SAU #20 Board Meeting

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Meeting Minutes

GMHS Cafeteria

Board Members Present: Crystal Labrecque, Emma Burnell, Jo Carpenter, Dennis Wade, Victoria Hill, Richard Umiker, Benjamin Mayerson, Andrew Mullins, Tiffani Arsenault, Keith Moon, Ashley Devost, Jaime Hussey, and Michael Waddell (6:45 pm)

Administration: David Backler, Superintendent SAU 20; Cassandra Micucci, Business Administrator SAU20; Tina Binette Special Services Director; Amanda Ramsay, IT Director

Public: Eric Cornish, Amanda Cornish, and Shelli Fortin, Minutes

Regular Meeting

1. **Call to Order–** Crystal Labrecque called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Approval of Minutes**

   On a motion by Benjamin Mayerson, seconded by Jo Carpenter, the Board voted to approve the minutes of May 8, 2025, as presented. Moon – abstain, Hill – abstain, Wade - abstain

4. **Technology Director's Report**

   David Backler commended the IT staff on the tremendous job they have done moving technology forward.

5. **Superintendent's Report**

   David Backler shared goals for this year, which are based on the needs of the SAU. For the goal of increasing community engagement and communication, Backler noted that they are hoping to be more effective at sharing information, as sometimes it is too much, and people don't pay attention. A Board member noted that the specific numbers are helpful, as it helps to screen what they are reading. A Board member asked if a parent only had a child at elementary school, would they get all the messages, and Backler explained that they would only get the messages that apply to them.

   Backler advised that he has been recently elected to the Board of Directors of the College Board and will be a voice for rural education. Backler noted that this is a good way to broadcast the work they are doing in SAU20. A Board member asked how much time this will require, and Backler advised about three days per year, and the College Board pays for travel. A Board member congratulated Backler on his nomination to the College Board.

6. Business Administrator's Report

Cassandra Micucci provided the preliminary budget to the Board, noting that there is a total increase of $7,068, or 0.67%. The increase is due to salary and benefits. Micucci advised that the Finance Committee has met twice to review the budget.

Micucci reviewed the budget by section, noting an increase of $1,456.00 in Professional Development. The largest increase is in the Workshop line, as more teachers are utilizing that. A Board member explained that new teachers are budgeted in the ALT Certification line, but once new employees are in the alternative plan, the Professional Development amount is budgeted in the school budget.

The total IT Department increase is $3,523, which is for salary and benefits. Micucci reminded the Board that they had agreed to increase the HRA cards to offset the increase in the health insurance costs. There is also an increase in supplies and software, which Amanda Ramsay explained and advised it will go down again next year.

The School Board decreased by $15, and Micucci explained that they have consolidated workers compensation and unemployment compensation in another line.

The Audit line is up $936 due to the change in auditors. Legal Counsel is budgeted the same at $500.

Central Office is down $9,387 as $10,000 was removed from Supplies/Books/Periodicals. This money was originally budgeted for staff appreciation.

Superintendent is up $3,505 due to salary and benefits. Student Services has increased $639 due to salaries, benefits, and dues and fees.

Child Find is budgeted at $500, the same as last year. There was no increase in the Safety Coordinator budget.

The Business Department has increased by $6,152, due to salary, benefits, software, and travel.

Operation Maintenance is up $259, and this is their portion of the maintenance of the FRC building.

A Board member asked why the percentage increase in the Business Staff salary was 2%, while others were 3%, and was advised that part of that salary comes from the PD budget.

A Board member noted concerns for the community, including costs of healthcare and taxes. The Board member suggested a flat budget this year, and suggested that the increase in budgeted salaries be the same as the increase in social security, which is 2.8%. The Board member reminded the Board of the public's concerns at the budget hearings last year.

A Board member noted that last year the superintendent offered to not take a raise, and that the public was angry that the Board turned this down, given how much pain was being expressed.

A Board member asked about Child Find, and was advised that this is money to identify children with special education needs. Tina Binette explained that, per law, they are required to advertise and offer a child find opportunity for ages 3 and up. They provide a free evaluation to see if the child needs any developmental supports. A Board member asked if this was in conjunction with Berlin, and Binette advised that we do our own.

A Board member asked about the SAU offices in the FRC building, and if they are exploring alternative space for the office within the schools. Micucci advised that GRS owns 11% of the FRC building, however they will be looking into that.

Micucci did calculations to see what the difference would be with changing the salary increase to 2.8%, and to 2% for administration and 3% for support staff, which would change the total budget increase to 0.57% for the first option and 0.16% for the second.

A Board member noted that although the idea of a flat budget is appealing, they have already put a lot of work into the proposed budget, and reducing it by another $7,000 might be difficult. David Backler noted that at this point, the only thing to cut would be salary increases to get to a flat budget.

David Backler advised the Board that eventually they will have to replace people in these positions, and the cost will be more than what is currently budgeted.

A Board member noted that the budget increase is spread between all the districts, with Gorham paying over half.

A Board member noted that the cost of everything is going up. The Board member also noted that as far as replacing people, the lower-level positions are becoming competitive, however management positions are costly to fill. The Board member also noted concerns over the increases in taxes, and that that the property tax system is broken. The Board member noted that he is pleased that the budget came in under 1%.

A Board member asked if they use could more of the fund balance.

Micucci advised that if they put the salary increases at 1.5% for the Business Administrator and Superintendent and other staff at 3%, the budget would decrease by $148, or -0.1%.

A Board member noted that the increase is not going to make a noticeable difference in taxes, and it is not worth going backwards in salary to make it up later on. The Board member again shared concerns about having to replace people in administrative positions. Another Board member agreed, noting that the cost for a search committee would be more than the budget increase this year.

A Board member noted that they are only voting tonight to bring the budget to the Public Hearing, and they can make adjustments after the Public Hearing depending on public comments received. The Board member noted that our current administration does a good job keeping the budgets in line and expenses down. It was noted that a few school districts have had a deficit of millions reported at the end of last year and did not know. Our district gets a report every month from the Business Administrator.

On a motion by Jo Carpenter, seconded by Andrew Mullins, the Board voted to bring he budget as presented to the Public Hearing. Mayerson-opposed

7. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

8. Non-Public Session

There was no non-public session needed.

9. Next Regular Meeting – Thursday, December 11, 2025 6:30 pm Milan Village School

10. Other

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Benjamin Mayerson, seconded by Dennis Wade, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 pm.