

Marlboro School Board Meeting Approved Minutes

Thursday, June 21, 2018, 3:00 PM

At MacArthur House - 1112 MacArthur Rd. 05344

Present:

Board: Douglas Korb(Chair), Celena Romo (Vice Chair), David Holzapfel (Clerk), Dan MacArthur, Lauren Poster

Administration: Bill Anton (Superintendent), Wayne Kermenski (Principal)

Members of the Public: Suzanne Whitehouse, Rachel Boyden, Emily Walsh, Erik Schickedanz, Christine Moyer, Patti Donnelly, Rochelle Garfinkle, Caitlin Persa, Amanda Georgeson, Liz Greco, Pam Maile, Sarah Lavigne, Charlene Morse, Erica Morse, Gail Chaine, Gail Greenleaf, Tom Hudak, Peter Barus (Recorder)

Call to Order

The meeting was convened at 3:15 PM.

Ms. Whitehouse introduced herself as facilitator.

Changes to the agenda

Marlboro School Board Retreat (Section 1)

• Welcome, Norms, and Process Outcomes

Ms. Whitehouse invited everyone to introduce themselves. She reviewed the agenda and discussed process outcomes and norms for the meeting. There was discussion.

She circulated index cards with questions to be anonymously submitted:

- what do you hope to get out of today?
- biggest hope?
- biggest fear?

• Current Landscape

Ms. Whitehouse led discussion of the past year's events, including Act 46, legislative activity.

Mr. MacArthur discussed budgets, education funding, potential end of small schools' grants (\$130,000.00 annually) to be decided next Wednesday (June 27) in Montpelier, and his intention to attend. Mr. Korb noted that the Statewide Map has been released. Mr. Anton reported that the Secretary of Education has suggested that Brattleboro (without Vernon) be Prek-12 as one school, possibly shifting Vernon to another SU, noting that this was a recommendation of the acting Secretary of Education as the previous Secretary had resigned, and that there is still to be a hearing for Brattleboro, Dummerston, etc., to present their cases; SU boundaries could be changed to one of a number of possible configurations. He discussed five units: River Valleys, West River, Marlboro, Stratton and Windham, noting that Stratton would be K-12. He explained that Windham, still part of the process, cannot be forced to join a Modified Unified District but can ask to be accepted by the West River district; that WR will probably create a budget and operation and Windham will continue on its path. He noted that last night the WR board was asked to develop a draft plan for all 600 students, to be presented at L&G to community members, that could have K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12; he will present the draft Monday night for the West River district.

Mr. Kermenski discussed new hires and the budget, working with less the next couple of years under the new Special Education funding model, preparing for changes; he noted his experience with something similar in Massachusetts. He observed that the budget for next year is in good shape; the Pre-k license is expected in two weeks; a preschool student is defined as 0.46 of a students.

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There was discussion of Special Education funding; the SU meets July 25 to discuss this block grant to the WCSU, which will decide on allocation, starting in 2019-20; less money, but also less paperwork, more flexibility; about 3% growth per year in funding and a dollar amount per student means rising costs will reduce funding. Mr. Anton explained that the SU is responsible for controlling the cost of Special Education. There was discussion about why this is an improvement, that many rules will be gone, teachers will face a broader range of student needs.

Ms. Whitehouse invited paired discussion about challenges and opportunities from the conversation, after which the whole group discussed challenges and opportunities across a range of issues including new hires, demands on teachers' time and energy of preschool; inadequate communication; a very large range of ability levels in classrooms; next year expected increase in the number of traumatized students; trauma-informed training; impacts and contributions of the community; family and community engagement; social-emotional health. It was noted that AMP had led the response to a rise in hate crimes; a suggestion was made to offer a "free childcare night".

Ms. Whitehouse asked about outreach, needs assessments. It was suggested that there had been more outreach previously; that there is now a reactive rather than a proactive response in welcoming new families. Mr. Hudak discussed Brattleboro's services and the challenge of access and poverty, noting that poverty is now defined as trauma; and the general lack of services; Free and Reduced Lunch is below 40% so there are no Title funds. A question arose whether families qualify who are not taking FRL, and the possibility that some are not availing themselves of services out of pride. There was discussion of Big Brothers/Sisters volunteers from the college. Mr. MacArthur discussed the magnitude of the trauma issue and acknowledged the benefit of the conversation.

Ms. Whitehouse reviewed the conversations so far and invited further discussion of the challenges and opportunities. There was discussion of early response when students arrive with issues; support for teachers when problems first appear; of identifying what happens and team follow-up; of the TLC system allowing staff-wide information about crises; that families that are struggling don't necessarily know what to do or how to access services or feel comfortable discussing their needs; of developing relationship with families. Mr. Kermenski noted that one of the goals is to look at Universal Trauma Training/Social Justice Training and community support, and discussed behaviorists writing plans for support beyond present skill levels, building a tiered system of support; and that some of the families are fairly capable and present opportunities to create a model. He noted an expected population of 76 next year, and additional enrollments with Preschool replacing Kindergarten. It was suggested that while Marlboro Cares mostly serves older people in town, their volunteers can drive and have had background checks, etc., and the conversation could be opened. It was suggested that much could be addressed by a Social Worker at the school, to support families who are struggling; that the mission and vision of a graduate is about support of the whole student, and the state wants reading and math. Mr. Hudak discussed Social Workers and Counselors; students coming to school with social-emotional challenges that impact their ability to learn; Ms. Maile suggested creating a short resource guide for parents, to give to all families regardless of need.

There was discussion of opportunities to create trauma-informed curriculum with the new configuration, and the L'After program; that Big Brothers/Sisters could be part of after-school programs; of low after-school program attendance in upper grades because of costs. It was noted that Girls on the Run did not have to pay \$100.00 each and some got running shoes and benefited greatly from their participation. There was discussion of the impact of family mobility, students leaving school for different reasons, and that this is currently being measured; that after-school programs are very inexpensive for participants; that there is some disconnect between school and after-school for students, there are different rules and expectations, they could be better coordinated for continuity, and more days are needed. It was noted that there is no boys' running program. There was discussion of poor clean-up after the after-school programs. It was discussed that only older children have Big Brothers/Sisters and possible reasons for this reduction, a suggestion that a community member could facilitate enrollment of new volunteers; it was noted that there are students on the waiting list for a Big Sibling; that Marlboro Cares might be able to help.

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Ms. Whitehouse reviewed opportunities that had come up:

- Marlboro Cares, more family supports
- communication among staff
- social-emotional health

• Profile of a Marlboro Elementary School graduate

Ms. Whitehouse discussed the idea of brainstorming and invited two minutes of thinking on the characteristics and attributes of a Marlboro School graduate (including any student who leaves Marlboro at any point in their education). Participant suggestions included:

- Feel like they have a voice
- Love of learning
- Industrious
- Sense of belonging
- Empathetic
- Responsible to their community (small and large)
- Accountable
- Communicators (visual, verbal, emotional, literate and numerate)
- Problem solvers
- Confident and self-aware
- Flexible
- Confident of own capabilities when challenged
- Strong intrapersonal skills manage emotions well
- Adapt with flexibility and integrity
- Judgment skills, decisions with integrity
- Collaborative
- Resilient
- Experienced with presentation of work
- Knowledgeable

Dinner Break

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Marlboro School Board Retreat (Section 2)

The meeting resumed at 5:40 PM.

• MES Learning Community Outcomes

Ms. Whitehouse distributed five sticky-notes to each participant and asked them to interpret ambiguity as choice; She read the student profile list aloud and invited participants to write on a sticky-note the completion of each sentence:

Values

- I want students to be:
- In my specific role I can:
- It is important to me that MES is:
- I want other people to know that I:
- I believe that our mission is to:

The sticky-notes were attached to corresponding posters around the room and volunteers read the notes from each board for general discussion.

Ms. Whitehouse then asked if there were any surprises; there was discussion; it was noted that “kindness” appeared frequently. She noted that this will be the basis for what comes next, and with permission, she read from the previously submitted index cards, answering:

- What do you hope to get out of today?
- biggest hope?
- biggest fear?

She discussed communication pathways, tensions that arise in group dynamics and how to deal with them, and invited discussion of tensions, noting that there had probably been some during the year.

Mr. Holzapfel discussed the term “stakeholders” from one of the earlier displays, and suggested discussion of the pressures that cause them to behave as they do, as a way to understand the larger dynamic and interrelationship. There was discussion, that tensions accompany change; of parents, teachers, administrators, board members as stakeholders, and of different ways to map this; kids as stakeholders; identifying pressures for each of the stakeholders.

Ms. Whitehouse charted stakeholders:

- Kids
- Families
- Teachers
- Building
- SU
- School board
- Government
- Federal
- State legislators, governor
- Private industry, corporate

-and invited suggestions of pressures and constraints:

- Kids – chaos, drama, time, social chaos
- Families – isolation; lack of intergenerational support, family pressures

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- Teachers – time, families, behavior management, range of student skills; measurable outcomes; assessments; external factors; self-care; personal/professional life; money; the need to encourage all students (even unsympathetic ones); work environment anxiety; accumulating mandates (“piling on”); isolation in the classroom; insufficient breaks; bathroom breaks; pressure to be better.

It was proposed to extend the time; this was not feasible; Mr. Schickedanz asked to hear from administrators; Ms. Whitehouse noted a proposal to extend to 7:15, hear from administrators and cover next steps.

- administrators
 - Mr. Anton discussed the Common Core as a universal, international benchmark opportunity for students to provide a future for themselves; as both a pressure and a measure; high quality instruction done well, should be demonstrable; that the Superintendent is a source of pressure.
 - Mr. Kermenski, as a teacher and now Principal, listed pressures including the budget expected to increase faster than income; confidential information on which decisions must be made missing pieces; being the hub, counted on by board and community; time; making everybody happy; legislative demands; societal pressures; statutory pressures; outcomes; juggling between legislative actions and administrative responsibilities; chaos.
- Community – pressure to conform to Act 46; the rules kept changing midstream while community persevered anyway; money; chaos.

Several participants had to leave under time constraints. Ms. Whitehouse acknowledged them and thanked all the participants.

• Marlboro School Mission

• Moving forward/Farewell

Ms. Whitehouse discussed outcomes and next steps noting that the conversation was not intended to deliver a neat package, it is a beginning; she invited and listed outcomes suggested by the group:

Outcomes

1. Guiding Principles
2. Pressures and constraints list (noting that teachers are families, all dealing with those pressures and constraints too)
3. Clear plan and protocol for feedback
4. Resource Guide for families
5. Deepen partnership with families
6. Mission/Vision statements
7. Strategic process

The participants thanked the Board for the meeting.

Next steps

Ms. Whitehouse invited and listed next steps as follows:

- Debrief Board & Staff
- Read the Minutes
- Committees - Board will initiate; staff volunteers
- Board Members - sit in on staff meetings regularly
- Collect models of communication channels that already exist at MES
- Committee with representation from School Board, teachers, administrators, parents
- Update existing handbooks

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Mr. Anton will bring model protocols; the Board will debrief and coordinate.

Members of the public left the meeting.

End of Section 2

The meeting was reconvened at 7:32 PM.

Approve minutes/payorders

Mr. Holzapfel moved to approve the minutes for May 31, 2018. Second by Ms. Romo. **All in Favor.**

Mr. Holzapfel moved to approve the minutes for June 13, 2018. Second by Ms. Romo. **All in Favor.**

Mr. MacArthur moved to approve Pay Order #26 dated 6/22/18 in the amount of \$75,176.80. Second by Mr. Holzapfel. **All in Favor.**

One additional Pay Order was not available, and approval was Tabled.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Anton reported that he had communicated with the Agency of Education to make sure the SU and Marlboro Board would be protected regarding Professional Development and had received no answer as yet; he will update the Board. He was called by the Acting Secretary of Education regarding a pilot program testing for chemical contamination in wells at ten schools, identified by geologic location; this will be a free risk assessment including all remediation needed, within the next two weeks while the building is empty; Marlboro is one of ten schools designated "at risk"; the program is voluntary; for information contact Chuck Shuer at Vermont.gov. There was discussion about when water is already being tested, that this test is not done routinely.

Mr. MacArthur moved to direct the Administration to follow up on the well test. Second by Mr. Holzapfel; **All in Favor.**

There was discussion of the different relationships between Administrators, board members, staff and the public. Mr. Anton recommended that staff should address concerns through proper channels established by the board through its policies and procedures and keep the role of professional teacher distinct from the role of community member. Mr. Korb asked that these distinctions be made clear in the models Mr. Anton will bring to the Board.

Principal's Report

(See Appendix)

Mr. Kermenski reported the Preschool moving ahead with licensing, expected in about two months; a difficult process, started in January; the annual building audit was done; the licensing will be completed in time for school to start; there was discussion about not being licensed on the first day meaning the students could attend but would not be counted officially until the paperwork comes through; all documentation is in order. Mr. Anton will assist if close to the deadline.

Ms. Poster asked about administration pressures and constraints; Mr. Kermenski explained that managing the pressures is part of the job; he sees changes as opportunities as opposed to challenges; Ms. Poster acknowledged that this has been an exceptionally challenging year for the administrator. Mr. Anton noted talented staff that really cares for the community; that Mr. Kermenski is building on this to create academic success; that the teachers may feel that as conflicting rather than complementary; Ms. Poster discussed a sense of uncertainty in the community. Mr. MacArthur suggested that participants left this meeting feeling

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that they could approach the Administration. Mr. Korb noted that calls to board members must be redirected to the Administration or Warned board meetings.

Mr. Kermenski discussed capital improvement moving ahead and the possibility of hiring people to mow the lawn, etc., probably under budget; the Meetinghouse School is contributing about thirty thousand dollars; there was discussion of disposal of fencing, etc. from the old location. He discussed progress on building improvements, entry locks, etc.

Mr. Korb asked for an update for the budget, noting that Ms. Chaine has begun work already; tuition from HS is significantly less; and discussed other admissions details. There was discussion of incoming students, PE office space conversion to a "Sunshine Room" for students; some partnerships have started with the BEL Center and others to help with behavior issues, write plans and manage them; these deal with capacity issues. There was discussion of Special Education students being out-placed to better address their needs.

Other Business

Mr. MacArthur explained that he is on the Resolutions Committee of the VSBA; that last year they made no resolutions; that he now submitted a draft (see Appendix II) for the Board to consider for approval. There was discussion.

The Board will bring suggested changes to Mr. MacArthur for the July 19 meeting.

Executive Session (Personnel)

The Board entered Executive Session at 8:09 PM to discuss personnel matters by unanimous consent.

The following kindness of Mr. Holzapfel, Board Clerk:

At 9:13 PM the Board moved out of executive session - no action taken

Upon exiting executive session, the Board re-affirmed its support of the school's Administrator to make educational decisions to benefit the school community.

Adjourn

The meeting was Adjourned at 9:13 PM by unanimous consent.

Upcoming Meetings & Important Dates

- WCSU Executive Committee Meeting July 25 @ 5pm
- Marlboro School Board Building Sub Committee meeting July 19 @ 6:30 pm
- Marlboro School Board Meeting Thursday, August 30 @ 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, June 23, 2018

Appendix I

Principal's Report - Retreat

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Preschool: The application has been submitted and I should hear back in about 2 weeks. Hopefully, we will be granted a license.

Capital Improvement Updates: We are right on target and Gail has been working really hard to keep everyone on the very short time schedule. Meeting House Board will help out with any expenses over the 75K that was approved.

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Appendix II

DRAFT 6/21/18

Whereas: a primary duty of a school board member is to promote and support education, and

Whereas: the role of the Vermont School Boards Association is to assist school board members in their purpose, and

Whereas: in order to assure that our educational system continues to be influenced by locally elected people, the educational role of school board members will be more important now that there are many larger districts around Vermont, and

Whereas: it is more important than ever that Vermont's students become good citizens of the world with good civic and cultural understanding,

Therefore be it resolved that the Board of the Vermont School Boards Association direct its staff of educators to:

Devote a substantial amount of time to attracting and supporting new school board members in all Districts, giving them the tools they need to be directly educationally involved in their Districts, encouraging them to develop and support creative and innovative educational ventures, and

To actively seek, develop, and reach out to all Boards to attract Resolutions which address educational issues which will give our students a broad world view and will increase civic and cultural literacy.