

ROCHESTER-STOCKBRIDGE UNIFIED DISTRICT BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING

~~WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2018 — 6:30 PM~~

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2018 - 5:00 PM

STOCKBRIDGE CENTRAL SCHOOL

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

*Board Members Present:* Carl Groppe, Megan Payne, Janie Feinberg, Amy Wildt, Jenny Austin

*Administration Present:* Bruce Labs, Bonnie Bourne, David Larcombe

*Members of the Community:* Jessica Arsenault, Pat Harvey, Tim Pratt, Frank Russell, Joanne Mills, Carrie McDonnell

**Proceedings-**

1. Call to Order – 5:05pm by Carl Groppe
2. Adjustments to the Agenda – None
3. Consent Agenda –

**3.1 Approve minutes of February 6, 2018 – Motioned by Janie, seconded by Carl. No discussion, all in favor, approved.**

4. Discussion Items

4.1 **Facilities** – Bruce Labs began by discussing an idea Rochester Principal Bonnie Bourne has been looking into which is moving the Elementary students to the Rochester High School for next year. Janie asked if there was a meeting about this, Bonnie noted no, she has just had discussions with teachers about it in the past week. Bonnie went on to explain that there is no space for common areas, technology, maker-spaces, or growth over time if students remain in the elementary building. Students would still utilize the kitchen and gym areas of the elementary building. She made it clear that the communities need to figure out what to do with the unused space as there will be some. She will be looking into costs on how much it will be to maintain these unused spaces. Amy asked if these costs are in the current budget. Bonnie said the costs reflect what is being paid now. Jenny asked what the cost would be to make this move; Bonnie said they need to research those figures. One of the major costs would involve construction to have a bathroom within the new kindergarten classroom. Jenny stated this idea was not floated by the Stockbridge board members yet, Bonnie apologized stating this idea just came to the table within the last week. Janie asked that Stockbridge be brought into these decisions from the start, and Jenny pointed out the building decisions are up to the new district board and not the individual town. Bruce added that using part of a building for education and the other part for something else could pose security risks, ie: if the unused portions of the buildings were rented to an outside entity. Bruce also noted that there may be funds to help with this transition. During the mergers the

SU received transition grants that still need to be divided up amongst the new districts. Megan noted that the gym has separate entrances and could ideally be blocked off by public using the rest of the elementary building. Discussion about the buildings in Rochester continued with Bruce suggesting a “clerk of the works” to help with any building moves, that’s what Bethel and Royalton are doing and can help by having a point person handle move coordination. Jenny asked who would pay for this and Bruce noted it could come out of the transition grant once that is dispersed. Bonnie noted there is equipment in the high school that the elementary kids will not use, projectors, shop tools, ipads, etc.. These items could be sold or auctioned off or traded with other schools. Bonnie thought it might be best for the board to walk around the property when in Rochester next. Carl thinks the board needs to come up with a broad plan for this move and present it to the communities for feedback.

4.2 **Budget** – New Business Manager at the SU David Larcombe was introduced. Bruce explained David just took over and has done this before so he needs very little training. He also noted that the SU is undergoing a huge software change. Discussion on the budget continued, Janie asked about enrollment; the bottom of the budget reflects actual heads in each school as of October 2017. Carl asked if they could have correct tuition numbers, the numbers used are averages, there should be data on each student based on this year. He noted this number needs to be as accurate as possible in order to determine the rest of the budget. Bonnie will supply some supporting documents to estimate where Rochester 7-8<sup>th</sup> graders might go to school next year and get those numbers into the budget. Bonnie went on to discuss the proposed staffing model for next year which includes one Pre-k teacher, one Kindergarten teacher, one 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade combined teacher, one 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade combined teacher, one 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade combined teacher. This configuration is based on the current population; teachers at Rochester helped to create it and they do support it. Bonnie noted this model works in Rochester for the next two years based on population, but could change due to population in the future. Janie asked about the Stockbridge configuration and Bruce noted that they discuss it every year and that hasn’t happened yet. Jenny asked about specials and wanted to make sure the students at each school have equal access to Art, Music, and Gym. It’s higher in Rochester because the teachers have more class blocks, not the students. Carl also noted that salaries are flat for the second year in a row, he asked that more accurate numbers be put in to reflect the changes in that. Bonnie also made a suggestion that in the future the schools could have a joint band, Joanne suggested it could go both ways. Bonnie agreed, students can rotate between the schools. Discussion continued on direct instruction, clarifying para educators, crossing guard duties, substitutes, and what is covered by SU. Field trips were discussed, a savings can be found by combining field trips. At this time (6:00pm) Bruce and members of the current Rochester board left for a special meeting with an executive session (student issue). Bruce had to leave immediately after to attend another meeting. Discussion continued about the budget with the remaining RSUD board members and principal Bonnie. Tim Pratt commented that the board should focus on the budget without moving students to the high school and that the Elementary can fit K-6 with the gym used for STEM programs. Carl responded that there won’t be numbers in time

to make this decision for the budget, but once they get the budget numbers figured out they will have time to put the energy into this. Tim Pratt noted that if Rochester utilizes the high school building it may become the coolest school in the state however it creates space where the state could come in and decide that Stockbridge students could go there too and fill that space. Carl thought this is unlikely but the state could do whatever they want. Carrie noted that the threat of the state shouldn't stop the board from utilizing the high school space. Carl noted they would not decide to move into the building without knowing all of the costs. Tim Pratt asked when the board got the budget, Carl noted it was Sunday. Tim felt like it was thrown together, Bonnie stated these are real numbers with the exception of placeholders from the current year – she is still trying to locate the back up on many line items as only being in Rochester for about 2 months it's been hard to pull everything together. Discussion on the principal continued, the budget allows for two. Joanne noted the merger discussions included one principal with an assistant. Bonnie thought it would be best to have one principal in each location, at least for the first year. Discussion continued. Bonnie noted most of the combined savings might not be realized until year two once they have had a chance to work through the kinks and know exactly what the district needs. Joanne noted Bonnie was not at the merger meetings so it's not her fault she isn't aware of the items that were promised or were put forth to “sell” the communities with. Bonnie assured that the district will be under the cap. Joanne had a question about how the state reimbursed private funds Stockbridge used to help pay the new principal. Carl isn't sure how that worked out but going forward private funds should not be needed for that type of expense. Bonnie noted that in this budget draft they found over a half million dollars in savings from last year, yet due to the states new laws there will still be a tax increase. Janie noted that there seems to be a lot of forward progress in Rochester but nothing in Stockbridge. Bonnie shared that she hasn't been asked to get involved in Stockbridge at this time. The board members discussed how the next meeting needs to be budget only; the warning for the annual budget meeting must be official and signed by March 25. Pat Harvey asked when the budget will be one line for both towns and not two. Bonnie said after the first year it will be as one combined line including both Rochester & Stockbridge expenses. Pat also commented that it's time the communities and boards start referring to students, staff and communities as “us” and not them. Carrie spoke to the high amount of the hot lunch transfer noting that the summer program was very successful and broke even with their food program. Bonnie noted most schools do break even. Discussion continued about buildings and future meetings and getting the budget numbers as accurate as possible. Amy stated as long as there is a bottom line to put to voters small tweaks can be made after the fact. Carl spoke briefly about the annual meeting warning such as the language and other items that need to be voted on.

5. Confirm Next Meeting Date(s) – **RSUD Special Budget Meeting March 22, 5:30pm in Rochester.**

6. Adjourn – Motioned by Janie at 7:27pm, seconded by Carl

*Minutes submitted by Jessica Arsenault*