

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Meeting
TUESDAY, December 10, 2019
Fair Haven Union High School
6:30 p.m.

Approved Minutes

Name	Role/Term	Town Representing	In Attendance
Kris Benway	Director of Special Services	Slate Valley UUSD	X
Pati Beaumont	Board Member	Benson	X
Rebeckah St. Peter	Board Member	Benson (Appointed 4/8/19)	X
Amy Munger	Board Member	Benson	X
Toni Lobdell	Board Member	Castleton	X
Tim Smith	Board Member	Castleton	Via phone
Julie Finnegan	Board Chair	Castleton--Board Chair	X
Vacant	Board Member	Hubbardton	-
Joshua Hardt	Board Member	Hubbardton	X
Vacant	Board Member	Hubbardton	-
Tanya Tolchin	Board Member	West Haven 9/30/19 1st meeting	X
Angela Charron	Board Member	West Haven	-
Michael (Trevor) Ezzo	Board Member	West Haven	X
Tara Buxton	Board Member	Fair Haven	-
Mike Bache	Board Member	Fair Haven (Appointed 4/8/19)	X
Rick Wilson	Board Member	Fair Haven	X
Peter Stone	Board Member	Orwell	-
Glen Cousineau	Board Vice Chair	Orwell -- Vice Chair	X
Dave Carpenter	Board Member	Orwell	-
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

Audience Attending: Abby Wald, Margaret Hayward, Cathi Cassidy, Jessica Nadeau, Deb Robinson, Kim Ransom, Makayla Woodbury, Andrew Kenzer, Assistant Superintendent of Mill River, Brian Hill and Mill River Principal, Tyler Weidemen.

Pledge of Allegiance: Julie Finnegan, Board Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Call to Order - 6:30 p.m.: Board Chair Finnegan called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: Toni Lobdell made a motion to approve the agenda with changes as noted below: This was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Mill River Middle School Presentation is moved up,

then we will have student presentation and then the presentation on Successful Transitions Supported Decision Making will be held then back to public comments.

Approval of SVUUSD Minutes - November 25, 2019: Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the minutes of November 25, 2019; this was seconded by Josh Hardt; there was one abstention by Toni Lobdell.

Mill River Middle School Presentation: The Assistant Superintendent of Mill River, Brian Hill, and the Mill River Union School Principal, Tyler Weidemen, were in attendance to answer questions about how the Middle School and High School Students are successfully housed on the same school campus. They were asked how do they keep students apart and is it successful. Mr. Weidemen said that they run a completely different schedule from Middle School and High School Students. There is an occasional opportunity for students to be grouped together in certain elective courses, but that is more the exception. The elective courses are set up closer to the Middle School section of the building. Middle School section was designed in a U shaped format and is primarily self-contained with the exception of the gymnasiums (two, one identified for each grade level MS/HS). Middle School gym is a multipurpose room. They were asked about busing. All students arrive on the same bus and then upon entering the building go to their respective areas. They have some purposeful interactive times often set up by student government and Mr. Weidemen said these times a very successful. They have HS students that come down to MS to tutor some younger students. They also host special activities for the younger MS students. The counselors for both levels are located in a similar area close to the Middle School wing as are the nursing services. High school students access the loft in the MS for the weight room however MS students are not involved in this program. Mr. Weidemen was asked how they promote autonomy of MS? He credits a strong teacher advisory program where Middle School students are linked with the same teacher to build a strong bond. The clock schedule is really helpful to this as well. There is a good deal of flexibility provided by the schedules not being in lock step with each other. The Mill River Admin also said that vertical alignment and common planning time contribute to the successful model. The Administrative team was asked about what is the greatest benefit or strength of such a model? One of them is the ability of the teachers to meet regularly and to work on the Social Emotional needs, Advisory every day for Middle School, building in a Flex or Call back block of intervention time has really helped. Personalized Learning Plans have helped. Conversely they were asked to share the biggest challenge. Trying to keep a tight Middle School core team is a challenge because at the same time there is a need to develop additional science and social studies teams. Teachers are often shared between the two levels but kids are not. They were asked if there were staffing efficiencies realized by this model? To some degree yes as MS students are allowed to take HS classes if they are ready for the challenge. Another challenge is how do we continue to add remedial lab times and more band and chorus times. Within the 7th grade team of students there are only 4 that do not participate in band and chorus. In regards to busing all students together, Admin has developed a program where older responsible Seniors are bus chaperones and act as good role models on buses and are recognized for doing so.

FHUHS - Student Presentation: Kim Ransom introduced two students from Fair haven Union High School to do a presentation on the Work Based Learning program at FHUHS. The students were Andrew Kenzer from Orwell and Makayla Woodbury of Castleton. Andrew began the presentation by discussing the job he was hired for at R. L. Valley. He described the many jobs he has held within the organization. He enjoys this and has learned a great deal on the job training, his jobs range from Cook, to running the register, helping to clean up spills, working the deli. Ms. Ransom shared how thrilled the employer is with Andrew's work ethic. Makayla Woodbury holds a volunteer position at Fair Haven concerned. She has held various jobs from working in the Thrift store to working on the food shelf side and now she is excited to be assisting with a Resource project. She really enjoys this placement and it has helped her to decide on a career in nursing. She emphasized that it is a great opportunity to learn many skills and it doesn't always have to be about earning money. This program requires students to complete a self-evaluation, employers provide an evaluation as does Ms. Ransom, Advisor/Teacher.

Successful Transition Supported Decision Making Project: Kris Benway introduced Deb Robinson, former Director of Sped. Jessica Nadeau, of the Community Access Program Cathi Cassidy, of Vocational Rehabilitation and Margaret Hayward, Director of Special Ed for FHUHS. Kris said we are looking for opportunities for success for all students beyond high school, even our students with

disabilities. There was a core group of agencies and educators out of Rutland County that initiated this Supported Decision Making Project. FHUHS became their first pilot school last year and had 5 students and their families successfully engaged in this model. This project was developed to help students and their families realize their dreams, hopes and aspirations. At age 16 it is the law that students with disabilities must work on successful transitions into community and work or further school experiences. This project is one way to meet that need. The work done in this pilot year has been recognized around the state and country and there soon will be an article published in a National journal about the project successes. They are looking to expand this model throughout the state to other area schools. While we are hoping to expand this to more qualifying students here at Fair Haven. The Goal being we want to improve Educational Outcomes for All Students. Information and materials were shared with the Board.

Public Comments: None

Correspondence: None

Committee Reports:

- Finance Committee met prior to this meeting tonight and discussed the following and approved the warrants.
- Warrants: Trevor Ezzo made a motion to approve total Payments in the amount of \$2,073,312.24, this was seconded by Mike Bache; motion carried by the full Board. Trevor Ezzo made a motion to approve the Food Service warrant in the amount of \$57,093.49, this was seconded by Mike Bache; motion carried by the full Board. Trevor Ezzo made a motion to approve Grants in the amount of \$50,219.81, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau; motion carried by the full Board.
- Finance Management Questionnaire -Action: Trevor Ezzo made a motion to accept the Financial Management Questionnaire, this was seconded by Toni Lobdell.
- Budget: The first draft of the budget was presented and is considered to be a rough draft. Currently it shows about a \$90,000.00 reduction over last year. It does not however include the interest we would have to pay on the first year of a bond should the bond vote pass. That feel would be around \$300,000.00. The Bond application must be submitted by May 15, 2020. The current budget does include an increase of 13% increase in health costs, it includes an increase in transportation costs, it includes a 7.5 % increase in tuition costs for those attending Stafford Tech; it includes the fact that we have a declining tuition student enrollment over last year.
- BVS Middle School: Brooke and some of the Board members met with families of Middle School Eligible status in Benson prior to Thanksgiving to answer questions about why we're exploring a different model for Benson MS students this upcoming. There were mixed points of view. A survey was sent out and that too brought mixed results. The Board feels at this time that they will not move forward with a school choice for the middle school until we see if the Innovation Project passes a bond vote. They did have to look at eliminating one MS teacher due to the low numbers of enrolled students at the MS level. The survey was sent out to Pre-K to grade 8 parents and there was a total of 26 responses.

Innovation Project: Board members shared their respective visits to different community organizations to explain the Innovation Project and to entertain questions from community members. Julie Finnegan visited the Castleton Select Board Meeting and said there was some good discussion, there was some good discussion and clarification of information. Amy Munger & Rebeckah St. Peter met with the BVS Select Board, and noted that 3 out of the 5 Board members were present along with 5 additional audience members. The general sense from this meeting is that community members are just wanting more concrete numbers, and without that are not showing a lot of support for the project. Glen Cousineau echoed a similar message from Orwell. Orwell is looking for hard numbers about the dollar figures for the Orwell Project. Glen also tried to explain to Orwell taxpayers that they will be helping to pay the bill for the South Burlington bond, this is a concept he feels need more explanation to all voters. Brooke said they are working on a tri-fold brochure that may provide the detail voters are seeking. It will explain more about the funding mechanisms. Trevor Ezzo shared that there was a general consensus that the Turf Field would be a big barrier to this project moving forward as some see it as an unnecessary expense.

Central Office Report: **Superintendent's Report**

We are in the midst of developing the FY21 Budget and with that comes another projected decrease in enrollment of approximately 30 students. This will have a negative impact on our budget. We continue to try and take advantage of staff attrition when the opportunities present themselves and at the same time we look for increases in efficiencies across the system. However, in our current configuration we inevitably get to a point where there are no longer efficiencies to be gained and costs that continue to increase.

The Employer Commissioners who are responsible for negotiating school employee health benefits under Act 11 submitted their Last Best Offers to the arbitrator. The arbitrator's decision is expected by December 15, 2019. After the 15th the VSBA will schedule 9 workshops around the state in January for school board members to learn more about the arbitrator's decision and the effects on the local bargaining process.

Every year, the College of Education and Social Services (CESS) at the University of Vermont, together with Vermont supervisory unions and school districts, the Vermont Agency of Education, and the Vermont NEA, join to honor the accomplishments of our state's outstanding educators. This year's ceremony is on December 5th at the University of Vermont. Our school district's recipients are Cathy Darley of the Orwell Village School and Joel Beste of Fair Haven Union High School. We are very appreciative of their dedication to our students.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

As Kris Benway shared through previous communications, Vermont's Act 173 of 2018 is education policy "proposing to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to all students who require additional support in Vermont's schools."¹

The Vermont Agency of Education emphasizes, "Due to the significant implications of this policy change, we believe Act 173 should be **the policy focus** for Vermont school districts and the AOE in the coming years."² Act 173 requires Slate Valley schools focus on the foundational systems that ensure equity in student learning as well as the resources that fund them.

Act 173 has a significant impact on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment through the enhancement or development of systems to support the success of **ALL students K-12**. It builds upon the proficiency and personalization expectations of Act 77 by structuring learning experiences to meet a wide range of student needs. This law focuses on "improving the quality of universal instructional practices" to "ensure core instruction meets the needs of most students."³

Slate Valley will employ high-quality (evidence-based) universal instruction ([SVUUSD Teacher Guide, K-5 Instructional Core](#)) measured through proficiencies, indicators, and benchmark assessments (MAPs/NWEA) to address academic and social and emotional development (PBIS as an evidence-based approach providing a continuum of support addresses social-emotional needs as an instructional approach to behavior and prevention) for **ALL students K-12**.

Evidence-based approaches to improve academic and behavioral skills through effective universal core instruction, and additional tiered support, must be monitored through the review of data (classroom and benchmark assessments) to address learner-centered questions. The examination of learner centered questions occurs through an analysis of a wide range of instructional data to include: Lesson Plans, Observations, Interviews, Surveys, Curriculum Documents, Assessment Descriptions, and Classroom Practices.

Classroom and benchmark assessment data provides evidence for a review of the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services for **ALL** students, and the quality of universal instructional practices in Slate Valley schools.

Director of Operations

The winter weather has had maintenance staff busy keeping parking lots and walkways clear for students and staff across the district. During the last school break work continued on repairing and upgrading the heating system in Orwell. Recent weeks have also seen a large amount of work focused on prioritizing projects to continue to address facility needs across our district schools as part of the annual budgeting process. Working collaboratively with the district's Facilities Managers and Building &

¹ Memo: Act 173 of 2018, August 2, 2018

² Act 173 Guidance Memo, August 26, 2019

³ Act 173 Guidance Memo, August 26, 2019

Grounds committee a list has been generated that we believe represents a well thought out proposal to continue to meet our district's needs for the upcoming year. There also continues to be a large amount of work focused on the Innovation Committee project. Finally, work is underway to integrate the radio systems at both the Benson Village School and Fair Haven Grade School with the phone system and public address system respectively to help bolster communication capabilities in both buildings as part of our district's focus on school safety.

Director of Special Services

The special education department has been busy preparing for the December 1st Child Count. The annual Child Count data collection reflects the status of children with disabilities eligible for services under the IDEA on December 1 of each year. The data are collected at the supervisory union level, according to state and federal statute and regulations. The collection includes demographic information, as well as information regarding placement (educational environment), educational location (facility) and compliance indicators (Individual Education Plans (IEP's) and evaluations completed on time). Counts and percentages are reported by disability, educational environment, gender, grade group and race/ethnicity.

Throughout the schools of Slate Valley, we are currently serving 227 identified students in special education; 35 students in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and 192 students in kindergarten through grade 12. This number reflects 16% of our K-12 population. We work diligently to create educational opportunities within our schools that will meet the unique needs of all types of learners so that we may maintain students in our local community and schools.

Director of Finance

Since we have recently spent some time talking about projected education tax rates, I thought I would give you some background information regarding education funding.

Education funding in the State of Vermont is complicated. Some Vermonters pay based on the value of their property, and others pay based on their income. The homestead property tax rate is affected by local school board spending, while the non-homestead rate is set at the state level and is not locally adjusted for school district spending. The Vermont system divides taxpayers into four groups: taxpayers whose property taxes are capped by law, taxpayers who pay based on their income, taxpayers who pay based on a combination of income and property value, and taxpayers who pay based solely on the value of their property. For the 2018 tax year of the 2,722 homesites that are part of SVUUSD, 1,879 or 69% paid in some part based on their income and received an average adjustment of \$1,142 to their education property tax payment. Of those taxpayers 596, or 22%, paid solely based on their income.

Until Act 60 passed in 1977, education tax rates used to be calculated the same way as municipal tax rates. Municipal tax rates are calculated by dividing the amount of money a town needs for its services and by the total value of the grand list for that town. The education tax rate does not rely on the grand list for an individual town. It uses the statewide grand list and the total statewide education spending to determine the rate. Under this statewide system of funding education, approved school district budgets are fully funded, and towns that spend the same amount per pupil will have the same tax rate (before the common level of appraisal (CLA) is applied) no matter what the grand list value is for each individual town. This means that if SVUUSD and Burlington SD have the same education spending per equalized pupil, an SVUUSD taxpayer and a Burlington taxpayer would have the same homestead tax rate, again before the CLA was applied.

Since Vermont shifted education funding to the state level, and created a statewide education property tax rate, it became necessary as part of the formula to adjust the grand list for each town to reflect fair market value. The CLA is the correction factor that equalizes what is paid in education property tax across towns. The CLA is used to adjust the homestead and non-homestead education tax rates. The CLA does not change a taxpayer's property value, but it equalizes what is paid in education property taxes across the state.

Other Business:

Rebeckah St. Peter wanted to join the Finance Committee. Julie Finnegan shared that she would need to be appointed to such a position. Toni Lobdell made the motion to appoint Rebeckah St. Peter to the Finance Committee, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau; motion carried by the full Board.

A Teacher Contract was presented by Trevor Ezzo. Trevor Ezzo made a motion to approve a teacher contract for Sierra Ostrow-Remy as the Health/PE Teacher at FHGS for the amount of \$24,769.00

(prorated from \$43,520) for the remainder of this school year; this was seconded by Toni Lobdell; motion carried by the full Board.

Brooke mentioned that in March when we look to reorganize the Board there are many open spots. Chelsie Brill should have notified 11 members that their spot is coming up for renewal. Brooke encouraged all Board members to turn in their paperwork.

Executive Session - If Needed: Personnel

Toni Lobdell made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:15 for the purpose of discussing a personnel issue with the Board and Superintendent; this was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Trevor Ezzo made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. with no action taken, this was seconded by Glen Coussineau.

Agenda Building:

- Budgets
- Warrants
- Finance
- Negotiations

Adjournment: Glen Cousineau made a motion to adjourn at 8:36 p.m., this was seconded by Rick Wilson.

SV Building & Grounds Committee - Dec. 16, 2020 _FHGS - 5:30 p.m.
SVUUSD Board Meeting - January 6, 2020 FHUHS - 6:30 p.m.
SV Finance Committee - January 6, 2020- FHUHS - 6:30 p.m.