

December 20, 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  
Legislative Subcommittee Conference Call Meeting  
Approved Minutes**

**Present:**

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

**Agency of Education (AOE):** Maureen Gaidys, Robert Stirewalt

**Others (via phone):** Matt Levin, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance; Mill Moore, VISA.

**Item A: Call to Order**

Chair Peltz called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

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

Chair Peltz asked for Roll Call and for callers to identify themselves. The subcommittee members identified themselves. Matt Levin and Mill Moore, VISA, also identified themselves.

**Item C: Amendments to Agenda**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

**D: Approve November 29, 2017 Draft Minutes**

Carroll moved to approve the legislative subcommittee meeting minutes from November 29, 2017. Huling seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

**Item E: Finalize Revised Draft of Report to the Legislature**

Huling shared that Stirewalt brought to her attention that on page 1, the first bullet under the section titled, "Looking back on 2017," it should read "new chair of the Senate Committee on Education" instead of "new chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Education." Carroll expressed concern about the total enrollment numbers that Russo-Savage has provided (87,000). He sees these to be in contrast with what Holcombe speaks of (76,300) – both in her earlier letter of advice to school boards and in Monday's presentation at the Education Summit. Carroll has asked for clarification from Russo-Savage. He thinks the discrepancy is because Russo-Savage's number includes PK and all students who live in the district but attend independent schools. He is awaiting confirmation from Russo-Savage, probably by tomorrow morning. Additionally, there might need to be a recalculation of students that are part of newly merged districts to make sure that the same definition is used. This

change is on page 2. The other change, noted at the SBE meeting was that the number of school districts should be changed from 147 to 142. Carroll hopes to send a final pdf to Huling for her to submit. Huling requested a Word version as well so that the AOE could proof it for ADA compliance.

Peltz commented that this could go out before Christmas. Carroll asked what past practice had been. Mathis replied that it was usually distributed at the legislative meeting in January. Huling said we could think about a different strategy and asked Carroll if he had suggestions for distribution. Carroll said the annual report is an opportunity for conversation with leadership in the Legislature and the Governor's Office. He suggested having the Chair of the SBE and the legislative subcommittee chair arrange a conversation with chairs of House and Senate committees, either separately or together. He also suggested meeting with the leadership of the House and Senate, in an effort to kick things off in a collegial manner, prior to the start of the legislative session. Carroll said briefings in advance are often appreciated, although this might not be possible. Stirewalt confirmed that the start of the session was January 3. Peltz suggested coordinating with the Pro Tem to get to Baruth and Sharpe, but said time was tight with the holidays. He offered December 27, 28 or 29. Huling offered to reach out and try to get an appointment in the next two weeks and asked if that was not possible, if as soon as possible would work. The subcommittee agreed. Carroll suggested that if this had to wait, then an advance copy should be sent with a handwritten note giving them the opportunity/courtesy to meet. Huling suggested sending the advanced copy as soon as possible. Carroll suggested that something similar should be extended to the Governor's office (Gibbs or Governor) as this is as much for them as the General Assembly. Carroll asked if courtesy copies also went out to education associations – VSA, VPA, VISA, VCSEA, etc. Mathis said this was not past practice; Huling offered that we could provide this to education partners and said the VSA had already requested this. Education partners were confirmed to include VSA, VPA, VT-NEA, VSBA, and VCSEA. Huling asked if Moore wanted a copy. Moore confirmed affirmative. Peltz suggested sending this to Business Managers. Huling asked Levin if he needed a copy and asked if he had other ideas of who would like a copy of this report. Mathis suggested sending this to PTA groups. Peltz asked Huling to use her discretion in how to distribute this report.

#### **Item F: Plan for Presentation of Report – Breakfast Meeting with Legislators**

Peltz asked if Huling had made any progress with this. Huling asked if we should stick with the same day as the Board meeting or pick a different day and noted that the January Board agenda is already very full. Huling suggested having a legislative subcommittee meeting at the State House and then a meet and greet in the cafeteria. Peltz confirmed meeting with both committees. Huling suggested a Wednesday, specifically, January 10. Huling asked if Stirewalt could reach out to the committees and see if January 10 works for them to meet either together or separately. Stirewalt said he would check on this. Mathis expressed concern over volume of Board meeting agendas. Huling reminded the group that the January agenda would include a workload calendar for the upcoming year, so that expectations are understood. Huling again suggested having the next legislative subcommittee meeting at the State House. Carroll advised Stirewalt on what was expected: meet and greet with coffee and pastries in the cafeteria between 8:00-9:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning, January 10 and as soon as possible thereafter meet with the committees. The subcommittee would only be able to meet with House Education in the morning. They could have lunch together in the cafeteria and meet with Senate Education as early in the afternoon as possible. Huling suggested a possible meet and greet over lunch if that worked better for both parties. Subcommittee members agreed on this. Peltz asked

