

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Dial in Number: 802-552-8456

Conference ID: 295 534 568#

March 29, 2021

Present: Dan French, Agency of Education (AOE); Sue Ceglowski, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA); Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA); Ken Canning, Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT); John Steiner, Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT); Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA); Amanda Garces, Human Rights Commission (HRC); Jeff Fannon, Vermont NEA (VT-NEA); Henri Sparks, Burlington School District; Bernice Garnett, Associate Professor, UVM

AOE: Suzanne Sprague

Agenda:

1. Election of New Chair
2. Discussion of Proposed Legislation (e.g. S.16 and S.84)
3. Other?

Secretary French called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m. He asked for nominations for chair. Canning nominated Sparks. Secretary French closed the nominations and called for the vote. The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Sparks asked Secretary French for an update on AOE Recovery work and the proposed legislation for S.16 and S.84. Secretary French reviewed the initial phase of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the second phase would begin in June with the focus on how to open schools and operate them safely. The guidance was being updated and would be released in early April. The outlook was optimistic with the vaccination program and warmer weather ahead. He hoped the number of cases would decrease by the end of April. Secretary French said the third phase was recovery, which coincides with the anticipated end of the pandemic and will point the education system to healing and mitigating the impact of the pandemic on students. The recovery plan will address: 1) social-emotional well-being; 2) re-engagement; and, 3) academics. He added that districts were required to submit recovery plans to: 1) assess their districts and consider the conditions faced by students; 2) prioritize their plan based on conditions that will likely be different in each district; and, 3) detail how the plan will be implemented. He would like districts to be prepared to operate under normal conditions in the fall and offered that federal resources are available to assist districts with the implementation of their plans.

Discussion followed regarding operational considerations, recovery funds and infrastructure, allowable uses, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSR) I, II and III, the districts' allocation based on the Title 1 formula, using funds for training for bullying and harassment given the rise of Asian American hate crimes, universal school meals, and when the state of emergency would be lifted.

Secretary French mentioned the following Senate bills: S.16 – An act relating to the Task Force on School Exclusionary Discipline Reform; and S.84 – An act relating to the use of exclusionary discipline for students who are under eight years of age and to school district truancy referrals to the State's Attorneys. He thought the Advisory Council would have interest in both bills. Discussion followed on where the bills are in the General Assembly, the AOE's position on S.16, bill has changed significantly since its introduction, Advisory Council commenting on the bills, being kept informed, eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in suspensions, re-engaging students, truancy, reviewing district recovery plans to identify patterns and strategies, data used by the Advisory Council in previous years, curiosity around bullying of Asian students, and the Combined Incident Reporting Software (CIRS) and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

Chair Sparks asked the members to forward any agenda items to his attention. Garnett suggested that the Advisory Council discuss the various other groups and task forces that have a like-minded focus and reaching out to these groups to ensure that everyone was working in concert with one another.

The next meetings are below.

May 30, 2021
July 26, 2021
September 27, 2021
November 29, 2021

Moore made a motion to adjourn. Francis seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague.