

1                                   **Lake Region Union High School Board Meeting**  
2                                   **Lake Region Union High School - Orleans, Vermont**  
3                                   **Meeting Held on Google Meet**  
4                                   **Thursday, March 11, 2021**  
5

6   **Board members in attendance:** Dave Blodgett, Michael Sanville, Jennifer Edlund, Gerry  
7   Cahill, Michael Conner, Jason Racine, Linda Michniewicz, and Tammy Wiggett

8   **Administrators/Faculty in attendance:** Bev Davis- Superintendent, Andre Messier- Principal

9   **Community Members in attendance:** Ed Barber- *The Newport Daily Express*, Darlene Young,  
10   Muriel Hess, Roderick Owens, Abby Braithwaite, Stephen Cantor, Sharon Caroli, Amanda  
11   Ticehurst, Anne Carroll, Chris Braithwaite, Elizabeth Nelson, Fredrica Very, Joan Vincent,  
12   Karen Ceraso, Ellen Braithwaite, Martha Braithwaite

13   **Call to Order:** David Blodgett, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:17.

14   **Additions/ Deletions:** None

15   **Privilege of the floor:** Martha Braithwaite spoke to the board about her concerns as a Lake  
16   Region graduate, parent of a Lake Region graduate, and citizen of Glover. She voiced concerns  
17   about recent discussions of the board regarding school culture and equity at Lake Region. She  
18   stated that students of color are suffering by being subjected to racial slurs, thinly veiled threats  
19   of violence, implicit and explicit bias, and micro-aggressions which pick away at a their  
20   wellbeing. Because of their need to belong, they are unlikely to come forward and voice what is  
21   happening to them. She stated that it is unfair to expect them to prove that they are under attack,  
22   and that adults must take responsibility for knowing what is happening and creating a safe and  
23   equitable learning environment for all students. Also, she stated that it fails white students when  
24   we don't adequately educate them about how to succeed in a diverse world. She asked members  
25   of the school board to participate as full partners in the work of the Equity Committee. She  
26   thanked many local citizens, such as Roderick Owens and Karen Ceraso, as well as several  
27   individual educators, for working to create a more equitable school experience for local students.

28   **Approval of Consent Agenda Items:** Jason Racine moved to approve the following items: the  
29   minutes of the February 17, 2021 board meeting, written reports, updated FY '21 financial  
30   reports, and payment of the bills. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Edlund and approved by  
31   unanimous vote.

32   **Old Business**

33   **Discussion on priority criteria for School Choice:** Mr. Messier explained that Lake Region  
34   received eleven applications for students who wish to attend Lake Region through School  
35   Choice. Four of the applicants are siblings of current school choice students. The board  
36   previously set the limit for new school choice students at five, with priority given to siblings of  
37   current school choice students. Therefore, the four sibling applicants will be given priority,  
38   leaving seven applicants for the remaining spot. One of the remaining seven applicants is a child  
39   of a current Lake Region staff member, and there has been a request to also give that student  
40   priority. After discussion, it was the disposition of the board to stay with the parameters  
41   previously set. The seven remaining applicants, including the child of the current staff member,  
42   will enter a double-blind drawing for the remaining spot.

43 **Superintendent Search Update:** Dave Blodgett announced that Penny Chamberlin had been  
44 offered and had accepted the OCSU Superintendent position. She will begin July 1, 2021. She  
45 brings a wealth of knowledge, and her last position was as a career center director.

46 **Annual Meeting Debrief:** Dave Blodgett noted that the Annual Meeting ran well, although  
47 attendance was clearly down because of Covid. Jennifer Edlund appreciated that some back and  
48 forth discussion was allowed because of the way the board reworded the warning. She felt it  
49 allowed for a more natural conversation where attendees could get answers to their questions  
50 more easily.

51 **Discussion of the Letter to the Board, read at the February 17 Meeting:** Michael Connor  
52 said he appreciated the letter and supports some of the ideas expressed. He agreed with the  
53 importance of addressing racism and expressed his believe that the board should be cautious  
54 when it comes to addressing how history and privileged groups are sometimes framed in the  
55 curriculum. He sees that there could be an opportunity for progress through the equity movement  
56 but is also concerned about the possible effect the movement could have on national identity and  
57 national unity. He expressed that it is the responsibility of the board to study how changes to the  
58 curriculum would affect young people.

59  
60 Dave Blodgett gave some context about the discussions the board had been having regarding  
61 school culture and the school environment. He referenced the strategic plan and its goal of  
62 providing a welcoming and accepting school environment for every student. He mentioned that  
63 racial equity is a huge part of these discussions and that the discussions were meant to  
64 encompass all aspects of equity and school culture, including issues of gender and  
65 socioeconomic status. He expressed that the staff and administration work hard to create a  
66 positive school environment and that the board has been engaging in conversations and taking  
67 these issues seriously. He welcomed input from the community to help in this work.

68  
69 Jennifer Edlund commented that she sees evidence that the curriculum has been shifting to  
70 address the Global Citizenship standards, and that students were currently having many  
71 opportunities to learn about our diverse world, based on things her children read and discuss in  
72 class. She felt these topics were very well-covered in the curriculum. She commented that, in her  
73 opinion, the board does take these issues seriously and has held many discussions in attempt to  
74 address them more fully. She expressed that the board would be interested in input from the  
75 community regarding other steps that could be taken.

76  
77 Tammy Wiggett stated that she appreciates board members' intention to do what is best for  
78 students, and also that she supports the sentiments expressed in the letter received by the board.  
79 She mentioned her confusion over the reluctance of some in regards to adjusting the curriculum.

80  
81 Michael Connor expressed his belief in the importance of providing historical truth and that he  
82 worries about adjusting curriculum in any manner that erases history. He would like to see  
83 imperfect history used as a learning tool rather than providing an inaccurate perfect image of the  
84 world.

85  
86 Michael Sanville spoke about how challenging it can be to have candid conversations and that  
87 sometimes, things are said bluntly and are not always phrased in the best way. He said he never  
88 meant to cause offense and that his intent is to provide what is best for students, staff, families,

89 and the community. He stated that he does not want to be defensive but to listen and move  
90 forward. He stated that it is important to be able to have an open, honest debate with sensitivity.  
91 He mentioned that if people have questions about things that were said, he would invite them to  
92 reach out by phone or email so that there could be a discussion. He stated that he did not believe  
93 the board was being dismissive and that the board works hard to implement the goals and  
94 strategies of the Strategic Plan, including those related to school culture. He said that  
95 discrimination and racism are wrong, and from what members of our student panel reported,  
96 teachers and staff are doing a good job dealing with issues as they arise.

97  
98 Michael Connor reiterated that it was not the board's intent to be dismissive, but that the board  
99 was looking for the most effective way to gather the information it was looking for. The goal was  
100 to find out what students were really thinking without projecting an image of what the problems  
101 were. The board was trying to be deliberate and make the best possible decisions to gather that  
102 information.

103  
104 Dave Blodgett closed the discussion by stating that all parties desire to create a safe and  
105 welcoming school environment for all students, and that there is clearly more to do and more  
106 discussions to be had regarding how to make this happen. He welcomed input from the public in  
107 helping the board discover the best way forward.

108 **Public Comments:** Martha Braithwaite suggested the following actions: 1. Invest in the racial  
109 literacy of all adults in the system, 2. Update policy and practice around Anti-bullying, as the  
110 current policy and practice is punitive and does not change behavior in the long-term, and 3.  
111 Review the curriculum to ensure accurate representation. She mentioned the OCSU Equity  
112 Committee may have further recommendations.

113 Roderick Owens expressed frustration over the way the board has been talking in circles and said  
114 what was needed instead are action statements. He said he has experienced a great deal of racism  
115 and insensitivity in the Northeast Kingdom and knows that students experience racism and  
116 insensitivity in school as well. He asked that the board bring other voices to the table to help  
117 move the conversations forward and to start taking action. He reminded the board that he has  
118 volunteered to speak on several occasions and that has not yet happened.

### 119 **New Business**

120 **Motion to Rescind Policies:** Jason Racine moved to rescind the following policies: i. E5 –  
121 Emergency Closings, ii. G9 – Grade Advancement, iii. G3 – Field Trips, and iv. H2 – Parental  
122 Involvement. It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved unanimously.

123 **Overtime Pay:** Michael Connor moved to approve paying Ed Stevens 3.5 hours of overtime for  
124 emergency custodial needs on Sunday, February 14, 2021. It was seconded by Jennifer Edlund  
125 and approved unanimously.

126 **Motion to Adopt Policies:** Jason Racine moved to adopt the following Required Policies: i. F36  
127 – Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX, ii. F37 – Homeless Students, and  
128 iii. G3 – Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements. It was seconded by Michael Connor and  
129 approved unanimously.

130 **Motion to Revise Policies:** Gerry Cahill moved to table the motion to revise policies until the  
131 following board meeting. It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved unanimously.

132 **Administrative Requests/ Reports**

133 **Winter Activity Outlook:** Mr. Messier reported that the winter sports season would soon reach  
134 its conclusion. Basketball playoffs were set to begin soon. Two Lake Region gymnasts would  
135 compete in the state meet, and several snow board riders and downhill skiers would participate in  
136 state championship competitions as well. He mentioned that one of the boys' basketball teams  
137 was forced to quarantine after contact with a team from another school.

138 **Covid Impact on Operations:** Mr. Messier noted that teachers were beginning to get vaccinated  
139 and that there would be a vaccination clinic at Lake Region for OCSU employees on March 19,  
140 2021. It was unknown if more in-person learning would be required by the state for the end of  
141 the school year, but a change in distancing guidance would be required in order to accommodate  
142 more in-person learning. As the leadership team contemplates plans for the following school  
143 year, they were strongly considering staying with the four by four block schedule that was  
144 implemented this year.

145 **Dishwasher and Solar Learning Lab:** Mr. Messier reported that the new dishwasher was  
146 installed and working well. He mentioned that the panels for the solar learning lab are up, the  
147 trench is there, the wiring is ready, and they were waiting to receive the charge batteries, which  
148 were on backorder.

149 **Executive Session**

150 None

151 **Business of the Board**

152 **Career Center RAB Report:** Bev Davis reported that the Career Center Regional Advisory  
153 Board had met and had been introduced to the newly hired Career Center Director.

154 **OCSU Board:** Dave Blodgett reported that the OCSU Board met and debriefed the  
155 Superintendent search process. They also voted to increase the salaries for OCSU office staff.

156 **Future Agenda Items**

- 157
- 158 • Parking Lot Paving Project
  - 159 • School Culture- Student Surveys, Discussion of Anti-bullying policy and practice
  - 160 • Covid Recovery Plan Update
  - 160 • Revision of Policies

161 **Upcoming Meetings**

- 162
- 162 • Full Board: Monday, March 22, 2021 at 6:15 PM
  - 163 • Full Board: Monday, April 5, 2021 at 6:15 PM
  - 164 • Full Board: Monday, April 26, 2021 at 6:15 PM

165 **Adjournment:** David Blodgett adjourned the meeting at 8:10.

166 Respectfully submitted,

167 Tammy Wiggett