

MEETING OF THE  
MONTPELIER ROXBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 20, 2019  
MINUTES

Minutes Approved: *April 3, 2019*

Present

Board: Bridget Asay (arr. 7:16 p.m.), Becky Bowen, Michele Braun, Lisa Frost, Steve Hingtgen, Tina Muncy, Jim Murphy, Ryan Zajac  
Administration: Superintendent Libby Bonesteel, Principal Mike McRaith  
Students: Emma Harter, Hope Petraro  
Public: Emma Bay-Hansen, Morgan Lloyd, Nicholas Nicolet, Susan Monmaney, Nathan Suter, and others  
Absent: Andrew Stein

\*NOTE: Mr. Hingtgen was elected but not sworn in prior to tonight's meeting. He therefore will not be voting on any items requiring action.

1. **Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m. Mr. Murphy requested the addition of an agenda item for an update from the student representatives.

- Public Comment - Emma Bay-Hansen read a prepared statement from parents of children who participate in the Earthwalk program (copy attached).

2. **Consent Agenda**

- Minutes of March 6, 2019 Meeting
- Warrants for Payroll and Accounts Payable for March 29, 2019
- Co-Curricular Contracts
- Resignations
  - Mike McRaith
  - Sarah Mele
- Policy for Adoption
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Policy Monitoring Report
  - Fiscal Management
- Superintendent's Report
- Declaration of Posting Locations for Board Meeting Agendas/Warnings

Mr. Murphy thanked everyone involved for their fantastic work on the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy to be adopted at this meeting. There were requests to remove the policy monitoring report and the declaration of posting locations for board meeting agendas/warnings from the consent agenda. Mrs. Braun moved, seconded by Ms. Muncy, to approve the consent agenda as amended

including minutes of the March 6, 2019 regular meeting, Warrant FY19 - 20A dated March 29, 2019 in the amount of \$873,003.64, Warrant FY19 - 20B dated March 29, 2019 in the amount of \$250,000.00, co-curricular contracts (see listing), two resignations, adoption of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy, and the superintendent's report. Motion carried unanimously.

With regard to the declaration of posting locations for board meeting agendas/warnings, Mr. Zajac requested to add school websites to the list of posting locations. Ms. Muncy requested to add the Senior Center to the list receiving courtesy copies. Following discussion, it was decided that Union Elementary School, Main Street Middle School and Montpelier High School will be the three designated posting locations, with all other locations/persons on the list designated as receiving courtesy copies.

The policy monitoring report revealed needed updates to the Fiscal Management policy. Following discussion, Ms. Bowen moved, seconded by Ms. Muncy, to approve the policy monitoring report. Motion carried unanimously.

### 3. **Board Business**

- Re-appoint Clerk

Mr. Zajac moved, seconded by Ms. Bowen, to appoint Ms. Frost as Clerk. Motion carried unanimously.

### 4. **Discussion**

- Attendance
  - Outside Programming
  - Extended Vacations

The discussion focused on how the District treats absences for participation in educational programs outside of the school building (eg. Earthwalk), as well as absences for extended vacations, etc. Equity, state law for attendance, effects of a truancy letter, responsibility for make-up work, and the need for clarity of what absence from town means were discussed. Following discussion, Mr. Murphy suggested that the Board trust Superintendent Bonesteel and the administration's judgment and allow them to continue forward based on tonight's discussion on this matter.

### 5. **Learning Focus**

- Student Members: Hope Petraro and Emma Harter

Hope and Emma reported on recent celebrations around the District, as well as their attendance at a conference in Jackson focused on the state takeover of Jackson public schools.

### 6. **Board Planning**

- Schedule Full Day Meeting Dates
  - Potential topics (eg. effective communication, equity)
- Discuss Potential Trainings and Dates

Health education was identified as a desired topic. A Doodle poll was suggested to confirm which dates work best.

### 7. **Executive Session**

- For purposes of discussion of contract negotiations

Ms. Asay moved that the Board find that discussing contract negotiations in open session would put the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Ms. Muncy seconded and the motion carried unanimously at 8:19 p.m.

Ms. Asay moved that the Board enter into Executive Session in accordance with 1 VSA §313 to discuss contract negotiations. Mr. Zajac seconded and the motion carried unanimously at 8:19 p.m. On a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to leave Executive Session at 8:35 p.m.

8. **Adjournment** On a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.



Heather Michaud  
Recorder

Co-Curricular Appointments

Bashara, Richard	Tennis, Girls: Varsity Coach	MHS
Benoit, Nolan	Girls' Ultimate Frisbee: Head Coach	MHS
Cain, Lilli	Tennis, Boys: Varsity Coach	MHS
Callison, Sam	Girls' Ultimate Frisbee: JV Coach	MHS
Cecere, Louis	Tennis, Girls: Assistant Varsity Coach	MHS
Cooke, William	Baseball: Assistant Varsity Coach	MHS
DeSando, Carlo	Ultimate Frisbee Coach	MSMS
Duggan, James	Baseball Coach	MHS
Garrison, Brian	Boys' Ultimate Frisbee: JV Coach	MHS
McCarthy, James	Baseball: Head Coach	MHS
Noble, Nate	Lacrosse, Boys: Head Coach	MHS
Reid, Kasandra	Track and Field Coach	MHS
Watson, Anne	Boys' Ultimate Frisbee: Head Coach	MHS

## Montpelier School Board Meeting: 3.20.19

A larger group of Earthwalk parents and I met prior to this meeting, and in an effort to streamline our public comments on this issue, I will be representing them and summarize our collective thoughts and questions.

We are here to open up a dialogue about how we treat absences that occur because of enrollment in educational programs outside of the school building, such as Earthwalk and the Nature Center. We see tonight as just the beginning of a larger discussion. Thank you for making room for this on the agenda.

In years past, days spent attending Earthwalk Village School were considered "excused" by the district. This year, days spent attending Earthwalk are being recorded as "unexcused." Our sense is that this change is perhaps the product a fresh interpretation of the rules by our new administrative team, and does not represent a shift in the longtime support for the program by our school community. Our children's absences have prompted truancy notifications for many of us, which brought our attention to this matter. We feel strongly that participation in Earthwalk or other such valued educational programs should not be treated the same as a child skipping school for no apparent reason.

We have always felt supported by the teachers, administrators, and community for our decision to provide a flexible solution to our children's educational needs. We hope to find a way back to that supportive environment in a way that balances with the needs of the district. We are concerned that treating participation in Earthwalk as an unexcused absence may have unintended consequences. Parents could decide not to participate because of these truancy letters, and this could make it harder for these programs to exist and continue to serve the many children that love and value the program.

We hope that you will explore the following questions on tonight's agenda:

1. How would Earthwalk garner the designation of "approved education program" under current law?
2. How do other schools and districts treat attendance to Earthwalk and other such programs? Can we build on those models and our past policy to be more supportive of programs such as Earthwalk?
3. What can we, as parents do to help move towards a solution?

Thanks again for your consideration,

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Emma Bay-Hansen

Nicholas Nicolet

Sarah McKearnan

Julie Curtin