

**HUUSD Board Meeting
30 August 2017
Harwood Library
6:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

Approved Minutes

Attendance

HUUSD Board: Christine Sullivan, Chair; Alycia Biondo; Caitlin Hollister; Alexandra Thomsen; Maureen McCracken; Gabe Gilman, Vice-Chair; Garrett MacCurtain; Jim Casey

Administration: Brigid Nease, Superintendent; Michelle Baker, WWSU Director of Finance and Operations; Lisa Atwood, HU Principal

Public: Art Trezise; Jeremy Gulley; Madeline Hughes, Waterbury Record; Chris Keating, Valley Reporter; Sandy Maeyr, MRV-TV camera operator; Jennifer Tripp Mead, minute taker.

Call to Order: Christine Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM.

Additions/deletions to agenda:

- Thomsen requested the Board talk about the August 7th letter they received from Heidi Spear and Jill Ellis, the Fayston representatives; Item added to Board reflection.
- Pellet bids for the wood chip plant; Item added to financial report.

Public Comment: No public comment

Board Reflections from Prior Meeting:

Heidi Spear and Jill Ellis, the Fayston representatives, sent the Board a letter on August 7th. In response to the letter, Alexandra Thomsen presented the following resolution and moved for its adoption:

While my hope was that we could start the new school year with forward direction instead of focusing on the board issues of the last year, I feel the need to formally respond to the August 17th letter sent by Heidi Spear and Jill Ellis. I move to adopt a resolution that reads as follows.

This board passed a unanimous vote of confidence in the superintendent and board chair in our June 14th meeting. As a board, we believe we can effectively improve climate and build mutual trust by moving forward with respect for roles and responsibilities and board policy. We are committed to working together to provide effective governance for all our schools. We do not believe there is any need for a facilitated board meeting or facilitated executive session. In addition, we do not believe any extra evaluations of the superintendent are necessary outside of the previously agreed upon evaluation schedule. We believe that our board is capable of creating a healthy climate and providing effective governance, and do not believe that any additional interventions are necessary.

We look forward to working together to move this district forward in a positive direction.

Maureen McCracken seconded. No discussion. Motion passes unanimously with Gabe Gilman abstaining.

Approve minutes: No amendments offered to the June 28, 2017. Minutes approved unanimously.

Reports

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Nease shared her FY18 State of the State Report. Report has also been shared with faculty and staff and posted on the WWSU.org website. Reflects on the work of the redesign, tracking class size, and includes an enrollment report that can be discussed at the September meeting. Board expressed appreciation for the range and depth of information included in the report.

Finance: Michelle Baker informed the Board that Central Office put out a call for bids for pellets for the wood chip plant. Received 2 bids. Michelle recommended Catamount Forest Products. Bid was for \$64/ton. FY18 cost is budgeted at \$63,000. Bid represents a savings on budget.

Gabe Gilman made a motion to accept the Catamount Forest Products bid as presented by Michelle Baker. Alycia Biondo seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Michelle Baker reported that the 2016/17 fiscal year ended on June 30th. The office is finalizing the audit reports this week. Michelle walked the Board through the financial reports and the transfer of funds from the individual districts to the Unified District. She also reported that none of districts ended the FY17 with a deficit. She recommended the Board consider developing a policy around contingency funds and unrestricted fund balances and the appropriate amount money to maintain in an unrestricted fund balance. Best practice is to maintain 2 months of expenses in a contingency to address emergencies. Michelle reviewed the implications of the tax rate changes made at the end of legislative session and their impact on FY18 budget.

Michelle introduced the administrative team's approach to budget planning for FY19. Goal is a budget process that better aligns with student achievement goals and a pro-active, strategic focus. The team will work together to create a comprehensive budget for the unified district focused on strengths, challenges, opportunities, and risks. Michelle provided and reviewed a draft budget plan and timeline broken down by the work each group (Board, Admin Team, and Director of Finance) will do.

Michelle asked Board to delineate strategic budget goals that will inform budget development. The Board should also look at how the budget is presented to voters to support transparency, gain stakeholder input, and promote understanding of the priorities and thinking that goes into the budget development.

Question from public: Does each individual school prepare their budget using the same budget categories? Michelle Baker confirmed yes, as per the State.

Board feedback: like linking budget development to strategic priorities for unified district. Asked what are the anticipated difficulties with this new approach. MB indicated making shift from working one on one with individuals focused on individual schools and to a team approach focused on individual needs within district-wide priorities.

Do we have any more information about impact of State level decisions on individual schools? Superintendent Nease reported that she'll be in Montpelier next week for discussions between the districts and the State. She'll report back on it on 9/27.

Will development of draft budget wait on board establishing a strategic budget process? Superintendent Nease responded that the full range of costs savings from creating the Unified District are still be determined. The full impact won't necessarily be known before the FY19 budget process begins. The admin will make sound recommendations focused on best practices with rationale for the Board to use as a starting point. Board can discuss, accept, reject as it chooses.

