

Slate Valley Modified Unified Union School District Meeting Minutes 9/11/17  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
 F.H.U.H.S. Library  
 6:30 PM

Approved Minutes

Name	Role/Term	Town Representing	In Attendance
Kris Benway	Director of ARSU Spec Ed	ARSU	Yes
Jody Goodhue	Temp. Clerk/1 Year	Benson	Yes
David Renninger	Board Member/ 2 Year	Benson	Yes
Amy Munger	Board Member/3 Year	Benson	Yes
Toni Lobdell	Board Member/1 Year	Castleton	Yes
Liz Mackay	Board Member/2 Year	Castleton	Yes
Julie Finnegan	Board Member/3 Year	Castleton	Yes
Shannon Baldwin	Board Member/1 Year	Hubbardton	No
Joshua Hardt	Board Member/2 Year	Hubbardton	Yes
Mike Fallis	Board Member;3 Year	Hubbardton	Yes
John Oakman	Board Member/1 Year	West Haven	No; appointed 9/11/17
Angela Charron	Board Member/2 Year	West Haven	Yes
Michael (Trevor) Ezzo	Board Member/3 Year	West Haven	Yes
Tara Buxton	Board Member/1 Year	Fair Haven	No
Michael Bache	Board Member/2 Year	Fair Haven	Yes
Roy L. Eckler	Board Member/3 Year	Fair Haven	No
Peter Stone	Board Member/1 Year	Orwell NMD (Non Member District)	Yes
Glen Cousineau	Board Member/2 Year	Orwell NMD	Yes
David Carpenter	Board Member/3 Year	Orwell NMD	Yes
Brooke Olsen Farrell	Superintendent	Slate Valley MUUSD	Yes
Cheryl Scarzello	Director of Finance	ARSU	Yes

Others Present: Chris Cole, ARSU Information & Technology Coordinator; Sherri Nichols, ARSU Curriculum Coordinator; Bonnie Lenihan, Director of Special Ed C/H & Minute Taker; Linda Peltier, CVS Principal; Patrick Walters, Orwell Village School Principal; Bonnie Condit, John Michael Hackett; Krista Doyle; Jason Rasco, FHUHS Asst. Principal; Brett Blanchard, Principal FHUHS; Kathleen Kilbourne, CES Principal; Becky Armitage, Director of Special Ed FHGS; Skip Cooke, Principal FHGS; Kim Prehoda, Principal BVS; Gina Himes;

Call to Order: Michael Bache called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and opened the meeting by setting the tone for the hopes for this Board. He welcomes the Board members and Audience and thanked those that had done all the work leading up to the formation of this Board. He shared his vision that we all think and act as one for the betterment of the educational opportunities for all children.

Approval of Agenda: Julie Finnegan made the motion to approve the Agenda as presented. Toni Lobdell seconded the motion. Motion passed by full Board.

Approval of Minutes -August 28, 2017: Julie Finnegan made motion to approve the minutes with the following changes. Glen Cousineau seconded this. Mike Fallis would like to be added to the Policy committee; Trevor Ezzo wants to come off the Policy committee but would be added to the Building and grounds committee and remain on the Finance committee. Motion passed with the changes noted.

Public Comment: Chair M. Bache asked the Public to introduce themselves. They did and stated their current roles. There was no additional public comment.

Correspondence: A letter of resignation was read by Chair M. Bache on behalf of Rick Wilson due to an impending move to a neighboring community. His resignation was accepted. We also received a letter of interest from John Oakman for the vacated position by Rick Wilson. M. Bache read the letter from Mr. Oakman, discussion ensued due to the fact Mr. Oakman also holds a coaching position in the district. Superintendent Farrell noted that a waiver could be sought to approve his appointment. She explained the waiver can be and typically is granted by the Secretary of Education. The Board agreed to appoint Mr. Oakman to the vacant WH position, Toni Lobdell made the motion to appoint John Oakman to the WH vacant position, and this was seconded by Julie Finnegan. Motion was passed by the full Board.

