

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Regular Meeting
May 4, 2020
Virtual Meeting
6:30 p.m.

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: Sheri Nichols, Amy Roy, Kim Lucci,

Call to Order: Tim Smith called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the agenda with the following changes, delete #11 Grant Assurances, and #14 No need for Executive Session, this was seconded by Angela Charron, motion carried by the full Board.

Approval of SVUUSD Minutes - April 20, 2020: Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the minutes of April 20, 2020 with no changes or corrections; this was seconded by Angela Charron; motion carried by the full Board.

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: No public comment.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee; Glen Cousineau gave an overview of the Finance Committee meeting directly before the Board Meeting. He spoke of the Legislative movements between the House and the Senate and the Budget Options of the 19 School Districts without an approved budget. We will also have a recommendation for the RFP Food Service Contract;

- **Warrants:** Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the total payments in the amount of \$1,507,918.07; this was seconded by Julie Finnegan; motion carried by the full Board. Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the Grants in the amount of \$15,462.09, this was seconded by Toni Lobdell; motion carried by the full Board.

Policy Committee

- **Policy A35 - Payroll During School Closure:** Toni Lobdell made a motion to approve the A35 policy; this was seconded by Glen Cousineau; motion carried by full Board.

Retirement: Glen Cousineau made a motion to accept the letter of retirement of Curtis Hier effective at the end of 2021 with regret; this was seconded by Julie Finnegan; motion.

Resignations: Glen Cousineau read the names of four staff members that have sent in a letter to resign their positions effective June 30, 2020 and made a motion to accept these letters of resignation with regret and good wishes for these folks moving forward. The four members leaving SVUUSD are Beth Ann Hughes, Christie Mainart, Lori Kramer and Nicole Gagnon; this motion was seconded by Julie Finnegan; discussion ensued. Tim Smith asked if there was a general reason why staff are leaving. Brooke mentioned that two of the staff were taking positions in Rutland City and the salary was greater than \$15,000 more than they are making here. The motion was carried by the full Board.

New Hires: Brooke mentioned that we had two new hires to discuss tonight. She asked for a motion to hire a new School Psychologist, Nicole Montana at a salary of \$65,000 for 193 days, which is a Non-Union position. Glen Cousineau made a motion to approve the contract for Nicole Montana as presented; this was seconded by Peter Stone. Glen Cousineau also made a motion to approve the letter of intent for a new Health Teacher, Erik Anderson, at a salary of \$50,164.00 to serve the schools of CES and FHUHS; this was seconded by Peter Stone; motion carried by the full Board.

Legislative Update: Tim Smith, Board Chair, reviewed the fact that the VSBA provides very good updates readily available to all Board members. He shared that there are two proposed bills to address the 19 School Districts without adopted school budgets, one by the House which is more generous with three options for the Budget; adopt the 2020 budget; 87% of the FY 20 budget; or adopt the 2020 budget with a 4% inflation; The Senate is proposing the 2020 Spending level. What is yet to be decided is whether these would just be adopted or if they would require districts to go forward with another vote. Having a vote is causing worries given the current health concerns of bringing the public together for a vote, or worries that folks would not come out due to the Covid Health concerns and the Economics struggles many are experiencing. Tim said he is hoping the Legislature will come forward with clear guidelines soon as if we have to prepare a budget vote we have to warn it etc. He expressed concerns that if we have a default budget assigned it interrupts the Democratic Process but given the current Health Concerns, he understands this. Glen Cousineau also mentioned the concerns for Districts that are trying to determine the yield given these unknowns. It is virtually impossible for the Directors of Finance to predict the yields and the resulting impact on the tax base.

Food Service Contract - Action: The Finance Committee is bringing forth the recommendation of the Food Service Committee of 8 People. There were two RFB bids, one from Fresh Picks Cafe Services and one from Abbey Group. The Committee's recommendation is to go with Abbey Group. They scored the most points in the RFP Process. Julie Finnegan made a motion to accept the committee's recommendation to offer the RFP to Abbey Group; this was seconded by Angela Charron. Discussion ensued. Cheryl Scarzello, Director of Finance, shared that even though they are a more expensive option, the committee scored them higher on the overall 17 elements under consideration. Cheryl discussed many elements of the process; Cheryl acknowledged that she had under budgeted the food service for next year based on her low estimate of the number of increases to the food service meals served through the free breakfast and lunch and its impact. Also a significant change was brought about by the State, moving to cost per meal reimbursement rates. Discussion was brought about as to whether or not we should pull back on the free breakfast and lunch for all. This is an equity issue and barriers have been removed by having this available to all students. Motion was carried by the full Board.

Grant Assurances: Per Brooke take this off the agenda for tonight.

