

ROCHESTER-STOCKBRIDGE UNIFIED DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2019 – 6:30 PM
@ STOCKBRIDGE CAMPUS
DRAFT MINUTES (REVISED)

1. Call to Order

1.1. Meeting called to order at 6:40pm. Attendees include administration Bruce Labs, Lindy Stetson, and Tara Weatherell; school board members Amy Wildt, Megan Payne, Carl Groppe, Janie Feinberg, Ethan Bowen, and Jenny Austin; several members of the public (sign in sheet not attached); and Orca Media representative Mason Wade.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

- 2.1. 8.6 – policies for cross-campus classroom balance
- 2.2. 8.7 – clarification of details regarding dandelion daycare sale
- 2.3. Rochester marquee – include under principal's report

3. Public Comment

- 3.1. Joanne Mills – Asked where the money came from for the Black River Design facilities assessment study. Joanne stated she was previously told that it came from the proceeds of the dandelion daycare sale. She was also told that the papers of the sale were accidentally destroyed, so how can we know what the details are if we don't know the information? If it was sold prior to the merge, wouldn't that be Rochester's money? Carl noted that it was explained to him by Steve Dale that all assets of each school became the combined assets of the RSUD district upon the merge, except any that were previously identified as belonging to a specific Town. Amy noted that we should have information on the details. Jenny noted that we didn't vote for the money for the study to come from the sale of dandelion daycare. Jenny noted that we talked about using the money from the Dandelion Daycare to pay for the study, but it was not officially voted to use that money for the study. Carl noted that the money from the sale was put in a vaguely defined fund. Amy noted that we have options to pay for the Study. Joanne noted that we are moving forward with plans without knowing how we are paying for them. Carl noted that there is no current plan of how we are moving forward with the Rochester facilities. There is a priority list in the Study of items to address at the facilities. Bonnie noted that the planning study is useful for both schools is to have information on both facilities.
- 3.2. Joanne Mills – What are the actual student numbers? Lindy noted there are 91 students (including 13-14 pre-K) in Rochester and 45 students (including 6 pre-K) in Stockbridge. Lindy and Bonnie do not have 7-12 student information with them. Amy noted that in October the student attendance counts are taken that is what is reported to the State. Bonnie indicated that she can get the number of grade 7-12 students to get out to the public.

4. Consent Agenda

- 4.1. Approve the minutes of Friday, August 2, 2019 (Retreat)
- 4.2. Approve the minutes of Friday, August 2, 2019 (Special)
- 4.3. Approve the minutes of Tuesday, August 6, 2019 (Regular)
- 4.4. August 2nd Special meeting notes: JDA to add a bullet per comment from Keith, community member who attended the 8/2/19 special meeting.
- 4.5. August 6th notes: Joanne would like to add that she would like to hold off on building addition until we know what our tax rate is. She was told “no promises”. Add under public comment under Section 9.
- 4.6. August 6th notes: Joanne noted the minutes should include Dina’s last name to the minutes.
- 4.7. Ethan made a motion to approve the August 2nd retreat minutes. Janie seconded. Motion approved. Jenny to make above noted revisions to the other minutes.

5. Board Comment – none

6. Tax Issue Update

- 6.1. Carl asked if everyone has seen the copy from the Board dated August 29, 2019 *From the Rochester – Stockbridge Unified District Board: Our Education Tax Rate is Resolved*. The administrators, SU, and board members went through and updated the student information for each Town and the SU submitted the data back to the State. The State has now reviewed the data. The outcome is that the corrected rates are \$1.499 for Rochester and \$1.6481 for Stockbridge. These rates are actually slightly less than our original annual budget number tax rates. The tax rates seen by residents are different because of different CLA values from each Town. We have not heard yet when the revised bills will go out. Carl noted it would have been nice to let the public know in advance of tax bills going out, but the Board did not know of the rate issue until tax bills came out. Bruce noted this task brought to light issues in the data system that was used to determine the equalized pupil numbers. For example, there was a high school student that we were not getting credit for. There was a public question asking whether this was going to be looked at going forward. Bruce noted that previously the calculations were done by hand, and with the State’s new electronic system there have been glitches. Tara said that moving forward she will have access to verify students in the entire supervisory union on the database. Bruce noted that he has heard from other Towns’ now wanting to check their own data after hearing of the issue in RSUD. Bruce noted that an error of one kid makes a big difference. Tara said that now there is a method of checks and balances.
- 6.2. Public question – The increase with the State’s error was 18%; what is the new increase? The exact percentage was not calculated, but it is less than what the original tax increase. Bruce noted a total of over \$350,000 in taxes is saved between what the State had set for tax rate and the revised, current tax rate. Ethan asked if we have to vote on the new tax rate since it is different than what was voted on. Carl noted that we do not need to vote on this change.
- 6.3. Amy – Is there anything we want to do or say to the State regarding the process? Janie noted that this is a pattern, they didn’t respond to the SU or us, and that there is one person that

calculates this number. Janie recommended that we write a letter to the State.

