

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

April 22, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar at the Administration Building on Monday, April 22, 2024.

Roll call was taken at 7:00 PM

There was a quorum. Board members present: Mr. Grabowski, Ms. Wintress, Ms. Colt, Mr. Bedlack, Dr. Buxton, Ms. Nucci, Ms. Sewell and Mr. Thrall. Mrs. Jablonecki arrived at 7:10 PM.

Student Representatives present: Aedan Ruddock. My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen was absent.

Administration present: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa and Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III.

2.0 Call to Order

Board Chair Mr. Grabowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation by Maple Street School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Joshua Egan, Principal of Maple Street School, thanked the Board for the opportunity to present at tonight's meeting. He introduced teachers Kristen Wood and Cassidy Ricciardone and thanked them for all of their hard work in launching the Student Council at Maple Street School. He then introduced six of his students from Grades 3-5 who participate in the council. Each student spoke about how the student council was established, how they were nominated to participate, when they meet and what they do. During their very first meeting, they brainstormed about problems in their school and community and came up with some great ideas to try to solve them. One of their initiatives included collecting snacks for students whose families couldn't afford them.

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They did so by creating flyers about the “Maple Menu” where they ask for donations of healthy, nut-free, individually wrapped snacks. The flyers went home to MSS families and were also shared on social media. The Student Council started to see donations coming in from all grade levels and the community. As a result of these generous donations, they were able to fill four cabinets with snacks and no student at Maple Street School has to go a day without a snack. Another initiative was the “Wrap-a-Staff” Fundraiser, where the teacher with the most money collected was wrapped at a whole-school assembly to look like a snowman. They raised \$874.73, and these funds will help to pay for students to go on field trips or extra fun activities. Other initiatives included the “Read Across America Reading Challenge”, “Rock Your Socks” and “Wear Red for Autism Awareness and Acceptance”. Next year, the students hope to open Student Council up to all grade levels, where they can create more fundraisers, events and support their school even more than they did this year.

4.2 Vision to Learn Presentation (BOE Goal #1, #3)

Sabrina Davis, Vision to Learn Connecticut Program Manager, shared a presentation on the Vision to Learn Program with the Board. She spoke about how Vision to Learn is a national, non-profit organization that provides mobile vision care services to children at no cost. They operate in 14 states and have been operating in CT for three years, serving eight Alliance Districts, including Vernon. Vernon Public Schools was one of the first Districts to sign-on to the program. She explained the Vision to Learn process: Vision to Learn staff screens each student using the Welch Allyn Spot Screener. This screening takes the place of the State eye screening mandate. Students who fail the vision screening or who already wear glasses are then examined by a licensed optometrist on the mobile clinic van. Students who need glasses will choose their frames from a wide selection. Once the glasses are ready, a licensed optician returns to the school to fit the glasses to each student. Lost or broken glasses are under a one-year, one-time warranty for a free replacement. Vision to Learn is an “OPT OUT” program where parents/guardians must complete a form stating they DO NOT wish their child to participate in the screening. All students in Grades K-12 are serviced. This year, Vision to Learn screened 2,706 students, of which 856 of those students qualified for eye exams and 802 were prescribed glasses. On March 8th, a celebration was held at Lake Street School to commemorate another successful year of the program in Vernon. The CT State Department of Education, the Connecticut Sun, many parents and the news media attended the event. During the event,

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students gave feedback that they could now see so much better with their glasses and could read better too!

5.0 Secretary's Report

5.1 Opportunity for Board of Education to add/delete urgent agenda items

No agenda items were added.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Aedan Rudock reported the following:

- During Spring Break, 17 RHS students and 5 adults went to Belize and explored the country. Their itinerary consisted of ziplining, underwater cave tubing, hiking to the Mayan ruins and much more. They were able to make the trip happen through a mix of 2 years of fundraising and putting in their own money.
- The RHS Track team has a home meet on Wednesday, April 24th against Windsor Locks at 3:35 PM.
- Signing Day is May 16th at 2:15 PM in the Gym.
- The RHS Baseball team has a home game against Bolton on Tuesday, April 23rd at 3:45 PM.
- The RHS Boys' Lacrosse team has a home game on Tuesday, April 23rd against Ellington.

6.0 Community Forum

Opportunity for comments on agenda items, potential future agenda items, or general information provided to the Board from citizens and community organizations (Individual speakers shall be limited to five minutes and the total time for public forum shall be limited to 15 minutes.)

No one addressed the Board.

7.0 Consent Agenda

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- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on March 11, 2024
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on March 11, 2024
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting held on March 18, 2024
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Communications Committee Meeting held on April 1, 2024

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b), (c) and (d)
SECOND: Mr. Thrall
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Results of the March 19th UCONN Neag Education Recruitment Career Fair (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa reviewed the results of the March 19th UCONN Neag Education Recruitment Career Fair with the Board. They met with 42 candidates, interviewed 11 and hired 2 Math teachers as of April 17th.

8.2 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 Results of April 2nd PD Day (BOE Goal #2)

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Mr. Testa reviewed the results of the sessions held on April 2, 2024 for Staff Professional Development Day. The sessions were open to Paras and Teachers and some sessions were mandated. He shared a spreadsheet with the Board that included responses from a staff survey and the scores given for each session. 71 staff members attended the session on Equity; their feedback was great and they thought the speaker was awesome. They would like him to come back next year. The NGSX Training session had the lowest score due to time constraints. For the next PD Day in August, some of the topics staff would like to cover include bullying and Chat GPT. The PDEC Committee will review these suggestions and plan for the August PD Day.

9.2 Approval of the Agricultural Education 2-Leadership, Clayworks 1, Creative Writing 1, Software Applications and Grades 2-5 PE/Health Curriculum (BOE Goal #2, #3)

Mr. Testa announced that the Curriculum Committee met on April 17, 2024. Mrs. Dominique Fox, Director of Teaching and Learning-Secondary, presented the Agricultural Education 2-Leadership, Clayworks 1, Creative Writing 1 and Software Applications curriculum to the Committee. The Committee reviewed each course and recommended they move to the full Board for approval. Mr. Jeffrey Farrell, Athletics Director, presented the Grades 2-5 PE/Health Curriculum to the Committee. The Committee reviewed each course and recommended they move to the full Board for approval.

MOTION: Mr. Wintress moved to approve the Agricultural Education 2-Leadership, Clayworks 1, Creative Writing 1, Software Applications and Grades 2-5 PE/Health Curriculum as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Ms. Colt

VOTE: Unanimous

10.0 General Business

10.1 Approval of June 12, 2024 as the Graduation Date for Rockville High School (BOE Goal #1)

Dr. Macary announced that he works closely with Project Graduation to align the RHS Graduation date with their planned event for the graduates. The event is held at Sonny's Place, and due to the popularity of the venue, event space books up very quickly. Once a

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date has been booked, it is nearly impossible to change to another date. Therefore, Dr. Macary is asking the Board to consider June 12, 2024 as the Graduation date for Rockville High School in order to align with Project Graduation's booking of June 12th for their event. He also noted that June 17th is the last day of school for Pre-K through 8th Grade and June 18th will be the last day of school for Rockville High School, due to an isolated power outage earlier in the year at the school.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve June 12, 2024 as the Graduation Date for Rockville High School as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

10.2 Approval of the Application for the Program Enhancement Projects (PEP) Grant (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. Testa reviewed the Application for the Program Enhancement Projects (PEP) Grant with the Board. He explained that there are five priority areas:

- Family Literacy Services
- Integrated Education and Training
- Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education + Training
- Technology Integration and Expansion of Services
- Transition, Career Navigation and Support

He asked the Board for their consideration in approving the grant application.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve the Application for the Program Enhancement Projects (PEP) Grant as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

10.3 Vernon Public Schools 10-Year Facility Study and Master Plan (BOE Goal #3)

Dr. Macary noted that we commissioned a 10-Year Facility Study in the Summer of 2023. Center Road School is our newest school at 65 years old, and Maple Street School is

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approaching the end of its useful life and cannot last another 20 years. HVAC systems in all schools will need to be replaced in order to meet newly enacted air quality standards. His recommended next steps are:

- Create a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan inclusive of HVAC needs
- Develop a plan to construct a new school to consolidate two school buildings
- Construct a Facilities Plan for non-capital improvements based on priorities

He asked the Board to look at the presentation given by Friar Architecture, which is located on the Google Drive. It's a great resource that points out all of the District's needs.

10.4 Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to Address the 10-Year Facility Study and Master Plan (BOE Goal #3)

Dr. Macary recommended that we create an Ad Hoc Committee in which Community members, Town Council members, Administrators, etc. would serve on to address our building needs. If anyone on the Board is interested in serving on the Ad Hoc Committee, they should contact Board Chair Paul Grabowski.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to address the 10-Year Facility Study and Master Plan as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mr. Bedlack

VOTE: Unanimous

10.5 Board of Education Finance Committee Report (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. William Meier III, Director of Business and Finance, announced that the Finance Committee met this evening and reviewed the Finance Report and the Year-to-Date Budget.

Mr. Meier also presented 4 action items requiring Board approval:

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(a) Healthy Food Certification 2024-2024

Healthy Food Option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Vernon Public Schools Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

MOTION: Ms. Wintress moved to approve the Healthy Food Option as read aloud.
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

Food & Beverage Exemptions: The Vernon Public Schools Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

MOTION: Ms. Wintress moved to approve the Food & Beverage Exemptions as read aloud.
SECOND: Ms. Nucci
VOTE: Unanimous

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(b) Proposed Meal Price Increase for the 2024-2025 School Year

Vernon Public Schools Food & Nutrition Services is proposing to increase meal prices due to the minimum wage increase, the increase in food cost due to supply chain issues, and the increase in the cost of living. Paid Lunch Equity is a requirement under section 205 of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 for all schools with pricing programs that participate in the National School Lunch Program. The USDA Paid Lunch Equity Tool has been used to help calculate the paid lunch price increase requirement.

Proposed Price Increase for SY 2024-2025:

Vernon Public Schools Food & Nutrition Services is proposing a \$0.25 increase in lunch pricing at all grade levels for SY 2024-2025.

Lunch	Current SY 2023-2024 Prices	Increase	Proposed SY 2024-2025 Prices
Elementary	\$3.00	\$0.25	\$3.25
Middle	\$3.25	\$0.25	\$3.50
High School	\$3.50	\$0.25	\$3.75

The Paid Lunch Equity requirements do not include any price requirements for breakfast. However, Vernon Public Schools Food & Nutrition Services is proposing a \$0.25 increase in breakfast pricing for SY 2024-2025 (0.30 increase at high school level).

Breakfast	Current SY 2023-2024 Prices	Increase	Proposed SY 2024-2025 Prices
Elementary	\$1.75	\$0.25	\$2.00
Middle	\$2.00	\$0.25	\$2.25
High School	\$2.20	\$0.30	\$2.50

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MOTION: Ms. Colt moved to approve Proposed Meal Price Increase for the 2024-2025 School Year as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

(c) Budget Amendment

Mr. Meier noted that, in the past, PTOs at each school would pay for the bus transportation for the 5th Grade Boston field trips. Lately, they have struggled to raise these funds, so the Board of Education will fund the transportation costs for these trips going forward. This was not planned in the 2023-2024 budget, so he is asking the Board to approve a budget amendment, moving the funds from unused monies in the Contracted Van/Lifts account to the Field & Athletic Trips account. The 8th Grade students at VCMS will be going to Boston as well due to their trip being cancelled during COVID

MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to approve the Budget Amendment Request as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

(d) Adopt-A-Classroom Donation from Subaru

Mr. Meier noted that AdoptAClassroom.org (AAC) has selected Vernon Center Middle School to receive a \$3,000.00 credit from Suburban Subaru of Vernon, CT to be used towards the purchase of classroom resources and materials in support of the school's students. VCMS Administration will be asked to select 6 teachers to receive \$500.00 each in AAC credit. In August, the teachers will be able to access an online account where they can use their funds to purchase classroom materials in the AAC Vendor Marketplace.

MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved to approve the Adopt-A-Classroom Donation from Subaru as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Ms. Nucci

VOTE: Unanimous

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10.6 Letter of Engagement – Shipman & Goodwin, LLP (BOE Goal #1)

Dr. Macary shared Shipman & Goodwin's Letter of Engagement with the Board and noted that their legal services have been outstanding so far. He said there is no contract with them, just a handshake deal where we can leave at any time should we want to.

10.7 Reports from Board of Education Liaisons Regarding Attendance at Organization / Committee Meetings (BOE Goal #1)

Mrs. Jablonecki reported that she attended the PTO meeting at Lake Street School. They are holding several fundraisers, including Little Caesars, Butter Braids and Munson's. May 17th is Family Fun Day and they are looking for gift card donations.

Ms. Sewell announced that the new PTO President is great and things are up and running again. They are looking forward to Teacher Appreciation Week on May 6-10 and are planning for their end of the year party. Yearbooks are in progress.

Board Chair Mr. Paul Grabowski asked for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss agenda item 8.2, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:22 PM to discuss agenda item 8.2, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary.

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:25 PM.

8.2 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved that the Board approve the request for a maternity leave of absence, submitted by Catrina Michonski, for the reasons discussed in Executive Session, and authorize the Superintendent to inform the employee of the Board's decision and the reason therefore.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

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11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

<https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/district-information/district-calendar>

No updates were made.

Dr. Macary reminded the Board that the BOE Student Awards Ceremony will take place on May 20, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Rockville High School Auditorium.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Wintress made a motion to adjourn at 8:27 PM

SECOND: Ms. Colt

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary