



Conference Call  
Vermont State House  
Ethan Allen Room  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

January 10, 2018

*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  
Legislative Subcommittee Conference Call Meeting  
Approved Minutes**

**Present:**

**State Board of Education Legislative Subcommittee Members:** Peter Peltz, William Mathis (via phone), Krista Huling, Connor Solimano (via phone), and John Carroll.

**Agency of Education (AOE):** Maureen Gaidys

**Others:** Matt Levin, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance; Anne Galloway, VTDigger

**Item A: Call to Order**

Chair Peltz called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

**Item B: Sign In for Guests/Callers**

Chair Peltz asked for Roll Call and for callers to identify themselves. Subcommittee members introduced themselves. No callers identified themselves.

**Item C: Amendments to Agenda**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

**D: Approve December 20, 2017 Draft Minutes**

Carroll moved to approve the minutes from the December 20, 2017 meeting; Huling seconded. Peltz called a vote. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Item E: Update - Robert Stirewalt**

Stirewalt was not present, so this item was skipped in hopes that he would show up later.

**Item F: Debrief on Distribution of Annual Report - Krista Huling**

Huling shared that the State Board of Education Annual Report to the Legislature went out to all legislators, and in the interest of timely distribution, she did not send it with hand-written notes, but plans to do so later. It also went out to the Governor, education partners and the media (VPR and VTDigger). Additionally, Haley sent a full press release.

She shared that there is a meeting in the Senate Pro Tem's office this afternoon. Huling spoke with Representative Sharpe who was excited to have this presented to the committee. Huling also spoke

with Senator Baruth and they are still working on when the report can be presented to the Senate Education committee. She thought that the committee might also want to discuss Rules Series 2200. Carroll asked if there was any feedback from legislators on the report. Huling said that Sharpe appreciated the end piece and the goal posts and thought it was a good check for everyone to be thinking about the three Es (excellence, equity and efficiency). Sharpe also commented on the number of Act 46 proposals and asked if the Board was ready for more. He acknowledged the workload that has been accomplished by the SBE. Huling also heard from Jay Nichols, VPA, and he was happy to receive the report in advance.

There was discussion on balancing the three objectives and the hope that even if only two of the three objectives are advanced, that the third objective will not go backwards. The intent is to not go backwards on any objective at the expense of progressing any other objective.

Peltz asked about Stirewalt. Gaidys offered that she could ask that he provide a written update to the subcommittee.

### **Item G: Legislative Priorities**

Huling asked Peltz if he had questions for House Education committee on what would be helpful for the Board to know. Huling said that one of the advantages of the SBE is that they can be thoughtful and deliberative. Huling suggested asking about issues that the SBE should be thinking about and deliberating, with the understanding that the SBE only meets once a month. Peltz asked if members had read the UVM special education funding report and said that it has some interesting data. There was discussion on VT being over the national average for costs and the shift from census-based funding to student-based funding. Huling asked if members had also received the special education report on delivery of services. Mathis suggested asking what was important to the committee, as statute says that the SBE has a role in advising the Legislature. Mathis also said he wanted to hear about the 5-6 finance bills and what will be done to prepare for this. The subcommittee agreed that it was important to get busy and not wait another month.

Huling suggested asking what the SBE could do to help and what the committee might like to have the SBE testify on this session. There was discussion on being good partners in making policy, concern over the next two months of SBE agendas, the need to get ideas from House Education to be shared with the SBE next week, what information might be needed, and coordination with AOE and requests for information.

Peltz said it would be nice to hear from the Senate Education committee as well. Carroll suggested asking about the timing of issues and that if possible, it might be good to be ready on a few issues by mid-February. Huling reiterated the importance of sticking to what was written in the legislative report. Mathis suggested coming up with specific people/teams to take on specific topics in an effort to move more quickly. Huling rebutted that she thinks the SBE response should be deliberative and not so quick to move. She encouraged the subcommittee to stay out of the weeds and look at the bigger picture and to stay student-centered.

### **Item H: Other**

Peltz asked about take-aways from the recent Education Summit. He was impressed by the collaborative and supportive tone and the strong statements from those who spoke about mergers.

There was discussion on the speaker who spoke about high needs kids and the lack of resources, modest savings and significant gains for students, and feeling proud of the work that they do and how they have improved opportunities for students. Carroll agreed that it was heartening to hear the opportunities that were created and the genuine enthusiasm and thought this was a good way to send a message to the folks who are dragging their feet.

Carroll shared that today he ran into Representative Masland, who has an interest in small schools and alternate structures and reported that Masland acknowledged that left with alternate structures, many communities are not likely to come up with solutions that match well with the objectives of Act 46. Masland offered that he would like to talk with the legislative subcommittee about that problem. Carroll wondered if maybe he had a legislative initiative that would support this. Peltz added that Laura Sibilia is also interested and that the weighting study was a particular concern; she feels higher weighting is needed to protect the small schools.

Peltz asked how many SUs had been merged. Huling clarified that there were 23 districts that are transitioning, and at least 4 SUs that were eliminated through redrawn SU boundaries and another 8 SUs and their SU boards were eliminated through the transformation of SUs into SU districts. There was discussion on the Governor's call to cap spending, consensus and if something can be done about it, that Act 46 might have laid a foundation and be a means forward to coming into some compliance with cost containment, union high schools and sending districts.

Mathis asked about the process for today and if the subcommittee could recess this meeting and restart it after the presentation to the President Pro Tem. Huling expressed concern over it not being warned. Mathis said that we could recess the meeting and come back at another time and still have it be legal and warned. Peltz expressed concern over space for a continued meeting. Mathis requested some kind of debrief – and thought recessing would be a good option. He asked to hear back on what happens, body language and what is learned. Carroll agreed that the meeting could be recessed and questioned an end time on the agenda. Peltz said the end time for this meeting was 10:00 a.m. Gaidyz clarified that two meetings were warned 1) this meeting of the legislative subcommittee from 9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. and 2) the rest of the day from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00p.m. There was discussion on space available and the afternoon meetings. Carroll offered to have Huling and Peltz call Mathis and give an update. Mathis suggested that they might need time as a group to debrief together. The subcommittee agreed on this.

There was discussion on the role of the state vs. local roles, teacher-staff ratios, where the SBE stands, and Secretary Holcombe presenting information on ratios at the next SBE meeting. Carroll and Peltz commented on the amount of information shared and the miles of spreadsheets received. Mathis said that there is a ton of research on ratios, but that the weeds of the printout would suffice. Carroll asked if someone could tease out regional and school size differences and added that 12 rows against 10 columns is about all that can be processed. The information was interesting, but overwhelming. There was discussion on ways that the data could be sliced for policy purposes, unified decisions and how that affects ratios, focus on critical issues, the difficulty of ratios as an issue, addressing this over a span of time, and the hope that the Governor won't tell them how to do it, but will tell them what needs to happen.

There was further discussion on the effect of initiatives on small systems, slowing down implementation, Proficiency Based Graduation requirements, reopening rulemaking for EQS, SBAC, ESSA, and the lack of guardrails to ensure consistency. Carroll talked about pulling back on the rate of advance and the Board playing a useful role in assessing this and what it should look like, because it cannot be done unilaterally. Huling said she hopes that the SBE is mindful that it needs to be a long-term solution and not a quick fix. There was discussion on NCLB, AOE historically having staff to improve delivery, those AOE personnel being cut, counting on districts to figure this out on their own, the possibility of cutting off people at the state and this falling back on the districts. Huling asked if school districts are paying more at the local level because AOE staff have been gutted. She shared the example of Act 166 and how when schools are trying to administer it and contract with 60 different private providers, they cannot handle that cost, but by moving this to the state level, it is anticipated that they will save money. She wondered where else could this also be the case. Carroll suggested getting UVM to study what has been decentralized to the SUs and the impact of this. Mathis said that there are some problems with legislation that will need to be straightened out. Peltz commented that education reform is as difficult as health care reform. Carroll concurred that this is a massive political and emotional issue to the communities. Huling disagreed that it was always emotional. There was discussion on different student-to-staff ratios, positions missing at the state level, and special education.

**Item I: Adjourn**

Peltz said the meeting needed to adjourn so they could get to House Education and that he would keep Mathis and Solimano abreast of what was going on and whether they could convene later in the day. Huling made a motion to recess. The meeting recessed at 9:57 a.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.