

BMU SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Via Zoom

September 2, 2020

Present:

Board Members: Angeline Alley, Paul Hazel, Allison Ingerson, Kristen Murray, Allana Page, Kelsey Root-Winchester, Coco Huang (student rep)

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Bruce Williams, John Barone, Scott Blood

Others: Jim Merriam, and other members of the public

- I. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 by Angeline Alley, Chair. The agenda was reviewed. A presentation by John Merriam was added. The VSBA update will be omitted
- II. Motion by Paul Hazel, seconded by Kelsey Root-Winchester to approve the Board minutes of August 5, 2020. Motion voted on and approved unanimously
- III. Correspondence
 - A. A letter of resignation was read from Wayne Smith.
- IV. Principal Report—Reopening
 - A. Dr. John Barone: shared data based on information received from students and parents, information on buses, and copies of recent letter to parents.
 1. Question from Judy Murray: How will remote learning be equitable? Dr. Barone: We have new cameras and microphones. There have been workshops at the building level and OESU level to train teachers on technology.
 2. Paul Hazel: Updated information on staffing? Scott Blood: Currently there is a possible vacancy for high school math and middle school science. We are currently short one full-time para. We are looking for a long-term sub paraprofessional. Dr. Barone: We have a candidate for the middle school science position. Coverage plans are in place.
 3. Angeline Alley: BMEA has been great to work with regarding MOA's and being flexible. John Barone and Scott Blood echoed that. The BMEA Executive Committee has been great to work with. Scott Blood: There is less stress and anxiety and everyone is moving to full acceptance. The Faculty is feeling prepared and ready.
- V. Custodial/Maintenance Report
 - A. Paul Hazel: Can we do the work with existing staff: Scott Blood: No. Currently we are working to increase some custodial time and are optimistic that we can do that.
 - B. Judy Murray: What is the septic system pumping cost? Will savings come from not doing the gym floor this year? John Barone: I don't have that information.
 - C. Angeline Alley: We will check with Daryl Sulham and have information for the October meeting.
 - D. Judy Murray: Will the roof hold up for the next 10-15 years? Angeline Alley: We will check with Daryl Sulham and share information at the October meeting.
- VI. OESU Update

A. Had an OESU Board meeting last night. A couple of policies are still being worked through. Almost every district is working toward one contract—same number of days, etc.

1. The Board went over plans for school reopening. Butler Bus has been very cooperative in working out bus routes, number of riders on a bus.
2. The Board talked about leaves of absence during COVID. At the OESU level, there are some employees whose children attend school in other districts where they don't have school all 5 days. Some employees are eligible for leaves due to COVID. If they cannot find child care, that can be an impact for our district.
3. The Board talked about a joint OESU retreat to talk about technology, COVID issues, and special education.

B. Food and Summer meals.

1. Bruce Williams said the Agency of Agriculture has extended the summer food program. There are significant benefits. Every child under age 18 has access to free meals. There is about 20% higher reimbursement rates for the meals.
2. There are logistical issues, since every child isn't in school every single day. Asst. Supt. Williams will work on ways to work through that at BMU.
3. The meals have been extended through December 31st, or until funding runs out. They will be a big benefit to children and families in the community.

C. Presentation by Jim Merriam, CEO of Norwich Technologies, a company very engaged in solar arrays in Upper Valley.

1. They are involved in the Groton Array, owned by Bruce Genereaux. They have provided arrays to several schools in the Upper Valley. Bruce Genereaux transferred the agreement to Norwich Technologies. The agreement will show us that we can save more. Norwich Technologies would like to provide more power from an array in St. Johnsbury to match BMU's needs. BMU has saved about \$2,000 per year so far, and the new arrangement would save about \$5,000-\$6,000 per year. There would be an amendment to the agreement we have. It would be for 20 years and would state that BMU would be working from the array that is going to be built in St. Johnsbury. We would stay on the Groton array until the new array is built.

VII. COVID Upbeat Data

A. OESU administered the staff a well-being and satisfaction survey in the fall of 2019 across all schools in the OESU and then administered the same survey in the spring.

1. Used data from the fall survey to set goals.
2. The spring survey included some COVID items.

B. 83 staff members at BMU completed the survey. The survey showed improvements from fall to spring in most areas.

1. Teaching from home questions showed data reflecting challenges in spots, which isn't surprising. 53% of the students were felt to be fully engaged. About 14% were not regularly engaging.
2. Communication: overall was fairly good, but showed areas for improvement, including collaboration between teachers
3. Work/Life balance indicated that it was a challenge for staff.

- 4. A lot of concern amongst faculty about student emotional well-being
- 5. Comfort using technology—a little higher comfort shown by BMU faculty than the average of the SU
- 6. Some concerns about internet access for students
- 7. Professional development was a need
 - a. If we have to close again, the learning would look a lot different than it did in March.
- C. The Upbeat survey will be given again in October and then again in the spring.
- D. The data supported a lot of the work that Scott Blood and John Barone have been doing over the last couple years.
- VIII. Public Participation—None
- IX. Negotiations Update
 - A. The negotiating teams from the Board and the BMEA have tentatively reached a 2-year agreement. This will be discussed in Executive Session
- X. Action
 - A. Motion by Paul Hazel, seconded by Kristen Murray to accept Wayne Smith’s resignation with regret. Motion voted on and approved unanimously
 - B. Motion by Paul Hazel, seconded by Allana Page to authorize the Chair to sign the amended Solar Agreement once it has been reviewed by legal counsel. Motion voted on and approved unanimously
- XI. Other Business
 - A. Can the Community Relations Committee prepare a post card to be sent out answering FAQ from the Zoom meeting? Angeline Alley will highlight questions to be answered.
 - B. PE and sports: Does the resignation change any PE? No.
 - 1. Will masks be required during PE and sports? Those questions were asked to be directed to either John Barone, Scott Blood, or Todd Powers. PE will be taught either be in classrooms or outside.
 - C. Concerns were shared about the clarity of phone calls being sent out to families, also regarding families receiving multiple phone calls
- XII. Executive Session
 - A. Motion by Paul Hazel, seconded by Kristen Murray to enter Executive Session at 7:28 PM pursuant to VSA Sec. 313, a. (1) (c) to discuss contracts, after making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.
 - B. The Board exited Executive Session at 7:40 PM
- XIII. Action—None
- XIV. Motion by Paul Hazel, seconded by Kelsey Root-Winchester to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 PM. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Nancy Perkins, Minutes Clerk

The minutes are in draft format and are unofficial until formally adopted by the Board at a subsequent meeting.