

# 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 22, 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 Monday, January 22, 2024.

#### **1.0 Establish Quorum**

Board members present in-person: Paul Grabowski, Kristian Wintress, Karen Colt, Anthony Bedlack, Patricia Buxton, Susan Jablonecki, Kriste Nucci, Simone Sewell and Mason Thrall  
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 and Ms. Nina Prajzner, Secretary to Mr. Meier.

#### **2.0 Call to Order**

Chairperson Grabowski called the meeting to order at 6:04 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 explained the differences between the blue pages and the white pages. He added that athletics is separate but also included in the High School and Middle School.

The workshop began on page 19 of Rockville High School.

On page 20, a question was asked about sharing lacrosse with Somers. Dr. Macary said they are co-op and share with Stafford.

On page 21, a question was asked about why girls tennis is paid less than other sports. Dr. Macary said it is contractual and based on seasons. He added that there is a formula in the back of the teachers' contract.

On page 22, a question was asked about the fire tech program being taught by an existing teacher or someone from a fire department. Dr. Macary said the current teacher is a VoAg teacher who is a part of a fire department.

A question was asked about details regarding any new enrichment clubs. Dr. Macary said they leave the interests up to the students. They survey students at the end of the school year to better serve their interests.

On page 25, a question was asked about piano accompaniment. Dr. Macary said it covers tuning and business expenses.

A question was asked about the rate paid for student labor. Dr. Macary said they pay minimum wage.

A question was asked about Foley drug testing. Dr. Macary said Foley is the name of the company.

On page 26, a question was asked about the 4% drop overall. Dr. Macary said there are three types of sports; Vernon run sports, co-op sports and teams of one. He added that last year they had a student interested in girl's hockey at South Windsor, however, this year the student goes to Manchester.

On page 27, a question was asked about the 8.5% drop overall. Dr. Macary said they bought new band equipment last year therefore they do not need to reservice as much this year.

On page 29, a question was asked about the esports fee being new. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about if the subscription cost is annual. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about if the number of students involved increased. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On page 30, a question was asked about the increase for the wrestling conference. Dr. Macary said they are going to two extra meets.

On page 31, a question was asked about the overall increase on trips. Dr. Macary said part is due to the transportation increase of 3.5% for the bus contract.

On page 32, a question was asked about stadium systems reconditioning. Dr. Macary said Stadium is the name of the company. He added they have the helmets checked and certified. A follow up question was asked about the mouth pieces. Dr. Macary said they do not recondition them because they are not reused. A follow up question was asked about the type of mouth piece being used. Dr. Macary said they are using ones to reduce the possibility of concussions.

On page 33, a question was asked about the decrease of \$1,000 for eBooks. Dr. Macary said fewer students are using the service.

A question was asked about photography being popular. Dr. Macary confirmed that it is a popular program at RHS.

A question was asked about acquiring more licenses for eBooks for the upcoming school year students if desired. Dr. Macary said they can if needed.

On page 34, a question was asked about the health class having everything it needs from last year's purchases. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On page 35, a question was asked about how many students are doing ESL. Dr. Macary said district wide there are about 120 students. He added there are 20-25 students at the High School. A follow up question was asked about the breakdown of their countries and languages. Dr. Macary provided the breakdown later in the meeting.

A question was asked about the instructional materials for world language supporting the new curriculum. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked if there was a new curriculum. Dr. Macary said yes, for French and Spanish.

On page 36, a question was asked about the forensics class being dropped previously. Dr. Macary said they have more students taking it now.

A question was asked about earth sciences being removed and added back. Dr. Macary said they are following the NGSS.

On page 37, a question was asked about the certification for students costing \$5,200. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about students graduating with certifications. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about covering teachers as well. Dr. Macary said no, only students. A follow up question was asked about teachers being responsible for their own certifications. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked if the certifications will help the students with employment. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On page 38, a question was asked if wrestling is sharing headgear. Dr. Macary said we would like everyone to have their own. He added the wrestling numbers have increased since last year.

On page 39, a question was asked for examples of school incentive types for the RHS general principal office school line item. Dr. Macary said this is for signage for around the building, certificates for students and "swag" for students. He added an example of footballs for the football team attending the next board meeting.

A question was asked about the marching band uniforms replacement schedule. Dr. Macary said they try to keep it to every four years but they are increasing the band so they will need to purchase more.

On page 41, a question was asked about the world language posters being more popular now. Dr. Macary confirmed. He added they can make their own so they need to purchase supplies but there are some they cannot make which would need to be purchased.

