

Southern Minnesota Education Consortium #6083
JANUARY 2022 CABINET MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022, 9:00AM
SMEC ED CENTER, 21697 HWY 56 AUSTIN, MN 55912

The regular meeting of the Cabinet of Southern Minnesota Education Consortium #6083 was called to order at 9:01AM by Dan Armagost on January 20, 2022. Due to COVID-19, proper social distancing recommendations were followed by in-person attendees and the meeting was also held virtually via video conference on Zoom. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by roll call and determination of quorum.

Cabinet members in attendance in person were Paul Besel (GM), Jamie Goebel (LY), and Jim Hecimovich (KPS). Jen Backer-Johnson (LO), Scott Hall (SL), and Brian Shanks (AC/GE) attended this meeting via Zoom. Administration and staff in attendance were Executive Director Dan Armagost, Director Denise Kennedy, Business Manager Amy Wylde, and Administrative Assistant Ashley Rye; also present via Zoom was Jeff Tietje (GE Principal).

Meeting Agenda

Administrative Assistant Ashley Rye confirmed additions to the agenda since it was initially sent out, which included adding D. Board Committees, E. SMEC Career Fair Committee, F. Van Purchase for Level III Transportation, and G. Fillmore School Psych and PT Contracts under New Business. The bank account balance was also updated. Paul Besel (GM) requested to add H. MSBA 714 Fund Balances for discussion under New Business and K. 20% Fund Balance for discussion under Old Business. Jamie Goebel (LY) motioned to approve the agenda with additions, 2nd by Paul Besel (GM), all were in favor by roll call; motion carried.

Public Recognition

Nothing to report.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

The approval of the December consent agenda consisted of approval of the December 2021 regular meeting minutes, approval of the Treasurer's/Financial report, approval of the Next Step bank account activity, approval of the contract for Olivia Hegge, approval of Megan Dreier's resignation, and approval of the tuition reimbursement agreement for Danielle Hall. Paul Besel (GM) motioned to approve the consent agenda, 2nd by Jamie Goebel (LY), all were in favor by roll call; motion carried.

Committee Reports

Admin Council: Scott Hall (SL) reported that meetings have been moved to the second Thursday of every other month. The next Admin Council meeting is Thursday, February 10th, 2022, at 2:30pm at the SMEC Ed Center. The Career Navigator will be at this meeting to start the conversation about the SMEC Career Fair.

New Business

** indicates action items*

- A. *Tuition Reimbursement for Staff Obtaining Licensure:* Director Denise Kennedy reported that there are currently nine employees across the cooperative that have returned to school to obtain licensure in various areas; six are SMEC employees and three are resource room teachers employed by consortium member districts. SMEC works with special education staff through a tuition reimbursement contract to become specialists and/or obtain special education licensure. Executive Director Dan Armagost emphasized how this program has helped retain highly qualified staff. Colleges and universities that SMEC currently partners with include Grand Canyon University, Augsburg College, College of St. Scholastica, Winona State University, and St. Mary's University of Minnesota.

Staff that are currently on a SMEC tuition reimbursement contract include:

- Danielle Hall (School Psychology)
- Camille Osmonson (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Krista Davis (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Kayla Van Tries (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Adam Koenigs (Developmental Adapted Physical Education)
- Macy Klaehn (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Emma Mandt (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Peyton Pooler (Academic Behavioral Strategist)
- Valerie McConnell (Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

- B. *COVID Policy – MSBA 491*: Cabinet members reviewed each member district’s approach to the anticipated Supreme Court mandate for vaccinations and masks for employers with over 100 staff. Consensus was that while most of the districts are just shy of 100 employees, and a few just over 100 employees, all districts have their MSBA COVID Policy 491 ready to be adopted should any federal mandates occur. SMEC plans to adopt the same MSBA policy as the member districts. As of now, adoption of this policy has been tabled.
- C. *Summer Mowing Bid**: SMEC received one mowing bid for the summer of 2022. Burdock LLC submitted a quote for May 1, 2022, through October 31, 2022, with a written anticipation of mowing twice per month. Jamie Goebel (LY) motioned to approve the summer mowing bid, second by Paul Besel (GM), all were in favor by roll call; motion carried.
- D. *Board Committee Cabinet Representatives*: Armagost noted that the SMEC Board seeks to establish more committees to assist with planning and processes. The board requests to have cabinet representatives on their committees to ensure input and decision-making from all angles. Jamie Goebel (LY) sought clarification as to whether the committees would be led by the board or the cabinet. Armagost reported that the board members requested to lead the processes but seek to have cabinet member input. The following committee representatives are as follows:
- Negotiations Committee**: Paul Besel (GM), Scott Hall (SL) would continue to assist with administrative contract negotiations; Dan Armagost and Denise Kennedy, along with the SMEC office and business managers will lead the certified and non-certified staff negotiations as approved by the Board.
 - Transportation Committee**: Jamie Goebel (LY), Brian Shanks (AC/GE)
 - Policies and Procedures Committee**: Jen Backer-Johnson (LO), Paul Besel (GM) also tentatively agreed
 - Building and Grounds Committee**: Brian Shanks (AC/GE), Paul Besel (GM)
 - Executive Director Evaluation Committee**: Jen Backer-Johnson (LO)
- This information will be shared with the Board at the organizational meeting on January 26th.
- E. *SMEC Career Fair Committee*: Career Navigator Julie Mitchell will be planning the career fair that will be held at SMEC this spring. The funds granted by the Southeast Service Coop (SSC) would be utilized for the purpose of putting on the career fair and assisting Julie Mitchell with the purchase of curriculum materials geared toward her position as career navigator. It was clarified that the grant amount should be \$12,500. Denise Kennedy has shared information from last year’s career fair with Julie to assist her with getting the planning process started. Julie has also requested to meet with representatives from each district to receive input and assist with community outreach for the event; she will begin this process this month.
- F. *Van Purchase for Level III Transportation**: A quote for four, 10-passenger vans to be purchased from Nelson Auto Center was reviewed for approval. Armagost noted that the federal 140 funds would be utilized for the purchase of these vans.

Jamie Goebel (LY) stated his concern for having to replace four vans at one time when they have cycled. Armagost noted that there is a high need for SMEC to assist with transportation as soon as possible, and the plan after the initial purchase of four would be to purchase an additional one per year to relieve that obligation.

Paul Besel (GM) sought clarification on if a cooperative district is an authorized transportation district. Armagost confirmed that SMEC is not. Besel questioned if SMEC would be billing districts that would be utilizing the

transportation services. Armagost provided clarification first by noting that transportation assistance would only be for level 3 and level 4 students. Armagost also noted that the transportation would be provided in-between schools and that resident districts would have responsibility for getting the student to their building, where SMEC would pick up and transport to their program. With this transportation plan, SMEC should receive enough funding to provide the transportation without having to bill back to districts. There is no obligation for districts to utilize SMEC assistance with transporting special education students if they feel it is going well.

Paul Besel (GM) sought additional clarification regarding special education reimbursement funds. Member districts can purchase vehicles and receive reimbursement if those vehicles are utilized to transport special education students. Armagost encouraged districts to continue doing this as they would still be transporting these students to their resident districts prior to SMEC picking up and transporting to the SMEC program. Armagost noted that SMEC plans to utilize ESSER federal stimulus funds to purchase the vans upfront.

A wheelchair van would also be purchased utilizing MA funds; a quote has not been established for this van yet. Wheelchair vans are on back order until at least December 2022, so it was requested that districts begin to look at finding contracted wheelchair van services for the 2022-2023 school year.

Scott Hall (SL) motioned to approve the purchase of four, 10-passenger vans, second from Brian Shanks (AC/GE), all were in favor by roll call; motion carried.

- G. *Fillmore School Psych and PT Contracts**: Armagost noted that Fillmore Central requested SMEC assistance with physical therapy (PT) and school psychologist services for their students. Armagost noted that SMEC has a current PT that is working part-time and therefore has the time to sell to Fillmore Central until the end of the school year. SMEC cannot guarantee a consistent school psychologist due to COVID and a heavy caseload within the Consortium, however, is able to offer Fillmore Central an hourly contract without committing to a time minimum. School psychologist services are only needed as they are available through the end of March 2022. Jamie Goebel (LY) motioned to approve the contracts, second by Scott Hall (SL), all were in favor by roll call; motion carried.
- H. *MSBA 714 Fund Balances*: Paul Besel (GM) shared the MSBA policy 714 regarding fund balances. Besel noted that all school districts should have a fund balance policy approved at the board level. Besel requested to have this reviewed by the policy and procedures committee and a policy be adopted following review.

Old Business

- A. *SMEC Ed Center Bond Payment*: A spreadsheet of the bond payment schedule was shared; member district bond payments including principal, interest, and individual district cost are included in the spreadsheet. \$62,130 was brought in through access fees, with an additional \$124,700 revenue from the level 3 programs. The total bond payment reduction of approximately \$186,000 for FY22 will be proposed to the SMEC Board. Lyle will only receive the access fee reduction as they do not currently host a level 3 program. This spreadsheet was shared with business managers at the last meeting and a large discussion ensued regarding how to manage the funds if a district has already levied and how to keep payments consistent. Business managers recommended that the \$186,000 be placed in a reserved fund to be applied to the principal bond payment in 2026.

Paul Besel (GM) reopened conversation to the board-approved fund balance and the lack of discussion between the cabinet, board, and business managers prior to decisions being made. Discussion continued regarding board versus cabinet authority and the disconnect between the roles of both. Armagost noted that this is also on the board organizational agenda for discussion at the meeting next week. Reference was made to the joint powers' agreement and review of this agreement for potential revisions. Jim Hecimovich (KPS) requested to have a working document on the joint powers' agreement to review during strategic planning this summer. Armagost noted that the board would like to take more ownership over SMEC decisions. There was mutual agreement

that this should be a slow process and discussion should continue about how to help the co-op run parallel to an independent school district, while still considering the nuances that follow running a cooperative.

Armagost requested that all superintendents go back to their districts with the bond payment information and have in-depth conversations with their business managers. SMEC has made the January bond payment and will wait to bill any member districts until a consensus has been reached. Kelly McConnell from Baker-Tilly will attend the next business manager meeting to provide information regarding the bond payment and answer business manager questions about early payoff. Discussion will then be brought back to the next cabinet and board meetings.

- B. *SMEC Business Manager*: Paul Besel (GM) clarified after reading the December meeting minutes that his motion intended to allow the option of hiring a firm. Salaries were explored for potential business managers and what each member district pays for expenses in their business offices. Armagost also noted he is going to research other co-ops and what they have for business office expenses.

Besel (GM) reminded Dan that the motion in December was to give SMEC until June to digest the need and what tasks for each position would look like. Armagost noted that the need was now and SMEC does not want to wait until June to post these positions. Armagost shared that he would like to post for an administrative assistant and business manager to start interviewing applicants prior to looking at contracting with an agency.

Jim Hecimovich (KPS) sought confirmation that these are both existing job positions. Armagost confirmed, and Hecimovich noted that a cabinet and and/or board action is not necessary to begin accepting applications and start interviewing candidates. Besel (GM) and Hecimovich (KPS) both stated support for posting for both position vacancies.

- C. *Next Step Glenville-Emmons Building Update*: Armagost reported that a lease proposal was given to SMEC for the potential building. This new location is in Glenville and a site visit will be performed to ensure that the building is appropriate for the transition program.
- D. *Strategic Planning Summer 2022 Update*: Gail Gilman will have a contract for Armagost to bring back for review at the next meeting.
- E. *Property Line Update*: The purchase of the property line has been tabled. SMEC will continue to negotiate.
- F. *Executive Director Evaluation Process – Board Approved*: Armagost reported that the board approved the executive director evaluation follow the MSBA superintendent evaluation model. Board Chair Michelle Nelsen and Jen Backer-Johnson will begin this process with Armagost.
- G. *Level III Transportation Garage*: A committee will be formed for planning, and the board will establish a budget for the building. Bids for this building have started to come in, but Armagost noted that many companies won't produce a bid without an architectural plan. Brian Shanks (AC/GE) noted that when building a new garage in Alden, the companies that provided bids also provided drawn-up plans. Armagost reported that bids are coming in well above pricing that is anticipated. Updates will be provided as more information comes in.
- H. *ELL Newcomers Program Update*: No updates to report.
- I. *Staff Negotiations Process – Board Approved*: The board approved the negotiations process. Currently, the process for staff negotiations is led by Executive Director Dan Armagost and Director Denise Kennedy with assistance by the SMEC business manager. Total settlement packages for member district employees are recorded on the whiteboard at SMEC to assist with the settlement process.

- J. *Mandatory and District Policies*: A committee will be formed to begin this process. Jen Backer-Johnson (LO) shared her notes for assisting with this process and will assist along the way. No further discussion.
- K. *20% Fund Balance*: Paul Besel (GM) noted that based on previous discussions in this meeting, there is nothing additional to discuss.

Administrative Reports

- A. Business Management Updates
- Bank account balance as of 12/13/2021: \$895,519.15. This balance was updated to reflect the deduction of payroll from the account.
 - The next Business Managers meeting will be Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 10:00AM.
- B. Director Denise Kennedy
- LETRS: Sent an email to building administrators today to describe what LETRS is and the process for training staff.
 - i. Registrations can no longer be transferred to other staff members per the state
 - ii. SMEC provides a \$1,200 stipend in the spring and in the fall to all special education staff in the consortium that are participating in the LETRS training – this includes resource room teachers, not just level 3 and 4 staff.
 - iii. Training on all 8 units for LETRS is 144 hours of time commitment
 - iv. The current national training is full, but another training will take place at SMEC this summer.
 - COTA Programs: Recruitment of related-service providers is also part of sending staff back for their licensure
 - i. Losing related-service providers to Mayo Clinic, including one of our COTAs, which provided an opening for that position
 - ii. Two universities are willing to work on agreements with SMEC for their COTA programs – Anoka Tech in Minnesota and Northland College in Wisconsin; both are interested in utilizing SMEC to help their students fulfill internship hours
 - Staffing Projections 2022-2023:
 - i. Currently wrapping up staffing projections for the 2022-2023 school year
 - ii. Will meet with building principals after upcoming CSTs
- C. Executive Director Dan Armagost
- SMEC Board Organizational Meeting – Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, at 6:30PM at the SMEC Ed Center
 - The Restrictive Procedures Report for quarter 2 has been submitted.
 - Currently working on the Civil Rights Report
 - Will be attending district board meetings to review the SMEC audit, some of these may be over Zoom

Cabinet Comments

The WSU Student Teaching Placement event is on February 3rd, 2022, from 2:00-4:30PM. Registration is by Friday, January 21st, 2022. No additional comments.

The next regular Cabinet meeting is Tuesday, February 15th, 2022, at 9:00AM at the SMEC Ed Center and via Zoom.

Motion to adjourn by Jim Hecimovich (KPS), second by Jamie Goebel (LY), all were in favor, motion carried. The cabinet meeting was adjourned at 11:23AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Rye, SMEC Administrative Assistant