

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

1. Call to Order
 - 1.1. Meeting called to order at 6:37 pm by Carl Groppe. Attendees include administration Bonnie Bourne, Lindy Stetson, Tara Weatherell, and Bruce Labs; school board members Carl Groppe, Ethan Bowen, Megan Payne, Amy Wildt, Jenny Austin, and Janie Feinberg; member of the public Joanne Mills; and Orca Media representative and community member Mason Wade.
2. Adjustments to the Agenda
 - 2.1. Grade configurations for next year at Rochester – 9.6
3. Assign Times/Time Keeper – Lindy Stetson
4. Public Comment (10 min) – none
5. Consent Agenda (5 min)
 - 5.1. Approve the minutes of Tuesday, November 5, 2019 (Regular)
 - 5.1.1. Ethan made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, Megan seconded. Minutes approved.
6. Board Comment (15 min) – none
7. Reports to the Board
 - 7.1. Superintendent (5 min)
 - 7.1.1. Bruce noted the SU has received special education money from the last quarter of last year, which was received two months late. Approximately \$600,000 was received, but this was less than the SU feels we deserved. The SU was told that at that time it would be 3-4 weeks late. This holds up the finalization of audits. Bruce called Jeff Francis, head of the superintendent's association, to see how we can get our issues out in front of the AOE. Jeff suggested Bruce come up with a list of five items that the SU has issue with at the AOE and sent to the AOE. The letter to the AOE included bulleted titles of: (1) Impact to SU from the delay in reimbursement, (2) AOE staffing understaffing with lack of expertise, (3) AOE provided trainings, (4) universal chart of accounts / finance, and (5) recognition of merged districts. Some of the details of the concerns are related to dialogue with AOE, not getting feedback or taken seriously, concerns with Brad James not getting back to us, lack of clarity on answers from the AOE, issues with the tax rate scenario, and other

concerns. Bruce will be sitting down with the secretary of the AOE regarding their receipt of the letter.

7.2 Business Manager (5 min)

7.2.1 Tara – The State was supposed to release the allowable tuition rate on Dec. 1, and will not be meeting that deadline. Definitions of allowable and announced tuition rates were discussed. Joanne Mills noted that the State hasn't updated the reference to "Rochester High School" in the State system. Bonnie noted she wanted the Board to be aware that the additional steps and time it takes at the State causes the SU, Tara, and others at the SU to duplicate steps and errors that come out of the AOE. Carl referenced that we pay money for additional efforts for the SU to clean up numbers, and we need to make sure we are producing a central office budget that is adequate. Bruce noted that the SU is looking for additional help. Bruce noted that the SU was given a deadline from the State regarding food service matters which would cause additional costs if they were late in submitting, but was work that needed to be done. Bruce noted that he knows the SU needs information, and the SU is trying to make sure that we can get this done. Bonnie noted that she is glad that it is on Bruce's list that SUs are getting penalized, meanwhile the State AOE can be behind on meeting their deadlines without being penalized. Janie applauded Tara for all the work that she is doing.

7.3 Principal (5 min)

7.3.1.1 The principals report handout included items such as (among other items) curriculum and instruction - starry night and winter concert, goal view training, direct instruction training, parent/teacher conferences, assessments, K-1 combined schools farm to table meal, and noted that the first trimester is complete.

7.3.1.2 Facilities – lead testing to be conducted, safety conference on December 10 and 11.

7.3.1.3 RSUD has submitted the application for the farm to school grant.

8. Policy Review (20 min)

- 8.1. Public complaints about personnel, B22 – Minor edits were discussed. Amy made a motion to accept the policy pending edits discussed. Janie seconded. Motion approved.
- 8.2. Head Lice Management, C35. Amy made a motion to accept the policy. Janie seconded. Motion approved.
- 8.3. Community Use of School Facilities, E20. – Minor edits were discussed. Amy made a motion to accept the policy pending edits discussed. Janie seconded. Motion approved.
- 8.4. Emergency closings, F31 – Minor edits were discussed. Amy made a motion to accept the policy pending edits discussed. Janie seconded. Motion approved.
- 8.5. Grade Advancement: Retention, Promotion & Acceleration of Students, C36. Lengthy discussion followed. Janie asked if we have to have retention, as research shows that retention is not effective. Instead of retention, we should be making sure that kids get what they need. Megan asked if this is for all grades, or just pre-k through grade 6. It was

clarified that this would be for pre-k through grade 12. Lindy noted that she thinks in at least upper grades retention is not beneficial. Bonnie noted she doesn't support retention; however, we are not always guaranteed that there won't ever be an exception. Ethan asked if we say "no retention" if this means the board would not pay for any circumstance for retention. It was confirmed that this is true. Janie noted that students that need retention are the ones that need differentiation. Ethan asked Janie if she felt the same way towards grade advancement. Janie said that she believes this applies to advancement as well. Bonnie said that there may be a rare time when retention may be work. Lindy suggested verbage that doesn't lock us into something but perhaps change to the wording to be procedural in nature. Lindy suggested that the policy as written doesn't help with the make-up of our district, and the difficult part is to make sure the policy is applicable to kids in grades 7-12 who attend schools outside of our school district. Policy to be tabled to January meeting. Lindy will put together some text for the next meeting.

9. Discussion Items

9.1. Budget Discussion (20 min)

- 9.1.1. Bonnie wanted to ask if there are any major initiatives that we want them to look at. She said that her and Lindy are looking at the engineering report to see what critical items they recommend putting into the budget.
- 9.1.2. Tara noted that as of yesterday the auditors are wrapping up at the SU. There is a tentative surplus for FY19 of \$329,000 (including reserve fund(s)). Tara still has questions about some of the reserve funds to be resolved. The reserve funds were briefly discussed. Tara to finalize looking into this amount and what fund(s) it includes.
- 9.1.3. Ethan – when will we know when what Janie is doing for the schools is "pilot" program or an actual program moving forward. Bruce thinks the SU has some funds to carry on the work that doesn't necessarily have to come out of the RSUD budget.
- 9.1.4. Ethan noted the desire for a second language and how can that fit into the budget. Jenny asked Lindy about the enrichment block at Stockbridge and whether this can be incorporated here utilizing the current PE teacher (who speaks Spanish). Lindy noted that she is trying to give kids voice to their enrichment activities and second language wasn't one that they are interested in. Jenny asked if we can set this as one of the options.
- 9.1.5. Jenny noted she would like the administration to keep considering how the combined schools can be more effective working as a merged district.
- 9.1.6. Bonnie mentioned the length of our school day and whether it can be adjusted. Contract says "up to 8 hours". Right now staff is there for 7 hours. Bruce said that Newton is the only school in the SU that goes 8 hours, and noted they have ½ days on Fridays.
- 9.1.7. Amy would like to look at younger years and extending the pre-school care. Bonnie said the highest paypack we can get is getting kids into the schools at a younger

age. Lindy noted Stockbridge has lost out on 3-year olds because it is only ½ days. It was noted that Sharon has an after-care program for pre-school aged kids, and Royalton has summer care. Bonnie mentioned the concept of a daycare / after-care program to increase the opportunities for pre-school aged kids. Bonnie noted that we should look at a model that makes our pre-school more desirable to parents. Bonnie noted that there is a childcare shortage in the area.

9.2. Review Budget Timetable (10 min)

9.2.1. Tara handed out a draft budget timeline based on statute. Jenny asked when we will be seeing a first draft of the budget. Tara noted that we will see a first draft in January. Tara suggested we may need a special meeting to go over the budget. Potential dates were discussed for such – tentative meeting(s) on Jan. 13 (Rochester @ 6:30pm) and/or Jan. 23 (Stockbridge @ 6:30pm).

9.3. Building Committee Update (10 min)

9.3.1. Carl noted the building committee has met 3 times, and they were hoping to report back at this meeting. However, there are more details that the committee is looking into prior to reporting back, including: looking at building priorities, where our student populations will be in a few years, reusing existing building spaces, potential updates noted in the report, investigating how bonding works, etc. There is a meeting next Tuesday to come up with a grid of scenarios. Lindy noted that community input is important - what does the community want and what are they willing to pay for are two key points. Ethan noted that for public outreach it is important to have as much Stockbridge and Rochester representation as we can. The possibility of holding a community meeting at the Stockbridge Meeting House was discussed as it is a location that is as close to the two Towns as possible. Bonnie suggests getting someone to mediate at these meetings. Lindy knows of a mediator that has been going to other SU meetings like this. Amy commented that we have only been together for 1.5 years and we need to show what our kids have gained. Joanne Mills noted a fear for Stockbridge is that “it doesn’t matter” because Rochester has more voters and will get what they want. Ethan doesn’t think that the Town of Rochester has one solidified opinion across its residents.”. Ethan commented that if there is a strong will by Stockbridge to unmerge, Rochester and the Board isn’t going to force the situation into something that both Towns don’t want.

9.4. Annual Report - committee check in (10 min) – not discussed

9.5. The Marque (10 min)

9.5.1. Amy suggests not doing anything until we know more about the plans for the Rochester campus. Ethan noted it isn’t just about the marque, but it is about communication and how do we get the word out about what is going on at the school. Bonnie noted it will cost \$1200-\$1500 to install but a location has not been located. A small sandwich board is allowed by the former Dandelion Daycare building, but the big sign needs to be at a different location. Bonnie noted that people that don’t go into the school won’t see a sign down closer to the school.

Bonnie said she agrees with holding off on putting a sign up next to one of the school buildings. Bonnie noted that we can put out a sandwich board up front.

- 9.5.2. Mason noted frustrations that there should have been a process when the sign was taken down in order to put the sign back up. Mason questions the whole process and accomplishments when little things can't be taken care of by putting up a sign. Ethan eluded to the discussion at the last meeting with a large emphasis on getting education accomplished and making progress in educating our kids.
 - 9.5.3. At this time the marquee to be put in storage until such time that we have a clear idea as to what building it will go in front of. A sandwich board on the abutters property will be used to announce events, as approved by the abutters property prior approval to place such.
- 9.6. Grade Configurations (10 min)
- 9.6.1. Currently have 14 3-year old's at Rochester elementary school, and at this campus we are licensed for 15 4-year old's. That would leave room for 4 new 3-year old's next year. Administration will be doing a "child find" to estimate how many youngsters are anticipated for next year. Bonnie foresees the options for next year include: (1) get another year licensed pre-school in the high school building, (2) pre-school and K combination, and (3) have all 3-year old's from both communities at the Stockbridge campus. Bonnie noted she does not support (1) because it would isolate a group in another building. She foresees there could be issues regarding transportation with (3). In scenario (2) she noted a 2nd licensed pre-school teacher could be achieved by having an existing staff member get a provisional license, and noted this shouldn't be an issue. Bonnie recommended waiting to see how many kids are expected next year before finalizing a plan. Megan asked if the schools have determined configurations for next year? Bonnie noted there will be some changes between this year and next year in regards to classroom configurations.
 - 9.6.2. Carl asked about the potential policy related to placing by campus depending on numbers in each group. Megan noted that this could be a difficult for some kids to move back and forth, and Jenny agreed. Lindy noted that adjustments at campus due to numbers is not ideal, but that we are really creative with coming up with solutions. Amy noted that for younger kids this may be easier as they spend more time integrating with kids at the other campus. Bonnie noted that we could slowly be moving towards with the notion of what we want becoming in conflict with what we have if the numbers of kids in each Town declines. Jenny noted that we need to look at the pool of kids in our area outside of our Towns and have PR for trying to attract families to have their kids come here (from neighboring Towns without elementary schools). Bonnie noted that we annually need to think about grade configurations.

10. Action Items

- 10.1. Trustees letter (5 min)

- 10.1.1. Carl has drafted a letter to go to the Rochester Trustees of Public Funds. Amy suggests indicating how the funds will be used (academically, not operational). Amy noted in Stockbridge the money has been endowed to the School. In Rochester, the money has been endowed to the Town, and we are asking the Town for a “gift”. Amy to make updates to the letter and send to Carl, and Carl to send out letter.
- 10.1.2. Tara has noted she has sent a letter to financial institutions in the area to see if they hold any accounts in our school district that we are not aware of. She hasn’t gotten any responses yet. Four open bank accounts for Stockbridge. Tara needs to contact the Stockbridge Town Clerk in order to get information as to what is in these accounts.

11. Public Comment

- 11.1. Joanne – dates on annual report timeline (handout by Bonnie) and annual meeting procedures (handout by Tara) do not line up.
- 11.2. Joanne – second language: can we see what schedules are for nearby schools and what their program is. Megan noted a second language is a common question that families ask. Ethan asked how effective it is to incorporate a second language. Janie noted it is very effective and suggested it is more effective the younger in age it is introduced to kids.

12. Other

- 12.1. Carl to send out survey monkey to schedule a board retreat

13. Future Agenda Items - none

14. Next Meeting Date

- 14.1 Tuesday, January 7, 2020 @ Stockbridge Campus - Regular Meeting
- 14.2 Tentative special meeting to discuss budget – January 13 (Rochester @ 6:30pm)
- 14.3 Tentative special meeting to discuss budget – January 23 (Stockbridge @ 6:30pm)

15. Adjourn

- 15.1. Meeting adjourned at 9:11pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Austin