Dr. Macary provided a follow up for the number of students in the ESL program. He listed 126 students with a breakdown of the following; 31 at Lake Street School, 32 at Maple Street School, 25 at Vernon Center Middle School, 19 at Rockville High School, 17 who refused ESL, and 2 in the renaissance program at Center Road School.

This concludes the review of the RHS proposed budget.

Vernon Center Middle School:

On page 47, a question was asked about removing the health education instruction line which was not being utilized. Dr. Macary said they were funding PE separate from health but they are now combined. He added that the line can be removed. Mr. Meier said he will remove that line from the budget.

A question was asked about the total dollar amount the reading instruction grant funded. Dr. Macary said the total reading intervention program being funded was \$245,144. He added they use Title I, Title II and Alliance funding.

A question was asked about the salary for the library media specialist being funded by Alliance. Dr. Macary confirmed.

On page 52, a question was asked about the school nurse annual fee for continuing education not being paid by the Board but the VoAg fee spoke of earlier was being paid. Dr. Macary said they pay for membership fees but do not pay for certifications for staff.

On page 53, a question was asked about the blank line for VCMS libraries and if it needed to stay in the budget if it was not being funded. Dr. Macary said they should keep it since they have it listed in the high school.

On page 54, a question was asked about the savings of \$12,000 due to no longer purchasing workbooks. Dr. Macary confirmed they are now online.

On page 56, a statement was made about the importance of providing incentives. Dr. Macary agreed. He added that they did team nights this year with parents where they received a lot of positive feedback and comments. A follow up question was asked about the attendance. Dr. Macary said there were over 200 people there.

A question was asked about the overall VCMS budget being 6% less than last year. Dr. Macary said it is because they transferred some salaries to grants.

This concludes the review of the VCMS proposed budget.

Center Road School:

On page 63, a question was asked about the buses to Boston and their increase in fees. Dr. Macary said the fee is \$2,000 per bus per school except for Center Road School which is \$4,000 due to population. A follow up question was asked if every child goes on the trip. Dr. Macary said yes, unless parents do not want them to go or they have behavioral issues.

On page 65, a question was asked about the \$10,000 for additional carpet and furniture for transitional K. Dr. Macary said they purchased in prior years for all grades except Kindergarten. He added that they try to replace the carpets every three years for the younger grades.

This concludes the review of the CRS proposed budget.

#### Lake Street School:

On page 69, a question was asked about the musical instruction increase of \$28,000. Dr. Macary said this is for the new teacher who was hired with more experience.

On page 71, a question was asked about increasing the supplement resource materials of \$250 per classroom as it had been that amount for years. Dr. Macary confirmed it has been that amount for eight years. A follow up question was asked about reviewing for a potential increase. Dr. Macary said they will review and come back with a response in the next workshop. A follow up question was asked about increasing in all of the schools. Dr. Macary said they will review this.

This concludes the review of the LSS proposed budget.

#### Maple Street School:

On page 76, Dr. Macary noted the office clerk salary increased due to minimum wage.

A question was asked if \$2,500 was enough for food prizes, etc. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about the decrease for printed materials. Dr. Macary said this is due to actuals. He added they are printing less.

On page 78, a question was asked again about the \$250 per classroom. Dr. Macary said they will review this. A follow up question was asked about the types of things purchased. Dr. Macary said it depends on the classroom and the school. He added this is for the extra stuff that makes classrooms special.

This concludes the review of the MSS proposed budget.

#### Northeast School:

On page 81, Dr. Macary said there is an increase in staffing at Northeast School, Skinner Road School and Maple Street School due to the "bubble".

This concludes the review of the NES proposed budget.

#### Skinner Road School:

On page 87, Dr. Macary said the overall decrease was because they hired new teachers in at a lower pay rates and also moved some salaries to grants.

A question was asked about the popularity of Lego league. Dr. Macary said there are two at the Middle School and one at every Elementary School. He said last season one team went to states.

On page 88, a question was asked about training for EpiPen's not being listed in other schools. Dr. Macary said some staff need more training in some schools due to allergies. He added that it is listed in all schools.

This concludes the review of the SRS proposed budget.

Chairperson Grabowski asked Board members to bring any questions regarding this workshop to the next workshop on Wednesday.

Board members spoke about the communication between the Town Council and the Board of Education. A discussion ensued.

Dr. Macary summarized the questions asked this evening requiring responses by the next workshop on January 24th:

- Should the \$250 per teacher classroom per school be increased for supplemental resources for all schools?

Dr. Macary provided a follow up to a question asked earlier about the top ten languages in the ESL program. They are Arabic, Mandarin, Polish, Spanish, Telegu, Twi/Fante, Ordo, Vietnamese and English.

## 5.0 Adjournment

Chairperson Grabowski motioned to adjourn the workshop at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary