

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

March 11, 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, March 11, 2024.

Roll call was taken at 7:00 p.m.

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

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

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 7:01 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

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

Dr. Brenda Greene, Principal of Northeast School, introduced teachers Mrs. Larochelle and Mrs. Leslie along with their Second-Grade students, who were here tonight to tell us about the different types of poems they have learned about in their Poetry Unit. They include the following:

- Haiku – a poem with three lines; line 1 has 5 syllables, line 2 has 7 syllables; line 3 has 5 syllables
- Cinquain Poem – a 5-line poem that describes a person, place or thing

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- Diamante Poem – a 5-line poem that has a noun in line 1, 2 adjectives in line 2, 3 verbs in line 3, 2 adjectives in line 4 and 1 noun in line 5.
- Couplet Poem – 2 lines that rhyme and have the same amount of syllables
- Acrostic Poem – uses the letters in a topic word to begin each line. All lines of the poem should relate to or describe the poem.

The students then shared some creative examples of poems they wrote in each of the styles they learned about.

4.2 Recognition of VCMS Art Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Dr. Macary took a moment to thank the Art students from VCMS for their beautiful displays in our lobby. The talent shown is incredible and parents should be proud of their child's work. Sherri Nevins, Art Teacher at VCMS, thanked the Board for the opportunity to showcase her students' work at Central Office. She also mentioned that there is an Art exhibition at Arts Center East on March 21st and another Art exhibition at VCMS in early May. The following students were honored for their art displays in Central Office:

- Milan Ashmeade
- Samerah Beason
- Jazlynn Brown
- Molly Cook
- Madison Gordon
- Becky Liu
- Brianna Maury
- Xaevianna Nieves
- Kerri Reed
- Sarah Rizzo
- Adrianna Sanchez-Hernandez
- Alexis Ufongene

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4.3 Recognition of the Senior Athletes of the RHS Football Team (BOE Goal #1)

Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell and Head Football Coach Erick Knickerbocker recognized the following Senior Athletes of the RHS Football Team for their participation in the “Class M Championships”:

- Jason Acheampong
- Jonathon Adcock
- Jatavien Bolton
- Makai Gillespie
- Lexington Hunter
- Dominic Minella
- Carson Morgan
- Jevon Osborne
- Garrett Paul
- Malakye Pinckney
- Aedan Ruddock
- Jayden Spaulding
- Shawn Spicer
- Ross Sutherland
- Cale Wilson

The Board then presented each team member with a commemorative football honoring their participation in the championship.

4.4 Presentation by Athletic Director Jeff Farrell; Recap of Winer Sports Season (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Athletic Director Jeff Farrell provided the Board with a recap of the Winter Sports Season. At VCMS, there were 33 participants in Boys’ and Girls’ Basketball and there were 20 participants in Cheerleading. At RHS, there were 207 total participants in the Fall season. Sports included Basketball, Unified Sports Hockey, Cheerleading, Wrestling, Indoor track, Ice Hockey and Dance. Overall GPA for participants was 86.6. Girls’ Basketball had a

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team average of 90.94. Spring Sports are now underway. Mr. Farrell estimates that 50% of the student body participates in at least one sport.

4.5 Board of Education Member Appreciation Month (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary noted that March is CABA Board Member Appreciation month. On behalf of the students, parents, staff and administrators, he thanked the Board members for the time dedicated to Vernon Public Schools. He said that combined, the Board puts in about 220 hours per year. He thanked them again for their efforts and presented a few gifts of appreciation in recognition of their service to the students of Vernon Public Schools.

4.6 CABA's Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications (BOE Goal #1)

Dr. Macary noted that the Board of Education was recently awarded the "*Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications*" for their Board of Education Member Handbook". He wanted to recognize the Board this evening for also receiving two Honorable Mention Certificates; one for their "Billboards" and another for their "School Brochures". The two Honorable Mention Certificates were included in the Board packet.

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

My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen reported the following:

- Most RHS-only local scholarships were due at the end of February. Last year, almost \$400,000.00 was awarded to members of the Class of 2023.
- RHS has been hosting FAFSA support during the school day to help students and families to complete/troubleshoot the FAFSA.

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- School Counselors are wrapping-up individual scheduling meetings with students in grades 9-11.
- The Volleyball lock-in was on Friday and Saturday this past weekend and many students and teachers were able to connect after school hours for the event.
- RHS showcased Mama Mia! The Musical at the school, with four performances over the days of March 1st to March 3rd.

Aedan Rudock reported the following:

- A number of regional scholarship deadlines have been pushed back to April 1 and April 15 due to FAFSA completion issues.
- School Day SAT is being held on March 27 as well as a Spring PSAT test date for students in grades 9 and 10.

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

7.1 Consent Agenda

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting held on February 7, 2024
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on February 12, 2024
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on February 12, 2024
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Expulsion

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Hearing) held on February 21, 2024

(e) Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Expulsion Hearing Continuance) held on February 27, 2024

(f) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting held on March 4, 2024

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f)
SECOND: Ms. Nucci
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Acceptance of Administrator Resignation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary presented a letter of resignation to the Board from RHS Assistant Principal Katherine Howard-Bender, effective at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. He thanked her for her service to the students of Vernon and wished her success in her future endeavors.

MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to accept, with regret, the resignation of RHS Assistant Principal Katherine Howard-Bender, effective at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

8.2 Approval of Increasing Educator Diversity Plan (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa presented the “Increasing Educator Diversity Plan” to the Board. Currently, we have 49% students of color and only 6% staff of color. The plan’s Theory of Action is to prioritize recruiting, hiring, supporting and retaining a diverse educator workforce who reflect and value the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic

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diversity of Vernon Public Schools. By doing this, we will diversify our workforce, decrease opportunity gaps and improve outcomes for all students. He spoke of recruitment, hiring & selection and retention goals and the strategies to accomplish each of these goals. Mr. Testa will need to submit the plan to the State by March 15th and is asking the Board for their approval of the plan.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

8.3 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 April 2, 2024 PD Day Schedule for teachers and Paraprofessionals (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa presented the PD Day schedules for Elementary, Middle and High School staff to the Board. Some of the sessions within each schedule are mandated and some work around diversity. He will follow-up with the results of the day at the April Board meeting.

9.1 2023 District Annual Performance Report and Determinations (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Robert Nagashima, Director of Pupil Services, presented the 2023 District Annual Performance Report to the Board. The CSDE is required to report annually to the public on the performance of each district in relation to targets in the State Performance Plan (SPP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA) Section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(1). Mr. Nagashima announced that we met all of the requirements on the following indicators:

- Indicator 4B (Suspension/Expulsion – significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity)
- Indicator 9 (Disproportionate Representation)
- Indicator 10 (Disproportionate Representation – Disability Category)

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- Indicator 11 (Evaluation Timelines)
- Indicator 12 (Preschool Transition)
- Indicator 13 (Secondary Transition)
- General Supervision (Noncompliance corrected within one year)
- Timely and Accurate Data
- Chronic Absenteeism Rate

Although we met all the targets on the listed indicators, areas of growth include:

- Percent of students with disabilities in district – Vernon increased 2.5% over 2 years whereas the State increased only 0.7%
- Dropout rate has increased 4.7% over 2 years
- Increase placement and time with non-disabled peers

In a letter included with the report, it was noted that the CSDE appreciates the district's continued efforts to improve results for students with disabilities.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Review of and Adjustment to the 2024-2025 Board of Education Budget (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary presented to the Board a spreadsheet listing the February 5, 2024 approved Vernon Board of Education Budget Summary and the March 11, 2024 Recommended Vernon Board of Education Budget Summary. The bottom lines remain the same on each summary. With an expected increase in Alliance funding, we will be able to take 5 staff positions at RHS from the local budget and pay them from Alliance funds. This will allow us to transfer funds from the Salaries and Wages line of the budget to the Benefits line to offset increased medical claims.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the Adjustment to the 2024-2025 Board of Education Budget as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

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10.2 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 a Budget Amendment Request for the Board's consideration to fund the purchase of 6 Automated External Defibrillators and outdoor cases for installation at athletic fields used by Vernon Public Schools athletes. The installation locations include:

- Near the stadium field and track at RHS
- Near the softball fields at RHS
- Near the baseball and softball fields at VCMS
- At the Miracle Field located at NES
- Near the soccer fields at Windermere fields
- Henry Park

Mr. Meier noted that the Town of Vernon will help with maintenance costs of these units.

MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved to approve the Budget Amendment Request as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Ms. Nucci

VOTE: Unanimous

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

Mrs. Jablonecki attended the Lake Street School PTO meeting. They held a Little Caesar's Pizza fundraiser as well as a Butter Braids and Munson's Chocolates fundraiser. They also sold chocolate bars at a Bingo event.

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Ms. Nucci attended the RHS production of Mamma Mia. She said it was fantastic; she was so impressed by the kids, the set and the sound. The auditorium was packed! She also mentioned that the “Project Graduation” bingo event was sold out. Over 200 tickets were sold at \$35.00 each. It was an amazing event with food and raffles.

Ms. Sewell announced that MSS has a new PTO President and their next meeting is on March 20th. She is very excited to see what changes will take place.

Mr. Grabowski announced that the CRS Spring Fair will take place on March 23 from 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM. There will be games and raffles at the event.

Dr. Macary announced that the Board of Education will be paying for the cost of all bus transportation for the Elementary and 8th Grade Boston Trips.

Board Chair Mr. Paul Grabowski asked for a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:28 PM to discuss agenda item 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary.

MOTION: Ms. Wintress made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:28 PM to discuss agenda item 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary.
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:32 PM.

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

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved that the Board approve the request for an extended leave of absence, submitted by Nicole Guilmette, 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: Ms. Sewell
VOTE: Unanimous

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Mr. Grabowski asked if any Board members would be interested in volunteering to review the many applications received for the Vernon BOE Scholarship and help select a recipient to be awarded. Ms. Nucci, Ms. Sewell and Ms. Colt volunteered to assist Mr. Grabowski with the review of applications and selection of a recipient.

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No updates were made.

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 8:35 PM

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary