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TWINFIELD UNION SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, December 19, 2017

Twinfield Union School Library

Present: Patrick Healy, Chair, Scott Harris, Chandra Miller, Lauren Cleary, Jon Groveman and Jill Wilson.
Student Reps: Sally Weinstein, Jacob Dufresne. **Administration:** Mark Tucker, Superintendent;
Mark Mooney, Principal; Bob Gulardo, Assistant Principal; Christina Kimball, Business Manager

Call to order and Introductions:

- Patrick called the meeting to order at 6:05.

Public Comment

- None

Consent Agenda

- Approve Minutes of Nov 28, 2017 – Lauren moved and Jill seconded to approve the minutes as written with one typographical correction. Motion carried.

Reports

Superintendent Report –

- School was closed on 12/12 for weather
- A problem with the heat into the cafeteria was fixed
- Recognition of religious holidays – The leadership team will be monitoring non-Christian religious calendar to avoid scheduling events on significant holidays. Still working on clarifying the specific holidays. Three significant ones are Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Passover. Still seeking to clarify which of the days of multi-day holidays are to be avoided.
- Governor's Ed Summit – Focus of the summit this week was Education Spending, shrinking demographics, and Act 46.
- Supreme Court hearing – The VT Supreme Court heard the appeal by Washington Northeast SU of the VT Labor Relations Board ruling regarding conducting teacher negotiations in open session. Decision could come in next 1-6 months.
- Negotiations – Boards are going back to the table on 12/20 with teachers and support staff. If not settled, there will be a fact-finding session in January.

Principal Report – A day in the life of the school on 12/19

- Seat belt safety monitoring as vehicles arrived
- Several student presentations around the building
- 7th-8th grades were dissecting a pig in science class
- 8th grade prepared a meal for serving at the homeless shelter in Barre on 12/19
- The Penny Challenge is ongoing, wrapping up on 12/21. Over the years, TUS has raised over \$40,000 for local charities

Student Report –

- National Honor Society fundraiser this year is toiletry drive, soap, shampoo, etc. Stuff goes to the homeless shelter
- Bernie Sanders essay contest – seven students entered
- Gabriel Groveman has been selected to serve as a Legislative Page for six weeks
- Criminal justice class took a field trip to the NE Correctional complex in St Johnsbury
- Jakob Dufresne was accepted to UVM

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Twinfo –

- Everyone sang happy birthday to Bob Gulardo

Board Discussion

- a. Transgender Student Policy – Second Reading
 - a. Bob told the Board about upcoming plans (January early release day) for additional training from Outright Vermont
- b. Public Presentation and Q&A on Act 46 Section 9 Proposal
 - a. Scott Harris led a discussion of the AGS Section 9 report. He reviewed the history of Act 46, and then discussed the efforts over the summer to find another option.
 - b. When the AGS Proposal is submitted, it will be reviewed by the Agency of Education, and they may ask for clarification or additional information. Then, the State Board will ultimately “decide” what TUS should do. Mark Tucker told the Board that his expectation is that the State Board will nudge TUS in a certain direction but not tell us exactly what to do. So, for example, if they suggest a certain partnership or merger, they will leave it to the Board s of the affected schools to work out the details.
 - c. There was a great deal of discussion and questions among the Board and between the Board and the public in attendance. One of the basic issues involved clarifying terminology – merger versus standalone – what does this mean? Since the Cabot-Danville-TUS merger failed in June, the TUS Board has reached out to districts and Supervisory Unions in the surrounding geographic area. These efforts and their results are detailed in the AGS proposal. In summary, everyone we reached out to, to ask about interest in merger or some other partnership, either said “no thank you” or “not now.” This has put TUS in the position of not having a partner to sit across the table from to discuss how any type of working relationship might work.
 - d. One audience member asked if the Board had reached beyond the bordering districts/Supervisory Unions to inquire about merger? The examples cited were St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute. Both of these schools are private institutes, and as such it is not possible for TUS to form a merger with either one. Some in the audience asked if TUS should be considering High School Choice, which would require the closing of the high school a TUS. Patrick explained that this is a discussion that can be had at any time, but it was beyond the scope of the AGS proposal. Closing the high school at TUS would require an affirmative vote by Plainfield and Marshfield as the two towns in the Twinfield Union. If interest in high school choice exists, it can be pursued by the community at any time and is not precluded by the proposal being submitted on December 26.
 - e. The Board asked for the public members to express their sentiment regarding the questions of merger vs. standalone. The general consensus in the audience and later among the Board members is that TUS does not know enough about a possible merger – because there has been no partner to discuss this with – to express a preference for merger. The proposal will be updated to reflect that perspective – which by default favors a standalone district – but to add a list of TUS “values” that would be important for the State Board to consider if they want to direct TUS towards merger discussions.
- c. Initial FY19 Budget Review - Christina reviewed the first draft of the FY19 budget
 - a. Overall budget totals are down by \$98,000 due to the retirement of some debt obligations, reduction in staff costs from the new teacher hires in the fall, etc. However, a number of factors contributed to an increase in net Ed Spending per Pupil: a decrease

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in local revenues, reduction of the property yield, a decrease in the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA), and a net reduction of 20 Equalized Pupils (a large HS graduating class last June was not matched by a large incoming kindergarten class). All of these worked against the school, and results in an increase in Education Spending per Equalized Pupil of 4.60%. The Governor's target is no more of an increase than 2.5%. Christina reported that reaching that lower target would require a reduction of an additional \$100,000 in the overall budget. The Board directed Christina to initiate discussions with administration to seek such a decrease. Mark Tucker reported that he has directed administrators to seek savings in staff through attrition – if teachers/support staff leave or retire, they will not be automatically replaced without first considering alternative staffing configurations.

- d. Regional High School Choice Lottery
 - a. Mark Tucker recommended to the Board that they approve ten incoming and ten outgoing "slots" as has been the practice in past years.
- e. Request for non-AFS sponsored student to attend Twinfield Union School.
 - a. A Plainfield family is planning to host a student from France and asked that she be allowed to attend TUS Feb-June 2018. The Board is generally supportive of this request but asked for some clarification about liability and parent rights.

Board Action

- a. Transgender Student Policy – Second Reading
 - a. Lauren moved and Jill seconded to adopt the C28 policy as written. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. Public Presentation and Q&A on Act 46 Section 9 Proposal
 - a. The Board directed the Superintendent to integrate the public comments and Board discussion into the draft AGS proposal. The Board will review revisions with the intent of having the proposal submitted by the end of the day on Friday. No formal vote.
- c. Request for non-AFS sponsored student to attend Twinfield Union School
 - a. The Board will act on this request at the next Board meeting, assuming the host family has provided the necessary clarifications.
- d. Regional High School Choice Lottery
 - a. Jill moved and Scott seconded to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve ten (10) incoming and ten (10) outgoing slots in the 2018-19 Regional Lottery. Motion approved unanimously.

Next Agenda Items

- a. Draft #2 of the FY19 Budget

Future Agenda Items

- Overview of extra-curricular opportunities for students who don't participate in sports
- Discussion of "Field Notes" – is there an interest and means to revive this communication?

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37