

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Regular Meeting

April 20, 2020

Virtual Meeting - 6:30 p.m.

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Approved Minutes

Name	Role/Term	Town Representing	In Attendance
Pati Beaumont	Board Member	Benson	X
Rebeckah St. Peter	Board Member	Benson	X
Vacant	Board Member	Benson	-
Toni Lobdell	Board Member	Castleton	X
Tim Smith	Board Chair	Castleton	X
Julie Finnegan	Board Member	Castleton	X
Vacant	Board Member	Hubbardton	-
Joshua Hardt	Board Member	Hubbardton	X
Vacant	Board Member	Hubbardton	-
Tanya Tolchin	Board Member	West Haven	X
Angela Charron	Board Member	West Haven	X
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	Vice Chair	Orwell	X
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, Kim Prehoda, Patrick Walters, Deb Infurna, Jason Rasco, Margaret Hayward, Kate Leathe, Jennifer Paquette, Bonnie Lenihan, Sheri Nichols, John Burke, Lynn Stack

Pledge of Allegiance: (Not done virtually)

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

Approval of Agenda: Tara Buxton made a motion to approve the agenda with the following additions: Policy A35 - Payroll During COVID-19 School Closure - to approve for warning; Resignation-2nd received today; questions submitted by Julie Finnegan; Glen Cousineau seconded the motion; motion carried.

Approval of SVUUSD Minutes - April 6, 2020: Peter Stone made a motion to approve the minutes of April 6, 2020 with the following corrections; Delete Julie and Glen as former Board and Vice Chair, the new Board Chair was added as was the Vice Chair, but the old were apparently not deleted. This was seconded by Toni Lobdell, with noted correction made; Motion carried by the full Board.

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: None

Committee Reports:

- **Building & Grounds:** Peter Stone, Committee Chair gave an overview of the Building and Grounds Committee meeting. Solar Power update has been completed and we are receiving credits. A 2 year oil bid is being explored. The two oil tank replacement projects are being completed. The BVS Waste Water joint group with the Hemp Farm is looking to move forward. The Building and Grounds Committee is recommending to the full Board that we move forward with this. Peter also mentioned the main projects that Chris Cole needs to take on, as they won't last another year. The biggest project has to do with the steam and heating system at the high school.

403b Plan Cares Act Amendments - Action: Cheryl Scarzello sent out information to the Board in their packets. This is an attempt to allow employees more flexibility to the plans than they originally had. These are pretty broad. If employees make a withdrawal they would not have to pay a penalty. They would also be allowed to take a loan if they are adversely impacted by Covid 19. The action the Board needs to take is to allow Cheryl to add these to our current plan. TD Ameritrade would notify our plan members. Peter Stone made a motion to adopt changes as outlined. Glen Cousineau seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Benson Joint Maintenance Agreement: Marble Valley Farms purchased a property adjacent to BVS. We have a forced main waste water system that goes from BVS to the town sewer plant. They are proposing to use our waste water plant. Our Engineer reviewed their company's engineer plan and we had a maintenance agreement drawn up by our Attorney. This is only the first step for the Marble Valley Farm, getting agreement from us allows them to get started on their applications to all State agencies. They will be employing some new employees. It does not affect the capacity of the school and our current waste water treatment. Peter Stone made a motion to move forward with the agreement with Marble Valley Farm, this was seconded by John Wurzbacher. Discussion ensued. Julie Finnegan warned we should be prepared for the smell. Mike Bache asked about the estimate of the usage. They have to obtain permission from the school district to exceed this. The motion was carried by the full Board.

Cheryl also discussed dealing with paying folks when school is not in session due to Covid #19. Based on the Governor's directive we are paying based on their contracted hours. We have been receiving guidance on how employees are to be paid, we now need a policy to state how employees would be paid. Proposed policy was sent out by Chelsie Brill to the Board members today. School districts have been asking the AOE for guidance since the beginning of the closure. The guidance has been slow in coming. This policy will keep us compliant with our federal funding sources to the best of our ability. The policy is called A-35 or Payroll During COVID 19 School Closure. We will continue to pay staff on their contracted hours. We are also collecting time sheets from employees for actual hours worked. The Covid costs will be calculated. The district will potentially be able to recoup some of these monies in the future. Toni Lobdell made a motion to warn Policy A35, Peter Stone seconded the motion; Motion Carried.

Last Day of School Memo: Brooke sent out a new schedule, Brooke outlined the days that were being considered March 17, was a snow day, Covid closures started on March 18, 2020. The last student day would be June 12, 2020 with the remaining days being teacher in-service days. The last teacher day will be either the 23rd or 24th depending on the school. Brooke is looking for a motion to approve her recommendations. Peter Stone made a motion to accept Brooke's recommendation, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Motion carried, June 12, 2020 will be the last student day.

Non-Union Vacation Days: Many of our staff had vacation days planned and due to remote learning and planning that had to occur we were unable to use all their vacation days. Peter Stone made a motion to carry over 5 vacation days to be used before the end of August 2020, this was seconded by Glen Cousineau. Motion carried.

New Hire (Letter of Intent): Kris Benway introduced Jami Sherwood as being assigned as a Special Educator to FHGS in the fall of 2020, this is a letter of intent in the amount of \$61,553.00; Peter Stone made a motion to accept the Letter of intent. Toni Lobdell seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. Kris shared that we needed to move forward this is a critical position, one of three special education openings. One abstention of the vote by Pati Beaumont as Ms. Sherwood is a current employer. Kris Benway spoke with Pati Beaumont prior to the recommendation for hire, and Pati thought this would be a good fit for Ms. Sherwood.

Resignations: Lea Pettis, Special Educator, resigns effective immediately; Marjorie Snyder was a second special educator resigning effective June 30, 2020 to pursue a new job up North. Peter Stone made a motion to accept the two resignations; this was seconded by Toni Lobdell. Motion carried by the full Board.

Principal's Report:

With the Executive Order from Governor Scott closing all Vermont Schools through the end of the 2019-2020 school year, Slate Valley has transitioned to remote learning for all of our students Pk-12. While we all realize this remote learning cannot fully replace the high quality of our classroom instruction, we have been preparing to provide all of our students with creative and unique opportunities to continue their education while schools are closed.

Pandemics are unlike any other challenge we face as leaders. We are truly in a place we have never been before. Nothing in our Leadership Team's past is quite like the current COVID-19 pandemic and they have risen to the occasion. Each department has delivered with expert guidance within their domains.

The Slate Valley Principals would like to thank the Leadership Team of Superintendent Brooke Farrell, Director of Special Services Kris Benway, Director of Operations Chris Cole, and Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Casey O'Meara, & Director of Finance Cheryl Scarzello. These people have not just reacted to what is happening, they are leading our district in light of what's happening.

Thank you Cheryl Scarzello for your rapid implementation of our food disbursement program, Chris Cole and Walter Ripley overseeing the vast world of remote technology, Kris Benway for your expert navigation taking care of our special education families, students, and staff, and special thank you to Casey O'Meara who has quickly delivered on a Continuity of Education plan and provided countless hours of guidance to our educators who have been forced to move their work completely online with very little notice. And finally, Brooke Farrell who has had to grapple with an online learning transition, meal distribution logistics and more, all while supporting her administration, principals, teachers, support staff, students and families. Thank you, Brooke!

As we work to maintain instruction during this pandemic we all need to understand that there is a marked difference between emergency remote teaching and well-planned online learning experiences. Moving instruction online allows for a certain amount of flexibility of teaching and learning, but this has come upon us at lightning speed. We also need to understand that the Slate Valley focus at this time is in supporting each other, our families, our students and our community to the best of our ability. It's the Slate Valley way!

Over the past few weeks, we have heard appreciation from our parents and students alike for the creative ways our teachers are engaging our students through activities like virtual morning meetings, group chats, live and videoed lessons, story "hours", and teaching in a Google Classroom. We know that our students learn best through social interaction, and Slate Valley teachers and administrators are striving to maintain that necessary social interaction despite mandated social distancing.

We are so very grateful to our teachers for their tireless work creating positive remote learning environments for our students. We are especially grateful to our parents. We know that balancing work, family, and school during this difficult time isn't easy for anyone.

Slate Valley administration is asking our teachers to consider a few key principles as they plan their remote lessons, keeping in mind that their professional judgment and their knowledge of their students should drive their decisions.

- **Focus.** Focus on core skills, not simply content coverage. This means that while we are attempting to move students along with curriculum goals, we know that nothing fully replaces what is done in the classroom. Lessons will be pared down, along with time and product expectations for students.
- **Expectations.** Assign “classwork” only, with no additional traditional “homework”. We know students take varying amounts of time to complete assignments, be it in class or at home. Teachers will adjust the quantity and type of work they are assigning as they assess student work and progress. Flexibility along with compassion for everyone’s life situation is key for us. While we do need your help to provide encouragement and an environment conducive to learning in your home, we do not expect you to teach the course or curriculum.
- **Clarity.** Provide clear directions. This is something we’re learning day by day as we receive feedback from students and parents. Parent questions can be addressed through the teacher’s school email address.
- **Flexibility.** Present lessons in a way that allows students access throughout the day. For families, this means students can watch videoed lessons or complete assignments when it is most convenient for them and their parents. Remote learning may be more effective when students participate live with their teacher, but we know it may not be possible for every student to tune in on any given day or time. Do what works best for your family.
- **Communication.** Teach and communicate with compassion and flexibility. This is perhaps most important as we know significant physical, emotional, and financial strain are new realities for our families.
- **1:1.** Use live chats or recorded lessons when appropriate. If students are unable to attend the live session, they can watch the video when it is more convenient for the family. At times, a teacher may want to also meet with small groups of students.

Never was it truer than now that it takes a village . . . we are in this together for the well-being of all of our children. We wish you good health and happiness in the weeks ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Roy * Benson Village School

Kim Prehoda * Castleton Elementary & Castleton Village School

Deb Infurna * Fair Haven Grade School

Jason Rasco * Fair Haven Union High School

Patrick Walters * Orwell Village School

Principal’s spoke about how proud they are of their staff and how much work they have accomplished and the support of the families and the community at large. We are trying to support all where they are at socially and emotionally. We continue to do this. Rick Wilson asks if there was consideration to follow the high school schedule as it was originally set forth. Jason said yes we did consider it, but due to circumstances that families found themselves in, it was clear that the traditional schedule was not going to work. We have to plan with great flexibility. Casey O’Meara addressed Rick Wilson’s concerns. Casey mentioned that not all students are independent enough to do this work on their own. The challenge for teacher’s is that not every student is able to join at the same time. Parents reached out over vacation for a suggested schedule. Tim asked how we were doing connecting with kids. How much of our school population is not on-line. Chris Cole drove around to get in touch with folks that still do not have internet access. We have less than 20-30 kids throughout the whole district that do not have internet. Some of them live too remotely to be able to get the access. We have 6-12 students that we were able to garner access for in the next two weeks. We were able to get some cricket access which works off AT & T. The Verizon wireless hotspots are not available until the end of May. Jason has 18 students at the high school that do not have access, but this is not due to accessibility, but rather in some cases due to misuse of the internet they have no services. At BVS they come down to the parking lot to get internet access. Patrick has one or two kids per grade level that are not

responding and we continue to reach out to these families. Per Kim, we have 7-8 kids at CES that are not engaging the way we would like them to. Deb Infurna has a handful of student's that are not having access. She thanks Fair Haven PD and outside agencies for their support of families.

Other Business: Overall Finances: General concerns about cash flow, where are we saving and the budget, Cares Act, and Stimulus monies. Brooke had a call with the Secretary of Education regarding the Care's Act, it is supposed to be 80% (roughly \$450,000.00) of your Title 1 allocation. Revenue is one of the biggest uncertainties, in regard to the budget, per Cheryl. She is specifically concerned about special education reimbursement and transportation reimbursement. We are continually asking AOE for additional Guidance. The AOE does not have a lot of answers at this point. There clearly are things we are not spending all of our transportation budget on, but we are using some of it to deliver meals. As of Friday, prior to break, we had served 15,000.00 meals to students within a month. We are tracking related expenditures to see if any can be offset by the Covid Reimbursement monies once they become available. Tim adds some information about the budget. Tim has testified before several committees at the State House. There are 19 school districts that have budgets that did not pass for one reason or another. Options being discussed are to allow these 19 schools to operate on the 2020 budget also to consider operating with a 4% inflator. It looks like it will be granted - an ability to begin operating based on a 2020 budget. Our defeated budget was very close to the current 2020 budget. We could as districts be granted in the future the ability to hold a vote in the fall, or late August. If we are allowed to operate under the FY 2020 budget we will be able to proceed. The FY 2022 budget is going to be very tough. Julie said why should we consider having an additional vote, why wouldn't we just have it when the general election vote was being held in Nov.?. FY 2021 budget was only \$125,000.00 more than the FY 2020 budget per Brooke. In the budget year 2022 there will need to be some very painful decisions made. The AOE is at a \$150,000,000.00 deficit. Brooke thinks there is a potential for the AOE to have clawbacks. Clawbacks means that the state can take a certain percentage amount of money back from districts even though we haven't budgeted for them to do so. This happened in 2018-2019 with the change insurance benefits. Julie asks if we can see some really tough discussions about additional consolidations within the district and beyond. We need to start these discussions sooner than later per Brooke.

Maternity Leave: Abigale Stannard applied for maternity leave. Tim Smith read a letter from Abigale Stannard from June 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020. Kris Benway supports the request for leave time. We would be looking at a long term sub for the start of the school year. Peter Stone made a motion to accept the request; John Wurzbacher seconded the motion. Motion carried. 1 Abstention (Pati Beaumont).

Executive Session - if Needed: No longer needed.

Agenda Building:

- Budget
- New Hire of positions which we must replace
- Replacing only critically necessary positions.

Adjournment: Glen Cousineau made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m., this was seconded by Peter Stone. Motion carried by the full board.

SVUUSD Board Meeting - May 4, 2020 - Virtual Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Finance Committee Meeting - May 4, 2020 - Virtual Meeting - 5:30 p.m.