



VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Barre City Place
219 North Main Street
3rd Floor, Room 304
Barre, Vermont 05641

August 30, 2017

- Strategic Goals: (1) Ensure that Vermont's public education system operates within the framework of high expectations for every learner and ensure that there is equity in opportunity for all.*
- (2) Ensure that the public education system is stable, efficient, and responsive to changes and ever-changing population needs, economic and 21st century issues.*

Minutes

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE): Krista Huling, Chair; William Mathis, Vice Chair; Connor Solimano; Mark Perrin; Peter Peltz; Bonnie Johnson-Aten, John Carroll; John O'Keefe.

Agency of Education (AOE): Donna Russo-Savage, Robert Stirewalt, Molly Bachman, Amy Fowler, Pat Fitzsimmons, Martha Deiss, Emily Byrne, Maureen Gaidys.

Others: Debra Taylor, RCSU superintendent; Lynette Gallipo, Rutland Town School; Mary Ashcroft, Rutland Town Select Board; Jay Nichols, VPA; Wendy Baker, SNHU; Steven Sanborn, Consultant; Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; Daniel MacArthur, Marlboro; Mill Moore, VISA; John Pelletier, Champlain College; Jerry and Nancy Dyke, Windham; Anna Brouillette, Let's Grow Kids; Jen Botzjorns, NEK Choice/Kingdom East; Karen Conroy, EVSU/NEK Choice; Celeste Girrell, Sutton, CNSU and KED; Biff Mahoney, UD#37 HEUC; Steve Dale, Consultant, WRVSU; Bob Lucicero, VTDigger; Matt Levin, VT Early Childhood Alliance

Item C: Oath of Allegiance/Affirmation of Office

Secretary Holcombe swore in Connor Solimano as the voting student member on the Board.

Item A: Call to Order

Chairman Huling called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and apologized for the delay and said she would adjust the agenda as appropriate to not keep parties waiting.

Item D: Public to be Heard

John Pelletier, Director of the Center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, introduced himself and said that he was here with concerns around the financial literacy standards. It was his understanding that the proposal before the Board was to replace mandatory standards with voluntary, more rigid standards. Pelletier is unaware of any state that is doing what we are recommending (since the financial crisis). Pelletier said that moving from mandatory to voluntary and making standards more rigid is not a favorable plan. This would put us in the bottom quartile of states on this topic. Secretary Holcombe clarified that the proposal for consideration, as she understands it, does not propose what he conveyed. She encouraged him to stay for that agenda item.

Item K: Rutland Central and Rutland Southwest SUs' Comprehensive Proposal

Russo-Savage introduced the proposal and gave background information. The first proposal is to acknowledge that two new districts have been formed and that they will be a single SU. The second and third items relate to a new law enacted on 2017 which allows for a new side by side, for the 2 newly merged districts and one other unmerged district can request to be part of the same SU and not merged as part of the statewide plan with other existing districts. For all approvals made, the operational date is July 1, 2018.

Bill Mathis joined the meeting at 9:18 a.m.

Mark Perrin joined the meeting at a.m. 9:23 a.m.

Superintendent Taylor asked her team to introduce themselves: Steve Sanborn, Consultant; Judy Pullinen, Superintendent, Rutland Southwest SU; Debra Taylor, Superintendent, Rutland Central SU; Chris Leopold, Counsel; Louis Milazzo, Business Manager, Rutland Southwest SU; Mary Ashcroft, Rutland Town Select Board; Lynn Gallipo, Rutland Town School; Meredith Morgan, Wells Springs and Middletown Springs; Clarence Haynes, Wells Springs and Middletown Springs; Linda Smith, Quarry Valley member.

Superintendents Taylor and Pullinen presented their Power Point, "Comprehensive Proposal to State Board of Education on August 30, 2017 – Rutland Central Supervisory Union/Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union."

Secretary Holcombe acknowledged this group for their responsive efforts and the hard work they put into this proposal. She also reminded the group that there is still activity going on in the region, so there could be a district moved in to this SU, but not a merger of districts.

There was much praise for the work this group put into this proposal. There were questions and discussion related to: isolated districts (Rutland City, Rutland Town, Arlington, Middletown Springs and Wells), involvement and inclusion of surrounding districts, long-term impact of this structure, time constraints, exceptions (221s) becoming supervisory districts themselves, Ira's tuition arrangement, the new SU's governance structure, the articles of agreement, efficiencies and reductions in costs (estimated at minimum of \$325K), and the use of Ira's Medicaid funds to expand PreK hours.

John O'Keefe joined the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

MOTION: Carroll moved to accept and approve Secretary's recommendations #1-4. Perrin seconded. Vice Chair Mathis clarified that the door is still open for additional mergers. Chair Huling acknowledged that Solimano is now a voting member, from the Rutland region. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to approve the Secretary's recommendations #1-4.

Item B: Roll Call

The Board introduced themselves.

Item E: Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mathis moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Johnson-Aten seconded. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda.

Item F: Board Announcements

Chair Huling asked Johnson-Aten for an update on the Approved Independent Schools Study Committee. Johnson-Aten said she missed the last meeting, but that not much has happened. Senator Baruth was voted in as chair at the second meeting and since then they have been bringing everyone up to speed with many presentations – one specific to special education. There are four more meetings to take place. The next meeting is September 12 at the State House in Montpelier, starting at 10:00 a.m. Mathis expressed concern over meeting the deadline.

Item G: Chair's Report

Chair Huling distributed the schedule of proposed SBE meetings for the upcoming year. Meetings are moving to the third Wednesday of the month. Locations are still to be determined for most of the meeting dates. During legislative session, meetings will be close to Montpelier. She asked members to put these dates on their calendars, especially the dates for the Retreat. Johnson-Aten stated that none of these dates work for her due to a conflict with her principals learning group on Wednesday, but that she would double-check this.

Item H: Committee Reports

Mathis asked for copies of the minutes from the legislative subcommittee meeting and to know if and where these minutes are posted on the SBE webpage. This item was delayed until later, potentially as part of the Legislative Agenda item.

Item J: Student Reports

Solimano shared that several weeks ago he attended a 2-day conference at VPA centered on student leadership, through the Center for Creative Leadership and a grant received from the Margaret Waddington Leadership Initiative. This pilot program is designed to expand and promote student leadership in VT schools. Carroll asked if the new student member had been appointed. Chair Huling said that she has reached out to the Governor's office and was told there might be an appointment by the end of this week. Carroll asked about the process for selecting and retaining counsel for the Board. Huling said we are close to the end of the process, but there is nothing to report on this at this time.

Item L: Board Norms

Chair Huling shared that this document came out of notes from the June retreat and offered for edits/input. Carroll stated that it would be helpful if every item received by the Board could be dated and have an author identified – specifically, that we could ask members of the public to do so when being heard or presenting at Board meetings. Holcombe offered that when presented with items during the Public to be Heard segment, or other times, that the Board could make their own note of date and author. Carroll suggested that under pre-meeting norms that we ask for author and date to be included. Holcombe clarified that anything posted on our website needs to be ADA compliant and that there are very strict guidelines on this. Word documents would be preferred so as to make accessibility checking easier. There was additional discussion on board packets, deadlines, distribution, last minute changes/expectations and calling the question.

MOTION: Carroll moved to accept the Board Norms as written, with language clarifying that all documents should be dated and have author identified. Solimano seconded. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to accept Board Norms.

Chair Huling introduced the “Draft Guidelines for Public Communications outside SBE meetings.” Carroll commented that this was an elegantly written document and moved to accept.

MOTION: Carroll moved to accept the Draft Guidelines for Public Communications outside SBE meetings; Perrin seconded. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to accept the Draft Guidelines for Public Communications outside SBE meetings.

Chair Huling introduced the Vermont State Board of Education (2015-2019) Strategic Plan that was discussed at the Retreat and offered to spend some Board time on this. Johnson-Aten suggested postponing this topic until September. There was discussion around aspirational goals, high expectations, equity and opportunity, EQS, need for support staff, data requests, policy governance vs. in-the-weeds work, alignment, timetables, proactive and reactive role of the Board, need for direction, data organized around aspirational concerns, need to revisit this regularly in bite-sized, strategic pieces, measures available, lagging indicators, outcomes and disproportionality.

Carroll suggested committing to a one hour discussion at the October meeting (morning preferred) to work on the Board’s three goals: expectations, equity, and systems stability. Carroll also suggested, prior to the October Board meeting, that some Board members meet with the “statistical guru” at AOE to discuss readily available data and indicators. Mathis agreed with this idea and asked about a catalog of data. Johnson-Aten suggested that everyone should read the CCSSO equity document (item V) – and that it be discussed in a facilitated manner, to get members on the same page with regard to equity. Chair Huling asked for volunteers to work on meeting with data analysts and brainstorming this document. Carroll, Mathis, Huling volunteered. Holcombe shared she hoped the role of this small group is to bring this back to the full Board for additional discussion and recommendations.

Chair Huling called a recess at 11:01 a.m. Chair Huling reconvened the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Item M: Agency vs. Department; Re-Alignment of Responsibilities

Molly Bachman, General Counsel, introduced herself. She spent time discussing the 2012 legislation, Act 98, which changed the roles of the State Board of Education and the Department (now Agency) of Education. Discussion included the Board’s overarching charge as a policy-making body and its powers as specified in 16 V.S.A. § 164, including its rule-making authority, the relationship between the Board and the Agency and the Secretary’s duties as set out in 16 V.S.A. § 212 and coherence of purpose.

Item N: Social Studies Standards & Financial Literacy Standards

Deputy Secretary Fowler introduced herself and presented on the two parallel issues of the Adoption of College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the request for approval for research and proposal of VT Financial Literacy Standards.

There were questions/discussion on relation to EQS, impacts of Title IIa cuts, concerns of unfunded mandates, standards vs. frameworks, need for intersection with PBL, limitations of C3, challenges of capacity, timeline for stakeholder input, global citizenship, rigidity vs. flexibility, cross-referencing of work, and existing financial literacy work.

MOTION: Perrin made a motion to accept the Secretary's proposal to grant approval for the research and proposal of Vermont Financial Literacy Standards. Mathis seconded the motion. Johnsen-Aten asked why not vote on C3 as well. Chair Huling reminded her that this was decided to be a Board norm. There was a question of urgency. Carroll noted that there was public comment on this topic.

John Pelletier, Director of the Center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, introduced himself again. He stated that his concerns were around conversations with AOE staff that suggested that there was not an existing mandate/framework for financial literacy and the perception that financial literacy is a new mandate. It is not, it is a modest, existing mandate. If looking at enhancing that modest mandate, it would be a step backward to not make these standards. Carroll asked if Pelletier had any objections to the motion. There was no objection.

VOTE: This vote passed unanimously.

The financial literacy standards will be revisited in November/December. C3 will be on the September agenda as a consent item.

Chair Huling recessed for lunch at 12:30 p.m. Chair Huling reconvened the meeting at 1:07 p.m.

Item 0: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe introduced Emily Byrne, CFO and added that she comes to AOE with state-level expertise, state budget experience, and that she is an incredibly fast learner with great expertise, connections and sense of humor. She added that budget season has ended and that Byrne would give an update on that.

Byrne provided some background on her experience, that she was a budget analyst, then state budget director and that she spent time with both the Shumlin and Douglas Administrations. She distributed a "Summary of the Education Fund" and "An Update on the FY 2018 Education Fund Budget – August 30, 2017" and discussed this with the Board.

There were questions/discussions about how the money would be made up, governance at the school district level, rates negotiated between the legislature and the Governor.

Secretary Holcombe continued with her report:

1. Healthcare recapture: The total recapture should yield about \$8.5 million this year. The average recapture was about \$60K, but there was significant variation.
2. Staffing: For the first time in a long time, the AOE has staff in place for all content areas outlined in the EQS; this was done over time through re-org and repositioning of staff.
3. Licensing: The licensing season just closed. Out of 3,400 licenses, 3,300 were successfully processed.

4. Special Education Rules: The Board was sent a communication that was sent to the field yesterday on this topic. Secretary Holcombe apologized on behalf of the AOE and explained that there was an earlier discrepancy identified and it was learned that the finalized version did not make it to LCAR. But, the version approved by LCAR is the official version. There was some urgency in this, but federal law trumps state law and the version we were using follows federal law. We are confident that we have not harmed students through this error. These rules will be coming back to the Board, but not at this time.
5. ESSA: We received feedback on the proposed plan, had 15-day turnaround, met this and resubmitted. There were several areas of clarification needed – second language students and identification of support, and several other issues that are posted on our website. AOE expects to hear if this plan is accepted in the very near future.
6. Smarter Balanced Assessment: Districts have had the results for months; we needed to reconcile/validate data and will be releasing these results next week.
7. Governor's Strategic Plan: AOE was asked to identify subset of goals - 1) complete implementation of EQS and Act 77 work; 2) increase opportunities for vulnerable populations; 3) develop resources that will help constituents better understand their and our education investment (building data dashboard, reviewing and revising data protocols, etc.); and 4) leverage economies of scale. These goals are consistent with the Board's goals that were discussed today.

There were questions/discussion regarding scale score reporting, how the Agency goals were determined, value for investment, organization of resources, financial sustainability, detailed breakdown of goals, special education resources, use/responsibility of paraprofessionals, forthcoming report on delivery of special education, VT's ranking of per-pupil spending.

Item P: Small Schools Grant

Donna Russo Savage, Principal Assistant and Brad James, Education Finance Manager introduced themselves. Russo-Savage distributed a memo titled, "Small School Support Grants & Geographic Isolation." She explained that geographic isolation has nothing to do with mergers, or a district isolated due to mergers. It is about whether a school is small and so geographically isolated that they should receive small schools grants.

James explained the process used. Russo-Savage stated that the plan was to share this information, give members time to carefully read this report and digest it, and then revisit it next month in more detail. The list of Small Schools is due this September; the metrics for Small Schools needs to be determined by next July. It is hard to list Small Schools before you have the metrics for Small Schools. This item will be on the September agenda for deeper discussion.

Item Q-1: NEK School Choice District

Russo-Savage introduced this proposal by explaining that the first proposal is for NEK Choice District, where 10 districts from three different SUs are requesting to become a member of Essex North SU and change the number of members that they send to the SU board. Kingdom East is requesting to be their own SU. And the last proposal is giving authorization to create transitional SU Boards.

Chair Huling asked the team to introduce themselves: Jen Botzjoorns, Superintendent, NEK Choice/Kingdom East; Karen Conway, Essex North SU/NEK Choice; Michael Clark, Superintendent, Essex-Caledonia SU, the district that will be going away in this merger.

Clark shared that 10 choice towns are requesting to be part of the Essex North SU. The plan is to join the towns in Essex North, split SU costs 50/50 and have Board representation of three members each, which will require an exception.

Secretary Holcombe acknowledged the professionalism, clarity and calm of the superintendents through this difficult and complicated situation without ever losing sight of the best interests of the students.

MOTION: Perrin moved that the State Board of Education adjust the boundaries of the current ENSU to include the NEK Choice School District pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261(a) and (b) and that the State Board of Education authorize the NEK Choice School District to appoint three representatives to the ENSU Board pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261(d) and that the State Board of Education establishes July 1, 2018, the day on which the NEK Choice School District becomes fully operational, as the day on which the newly drawn boundaries of the ENSU become effective. Carroll seconded the motions. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous.

Item Q-2: Kingdom East UUSD

Chair Huling asked for introductions: Celeste Girrell, Sutton, VT, Chair of Caledonia North and Kingdom East; Dick Mahoney, Sheffield. Botzjoorns explained that there were 5 operating schools, 6 towns – and they are joining with two from Essex Caledonia, Concord and Lunenburg to make one unified union district. There is a lot that cannot be done unless you are an SU. There were questions about SDs owning property and SUs borrowing money.

MOTION: Peltz made a motion that the State Board of Education adjust the boundaries of the current Caledonia North Supervisory Union and the Essex Caledonia Supervisory Union and to designate the newly formed Kingdom East UUSD as a supervisory district pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261 and that the State Board of Education establishes July 1, 2018, the day on which the Kingdom East UUSD becomes fully operational, as the day on which the Kingdom East UUSD becomes a supervisory district. Johnson-Aten seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous.

Item Q-3: Transitional SU Boards for all adjusted boundaries

Russo-Savage explained that item Q-3 came about after a VSA meeting where it was apparent that even though SUs are not fully operational until 2018, they need operational/transitional boards, so that they can hire superintendents, etc. By having a transitional board, the expectation is not that they provide all services. There were questions about identifying a specific district or union or keeping this a general motion.

MOTION: Perrin made a motion that the State Board of Education authorize the member districts of each new or adjusted supervisory union approved at this August 30, 2017 meeting to appoint a Transitional SU Board on or after August 31, 2017 and that the State Board of Education declare that the authorization to appoint a Transitional SU Board does not negate the State Board's prior temporary assignment of any newly created unified district to a pre-existing

supervisory union for administrative and other transitional services. Mathis seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous.

Item R: Town of Vernon

Russo-Savage warned that next month would be a bit complex. She explained that when an elementary district is a member of a Union High School district, the voters of the withdrawing district need to approve this as well as the voters of each individual town that is also a member. Vernon has a specialized exemption to tuition and operate – this raises issues. If a new district were to form in Windham SE, there is concern that Vernon would no longer be able to pay tuition. Vernon had a vote and would like to withdraw from Brattleboro UHSD. They have drafted a separation agreement. Next month this will come to the Board to: 1) get permission to withdraw and then 2) see a proposal for the others to merge.

There were questions/discussion on the logic of having all the towns vote, this being an unfortunate precedent, the authority of the legislature over municipalities, clarification on next steps, and Vernon’s Small School Status.

Russo-Savage tentatively said that next month there could be 4-5 union SD proposals, 3-4 3x1 or 2x2x1 proposals. Potentially, there are 11 different items of varying degrees of complexity for September.

Chair Huling recessed at 2:25 p.m. for a five minute break. The meeting resumed at 2:38 p.m.

Item H (Revisited) Committee Reports/Item T Legislative Agenda:

Vice Chair Mathis reported that the legislative subcommittee met by telephone and spoke about making the committee more effective, role of the subcommittee vs. the role of the Board, having specific people identified for certain topics, scheduling weekly phone meetings, and discussing this with the entire Board, specifically PreK, Act 46, Tech Ed and Act 49. Chair Huling is concerned that this subcommittee is more ad hoc and not proactive and that the subcommittee needs to be reformed due to changes. She is unclear on the charge of this subcommittee. Peltz is concerned about the relationship that can be developed with the legislature and the challenge of building relationships with the two committees.

There was discussion about being less reactive, monitoring what happens in the legislature, communications from the Legislative liaison, reparative work to be done with the legislature, legislature’s perception of the Board, historical relationship with the legislature (prior to the transition of Commissioner to Secretary), loss of resources for the Board, asset of being a small state, capacity of the Board, comfort level of having subcommittee members represent the Board, and the need for a sustainable plan. Chair Huling paused this discussion to move onto Item S.

Item S-1: White River Valley SU – Bethel-Rochester: Revocation of May 16 Vote

Russo-Savage explained that there are two proposals, and the 2nd is contingent on the first. There was approval for 3 separate potential mergers, one of which was Rochester, Bethel and Royalton and since then there have been many changes. First Bethel and Rochester voted yes and Royalton voted no, then there were petitions to reconsider and an alternative proposal. Then Royalton voted yes and Rochester voted no. Bethel and Royalton want to work together.

This is plan B for Bethel and Rochester.

Lisa Floyd, introduced herself as Bethel School Board and Chair of PK-12 study committee. She explained that in-between getting approval for plan B, community members from Bethel came forward with concerns. Plan B was a stop-gap measure and not a good fit for Bethel; Rochester wanted to move in a different direction. Rochester would like to be free to pursue other options and move towards choice or designation. There is a future for Bethel and Royalton to work together, for which there is more community support.

MOTION: Carroll made a motion that the State Board finds that the Study Committee's request for it to revoke its approval of the contingent proposal for the Bethel and Rochester School Districts to form a new unified union school district is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b) and that the State Board votes to revoke its May 16, 2016 approval of the contingent proposal. This was seconded by Johnson-Aten. Discussion: Secretary Holcombe asked for an explanation on what was going on with Rochester. Bruce Labs, Superintendent, WRVSU, shared that they are formally studying with Stockbridge for a PK-6 merger. Superintendent Labs confirmed that with lost phantoms and lost tuition once the Rochester high school closes, Rochester anticipates a sharp increase in their tax rate, especially compared to what the rate would have been in a merged district. They are also considering a stand-alone, PK-8. There has been a lot of mis-information in the community. Labs' hope is to get students to a better place academically; they could be doing a lot better. Johnson-Aten asked for clarification on revoking approval on a contingent proposal. Russo-Savage explained that this takes it off the table so that it doesn't need to be presented to the voters, before moving forward. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to approve this motion.

Item S-2: White River Valley SU – Bethel –Royalton: Approval of Study Committee Proposal

Floyd presented a Power Point presentation of the proposal. There were questions on how locations were decided upon, major hurdles, the mileage between the two schools, savings, at-large representation, and the Truth campaign.

MOTION: Carroll moved to accept recommended actions #1-3; Perrin seconded. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote passed unanimously.

Item T (Continued): Legislative Agenda

Carroll talked about proactive agendas and responsive work in regard to legislative work and prioritizing legislative issues/involvement. He suggested every two weeks there be a scheduled and warned debrief via telephone from Legislative Liaison to the Legislative subcommittee. The Board will continue to prepare the legislative update – there might be an opportunity for a letter, weekly updates from Stirewalt should continue.

There was discussion around the legislative subcommittee speaking to the legislature, submittal, content, input and fidelity of the legislative report, and connection with the Strategic Plan.

Chair Huling reminded the Board that the legislative subcommittee needs to be re-constituted. Those interested in serving on this subcommittee should email Huling so that this

subcommittee can be determined at September's Board meeting, along with the charge of this committee.

Chair Huling asked if any members had issue with the proposed date for the SBE December meeting on December 20 and if this meeting should be moved to December 13. Chair Huling requested a Doodle poll for these two dates to determine which would yield a quorum for December.

Perrin inquired about the CCSSO document, "Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs" that was distributed. Secretary Holcombe shared that CCSSO is a national organization of state commissioners/secretaries, with an agenda focused on equity. This document reflects a consensus of all 50 states. Additionally, AOE leadership has been surveyed to help prioritize equity areas. Carroll asked to have the AOE's first pass shared with the SBE. Secretary Holcombe stated that this is a great tool for making equity concrete and measurable. Carroll asked Holcombe to offer similar documents with regards to high expectations and systems stability. Secretary Holcombe said there are data stories and there are some patterns that raise questions.

Johnson-Aten noted that the education liaison from the Governor's Office used to participate in SBE meetings, but no one has attended since Ali Richards left halfway through Shumlin's last term. She noted that there has been no Governor's Office attendance/interaction with SBE.

Adjourn

MOTION: Solimano moved to adjourn the meeting; Peltz seconded. There was no further discussion. **VOTE:** The vote was unanimous to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.