Superintendent Nease reviewed ACT 85 and why it means HUUSD was assessed a 190K fine for this fiscal year. Schools receive a fine if their healthcare plans are not compliant with the requirements of Act 85. The current faculty contract, which was in place before Act 85, is not compliant and as a result a fine was assessed. HUUSD is still in negotiation with the faculty union for a new CBA. Michelle Baker can't do the calculations yet for a proposal for where in the budget to find the money to cover the fine until the start of school year expenditures (hiring, benefit selections, shared costs savings, etc.) are determined.

Michelle Baker asked the Board what they need for their next meeting to consider the proposed budget planning process. Board will discuss at their retreat and follow-up with questions after.

Work Groups – Negotiations: Traded first proposals last week. Another session is scheduled for 8/31, with two more each scheduled in September and in October.

Work Groups – Facilities: Warren school building project has been primary focus. As of last Wednesday it looked like everything was on time for certificates occupancy for Monday. The Fire Marshall would have issued a certificate of occupancy, but Committee determined a thorough cleanup process was necessary for the safety and comfort and safety of students and staff. There is still some work being done, but it is being scheduled around school activities to minimize disruption. Committee will put together small piece for Warren Front Porch Forum to describe the work. Warren got grant for storm water and work will happen in summer of 2018. Ray Daigle will work with town of Warren, as town owns school grounds.

Superintendent Nease reported that a team of custodians from across the district pulled together to share resources and staff to undertake the cleaning at Warren. She praised their willingness to chip in and the hard work they did to get to Warren clean for a Tuesday opening.

Moretown did not get the storm water grant. It was denied on grounds that the project was related to flood mitigation. Moretown Select Board is looking for other funding sources. Fayston

maker space is completed. Plan for Harwood Union track has been presented. The Facilities committee will discuss it before presenting it to the full Board.

Two committees, Communications and Policies, are struggling to meet due to changes in membership and members' schedules. Board will discuss committee membership at the retreat. Suggestion was made that the Communications Committee developing a strategic communication plan for when information needs to come from full Board.

Discussed ideas for how to expand the search for candidates for the Duxbury open Board seat.

Action Items

Finalize Agenda for Retreat:

Caitlin Hollister and Val Gardner, the retreat facilitator, did preliminary planning. Caitlin shared a draft retreat agenda and proposed outcomes. Discussed what can be prepared ahead of time, in order to make best use of the retreat's time. Retreat is a public meeting and will have a call to order. Will take place off-site at the Mad River Barn. Agenda is ambitious. What can be cut or shrunk for productivity? Can the HUUSD redesign work be put off till second part of year, since it can take place till after the budget process development is completed? Superintendent Nease reported that there are a series of probe questions that the Board could respond to. Administrators have already done so and she would find it useful to be able to review both sets of responses.

Next steps: Caitlin will make changes based on discussion; think through how to handle the minutes; will send out a call for RSVPs and dietary issues. As an open meeting Laura Titus will warn it.

Discussion Items

Process, Timeline for Updating WWSU Superintendent Job Description and Evaluation:

At a minimum, the description needs to be updated to reflect transition from WWSU to HUUSD and the new organizational structure. Title 16 details what a superintendent is legally responsible for. Superintendent Nease indicated she could share job descriptions from districts that are already unified, as well as other resources related to a superintendent's statutory responsibilities. Description needs to adequately convey the scope and depth of superintendent's responsibilities.

Currently the position is evaluated every two years, typically in the spring. The evaluation was scheduled for last spring. Board opted to postpone it due to workload at the time related to the Study Group and proposed unification. The rescheduled evaluation is tentatively planned for spring 2018; timeline needs to be worked out. Process involved gathering feedback from a number of groups; turn around time for that needs to be considered in the timeline.

Question from public: What is the structure of evaluations? Who conducts it? How it is documented? In 2009 a thorough, comprehensive evaluation system was put into place for faculty. Central Office keeps a master database and informs the principals who is due for

evaluation and what kind. All evaluations are written and detail performances considerations. Evaluations are filed with Central Office; Superintendent Nease reads them all and approves them to record or follows up with principal if there are questions.

Board requested a summary of the evaluation process for the admin team and building administrators. Superintendent Nease reported that evaluations take place every year for first three years and subsequent evaluations are biennial.

Review Year-Long Calendar:

Board discussed meeting dates in November and December and adjusting calendar around the holidays. Also reviewed January meeting dates to ensure there are enough dates to complete the FY19 budget in time to be submitted to the printer for distribution by the 45 days pre-Town Meeting deadline.

Executive Session: Not needed.

Other Business: Legally all the Board needs is a quorum to do the business of the Board. Board does not need a representative from each town to be present to meet. A quorum isn't based on the number of the Board members; it is based on the amount of weighted votes present.

Adjournment: On a motion made by Alexandra Thomsen and seconded by Alycia Biondo, the Board voted to adjourn at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Tripp Mead