

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: January 18, 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 Wednesday, January 18, 2023.

1.0 Establish Quorum

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

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

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 Fischer called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

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

There was no public comment.

4.0 Budget Workshop

Mrs. Fischer welcomed everyone to the first budget workshop for the 2023-2024 Proposed Superintendent's Budget. She introduced new board member, Mr. Paul Grabowski. She also thanked Council Member Clay and Council Member Motola from the Town of Vernon for

attending. Dr. Macary started by announcing this is one of five budget workshops where they will go through line by line for review. The workshop will begin with the Personnel section this evening as that makes up 78% of the total budget. Mrs. Fischer opened the floor to any general questions.

A question was asked about the difference between lane and step. Dr. Macary said there are salary schedules in the Teacher Contract. He also explained that for teachers, there are ten steps and four lanes. Lane one is for those who hold a Bachelor's degree, lane two is for a Master's degree, lane three is for a sixth year Certificate and lane four is for a PhD.

A question was asked about an employee being bumped to the next step if they were hired during an off-time of the year. Dr. Macary said if they were here for at least 50% of the year, they will. A follow up question was asked about where an experienced teacher begins when they are hired. Dr. Macary said if they have ten years of teaching, they are placed on a step commensurate with their experience, although it may differ for those who taught in a private school.

A question was asked about the paraprofessionals raise in pay when their contract has not been negotiated. Dr. Macary said what you see is the step increase as it reads right now. If their contract negotiates a raise, it will be higher. There will be four contracts negotiated after February 10th.

A question was asked about Nonaffiliated personnel salaries. Dr. Macary said it looks like they are getting a raise but it is because they are actually behind a year.

A question was asked about school clerks at the elementary schools. Dr. Macary said they have to take minimum wage into consideration.

A question was asked about Alliance and ESSER funding budgets not being added to the budget book. Dr. Macary explained how those salaries are paid out of the grants. Personnel whose salaries are in those grants have it listed as their funding source.

The workshop began on page 135 of the budget book.

On Page 135, a question was asked about Heidi Stacer's salary. Mrs. Fischer explained she is step ten and has a Masters degree.

A question was asked about running the High School with one assistant principal. Dr. Macary said it is recommended to have one admin per three hundred students. The High School currently has nine hundred forty-five students.

A question was asked about running the High School with four guidance counselors. Dr. Macary explained they have four guidance counselors and one department head who handles scheduling and overview. He added that a student having emotional issues, their first line of defense is their guidance counselor.

A question was asked about running the High School with two art teachers and two tech education teachers. Dr. Macary said due to student interests and scheduling requirements, this would not work.

On Page 136, a question was asked about Sarah Malinak being funded under ESSER. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about Samantha Camolli being a new teacher. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about dropping language arts and math down to eight teachers instead of nine. Dr. Macary said in the future it may be possible but right now it is not.

A question was asked about world language teachers. Dr. Macary said Spanish has a heavier interest by students therefore there are four Spanish teachers and two French teachers.

On Page 137, a question was asked about why the FY23 approved budget column is blank for Amanda Majersky. Dr. Macary said she was paid under the Alliance grant for 2023.

A question was asked about Jill William and if she should she be Step 8.5 instead of Step 8. Mr. Meier will correct this.

A question was asked about Jenifer Tuller's position. Dr. Macary explained about the RAM center and how it is staffed for the students to attend for intervention.

A question was asked about adding another Social Studies teacher. Dr. Macary said there may be a need for one in the future depending on students interests.

On Page 138, a question was asked about the line that states "Resigned J Rizzo". Dr. Macary explained that position was eliminated. Mr. Meier will add a note which reads "Reduction in Force".

A question was asked about special education teachers and if they can float between schools. Dr. Macary said their case loads are around twenty students per teacher. A follow up question was asked if the teachers can stay at the High School for part of the day and then go to another school. Dr. Macary said this would not be successful as their case loads are full.

On Page 139, a question was asked about the in-school suspension facilitator, their credentials, and if there was another person available instead of having a designated person. Dr. Macary said they can possibly put a paraprofessional in that position and he will look into it further.

A question was asked about the three special education paraprofessionals they are reducing. Dr. Macary explained how one to one paras usually move with their students. At RHS there should be twenty paraprofessionals.

A question was asked about the need for need five principal office secretaries. Dr. Macary explained all of their roles and the need for their position.

A question was asked about the job responsibilities for the Athletic Director secretary. Dr. Macary explained they handle the schedule, bussing, and all other Athletic inquiries.

On Page 140, a question was asked about the \$1,000 stipend for School Nurse Lisa Vincze. Mrs. Fischer explained that it is due to the larger number of students at the High School and is a part of the Nurses Contract.

A question was asked about reducing custodians. Dr. Macary said they have already reduced them in the past.

A question was asked about the salary increase for Custodian Daniel Johnson. Dr. Macary said he moved to night shift.

On Page 142, a question was asked about classroom teachers under math interventionist. Dr. Macary said they do one boost class per grade. A follow up question was asked regarding the additional workload. Dr. Macary said he would add someone back in but it would add roughly \$150,000 to the budget.

On Page 143, a question was asked about Melanie Cockerham's salary. Dr. Macary said she received her sixth-year certificate. Mr. Meier will note the lane change.

A question was asked about David Oman's salary being blank in the FY23 Approved Budget column. Dr. Macary said he was paid out of a grant last year.

On Page 144, a question was asked about eliminating one of the librarians at VCMS.

A question was asked Monica Bardon's salary. Dr. Macary explained the minimum wage increase. He asked Mr. Meier to pull a report for the next meeting with information on the number of staff and the dollar amount for those affected by the minimum wage increase.

On Page 145, a question was asked about William Bilyak missing his step. Dr. Macary said he is a full-time employee and not a teacher. Mr. Meier will adjust his FTE to read 1.0.

A question was asked about the two custodians at the bottom of the page and if their salary in the FY24 Proposed Budget was what they are getting paid now. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked if they could drop down to four custodians. Dr. Macary said no, they have already reduced them in the past.

On Page 147, a question was asked about the need for an assistant principal at CRS. Dr. Macary said they will have one part time.

A question was asked about special education personnel and their job responsibilities. Dr. Macary explained how many there are and their roles.

On Page 148, a question was asked about sharing special education teachers. Dr. Macary said they have too many special education students to share as there are only three special education specialists.

A question was asked about Paraprofessionals Abby Principato and Shana Wakefield. Dr. Macary explained that paras are assigned based on students need. At CRS there is a reduction of two. Staff will be re-assigned.

On Page 149, a question was asked about filling the position of the Health Aide. Dr. Macary said they are still looking to fill the position.

On Page 151, a question was asked about if a replacement was found for the classroom teacher in grade one. Dr. Macary said she was hired on Tuesday, January 17th, 2023.

On Page 152, a question was asked about who will monitor the library with the reduction of the Librarian. Dr. Macary said they will have three librarians cover the five Elementary Schools. A follow-up question was asked about the value of the resources in the library and how students will access without someone in there. Dr. Macary said the library will be closed the days it is not monitored and that any time students are in the library, there will be supervision.

A question was asked about the comment “filled open position” for para educator. Mr. Meier will have that comment removed.

A question was asked if Dr. Macary sees any issues with the librarian union asking the librarians to travel to different schools. Dr. Macary said they have management rights in the contract. If they move in the middle of the day, they must be paid mileage.

On Page 153, a question was asked about the PK coordinators being a reduction in force. Dr. Macary said they had some transitional K who didn't have a PK experience. They were sent to the transitional teacher to reinforce those schools. Class sizes are much smaller so they eliminated the position.

A question was asked about bubbles of populations and the increase and decrease of teachers through the years. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about the stipend for Joshua Egan. Dr. Macary explained if they have their sixth-year Certificate they receive \$1,400 and if they have their PhD they receive \$2,800 per the contract. A follow up question was asked as to why stipends are offered for positions that require that level of education. Dr. Macary explained the contract obligations.

On Page 155, a question was asked if one fifth grade teacher is accurate. Dr. Macary said yes, there is only one fourth grade this year.

On Page 156, a question was asked about losing a paraprofessional. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about eliminating two special education paraprofessionals. Dr. Macary said they are eliminating one.

On Page 157, a question was asked about fourth grade classrooms. Dr. Macary said there is a reduction in force due to enrollment. A follow up question was asked regarding the number of students in each class. Dr. Macary said there are thirty-nine students in the fourth grade.

On Page 158, a question was asked about the last line for paraprofessionals being blank. Mr. Meier will add “Reduction in Force” into the notes box.

A question was asked about a replacement for the School Nurse. Dr. Macary said they are still looking. He added they are eliminating a health aide at Skinner Road School.

On Page 159, a question was asked about sharing three general maintainers with the Town. A follow up question was asked if the Town has people working for us as well. Dr. Macary said they are shared services.

On Page 161, a question was asked about dropping down to two adult education secretaries. Dr. Macary said if they reduce the position, they would still end up paying since most of it is paid by a grant.

On Page 162, a question was asked about one to one nurses. Dr. Macary said they are LPNs so their salary can be lower than the RNs and they are not included in the Nurses contract.

A question was asked about reducing a school climate specialist position. Dr. Macary said yes. He noted they were not included in the reduction list. There are now seventeen reductions.

On Page 163, a question was asked about the District Social Worker. Dr. Macary said they have two and are dropping down to one. They will assign them as needed. A follow up question was asked on if they were adding one with ESSER funds. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On Page 165, a question was asked about the school psychologist being an open position and how the salary was determined. Dr. Macary said this person just resigned as the budget book was in production. He added it is currently an open position but they are using an outside service to fill as there are currently zero applicants.

A question was asked about the difference in assignment names for social workers. Dr. Macary said they will revise them to read as "Social Worker".

On Page 166, a question was asked if there is one BCBA for the district. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about Shelly McCone being a PK teacher. Dr. Macary said they will change the title to PK Coordinator. Mr. Meier will adjust this.

A question was asked about Samantha Randazzo covering all of the elementary schools. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about the salary amount in the FY24 Proposed Budget for Peter Lynch. Dr. Macary said that is what he currently earns.

On Page 167, a question was asked about PT and OT and how it is determined what to pay them. Dr. Macary said it is based off of their experience.

It was mentioned to new board member, Mr. Grabowski that closing a school was asked in a prior meeting and the answer was no, as it would be too disruptive. There is not enough space in existing buildings and the savings would only be around \$800,000.

Dr. Macary summarized the questions asked this evening and follow up information for the next budget workshop:

- Can the In-School Suspension Facilitator be re-classified?
- Report of the number of employees and the dollar amount affected by the minimum wage increase.

Mrs. Fischer congratulated Mr. Meier and Mr. Lacoske for their lanes and steps being correct and aligning with the contracts.

The Board will plan to review Rockville High School and Vernon Center Middle School next Monday before the Board meeting.

5.0 Adjournment

Mr. Linton motioned to adjourn the workshop at 7:20 pm. Mr. Thrall seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Buxton, Board Secretary