

September 18, 2019

Draft Minutes

Retreat Day 1

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE): John Carroll, Chair; Jenna O'Farrell, Vice Chair; William Mathis; Peter Peltz; John O'Keefe; Oliver Olsen; Kimberly Gleason, Kyle Courtois, Sabina Brochu, Daniel French.

Agency of Education (AOE): Maureen Gaidys

Others: Jacki McCuin, constituent; Lola Duffort, VTDigger.

Chair Carroll called the retreat to order at 1:36 p.m. and advised that there would be an icebreaker and the group would break at 4:00 p.m., meet in the portico at 4:30 p.m. and caravan to the Carroll home for a reception.

Item A: Icebreaker Activity

O'Farrell opened with an ice breaker – Personalized Deli Sandwich. Members went around and described in detail the deli sandwich that most appropriately represented them.

Item B: Reinventing the Board

Chair Carroll introduced the work of the afternoon and said that it would be an open-ended, but somewhat steered discussion that would hopefully answer the question of “what do we want to be when we grow up?” He reviewed the agenda for day two of the retreat: continued discussion on reinventing the Board, board operations, board norms, schedule and location of future meetings, response to the Sunset Advisory Commission, other business and reflections/evaluation of this year's retreat.

Chair Carroll introduced Act 98 of 2012 and explained some of the history of how the State Board had operated prior to this legislation and how this change impacted the operations of the Board. This change had been contemplated for years and by various Governors. He spoke about spending energy on turning the clock back or moving forward. He distributed a document titled, “Vermont State Board of Education: HOW THE BOARD SPENDS ITS TIME.” He called attention to the right shaded column titled, “Estimates of Hours per Year on Each Category of Work.” He emphasized that the Board makes rules for the Agency of Education, and this is not necessarily the case with other agencies.

There was discussion on the legislature directing this work to the Board and not allocating appropriate staff despite Act 98 saying otherwise, working with the legislature to change statute, productivity of the Board, unique position to shape education in Vermont, proposed transition from reactivity to proactivity, need to shed reactive vestiges and formulate a strategic approach, finding a purpose, operating as a think tank, seeking staffing such as the caliber of legislative council that answers directly to the Board, adjusting the frequency of Board meetings, growing into a new vision or going out of business, eliminating the Board's administrative functions and returning them to the Agency, fiscal constraints contrast and challenge the Board's request to shed administrative tasks, using a graduate fellowship to support the Board, need for paid CEO or executive director to do this work, agenda development is shaped via a 30-minute conference call with AOE staff, Agency initiates 90% of the Board's agenda, Board cannot do business without having talented staff available and this raises capacity concerns.

There was further discussion on French's "Designing the Future" document, adaptive leadership model, that form follows function, Finland's story and educational system, the need to be as intentional as Finland about education, need for debate to set policy, need to define policy better, policy should be an ends statement (not means), complexity of what we build as a system interferes with our ability to achieve our ends, thinking about transparency and data and the design conversation, inequity and lack of social justice, accountability, Act 46 being a fruitful experience for the Board, State Board is respected and branded, "Designing the Future" becoming a blog post, using the Board to spotlight the areas of excellence in the state, how areas of excellence would be determined, shaping public knowledge, need to pick battles and pick them soon, picking a variety of topics (granular, global and moderate in gauge), the rulemaking process, State Board made to look foolish with Rules series 2200, Act 173 rules are highly technical and defies the current construct, Vermont State Board of Professional Educators (VSBPE) also creates rules on teacher quality, there is a coherence problem, using the bully pulpit to make positive changes, convening a conversation on quality, thinking about the Board's purpose in conjunction with the significant demographic challenge that is not specific to education, sense of urgency, framing the vision and sharing it with Vermonters.

Chair Carroll reminded the group that they would be in silent mode on the issues discussed today until the group reconvenes tomorrow. He said the plan would be to continue the discussion tomorrow and formulate a plan.

Chair Carroll adjourned day one of the retreat at 3:56 pm.