

RSU #63 Board Meeting  
Date: January 22, 2018  
Location: Holbrook Middle School

Minutes

**Members Present:**

*Town of Eddington:* David McCluskey and Rusty Gagnon

*Town of Holden:* John Hutchins, Jennifer Newcomb, Gavin Robinson, and Suzanne Wieland

*Town of Clifton:* Linda Graban

*Superintendent of Schools:* Susan M. Smith

*Excused Absent:* Samantha Berube, Town of Eddington and Jake Morgan, Transportation and Facilities Director.

Board Chair, Rusty Gagnon called the meeting to order at 6:32pm. A flag salute was conducted and a moment of silence was observed.

New Board Members were introduced and welcomed. John Hutchins will be filling the seat of Daniel Allen for the Town of Holden and Linda Graban will be filling the seat of Buzz Moore for the Town of Clifton.

Motion by Jenn Newcomb, 2<sup>nd</sup> by David McCluskey to approve the minutes from the November 27, 2017 Board Meeting.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**Recognition and/or Awards of Students, Staff and Others:** Rusty Gagnon, Board of Directors Chair, recognized and thanked Ken Smith, former RSU #63 Interim Superintendent of Schools, Kelly Theriault, RSU #63 Business Manager and Jenn Newcomb, RSU #63 Board of Directors Vice-Chair, for their countless hours of hard work on the Yvonne Mitchell case. The Chair's comments in their entirety are attached as an appendix.

Superintendent Smith has received emails from staff members commending Jason Staples, new Holbrook Custodian, on his work quality. They are very pleased with the cleanliness of the rooms and offices. Superintendent Smith received a call from a parent, commending Jeannie Bachelder, Bus Driver, for setting the bus safety standard and sticking to it.

**Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:**

The Holden Elementary School received a \$250 donation for the Library in honor of Michelle Hardy, Library Volunteer and John & Lola Ferwerda for instilling the love of reading into John & Lola Ferwerda's grandchildren. The District received a \$325.20 "Secret Santa" donation to pay off school lunch balances. The money was applied to unpaid balances accrued prior to being qualified for free or reduced lunch. Heritage on 9 will be donating their returnable money quarterly to the Holbrook School to be used for Technology. The first quarter donation totaled \$93.60. Circle K donated two \$50 gift cards. These were given to Michelle Hardy, Volunteer Librarian and Shelly Miller, Holden Ed Tech, who is volunteering as Chess Club Instructor. Circle K will be donating a total of \$2,000.00 over the year as part of the Fuel Our Schools program. Ashton Carmichael, Librarian at Holbrook School, was awarded a grant from Donors Choose. Mr. Carmichael applied for a "Where in the Library Can I Find" grant and was awarded iPads to be used in the Library.

**Presentations:**

Bill Hall, from RHR Smith & Company, reviewed information from the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year Audit. He answered questions and identified Student Activities Accounts as an area to work on. Overall, RSU #63 is in good financial standing. Mr. Hall also stated that he was pleased RSU #63 followed through with the Yvonne Mitchell case.

**Questions and Comments from the Public:** Bob Harvey, Holden resident, echoed thanks to Ms. Newcomb and Ms. Theriault for their hard work on the Yvonne Mitchell case. With the closure of the case and the reimbursement of lost funds, he expressed his concern for the towns that had helped cover costs during the time of loss. He hoped some of the money would be paid back to the towns.

**Dates of Next Committee Meeting:**

Budget & Finance Committee: Monday, February 12, 2018, at 5:30pm, at Holbrook

FY19 Budget Workshop: Thursday, February 15, 2018, at 5:30pm, at Holbrook

Policy Committee: Tuesday, February 6, at 4:30pm, at Holbrook

New School Community Committee: TBD

Technology Committee: Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at 3:30pm, at Holbrook

Curriculum Committee: TBD

**Discussion and Motions Regarding Reports**

None.

**Budget and Finance:**

Jenn Newcomb advised the Budget and Finance Committee met prior to the Board Meeting today. Discussion took place on the Management Letter from RHR Smith & Company regarding the FY17 Audit. Discussion took place on the multiple roof leaks at the Holbrook School, and the estimated \$20,000.00 in repair work that is needed. Ms. Newcomb will have a full report for the next Board Meeting.

**Superintendent's Report:**

Superintendent Smith recommended inviting Peter Lowe from Brann & Isaacson on February 26, 2018 for a workshop with Board Members and Representatives from the Collective Bargaining Units to focus on the role of the Board (and others) in negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, individual contracts, evaluations, and policies as well as how those work together.

David McCluskey made the motion to invite Peter Lowe to lead a workshop from 6:00pm until 7:00pm on Monday, February 26, 2018 to be followed by the regular Board Meeting. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed.**

**RSU #63 Chair's Report:**

Rusty Gagnon discussed an email she received from Maine School Board Association (MSBA) newsletter and encouraged all Board Members to read these emails. LD1761, An Act Regarding the Prohibition of Firearms on School Property is going before Legislature.

RSU #63 Board Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2018

Page 2 of 7

Ms. Gagnon recommended all Board Members contact their local representative and voice their opinion in regards to this bill. Ms. Gagnon gave an article to Superintendent Smith titled "Derelict school becomes national leader by making a surprising subject (music) compulsory."

**Acceptance of Reports:**

Motion by Jenn Newcomb; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Suzanne Wieland

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**Old Business:**

**Policies:**

Motion to approve policy JKR-R-Disciplinary Removal of Students with Disabilities-Administrative Procedures by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb, with amendments.

**Vote: 6 Approved; 0 Opposed; 1 Abstention from John Hutchins**

Motion to approve policy KDB-Public Right to Know by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**New Business:**

**Policies for Approval:**

Motion to approve policies ADC-RSU #63 Policy Addressing Tobacco Use & Exposure and ADC-R-RSU #63 Policy Addressing Tobacco Use & Exposure-Administrative Procedures by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Suzanne Wieland with amendments.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Motion to approve policy DKC-Reimbursement of Business-Related Expenses by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb with amendments.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Motion to approve policy EEAEC-Student and Rider Conduct on School Vehicles by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb with amendments.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Motion to approve policy KF-Community Use of School Facilities & RSU #63 Equipment by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb with amendments.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**Policies for Rescinding:**

Motion to rescind policy GBED-Tobacco & E-Cigarette Use on School Premises by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**Board Committee Membership:**

Motion to add Suzanne Wieland to Budget and Finance Committee by Rusty Gagnon; 2<sup>nd</sup> by David McCluskey.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Updates to the current Board Committees:

John Hutchins has joined the Policy Committee, Curriculum Committee, and Technology Committee. Linda Graban has joined the New School Community Committee and is going to be the John Bapst Memorial High School Liaison. David McCluskey expressed interest to continue representing RSU #63 on the United Technology Committee (UTC) Board after his RSU #63 Board Membership expires in June. Superintendent Smith checked with UTC and this does follow the Cooperative Agreement.

Cost Benefit Analysis Recommendation from the New School Community Committee:

Superintendent Smith shared the two Cost Benefit Proposals that were submitted. The cost to have the analysis done was much higher than anticipated. The New School Community Committee recommends we meet with Oak Point to see if there is anything that can be done to lower the cost. Board members discussed other options of obtaining cost savings comparisons from in-house staff. Superintendent Smith advised some of the comparison data could be done in-house, but much of the information needs outside expertise.

Bob Harvey stated he was very pleased to see the proposals are being rejected, as the costs are much too high. He felt the money could be better used elsewhere in the schools. He is in favor of combining the schools we have as long as we continue to maintain the buildings so they have a good resale value.

Motion to invite Oak Point to meet with the New School Community Committee for further discussion of Cost Benefit Analysis by Gavin Robinson; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Motion to continue the Board Meeting past the two hour time limit by David McCluskey; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Suzanne Wieland.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

2018-2019 Calendar:

Superintendent Smith presented the 2018-19 school year draft calendar. She advised it is similar to this school year calendar and aligns with the UTC calendar. The one change is the last day of school. Half-days are not legal school days. Students must receive breakfast and lunch. Parents will also be notified that we will not dismiss at 11:00am on the last day for this school year.

Motion to approve the 2018-2019 calendar by David McCluskey; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jenn Newcomb

**Vote: 6 Approved; 0 Opposed; 1 Abstention** (Gavin Robinson momentarily absent)

Personnel Actions:

Keith Johannes resigned as Holbrook Custodian. Bruce Blackmer rescinded his resignation and instead requested a reduction in hours. We could not accommodate his request. Mr. Blackmer's last day of employment was December 22, 2017. Kim Colavito has been reassigned from substitute Bus Driver to regular Bus Driver. Andrea Turmelle and Donnette Cameron are on medical leave. Tara Ring has been hired to fill the Ed Tech III vacancy at the Holden School. Tim Archambault is returning as Baseball Coach for the Holbrook School. Steve Goulette is continuing as After-School Program Coordinator. Nikki

RSU #63 Board Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2018

Page 4 of 7

Goss and Erin McDonald will be offering After-School Instructional Support. Peter Walsh will be instructing Math Masters for Grade Three and Five as well as Robotics for Grade Six. Doug Ferguson will be instructing Math Masters Grade Four. Sonia Groesbeck, who was also appointed as a Substitute, will be instructing the After-School Babysitting Certificate Program. Jason Staples has been hired as the Holbrook Custodian.

Searches continue for Substitutes, Softball Coach, Track Coach, and After-School Program Guided Study Instructors for Grades Six and Seven.

**Questions and Comments from the Public:** None

**Executive Session:**

At 8:34pm Gavin Robinson made a motion with a second by David McCluskey to go into an executive session contract negotiations between RSU #63 and Superintendent Susan M. Smith pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. section 405 (6) (D).

**Roll call was taken with all members replying "Yes".**

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

At 9:39pm, Rusty Gagnon declared the Board out of Executive Session.

Motion by Suzanne Wieland; 2<sup>nd</sup> by David McCluskey to accept Superintendents Smith's Three Year Contract as proposed with an increase of \$1,500.00 per year in salary and an additional annuity benefit of \$1,000.00 per year.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

**Adjournment:**

At 9:44pm a motion was made by Suzanne Wieland; 2<sup>nd</sup> by David McCluskey to adjourn the meeting.

**Vote: 7 Approved; 0 Opposed**

Respectfully submitted by,



Susan M. Smith

RSU #63 Superintendent/Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Approved: February 26, 2018

## APPENDIX : Opening Remarks from Board Chair, Rusty Gagnon

We're going to take a brief and special moment off Agenda tonight for two purposes – both related to what has been a 10-year “issue” for this District – the misappropriation of nearly one-quarter of a Million dollars from the District's school budget over several years by its former Business Manager, Yvonne Mitchell.

For many years, those of us working on this case have been unable to answer questions posed by members of the public and school district. TO do so might have compromised the attorneys' abilities to bring this case to the conclusion it has. So, in a nutshell, this is what has happened.:

On Monday, Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, five people stood before the Superior Court Judge in Bangor and addressed various ways in which Yvonne's theft had negatively impact this District and its communities. Those individuals were: Ben Breadmore (Holden Town Manager), Karen Clark (former School Board member from Eddington), Susan Smith (District Superintendent of Schools and Director of Curriculum & Instruction), Jennifer Newcomb (School Board representative from Holden) and Jackie Smallwood (former Holden resident who stood with Jenn), and myself as a School Board representative from Eddington and the Board's Chair. It was my belief that the judge heard and understood the information and negative impacts which occurred because of Yvonne's thefts.

Following our remarks, Yvonne and her attorney attempted to explain her reasons for the theft of over \$215,866., to which she had already pled guilty. In summary, she claimed her son had acquired a drug habit resulting in an addiction to heroin. In order to save his life, because she was so fearful of him dying, she bought him a trailer, paid the lot rental, bought him food and clothing, and attempted (several times) to get him into rehab programs.

At that point, her attorney requested that she have no prison time because she had (as of that day) made full restitution. We had previously pointed out the \$215,866 did not include interest, the District's costs for a Forensic Audit and Attorneys, up until when our attorneys turned the matter over to the Attorney General.

Our attorney from the A.G.'s office then pointed out to the judge that many of the years Yvonne claimed to be providing housing, food, clothing, etc. for her son, he was in prison on drug-related charges and, as such, had housing, food, clothing, etc. provided by the State of Maine.

Bottom line to this is that Yvonne was sentenced to 2 years in state prison and 3 years on probation.

SO, now you know how things turned out. However, I would be remiss if, now that we can talk about the case, certain people were not recognized for their significant contributions to this resolution.

**First – to Jenn Newcomb** who, as a member of the public (along with Jackie Smallwood) attended School Board meetings month after month and raised questions about the monthly Finance Report; prepared detailed documentation supporting her concerns that finance expenditures were not being reported accurately and even met personally with Yvonne and the (former) Superintendent, with no improvements or changes. I believe this

issue was the primary reason why Jenn ran for School Board and has served heroically as Chair of Budget & Finance these past 4 years.

**Second – Ken Smith**, our former Interim Superintendent of Schools who understood the frustration Jenn & I felt waiting for the Attorney General's Office to move forward on the case. The case had been dragging on for years. Not only did Ken make regular calls to the attorney assigned to the case, but even called and spoke to the Attorney General, Donna Mills, personally. How fortunate we were that Ken and Donna knew each other from the time when they both worked in Millinocket. But for Ken, I don't know if this case would have ever moved from the back burner.

**And Last, but by no means least – Our hard-working Business Manager, Kelly Theriault.** From the beginning, I think Kelly knew she had inherited a mess. Her willingness to find the answers to a myriad of questions by digging through years of convoluted budget and finance reports, turning over boulders, rocks, stones, and pebbles to find enough data to know a Forensic Audit was needed and the cost justified. Without Kelly, the District would never have been able to recover the \$215,866 and that chapter of anger and frustration brought to a close

I know this case and its associated procedures have been a heavy and additional burden on Kelly. There is nothing anything any of us can say to equal our appreciation for your hard work and dedication to resolving what many of us, in that courtroom, called Yvonne's complete betrayal of ethics, integrity, honor, and professionalism.

**Kelly, these flowers are for you.**

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Last, but by no means least, and I say this to all Board members (now and to come) and everyone else associated with the District, when there are members of the public or staff, who repeatedly bring forth concerns or issues they believe to be unaddressed, the Board needs to listen to them. Yvonne did the stealing but she had help from those unwilling to confront her. None of us can abdicate our responsibilities – not as Board members, auditors, administrators, parents, or taxpayers. Accountability must be the watchword of everyone.