



Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

November 4, 2024, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Maple Run Unified School District
Central Office Boardroom
28 St. Catherine Street, St. Albans, VT 05478
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting
Call In: 1-802-828-7667
Conference ID: 375 196 178#

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Commission Members: **Meagan Roy**, Chair; **Peter Conlon**, Representative Addison-2 District; **Ann Cummings**, Senator Washington District; **Zoie Saunders**, Interim Secretary of Education (AOE); **Jennifer Deck Samuelson**, State Board of Education (virtual); **Nicole Mace**, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA); **Craig Bolio**, Tax Commissioner; **Oliver Olsen**, Vermont Independent Schools Association; **John Castle**, Vermont Rural Education Collaborative; **Michael Lechliter**, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA); **Jeff Fannon**, VT-National Education Association; **Jay Nichols**, Vermont Principals' Association (VPA); **Elizabeth Jennings** (virtual), VT Association of School Business Officials (VASBO).

AOE: Rose Neddo, Emily Simmons, Jill Briggs-Campbell, Maureen Gaidys, Suzanne Sprague.

Others: Bill Kimball; John Muldoon; Jay DeNault; Ken Fredette; Aron Smith; Travis Vigneau; M Kendrick ; Elaine Bellavance; Lamson, Dylan; Elizabeth St. James; Katrina Menard; Brian Bloomfield; Jeanne Jensen; Julia Richter; Chelsea Myers; Jeff Gutsfeld; Meghan Metzler; Chester Telegraph; Pam Reed; John Clifford; Elizabeth Burrows; Bridget Burkhardt; Sue Ceglowski, Albert, Jeanne; Matthew DeGroot; Patrick Titterton; Sameroff, Rebecca; Austin; Dr. Mary Gannon; Davis S; Bud Meyers; Alison Novak; Margaret MacLean; Maggie Lenz; Wilmer Chavarria; 17038639444; Austin Davis; Allen Gilbert; Jeff Francis; 18025953776; Sheila Soule; Marcy Harding; 16032852594; Christine Bourne; Emilie Kornheiser; Ashley; Heather Bushey; Kendal Smith, Darren Allen; John Clifford; 18023181814; Rebecca Holcombe; Clare Buckley

Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Roy called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. She acknowledged Superintendent Kimball and thanked him for the use of their space.

Superintendent Kimball welcomed the Commission on behalf of Franklin County. He gave each member a ½ gallon of award-winning maple syrup produced by students from the Maple Run School District.

Chair Roy asked members to introduce themselves. Members present included: Olsen, Fannon, Cummings, Lechliter, Castle, Deck Samuelson, Saunders, Conlon, Mace, Nichols, Jennings and Bolio. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 21, 2024

Nichols moved to approve the [meeting minutes from October 21, 2024](#); Castle seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Public to be Heard

Sue Ceglowski, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), asked the Commission members to [read this memorandum](#) from the VSBA, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) and Vermont Association of School Business Officials (VASBO) that was submitted as public comment. It stresses the importance of the Commission having clear, relevant and accurate data which is different than the data for the Listen and Learn Tour.

Ken Fredette, Friends of Public Education, said that time is precious, and the Commission's work to produce a cost-containment report this December is challenging. He read [this statement](#). He voiced concern that at the last Education Finance Subcommittee meeting much of its time was spent focusing on a report that was irrelevant to Vermont.

Pam Reed, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA), shared [comments that were submitted](#) to the Commission on October 21. She offered six insights for the Commission's consideration.

Jay Nichols, Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), said that a [public comment](#) submitted by a group of independent schools included the VPA as stating to put forward proposals that would force school districts to reduce the tuition they pay our schools and then cap annual tuition rates at the average announced tuition (AAT) rate. He stated for the record that the VPA did not make that proposal.

Brian Bloomfield, Lyndon Institute, spoke on behalf of Burr and Burton Academy, Lyndon Institute, St. Johnsbury Academy and Thetford Academy. He referenced [public comment](#) that was submitted to the Commission pertaining to short term cost containment, and specifically limiting payment of tuition to independent schools, to the average announce tuition (AAT).

Subcommittee Reports

Steering Group (SG): Chair Roy said there is no update since the group has not met since the last full Commission meeting.

Education Finance Subcommittee: Emilie Kornheiser, Education Finance Subcommittee Chair, said that the subcommittee heard from Larry Picus regarding this [report](#) on education spending. The subcommittee heard from AOE consultants, New Solutions K-12 and Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA), on what they are doing related to education spending. The subcommittee began the process of how they want to organize recommendations. Some subcommittee members had concerns with the data in the data analysis and the resources available to the subcommittee related to data. The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for November 18.

Interim Secretary Saunders addressed questions around the data and specifically to this [public comment](#). She shared her disappointment with the authors as these are the people the AOE has proactively reached out to for involvement in improving the AOE data infrastructure in making reporting more meaningful in the field. Interim Secretary Saunders believes the AOE has been a very collaborative and productive partner in this work. She provided an update on AOE data work that is ongoing including the data framework, data validation and improving data systems, data quality, data accessibility and transparency. Interim Secretary Saunders said the AOE will push as fast as it can.

Communication and Engagement Subcommittee: Chair Roy provided an update and said the subcommittee had not met. At its meeting on November 18, they will review the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the engagement consultant. There are 8 RFPs to review and discuss. The subcommittee will then bring a recommendation to the full Commission for its consideration at the December 2 meeting. The public engagement session will take place in November and December without a consultant.

Discussion: Preliminary Report & Short-Term Recommendations

Chair Roy said most of the meeting would be a discussion on the preliminary report and short-term recommendations. She reviewed logistics regarding drafting of the report and noted that she will draft the report for the Commission's feedback. She will circulate a draft as soon as possible following the meeting. Discussion followed regarding using the Steering Group as a resource.

Chair Roy referred to [this document](#) which is a reflection of the concepts raised during previous Commission discussions in sections: 1) preliminary findings 2) cost containment strategies and 3) data. Chair Roy noted that any recommendations would align with the Commission's [Guiding Principles](#) and the team would center its discussion later today about data using [Data Framework that had been proposed by the Steering Group in August](#). Discussion followed regarding data informing the findings, whether strategies could impact FY26 because districts are working on those budgets now, Commission's recommendations impacting FY27, longer term discussions, limited opportunities for short term cost containment, long range strategies focus on sustainability, including a high-level timeline in the report, Commission's recommendations are not limited to only impact FY26, legislature will take action, vetting all ideas through the Commission, being open to all ideas and being open to listen to others whether individual Commission members agree, cost-containment or property tax relief or both, fewer superintendents and fewer supervisory districts, data needed to support or prioritize findings, Education Fund uses and sources of Education Fund, Listen and Learn tour data, status check of [data framework](#), grading the data and level of confidence in each data set and the complexity around governance models.

Chair Roy referred to the [data framework](#) and began discussion on the current status of each data element, if the Commission has access to the data and the quality of the data. She listed each data set and asked for input. Discussion followed regarding the status of demographic data sets including statewide demographic projections (historic and predicted). Discussion followed regarding the status of governance/delivery system data sets including the state profile report, Supervisory Districts and Unions and governance structure, tuitioning, staffing per 100 students, class size, salary compensation schedules, provisional licensure status and staff retention.

Further discussion occurred regarding the status of Education Fund data sets including the breakdown of \$1.89 billion education payments by object and function, Education Fund sources, Education Fund and uses over 10-year span, transportation payment, special education and facility needs assessment. Additional discussion occurred regarding the status of student outcome data including disaggregated student assessment results, student conditions and Education Quality outcomes/equity index.

Chair Roy proposed the Commission's report could include a call to action, acknowledgement of the tax burden and impact, high-level identification of cost drivers, challenge of the timeline, preview larger scale changes, how the funding system compares to other states, use of data to validate assumptions, Education Fund uses and the interconnected nature of the three policy areas. Discussion followed regarding convening longer term analysis of recent legislation, including a

strong suggestion around having an evaluation framework with any recommendations and using Act 127, 173 or 46. Chair Roy said she feels the Preliminary Report could speak to most topics being asked of the Commission. Discussion followed regarding including the challenge of rurality in Vermont, delivery models that are geographically necessary or by choice, challenge with capital, all schools do not operate the same, educational delivery and equity of educational delivery across the state, facilities and Education Quality Standards data.

Chair Roy asked the Commission members to review each strategy to determine if it is short-term or long-term. Discussion followed regarding keeping all strategies to further vet and discuss, strategy not feasible to implement for the upcoming year, more time needed to properly vet the strategy, Education Finance Subcommittee work, vote at the December 2 meeting, recommendations for both the field and General Assembly (GA), State making the hard decisions and not leaving those decisions to local officials, creating a shared responsibility for all Vermont kids, must be a call to action and updating the Education Funding system. Chair Roy named each strategy and asked the Commission to put into 4 categories of either cost-containment, property tax relief, revenue proposals and data and determine if they are actionable in 2025. Discussion followed on each strategy.

Next Steps/Agenda Items for December 2, 2024, Meeting

Chair Roy said the next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for November 14. She will have a draft to share prior to the meeting to obtain feedback on the draft report. Chair Roy will send the draft to the full Commission as well for its feedback. The next Education Finance Subcommittee meeting is November 18 where a portion of the meeting can be to provide feedback on the report. The next full Commission meeting is December 2, and the Commission will vote on the report. Chair Roy noted that the December 2 meeting will be held in Addison County in the Addison Central School District with the exact location to be determined.

Public to be Heard

Jay Denault, Franklin County, said that he was encouraged by the funding discussion. He said that often times school boards members deal with issues that are beyond their ability to control. He added that it's not only legislative action that causes increases to school budgets and that the State's new student assessment system costs more than \$4,489,481.00 more than the old system.

Adjourn

Chair Roy said the public engagement session will take place in the St. Albans Town Education Center's Library. The session will begin at 5:00 p.m.

Chair Roy adjourned the meeting at 3:52 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Suzanne Sprague.