

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Paul Grabowski, Chair
Kristiana Wintress, Vice Chair
Karen Colt, Secretary
Anthony Bedlack
Patricia Buxton
Susan Jablonecki
Kriste Nucci
Simone Sewell
Mason Thrall

Date: January 17, 2024

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 Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

1.0 Establish Quorum

Board members present in-person: Paul Grabowski, Kristiana Wintress, Karen Colt, Anthony Bedlack, Patricia Buxton, Susan Jablonecki, Kriste Nucci and Simone Sewell.

Board members present via Zoom: None

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; Mr. Brett Lacoske, Financial Analyst and Ms. Nina Prajzner, Secretary to Mr. Meier.

2.0 Call to Order

Chairperson Grabowski called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

3.0 Community Forum Opportunity for Public Comment on Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget

There was no public comment.

4.0 Budget Workshop

Dr. Macary asked everyone to introduce themselves.

He then asked if anyone had any high-level questions. A few pages from his PowerPoint were presented which explained in further detail the changes to the budget.

A question was asked if there are enough social workers for the high school. Dr. Macary said they would like to have more but they do make referrals to the Village. He added that the TALC program has its own social worker and they also have a full time and part time psychologist and five guidance counselors.

A question was asked if any portion of today's meeting was confidential. Dr. Macary said no.

Dr. Macary asked if there were any other questions before they begin reviewing personnel.

A question was asked about new hires being brought in on step three. Dr. Macary explained they use step three for masters at a rate of \$65,775 for open positions as a middle flexibility point for budgeting.

Dr. Macary explained the layout of the column headers.

The workshop began on page 137 of personnel.

On Page 137, a question was asked if a principal is new if they are listed as step one. Dr. Macary said in the administrator contract, a High School principal gets paid the highest then the middle and so on. He added that the lane is their position. He reminded the Board that the shared google drive has all salary schedules set up for their review.

A question was asked about the assistant principal stipend of \$1,400. Dr. Macary said if they have their 6th year degree, they receive a \$1,400 stipend and if they have their Doctorate, they receive a \$2,800 stipend.

On page 138, a question was asked about the note which said RAM center and if they were being paid from alliance. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On page 139, a question was asked about the career service coordinator position and if they should be in the OPS budget instead. Dr. Macary explained this position was different than the one in question.

A question was asked about Michelle Trani going from \$68,157 to \$78,563. Dr. Macary said this was because the person in the position last year was at \$68,157 but Michelle was hired at \$78,563.

Dr. Macary explained they ASTE teachers are paid at 1.2 FTE as they work over the summer.

On page 141, a question was asked about the number of secretaries in the high school. Dr. Macary explained their roles.

A question was asked if the ISS facilitator position was filled. Dr. Macary said yes. He explained that during the last budget cycle, the ISS facilitator was filled by a nonaffiliated salaried staff at around \$52,000. We are now funding at \$26,660.

On page 142, Dr. Macary noted two-year salary increases for the unions which were not settled prior to the budget last year. The new salaries are reflected in this budget.

On page 143, a question was asked about the number of assistant principals at the middle school.

There was a fire alarm which recessed the workshop from 6:25pm to 7:00pm.

Mr. Bedlack arrived at 7:00pm.

Dr. Buxton left the meeting at 7:00pm.

On page 144, Dr. Macary explained they are expecting an increase in Alliance funding therefore they put all six world language teachers at VCMS into Alliance. A follow up question was asked if they would stay in alliance or be removed. Dr. Macary said they are in a bi-annual state budget for funding. A follow up question was asked about where the alliance funding comes from. Dr. Macary explained ECS and Alliance are now the same. He added if they decrease the funding to Vernon, they would need to decrease 35 other districts.

On page 145, a question was asked what Esser III to local meant. Dr. Macary explained we no longer receive Esser III therefore those positions were moved back the local budget.

A question was asked about the .2 FTE for the computer science position. Dr. Macary said that position is split between computer science and technical education.

On page 147, Dr. Macary said they are adding a certified library media specialist to the Middle School. A follow up question was asked if it would be funded by Alliance. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On Page 149, Dr. Macary said they want a 14-classroom model which fluctuates based on enrollment. He added if there are four classes in fourth grade and three in fifth grade this creates a "bubble". The following year they would need to hire an additional fifth grade teacher.

A question was asked about what a math interventionist is. Dr. Macary said they work directly with students who are not at their grade level for math.

On page 154, a question was asked if someone gets a raise do they move to another lane. Dr. Macary confirmed and added that a degree change means they are moving up a lane. Step changes happen per the contract and are based on years of service.

A question was asked if the new tutor for Lake Street School was listed in Lake Street or Pupil Services. Mr. Meier said it is Chandler Johnson who is listed on page 154.

Dr. Macary said we have fourteen students in the ABL program. It would cost roughly \$85,000 per student to out place them.

On page 155, Dr. Macary noted the "bubble" he was referring is shown in the middle of the page for a new grade five teacher position based on enrollment. He added that some years we remove teachers and some years we add them. A follow up question was asked about if the position has been filled. Dr. Macary said we will post the open position in March for the upcoming school year.

On page 156, a question was asked about how the rotating librarians are working out. Dr. Macary said he has received nothing but positive feedback.

On page 157, Dr. Macary noted the same "bubble" for Northeast School.

A question was asked about Title grants. Dr. Macary said these are based on poverty numbers. He said for example, if 50% of poverty is at one school, then they need to send 50% of the funding to that school. He added that Maple Street School and Vernon Center Middle School are the larger schools for funding. A follow up question was asked if the high school was included as well. Dr. Macary said the free and reduced lunch numbers drop at the High School.

A question was asked about the additional teacher for Special Education-K. Dr. Macary said this position is for next year and will post in March. A follow up question was asked about Rayann Knowlton being listed twice. Dr. Macary said the position is correct but the name is incorrect. Mr. Meier will fix the name to read open position instead.

On page 158, Dr. Macary said they adjusted for minimum wage this year. He added that they budgeted at \$16.00 per hour since part of the year will be paid at \$15.69 but they are unsure what the next adjustment will be on January 1, 2025.

On Page 159, a question was asked about increase in fifth grade teachers. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about Title I and Title II. Dr. Macary said Title I is for schools with more than 40% of students on free and reduced lunch while Title II is for teacher professional development.

A question was asked about an open position. Dr. Macary said they will fill it.

On page 161, Dr. Macary said maintainers were in the union contract with the two years of increases. He also mentioned they have a few open positions and welcome referrals.

On page 163, a question was asked about what the ABE grant is. Dr. Macary said ABE stands for adult based education. The ABE grant needs to go to adult education. He also spoke of the VRABE program and the 14 towns they serve. There are six sites throughout CT which their districts give VRABE the money to run the program. He also noted Vernon is the second lowest pupil per expenditure in the state for adult education. A question was asked about any scholarships for the program. Dr. Macary said GED and ESL programs are free. The other classes such as cooking, dancing, etc charge a fee.

A question was asked about what an internal transfer was. Dr. Macary said it is when we transfer a position internally with an existing employee.

A question was asked about the payroll supervisor position. Dr. Macary said they have a meeting Friday for a potential candidate. He noted the position has been vacant for more than six months. A follow up question was asked about increasing the wage. Dr. Macary said they cannot increase the wage because the position is part of the union contract. He added that if they have experience they will be hired at a higher step.

On page 165, Dr. Macary noted there are medically fragile students who require a 1-1 nurse. He said there was a placeholder in the budget at \$48,000 but now they know the salary is \$56,980. A follow up question was asked if we are adding anymore for next year. Dr. Macary said no, they are staffed. A follow up question was asked if they share them amongst schools. Dr. Macary said no, they are 1-1 per student.

On page 167, a question was asked about the new social workers. Dr. Macary acknowledged they have been added in.

On page 168, a question was asked about the difference between the gifted and talented teacher pay. Dr. Macary said it is based on their years of experience teaching. He added this position was in the teacher collective bargaining unit. A follow up question was asked if they were just in the High School. Dr. Macary said no, they offer them for multiple schools.

A question was asked about if the Pre-K coordinator was overloaded. Dr. Macary said no. He added they also assist with some magnet school students.

On page 169, Dr. Macary explained the Next Step program was for students age 18 to 22 with disabilities to learn daily living skills. He noted they have a simulated home there.

A question was asked about physical therapy and occupational therapy only being at Next Step. Dr. Macary said they go to the whole district.

A question was asked about the students utilizing group homes. Dr. Macary said they can start at age 23.

A question was asked about where building substitutes fall. Dr. Macary said they are not listed in personnel.

This concludes the review of the personnel proposed budget.

The Board will plan to review Rockville High School details on Monday. He added they will address as much as possible in two-hour time slots.

Dr. Macary explained the different between the blue and white sheets in preparation for the Rockville High School details review.

5.0 Adjournment

Chairperson Grabowski adjourned the workshop at 7:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary