

DANVILLE SCHOOL BOARD
Special Meeting: Annual Reorganization
Thursday, March 3rd, 2022, 6:00 pm
Zoom Teleconference

School Directors Present: Clayton Cargill, David Towle, Tim Sanborn, Melissa Conly, and Molly Gleason

School Administrators Present: Mark Tucker (Superintendent), Sarah Welch (Elementary Principal), David Schilling (Upper School Principal)

Student Members Present: Thomas Edgar and Ava Marshia

Community Members Present:

Alison Despathy

Bethany Hale

Carolyn Morrison

Paul Hayes, Caledonian Record

Lindsey Mitchell Wheeler

Krissie Mantius

Peter Mantius

Bobbie Copen

Kaity White

Melissa (no last name)

Lindsay (no last name)

Rob Balivet

1. **Call to Order:** Superintendent Mark Tucker called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm and confirmed all directors were present. This was the annual reorganization meeting to elect director roles, including a new board chair.

The Board met remotely and used a different Zoom format to increase security. Mark reported there was a horrible “zoom bomb” at the Cabot Annual Meeting on Monday night that they don't ever want to happen again. In the new format, board directors and administrators are assigned as panelists and others come in as attendees. Public comments are still supported in this format and handled on a person-by-person basis.

2. **Reorganization of the Board:**

The first order of business was for the Board to elect a chair. Mark opened the floor to nominations.

Motion to nominate a Board Chair: Moved by Dave T. to nominate Clayton as Board Chair, seconded by Tim. The motion carried with four in favor (Clayton abstained from voting).

There was discussion about additions to the agenda, and a roll call of the student members was done at this time. Clayton mentioned adding “future agenda items” as an item on the next agenda.

Clayton chaired the remainder of the meeting as Board Chair.

Motion to nominate a Vice Chair: Moved by Tim Sanborn to nominate Dave T., seconded by Melissa Conly. The motion carried with four in favor (Dave abstained from voting). No discussion.

Motion to nominate a Clerk: Moved by Melissa to nominate Molly for Clerk, seconded by Tim. Motion carried with four in favor (Molly abstained from voting). Discussion on Robert’s role as Clerk. Clayton said Robert is willing to help, and the Board would have to figure out how the minutes are going to be posted. Mark said Scott could help, and he'll probably want to bring it underneath the Danville School website. Tim mentioned when he first started on the board there was a designated person, who was not on the board, who came to every meeting and recorded the minutes. Mark shared that they’ve never had success finding somebody who could commit to coming to every meeting. There are other options such as hiring somebody who transcribes minutes for boards, and they get sent back for review.

Motion to nominate CCSU Board Representative: Moved by Tim to nominate Clayton as a CCSU Board Representative, Dave T. seconded. Motion carried with five in favor.

Discussion: Clayton stated that this is where board policy is discussed and where mandatory policies come down from the VSBA. Two board members are needed, and an alternate specifically. Clayton would like to continue to sit on that board. Meetings are bi-monthly on the third Monday at 5:30 pm.

Clayton opened the floor for nominations:

Motion to nominate 2nd CCSU Board Representative: Moved by Molly to nominate Melissa as the 2nd representative to the CCSU Board, seconded by Tim. Motion carried by a vote of four (Melissa abstained).

Motion to nominate an alternate to the CCSU Board: Tim moved to nominate Molly as an alternate to the CCSU Board, Melissa seconded. Motion carried by a vote of four in favor (Molly abstained).

Motion to nominate Negotiations Council: Moved by Melissa to nominate Clayton to the Negotiations Council, seconded by Molly. Motion carried by a vote of four in favor (Clayton abstained).

Discussion: Clayton shared that the Negotiations Council negotiates with the teachers' union and a small group of teachers for the salaries, and those negotiations are currently held in December. He also shared that the Board renamed community member, Ginny Lavelly, to the Negotiations Council. Clayton has also served on the council and is willing to continue. David T. recused himself due to a conflict of interest. Tim also had a conflict of interest due to being part of the teachers' union.

Motion to set the regular Board meeting schedule: Moved by Dave T. to meet on the first Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 pm. Second by Tim. Motion carried by a vote of five in favor.

Discussion: Mark shared there will likely still be a Zoom component after the Board goes back to in-person meetings because it's so effective to get more people involved. Clayton clarified March 1st would've been the first meeting, and this is a special meeting because we didn't have a meeting on March 1st. In the event that there is a meeting that is not held on the first Tuesday of every month, it's called a special meeting.

Annual Board Retreat: Clayton asked to table this discussion via general consensus. No vote for now.

Motion to designate official newspapers and posting stations: Moved by Tim Sanborn, seconded by Dave T. to designate the Caledonian Record as the official newspaper, and the Town Hall, the school, Marty's, Hastings, and the school website as posting stations. Motion carried by a vote of five in favor.

Discussion: Clayton shared that traditionally the Board's official newspaper is the Caledonian record where warnings for our meetings are posted and also at the Town Hall, the school, Marty's, and Hasting Store. It is on the school website as well.

Motion to approve the Code of Ethics policy: Moved by Tim to approve the Code of Ethics policy, seconded by Melissa. Motion carried by a vote of five in favor.

Discussion: Clayton said board directors signed last year and that all have to re-sign again. Melissa and Molly need to sign as new directors. Molly shared the document on her screen for

all to review together. Clayton highlighted for directors not to use the role to their advantage and maintain the highest ethical standards and acknowledge the requirement by signing this document.

Communication practices and handling complaints: Mark stated that it's important for the Board to understand the different roles and that operations of the school are the responsibility of the administration; complaints should start with him or the building principals. The board's responsibility is policy and for holding the administration accountable for following policies and following the legal directives and statutes, etc. Sometimes parents will contact school board directors about an issue, and he suggests that the first response after listening to them empathetically is to ask what Dave or Sarah said, or what did the child's teacher say about the problem. They'd like to address the problem at the level where it occurred. If the administration takes action against an employee, and they have appeal rights, sometimes those appeals can rise up to the level of the school board. It's always preferential that directors not be involved in that process until the matter comes before them because they are supposed to be balanced not have preformed notions about what's going on.

He added that directors should be careful about talking about things that are not in the public record. If there are matters that come before the board, and in executive session, those are not shared outside of the executive session. Directors and administrators are always concerned about confidentiality with students.

Clayton stated that traditionally directors went to the chair to communicate outside of the Board and recommended directors go directly to him as the chair going forward.

Appointment of the delegate for the statewide health insurance: Clayton said he went to a webinar about reorganizing, and that this year, the Board doesn't need an appointment for the state because that matter is closed for the year. Mark Tucker agreed. No action was taken.

Motion to nominate signers of warrants: Tim nominated Clayton, seconded by Melissa Motion carried with five in favor.

Discussion: Clayton added that this is a board member who goes to the CCSU office and reviews the checks that get signed by the treasurer before the treasurer signs them. This pertains both to large purchases and checks for vendors that have been approved by the Board as well as the great many smaller purchases that make up school spending. This is for things like signing off on basketball referees, small items, note pads, all kinds of school supplies to teachers' requests. Clayton currently does this job and he's happy to continue. An alternate is needed as well.

Motion to nominate the second signer of warrants: Moved by Melissa to nominate Molly as the second signer, Dave T. seconded. Motion carried with a vote of four.

3. **Approval of minutes:** Clayton stated there were two sets of minutes to approve. The first one was a regular meeting on February 1st. Robert sent the minutes and Clayton reviewed them. Other members also reviewed the minutes. Dave T. moved to approve the February 1st minutes. Tim seconded. All voted in favor of approving the February 1st minutes. Molly and Melissa voted to approve, but after discussion, their votes were ignored, as they were not members.

February 3rd was the “Meet the Candidates” meeting, and there’s a transcription of what the candidates said. Molly asked if she and Melissa should vote if they weren’t on the Board at the time. Mark said they should not so they abstained. Motion moved by Dave T. to approve the February 3rd minutes, seconded by Tim. Three voted in favor of approving the February 3rd minutes. Motion carried.

