



Conference Call  
Vermont Agency of Education  
Room 317  
219 North Main Street  
Barre, VT 05641

March 20, 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  
Special Legislative Subcommittee Skype Conference Call Meeting  
Draft Minutes**

**Present:**

**State Board of Education Legislative Subcommittee Members:** Peter Peltz, Connor Solimano, William Mathis, Krista Huling.

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

**Others:** None.

**Item A: Call to Order**

Chair Peltz called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

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

No other callers or guests identified themselves.

**Item C: Amendments to Agenda**

There was a request to correct agenda item D to read "approve the minutes of the *March 7 meeting*."

**D: Approve March 7, 2018 Draft Minutes**

Huling moved to approve the March 7 meeting minutes; Mathis seconded. The vote passed and the minutes were approved.

**Item E: Discuss/Strategize on H.879**

Huling read a letter from Representative Long, who was writing on behalf of Chairman Sharpe. The letter advised that the Board might be discussing the special education bill during the morning session of tomorrow's meeting and asked that the committee be advised of any outcomes as soon as possible. The bill is scheduled to be presented at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the committee is meeting with legislative council in the morning, and any feedback from the State Board will help as they consider possible amendments.

There was discussion on the State Board making a statement on this bill (H.879). Discussion included input on whether or not this is in the Board's purview, if this should be pursued and if it is appropriate, that the Agency is advising against this, the advantages of the Board being independent, that the Board operates as a body year-round and the Legislature does not, that the Agency works for the Governor, and that most other states have money-granting authority. Huling asked if the subcommittee wanted to take the Agency's advice or not. There was discussion on capacity, access to Agency staff, adding a phrase that the Secretary will make recommendations by October and the Board will act on them by November, that capacity is needed, that the Secretary does not believe this authority should rest with the Agency, who makes recommendations on the tax rate, and the precedent that outside entities make recommendations on setting tax rates.

Huling shared Emily Byrne's (AOE Chief Financial Officer) statement regarding this. Mathis said he disagreed with Byrne's statement and that Carroll did as well, as evidenced in his email. There was discussion on driving appropriations, setting the tax rate, Legislature overriding the Board, constitutionality of setting the rate, the unique idea that the Legislature is asking the Board about giving the Board authority, the stature of the Board, and Legislature's history of doing what they want anyway. Huling asked Solimano for input. Solimano asked for clarification and was not sure that he was comfortable weighing in at this point. Huling clarified that Peltz and Mathis would like to take on the authority for rate setting. Mathis added that Carroll was also in agreement with this. Huling offered a statement: The Board is not advocating to set the rate, but would take on the responsibility when asked. Peltz thought that was too ambivalent. Mathis offered that the statement says the Board agrees with this and here is why, primarily because the Board is independent and it would take this out of the political sphere. The Board needs to be assured of staff support. Revisions continued and Huling pressed to identify what specific staff is requested. Mathis suggested a qualified professional person and added that the Board needs to build capacity with a guarantee of staff. Mathis asked if the clause of "adequate staffing" was taken out of the bill, since he couldn't find it. There was more work on revising the statement. Huling agreed to draft a statement and circulate this with subcommittee members prior to the Board meeting.

Huling shared that Peltz and Mathis will be talking with the Senate on Thursday. Huling shared how she handled her recent testimony and suggested sharing the memo from the Board that was recently voted on in addition to the statement that will be forthcoming as talking points. Huling shared that this bill has not yet crossed over.

Mathis asked Huling to read his email that was sent to her just before this meeting started titled, "Small schools, isolation, academic efficiencies, the weighting study and other confusions." There was discussion on small schools grants, money needed for staff and studies, dealing with this in a systematic fashion, how this overlaps with H.879, special education and independent schools, the efficiency of the census-based model, having questions for the Legislature on how the census-based model is envisioned to work, the need for better structure, specifics of the testimony requested, starting with the Board's February 21 statement on special education funding, looking at proposed amendments, the legislative subcommittee and student reports for tomorrow, that Peltz and Mathis would have questions for the Board tomorrow on any statements to be presented in testimony.

Peltz requested meeting minutes from the last subcommittee meeting to use in his report tomorrow. Mathis shared that O'Keefe is going back to the drawing board with the small schools grant project.

**Item F: Legislative Update**

Gaidys shared that Jones had not responded to this meeting invite and that it was likely too short notice for her to attend as she was probably already scheduled elsewhere in the Legislature. Huling offered that the Board would receive a legislative update at tomorrow's meeting.

**Item G: Other/Next Steps**

Huling will prepare a statement. Peltz suggested sending it to Mathis for feedback since he was headed into another meeting.

**Item H: Adjourn**

Mathis moved to adjourn; Huling seconded. The vote to adjourn was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Maureen Gaidys.