

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Anne Fischer, Chairperson
Mark Kalina, Vice Chairperson
Stephen Linton, Secretary
Patricia Buxton, Treasurer
Jennifer Buckler
Kevin Brown
Deborah Rodriguez
Mason Thrall
Kristiana Wintress

June 14, 2021

DRAFT MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held via Zoom Webinar and in-person on Monday, June 14, 2021.

1.0 Establish Quorum

Roll call was taken at 7:02 p.m. Board members present in person: Mrs. Fischer, Mr. Kalina, Mr. Linton, Dr. Buxton, Mr. Brown, Mrs. Buckler, Mrs. Rodriguez and Ms. Wintress. There was a quorum.

Student Representatives present via Zoom: James Wheeler.

Administration present in person: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa, Interim Director of Business and Finance Michael Santogatta

2.0 Call to Order

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Recognition of Jeffrey Farrell - Recipient of the Patsy Lemley Kamercia Outstanding New Athletic Administrator Award Winner for 2021 from the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary announced that Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell has received the Patsy Kamercia Outstanding New Athletic Administrator Award for 2021 from the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors. Patsy was the first female president of the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) and the first female inductee into the CAAD Hall of Fame. She was the athletic director at Haddam-Killingworth from 1975 to 1985 and made positive and lasting contributions to CAAD. The award recognizes a "new"

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athletic administrator and CAAD member who has made positive contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local, league and state level. Dr. Macary thanked Jeff for his contribution to Vernon Public Schools and congratulated him on receiving the award.

Mrs. Fischer presented Jeff with a gift on behalf of the Board of Education and congratulated him as well.

4.2 Sports Update from Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Athletic Director Jeff Farrell spoke about the various school athletic teams and their accomplishments throughout the year. Although COVID-19 placed a hold on the fall and winter seasons, students were able to participate in-person for the spring season. He spoke of the VCMS Baseball and Softball teams and their seasonal records. While fall and winter sports seasons were on pause at RHS, that time was used to work on the four core values of Academics, Commitment, Teamwork and Sportsmanship. For the spring season, Baseball, Softball, Boys' and Girls' Lacrosse, Boys' and Girls' Tennis, Golf, Boys' Volleyball, Unified Sports, E-Sports and Outdoor Track were offered to students. In total, 207 students participated in spring sports and 316 students participated in sports throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Four RHS graduates are moving on to play sports in college:

- Alex Silver – Softball – St. Joseph's
- Colton Labrecque – Swimming – Wheaton College
- Cam Lucas – Golf – Piedmont University
- Nasir Knighton – Football – Post University

Jeff announced that, during the post-season, coaches are evaluated, students are surveyed and goals and improvement plans are made for the next season. He said the fall season should be back to a full schedule and will take place on the new field. The only spring sport impacted by COVID restrictions was indoor volleyball. Those students wore masks while playing. His goal for E-Sports is to get more students involved for the 2021-2022 school year.

5.0 Secretary's Report

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

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No agenda items were added or deleted.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Student Representative James Wheeler reported the following:

- The 2021 RHS Graduation ceremony was held on June 10th and went very well. It was so nice to be able to hold in-person and watch his brother and some of his friends graduate.
- Project Grad took place after the graduation ceremony from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am the next day at Sonny's Place. Everyone had an awesome time!
- Mr. Farrell covered most of what James was going to report on for Spring Sports, but he did say he enjoyed being able to play baseball this season. The coaches did a great job!
- He's excited that summer is finally here!

Mrs. Rodriguez asked James for an update on the baby animals. James said that, unfortunately, they lost all but one of the baby goats due to premature birth. The one they were able to save is named Franklin. One of the mother goats also died while giving birth. Moana the cow is due in October and they have successfully bred the ram and the ewe.

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 (limited to 15 minutes)

No one addressed the Board.

7.0 Consent Agenda

7.1

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on May 24, 2021
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Curriculum Committee Meeting held on May 26, 2021

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- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Focus Group) held on June 2, 2021
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting Held on June 7, 2021
- (e) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3000 - Concept and Rules in Business and Non-Instructional Operations
- (f) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3010 - Goals and Objectives
- (g) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3111 - Fiscal Year
- (h) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3120 - Budget Development
- (i) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3150 - Budget Adoption
- (j) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3160 - Budget Administration
- (k) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3231 - Medicaid Reimbursement for Special Education Students
- (l) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3240 - Tuition Fees
- (m) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #3250 - Materials/Services Fees, Charges
- (n) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3260 - Sales and Disposal of Obsolete Books, Equipment and Supplies
- (o) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3280 - Gifts, Grants, Bequests and Supplemental Funding
- (p) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #3290 - Grants and Other Revenue
- (q) Approval of Physical Therapy Equipment Donation to Vernon Public Schools

Mr. Brown pulled Consent Agenda Item #7.1(b). He noted a correction in the “Attendees” section. He is listed as attending when he was not present at the meeting. Mrs. Fischer noted that “Math Curriculum” should instead be labeled as “Algebra I”.

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Mrs. Fischer pulled Consent Agenda Item #7.1(c). Deborah Rodriguez was listed as attending the Focus Group meeting. She was not present. Mrs. Fischer noted that Rony Urtecho should also be added as an attendee at the meeting.

Ms. Wintress pulled Consent Agenda Item #7.1(h). She noted that the “Policy Reviewed” date should be changed from “May 24, 2021” to “June 14, 2021”.

MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved to approve Consent Agenda Items #7.1 (a), (d), (e), (f), (g), (i), (j), (k), (l), (m), (n), (o), (p) and (q).

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #7.1(b) as amended.

SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #7.1(c) as amended.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #7.1(h) as amended.

SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez

VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Teacher Recruitment Project Presentation (BOE Goal #1, #2)

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Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa introduced Terese (Tracy) Duenzl, Principal of Lake Street School, who will be presenting the Teacher Recruitment Project (TRP) we will participate in next year in partnership with CREC.

Principal Duenzl said that the purpose of this project is to increase diversity within the staff to more align with our student diversity. TRP is an alternative route to elementary certification, specifically designed to recruit and retain teachers of color and eliminate common barriers to certification. She reviewed the current staff to student ratio of diversity in Vernon Public schools and emphasized the value of this project. Criteria for selection of the candidate as well as their mentor were presented. Upon certification, our goal would be for the teacher candidate to be hired as a teacher for Vernon Public Schools. Our first candidate selected for the 2021-2022 Academic Year is Ariana Nieves-Mathias. Her mentor is teacher Taylor Sisson Martone, Grade 3 at Lake Street School. Ariana is a graduate of RHS as well as a resident of Vernon.

8.2 Retirees with 20+ Years of Service (BOE) Goal #1, #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa announced the 10 retirees with 20+ Years of Service:

- Ann Cilfone, Teacher – 27 years
- Holly Jensen, Teacher – 37 years
- Maria Kenzior, Café – 29 years
- Mary Ann Melendy, Café – 28 years
- Lynn Nissen, Para – 30 years
- Debra O'Brien, Secretary – 20 years
- Susan Rock, Library – 33 years
- Shaune Santos, Teacher – 35 years
- Deborah Seigle, Secretary – 26 years
- Susan Zylberman, Teacher – 24 years

Mr. Testa and Mrs. Fischer thanked them for their service and dedication to the students of Vernon Public Schools. Dr. Macary noted that the 37 years of service for Holly Jensen was all in one school. He also mentioned that the Board sent out a very nice letter of appreciation to each retiree.

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9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 Approval of Algebra I and K-2 Writing Curriculum (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary began by saying the curriculum documents are available on the Google drive as they were too large to print.

Mr. Testa said that the committee met on May 26, 2021. Dominique Fox, Director of Teaching and Learning-Secondary, presented the new Algebra I curriculum for the high school. Melissa Trantolo, Director of Teaching and Learning-Elementary, presented the new writing curriculum for grades K, 1 and 2. Mr. Testa asked committee member Mrs. Rodriguez if she had anything to add. She said the presentations were very thorough and collaborative. Mrs. Fischer said she was very impressed with the enthusiasm of Dominique and Melissa and thanked them for putting this together. Mr. Kalina said he was impressed by the sheer volume of the document.

MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved to approve the Algebra I and K-2 Writing Curriculum

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

9.2 Approval of Rockville High School Trip to Paris, France and Barcelona, Spain-April 2022 (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary said the RHS trip to Paris, France and Barcelona, Spain in April of 2022 was approved at the May 24, 2021 meeting, but the Board had concerns on equity stance. With the cost of the trip being approximately \$3,193.00 per student, he has some recommendations he would like to present to the Board to help defray the costs.

- Vernon Public Schools would cover the bus transportation cost of \$1,300.00 to Logan Airport
- Any student who receives free or reduced meals through direct certification would be eligible for a \$1,000.00 scholarship
- Hold fundraising events

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Mr. Kalina asked how many students would attend and what percentage of those students would qualify for free and reduced meals. Dr. Macary said about 15 – 25 are interested in the trip, and approximately 33% would qualify for free and reduced meals. Mr. Kalina asked where the funding would come from for the scholarships as well as the bus transportation. Dr. Macary said they are still working on the funding source for the scholarships. The bus cost would come from the transportation budget as this type of expense is normally budgeted anyway. Mrs. Buckler asked how much do we think could be reasonably raised through traditional fund raising efforts. Dr. Macary estimates approximately \$500.00 to \$600.00 per student. Teachers would assist with fundraising efforts. All fundraising would need to be complete before January 2022 when the final payment for the trip is due.

MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved to approve the cost saving recommendations presented regarding the Rockville High School Trip to Paris, France and Barcelona, Spain – April 2022

SECOND: Mr. Brown

VOTE: Unanimous

9.3 Summer Book Reading (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa shared the teachers' summer reading book titled "Social Emotional Learning and the Brain - Strategies to Help Your Students Thrive" by Marlee Sprenger. This book aligns with our social and emotional learning theme and is the first summer read to be provided to our staff. A copy was presented to each Board member and he suggested that they may enjoy it as well. Mr. Kalina asked who the ASCD was that was listed on the cover of the book. Mr. Testa said they are an organization for educational leadership that provides books through our membership with them.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Approval of Vernon Education Mini-Grants (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary thanked the Vernon Education Foundation for their support and funding of the

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3 mini-grants awarded this year:

- Amela Fejzic, 4th Grade Teacher at Center Road School for 15 copies of the book “Culturally Responsive Teaching” to be distributed to teachers. Award was approved for up to \$500.00.
- Regina Lee, teacher at VCMS, for her request to put light on Historical fiction speaker which makes history come alive for students and also add small novels to the library with these types of topics. Request was approved for \$500.00.
- Christine Oyola, Social Worker in Center Road School’s Renaissance Program, wants to create a gardening project with raised flower beds in the recess area to promote well being of students’ mental health. Award of \$500.00 for gardening supplies was approved.

MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved to approve and accept, with gratitude, the Vernon Education Foundation Mini-Grants awarded to staff of Vernon Public Schools.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

10.2 The American Rescue Plan (ESSER III) Funding-Vernon Public Schools – Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan 2021-2022 (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary announced that Vernon Public Schools will be receiving 4.3 million in ESSER III funds to be expended over the next 3 years. The application for the grant is due August 23rd. We will be publishing our Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan 2021-2022 to our website by June 23rd. We are looking for feedback on the plan over the coming months, but we also realize this plan could change based on trends and any updated CDC guidelines that could occur prior to the opening of the new school year.

Mr. Testa said there are 5 main sections that must be included in our plan:

- Health and Safety Strategies
- Continuity of Services
- Public Comment

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- Periodic Review Process
- Understandable and Uniform Format

The Board discussed various concerns such as learning loss, cleaning of high-touch areas, modified use of lockers, remote learning, mask requirements and social distancing. A suggestion was made that we survey elementary school parents for their thoughts about whether or not their child should wear a mask. Dr. Macary said that once the vaccination receives approved status rather than emergency status, we can add a child's COVID-19 vaccination to their health record. Under current emergency status, we are not allowed to do so. It was noted on page 4 of the plan that there is an error in the language under the "Contact Tracing" section. It should read "The school nurse *will*" rather than "the school nurse *with*". Dr. Macary asked the Board to send their thoughts on the plan to either himself or Mr. Testa.

10.3 COVID-19 Update (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary said this will probably be the last COVID-19 update since school is over for the summer. He is encouraging vaccinations for all students and staff. Preliminary data shows that the vaccine will soon be available for children 8+ years. COVID-19 cases are down, but last week, we did have 4 classrooms that had to quarantine. 3 of them were at the elementary level.

10.4 Board of Education Business and Finance Report (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Interim Business and Finance Director Michael Santogatta reviewed the Business and Finance Report, including the grant budget and grant drawdowns. The Cafeteria budget had a tough year with food pricing increases, etc., but we were able to offset a good portion of their deficit with grant funds. This will allow them to open the new fiscal year debt free. Summer meals will be provided again this year, but we will run and execute the program ourselves, which will help with reimbursements. Mr. Santogatta said the main focus of the Business Office is to close out the 2021 fiscal year in the next two weeks.

There was an action item included in the Business and Finance Report asking the Board to approve the Asset Disposal Requests as presented in Exhibit H for items from Physical Therapy, Northeast School and Food & Nutrition.

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MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved to approve the Asset Disposal Requests as presented in Exhibit H.
SECOND: Mr. Linton
VOTE: Unanimous

10.5 FY 2021 Ending Year-to-Date Summary – Resolution (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary said this is standard practice done every year. We have already moved \$382,000.00 to the Capital and Non-Recurring Education Fund account. We don't expect a lot of money to remain, but would like to present for Board approval a Resolution indicating that the Superintendent is authorized to request from the Town of Vernon that the remaining FY2021 Board of Education fund balance be transferred to the Capital and Non-Recurring Education Fund account.

MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved to approve a Resolution indicating that the Superintendent is authorized to request from the Town of Vernon that the remaining FY2021 Board of Education fund balance be transferred to the Capital and Non-Recurring Education Fund account.

SECOND: Mrs. Buckler
VOTE: Unanimous

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No changes were made to the calendar. Dr. Macary announced that the annual Central Office picnic will take place on June 24, 2021 at 12:00 pm. All are invited to attend.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

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There were no questions from the press.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Linton motioned to adjourn at 8:44 p.m.

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Linton, Board Secretary