

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
Michele Arn
Kevin Brown
Latasha Hyatt
Deborah Rodriguez
Mason Thrall

September 14, 2020

APPROVED MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held via Zoom Webinar and in person on Monday, September 14, 2020.

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

Present in person when the meeting was called to order were: Mr. Kalina, Mr. Linton, Dr. Buxton, Ms. Arn, Mr. Brown, Mrs. Rodriguez, and Mr. Thrall.

Present via Zoom Meeting when the meeting was called to order was: Ms. Hyatt

Student Representatives present (via Zoom Meeting): Allison Blume

Administration present in person: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa. Director of Business and Finance Angela Wang

1.0 Recognitions and Presentations

1.1 Introduction of New School Resource Officer Gregory St. Pierre (BOE Goal #1, #3)

School Resource Officer Gregory St. Pierre introduced himself to the Board. He has been a Vernon Police Officer since 2012. During his time at the Vernon Police Department he has been a Drug Recognition Expert, a Field Training Officer, Training Instructor and a member of the Crisis Intervention Team. He grew up in Plymouth, CT and graduated from Terryville High School. He also graduated from Western Connecticut State University with a bachelor's degree in Justice and Law Administration.

He has been married for 5 years and his wife, Sara, is a first grade teacher in Salem, CT. He enjoys hanging out with friends and family, playing golf, hiking, mountain biking and riding ATVs.

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He is looking forward to this school year and is very excited to form positive relationships. He spent a couple of weeks with former School Resource Officer Joshua Wells and feels confident moving forward.

Mrs. Fischer welcomed him and thanked him.

1.2 Recognition of Bianna’s Pizza Donation (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Bianna’s Pizza partnered with Vernon Public Schools and donated eight (8) pizzas per month this past April through June to students and families as incentives. They were delivered to students and families with an attached note “Nice Job” or “We are proud of you.” This was used as a reward for students who were doing outstanding on their distance learning and/or for those disengaged families that needed a pick-me-up.

Mr. Macchi of Bianna’s Pizza introduced himself and thanked the district for allowing them to help and donate to the community and schools. He would like to continue to do this. Both Dr. Macary and Mrs. Fischer thanked him for his generous donations.

1.3 Vernon Education Foundation Mini-Grants (BOE Goal #1, #2)

This year the Vernon Education Foundation awarded mini-grants to staff of the Vernon Public Schools. Mrs. Laurie Bajorek from the Vernon Education Foundation shared detailed information about the mini-grants. Mini-grants were awarded as follows:

Title	Staff	School	Program	Award	
Mini-Grant Program					
Faces of Vernon’s Diversity: A traveling photography exhibit (EPOCH ART)	Tooker, Nevins	VCMS	Art	\$500	Amarjit Buttar Community Service Grant
Raised Bed Gardening	Reed	RHS	TALC	\$425	Cathy Rebai Innovation Grant 2020
VCMS School Store - Sped/Mentors	Mullins, Cohen	VCMS	ABL	\$500	
Historical Fiction Literacy collection expansion/Guest Speaker	Lee, Halpryn, Colon	VCMS	7 & GT	\$500	
Race & Equity Grants					
Race in America - Impacts on Teaching & Learning	McEvila, Fabuien	MSS	Staff	\$500	
8:46 Multi-Cultural Diversity Education	McEvila, Lagun-Brandao, et al	MSS	ALL	\$500	
So You Want To Talk About Race?	Fejzic	CRS	Staff	\$530	

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MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved that the Vernon Board of Education approve, and accept with gratitude, the mini-grants awarded to staff of the Vernon Public Schools.
SECOND: Mr. Linton
VOTE: Unanimous

Both Dr. Macary and Mrs. Fischer thanked the Vernon Education Foundation for the mini-grants.

2.0 Consent Agenda

2.1

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on August 24, 2020
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (PD Workshop) held on August 31, 2020
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Board Member Orientation) held on September 3, 2020

Mrs. Rodriguez, Mr. Kalina and Ms. Hyatt asked to pull Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a).

MOTION: Ms. Arn moved to approve Consent Agenda Items #2.1(b) and (c).
SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez
VOTE: Unanimous

Both Mrs. Rodriguez and Mr. Kalina noted that on Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a), page 1, Mrs. Rodriguez should be listed as present when the meeting was called to order.

Ms. Hyatt shared her concerns about Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a), pages 8, 9, and 10. She noted that her concerns and opinions were not included in the August 24, 2020 minutes and she wanted them added; the minutes as presented are misleading and don't represent the discussion the Board had. She is not in agreement with the notes. Dr. Macary called a point of order and noted that these are minutes and not transcripts and this is standard practice. That would be a change in policy.

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Board members discussed whether Board member discussion, disagreements, dissention and concerns should be added to Board minutes. It was suggested that if a Board member wants something included in the minutes that it could be called to the attention of the recorder that the Board member wants this on the record in the minutes. It was suggested that Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a) be tabled and reviewed further until the next meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to table Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a) Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on August 24, 2020.

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

VOTE: Mr. Linton, Mr. Brown, Ms. Hyatt, Mr. Thrall, and Ms. Arn voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Kalina, Dr. Buxton, and Mrs. Rodriguez opposed the motion. The motion carried.

2.0 Secretary's Report

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

No agenda items were added or deleted.

2.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Student Representative Allison Blume reported the following:

- It's good to be back.
- Everything is much different as activities are changing and she noted that she may not have a lot to say.
- In review, in the past few weeks, students are adjusting to in person and virtual learning. They have been working out the details.
- Mask breaks have been implemented by teachers.
- Starting tomorrow free breakfast and lunch will be offered to all students – regardless if they had a plan in place before.
- As for morning announcements, she and another student are doing announcements and they throw in a joke at the end.
- Coming up this week school photos will be taken in alphabetical order. Students are joking about taking photos with masks on.
- Sporting meets have begun.

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- The SAT will be held on October 30th and administered at RHS.

Mrs. Fischer welcomed Allison back and asked if she was participating in the hybrid model. Allison shared she is participating in the Hybrid model and that it was weird at first but nice to get back to school and see everyone. She is glad that the hybrid model is going as well as it is.

3.0 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)

Town Administrator Michael Purcaro addressed the Board. He congratulated the Board on the reopening of schools. He speaks regularly with Dr. Macary and Mr. Testa but doesn't get a chance to speak to the Board. He appreciates the support of the Board. All emergencies start and end at the local level. The schools are at the heart of our community. The decision to reopen schools amid the pandemic is one of the most momentous moments. Budget, policy discussions, etc. all were shadowed this summer because the Board had to focus on bringing students back to school. The fact of the matter is hard decisions were made right here locally in Vernon. He wanted to share how grateful he is and how he truly respects the work that the Board does.

5.0 Personnel

5.1 Approval of Job Description for Grant Manager (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

The Board was asked to review and approve the job description for Grant Manager.

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Testa highlighted the job description and shared information. The salary for this position is between \$60,000 - \$65,000. There is a lot of fiscal responsibility that comes with the position. The Grant Manager will also be connected to the Business Office and will not just be writing grants. We used to have a Grant Writer position. This is a new position and would involve doing more – writing the grant and also managing it. It is not a remote position. The Grant Manager will interface with Mr. Testa on a daily basis.

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Board members discussed and reviewed the job description. A suggestion was made to amend page 2 by removing “*attend to task for 45-60 minutes at a time*” and replacing it with “*multi-tasking*”.

MOTION: Ms. Arn moved that the Board approve the amended job description for Grant Manager as discussed and presented.
SECOND: Mr. Kalina
VOTE: Unanimous

5.2 Approval of Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

The Board will review the proposed Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association in Executive Session.

This item was moved to the end of the agenda.

5.3 Approval of Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Federation Union of Paraeducators (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

The Board will review the proposed Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Federation Union of Paraeducators in Executive Session.

This item was moved to the end of the agenda.

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

The Board will review and may take action on an employee’s request for Leave of Absence. This will be held in Executive Session.

This item was moved to the end of the Agenda.

5.5 Superintendent’s Evaluation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

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The Board will discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation in Executive session.

This item was moved to the end of the Agenda.

6.0 Teaching and Learning

6.1 Review of Summer Reading Program (BOE Goal #2)

Director of Teaching and Learning (Elementary) Mrs. Melissa Trantolo and Director of Teaching and Learning (Secondary) Mrs. Dominique Fox reviewed the summer reading program with the Board.

Mrs. Trantolo went over a brief summary of the reading program. The program began with a kickoff with staff members reading with pets and their children. The goals for the program were to foster a love of reading; practice and retain literacy and numeracy skills; social emotional focus; and to continue personal connections between students and staff. There were facilitators at each elementary school. This year they added some improvements with differentiated text for Grades K-2 and Grades 3-4. Teachers recorded read alouds and communication and feedback was provided by teachers. There was a mid-summer check in and students earned a free Kona Icee. Students also had options to do paper and pencil journal. The following number of students participated per school:

CRS	45
LSS	33
MSS	25
NES	32
SRS	43

Mrs. Fox gave the board a brief summary of the middle school program. Much like elementary school, the middle school had a kickoff video with the Rocky theme. It ran from June 15th – August 14th. There were three goals: Foster a love reading; create a community of readers; and practice and retain literacy. The middle school reading was based on choice under six genres: dystopian, historical fiction, social issues, sports, survival/adventure, and teen. They had a Google classroom and weekly schedule that was followed. Dystopian had the highest signups. They also had mid-summer participation. The sign-ups in the beginning in June was 349 but by mid-summer it dropped to 151.

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They had positive takeaways: Genre-based groups, variety of materials on weekly basis, and on-going reward program that the kids were interested in. Things to reconsider for next year included setting clear expectations about requirements, using google classroom (felt like school) and level of difficulty in terms of resources. Moving forward they want to increase communications with students/parents; increase dialogue between students; provide access in print, digital and audio; ask for more student input when designing program; more in person promotion of the program; and more culturally responsive texts.

Mrs. Fischer thanked them for their work and noted that the participation was more than expected. She also thanked everyone who was a part of it.

6.2 Review of Professional Development (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa gave the Board a review of recent Professional Development (PD). He provided a summary of the PD which took place prior to start of school. There were five days of PD. One of the key differences this year was that PD was provided to a wide variety of staff including library workers, health aides, paras, secretaries, etc. The sessions offered aligned to three themes: educational equity, trauma informed instruction, teaching and learning in a hybrid and virtual learning environment. The feedback from staff was very positive. More sessions will be offered in November. Several questions on a survey sent to participants included the overall high quality of the program and 88% of respondents agreed. There was a total of 400 participants and approximately 150 staff members responded to the survey.

6.3 College and Career Readiness Student Achievement (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa gave the Board a review of college and career readiness student achievement. He shared a brief summary as it relates to our advanced placement exams. A score of 3, 4, and 5 are passing scores. 74 percent of the graduates are furthering their education at a two or four year college and this is close to last year's numbers. The same number of classes are offered this year. It was noted that the reason we don't have a trend this year is because the test was different. We can't compare apples to oranges. There is a big difference in taking a 3 hour test vs. a 45 min. abridged test. With regard to STEM, the district will be revising the science curriculum in the elementary and middle schools. Presently, we do not offer engineering but we can look into it. Dr.

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Macary noted that Vernon is working together with Goodwin University to offer STEM. Some of the AP exams that Vernon does not offer include social government, US history, etc.

7.0 General Business

7.1 Special Education Tuition and Services (BOE Goal #2)

Director of Business and Finance Ms. Wang shared special education tuition and services information when she reviewed the Business and Finance Report with the Board.

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

Ms. Angela Wang, Director of Business and Finance, gave the Board an updated report including the Year-to-Date Budget.

There was a request for two action items:

1. Out-of-District Tuition Rates for FY21
2. New Scholarship Application – Peter Ramsdell Memorial Scholarship

MOTION: Mr. Kalina moved that the Board approve the out-of-district tuition rates for FY21 as presented.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved that the Board approve the new scholarship application – Peter Ramsdell Memorial Scholarship as presented.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

7.3 Review of Pending Litigation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

The Board will review, in Executive Session, pending litigation.

This item was moved to the end of the Agenda.

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8.0 To Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No changes were made to the calendar.

9.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

There were no questions from the press.

Mr. Kalina made the motion at 9:02 PM to extend curfew until the close of business. Mrs. Arn seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Buxton made the motion at 9:03 PM to go into the Executive Session inviting Mr. Testa, the Assistant Superintendent, for Agenda Item 5.4 (Leave of Absence Request) and inviting Dr. Macary, Superintendent, for Agenda Item 5.2 (Approval of Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association), 5.3 (Approval of the Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Federation Union of Paraeducators), 5.4 (Leave of Absence Request), 5.5 (Superintendent's Evaluation), and 7.3 (Review of Pending Litigation). Mr. Linton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board came out of the Executive Session at 10:24 PM.

Mrs. Rodriguez made the motion to approve the agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association. Mr. Kalina seconded the motion. Mr. Brown, Dr. Buxton, Ms. Hyatt, Mr. Kalina, Mr. Linton, Mrs. Rodriguez, and Mr. Thrall approved the motion. Mrs. Arn opposed the motion. The motion carried.

Dr. Buxton made the motion to approve the agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Federation Union of Paraeducators. Mr. Kalina seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Linton made the motion to adjourn at 10:26 PM. Mrs. Arn seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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To view the entire video of the Board of Education Meeting held on September 14, 2020, please visit our website: <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/board-of-education/meetings-broadcasts> and link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v2_PPmQDBceCUC_0f2hbl5eJsZmTM11H/view

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Linton, Board Secretary