

**SLATE VALLEY INFORMATIONAL MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2020
6:30 PM
meet.google.com/xyb-itry-dgu
Or call (US) + 1 234-307-0704 PIN# 698 588 330#**

Unapproved Minutes

Name	Role/Term	Town Representing	In Attendance
Pati Beaumont	Board Member	Benson	-
Rebeckah St. Peter	Board Member	Benson	X
Becky Spears	Board Member	Benson	X
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	-
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	Board Vice Chair	Orwell	-
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: Administrator's: Kim Prehoda, Bonnie Lenihan, Patrick Walters, Amy Roy, Deb Infurna, Phil Hall, Rebecca Armitage; Others Present: MaryAnn Munger, Maureen/John Burke, Michael Alexander, Deb Alexander, Karla Ramey, Melanie Coombs, Shannon Baldwin, Crystal Bennick, Tanya Hall, Paul Millette, Amy Jackson, Joey Williams, Sarah Winter, Ann Pierce, Barb Phillips, *89, *17,

Tim Smith called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. He reviewed the ground rules for tonight's Informational Budget Meeting. Glen Cousineau, Chairman of the Finance Committee will present on

the Budget being proposed for a vote on August 11, 2020. Tim shared that we will answer audience questions at the end of the meeting. He asked audience members to identify themselves and the town they were from. He emphasized that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to answer Budget questions related to the FY21 School budget and we would not be entertaining questions on the reopening plan for tonight. That will be covered again at the August 10, 2020 regular board meeting. He also encouraged those submitting absentee ballots to do so soon so that all votes would be received in time and counted.

Glen Cousineau, Chair of the Finance Committee began reviewing his Power Point Presentation. He emphasized that the budget being voted on August 11, 2020 is only for the day to day operations of the school for 2020-2021. It does not include any expenditures related to a new bond, he repeated this several times. He covered current school enrollment compared to the last 5 years, he reviewed the district vision and mission, the budget objectives some of which include budgeting for the increased Social Emotional Learning needs of our students, building maintenance, professional development to support staff in the further developing Personalized Learning Plans as this is a state mandate, promoting a budget that brings equity for all students. Additional considerations were reviewed by Glen and can be found on the web site; such as the provision of free breakfast and lunch to all students.

Next Glen covered the reduction of staff within this budget. This year there was a reduction in staff of 4.7 FTE, there was a .8 combined position of .4 student support person and .4 ELL Teacher; which resulted in an overall staff reduction for the 20-21 school year of 3.9 staff members. Glen noted that over the past 3 years we have had a reduction of 15 total staff which was due in part to a declining student enrollment. Glen reviewed the article which is asking voters to approve an operating budget of \$26,402,586.00 which is \$91,052 lower than the FY20 budget. This budget results in \$16,398.68 of education spending per equalized pupil which is a 1.99% compared to FY20. The expenditure budget for this year is \$26,402,586.00. This is a total of \$220,455.00 less than the budget we put out to voters in March. There was an overall decrease of \$91,052.00 from the 2019-2020 school year. Revenue has increased. Budget for Education Spending is \$21,608,352.00 which results in \$264,586.00 less than last year's budget. Statewide the average budget increases are 4.6% for most districts. We are projecting a 1.2% decrease in Slate Valley. Our equalized pupil count is 1318.09 this year or a 3% decrease in equalized pupils over last year.

Glen reviewed a pie graph that shows where the money breaks out from this proposed budget to include: 55% of the budget is wages, 20% of budgets due to benefit increases. So .75 of every dollar goes toward salary and benefits which are negotiated and driven by the contract. Transportation and insurance costs account for about 10% of the budget and so on.

Glen covered other tax rate considerations. For example this year due to the merger voters will receive a .04 cent tax rate incentive before the Common Level of Appraisal is applied to the equalized tax rate. Last year was \$1.4408, this year we are at \$1.4506 or an increase of \$0.0026 of equalized tax rate if the FY 21 budget is approved. He shared that the majority of our taxpayers pay based on their income and not the total property values. Glen shared that a decrease in the Common Level of Appraisal means an increase in a town's tax rate.

Presentation ended and Audience was encouraged to ask questions about the budget.

Crystal of Castleton asked if the number of Expected Pupils for 2020-2021 school year was used in this presentation. Brooke Olsen Farrell, Superintendent explained it was not as we have not received on Home School Approved Application from the State of Vermont yet; when and if we do the students are unenrolled from the district, but again she reiterated that we have not had one application approved yet though we have heard that as many as 80 students from across the district may apply. Brooke shared

that the Legislature is potentially exploring legislation that would hold districts harmless due to Covid Pandemic and the unique circumstances we find ourselves in. Tim Smith, Board Chair also reminded the audience that this is based on a two year average. Brooke agreed and said the impact will be felt in next year and the following year's budget if the Legislature doesn't address this.

Mike Alexander of Castleton, asked several questions: He noted he was holding the budget handout he received in the mail and was comparing last year's budget with this year's proposed budget. He asked what accounted for the \$152,000.00 increase on the line called "2190 Other Student Services" in the Expenditure Summary on page 2. Cheryl Scarzello answered this question. Many of the increases are due to Behavior Interventionist, Home School Coordinator positions, also under this area falls Guidance, School Nurses, Speech and Occupational Therapy services. Some of this per Cheryl is due to a realignment of the budget and where things are coded currently moving forward. His next question was similar in that he noted a 100% increase in Improvement of instruction. Cheryl Scarzello again mentioned the function codes come under 2200 and includes Professional Development for Teaching Staff, by contract all staff are entitled to 6 credits per year at the UVM rate, and we never know how many staff will take advantage of this opportunity. Cheryl noted that we have a lot of new staff that are more likely taking advantage of the course offered to them through their contract. Professional Development for staff is increased as are the mentoring services for staff. Mike mentioned that on line 250 Other Central Office expenses seems to have gone from 375,000 to 675,000.00. Chris Cole spoke up and said again this is more about the realignment of budget codes and changing the structure to that which the state mandates. Chris mentioned that if you look at line 2230 there was a reduction in IT services of \$212,000.00 He also noted that on line 2600 you will see a reduction in buildings and grounds but that amount was recoded under building improvement per state requirements. It is really about realigning the budget codes and standardizing them per Chris and Cheryl.

Lastly Mike noted that though there was a decrease in direct services there seems to be an increase in Administrative costs of \$72,000.00. Cheryl said that we have no more administrators than we had last year, but that with the increases to wages and benefits and increases to health insurances and a change in health insurance (single to family) can result in a \$20,000 increase alone. Mike stated that he and his wife have voted for each budget and for the Bond. He said this is a Good Budget; however our problem in the past has been perception. Tim Smith addressed that contracts come out per state statute every year between January and February prior to the approval of budgets, this is being looked at by the Board. Right now we are bound by VT State Statute.

Crystal B of Castleton noted that other districts are seeing a 20% reduction of students choosing a remote option and wonders if this district will consider this. Brooke Olsen Farrell, Superintendent shared that we have a regular task force reopening planning meetings and we are constantly having to revise our plans based on data received. Again she mentioned that 80 students or family members had indicated they were planning on homeschooling but no approved plans have come from the State of VT as of yet.

Brooke reminded all that the full budget is on the first page of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District website as is the updated annual report. The Frequently Asked Questions are also on the website and contain a great deal of additional information. Cheryl reminded all to read the Frequently asked Questions and answers.

Tim Smith moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. He encouraged all to get out and vote and to send in any absentees ballots as soon as possible.