

May 16, 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.

State Board of Education Minutes

Present:

State Board of Education Members: Krista Huling, Bill Mathis, John Carroll, Mark Perrin, Stacy Weinberger, Bonnie Johnson-Aten (joined at 10:38 a.m.), John O'Keefe (joined at 10:30 a.m.), Peter Peltz, Connor Solimano and Rainbow Chen.

Agency of Education (AOE): Rebecca Holcombe, Robert Stirewalt, Haley Dover, Maureen Gaidys, Donna Russo-Savage

Others: Tiffany Pache, VTDigger; Juliette Longchamp, VT-NEA; Jonathan Wolff, Primmer/Lyndon Institute; Paul Carnahan, Montpelier VT; Jon Guiffre, Roxbury.

Leon Wheeler, principal, welcomed the Board to Winooski. Chen led the group on a tour of Winooski School District.

Item A: Call to Order

Chair Huling called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and thanked Winooski for hosting the State Board of Education.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Huling asked Chen to share the award that she was given by her principal. Chen explained that it is a daily tradition at Winooski High School to give out a GX (Graduation Expectation) Champ Award; this award is to a student who demonstrates behavior that displays graduation expectations through action. The Board members introduced themselves. Chair Huling announced that Johnson-Aten and O'Keefe would be joining the meeting late.

Item C: Public to Be Heard

There were no members of the public to be heard.

Items D: Consent Agenda

Chen asked to have it noted that she left the April meeting after the lunch recess and did not vote in the items that followed lunch. Secretary Holcombe asked for clarification on page 7 under item P for Mill River Unified Union School District, she asked to add after the first sentence that "for this reason AOE review is not required prior to bringing the proposal to the Board" and also after *financial information provided* add "they need to do proper vetting independently for financial viability and also

assess proportionality of representation on the board with their attorney” as this is typically done by Agency staff but in this case was done by the school’s attorney and financial staff.

Motion: Mathis moved to accept the consent agenda with the edits noted; Peltz seconded. There was no further discussion. **Vote:** The motion passed unanimously.

Item E: Board Announcements

Weinberger shared that she went to a New England Regional Head Start conference at Bretton Woods, NH last week. After hearing that Head Start was addressed in Trump’s skinny budget, it was exciting to learn that an \$85 million COLA allotment had been given to Head Start. There was a lot of attention and positive discussion about this historic anti-poverty program.

Mathis attended the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference and discussed one paper with Tammy Kolbe at UVM and another related to educational reform. It was a very electric discussion – they talked a lot about the limits of what schools can do – early education issues, community schools, extended the day, extending the year, etc. and how to attend to the achievement gap, via these issues which are outside the traditional classroom.

Item F: Chair’s Report

Chair Huling reported that in regards to staffing levels of the SBE, the request was for three staff for a total of \$180,000 and as of yet it is not included. She spoke with Representative Juskiewicz around staffing for the Board who confirmed it is on the radar for both House and Senate; it has been a tough year. This will continue to be addressed, as they understand that H.513 requires a lot more work of the SBE.

Chair Huling sent H.513 (Miscellaneous Ed bill) to all members to review; there are over 35 references to the Board. It also creates a study committee for independent school rules. At present, the Board’s work on independent school rules will be halted until the report is received from the study committee. This committee needs to meet by 5/30/17, but the bill has not yet been signed by the Governor. Huling announced she has appointed Johnson-Aten as designee to this study committee. LCAR is moving forward and Rule Series 3400 is scheduled to go to LCAR on May 25, 2017. There are some updates that need to be made, due to new legislation, but they are only dates, nothing substantial.

Item G: Committees’ Report

There were no committee reports.

Item H: Student Report

Solimano and his principal will be attending a conference on June 2, sponsored by the Center for Creative Leadership, to promote student leadership and student voice. He will keep the Board informed of what is learned. Solimano also shared concern that there is no formal process for increasing student voice into the student report. He would like to use the student report to reach out to the schools. He will work to improve this aspect and asked the board members to advise him if they have any ideas. Secretary Holcombe offered that if Solimano could provide a write-up, AOE could assist with promotion. She asked Haley Dover, Public Information Officer, to reach out to Solimano and assist him with this endeavor.

Chen shared that on May 6th there was a multi-cultural conference and though she did not attend, it was a good opportunity to develop some leadership skills through cultural dance and art. Chen announced that the Burlington High School Register recently won an award for the *Best New England Student Newspaper* – and that this is the nation’s oldest student-led newspaper. Last week was the All State Music Festival in which 406 student musicians participated. Chen gave an update on her exploration of Act 77 - she has examined different school models and concluded that communication is very weak. Many don’t fully understand this concept and traditional schools have a hard time transitioning. They need assistance; they are moving at a pace that is comfortable, but are very cautious. She will present more information on this at the Vermont Superintendents Association conference this Friday, at Lake Morey at about noon.

Item K: Secretary’s Report

Secretary Holcombe announced that Bill Talbott has indicated that he will retire, probably by the end of June. The position is posted and the hope is to have someone hired in time enough to have a planned transition. Talbott has covered an extraordinary span of time and has an extraordinary breadth and depth of knowledge around Vermont finance and education and Title 16. We are all sorry to see him go. There will be a celebration in his honor.

AERA Conference: She also attended this for one day and gave a presentation on behalf of Atlantic Rim Collaboratory, an international group that is creating a new narrative of school improvement and systems improvement that is focused on child well-being and excellence in equity.

Presidential Scholars: We are down to two finalists. Vermont was over-represented in the last cut; our state has some pretty amazing students who put themselves out there and have been recognized on a national level; this information will be provided to the Board.

Independent School Rules: Regarding H.513, no legislative members will be appointed until the bill is signed and we don’t know when that will be. This meeting will be planned accordingly.

Act 166: Secretaries Holcombe and Gobeille (AHS) have testified to committees around the structural challenges related to implementation of Act 166 and are committed to working prior to next session to improve upon this and expedite a more effective, efficient, and better use of taxpayer dollars to provide good outcomes for children. There is a big event prior to next Board meeting, sponsored by Building Bright Futures (BBF) that is focused on designing the new system for early education and how we fund it. Secretary Holcombe asked to go on the record to say that this is not a conversation that can be carried out by advocacy groups. If the agencies cannot implement what is put forward, it cannot be done. Until the agencies have developed the infrastructure, it is not possible to expand upon what we are doing.

Item J: Federal Budget Update – via conference call

Chair Huling welcomed that participants and asked them to introduce themselves: Michael DiNapoli, Budget Analyst, Senate Budget Committee; Mark Laisch, Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Jessica Berry, Professional Staff on full Appropriations Committee; Kathryn Toomajian, Senior Health Advisor, Senator Leahy’s Office.

Chair Huling asked to hear about how the budget is evolving at the federal level.

DiNapoli talked about the Skinny Budget's drastic cuts to various discretionary programs - some named, others not. US ED's budget is cut by 13.5% and HHS is cut by 17.9%, all of which affect education funding decisions in Vermont. Programs eliminated include: teacher professional development program (\$10 million) and after school program (\$5.7 million), Perkins CTE is not called out specifically, but are anticipating about \$600,000 cut. Proposed for level funding: Title 1 and IDEA. It is unclear what the Administration's plans are for Title IV(a) and funding for technical professional development and infrastructure. The proposal will eliminate or reduce 20 more non-specific programs (impact aid). Early education cuts are 17.9% - mostly in AHS, but there would still be \$1.8 million cut in Vermont, affecting about 150 kids. Preschool development grant program is not specifically identified to cut, but anticipated.

Proposed cuts to higher education - supplemental education opportunity grant, Pell Grant, and Trio/Gear-Up programs. The rest of the budget proposal should be out on May 23 and will have more details. They want the budget to balance in 10 years, so this means drastic cuts.

O'Keefe joined the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Mathis asked if more cuts can be expected from the Skinny Budget and about vouchers and Medicaid. The response was that we are unsure how this will play out and that we won't know until we get the full budget detail. Skinny Budget provides a clear vision to non-defense discretionary spending at US ED. Choice is a high priority - both public and private are outlined in the Skinny Budget; these would get increases unlike the rest of federal support for public schools which will have drastic cuts. In response to Medicaid, this is more wrapped into what the Senate does on the new health care bill; timeline is uncertain, it could be this summer. Medicaid cuts are certainly on the table. Schools are feeling concerned about this.

Leisch gave the context for how 2017 played out: There was bipartisan support for getting 2017 Appropriations bills passed last year. The Trump Administration requested that Congress defer action and passed a CR that took us past half of the fiscal year and now are faced with unknown Title I allocations for 2017. This created challenges, but ultimately did get a package done. Trump's proposal for 2018 is to cut Title I, because \$1 billion of this is identified for a School Choice program. Secretary Holcombe clarified that AOE is forward-funded.

Secretary Holcombe asked about 21C programs. Response: For 2017 this was level funded, eliminated in 2018.

Mathis asked if there would be another CR. Response: It's hard to say, a CR will absolutely be part of it - the question is how long will they last and if there's a full year of CR, how will non-defense discretionary spending cap be dealt with? Those situations will be tricky.

Chair Huling asked about the Perkins reauthorization. Response: Last year the Perkins reauthorization was passed by wide margin and it will be taken up again tomorrow - this should have bi-partisan support. There were prohibitions on the Secretary of Education and this made it difficult for the Democrats to come to the table. This is level funded for 2017. Cuts are anticipated and

we know how important this funding is for CTE and VT Technical College. They will be fighting for the highest reauthorization possible.

Mathis asked about small state minimums. Response: the Senate draft was unchanged in the last go around. Wyoming and other small states share our concern related to the adequacy of the small state minimums. Secretary Holcombe asked if there is interest in increasing the small state minimums. Response: The situation is that you end up shifting money but not growing the pie. DiNapoli has not heard of adjusting the small state minimum administrative uses, but is open to discussion.

Secretary Holcombe and Chair Huling thanked the congressional delegation and expressed appreciation for their hard work, communication and advocacy and noted that they have been invaluable on a number of fronts.

AOE is funded over 70% with federal dollars and this makes us very vulnerable. Holcombe added that we could not meet our state statutory obligations without federal dollars. O'Keefe asked for the breakdown of federal funds and General Fund for AOE staff. Holcombe offered to share this information.

Johnson-Aten arrived at 10:38 a.m.

Chair Hulin called a 10 minute recess at 10:38 a.m.
Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 10: 55 a.m.

Item L: Resolution of Appreciation – Rainbow Chen

Chair Huling shared how she first met Chen and was impressed by her candor and ability to reach out to all students and her level of engagement on a tour of Winooski the year prior to Chen joining the Board. Weinberger read the Board's resolution.

Motion: Johnson-Aten moved to accept the resolution; Perrin seconded. There was no further discussion. **Vote:** The vote passed unanimously.

Secretary Holcombe shared that she is very proud that Chen is from VT – and shared a comment made by Chen at a previous Board meeting at Hartford High School, “Why don't we tell students how much better they are doing instead of how much farther they have to go?” Chen always pivoted the conversation to helping others to get better. Secretary Holcombe offered that we are here to help every student do better – and asked her not to forget that. She presented Chen with a mug and sweatshirt from Brown. Solimano commented that Chen has been a great mentor, thanked her for that and said that he felt welcomed right from the start.

Item M: Legislative Round Up

Chair Huling introduced Robert Stirewalt, Director of Policy, Regulations and Legislative Affairs, to update the Board on legislative issues.

Stirewalt stated that a caveat to this report is that only S.1 has been signed. Stirewalt summarized the document that was distributed detailing the legislative session.

Chair Huling thanked Stirewalt and asked that he return in June/July and talk about what actually transpired. She noted on page 2 under Act 46 there is quite a bit of work for the SBE and added that

Russo-Savage will do a deep dive with the Board at the June retreat to strategize how to prepare to deal with this.

Chair Huling shared that Items P have been withdrawn from today's agenda.

Item N: Statewide Overview

Act 46

Russo-Savage shared an updated map on merger activity and explained the changes that have taken place since the last meeting.

Summary: Of the towns that have actually voted yes there are 114 towns (representing 124 districts) that will be moving into 26 new unified districts – that is a net reduction of 98 districts in the state. Before Act 46 there were 272, there are now 174. Since Act 46, for ADM, there have been about 32,700 students moving into new unified school districts – add to that the 2,500 students from the Chittenden East merger and the 18,000 students in pre-existing supervisory districts, the total is in excess of 53,000. That is about 61% of our VT students are or will be moving into unified districts.

There was discussion on revote participation and majority, staffing reductions in merged districts, compiling statewide data on this to identify efficiencies and tracking indicators for improvement. Baseline data is available. EQRs will give good information on many indicators and will be publicly available. There are important conversations that need to happen once we have the data.

Secretary Holcombe shared that the Administration has created a new agency – the Agency of Digital Services (ADS) – and that AOE had our IT Director reassigned to ADS. We have since re-assigned our research and data group to Deputy Secretary Bouchey, who has extensive doctoral level training and she has been systematically assessing our data collections and establishing new protocols for collection, cleaning, sharing, standardized reporting, etc. so that this can be done with fidelity.

Chair Huling called lunch recess at 11:51 a.m. to resume at 12:30 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 12:38 p.m.

Rule Series 3400 and H.513

Russo-Savage continued with an update on Rules Series 3400 and that this will go to LCAR on May 25, 2017. Chair Huling and Russo-Savage intend to attend this meeting

Russo-Savage explained a provision in H.513 that allows Vernon, specifically, to withdraw from an existing union high school district. There are changes in the kind of structures are eligible to receive tax rate reductions and in the deadlines for creating those structures and existing "Phase 2" mergers. These changes will create more flexibility. Another change is that AOE and Board is required to start reviewing alternative structure proposals by October 1. The deadline for submitting these proposals has been extended from November 30 to January 31. Lastly, the criteria for the small schools grant changes effective July 1, 2019 (the criteria is either geographic isolation or an extremely efficient school that is doing well with students in poverty) and Act 46 requires metrics to be developed by July 2018. H.513, however, requires that the Board needs a list of geographically isolated schools by September 30, 2017, which means the metrics for determining this actually need to

be developed much sooner. We have reached out to a policy research class at Dartmouth and are hopeful to have something from them by the end of the semester. There is a lot of work to be done on this over the summer.

Chair Huling invited members of the public to be heard, on issues outside of the three proposed mergers, prior to moving onto the merger proposals.

Peter Clark introduced himself as the Act 46 Coordinator, former principal in Montpelier, now retired. Clark is the Act 46 coordinator for the Caledonia Cooperative District whose report was approved at the April Board meeting. While preparing for public session, he discovered some miscalculations in the financial backup to the report. He notified the committee immediately, and reposted corrected reports to the clerks and the website. He wanted to advise the Board that the financial section of the report had been amended. This does not change what is being voted on, the articles, or anything substantive, and his lawyer advised that this Board notification would complete due diligence efforts.

Item 0: Merger Proposals

1. Bethel-Rochester

Russo-Savage introduced the proposal and explained that this involves districts in WRVU, two of which were contingent upon the creation of a PK-12 operating district. Royalton did not approve and thus the entire study committee got together to move forward. What is complicated is that both Royalton and Rochester voters have submitted a petition to revoke. There is one instance where this contingency would not be exercised and that is if Royalton approves the vote and overturns its original decision and Rochester also reaffirms its original decision. The revoke for Rochester is May 20 and for Royalton is May 13. The revoke needs to be more than 2/3 of the original vote.

Chair Huling asked the study committee to introduce themselves: Lisa Floyd, Vice Chair of Bethel School Board and PreK-12 Study Committee Chair; Frank Russell, Vice Chair of Rochester Board and PreK-12 study committee member; Bruce Labs, superintendent of WRVUSU; Steve Dale, Act 46 Consultant.

Floyd led the Power Point presentation. There was discussion around number of locations, one-time or ongoing savings, reductions in staff, consequences for Royalton, student voice, and Plan B. Secretary Holcombe thanked the study committee for putting students first, acknowledged the hard and admirable work of this committee and thanked them for the grace with how they were mindful of neighboring districts.

Motion: Mathis moved to accept the proposal; Johnson-Aten seconded. There was no further discussion. **Vote:** This vote passed unanimously.

2. Montpelier-Roxbury

Russo-Savage noted that at the time Roxbury and Montpelier submitted their proposal, Act 46 had a provision that certain districts are exempt. Montpelier was not included in that provision and would not have been exempt unless it merged. When H.513 looked like it was moving and would exempt

Montpelier even if it didn't merge, Russo-Savage advised Montpelier of this. They discussed this and are still in favor of this proposal.

Chair Huling asked the Montpelier-Roxbury study committee members to introduce themselves: John Guiffre, Roxbury School Board Chair, Laurie Gossens, superintendent of Washington South SU; Paul Carnahan, Montpelier; Brian Ricca, superintendent of Montpelier School District; Steve Dale, Act 46 Consultant.

Guiffre and Carnahan led the Power Point presentation. There was discussion about transportation and bus time, CTE assignment, after school activities, student input into the decision, loss of school choice, effect on real estate values, efficiency, sustainability of RVS, farm-to-school activities, Northfield, and snow days.

Motion: Mathis moved to accept the proposal; Peltz seconded. There was some further discussion.

Vote: The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Huling called a 5 minute break at 2:13 p.m.

O'Keefe excused himself from the meeting at 2:22 p.m.

Chair Huling called the meeting back to order at 2:22 p.m. and asked that the minutes reflect that O'Keefe had left the meeting.

3. Cabot, Danville, Twinfield

Russo-Savage introduced this proposal as related to the Caledonia Cooperative which is conditional specifically to this proposal.

Chair Huling asked the study committee to introduce themselves: Scott Harris, Twinfield School Board Vice Chair; Chris Tormey, Cabot School Board Chair and Washington Northeast Advisory Union Board Chair; Bruce Melendy, Danville School Board Chair; Nancy Thomas, Washington Northeast superintendent; Peter Clark, Act 46 Consultant; Mat Forest, Caledonia Central superintendent.

Harris, Normandy and Melendy led the Power Point presentation. Discussion followed about Cabot's motivation, incentives, community acceptance, class sizes and offerings, graduation outcomes, Article 17 item 4, moving grades from town to town, student input, magnet schools, capacity issues, trust and grief issues, anxiety for staff and students over losing a school, surrounding tuition towns, eagerness to bring this to vote, lack of optimism, need for a strategically placed regional high school.

Motion: Carroll moved to accept the proposal; Johnson-Aten seconded. Discussion followed around the vote, taking this to the legislature, and lobbying. **Vote:** this vote was passed unanimously.

Russo-Savage clarified that both Items P have been withdrawn – they are still interested and want to move forward with these but given H.513 they will be revisited later.

Chair Huling handed the gavel to Mathis and recused herself for Item Q since she works at South Burlington High School.

Item Q: Waiver Requests (16 V.S.A. § 1071 (c))

South Burlington

David Young, superintendent requested a one-day waiver due to an unfortunate situation involving death threats to staff and students on April 19 and 20. Young decided not to have school that Friday due to a high concern for emotional well-being and as a result is one day short of 175 days.

Motion: Johnson-Aten moved to approve this request; Carroll seconded this motion. There was discussion around the involvement of law enforcement and others at both local and federal level, copycat risks and resources that were provided to principals and superintendents statewide. **Vote:** Bill Mathis called the vote. It passed with unanimous approval.

North Country

There was no representative for the waiver request from North Country SU.

Motion: Peltz moved to approve the waiver; Mathis seconded this motion. There was discussion on days of instruction. **Vote:** This request was approved unanimously.

Item R: Board Communication and Discussion

Chair Huling shared Perrin's draft notes from the last Board meeting that related to topics for planning the Board's Retreat agenda and a draft of communication.

Mark captured the discussion at the end of April SBE meeting around Board understanding involving communications and gave some examples from other states. Perrin shared that Carroll and O'Keefe had some edits; these edits were then distributed to Board members. Perrin offered to review the two drafts and combine them to be revisited at the next meeting. Chair Huling asked Perrin to revise, combine and prepare another single draft for the retreat/next meeting. Perrin will send this draft to all Board members and they will offer individual feedback to him.

Chair Huling announced that the June meeting is scheduled for June 19 and the Board retreat will follow on June 20 at Jay Peak. More details will be forthcoming.

Carroll offered that what is being sought is guidance to SBE members *outside* of SBE meetings and not to provide policy for individual members' behavior outside of SBE meetings. Civil rights are involved. He encouraged the Board to understand what was being considered: guidelines for outside Board meetings and the importance of respect.

Adjourn

Motion: Chen moved to adjourn; this was seconded by Weinberger. There was no further discussion.

Vote: The vote to adjourn was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys
