

SCHOOL UNION 69
NOTICE OF MEETING

June 20, 2023
6:00 p.m.
at Hope Fire Station
475 Camden Road, Hope, Maine

JOINT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Chair: Melissa Nowell, Chair (corrected)

In attendance:

Appleton
Elizabeth Grierson, Chair '24
Emily Garrigan, '25

Hope
Tim Lock, Chair '24
Jude Masseur, '26

Lincolntonville
Tracee O'Brien, Chair '26
Melissa Nowell, '24
Emily Berry, '25
Amy Peterson, '26

Also in attendance: Kate Clark, Superintendent, Charles Weidman, Sarah Smith and Samantha Mank, Hope and Lori Costigan, Scott Esancy, Charles Garrigan and Prent Marriner, Appleton.

1. Melissa Nowell called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm.
2. Public Comment-none
3. Adjustments to the Agenda-correct agenda to indicate the Chair is Melissa Nowell. Tim Lock moved to change item #6 to item #4, seconded by Tracee O'Brien. Vote: 8-0 in favor, motion carried.
4. Finance Subcommittee Report and Recommendations: Beth Grierson reported that the Finance Subcommittee had met three times and had interviewed Central Office staff, Brewer and Brewer, CPA staff, Principals, as well as Town Office staff in order to understand the challenges facing the Central Office Finance Team and develop a list of recommendations.
Short Term recommendations: review delinquent state reporting; continue to seek ways to fill open positions; looking into options for hiring data entry support; broaden job descriptions to attract a wider range of candidate and use Indeed to advertise positions; triage the high priority items that need to be addressed immediately: the Appleton audit; preparing for '23 audits so they are completed on time; maintain AP, payroll etc. and invoice federal and state grants.

Long Term recommendations: research the possibility of creating a part time business manager position; research collaborating and/or combining financial services with other districts or educational service centers; transition to new finance software (summer of '24); streamline processes to increase efficiency; seek out opportunities for the various town committees to communicate and collaborate; streamline financial processes in the three towns.

An explanation of the reasons the finance office has had difficulties meeting audit deadlines in the last three years when prior teams had been able to complete the audits on time. The discussion outlined the following factors.

1. The influx of COVID grant funding in excess of \$2,000,000 over the last three years that needed to be tracked and invoiced.
2. The loss of a key team member in July of 2022 and difficulties finding adequately trained staff to replace her.
3. The increased expectations auditors have placed on school finance teams in recent years, the expectations are not the same as they were before COVID.
4. The fact that this finance team has been tasked by the auditors with fixing many mistakes made as far back as 2015.

A discussion of current staffing structure and job responsibilities led to the committee requesting a time study of all members of the central office staff to examine any redundancies and inform restructuring efforts. Kate Clark shared that the A Team had discussed moving the grant responsibilities from the principals to the superintendent to centralize the tasks that need to be completed and consolidate efforts.

Kate also shared information about the two local Education Service Centers. At this point, we are waiting to hear back from both regional centers as to whether or not there are services available to purchase.

It was decided that options for outsourcing payroll to free up central office staff would be explored.

The following list of action items was agreed upon by the Joint School Committee members:

1. Look into options for sharing or outsourcing services (payroll companies; accounting firms; surrounding districts and/or educational service centers).
2. Create a budget specifically for the finance team for the December Joint School Committee meeting.
3. Move federal and state grant oversight to the responsibility of the superintendent, instead of the principals.
4. Complete a time study of tasks completed by Central Office staff
5. Update job descriptions

It was also decided that an ongoing Finance Subcommittee would be formed to continue to monitor changes, and inform decisions regarding expenditures that are not currently captured in the Central Office budget adopted in December that runs from July 1, 2023 until June 30, 2024. Emily Berry volunteered for Lincolnville. Hope and Appleton are meeting next week and will determine a member from each school committee. Tracee O'Brien moved to continue the finance subcommittee to create a timeline for the above

action items and provide oversight into their completion, seconded by Tim Lock. Vote: 8-0 in favor, motion passed.

5. Beth Grierson moved to approve of the minutes of the December 6, 2022 meeting and the April 11, 2023 special committee meeting, seconded by Tracee O'Brien. Vote: 6 in favor with 2 abstentions, motion carried.
6. Year-to-Date Financial Report for Central office and Special Education: the financial report was reviewed.
7. Subcommittee membership for SY 23-24: to be determined at the individual school committee meetings.
8. Discussion: posting documents after votes are taken ie: CO budget on website. The committee agreed that once a document is voted on and approved, such as the yearly central office budget, it can be posted on the district website. Also, minutes can be posted in draft form.
9. Any other business to come before the board-none
10. Tracee O'Brien moved to enter executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. section 405 (A) for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter, seconded by Beth Grierson. The committee voted unanimously in favor, and entered executive session at 7:45 pm. The committee exited executive session at 8:25 pm.
11. Future agenda items for the next meeting on: December 5, 2023
 - a. Exec session for supt and director of special education contracts
 - b. Election of Joint Board Officers
 - c. Budget for special ed and supt office
 - d. Update from special ed director
 - e. Cost sharing formula
12. Beth Grierson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Tracee O'Brien. Vote: 8-0 in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.