- 6.4. Joanne Mills – Joanne asked about the 5% cap issue that we were told applies to us, but are now told it doesn't. Amy said this was misrepresented to the Board, and that we were told during the merger that this applies. Joanne noted that she thinks there should be a revote because it was misrepresented. Joanne noted that it is a big issue. Leslie commented that she did not think that the merger would have gone through if the 5% cap wasn't part of the merger.
- 6.5. Public comment – How are homeschool students accounted into the system? Lindy noted that they can participate in any programs at the school. Deb Matthews noted that homeschool students can't be registered as both homeschool and as a public-school student. She noted they are allowed to access up to 40% of the school day and still be considered homeschooled. They do not get credit unless they go over 40%, and then they would count as public school students. Carl noted that it would be good to have an idea of who the homeschoolers are in our Towns.
- 6.6. Leslie – How many students are there in special education? Lindy and Bonnie noted that there are 2 in Stockbridge and 7 or 8 in Rochester (for pre-K through grade 6). Is there a Wilson certified teacher in the district? Bonnie noted there is one in Rochester now.

7. Reports to the Board

7.1. Superintendent

- 7.1.1. The SU brought in all the new teachers in the SU on Aug. 22 (34 total) for the day. August 26th was a ½ day for the SU, and approximately 250 SU-wide staff attended meetings. Bruce noted an important topic of the day was the literacy program, including a reading coach that is working within all the SU.
- 7.1.2. Bruce noted he has been trying to work on a weekly communication with all boards in the SU. Bruce has been visiting all of the schools in the SU. Bruce noted that several districts are reporting more students than last year.

7.2. Principal's Report¹

- 7.2.1. Approximately \$6K worth of roof repairs were needed for the Rochester elementary and high school buildings due to serious leaks.
- 7.2.2. We have yet to find any specific information that confirms any of the 3 oil tanks are less than 40 years old. Public question – do we know who installed oil tanks? Bonnie noted we do not know. Public question – shouldn't State know that the tanks are installed? Bonnie noted that it doesn't seem there is was any oversight or records maintained with prior administration. Bonnie noted they will check with the State regarding oil tanks. Joanne noted she is surprised that the insurance company hasn't asked about inspections, as from her experience that they usually ask to confirm inspections. Public comment – if it was CV Oil it is likely that they haven't been inspected. Mason noted that there have been conversations about the tanks with the State in the past, and why isn't the information kept over the course of time? Public comment from woman that

¹ 7.2 heading is revised from prior meeting minutes.

- has lived here for 8 years and paid taxes for 30 years, and dislikes hearing of stories that we haven't had records in the past and wants to see concrete information moving forward. Lindy noted that she agrees, and that the current administration feels the same way. She noted records had not been kept from prior administration, but now we have an organized facilities binder to move forward with. Janie noted that now we have consistent principals and leadership and is most confident because our current leadership is on top of this. Megan noted that as a Board we have been wanting this information. Now if we were to lose leadership, we will have the information to pass on. Bruce noted that you need to have good leadership in order to get these systems we talk about in place, and that in the last 5 years we have had 4 principals.
- 7.2.3. Public question – Have there been no records or accountability prior to now? Carl noted there are some more recent documentations. However, part of the problem was to do just what was needed to keeping things going, but when this was done the drawings/information was not updated. Carl noted that the State used to assist in school improvement projects (50% of costs), and since the State stopped paying for these projects there has been less tracking. Carl noted that deferred maintenance is an issue across the State. Joanne asked why if we only use one Rochester building are, we still heating both buildings? Bonnie noted that in the interim we can't just walk away from a building. Ethan noted that we own both buildings and if someone gets hurt around the building that we are liable. Bonnie noted that two of the rooms in Rochester are used in the high school. In addition, the auditorium and stage are being used by the community. There is a building use fee associated for use and Bonnie noted that this fee should probably be looked into. Public question – Can we use Pierce Hall in lieu of the auditorium? Ethan replied that there are differences between the uses at Pierce and the auditorium. Carl noted that we need to maintain facilities to a point in order to be reasonable assets and to keep them safe.
- 7.2.4. Tony – Noted that the Study will be including asbestos and lead investigations. Bruce noted lead is on the legislature's agenda, a new 2018 measure. Tony asked if there is the need for abating asbestos, whether someone look for grants for federal money to help with this. Carl noted that at the SU level there is someone who deals specifically with grants. Stockbridge is looking at grant opportunities to help with the generator. Bonnie thinks most of the asbestos was abated, but was not sure if all the areas were improved or not. Bonnie noted she is not anticipating any major issues related to asbestos. Amy noted we received a \$7,500 grant to go towards the facilities Study.
- 7.2.5. Bonnie noted she would like to have double doors at the beginning of the hallway as a safety measure. Carl asked if the safety funding has already been allocated. It was noted that we were not eligible for the 2nd round of funds, but may be eligible for the 3rd round of funding. It was noted that SCS doesn't have double doors. The front of the building at SCS is set up differently because people can still get into the building through Lindy's office. Leslie commented that there didn't used to be a door between the secretary and principal's office.

- 7.2.6. Bruce also commented that some schools are looking into summer care. Some schools are making monetary resources from these programs.
- 7.2.7. Tony – Is ASP part of the school budget? The Town makes a portion of the payment, part of the program is paid for via a grant, and parents pay a portion. Joanne asked how much parents pay for ASP? Jenny noted that full price is \$7 per day per kid, \$4 for the reduced rate. The transportation cost is covered for the busing of students back and forth for swimming, etc. during summer programs. Public question – If encouraging 3-year olds to come to school we need to have seat belts on the buses. In Stockbridge there are seat belts. There is also a bus monitor at Stockbridge. Bruce noted that 4-year olds can ride without seat belts (not sure about 3-year old's).
- 7.2.8. Public comment – How does the Stagecoach busing work into the budget; public commented they heard that they will not be providing bussing in the future? Carl noted that as a school choice school we cannot put MS/HS bussing into our budget. It is the receiving middle and high schools that can choose to send buses here, and they pay for such.

7.3. Opening of School

- 7.3.1. School opened smoothly. There are 91 Rochester students and 45 Stockbridge students (pre-K through 6th grade). Dick Schultz is retiring after many years of service to Rochester. Butler transportation service is responsible for finding a replacement. Bonnie noted that a replacement has already been found who is part of the community.

7.4. Board approval to dispose of education materials – no discussion

7.5. Custodial Services – Stockbridge

- 7.5.1. Lindy noted we still do not have a custodian in Stockbridge. Over the summer staff did this work. An elaborate search has been ongoing. Lindy said a sub-contractor has been contacted to see if this is an option. Bonnie noted that Vermont's unemployment rate has dropped and that there are a number of schools looking for positions. It was noted that this is a 0.67 FTE, with wage based on experience. Amy asked if the Rochester custodial staff is able to provide assistance. Bonnie noted that Rochester custodial staff is not looking to expand their hours.

7.6. RSUD joint initiatives (Staff/RSUD Goals)

- 7.6.1. Bonnie noted she would like to look into before and after school for pre-school. In Rochester there is not full day pre-school. Janie noted it is important to have full day pre-school and knows of one family in Town that could not come to school until the ASP program was available. Bonnie noted that pre-school program can be difficult for some families because of transportation. Janie noted Sharon has a large pre-K program; Bruce noted they have after school care there. Public comment – Suggest integrating what we are doing at the schools into the marketing of our schools.
- 7.6.2. Working on a combined RSUD handbook for both schools.
- 7.6.3. Faculty for both campuses are attending a safety training in September.
- 7.6.4. Literacy work starting to happen – faculty from both campuses attended a literacy training.

7.7. Review of SBAC student achievement data – tabled for next meeting

7.8. Generator Update – Stockbridge

- 7.8.1. Working on moving forward the generator. Lindy to let the Selectboard know about the process moving forward. Janie noted that she had approached the Selectboard regarding the Town's potential assistance with the generator and that the Selectboard had requested more information. Lindy to get more information that can be brought to the Selectboard.
- 7.8.2. Marquee at Rochester – Bonnie noted it had to be moved with the sale of the dandelion daycare. There have been suggestions of its' location, such as along the barrier that separates the busses and cars. Busses are concerned with line of sight at that potential location. It would have to be parallel to the school and would make it difficult for vehicles to see. Bonnie doesn't think it would be practical to be put the marquee at this location. Ethan asked if the school can talk to the owner who bought the dandelion daycare to see whether it could be put on their property. Ethan asked how can we get the word out about information to communicate to the public; maybe the Town will let the school put up a sign on Town land. Mason noted that there should have been a plan in mind for its' relocation prior to it being taken down. Mason noted the marquee is a communication method for residents. Megan noted that PTO has struggled with attendance and it would be great to have a sign to get the message to residents about PTO events.
- 7.8.3. Public question – There was a survey that was sent out in Stockbridge which included a question about whether they would be interested in being a volunteer at school. She asked how does somebody volunteer? Lindy noted that interested community members can come to the School and fill out the required paperwork. Public member commented that it is frustrating when papers get tossed out and not followed up on. Janie noted it has been a rough couple of years and has been difficult to focus on what we want to focus on.
- 7.8.4. Joanne Mills noted that Lindy and Bonnie are always willing to listen and answer questions on the phone.

8. Discussion Items

8.1. Treasurer

- 8.1.1. A nomination was made by Amy Wildt to elect Rebecca Klein to the position as treasurer. Ethan made a motion for Rebecca Klein to be the treasurer, Janie seconded. Motion approved. Amy noted that she is not interested in a long-time position. She is filling the position of Cathy Brown. Public question – why is the new Town Clerk not taking this position. Amy's discussion with the Rochester Clerk was that this can be too much for a new Clerk person. The new Clerk in Stockbridge was not approached, assuming that she will be busy with other work and learning the position. Perhaps in the future this will be something to approach one of the Town Clerks about.

8.2. Literacy Training, Janie – Tabled to next meeting

8.3. Black River Design

- 8.3.1. Delay in getting asbestos information into the report.
- 8.3.2. Lindy noted that she asked for square footage per student to be incorporated into the report. Amy noted page numbers not lining up, etc.
- 8.3.3. Need to schedule a sub-committee and public community meetings. Carl and Amy to be on a building sub-committee.
- 8.3.4. Jenny noted to Lindy to make sure that we get excel and AutoCad files to us from Black River Design before closing the project.

8.4. Schedule February Retreat – Tabled to next meeting

8.5. Policy for Tuitioning Students

- 8.5.1. Bruce noted that he has been looking at other schools' websites and thinks it would be good for this district to design a wording for the website about how tuitioning works and how is it done. Policy committee meeting coming up in October. Carl asked if Steve Dale is still involved with this committee. Bruce said he is not. Carl noted that it isn't likely that it will be an SU-wide policy.

8.6. Policies for cross-campus classroom balance

- 8.6.1. Carl looking for opinion of Principals in regards to potential combining of students for a specific grade if there are smaller class sizes for one particular grade. Carl noted that it would be good to know the educational value of class size.

8.7. Clarification of details regarding dandelion daycare sale

- 8.7.1. Carl asked what we can get for information regarding the sale of the dandelion daycare sale. Tara has a folder with information. She said the settlement amount was \$70,904.05. Tara said the funds were deposited into a Rochester general school fund prior to the merger. Jeff Sherman was Rochester School Board chair at the time, and Willem Jewett was the settlement agent. Amy noted there was a motion made to allocate it into a general education fund. In regards to the sale, the preschool playground was moved, and a partial fence was put up. Amy noted she assumes the money for that came out of the settlement amount.
- 8.7.2. There was prior discussion of potentially using the dandelion daycare sale revenue to pay for the Facilities Assessment Study. Bonnie noted that everyone noted that it is an option to use the dandelion daycare proceeds but no vote was made. A decision still needs to be made regarding how the Study is paid for. Carl noted we should review minutes from Rochester meetings to see how the language was noted in the sales.

9. Action Items – none

10. Public Comment

- 10.1. Mason commented in regards to the double doors at the buildings, we want to make sure that in addition to safety we want to make sure kids are happy.

11. Executive Session - Student Issue

11.1. Went into executive session at 9:02pm

12. Return to Public Session

12.1. Return to public session at 9:45pm

13. Other – none

14. Future Agenda Items – none discussed

15. Next Meeting Date

15.1. Tuesday, October 1, 2019 @ Rochester Campus - Regular Meeting

16. Adjourn

16.1. Meeting adjourned at 9:55pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Austin