

Hudson School District School Board Retreat Approved Minutes

July 21, 2021

Nashua Country Club
25 Fairway Street, Nashua

In attendance:

Gary Gasdia
Diana Lamothe
Ethan Beals
Mike Campbell
Gretchen Whiting

SAU Staff

Larry Russell, Superintendent of Schools
Rachel Borge, Director Special Services
Jen Burk, Business Administrator
Kim Organek, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction
Terry Wolf, Director Strategic Engagement & Communication

Called to order: Mr. Gasdia called the meeting to order at 9:04 and turned the meeting over to Superintendent Russell.

Mr. Russell thanked everyone for taking the time to meet. The retreat is a workshop format, where board members can take the time to informally discuss topics and long-term planning.

2021-2022 Priorities

Mr. Russell reviewed principal priorities for 2021-2022. The common themes among all principals are social emotional support for student and staff. A large number of students will be in school for the first time ever or in eighteen months. Implementing iReady and continuing to roll out Math in Focus are priorities in the elementary schools. All schools will support staff with the adoption of Schoology and support will be provided with the instructional support team through on-demand professional learning. Ms. Whiting asked if the principal priorities can be shared with the board on a quarterly basis.

Long-Term Goals & Strategic Plan

Ms. Wolf briefly reviewed the pillars and goals from the strategic plan. The plan is in the process of being updated. Mr. Gasdia and Ms. Whiting liked the format of the document. The board is looking forward to resuming regular updates about the strategic plan.

Alternative School

Mr. Russell shared a draft proposal for an alternative school. He said it's a concept that's been around the country and supports students that struggle with school. The goal is to catch kids while they are young, in ninth and tenth grade. Students will still meet the state requirements for at state diploma. The program would be started as a pilot with ESSR funds. If the pilot is successful, the program could accept tuition students from other districts.

Board members asked administration to set criteria to evaluate the project. Administration will bring more details to the board in the fall.

Early Learning Center/Preschool

The Early Learning Center is at full capacity, both at Library Street and HO Smith. Preschool is currently at Nottingham West. HO Smith has 228 students registered for the coming school year and Library Street has 173 registered with estimates it will be 195 by the first day of school. With current staffing at Library Street, they don't have the room. The gym is also being used as a storage area for custodial supplies, Title 1 and library materials for students.

SAU staff, principals and the district transportation provider met with representatives from the town on July 20 to discuss the traffic pattern at the Early Learning Center. Traffic can back up at times during the start and end of the school day. The SAU is going to do a traffic study and will report to the board with an update.

Capital Improvements

The board discussed potential long-term capital improvement needs in the district. A capital improvement committee, led by Ms. LaMothe, is putting together a plan for capital improvements that will be shared with the town. Items discussed:

The Early Learning Center

The Early Learning Center was created in 2014 to bring preschool, kindergarten and first grade into the same location. The Library Street building is at capacity. HO Smith and Library Street share a playground. Preschool is at Nottingham. HO Smith was built in 1945 and cannot be used for students below first grade. Portables are being considered to alleviate space issues at Library Street but it looks like a six month wait, minimum. Ms. Whiting does not like portables. They are detached from the school and are not conducive to building community.

Hills Garrison

The roof is currently being replaced. The traffic flow between Alvirne and Hills Garrison is a concern. Ms. Burk is meeting with VHB and Principal McCarthy next week to review a traffic study.

Nottingham West

The gym floor is being updated. New bleachers will be installed soon. The roof has been leaking in several spots this summer. Storage space is needed.

Alvirne High School

The biggest need at Alvirne High School are the safety and security items that were proposed in warrant articles the last few years. The school cafeteria needs new tables, which are budgeted this year.

Hudson Memorial

Hudson Memorial share a list of needs for the next five to ten years:

- The gym floor and bleachers have reached their lifecycle
- Upgrade the baseball, soccer and softball fields
- Replace the bathroom partitions
- Upgrade the girl's locker room – this was last done in 1967 and the boys locker room was upgraded seven years ago
- More cameras in the hallways
- Continue the classroom furniture replacement plan
- Replace teacher desks – some desks are from 1967

Mr. Gasdia asked why the desks hadn't been replaced sooner. Each year the board asks what the needs are. The board agreed they would rather have requests and deny them than not know what the needs are. Members of the board felt that the girls' locker room should be a high priority but needed an accurate estimate for repairs.

Alvirne Renovation

The capital improvement committee recently discussed options for an Alvirne renovation. The safety issues (entrance, parking, and cafeteria) are still a high priority. Ms. LaMothe updated board members on the meeting. There is interest in creating a warrant article for the March 2020 proposal for \$17.5M that included the safety needs and an auditorium. The capital improvement committee discussed fundraising to offset some of the cost of the proposal, including naming rights.

Mr. Ethan Beals did not support the March 2021 proposal, instead preferring the March 2020 proposal. Jen Burk stated the board could submit a letter to the state for building aid. The letter would need to be send in January 2022 and the warrant article would be in March 2023. There are 15 projects that have already been submitted to the state. Last year they were funded at 40%.

Mr. Campbell liked the idea of getting people involved and fundraising to offset the costs. Mr. Gasdia agreed that involving multiple groups could garner support. It would be a two-year commitment.

Ms. Lamothe supports reviewing the plan but is not ready to make a decision to put a plan on the ballot. Mr. Campbell agreed. Ms. Whiting stated she didn't want to make a decision on a warrant article.

Potential Warrant Articles – March 2022

Mr. Russell and Ms. Burk share potential warrant articles for March 2022.

Contracts

There will be three contracts March. The part-time paraprofessionals and food service (PSRP bargaining group), secretaries and AFSCME.

Fund Balance Retention Update

Ms. Burk shared that the RSA for fund balance retention has been changed to allow up to 5% retention – it had been 2.5%. A warrant article will be needed to update the district's ability to retain up to 5% of unassigned fund balance, which will be proposed for the board's consideration to appear on the March 2022 ballot.

Mr. Beals asked if there are other type of capital reserve funds the board should consider. Ms. Burk said there are options for other types of funds. A warrant article needs to be put on the ballot each year to reserve funds and a warrant article is need to expend funds.

Early Learning Center Library Street Roof

The roof at Library Street is nearing the end of its lifecycle. Mr. Beals asked if we can get an assessment of the roof and how long it can last. Ms. Burk shared there is a roof plan and that some building roofs are broken into sections over multiple years. Ms. Burk said this item might need to be Nottingham instead.

Superintendent Goals – 2021-2022

Mr. Russell shared the Superintendent Goals that had previously been discussed at the June 7 board meeting. Board members asked for metrics to be added to show the progress on goals, consistent training on communication, clarity, and consistency in presentations, and improving overall culture survey results.

Miscellaneous Items

COVID Protocols- Fall

The district will need to share an update on COVID protocols for the fall. Right now, the district is mask optional for Summer Scholars and the ESY program. As of today, we plan to be mask optional but we need to review guidance from the NH Department of Health & Human Services. Mr. Russell is ready for the public to return to the buildings. Mr. Russell will provide an update to the board and the public at the board meeting on August 16

Employees Under Contract Going to Other Districts

Mr. Russell shared that we lose staff over the summer to other districts, even though employees are under contract with us. Mr. Gasdia and Ms. Whiting shared they are having difficulty finding employees in their respective workplaces.

School Board Meeting Processes

Nominations

Staff nominations have historically been done in non-public. In past locations, Mr. Russell has done nominations in public. Mr. Beals shared concerns over discussing individuals that might not be hired in public session. Mr. Gasdia said the Select Board discusses nominations in non-public and then affirms the decisions at the next meeting under “Old Business.” Ms. Burk will check the RSA and policies for nominations to make sure we are following the correct protocols.

Minutes

Ms. Wolf suggested using an auto transcription service to transcribe the meeting. The minutes would be the official record and the transcript would be the unofficial record that people could use as a reference. Board members asked for draft minutes to be posted to the website as soon as possible, within 24-48 hours of a meeting.

Adjourn

Adjourned at 3:05pm. Motion made by Ms. LaMothe, seconded by Ms. Whiting. Motion passed 5-0.

Supporting Information

- Superintendent Goals – 2021-2022
- Enrollment information