4. **Administrative Reports:**

Superintendent’s Report: Mark submitted a written report, and stated that everything he wrote about COVID mitigation doesn't apply anymore. As of Monday of next week, March 7th, the indoor mask requirement at the schools is lifted. He was expecting the agency to lift their recommendation for indoor masking, and they decided on March 14th because they wanted the schools to have enough time to prepare for the transition. The school has been working on this since February 16th which was the last date Mark sent out a newsletter on COVID, a couple of days before vacation, and he has been communicating with the staff at the schools. He wanted it to be on record at the board meeting that the administration is hoping that we're going to have civil behavior between mask wearers and non-mask wearers. He expects some staff might decide to take off their masks and some will continue to wear them. Kids will probably take their masks off and some kids will continue to wear them. The administration and the principals will be focused on dealing with conflict between kids. The mask recommendation was disconnected from the vaccination levels at schools, and that's why he is lifting it. Starting on Monday, there will be no more indoor mass requirement and that extends to the buses as well.

He continued to share about Act 173, a piece of legislation that was passed a couple of years ago that said Vermont was going to shift from a reimbursement model for services for special education to a block grant model. It's supposed to go into effect in July. The rationale behind the consideration of delaying the implementation of the rule changes is that they are going to actually increase the special education case count at the same time that the state has cut back on the money that they're providing for special education. The pupil weighting study is a study that was completed two years ago by a researcher from the University of Vermont to look at pupil weighting in the current education finance program. He continued to share more details for the

benefit of Melissa and Molly as new members. Pupil weighting is a mechanism that's part of the education funding formula that says certain students cost more money to educate. In terms of determining how much money will be given to the school to educate certain students, instead of counting them as a single student, additional weights are applied. The old weighting model has been in existence for 25 years now. It gave a slight additional weight to high school students and pre-K students at a much lower rate. There's more science involved in the study on pupil weighting. There are also adjustments made for factors around special education, poverty, and the challenges of operating schools in a rural environment. It looks like they will be implementing the recommendations in the weighting study as they were presented, to take effect in 2024, which is not the current budget year that we just voted on, but the year forthcoming.

Principal's Report: Sarah Welch shared the principal's report on the screen. Highlights include: Elementary and middle school had a sugar on snow celebration at the school (pictures are up on Facebook). She thanked Clayton, Molly, and Melissa for helping the staff and serving; Jen Crocker and Molly for donating syrup; and Linda Vance for donating the delicious donut holes that she makes and sells.

Dave Schilling shared his report. Highlights include: He recognized Nick DeCaro, the student council advisor, and basketball coach, for taking on about three or four full-time jobs every time winter carnival happens. He also shared that the girls' basketball team had a great season and made it to "the Aud" for the first time in years. The Varsity boys are playing at BMU on Saturday, hoping to get them to the Aud as well. He thanked Mark for making a common-sense decision that it was time to make our own decision in the best interest of kids regarding COVID policies.

Sarah shared they have heard from parents who are grateful for the changes happening.

Student Services Packet: Discussion on the information that was sent to directors prior to the meeting. Mark is working on getting the information sent out sooner. Mark added that he asked Sabrina to put together a presentation on upcoming special education changes, and she'll be touring around through the district board meetings to present. He's trying to get her on the agenda for April to come in and present to the Board.

Student Reports: Ava reported that she didn't have much for this month. She apologized and didn't realize that there was a regular meeting until she received the Zoom link. She said it's great to see two strong female faces on the school board now. Thomas reported that it's been pretty quiet since this is the first week after break.

5. Board Discussion:

Resignation of the High School Principal (Discussion / Acceptance)

Follow-up from the last meeting: Clayton stated there was a question regarding the resignation of the Danville high school principal, and that he simply left his contract as a two-year contract. The current search for a new principal is based on the job opening that has been created by Dave S. finishing out his contract, having told us in January that he was not exercising the third-year option. No action was deemed necessary, and none was taken.

Principal new hire recommendation by the superintendent: Clayton asked Mark if he was ready to give us an update. Mark said they are close to making a decision. He put this on the agenda in case it had fallen in place in time to act on it tonight. He would potentially request a special board meeting to act on a recommendation in the upcoming week. Discussion on dates/times, possibly Monday or Thursday.

At this point in the meeting, Dave Schilling asked about adding an item to the agenda. Clayton shared that agenda additions cannot be added once the meeting begins. The item had already been added to the original agenda.

Outdoor Program Structure (discussion/ possible approval)

Dave shared the need for additional space for high school programming and a document on the costs, construction, and benefits of using a yurt. This could be used for the experiential learning program as well as a facility that could function for multiple groups. They can last 25 years and are extremely durable. He lived in one for an Idaho winter in the Tetons. It's a relatively affordable satellite space with year-round accessibility. It could be the home base for the experiential learning program, and the ski program could be by the ski trails. Classrooms could sign it out when it's not being used for something else and have an open space. It's easy to relocate, and it's much more suitable than a temporary trailer or some other form of a classroom. The site would be where the wind turbine used to stand. It's already got a conduit run from the sugar house for power. Dave included links in the report on different schools that have used them and how they have done it. He received two quotes: [click here for quotes and more information on the yurt](#). The Colorado company would be more suitable to our climate with snow and wind. His recommendation was to go with the Colorado company and use funding from a mix of unrestricted surplus and endowment funds, whatever was deemed an appropriate use by the CCSU finance Manager Michael Concessi.

Questions and Discussion:

Dave shared that the structure sits covering the deck and the deck is fully supported, and a ramp could be built by a local contractor or a trades class at the school. The deck itself does not have to be pressure treated or weather-resistant because there are covers and it keeps costs down.

The yurt would be available to community groups as well.

There are propane units for heating, and Dave stated he would probably come back to the Board to see if it can be covered by the facilities budget.

Dave T. asked for this clarification and Dave S clarified. The proposed location of the yurt makes the restroom (and other) facilities of the school still easily accessible to students.

Motion to approve the purchase of the yurt, not to exceed \$30,000: Moved by Dave T to approve the purchase of the yurt. Melissa second. No further discussion. Motion carried by a vote of five in favor.

Repair/Replacement of Main Hallway Lift (Discussion / Possible Approval)

Accessibility needs: Dave shared that the lift in the main hallway of the school is out of ADA compliance, but more importantly, a student who would be transitioning to the middle school next year has a chair that is physically impossible to fit in that lift. This lift is the access to the middle and high school areas of the school, as well as the library. Both for ADA purposes and student accessibility purposes, that lift has to be replaced. The good news is that they don't have to significantly modify the building to replace the lift so it could fit into the space of the current lift. The difference would be that the lift ramp would extend out into the space where currently there's no ramp so that somebody could transfer on and then be elevated. The cost of the lift is about \$19,500 to replace. The Board put aside \$60,000 at the beginning of this year for potential emergency air handler replacement that has not needed to happen yet. Those air handlers on the top of the building are at the end of their life. Dave S. recommended the Board transfer up to \$20,000 from that fund to replace the lift and not have to incur any additional expenses. The depth of the school elevator from front to back doesn't meet current ADA compliance, and the lift would accommodate a bigger wheelchair down the road if needed.

Motion to approve of a lift replacement at \$20,000: Moved by Melissa, Molly seconded. Motion carried with a vote of five in favor.

6. Public Input:

From Zoom chat from Rob Balivet:

Dave S. shared that there is a public comment in the chat - Rob said he has really enjoyed working with David Towle on the master plan.

From Alison Despathy:

She is grateful to Mark Tucker for making masks optional and had a question about screen time for students and the return to in-person meetings for the Board. In-person meetings were imminent, according to Mark Tucker. The CCSU was waiting on the Vermont Legislature to update the statute regarding in-person meetings.

She also mentions that she likes yurts and has lived in one.

No Additional Public Comments.

Future agenda items:

1. Discuss the building plans with Truex Cullins and a bond vote in April.
2. Sabrina Brown, Special Services Presentation
3. Recommendation of a policy that was not sent down by the CCSU board - Policy to Consider from VSBA, Code A31, Board Member Education
https://www.vtvsba.org/_files/ugd/b44bfd_c5e75a4e79a64e57a2a7fc7e2eea755f.pdf
4. Board education and VSBA webinars (specifically in relation to this [webinar](#). Toolkits are available [here](#)).

Sarah asked the Board about what would be helpful in the board reports from principals.

Tim shared that the reports are helpful and recommended picking a class and having the teacher or a student write the blurb about something exciting that happened.

Clayton stated that the principals do so much communicating with the public already and some things can be linked as part of the reports and can be added over the course of the month.

- 7. Meeting Adjournment:** Motion moved by Tim to adjourn. Seconded by Melissa. Motion carried with five in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:34pm.

Respectfully submitted by Molly Gleason, Clerk, March 6, 2022