as they're close to the 900 students they're also looking into being a standalone or joining Franklin West in a side-by-side structure. For Georgia to pursue that option they wouldn't qualify for incentives, and the Georgia Board is also favorable to building a high school, as they worry about the amount of money they pay to tuition their children and feel that it could be a wash to build their own

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high school. Her impression is that they recognize that the townspeople are pro-high school choice, and that it would require education, but they feel that they could be an exceptional PreK-12. The implication for South Hero is the loss of high school choice, and the possible absorption into the Georgia school.

- Act 46 is teeth to Act 60, and aims to ensure every kid has the same opportunities across the state, hence the existence of the educational quality standards. On top of coping with the loss of the incentives, South Hero would have to spend more to elevate education standards. Ultimately she feels that South Hero, not the five Board members, need to make the decision.
- Bernie Toth asked if Georgia could absorb Folsom kids into high school/middle school if their numbers go down. Kris Bowser replied Superintendent Burrington did reach out to the Georgia superintendent to ask if they could guarantee that in a Georgia merger that South Hero would stay PreK-8. They would not be pinned down in a definitive yes or no.
- Bentley Vaughan said that he felt it was inappropriate to wildly speculate about Georgia's Board's actions, would prefer to have their Board make statements about their feelings. Dave Cain asked Bentley if he felt that Kris Bowser was misrepresenting Georgia, and Bentley said that he said he felt they weren't speaking to personal opinions. Kris Bowser said that she felt she and Bentley heard things differently.

Public Comments:

- Tim Maxham said that he believed that the Georgia high school merger is Franklin West (Georgia, Fairfax, and Fletcher)
- Peter Bowser encouraged Public Comments to be civil. South Hero is a rich community and a great environment, and just as children are raised in an anti-bullying environment, their parents owe them no less than to follow those guidelines. He stated the the Board Members were all good people, and that dragging their spouses and children into the personal conflict, however people feel about this issue, should not be tolerated.
- Mike Bishop asked how Dave Cain would vote. Dave Cain stated he would be voting no.
- Mike stated that he had asked the state attorney if, after the vote, 30 days past the vote itself 5% of the voters could petition to rescind the vote, and he felt that that would happen, and that this could be an ongoing issue where South Hero would have to vote over and over; encouraged the Board to consider that before voting to go on the ballot.
- RJ Sweeney said that if South Hero doesn't vote in November and does not come up with another preferred model after, the school will lose \$350k, and the tax incentives. He felt uncomfortable about the state forcing their hands like this, and there are a lot of unknowns, but he would vote yes because the stakes are so high he felt it was imperative that this go out to the community, and to him a "no" vote prevents that. The August vote also came through when we didn't have information. New information coming out in August clarified that you do not qualify for any of the incentives if you vote to join an already merged district at a later date.
- Tim Maxham said that he's been very actively involved since day 1, has attended many meetings and it's a hard issue. He supports the move to put the question on the ballot in

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November. This is the one-time opportunity to get the incentives and continue to get the hold harmless and small school grant.

- Sue asked about the deadline to get articles on the ballot for the November vote. Kris said she believes that it's September 27th but didn't have it in front of her. People have to take out new School Board nomination papers and those have to be submitted to the Town Clerk on Oct 9
- Fred Heslop asked RJ Sweeney if deadlines on hold-harmless grant have changed. RJ Sweeney said that the Board had asked for clarification about hold-harmless; in no uncertain terms that if they don't go into a preferred structure at the same time that everyone else votes, South Hero will not get the incentives. Fred Heslop said that seems extremely punitive. Kris Bowser agreed; the state said that they're not *making* anyone do anything, and if you do go with the preferred you get an incentive, if you don't go with a preferred you're penalized. Fred Heslop said that he felt it must be a misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Dave Cain assured him that it was not, that comes directly from the attorney who constructed Act 46.
- Fred Heslop asked if the Board has given thought to how to best communicate to the town in an unbiased way to get information out. RJ said yes, with the establishment of the PreK-6 subcommittee and the PreK-8 subcommittee, information would be disseminated. Kris Bowser agreed and said that was one of the reasons that they were going to the ballot, so that the Board wasn't forcing the voter's hand.
- Fred Heslop asked how to best speak about other issues, and Kris said he could send her an email and she'll put it on the agenda.
- Peter Siegfried asked what next process is if the vote fails and Georgia doesn't want to merge, what happens? Kris Bowser responded that the Island towns will try again, but it's possible that we'll be there in 2019. If we don't have a preferred plan set by June 30, 2019, voted on by both town and state, the state will get involved.
- Kari Banas stated that if the state does intervene they cannot change the structure, but they could take the money away. Fred Heslop stated that if South Hero lost that money, Folsom's structure *would* change. Dave Cain agreed.
- Bill Banas said that he felt that with the big elections in November of new Governor, there could be changes coming from that direction. He said that if he felt that the August ballot measure was "fair", he could support the November vote, but he didn't. The Island Merger would be a huge change for the entire character of the town, and more attention should be paid to fighting Montpelier.
 - RJ Sweeney asked Bill Banas that, if he were a Board Member (hypothetically), and they didn't go on the ballot in November, and then the Georgia merger fell through, what would he say to those community members who asked why they weren't given a voice in November? Bill Banas replied that they did have a chance to have their say in August.
- Kris Bowser closed public comments after 20 minutes, and stated that however the vote played out, it wouldn't rely on the five Board Members.
- Bentley Vaughan stated that people have already had a chance to speak; they had a chance in the August vote and through forums, petitions, and surveys.

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Board Action:

- RJ Sweeney made motion to approve minutes for September 1, 2016. Motion passed unanimously.
- Kris Bowser made motion to approve contract of Justin Gardner for this year as Kindergarten paraprofessional. Motion passed unanimously.
- Bernie Toth made motion to pay bills. Motion passed unanimously.
- Kris Bowser made motion to put Act 46 Island Merger on the November ballot. Passed 3-2. Kris Bowser, RJ Sweeney, and Bernie Toth in favor, Dave Cain and Bentley Vaughan opposed. Measure will go on ballot.
- RJ Sweeney made a motion to waive fees for the VFW to use the building going forward. Motion passed 4-1, Kris Bowser, RJ Sweeney, Bernie Toth, Bentley Vaughan in favor, Dave Cain opposed.

Executive Session: none

Board Correspondence/Sharing: none

Follow-up/Old Business:

- The VFW asked for permission to continue to use gymnasium moving forward. The Board was confused about why this request was coming to them, and Bernie Toth instructed them how to go about making the request. Principal Badeau suggested the reason the VFW had gotten the wrong impression due to holding off on hosting events until the floor issue was resolved at tonight's meeting. VFW also requested a permanent waiver of the \$200 reduced fee they are charged to use the building. Board approved (see Board Action).

Meeting officially adjourned at 7:00p.m.

Next meeting will be October 6th, 2016 at 6:00p.m. Folsom Education and Community Center

Kristina Bowser

RJ Sweeney

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Dave Cain

Bernadette Toth

Bentley Vaughan