Committee Reports: There have not been any committee meeting to date. Superintendent Farrell explained that the Board could investigate the work already done by VSBA for support in writing policies rather than starting each policy from scratch. Julie Finnegan made the motion to investigate receiving support from the VSBA; Mike Fallis seconded this motion. Discussion ensued and the motion was passed by the full Board.

- a) Policy ~ 1st meeting is set for September 25, 2017 prior to the next SVMUUSD meeting.
- b) Personnel
- c) Finance ~ 1st meeting is set for September 27, 2017
- d) Building and Grounds
- e) Negotiations

#### Central Office Reports:

##### **Superintendent's Report**

The past 2 months have been extremely busy. My focus this summer has been the transition to the new district. With this has come the reorganization of board meeting schedules due to the local boards fading away and the new SVMUUSD board taking over. In addition, our entire system/structure needs to be redefined. We have been working on new hiring structures/systems, bringing contract language together, developing a new budgeting process, etc.

On Opening Day with staff we spent time discussing as a collective group what our vision for the future will be as we move to becoming a new entity. What will it look like, sound like and feel like to be part of the Slate Valley Modified Unified Union School District/Addison Rutland Supervisory Union 5 years from now. We would like to gather feedback from school board members, parents and students in the creation of our vision and priorities.

Throughout this transition the Leadership Team will work to create a culture of coherence throughout our system that places learning at the heart of all decisions while at the same time celebrate the individuality in our schools. This will lead to efficiency and clear direction that will enhance the wonderful things that are already happening throughout our schools and expand opportunities for all.

The ARSU Leadership Team (administrators from all of our schools) have developed Shared Beliefs for our system. These will be the foundation for decision making moving forward and define what we stand for as a system. We are committed to hiring/retention of personnel that can commit to our belief system and these were unveiled to staff on our Opening Day.

We believe:

- In providing for the social, emotional and academic needs of every child so that they feel connected, safe, and respected in order to ensure student achievement.
- In providing a challenging and engaging atmosphere in which all members of the school community can learn and grow.
- In providing opportunities for inquiry, research, global collaboration, and communication.
- In providing varied, rich and personalized opportunities for learning.
- In providing experiences to develop critical thinking skills that allow students to become engaged participants in their school communities and beyond.

### **Curriculum and Staff Development Coordinator**

The past month we have begun working on our unified focus on learning and unification. This process began at our Leadership Academy around shared beliefs and a theme for the year. During our Leadership Academy we outlined a Continuous Improvement Plan that focuses around the following: academic proficiency, personalization, multi-tiered system of support which includes the culture and climate within our schools, equity, technology integration as an accelerator for learning, and mentoring to retain high quality staffing in our schools. This plan is the driver for all decisions in curriculum and professional development.

The District Opening Day celebration included working on the vision for Slate Valley. The afternoon was focused on learning with teachers sharing their expertise around transferable skills, personalized learning plans, developmentally age appropriate instructional practices for vocabulary acquisition, writing across the curriculum, proficiency based assessment, special education in the proficiency based classroom, behavioral coaching, and teaching with poverty in mind.

### **Director of Special Services**

At the start of the 2017-2018 school year we are welcoming lots of new faces in ARSU. This year, we have three new Early Childhood Special Education Teachers, one new SLP, five new special education teachers, and two alternative special education teachers. We also have a new school psychologist working full time in ARSU, and we are contracting with a second, who will work part-time, to meet the comprehensive evaluation needs in special education.

In support of our Unified Focus on Learning, on August 25, 2017 all instructional and support staff engaged in activities to collect their input for creating the new vision of Slate Valley Unified. Additionally, the new special services personnel attended a training session on Goalview (our special education management system), service documentation, and School Medicaid billing. Returning special education staff also engaged in learning related to the role of the special educator in proficiency based learning and continued their professional inquiries on standards based grading.

On August 30, 2017 the Special Services professional staff met for two hours at Castleton Elementary School. We explored the implications of the new Supreme Court ruling (Endrew F. v. Douglas County School System) with regard to entitlements for a free appropriate public education. We discussed the changes to the VT Special

Education requirements that are effective immediately and require changes back to the old rules due to an error in which the wrong rules were posted and approved. We solidified our continued focus on student growth through determination of appropriate progress monitoring practices.

This fall we welcomed 258 IEP students in ARSU; 31 at the preschool level and 227 in grades K-12. This is an increase of 31 students in grades K-12 from our spring report. To capture the change from last spring it should be noted that we graduated 12 students; 1 student dropped out of school; 6 students were found ineligible for special education; 13 students moved out of district and 1 parent revoked consent for special education services for their child. Additionally, we have enrolled 35 new students with IEP's in ARSU this fall. Many of these students have significant social, emotional and academic needs that require additional placements and personnel. A child count summary for September 1, 2017 is attached.

#### **UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL UPDATE:**

This fall we are operating three Universal Preschool Classrooms in ARSU with sites at Castleton Elementary School, Fair Haven Grade School, and Benson Village School. We have 89 students registered in our preschool programs. We also have 13 partner programs located in Addison and Rutland counties where another 36 ARSU students are enrolled and are able to access high quality preschool school experiences. At this time, 31 preschool age students are eligible for special education and a number of evaluations are planned for early fall.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristin H. Benway, Director of Special Services

#### **Information Technology Coordinator**

This summer the technology team focused on upgrading classroom projectors, interactive boards and preparing and distributing Chromebooks. There were approximately 25 new touch boards installed throughout the district. These new boards are replacing the existing Smartboards that have been in place for many years and are starting to fail. There were 335 new Chromebooks purchased. These Chromebooks will be replacing and expanding our existing 1:1 program.

We also worked on the many data reports that are required to be sent to the Agency of Education along with upgrading and preparing all of our data systems for the new school year.

#### **Director of Finance**

The summer is always a busy time for the Business Office as we wrap up the previous fiscal year and begin a new one. This summer was been a bit more challenging with the sudden notification from our audit firm of many years that they would not be able to do the FY17 audit for ARSU and school districts. Finding out our audit firm was not coming with less than 6 weeks before their expected arrival meant that we had to quickly go out to bid and find a firm that would be able to do the audit as soon as possible. I was quite concerned that I would end up with new auditors in the office at the same time we were beginning the hard work of budgeting for new entity - SVMUUSD. Fortunately, they were able to come in the third week of August and were able to get most of the field work done. I will provide you with more feedback from our new firm RHR Smith in the coming months. Needless to say they were very impressed with the Business Office staff and the amount of work we handle considering there are so few us.

Many end of year reports required by the Agency of Education and our various grantors were completed over the summer. We also on-boarded more than FIFTY new hires! The first payroll for school year staff is always complicated. It was even more so this year with the late settlement of the teacher's contract and the fact that support staff contract negotiations are just getting started. The next few months will be very intense for payroll with having to make retroactive pay adjustments and changes in health insurance premium deductions.

Open enrollment in the new VEHI health insurance plans will begin September 15<sup>th</sup> and go through October 15<sup>th</sup>. I expect that Ann Pelkey, the Payroll Clerk, and myself will be very busy answering questions regarding the new VEHI plans. One of our Business Office staff is on a medical leave through the beginning of October.

As I wind down on health insurance I will begin gearing up on budgeting for Slate Valley Modified Unified Union School District for FY18, as well as beginning the process of establishing a new school district. More to follow on that in the coming months.

Warrant Authorization: (action item): Cheryl Scarzello presented information regarding the need for having a warrant procedure and shared such in writing with the Slate Valley Modified Unified Union School District. Julie Finnegan made the motion to accept the warrant as described and written. Angela Charron seconded the motion. Motion was carried by the full Board

Responsibilities of the Slate Valley Modified Unified Union School District (see link below). Superintendent Farrell & Chris Cole, Information & Technology Coordinator prepared a presentation.

[Responsibilities of the SVMUUSD Board:](#)

Bylaws: Superintendent Farrell noted that currently the ARSU Board was the only Board that had Bylaws. She said that many new Boards that were forming around the State saw a need to develop bylaws that work in tandem with Roberts Rules of Order. The Executive Board members of SVMUUSD might look at the drafts available and come up with Bylaws to present to the larger Board for consideration and adoption. Michael Bache suggested the Superintendent send the draft Bylaws out to the full Board prior to the next meeting for them to review and then feedback could be given for the Executive Board to consider and finalize. To be revisited at next meeting.

Vision:

The Superintendent provided a protocol to the Board to help them contribute to the development of the District Vision. Part of the Board's Responsibility is to articulate a vision of education that reflects the aspirations of the community and best practices identified by the administration. The Goal of the activity is to create a "unified organization." Board members were asked to project into the future 5 years from now and answer the following question. What do they want the "organization" to look like, sound and feel like when it is fully realized? Their contributions would then be combined with that of the Administration, the Teachers, and the Parent Survey information feedback. She also hopes to enlist students to contribute to this process.

The following were contributions from SVMUUSD Board members:

Julie Finnegan wants all students to have a "clear" path that they would like to pursue after High School.

Josh Hardt adds to this that he wants diversified pathways that are clear and large in number.

Glen Cousineau hopes that kids in all the sending schools have equal opportunities and that they all arrive at the High School on the same page, which in turn offers them more educational opportunities.

Angela Charron wants to be a district that others emulate; she wants SVMUUSD to be the best in the State; she wants it to be a place that others want to send their students to. She wants many opportunities for students whether it be providing college opportunities, trade school works, programs rich in the arts, sports, etc. She wants to turn out well rounded students.

Trevor Ezzo wants all of the aforementioned but for us to do it efficiently.

Toni Lobdell wants all schools to consider us as (1) where all students are considered our students regardless of the town they come from.

David Carpenter recognizes that there is a huge focus on STEM, but doesn't want us to neglect the importance of the Arts; he doesn't want us to lose students with interest in the Arts to specialty schools.

Josh Hardt agreed with David's statement about the importance of the Arts. Josh would also like the us vs. them mentality to go away, working towards a unified system.

Mike Fallis would like to see a component of the vision include a way to draw in the greater community to our schools where there were opportunities for different education for adults; he would like our students to know that learning doesn't stop with kids. (Full service schools)

Michael Bache would like our district to be engaging place for Administration, and Teachers; a place where staff want to be. He also expressed that he would like to see each student challenged at whatever level they can

participate making a case for Individualized Learning Plans for students. Michael would like to see us market ourselves better as he feels there is already much to celebrate within each of our schools.

Liz MacKay would love to see that everyone in the community would think that their investment in education is a worthwhile investment to be making. She would like people to be proud of our schools.

Other Business: At the last meeting Board members had expressed interest in seeing if PEG TV could begin taping the SVMUUSD meetings this year or explore if there were students interested in borrowing equipment and doing the taping (perhaps students enrolled in the Stafford program). Superintendent Farrell followed up with PEG TV. They could not possibly commit prior to the termination of their current taping of the C/H Board. Discussion ensued. David Carpenter asked if we could spec out the purchase of equipment. Chris Cole will research some cost factors prior to the next Board meeting and report out on this. Brett Blanchard shared that he had discussed with some students the possibility of committing to taping and editing these meetings if PEG TV could not.

Job Descriptions need to be updated for many positions in regards to FMLA paperwork. As staff accesses FMLA paperwork we need to have current job descriptions to supply to Physicians to assure that staff coming back to positions receive clearance and in turn the District needs reassurance from Physicians that employee continues to be able to complete the job requirements. Updating these job descriptions for multiple positions will need to be addressed.

Agenda Building: The Superintendent discussed the fact that it was a good habit to get into to build the agenda for next meeting prior to the conclusion of each meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2017. This is also the date for the VSBA Training meeting for new Board members in Otter Valley. Josh Hardt indicated he would be participating in the VSBA meeting. Angela Charron indicated she could not attend the September 25, SVMUUSD meeting. The Board agreed it was a good idea to pre-set agenda. Some topics for next meeting include:

- Bylaw discussion
- Principal Reports (all schools); members will receive these reports ahead of time in their packets
- Review cost of video equipment
- Vision feedback from all parties to date
- Report from the policy committee which meets prior to the SVMUUSD meeting.

Executive Session: (if needed): Not necessary

Adjournment: Julie Finnegan made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36; this was seconded by Glen Cousineau.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Bonnie Lenihan