

# The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600  
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Anne Fischer, Chairperson  
Mason Thrall, Vice Chairperson  
Patricia Buxton, Secretary  
Paul Grabowski  
Karen Colt  
Mark Kalina  
Stephen Linton  
Deborah Rodriguez  
Kristiana Wintress

Date: February 1, 2023

## **APPROVED MINUTES** BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING BUDGET WORKSHOP

A Vernon Board of Education Budget Workshop was held via Zoom Meeting and in-person on Monday, February 1, 2023.

### **1.0 Establish Quorum**

Board members present in-person: Mrs. Fischer, Dr. Buxton, Mr. Grabowski, Mr. Kalina, Mr. Linton, and Ms. Wintress.

Board members present via Zoom: Ms. Colt and Mrs. Rodriguez

Mr. Thrall was absent.

There was a quorum.

Also present were Dr. Joseph Macary, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Robert Testa, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. William Meier III, Director of Business and Finance; and Ms. Nina Prajzner, Secretary to Mr. Meier.

### **2.0 Call to Order**

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **3.0 Community Forum Opportunity for Public Comment on Superintendent's Proposed 2023-2024 Budget**

Susan Simmons, current library manager at Maple Street School, thanked the Board for allowing members of the Librarian Union and the public to speak at the January 30<sup>th</sup> Budget Workshop. She asked the Board to place give a thoughtful review of the testimonies from Monday night. She added that librarians help every child grow into a life-long leader. She feels they are a great investment for Board of Education.

#### 4.0 Budget Workshop

Mr. Meier handed out the response sheet to Board members regarding the six questions asked at the January 30<sup>th</sup> workshop. The questions and responses are as follows:

**Question 1: What equipment is purchased under "Non-Instructional Equipment-Apparatus to Fix Equipment" for the Cheerleading Team? (RHS page 41).**

*Response: This account is used to purchase trophies, athlete recognitions and to replace small or damaged uniform items and other miscellaneous team supplies. Comments will be updated.*

**Question 2: VCMS has teacher stipends for Math Olympiads, Math Team Advisors and Two Enrichment clubs under the Mathematics Organization Code. Are there four math teams? (VCMS page 49).**

*Response: VCMS runs the Math Olympiads and Math Team. The Enrichment clubs listed beneath Math Team advisors are the 2 student interest clubs that are determined each year based on student voice. They are miscoded as Mathematics. Book will be updated.*

**Question 3: How many students are utilizing the late bus at VCMS?**

*Response: The late bus runs three days per week. The student count averages between 8-12 students per day.*

**Question 4: What is the new art class at VCMS? (VCMS page 53).**

*Response: The \$500 increase in the art line item is to cover supplies for a new photography club at VCMS being run through the Art Department during Eagle time.*

**Question 5: What is the NASSP membership at MSS? (MSS page 74).**

*Response: The comment should read "CAS (CT Association of Schools) activities and memberships." The comment will be updated.*

**Question 6: What are the state testing supplies at SRS? (SRS page 88).**

*Response: These testing supplies will not be needed in FY24 and this line will be removed. This results in a reduction of \$125. 00 to the total budget.*

The workshop began with general questions.

A question was asked about math enrichment and if it was after school. Dr. Macary said it is after school. He added that if there is club, such as art, it would be done after school.

A question was asked about how many students use the late bus. Dr. Macary said eight to twelve students take the late bus per day for the whole school. A follow up question was asked about parents picking students up for extracurricular activities. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up

question was asked about the late bus being a van or bus for cost reasons. Dr. Macary said they are charged the same for the late bus regardless of the vehicle type.

Maintenance:

On page 95, a question was asked about overtime for maintainers. Dr. Macary said this is for emergency situations such as a fire or flood. He added they also work overtime in August to prepare the schools for the beginning of the year.

A question was asked about engineering services. Dr. Macary said this covers architectural designs. A follow up question was asked about if this should be listed under capital instead. Dr. Macary said they keep it under maintenance.

A question was asked about the increase for other professional and technical services. Dr. Macary said they are expecting an increase in all fees. He added that they also need to have the bleachers inspected now as well as the basketball hoops. A follow up question was asked about this needing to be done annually. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about machine and equipment repairs being done internally at the Town garage. Dr. Macary said the Town garage does most of work but for specialty work they send it out. He added this budget is for parts, etc.

On page 96, a question was asked about repair energy management systems. Dr. Macary said the fees have increased for proprietary systems.

A question was asked about fire extinguishers testing each year. Dr. Macary said there are a lot of fire extinguishers in the buildings. Mr. Meier added that this also covers the Ansul systems in the kitchens. A follow up question was asked about adding a note about the Ansul system. Mr. Meier will update the note.

On page 97, a question was asked about conference fees for the CT School Building Grounds Association. Dr. Macary said it is for the membership for the Director of Building and Grounds. He added they go to Annual events as their professional development.

A question was asked about repairs to new intercom systems. Dr. Macary said they have to make sure they work in case there is a lock down. A follow up question was asked about this being a hardware or software issue. Mr. Meier said this also covers speakers in classrooms, amps in the offices, etc.

On page 98, a question was asked about maintaining inventory for plumbing supplies. Dr. Macary said they have small inventory such as gaskets but no big items such as toilets. A follow up question was asked about where they purchase these items. Mr. Meier said they go to a local Home Depot or they send one maintainer to go get everything for the week at a store in East Hartford. He added that they do stock more now than in prior years due to long delivery wait times for some items.

A question was asked about the 5,500 gallons of automotive fuel and gasoline. Mr. Meier said this is used for the nine maintainer vehicles. A follow up question was asked about adding a note to specify this. Mr. Meier will update the note.

A question was asked about if they pay Parks and Recreation for seeds for landscaping supplies. Dr. Macary confirmed they do. He added they also pay for the paint for the lines as well.

On page 99, a question was asked about State mandated menstrual products. Dr. Macary said they have to put menstrual products in restrooms now. A follow up question was asked about the boys' restrooms. Dr. Macary confirmed they do need to be in both girls' and boys' restrooms. A follow up question was asked about needing dispensers for the menstrual products. Dr. Macary said yes, they are needed.

A question was asked about deleting the empty line for new non-instruction equipment. Mr. Meier will have this removed.

This concludes the review of the Maintenance proposed budget.

Central Office:

On page 101, a question was asked about the proposed budget for substitute nurses being enough. Mr. Meier said it is not but they move money from vacant salaries into the substitute line.

On page 103, a question was asked about magnet school tuition. Dr. Macary said this is not new, it was moved from Pupil Services because it did not belong there since this tuition is for regular education students. A follow up question was asked if the \$900 increase taken into consideration. Dr. Macary confirmed it was.

A question was asked about the decrease for the contracted service vocational technical bus. Dr. Macary said there are less students taking the bus and the actuals for last five years are lower. Mr. Meier added that they also moved homeless transportation out and broke it out separately.

On page 105, a question was asked about the duties for the chemical hygiene science safety officer. Dr. Macary said they make sure everything is marked correctly, stored correctly, and disposed correctly. He added that they were marked on an OSHA report that they needed to have this person specifically in science labs.

A question was asked about the budget for Elementary Leadership Team being moved to temporary salaries. Mr. Testa said it used to be a stipend position but they only meet a few times throughout the year so it was easier to use timecards. He added it was in their favor to pay them at an hourly rate. A follow up question was asked about this being in the contract. Mr. Testa confirmed. A follow up question was asked about where temporary salaries are located in the budget. Dr. Macary said it is located in this section on page 107.

On page 106-, a question was asked about building and daily substitutes. Dr. Macary said they increased the daily rate to \$130 per day which is roughly \$20 per hour. He added they did this for retention. He also said they only budget \$390,000 but they spend closer to \$500,000. A question was asked if teachers who cover for other teachers are paid out of this account. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about in lieu of medical insurance being removed from the budget. Mr. Meier will have this removed.

On page 107, a question was asked about advanced training in SNAP. Dr. Macary said this is for nurses to enter all medical information. He added that they want HIPAA entered in SNAP.

A question was asked about the \$500 stipends for TEAM mentoring for the second year. Mr. Testa said they receive \$500 for the first year as well. Mr. Meier will update this note. A follow up question was asked about if the large increase was due to an increase in teachers who need TEAM mentoring. Mr. Testa confirmed.

A question was asked about the decrease in severance pay for teachers district wide. Dr. Macary said last year they had seven and this year they only have two but are expecting two to three more.

On page 108, a question was asked about how the budget for insurance benefits was calculated. Dr. Macary said they take the actuals of the past five years. The Board and Town went self-insured last year so greater weight was given to the prior year's figures. He added that last year they had an increase in the number of claims. Over the past several years, health insurance claims went up 8% with an average of thirty-three people on high cost claims. This past year there were thirty-eight high claim individuals. He said the fund lost approximately one million dollars in the last fiscal year. They need to replenish that money. A follow up question was asked about the \$200,000 reduction by the mayor. Dr. Macary confirmed. A new health incentive program is being incorporated into bargaining agreements. It is currently in the nurses' contract. This plan has a mandatory wellness component for employees and their dependents. He added that our insurance consultant, USI, said in general the Vernon school staff got sicker with more high cost claims. A follow up question was asked about this being job related sicknesses. Dr. Macary said no and gave examples of high cost claims being cancer treatments or high cost surgeries. A follow up question was asked about what percentage of staff takes insurance. Dr. Macary said the total group is about six hundred to six hundred fifty people so around 55-60%.

A question was asked about the line item for page 102 matching the third line on page 108. Dr. Macary said they had to delineate the Mayor's reduction from the FY23 budget. A follow up question was asked about putting the \$200,000 into that line item. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about the Town sending bills in December for net food services. Dr. Macary said they get two bills. One for food service and one for employees. A follow up question was asked if the total number was for food service and employees. Dr. Macary said it was just employees. A follow up question was asked about removing the line "net food services". Mr. Meier will have this removed.

On page 109-, a question was asked about the \$85,000 for contract negotiations. Dr. Macary said they start with teachers next summer and maybe one other contract so this is correct.

A question was asked about post-employment benefits for cafeteria staff. Dr. Macary said that is what they give according to pension for all employees. Mr. Meier will remove "cafeteria".

On page 110, a question was asked about the need for \$2,750 for professional development for the Board. Dr. Macary said it was to invest in people. He added any professional development comes from that line include CAFE conferences.

A question was asked about the \$53,148 increase for CA information systems. Dr. Macary said this is for shared services with the IT department at the town. He added their share is \$1,048,148.

A follow up question was asked about what the towns share is. Dr. Macary said the town pays the same.

A question was asked about private duty police services being used only for graduation. Dr. Macary said no, they are also hired at the beginning of school to help with traffic. A follow up question was asked about the Town agreeing to provide police officers at the beginning of the school year. Dr. Macary said no, they have always paid but there are times when they help for free.

A question was asked about Solar credits. Dr. Macary said they get credits back from solar at Center Road School, Lake Street School, and Northeast School. He said the solar credits for all three schools amounts to \$25,000 to \$30,000. A follow up question was asked about owning or leasing the panels. Dr. Macary said they lease them through the town. A follow up question was asked about this being the net expense. Dr. Macary confirmed. He added they did not pay any upfront costs on the solar panels. A follow up question was asked about being responsible for disposal. Dr. Macary said no, it is in their contract.

On page 111, a question was asked about why employee travel decreased by \$1,000. Dr. Macary said they anticipate needing that much. A follow up question was asked about the benefit of adding a year to date column on the budget. Dr. Macary said he felt it would be too confusing.

A question was asked about employee travel for health services. Mr. Meier said it is for professional development off site and travel to schools including mileage for the Nurses.

A question was asked about business office travel expense. Dr. Macary said this is used when the business office staff travels to schools to help. It was also noted that Mr. Meier received a separate travel stipend.

On page 112, a question was asked about the new name for the CT Center for School Change. Mr. Meier will update this to Partners for Educational Leadership.

A question was asked about CAFE providing services and fair value exchange for what is paid. Dr. Macary said they get benefits on policies. He said they spend a lot of time reviewing these as there are over eight hundred pages in policy book. He added that using CAFE policy services is worth it.

A question was asked about the note CREC \$750. Dr. Macary said this is because they are part of the CREC consortium.

A question was asked about the \$5,000 already being listed for the CAFE conventions. Dr. Macary said this is for other types of professional management such as district management council, etc.

A question was asked if \$1,800 covers the cost for printing and binding for letterhead, brochures, and business cards. Dr. Macary said this line fluctuates.

On page 113, a question was asked if summer school transportation is taken out of SE student transportation. Dr. Macary said SE is for special education for the whole year. He added that summer school transportation covers elementary school runs and special education runs. A follow up question was asked about how many bus monitors there are. Dr. Macary said he is unsure of

the exact number as it is based on IEPs. He also said that the bus monitors come from First Student. It was also noted that SE transportation covers preschool as well.

A question was asked about the 20% increase for magnet school tuition being outside of our control. Dr. Macary confirmed it is.

A question was asked about the 5.9% increase on transportation being per the contract. Dr. Macary confirmed and noted they should see a lower increase next year.

A question was asked about the \$13,600 for contracted service vocational technical bus. Dr. Macary said homeless transportation was removed from here. A follow up question was asked about the cost for homeless transportation being high. Dr. Macary said it is because they are unsure of the number of homeless students plus they need to add in the 5.9% increase.

On page 114, a question was asked about it being helpful to communicate that there is no limit on miles for homeless transportation. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about how many homeless students there are currently. Mr. Testa said twenty-five to thirty-five.

A question was asked about the increase for the Finals website. Mr. Testa said they haven't really seen an increase in the past few years but everything is increasing now.

A question was asked about the totals under the library system wide support notes being \$1,000 different than the budget. Mr. Meier will check the number and report back.

A question was asked about heating oil #2 for VoAg. Dr. Macary said this is just for the VoAg building. A follow up question was asked about this being the only building on heating oil. Dr. Macary confirmed. He said last year they budgeted for \$2.00 per gallon. A follow up question was asked about switching to gas. Dr. Macary said they would have to do install new boiler or convertor in order to switch.

On page 115, a question was asked about the large increase for automotive fuel and gasoline. Dr. Macary said they went from \$2.03 per gallon to \$3.08 a gallon.

A question was asked about reading instruction strategy books being unique for every school. Mr. Testa said those are provided to each of the schools and they are interchangeable.

A question was asked about removing the line for CA assessments. Mr. Meier will have this removed.

On page 116, a question was asked about the cost for F&P kits. Dr. Macary said they do cost that much. A follow up question was asked about Lake Street School needing more. Mr. Testa said they replace them where the need is.

A question was asked about the deduction in budget for math supplies at CRS. Dr. Macary said this is enough and that it is pooled. He added that they break it out by school so people can see it but internally there is more flexibility for those line items to get the schools what they need.

On page 117, a question was asked about district wide radio repeater fees. Mr. Meier said every building has a local system but they also have some repeaters between building. He added that

they pay for a lease on Box Mountain. A follow up question was asked about using a phone instead. Mr. Grabowski said it is a two-way radio. Mr. Meier confirmed.

A question was asked about permanent bus passes. Mr. Meier said they buy laminated bus tags for the elementary students to attach to their backpacks to help ensure they get on the correct bus.

A question was asked about the \$9,500 increase for CCTV/safety systems maintenance. Mr. Meier said this is a vendor contract. He added that some of the increase comes from the cameras coming off of warranty and needing to be added to the service contract.

A question was asked about what the Alertus System is. Mr. Meier said it is a program in the cafeterias and gyms that have beacons with lights to notify people of an emergency in the building. A follow up question was asked about it being new or a renewal. Dr. Macary said they bought it last year and this is the annual service renewal.

A question was asked about what CCTV/safety systems maintenance covers. Mr. Meier said this covers burglar alarm system for sensors and door as well as cameras.

On page 118, a question was asked about Newline interactive displays. Mr. Testa said this is the interactive touchscreen display. He added they used to have projectors but are switching to these interactive displays. He also said compared to the white boards, the TV-style displays are cheaper and easier to mount.

A question was asked about the budget for Chrome books. Dr. Macary said they usually purchase two hundred fifty chrome books for the incoming ninth grade class. On average the cost around \$300 each. He added that after four years, they are practically useless. A follow up question was asked about seniors keeping their chrome books. Mr. Testa said in the past they have let some keep them but they do ask for them back.

It was noted how much the budget for software has increased.

On Page 119, a question was asked about Zoom. Dr. Macary said a lot of PPT meetings and conferences are done via Zoom now. He added if a student is sick, a teacher may allow them to Zoom in as well. A follow up question was asked about a per seat license. Mr. Testa said no, they have a district license.

A question was asked about Study Cat & Soundtrap. Mr. Testa said this software is used as an update to the music tech production course. He added that some students are more advanced. A follow up question was asked about Study Cat being for music as well. Mr. Testa said yes, both programs were requested by the teacher and music department. Sound Trap was also budget at RHS and \$1700 from the RHS line is being removed from the budget.

A question was asked about health equipment for the Elementary Schools. Mr. Meier said they consolidated all Elementary School accounts into one. He added that this covers machines for hearing screening and vision charts as well as the replacement of broken items. He also said the Nursing Supervisor has a replacement schedule to follow as well.

A question was asked about MSDS/SDS. Mr. Testa said they have a contract with them so they can login and download safety sheets. He added that they used to have binders they had to update but now they can go right online and print off the safety sheets.



This concludes the review of the Central Office proposed budget.

#### Continuing Education:

On page 123, a question was asked about the secretaries' salaries being ABE grant funded. Dr. Macary said in the past they paid 75% of the salary but noted they should be paying the full salary. A follow up question was asked about why they lost the grant funding. Dr. Macary said they did not lose it but they cannot use the entire ABL grant for this. It was also noted that this is the current salary since this contract has not been negotiated yet.

This concludes the review of the Continuing Education proposed budget.

#### Pupil Services:

A question was asked about the current number of tutors. Dr. Macary said they have two at Next Step and then one per IEP if they are needed for hearing, disability, etc. He added there are currently eight to ten. A follow up question was asked about how they are paid. Dr. Macary said they are paid hourly based off of their need for them.

On page 129, a question was asked about how the speech and hearing reduction will impact IEPs. Dr. Macary said they should have a speech and language specialist for every building. He added this reflects the same number of staff, they are just saving money by hiring staff on lower steps. A follow up question was asked about if there is currently one in each building. Dr. Macary said if they do not have one, they outsource the services.

A question was asked about the secretary salary. Mr. Meier will remove this from the budget.

A question was asked about summer school being paid through the ESSER grant and what they will do when this ends. Dr. Macary said they budget \$4,000 for tutors and \$40,000 for salaries. A follow up question was asked about spending all of the budget for this year. Dr. Macary said they most likely will not unless it goes over.

On page 130, a question was asked about what inclusion equipment is for physically handicapped instruction. Dr. Macary said it would be any kind of adaptive equipment they needed such as bouncy chairs for students with ADD or chairs with a slant for vision impaired.

On page 131, a question was asked if the number of students for magnet school special education increased. Dr. Macary said the number has gone down but the prices have increased by 40%.

A question was asked about the increase for tuition to other LEAs. Dr. Macary asked the Board to review line 55810 and 55820. He added an example of when they outplace to CREC, they are an LEA so they charge to that line item. If they place them in Gengras, they are not LEA as they are private. They have more students going to LEAs than private, but in the end, it equals out.

A question was asked about removing the blank line for School psychologist. Mr. Meier will have this removed.

On page 133, a question was asked about buying the new Next Step van outright. Dr. Macary confirmed they are.

This concludes the review of the Pupil Services proposed budget.

Dr. Macary recapped his recommendations for the budget.

- Change the In-School Suspension Facilitator to a paraprofessional position. This will save around \$25,000. They will adjust the pay to the highest paraprofessional pay.
- Leave the librarians the way they are proposed. IT will take over Chromebook issues.

#### Revenue Estimates:

Dr. Macary explained that ECS goes to the town, Medicaid goes to the town, Tuition for VoAg and Special Ed VoAg goes to the town. He said the Transfer In is a salary for the shared services Public Works Director.

This concludes the review of the Revenue Estimates.

#### Capital Plan:

A question was asked about a playground inspector. Dr. Macary said Parks & Recreation Director Marty Sitler is certified.

Dr. Macary said the ten-year facilities study may reshape how they do the capital plan in the future. A question was asked about if they will look at the building as a whole. Dr. Macary confirmed they will. He added the facilities committee will review and then have the studies done. He believes they should have it back in September. He said anything over \$100,000 to \$150,000 is listed as Capital.

This concludes the review of the Capital Plan.

Mrs. Fischer asked if anyone felt anything needed to be added or deleted from the budget.

A question was asked about the money for materials in Maintenance being reduced. Mr. Meier said he believes they will spend what is budgeted based off preventative maintenance and unplanned repairs. It was not recommended to cut money from this based on the age of the facilities.

A question was asked about the cost to add an interventionist. Dr. Macary said the salary is \$68,000 to \$70,000. He added that the salary does not include benefits. With benefits it would be more like \$85,000.

A question was asked about textbooks from page 13 and if they were interested in following curriculum requirements but paying someone to build textbooks online. Dr. Macary said a lot of these are in articulated classes so you have to buy their books. This included MCC and UCONN.

It was requested that Mr. Meier run new number for Monday based off of the changes and provide the Board with an updated page 5 of the budget.

5.0 Adjournment

Mrs. Fischer motioned to adjourn the workshop at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Buxton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Patricia Buxton, Board Secretary