

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

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

January 9, 2023

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, January 9, 2023.

1.0 Establish Quorum

Roll call was taken at 7:02 p.m.

There was a quorum. Board members present: Mrs. Fischer, Mr. Thrall, Dr. Buxton, Ms. Colt, Mr. Kalina, Mr. Linton, Mrs. Rodriguez and Ms. Wintress.

Student Representatives present: Aedan Ruddock and Anaya Tolton.

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

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

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation by Skinner Road School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Skinner Road School Principal Bryan Kerachsky posed a question – “What can we do to make kids come to school?” He got together over the summer with his Art, Music & PE teachers to come up with a plan. They created “Interest Based Units” (IBUs) where students in grades 3, 4 & 5 would work together, similar to a middle/high school model. The students would choose 2 areas of interest from the three available IBUs: Fitness for Life, Fabric Arts and Music Technology. They take part in their first choice in the first semester, and their second choice in the second semester. They meet once per week for 40 minutes. He introduced the teachers and their students, who have just completed their first

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semester, and asked them to present their projects and speak of why they like this new model of learning. The students all agreed that this was a lot of fun and they like it very much. It gives them a chance to work with other kids that they would not normally interact with in a standard classroom setting.

4.2 Recognition of Board Member Kevin Brown (BOE Goal #1)

Board Chair Mrs. Fischer sadly announced that Board member Kevin Brown is leaving the Board of Education after 5 years of service. He was recently elected as the State Representative for District 56 and will need to devote his time to his new role. Mrs. Fischer thanked him for his dedication to the Board of Education and the students of Vernon and wished him well in his new position. Superintendent Dr. Macary thanked Mr. Brown for his 5 years of service, his wisdom and his advocacy for students. He will be sorely missed. Mr. Brown was presented with a gift from the Board of Education recognizing his five years of service. He thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve alongside them and for their support and commitment to the students of Vernon.

4.3 Fall Sports Season Presentation (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Athletic Director Mr. Jeffrey Farrell discussed the results of the VCMS and RHS Fall sports season. He presented a PowerPoint, recapping the season for each team. VCMS had 109 students participating in soccer, cross country and cheerleading. RHS had 253 participants in soccer, unified sports, cheerleading, football, cross country, volleyball, e-sports, swimming and field hockey. All 253 RHS athletes were academically eligible after the first marking period. Mr. Farrell also spoke of the mentoring program started this year at Center Road School, where RHS students work one-on-one with CRS students. He also spoke of the Student Athlete Leadership Team (SALT). There are currently 31 students in this organization, which promotes leadership and participation in special events and projects. Some of these include the Leadership Conference at SCSU, the creation of an “athletic hallway” at RHS and the official’s appreciation event planned for this winter. RHS offers a total of 25 sports programs.

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

Aedan Ruddock announced that exams are scheduled for 1/17/23 through 1/24/23. Exam days will be half days for students. An Open House for current 8th graders is scheduled for January 26, 2023 at 6:00 PM. Course recommendations for the 23-24 school year will begin shortly. School counselors will be meeting one-on-one with students to review progress towards graduation and tailor course selections with possible future plans.

Anaya Tolton announced that RHS continues their participation in the FAFSA Challenge, which is an incentive to get as many students as possible to apply for financial aid. 84 students have completed applications to date. Thanks to grant funding, a number of incentives will be raffled off to the senior class throughout the remainder of the school year.

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.)

Donna Connolly, 401 Talcottville Road, Vernon, CT, spoke to the Board. She said she is concerned for the future of our students and educators, especially with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. She is hearing of behavioral disruptions in classrooms and fights on the playground. She is concerned that Paras do not make enough money for what they have to deal with, especially Special Ed Paras. Regular Paras and Special Ed Paras make the same wage. They are paid a few cents above minimum wage and less than surrounding towns. She cannot understand why anyone would want to be a Para under these circumstances. They deserve fair compensation, and should be paid more than the workers at Costco.

7.0 Consent Agenda

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- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on December 12, 2022
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting held on December 12, 2022
- (c) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5118 – Students – Non-Resident Students (BOE Goal #3)
- (d) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5124 – Students – Reporting to Parents / Guardians (BOE Goal #3)
- (e) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5125 – Students – Student Record Confidentiality (BOE Goal #3)
- (f) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5131.911 – Students – Bullying / Cyberbullying / Hazing (BOE Goal #3) (BOE Goal #3)
- (g) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5132 – Students – Dress and Grooming (BOE Goal #3)
- (h) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5134 – Students – Married / Pregnant Students (BOE Goal #3)

Mr. Kalina asked to pull items 7.1(g)

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) and (h).

SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez

VOTE: Unanimous

Mr. Kalina reviewed pulled items 7.1(g), Reviewed Policy #5132 (page 33), noting that the wording is a bit confusing. After much discussion, a decision was made to bring back this policy to the Policy Committee for review at their next meeting.

8.0 Personnel

- 8.1 Approval of Vernon School Nurses' Association Contract (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

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Board Chair Mrs. Fischer asked that this item be moved to the end of the meeting.

8.2 Certified Staff Retirements (BOE Goal #2)

Superintendent Dr. Macary noted that, per the teachers' contract, teachers must inform us if they plan to retire. To date, two teachers have notified us of their retirement at the end of the 2022-2023 school year:

- Chiara Ferraro, Grade 5 Teacher at Center Road School
- Pamela Hoyt, Grade 6 Science Teacher at Vernon Center Middle School

Dr. Macary and Mrs. Fischer thanked them for their years of service to the students of Vernon Public Schools and wished them well in their retirement. They will be deeply missed.

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

Board Chair Mrs. Fischer asked that this item be moved to the end of the meeting.

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 Next Generation Accountability Index (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa reviewed a Power Point he created about the Next Generation Accountability Index for 2021-2022, which is a report card for our schools. He first gave an explanation on how to read the results, and then went through each area in the report. There are 22 indicators in the report; Vernon out-performed the State average in 18 of the 22 indicators. The CSDE identifies groups of schools as "Schools of Distinction" based on overall performance, growth and change in overall performance. Three Vernon schools received this honor for 2021-2022: Lake Street School, Northeast School and Skinner Road School. Northeast School has received this honor three years in a row and Skinner Road School has received it four years in a row. Dr. Macary spoke of a conversation he had with the Commissioner of the State Dept. of Education. Education took a hit with the pandemic. He asked her to identify the top three concerns she had. She mentioned chronic absenteeism, post-secondary entrance and the SBAC scores. There are some areas in Vernon that still need improvement. Chronic absenteeism is an issue, especially right now with flu season. We've accomplished much that we should be proud of, but there is more to do. Physical Education is an area of

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concern and, although we put a great deal of effort and have good participation in our sports programs, PE needs to focus more on life skills. There are 4 tests that students need to pass:

- Mile run
- Sit and reach
- Push-up/curl-up
- Pacer run

The Mile run is our weak area and improvement is needed.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Budget Amendment Request (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III presented a Budget Amendment Request regarding a safety and security issue at Maple Street School. They would like to install a locking gate with a crash bar to block an alley on Union Street where people are gaining access behind the school building. The funds would come from a surplus in Lake Street School's teacher salaries as a result of hiring new teachers at a lesser salary.

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved that the Board approve the Budget Amendment Request as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

VOTE: Unanimous

10.2 Approval of the Transfer of Dormant Scholarship Account Balances to the Vernon Board of Education Scholarship Account (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III noted that the Ad Hoc Scholarship Committee met to discuss these dormant accounts. All efforts were made through the Probate Court and the Journal Inquirer to find anyone related to these accounts who may have knowledge of a current charter. No one came forward. Mr. Meier is asking the Board to approve the transfer of these dormant funds to the newly established Vernon Board of Education Scholarship and closure of said accounts.

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MOTION: Mr. Linton moved that the Board approve the transfer of six dormant scholarship account balances to the Vernon Board of Education Scholarship Account and approve the closure of said accounts as presented.

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

10.3 Approval of the Transfer of Fully-Expended Scholarship Account Balances to the Vernon Board of Education Scholarship Account (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III noted that the benefactors of these two low-balance accounts have requested that we close them now that all funds have been expended and fall below the award amount. Mr. Meier is asking the Board to approve the transfer of these two low-balance accounts to the newly established Vernon Board of Education Scholarship and approve the closure of said accounts.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved that the Board approve the transfer of two low-balance scholarship accounts to the Vernon Board of Education Scholarship Account and approve the closure of said accounts as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Linton

VOTE: Unanimous

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 of the upcoming Budget Workshop on Wednesday, January 18th. They will begin with their review of the Personnel section.

Mrs. Fischer reminded the Board of the CAFE Legislative Breakfast scheduled for January 20th at Coventry High School.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

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MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved that the Board of Education go into Executive Session at 8:22 PM to discuss items 8.1 and 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary
SECOND: Mr. Linton
VOTE: Unanimous

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:00 PM.

Item 8.1

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved that the Board of Education approve item 8.1, Vernon School Nurses' Association Contract for July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2027 as presented in Executive Session.
SECOND: Mr. Kalina
VOTE: Unanimous

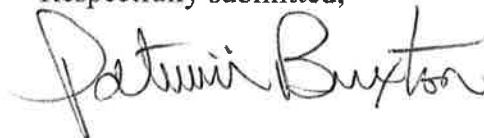
Item 8.3

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved that the Board of Education approve item 8.3, the request for an unpaid leave of absence submitted by Kristen Chepeleff, for the reasons discussed in executive session and authorize the Superintendent to inform the employee of the Board's decision and the reasons therefore.
SECOND: Dr. Buxton
VOTE: Unanimous

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Linton made a motion to adjourn at 9:04 PM
SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Buxton, Board Secretary