

**MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT (MVSD) BOARD
INFORMATIONAL BUDGET
MEETING MINUTES
MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL LIBRARY
June 4, 2019
7:00 PM**

Present: Board members: Board Chairperson, Chris Shepard (Highgate), Board Clerk, Meaghan Conly (Swanton), Don Collins (Swanton), Eric Beauregard (Franklin), Devin Bachelder, (Franklin), Steve Scott (Highgate)

Others Present: Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, Business Manager. School Administrators: Dan Palmer, Pat Hartnett, Dena St. Amour, Justina Jennett, Joyce Hakey. Kosha Patel, Tania Hayes, Robert Gervais, Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary. Channel 15/16 cameraperson. Community Persons in attendance: Pam Greene, Dave Bennion, Jay Denault, Denis Boucher, Peter Magnant, Gregg Gervais, Ty Choiniere, Nola Gilbert, David Roddy, Georgette Roddy, Jim Sullivan, Connie Beyor, Brandy Maskell, Kim Gates-Maynard, Elaine Nester

Call the Meeting to Order- Chris Shepard called the informational meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Presentation

The board displayed a power point presentation for the community in attendance to view. Julie talked about how we got here with the State Board issuing an order on November 30, 2018 calling for organization of the new District within 60 days. That date was postponed by an agreement between the State Attorney's office and the attorneys fighting Act 46. The district met again in February but the business of the meeting was postponed by the voters to see what the judge decided. In March the voters of the MVSD community met and organized. This allowed us to form and meet as a transition board and conduct school district business, including developing the merged budget and warning a vote on Articles of Agreement and the election of new board members on April 30th. The newly elected board of 6 met and adopted the merged budget and warned it for a vote on June 11th. All along the way the local boards were preparing the information and priorities that they wanted to ensure were included in a merged budget. Chris explained that Franklin, Highgate, Swanton and MVU make up the Missisquoi Valley School District. Meghan reported the enrollment in each school and what was important to them with the highlights in Franklin being Number Talks, Community Involvement, and Teamwork. Highgate's highlights was academic performance especially their work on Math Menu, high quality staffing, and positive climate for learning. Swanton highlighted their success of PLC work in math and literacy, their continued hard work in social, emotional learning and growing student

enrollment. MVU highlighted their wide variety of courses for students in grades 7-12, including in the arts, foreign language, business, family consumer sciences, and our unique and popular agricultural program; increasing number of our students are taking advantage of rigorous academics opportunities such as Early College, Dual Enrollment, AP courses, our Honors Credential, Work Based Learning placements, and personalized learning option Humanities in Action. MVU's students contribute thousands of hours of service to our community through our middle and high school Student Councils, Honor Societies, and other clubs and organization.

The Pre-K 12 Expense Budget is \$37,001,935 with the anticipated Revenue of \$9,069,348. The Per Pupil Spending is \$15,158. Lora explained the areas of increase and adjustments as follows: Step increases for professional salaried staff □ Health insurance premium increase of 11.8% for all staff □ Facility Bond debt payments for MVU and Highgate □ Investments in building and grounds, repair and maintenance □ Grant Funded Teachers incorporated into general fund expenses □ Athletics and co-curricular □ Moderate increases to Supplies, Books and Equipment □ Increased investment in staff professional development □ Reductions have been made in Early Childhood due to loss of Early Childhood Expansion Grant funds □ Reductions have been made in ELL staffing to accommodate loss of Sheldon students. Julie explained that included in the extra-curricular budget is a feeder football program for the Junior Varsity. When the MVU School Board met, they thought it was important to include this to strengthen the quality of the program. They budgeted \$10,000 and wanted the public to know that this was included to provide transparency with our new board. The FY20 MVSD \$15,158 equalized per pupil cost is below the average of \$16,111 with the rest of the state. The estimated tax increase based on the Homestead Value of \$200,000 will be \$186 in Franklin, \$170 in Highgate and \$210 in Swanton. Lora stated that approximately 70 to 80% of the population receives income sensitivity.

Chris Shepard read the Article language for Article 3: Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District approve the School Directors to expend \$37,001,935 which is the amount the School Directors have determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$15,158 per equalized pupil.

Julie pointed out that Article V was placed on the warning in error. Article V Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District transact and other business legally authorized to be transacted; considered appropriate and necessary when met? This article is intended for a town meeting style vote and not an Australian Ballot. Will Senning from the Secretary of State's office has advised us that this Article is not necessary and that it will not be counted. This will not impact the other articles on the ballot.

Julie explained that the legislators did not pass a default budget this session. None of the proposals made it through the legislation. If the budget is not approved, there will not be a budget on July 1st and it may put summer programming at risk. Chris read the location of the voting: FRANKLIN- Franklin Town Hall, Main Street, Franklin;

from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. HIGHGATE- Highgate Sports Arena, 243 Gore Road, Highgate Center; from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. SWANTON - Swanton Village Municipal Complex, First & Elm Streets, Swanton; from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m

Don Collins expressed his disappointment that the legislators did not pass a default budget and felt that we should let them know how disappointed we are.

Chris asked the community members in attendance if they had any questions.

Kim Gates-Maynard commended the board on the work involved in the new budget. She is disappointed that there is no comparison to last year. Lora explained the challenge of making this comparison when the lines do not match and how they are in different areas of the different town budgets. There will be a comparison next year. Additionally, there are bonds from Highgate and MVU. Chris explained that the Highgate bond included improvements to the roof, bringing the White Building to code, upgrades on the HVAC system. It is a 20 year bond at 3.58% interest. MVU's bond includes upgrade in security, electrical connections being move to the woodchip area from underneath near the theater, replacing the chiller, additions to the front of the building. This bond was passed the year before so this year only the interest was paid on it. Don Collins explained the reason for the delay to bring it to voters was they wanted to pay off the last 20 year bond before bringing a new bond to the voters. Denis Boucher explained that they tried to keep the payment the same. Jay added that this eliminates the \$100,000 article that has been on the warning each year at MVU. Connie Beyor inquired about if there was any money for capital improvement funding? Lora explained that Swanton moved the capital line project to their plant budget line item. Kim Gates-Maynard asked about the 12% increase in health insurance and how this translates in real dollars? Lora stated that this amounts to approximately a \$50,000 increase. She explained that it was challenging moving from five districts to one district. Kim stated that she would like to support education but would like to know where the money is going and the budgets behind it that came to the total. Lora invited anyone to come in to the office and she would be happy to go over it individually and walk through it. The transportation revenue is received at the Supervisory Union office so in this budget, it is shown at the full expense but when it is in the local budget it is shown as a net expense. Sharon Bousquet asked about the breakdown on the principals' office. Lora responded that it included salaries, lease on the copiers, postage, paper, supplies, registrar etc. The general administration includes the Supervisory Wide administration such as the Curriculum Coordinator. Don explained that losing Sheldon made a financial impact on the Supervisory Union. Other administration includes the Early Childhood Administration, Special Education administration and support staff. Connie Beyor commented on the impact of Sheldon leaving the Supervisory Union. Lora responded that Special Education expenses was based on use so there was no impact. Central Office is based on enrollment and the Early Childhood Program was based on grades 1-3 ADM. Lora explained that taking Sheldon out caused more of a financial burden on the Supervisory Union. Julie explained that any previous shared cost has a bigger impact on the district. Ty Choiniere stated that he has been to multiple meetings and the board needs to be more transparent. He explained that there use to be pages of information provided and doesn't understand why there is not more information given

Jim Sullivan said he has been involved with the MVU Agriculture Advisory Board and if you were to add all the budgets together, what is the increase? Lora explained there is a two million dollar difference with \$500,000 being just in health insurance increase. Jim asked if there is revenue from the Ag Program, how does it work? How do you take the money now with four different districts and apply it. Jim stated that there is a lot of revenue received as a result of students enrolled in the Ag Program. He wants the revenue to go directly to the Ag Program. Julie explained that there is an expense budget and the revenue will come off the top of all expenses. Lora stated that there are reserve funds such as scholarships that are allocated for that specific purpose. Jim didn't understand how you can use AG revenue to offset expenses in all the schools. Connie asked about the revenue from the State of Vermont that does not have an identified purpose, how do we account for it? Jim felt there was confusion on where the money ends up. Lora welcomed anyone to come in so that she can go over the details with them. Jay Denault felt that the district should provide more information on the budget. Pam Greene echoed what the others have said about a lack of detail on the budget. She asked what the district paid for dues, specifically for the Vermont School Board's Association. Lora said they pay about \$15,000. She was very disappointed to see that the VSBA worked tirelessly against us who were not for the forced merger. Chris stated that it is on the docket for the board to review this expense. Nola asked where one can obtain a copy of the 2018 audit. Lora said they can request it from the Supervisory Union office. Jay agreed with the lack of detail and said that back in April there was a breakdown of what each school spent and the Supervisory Union. He is disappointed to see it all lumped in one column. This is not in compliance with transparency and very difficult for the voters to get the information they need. Connie commented that this was a huge task and she couldn't imagine how difficult that was. Next year how will the budget process will be different and will it give us more information. Chris explained that they did so much in a hurry this year and they will work on providing more detail next year. Jay asked if the State required the format that was used. Lora replied that the State did not require this format but did expect that the different schools were merged into one budget. They need to do a lot of work to standardize the approach. Jay stated that he can't tell what is being spent in each school. Devin Bachelder replied that the board needed to combine in to one budget. Jay explained that even the State has more detail in their State budget. He needs more information to help make a decision. Ty Choiniere said he would like more details next year. It should be backed up with more general fact information. Kim asked where the other increases were with approximately \$50,000 in the health insurance line and the increases in the bond. Chris explained that they made increases in the buildings and grounds in all the budgets because all of them were set too low and the MVU Principal has a \$145,000 bond payment Brandy asked about the loss in grant funding in the Early Childhood Program. Lora explained that this was the last year of a four year ECP grant. Jim explained that he went to the meeting when they talked about the football. He said that \$10,000 for football is peanuts compared to \$65,000 being spent on track. He asked that voters not use this as a reason not to pass the budget. Sharon Bousquet asked how much of the budget is spent by June? Lora did not have an exact number. Nola asked how spending for the chart of accounts will work? This used to be broken down by school. Will the funds be separated and building specific? Lora explained that salaries will be broken by building. In the future tech leases, copier leases,

district wide expenses will not be broken by each school. They must be reported to the State by code Chris asked if there were any more questions? Hearing none, he declared the meeting adjourned.

Adjournment

Chris adjourned the informational meeting at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary