

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

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

Date: January 30, 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, January 30, 2023.

1.0 Establish Quorum

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

Board members present via Zoom: Mrs. Rodriguez

Mr. Linton 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 6:01 p.m.

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

Members from the Librarian Union spoke in regards to the proposed elimination of three librarian positions in the 2023-2024 budget. Tina Glidden spoke against elimination of position. She explained libraries are critical for fostering a lifelong love for learning. She also included that the library is a sanctuary for students who need a quiet place outside of the classroom. She respectfully asks for the budget to increase to retain staff.

Dacia Ball spoke as a former library manager at Rockville High School. She currently works for CHR in Manchester as a parent educator. She encourages students to access libraries for the purpose of free cultural and enrichment services. She included that students need a place to decompress and explore.

Pegi Deitz-Shea spoke as a current children's book author. She explained that her children are language arts teachers and she is married to an English professor. She feels none of those careers would have been possible without libraries. She added that children cycle through teachers and subjects through schools but the librarians provide consistency.

Rachel Hampton's son spoke about the importance of a Librarian to him. He included that the librarians teach him about reading, typing and responsibilities with books. He said he doesn't enjoy reading but the library helps him find topics that he likes.

Susan Simmons spoke as the current library manager at Maple Street School. She explained she was disappointed to read about the proposed cuts in Librarian positions. She listed some of the job duties she has. She explained the library provides more of an informal setting for students who need it. She feels students should be able to access the library all day.

Beth Halvorsen spoke as a current library manager at Northeast School. She said she loves her job. The students come back excited to tell her about the book they finished reading. She has great plans for the library and has already brought in her bearded dragon, Godzilla, to joined them. She also read a letter written by Pamela Colon, current library media manager at VCMS. Pamela feels their workload has increased tremendously. She feels it is not feasible for one librarian to do the chrome books. She added that VCMS cannot function without teamwork.

Nancy Knowles spoke as the current library media manager at Skinner Road School. She read a letter written by Wendy Harmon, current librarian at VCMS. Wendy feels libraries are vital for students to become lifelong learners. She said they help students and teachers find resources they need that may not be available in classrooms. Nancy also read a letter written by Gulrukh Khan, current librarian at RHS. Gulrukh graduated in 2018 and during her time in High School, the library was always sanctuary. It was a place for her and other students to advance their knowledge and read about their interests.

Ole Kushner Hermanson spoke as a parent with two children that attend RHS. He said the last time he attended BOE meeting, it was held at the RHS library. He understands that costs have increased as well as minimum wage but feels the budget should increase as well. He feels librarians are important to students' lives.

Mrs. Fischer thanked everyone for attending and speaking.

4.0 Budget Workshop

The workshop began on page 37 of the RHS details.

On page 37, a question was asked about a decrease in students for "Read Naturally Live". Dr. Macary confirmed the decrease and added they are also using another program as well. A follow up question was asked if these are programs the students can take home. Dr. Macary said it is on

their Chromebooks. A follow up was asked about a similar line item on page 35. Dr. Macary explained that gives them online access.

On page 38, a question was asked about small animal health supplies being new to the budget. Dr. Macary said it was started as a pathway. A follow up question was asked about new animals. Dr. Macary said they included rabbits, cats, and some dogs.

A question was asked about what sports are included in teams of one. Dr. Macary said girls swimming and gymnastics as well as others. A follow up question was asked if all teams of one go to South Windsor High School. Dr. Macary said no, some go to Manchester.

A question was asked about the difference between the physical ed equipment listed on page 38 and page 40. Dr. Macary said one is for after school intramural sports. A follow up question was asked about fitness equipment for PE classes. Dr. Macary said this is for PE assessments rather than supplies.

A question was asked about the increase for color guard. Dr. Macary said there are additional students. They went from twenty-four to thirty-eight. He also reminded of the uniform replacement schedule.

A question was asked about the \$1,000 for golf Equipment. Dr. Macary said it covers golf balls and t-shirts for their uniforms. A follow up question was asked about more golfers for this year. Dr. Macary said the season hasn't started yet.

The same question was asked about the budget for Tennis equipment. Dr. Macary said it covers tennis balls and shirts for their uniforms.

The same question was asked about the budget for Lacrosse equipment. Dr. Macary said it covers sticks and balls.

On page 39, a question was asked about the \$2,200 increase for art instruction. Dr. Macary said this is what the four art teachers requested. A follow up question was asked about the cost increasing. Dr. Macary explained there are twenty classes with fifteen students in each class totaling three hundred students.

A question was asked about the note on field and athletic trips. Mr. Testa said the first line of the note should be removed. A follow up question was asked if this was for admission and not transportation. Mr. Testa confirmed.

A question was asked about the \$8,500 for student supplies. Dr. Macary said this covers student needs such as pencils, notebooks, backpacks, etc. A follow up question was asked about providing backpacks for students. Dr. Macary said they do if the student needs one.

On page 40, a question was asked about the music software Sound trap. It was noted that GarageBand may be used for free instead. Mr. Testa said Sound trap is more advanced for the music production course. A follow up question was asked about it being more applicable in the industry. Mr. Testa confirmed it is.

A question was asked about the increase for marketing and promotional items for VoAg. Dr. Macary said it is used for recruitment. A follow up question was asked about a similar line item on

page 27. Dr. Macary said page 27 is for post cards and materials while page 40 is for recruitment “swag”.

On page 41, a question was asked about the note of “No longer needed. Drops Off” for the \$3,500 budget for art instruction. Dr. Macary said it was for new equipment but they are not buying anything new. Mr. Meier added that it will be removed next year. A follow up question was asked about adding the line back in if they need new equipment. Dr. Macary confirmed they will. Mr. Meier added that some of the budget has been shifted to more accurate line items.

A question was asked about safety apparel for athletics. Dr. Macary said if they have students that run in the road, they need yellow safety vests.

A question was asked about what the apparatus to fix equipment for the cheerleaders is. Mr. Meier will follow up.

Mr. Testa said the budget for Sound Trap on page 40 can be removed as it is listed twice in the budget. Mr. Meier will have this removed.

On page 42, a question was asked if the poster printer maintenance and supplies should be listed on a different section of the budget. Mrs. Fischer said no, the printer is in the library.

A question was asked about the overall 4.51% increase for FY 23-24. Dr. Macary said central office holds most of the increase due to utilities, health insurance, claims, etc. A follow up question was asked about this increase being due to things out of their control. Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about how many classrooms the \$8,002 for replacing classroom furniture will cover. Dr. Macary said it will cover one classroom.

A question was asked about the \$1,000 for miscellaneous equipment replacement for science labs and which labs this is applied to. Dr. Macary said this is for the old labs and is not related to the science lab renovations this summer.

A question was asked about the reduction of the special education teacher. Dr. Macary said it should be taught by an Algebra 1 teacher.

This concludes the review of the RHS proposed budget.

Vernon Center Middle School:

On page 48, a question was asked about how many guidance counselors the MS has. Dr. Macary said three. A follow up question was asked about dropping down to two. Dr. Macary said there is one per grade and they follow their grades. He added there are currently two hundred forty students per counselor. Only two counselors would be over recommended guidelines for students.

A question was asked about any sports teams with less than ten students. Dr. Macary said no.

A question was asked about intramural sports. Dr. Macary said they didn’t offer them during Covid. They are presuming this and adding more to unified sports. A follow up question was

asked about adding this to teachers' contracts. Dr. Macary said they will add it for unified sports. He added the pay is based on the time it takes to do the sport.

On page 49, a question was asked about the Bermuda trip. It was thought that they were not longer doing this. Dr. Macary said covid changed the way the company was doing things so they are continuing to go.

A question was asked about the two enrichments for \$1,542 for mathematics club stipends coded as mathematics. Mr. Meier said this is coded incorrectly. He will correct this in the book.

A question was asked about clubs with less than ten students. Dr. Macary said there are no clubs with less than ten. A follow up question was asked about the Bermuda trip having more than ten students. Dr. Macary confirmed there are more than ten.

A question was asked about the two student council advisors and if there only used to be one. Dr. Macary said they are doubling as the size of the student council has increased.

A question was asked about the yearbook being split. Dr. Macary said yes, its contractual.

A question was asked about the \$56,509.36 for general school programs. Dr. Macary said this is a salary. Mr. Meier will change the description.

A question was asked about what follow up for attendance is. Mrs. Fischer explained they follow up with why students are not in school.

On page 50, a question was asked about the new SEL school-wide advisory. Dr. Macary said it is a separate stipend for teacher doing SEL. He added that they plan what the students do each week. A follow up question was asked about it being based off board initiatives? Dr. Macary confirmed.

A question was asked about how many custodians there are. Dr. Macary said there is one first shift and four second shift. A follow up question was asked about dropping down to three. Dr. Macary said they used to have five and already reduced to four.

A question was asked about the missing budget for substitute teachers and the office clerk. Dr. Macary said they only have office clerks at the Elementary Schools. He added that the substitute teachers moved to central office.

On page 51, a question was asked about MakerBot ins. machine repair. Dr. Macary said this is for repairing them. A follow up question was asked about what ins means. Dr. Macary said it stands for instructional.

A question was asked about two traveling teachers. Dr. Macary said they go to the Elementary schools to assist.

A question was asked about piano tuning for four pianos twice a year. Dr. Macary said they are hoping to only do it once a year. A follow up question was asked about the \$775 total. Dr. Macary said it is a different type of piano than the other schools.

On page 52, a question was asked about the family and consumer science traveling teacher. Dr. Macary said that is for conferences. Mr. Meier will remove traveling teacher from the note.

A question was asked about if students use the planners and if they could switch to an electronic version. Dr. Macary said they have code of conduct on it. They do use them for legal reasons. A follow up question was asked about making it electronic. Dr. Macary said yes, they can. A follow up question was asked about only printer paper ones for those who need them. Dr. Macary said that is a possibility.

A question was asked about the new \$300 for cheerleading competitions. Dr. Macary said they are charging us now. A follow up question was asked about how many competitions this covers. Dr. Macary said one.

A question was asked about field and athletic trips. Mr. Meier said they will update the note. A follow up question was asked about the budget needing to increase by 5.9% to match the bus contract increase. Mr. Meier will look into this. A follow up question was asked about utilization. Dr. Macary said it is for after school activities for students without transportation.

On page 53, a question was asked about where the students go on the field trip to see French culture. Dr. Macary said they go to a French restaurant.

A question was asked about the increase being correct for travel by First Student for interscholastic sports. Dr. Macary said interscholastic sports increased at a different percentage.

A question was asked about a new class being offered in art. Mr. Testa will follow up with the name.

On page 54, a question was asked about dictionaries, workbooks, and weekly reader being discontinued. Dr. Macary said it is a staple and they will continue to do it.

A question was asked about the supplies and materials increase staying the same as last year. Dr. Macary said the incoming fifth grade class not as big as current sixth grade class.

On page 55, a question was asked about program incentives and workbooks. Dr. Macary said this is for ABL and TLC programs for rewards to continue positive behavior.

A question was asked about if the athletic trainer goes to VCMS. Dr. Macary said they do not. A follow up question was asked about the protocol for an injury at VCMS. Dr. Macary said they call an ambulance.

On page 56, a question was asked about the budget for library supplies being similar to what is listed on page 55. Dr. Macary said these are for new supplies while the other one was for replacements.

A question was asked about the need for more materials to support branding of school. Dr. Macary said there are still places they need to do.

This concludes the review of the VCMS proposed budget.

Before reviewing the Elementary Schools, a general question was asked about the elimination of one paraprofessional. Dr. Macary confirmed.

Center Road School:

A question was asked about the varying amounts for stipends. Dr. Macary said they are based on the hours and the number of students.

A question was asked about the cost of copier paper being the same as VCMS. Dr. Macary said this is due to the increased number of students CRS and VCMS using more Chromebooks.

On page 59, a question was asked about how the stipend for coaching intramural sports is calculated. Dr. Macary said it is based on the hours and the number of students.

A question was asked about PE teachers traveling to CRS. Dr. Macary said they do travel. A follow up question was asked about it not being listed in the budget. Dr. Macary said they only pay travel if they go to one school in the morning and another in the afternoon.

On page 60, a question was asked about secretarial overtime being based on the needs of the school. Dr. Macary said the secretary stays with students after school if they are not picked up.

A question was asked about switching piano tuning from twice a year to once. Mr. Meier said this is what the music department recommended.

On page 62, a question was asked about the music instruction classroom being used only used for music. Dr. Macary said they can do anything music or art related there.

A question was asked if all classrooms are being used at CRS. Dr. Macary said there have one or two not being used. He added that they have a four-classroom model and some grades have only three classrooms.

This concludes the review of the CRS proposed budget.

Lake Street School:

On page 67, a question was asked about if the teacher from LSS can go to CRS for intramural sports. Dr. Macary said no.

On page 68, a question was asked about the \$1,010 increase for the office clerk. Dr. Macary said all elementary schools have an office clerk and they work twelve to fifteen hours per week. They are affected by the minimum wage increase.

On page 70, a question was asked if all classrooms are being used at LSS. Dr. Macary said yes as well as two classrooms or the ABL program and one for the ESL program.

This concludes the review of the LSS proposed budget.

Maple Street School:

On page 73, a question was asked about the salaries for two special ed coordinators. Dr. Macary said Maple Street had the transition that they eliminated.

On page 74-, a question was asked about why they only use Minuteman for steps and decals. Dr. Macary said this is more defined and the Minuteman prints the Rockville Ram for windows, etc.

A question was asked about the acronyms NASSP and ASCD. Dr. Macary said NASSP stands for National Association of Secondary School Principals and ASCD stands for The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. A follow up question was asked about the increase on this line and what it is used for. Mr. Meier will follow up.

A question was asked about what teachers pay teachers is. Mr. Testa said it is a teacher's resource to find curriculum and lesson plans from other teachers. A follow up question was asked if other schools use it. Mr. Testa said most teachers use it. A follow up question was asked if they have to pay for access to it. Mr. Testa said yes, there is a minimal fee involved. He included that a lot of teachers pay out of pocket for it.

A question was asked as to why MSS belongs to NASSP. Dr. Macary will follow up.

On page 75, a question was asked about the removed budget for the transportation of students to RHS for the mile run. Dr. Macary said the students are still going to the High School but it cost was incorporated into the bus contract. Mr. Meier will remove the line from the budget.

On page 76, a question was asked about furnishings for one new classroom. Dr. Macary said \$2,500 will not do one full classroom. He added this is used for AC units, desks, replacing broken equipment, filing cabinets, etc.

A question was asked about it costing the same to run MSS as LSS. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about empty space. Dr. Macary said there is one empty classroom. He added they have a three-classroom model and one grade has only two classes.

A question was asked about building maintenance. Dr. Macary said this is for fencing and gates around the schools as well as Union Street park and playground.

This concludes the review of the MSS proposed budget.

Northeast School:

On page 80, a question was asked about the decrease in custodial/maintenance overtime. Dr. Macary said it was based it on actuals.

A question was asked about UA to CRS. Dr. Macary said this is for Unified Arts. He added there is someone who goes to CRS to cover the end of day.

On page 82, a question was asked about NES costing less to run than other schools. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about any empty space. Dr. Macary said there is one empty classroom. A follow up question was asked about enrollment. Dr. Macary said there are two hundred twenty students. He added they have a two-classroom model and one grade has only one classroom. A follow up question was asked about the class sizes. Dr. Macary said fifteen to eighteen students with one class of twenty-four.

This concludes the review of the NES proposed budget.

Skinner Road School:

On page 85, a question was asked about the reduction of a health aide. Dr. Macary confirmed. A follow up question was asked about any anticipated consequences. Dr. Macary said there is a full time RN there.

On page 88, a question was asked about SRS being the only school allocating money for state wide testing. Dr. Macary said they will follow up and that this should be listed under central office.

On page 89, a question was asked about any empty space. Dr. Macary said there is one empty classroom. He added they have a three-classroom model and one grade has only two classrooms.

A question was asked about the year the last school was built. Mrs. Fischer said Center Road School was built in 1969.

This concludes the review of the SRS proposed budget.

Dr. Macary listed all of the follow-up questions and their response thus far.

Question 1: Can the In-School Suspension Facilitator be re-classified?

Response: This is still an open item under review.

Question 2: What is the Budget for the baseball helmets to be reconditioned?

Response: They are not required to be reconditioned each year. The cost to replace them is the same as the cost to recondition them so replacement is suitable going forward.

Dr. Macary also summarized the questions asked this evening requiring responses by the next workshop on February 1st are as follows:

- What equipment is purchased under “Non-Instructional Equipment-Apparatus to Fix Equipment” for the Cheerleading Team?
- VCMS has teacher stipends for Math Olympiads, Math Team Advisors, and Two Enrichment clubs under Mathematics Organization Code. Are there four math teams?
- How many students are utilizing the late bus at VCMS?
- What is the new art class at VCMS?
- What is the NASSP membership at MSS?
- What are the testing supplies at SRS?

Mr. Testa shared there are currently thirty-six shared personnel working in the buildings. A question was asked about the percentage of time Dwight Ryniewicz devotes to the schools. Dr. Macary said about twenty-five to thirty percent of his time. A follow up question was asked if this is beyond what the Public Works Director should do. Dr. Macary confirmed and added that the VCMS baseball field was handled by Dwight.

A question was asked about shared personnel not having a vehicle and if we cover the cost for that. Dr. Macary said they have never encountered that.

A question was asked about the Librarian Union providing emotional support for students and if they have properly trained personnel for this instead. Dr. Macary said they do train all staff on Social and Emotional Learning but they would like students going to psychologists or guidance counselors first. He added that the qualifications for a Librarian are limited. He also included that IT should be handling the chrome books at VCMS. They are proposing one librarian work at MSS three days a week and LSS two days a week alternating schools every other day. The same would be proposed for NES and SRS.

A question was asked about what the budget would increase to if they were to add back in the interventionalist. Dr. Macary said it would increase the proposed budget from 4.4% to 4.9%.

The Board will plan to review Maintenance, Central Office, Pupil Services, and Continuing Ed at the next budget workshop on Wednesday.

5.0 Adjournment

Mrs. Fischer motioned to adjourn the workshop at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Buxton, Board Secretary