

Approved Minutes
TOWN OF STRATTON SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020 at 6:00 PM

Present

Board:

Thomas Montemagni (Chair)
Allison Young (Vice Chair)
Lorraine Weeks-Newell (Secretary)

Administration:

Bill Anton (Superintendent)

Members of the Public:

Colleen Palmer
Betsy Lahue
John Nault
Helen Nault
Sian Morse
Candie Barnard
Stacie Chiodi
Marisa Powers
Andrea Fournier

Claire MacGregor
Bart Richards
Alyson Peterson
Kristine Koepp
Melissa Walker
Abbe Haber
Carol Huber
Jessica Marullo
Peter Barus (Recorder)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

Consider modification to this agenda.

Approve policy update

Approve School Board Minutes from its work session of August 20, 2020.

Ms. Weeks-Newell moved to approve the minutes for August 20, 2020. Second by Mr. Montemagni. All in Favor

Discuss communication with the Town Treasurer

Documents had been provided (*September Snapshot, Stratton/Tuition Policy, Transportation Policy, Residency Policy*). There was discussion of enrollment as of September 1, noting three new enrollments approved, anticipating two more, and expect other applications: current enrollment at 60.

a) approve Order

Ms. Weeks moved to approve the Pay Order dated September 1, 2020 in the amount of \$66,910 for tuition and transportation. Second by Mr. Montemagni. All in Favor.

b) address any other related issues

It was noted that a residency packet had been received; that the family had been given the old application and was missing some documentation, following up; and that there were transportation bills from two other families for Long Trail (total of three students).

Read and discuss any correspondence brought before the Board;

Mr. Anton discussed VSBA correspondence regarding the Homestead Tax Rate, noting that the state Education Fund was down, about 28 million in the red; and that only coronavirus funds were being used so as to keep tax rates flat.

Discuss issues regarding the State of Vermont Weighting Study.

Mr. Anton noted that the Weighting Study would not be addressed in the current five week legislative period, that between October 1 and December 15 elections would be held, followed by setting agendas for the next Biennium; and that Stratton would be kept informed for timely participation.

Mr. Anton noted that the Legislature would be looking only at a bottom level penalty, considering a hold harmless provision, and cited for example that if a district were down to 90 from a normal 100 students, that would be a 10% loss of ADM, EQP 5%; that this scenario would not affect Stratton. There was discussion.

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Mr. Anton reported that he had conferred with State Rep. Pajala, a staunch advocate for Stratton, that Rep. Pajala was working to create a coalition of like-minded towns; that Winhall was looking at around half a million dollars in unanticipated tuitions; the special challenges particular to non-operating districts in ski towns; and that a no-interest loan was being considered to deal with the financial ramifications. There was discussion as to whether the schools might be able to help in this dialog; that the argument that Vermont wants new residents, and should not want to punish non-operating school districts, could be enhanced if supported by school directors in other towns; that legislative discussions could run from November to January; and of the value of working closely with Rep. Pajala.

Ms. Young noted conversation with a resident who offered help with the process; that the Board needed two more; that the resident had suggested a less urgent tone, that there might be more time to work effectively. Ms. Haber and Ms. Powers accepted Ms. Young's invitation to participate.

It was noted that the Mountain School has 41 new students, not all from Stratton; that many new residents are moving into the area, and they had to hire a new teacher. There was discussion;

Complete any outstanding residence issues.

Ms. Young will be sending email to applicants regarding missing documentation. Ms. Peterson noted a new application being completed. There was discussion of the pending sale of property.

Discuss/update efforts to meet with the administrations of SMS and B&B.

Mr. Montemagni discussed the process; there was discussion of possible dates for dialog with B&B, and of negotiating a cap with SMS; noting that it would be important for the whole board to go to a meeting at B&B; possible dates were discussed, and will be followed up for confirmation.

Approve and sign the Warning for the October 6, 2020 meeting regarding adding two additional board members.

Ms. Young explained that there is one interested candidate, that two are needed, that the Warning must be signed.

Review and vote on whether to make adjustment to the Board's approved budget to comply with the financial standards of the Town's auditors.

Ms. Petersen reported that when the Auditors were in the office they had noted a vote to create a reserve fund, and had advised obtaining legal opinion on a name for that fund to comply with statute; and noted that Ms. Garland had advised calling the fund "Tuition Reserve" previously, and that the Auditor would not make any recommendation. Mr. Anton suggested waiting until the CFO returns (September 14), that Ms. Garland could provide the proper terminology without incurring additional legal expenditures. It was noted that the Warning has an additional item in reference to accounting nomenclature.

Review tuition, residency & transportation policies

Ms. Young explained that some of the language had been revised in the transportation policy, displayed on the videoconference screen.

There was discussion of the Long Trail bus, that three families were receiving bus fees, and the return trip was in question; that the Town was paying for the bus; that this should be revisited next year depending on what happens. Ms. Marullo requested consideration for the families who had to change schools and needed transportation home. There was discussion of impacts on budget and taxes; the request was taken under advisement.

The annual review of transportation was completed. Residency Policy language was discussed.

Ms. Weeks-Newell moved to approve Policy F16 (Stratton School Tuition Payment), and Policy F13 (Stratton Verification of Student Residency), both revised on July 2, 2020. Second by Mr. Montemagni. All in Favor.

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Mr. Montemagni moved to approve Policy F09 (Stratton Transportation Policy) reviewed August 20, 2020. Second by Ms. Young. All in Favor.

The Policies will be duly posted.

Address any other business that may legally come before the board.

Adjournment

Ms. Weeks-Newell moved to Adjourn. Second by Mr. Montemagni. All in Favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 7:09PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, September 1, 2020