that a meet and greet at lunch be announced in both chambers. There was discussion on using the room off from cafeteria or gathering in the corridor. Peltz offered to help Stirewalt. Carroll asked Stirewalt to get back to the subcommittee in writing soon after the New Year, as this cannot wait until the next meeting of this subcommittee (January 10) to decide what is happening. Huling suggested warning the whole day, as they will be traveling together. Gaidys said that sounded appropriate and that she would confer with legal counsel and warn as required. Carroll confirmed that Huling's intention in to invite the entire Board for as much as possible of this day. Carroll recapped that as soon as Stirewalt confirmed the date, Gaidys would warn it and Huling could send invitations.

### **Item G: Legislative Update**

Stirewalt shared there has been a lot going on and that testimony is already booked. On January 3, 2018, Russo-Savage will testify on the current state of mergers. She is also working on a legislative report for December 28, 2017; she is very busy heading into this session. The House Education committee has already requested testimony on the DMG report. There will also be testimony requested on the special education funding report. The finalized Act 77 report will be coming out soon and testimony will be booked on this topic for Deputy Secretary Bouchey. In addition, Oscar Aliaga, AOE's new Career Pathways Coordinator, will also be testifying. Both House and Senate Education and House Health and Welfare committees have asked AOE and AHS secretaries to report on Act 166 recommendations. This is already booked for Room 11 on January 3, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. Stirewalt said he is also hearing a lot about changing the funding formula. There are many plans floating around to change the formula so that the Education Fund is not simply funded by property taxes. The \$80 million budget gap remains an issue that everyone is working hard to solve. The Governor recently addressed the staff-to-student ratios, which are currently 4:1 (one of the lowest in the nation) and how reducing this to 5:1 could impact savings (\$100 million).

Stirewalt congratulated the Board on their legislative report. He said it was good, simply written, an excellent idea to get out front in presenting it, and that it will be very effective at the start of the session.

Stirewalt said there are few legislative reports due to the Board. The statewide governance proposal is due June 1, 2018 and should be posted to AOE website in November 2018. The metrics for small schools support grants is due July 1, 2018. Last month AOE was asked by the Governor's Office to clarify what reports are due. Stirewalt offered to update the Board on the status of these reports. The report on the estimates to fund special education in the ensuing year is expected to be provided to the Board by January 15, 2018. Carroll asked if it would be reasonable to request a written list of reports and their expected date of availability for the entire year. Stirewalt offered to share full report obligations and to color-code those that are specifically due to the Board. Peltz asked about the student ratio (recommended 5:1) and if that was in bill form. Stirewalt said that was a good question and he anticipates some bill to come forward that addresses ratios, as this goes to the Governor's core initiative of affordability. Mathis asked for an update on the work of the Rules 2200 committee. Stirewalt said a draft report was expected and deferred to Huling. Huling said she would be checking in with Board representative, Johnson-Aten to get an update on this morning's Approved Independent Schools Committee meeting. There was discussion on observations from the last Approved Independent Schools Committee meeting, findings and/or recommendations or lack thereof, consensus/lack thereof pertaining to financial reporting, and what this might mean for the

Legislature. There was further discussion on waiting for guidance, observation that there is nothing in statute that prohibits the Board from working on rules simultaneously that are being considered by the Legislature, the importance of communication, taking advantage of extending this courtesy offering to suspend work while the Board awaits further information, conscientious courtesy, hope that it works both ways, and difficulty in anticipating legislative action.

Peltz asked for thoughts on the recent Education Summit. There was discussion on this being a worthwhile setting to extend the Governor's conversation, the unsustainable high cost of education in Vermont, that any big idea like this needs to be discussed multiple times, the wish that it could have been more practical about savings, panel discussions from those who had merged and the savings realized from that, and increased opportunities for students. Mathis noted that it was impressive that the Governor spent the entire day with this group and added that Holcombe did an excellent job framing issues up front; he did not realize that she had such a big role in this event. He was surprised and pleased with the civil tone employed around controversial issues.

**Item H: Other**

**Item I: Adjourn**

Mathis moved to adjourn; Huling seconded. The vote to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.