Central Office Board Report May 2020

Superintendent's Report:

The week of May 4th is National Teacher Appreciation week. We thank all of our staff for their incredible efforts especially over the last couple of months! We know that it has been a huge adjustment for students, parents and staff and it takes all of us working together now more than ever to meet the needs of students remotely. As we begin to look towards August and hopefully the reopening of school it will be very different. We will be using these next few months to think carefully about what 2020-2021 will look like in Slate Valley. It will not be anything close to business as usual from a social, educational and financial perspective. We are all working hard to identify the questions that will need to be addressed and resources that we will need to have in place. It will take all of us partnering together to reimagine what education will look like moving forward. I have linked an NPR article below in case you haven't seen it. It is worth a read. <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/24/842528906/what-it-might-look-like-to-safely-reopen-schools>

As of April 27th we have the following positions open or hired/transitioning for the 2020-2021 school year.

.4 English Language Learner- Teacher

1 Psychologist

4 Special Educators

1 ECSE/Special Educator

1 Science/Math- We are trying to hold on this position to see if we can do without.

2 School-wide Teachers- (granted funded/locally funded)

1 Senior Finance Specialist

1 Health Teacher

.6 Health/PE Teacher

.80 SLP

2 Long Term Substitute Special Educators

1 Student Support Position- We are trying to hold on this position to see if we can do without.

1 Administrative Assistant to Guidance

1 Anticipated Elementary Teacher

Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment:

On March 30th I asked Slate Valley educators to consider your approach to work, take time to consider how you will "teach" and what is reasonable to expect from students in our new mode of remote/distance teaching and learning.

The closure of schools requires students, parents/guardians, and educators to partner in the facilitation of meaningful curricula, instruction and assessments remotely. We know the current state of life raises many questions as we adjust to our new reality.

In a remote/distance learning setting there has never been a greater need for authentic, individualized, experiential learning (Slate Valley Vision Statement) than now.

Learner independence is increased when students are able to select a topic of study, have their learning preferences and readiness catered to, with the opportunity to pick a mode of display for their learning. This approach necessitates a teacher's guidance.

I have experienced, as a parent and practitioner, the power of student interest relieving stress for families during this time of remote/distance learning. Independence in a sustainable remote/distance, home, learning environment requires consideration of a learner, the ability to capture naturally occurring 2 moments as experiences for reflection, merging prior knowledge with new learning before experimenting with new ideas.

In Slate Valley students design Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) where educators can access student reflections on Who I am, and Who am I? to imagine and create independent student learning. When considering remote/distance learning in Slate Valley: learning styles, learning preferences, personal goals, core values, interests and abilities, and career exploration will need to be maximized, K-12, to reimagine teaching and learning.

In the same communication on March 30, 2020, I wrote, with the utmost respect and gratitude consider the following in designing independent learning experiences for where we will go:

- Be flexible with your creation of learning, and students' understanding of your facilitation. What educators are accustomed to when school is in session is not possible in our new environment. Thinking about teaching and learning requires a great deal of empathy.
- Students do not have the benefit of the support they had while school was in session. As well, students might be caring for siblings, have additional chores, have to care for elderly relatives or neighbors, and do not have the "time" they are accustomed to for school work. Remember, no one asked for remote/distance learning and a stay at home order.
- How can naturally occurring experiences (caring for siblings, additional chores, caring for elderly relatives or neighbors) provide moments for learning? How can student reflection, a blending of prior knowledge with new learning occur before planning for active experimentation?
- Determine what is most essential at your grade level, or in your content area, to be worked on during this time of remote/distance learning.

The silver lining of this global pandemic is learning flexibly, with empathy, individualized and personalized, during naturally occurring moments in our students' lives. We now have the opportunity to partner with students and families in a manner never experienced.

Director of Operations:

As the guidance from the state has evolved in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic we have continued to adjust how staff are progressing on a variety of projects in the Operations Department. Maintenance staff continue to regularly clean and disinfect our buildings in order to support the biweekly meal distributions as well to provide access for the limited number of staff who require access to support the remote learning process for all students.

In regards to technology, we have made significant progress in working with OTT and Consolidated Communications to provide internet access to families needing support for their students to be able to fully participate in remote learning. We have also completed the process of providing devices to all students in grades K through 12 and continue to support the repair and replacement of devices as needed following the processes each school has in place to distribute needed student materials.

Director of Special Services:

As Casey notes above, despite the monumental challenges brought about by this global pandemic, there are silver linings that have been identified in our path to remote learning. We have been given the opportunity to serve students and support families in their home environments and be witness to the strengths that families have as well as the struggles that they are experiencing during these unprecedented times from preschool through high school.

At the preschool level, we have been able to offer flexibility with our programming to be able to meet families where they are at...and allow them opportunities to engage in learning and collaboration in real time, using recorded sessions, working 1:1, in groups, and we have also fostered opportunities to allow students some remote engagement with their peers. (This week they have a pajama dance party planned). I have included a link to the Google slides of a presentation that I was asked to share on the statewide UPK conference call on 4/17/2020. These slides include a link to the Slate Valley's COL plan for UPK that is a subsection of the larger document previously shared for K-12, as well as a link to our UPK Newsletter for April, and a link to one of our UPK teacher websites. All of our UPK and ECSE teachers have done a phenomenal job of exploring the possibilities for engagement with our families and this includes just one more example of this good work. UPK AOE Presentation 4-17-2020

PRESCHOOL SCREENINGS/CHILD FIND: Please note that we are distributing and collecting our preschool screening information remotely via the completion of surveys from parents/families because of the inability to conduct in-person, developmental screenings this year. We have reached out to all families that we are aware of that have children residing in our district with children ages 2.5 - 5 years of age and are hopeful that we are reaching all of them. If you are aware of a child who has not previously been screened by our staff, that falls within this age-range, please let me know. We anticipate being able to confirm placements with families by May 15th.

Director of Finance:

Last week Barbara Phillips informed me that she would be resigning her position as Senior Finance Specialist. Barb has been with the district for 14 years and has been a key member of the Business Office Team. She was instrumental in our successful implementation of eFinance Plus and many other district wide systems. We will miss her and wish her all the best in her new position! We have listed her position on SchoolSpring and have advertised her position in a number of local papers.

Late Friday morning the Vermont Superintendents Association sent out information to all Superintendents with regard to a bill that was being considered by the House Education Committee related to providing options for establishing fiscal year 2021 budgets for school districts that do not have a voter approved budget. A link to the bill can be found here. Brooke and I quickly drafted a letter in support of the bill which can be found here. The committee took several hours of testimony from a number of stakeholders including Superintendents from other districts. In checking in with the VSA on the status of the bill, it does not appear to be encouraging. As you can imagine there is a great deal of concern from Legislators with regard to taking away voter rights, despite the uncertainty of districts being able to conduct a budget vote anytime in the near future.

As of Friday, April 24th, there have been 22,265 meals distributed to families in our school district since we began meal distribution on March 19th. On Tuesday April 21st, we reached a high of 492 pickups. The number dropped off again on Friday, which may be due to the 112,000 meals that were distributed by the Vermont Army National Guard at the Rutland Airport. It is clear that there is a growing concern about obtaining food by people in our community. Nicole Rice, the Fair Haven Grade School Home to School Liason, has spearheaded a district wide food drive through May 8th. She has established sites throughout the district to collect ingredients to build dinner meal baskets for families in our district. The flyer can be found here. We are thankful for Nicole's initiative and the assistance it will provide to our families during this stressful time.

Other Business: Brooke mentioned that typically HS Diplomas have Brooke's signature and 3 Board Member signatures; however given the Covid #19 Pandemic and the challenges with multiple signatures and a 72 hour wait period in between we will go with two signatures this year, Superintendent and the Board Chair. Rebeckah St. Peter mentioned that she was making face masks for free and would mail them to anyone in need. Please send her an email with your address if you need one.

Brooke also shared that we will need to have some serious discussions about how we move forward in the fall and how schools will not be back to normal. We will be working together on guidelines. She mentioned remote learning continuing in some capacity, precautions for students and staff, staggered times, eating meals in classrooms as opposed to large gatherings in cafeterias. Checking temperatures of staff entering buildings now by our Health Officer appointee, Lead Nurse at this point. She said more guidance will be coming by 5/8/2020 about what the end of year activities might look like, summer considerations and the openings of school in the fall. Tim Smith, Board Chair, shared his comments that he does not accept that school in the fall can't return to normal. It is too early to tell. He encouraged his fellow Board Members to speak out with their own feelings regarding the fall. John Wurzbacher asked when will school playgrounds open to the public as in many communities this is the only playground available to students. Brooke will provide more daily updates to Board Members as they come from the Governor, AOE and CDC to keep them informed. She indicated that the Board alone can not make these determinations that we also take our guidance from the experts at the State level. Julie Finnegan echoed this same sentiment. Julie said she follows the daily memos coming out from the State level experts as an employee of the college. She said business as usual is not always at our discretion.

Executive Session - If Needed: Not Needed

Agenda Building: Tim Suggested the following topics for the agenda:

- Guidance on End of the Year/Summer Activities
- Budget
- Graduation Plans
- Guidance/Recommendations for Parents from Brooke and the State regarding End of the Year/Summer Expectations for families; are they able to access playgrounds, etc.
- Topic items in advance to Brooke for discussions on matters of concern to Board Members in advance so Board Members can give thought to the topics prior to the meeting; Brooke will come up with a few related items and put them out in the agenda so that interested community members could attend virtually.

Adjournment: Peter Stone made a motion to adjourn at 7:54 p.m.; this was seconded by John Wurzbacher; motion carried by the full Board.

SVUUSD Board Meeting - May 18, 2020 - Virtual Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Building & Grounds/Policy Committee Meetings - May 18, 2020 - Virtual Meeting - 5:30 p.m.