Trust Advisory Committee

Draft Minutes

September 16, 2019

Members in attendance: Nancy Kennedy, Cade Douglas, Carolyn White, Liz Mumford, Jay Blain, Sarah Thomas, Lark Reynolds, Susan Edwards, Mary Wohlforth, Shawn McLeod, Tyler Slack (phone)

USBE Staff in attendance: Paula Plant, Karen Rupp, Natalie Gordon, Ben Rasmussen, Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings

Others in attendance: Nathan Brady and Amy Shewen, OLRGC; Jessie Steward, LTPAO.

At 12:07, Chair Nancy Kennedy welcomed the committee.

Carolyn White made a motion to approve the minutes of August 19, 2019. Sarah Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

At the August 19 meeting, the committee made a recommendation to the Utah State Board of Education leadership to advocate for School LAND Trust plans and program funds to remain separate from Teacher and Student Success Act plans and program funds. Cade Douglas read a draft of the letter to the committee. Natalie Gordon will forward a copy of the final letter to all committee members.

Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings discussed potential legislation that would affect councils. Currently, SCCs are exempt from the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act. Councils are subject to 53G-7-1203 that requires open meeting requirements for councils. The law does not require recording and posting of meeting audio and specifies that councils may not close meetings. The committee discussed recording and posting of meetings. Cade stated that it is not difficult to record and post meetings, but that there may be no demand for the information, and clearly written minutes would provide transparency. Jay Blain believes that this would become more necessary as the program funding continues to grow. Susan Edwards stated that volunteers serving on councils may be hesitant to have the meetings recorded. Sarah Thomas stated that in some rural communities, the meetings are held in areas without internet access or cell service. Liz Mumford is concerned that because of the frequent turnover of council members, training would take time away from the business of the council. Mary Wohlforth discussed the issue with principals and parents, and believes this would hinder parents’ willingness to ask questions, and would therefore reduce the information parents have when making decisions. Karen Rupp mentioned that these concerns may be greater at schools with large minority populations. Angie asked if the School LAND Trust plans were discussed in detail in local board meetings. They are not.

The discussion progressed to the need for councils to close meetings. Susan stated that currently, she trains councils in her district that they may not close meetings because they are not allowed to discuss individual teachers or students. She had some concerns that the safety discussion could evolve to include information that should not be in an open meeting. Paula Plant stated that there are strict legal requirements for closing meetings, and councils do not have lawyers present to advise and assist.

Nathan Brady asked if there were compelling reasons to not record and post meetings. The committee suggested that recording meetings could lead to limiting discussion from committee members and less parent participation. The committee agreed that there would be a small fiscal impact, and that recorders could not be purchased with program funds.

Jessie Stewart of the Land Trust Protection and Advocacy Office mentioned a few highlights of the last month. Advocacy Office Director Justin Atwater was introduced to the Utah PTA Board of Directors and was asked to present in a general session in their Advocacy Conference. Justin was also introduced to the Utah State Board of Education.

Paula Plant gave an update on the SITLA meeting held the previous week. There were a few questions regarding decisions made by the SITLA Board in the meeting.

Karen Rupp briefed the committee on Fall Statewide Training.

Paula Plant updated the committee on School Safety and Digital Citizenship. SchoolLANDTrust.org has been updated with responsibilities of councils, a discussion guide and timeline. There are also new links on the website to provide resources to councils. Susan Edwards informed the committee that Canyons District is working on a template for a district report to schools on safety principles and digital citizenship, and will share the information with the committee when it is complete.

Paula Plant mentioned that Travis Cook has started working with the Provo eSchool, and is working to clarify some issues relating to the School LAND Trust program and online schools.

The committee discussed the positions of the various organizations regarding the USBE rule defining allowable trust expenditures. Jay Blain was concerned with the reference to the statewide accountability framework. Cade suggested that the $7,000 should also include a percentage (10%?), using whatever is the greater amount. Liz Mumford mentioned that changes may require local boards to take more responsibility. Cade suggested adding local board priorities. Carolyn would like to focus on college and career readiness. Lark stated that DBOs would like more flexibility in how the funds are spent. Cade suggested that this change could be a small step toward a big step of greater flexibility. Susan Edwards is concerned that this could be an incremental step to losing control of the funding. The committee discussed the need to keep the program academic and data driven. It is important to keep the local board in the discussion.

Paula will take the suggestions made and get an updated draft to the committee early next week so the members can get input from their various groups. If the recommendation can be made to the USBE before the November Board Meeting, the rule could be in place as early as January.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31.