

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 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, March 13, 2023.

1.0 Establish Quorum

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

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

Student Representatives present: Anaya Tolton. Aedan Ruddock 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

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

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

Mrs. Tracy Duenzl, Lake Street School Principal, spoke about how Grade 2 students have been studying different styles of poetry and have each written a few that they would like to read aloud to the Board. There were over 15 students who participated in the presentation. They were asked to introduce themselves before they began their readings. They did a great job and their poems were very creative, especially the “I Am” poems, which express

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

personal likes and characteristics of each student. Mrs. Fischer thanked the students for their beautiful poems and noted how brave they were to read in front of such a large group.

4.2 Board Member Appreciation Month (BOE Goal #1)

Dr. Macary announced that March is “Board Member Appreciation Month”. He thanked the Board of Education members for their service to Vernon Public Schools and said we could not run the District without them. Over the last year, they have given over 240 hours of their time attending meetings, all for free. He expressed a heartfelt thank you to each member and then presented them with a gift bag, filled with goodies, as a token of the District’s appreciation.

4.3 Read Across America Event (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Testa noted that, for the first time since COVID began, Vernon Public Schools participated in “Read Across America Day” on Thursday, March 2nd. Town and Board of Education leaders as well as Vernon Public Schools Administration and staff read to Elementary School classrooms throughout the District. The students really enjoyed having a special guest visit their classrooms and enjoyed the books that were read to them. The goal of this event is to encourage children to read. Mr. Testa thanked all who participated. Mrs. Fischer said it was a great turn out from the Vernon Community.

4.4 District Strategic Plan Implementation Update (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary introduced Laura Boutilier of Partners for Educational Leadership. Laura is here this evening to provide an update to the Board on the District’s Strategic Plan Implementation and the many activities that are going on. She noted that we have a great strategic plan that was agreed to last June, but going forward, implementation of that plan is key. She reminded us of the three priorities within the plan: Student Success, Family and Community Partnerships and System Excellence. She then presented a video highlighting ongoing activities relating to “Student Success”. In the video, Lake Street School Principal Tracy Duenzl spoke of their “Culturally Diverse Read Alouds”; Center Road School Principal Heather Earley spoke of their “Mini Lessons in Reading”; Vernon Center Middle School Principal David Caruso spoke of “Reworking Tier 1 Instruction” to

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

design lesson plans that are engaging to students; Rockville High School Principal Jason Magao spoke of the “College and Career Pathways” being offered to students, beginning with the Class of 2026. Another video was shown, highlighting activities that have taken place regarding “Family & Community Partnerships”. In the video, Skinner Road School Principal Bryan Kerachsky speaks about events including their “Reading Marathon”, “Literacy Night” and “Movie Night”, where families come into the school with the students and interact with the staff. Joshua Egan, Principal of Maple Street School, speaks about their “Math and Literacy” nights, where students and their families come to the school to enjoy spending time together with staff, enjoying a meal and having raffles, playing games, etc. Principal David Caruso of Vernon Center Middle School speaks about their “Team Nights”, where one academic team meets with the students and their families. The families tour the school, meet with the teachers and enjoy a meal together. All of these activities are very well received by the families and help to build community between the students, their families and the school. “Systems Excellence” has 127 actions in place. One of these actions brings all 7 District Principals meeting together monthly in one of the schools (locations rotate each month) to discuss instruction, issues and concerns and where they feel they could improve. Mr. Testa noted that every Principal has said they feel meeting with their colleagues is extremely valuable and they enjoy seeing other buildings in action. They have all expressed that these meetings should continue in the next school year. Laura noted that next steps in the plan include revising School Improvement Plans based on this year’s experiences, reviewing progress made this year and continuously analyzing the Metrics for Success.

5.0 Secretary’s Report

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

No agenda items were added or deleted.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Anaya Tolton reported that the Bio Teams have been finishing up their digestion unit and many students have had an opportunity to perform their frog dissections. Spring Sports are starting up in the next few weeks. The Volleyball lock-in will take place this Thursday from 6:00 PM to 12:00 PM. School Day SATs for all Juniors will take place on

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

Wednesday, March 22nd. RHS has been participating in the FAFSA Challenge. The goal is to increase FAFSA completion by 5% or more for the 22-23 school year. School counselors are wrapping up their individual course selection meetings with students.

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 Communications Committee Meeting held on February 27, 2023
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on February 27, 2023
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting held on March 1, 2023
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting held on March 6, 2023
- (e) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5118.1 – Students – Homeless Students
- (f) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5132 – Students – Dress and Grooming
- (g) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5141 – Students – Student Health Services
- (h) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5141.22 – Students – Communicable and Infectious Diseases
- (i) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5141.25 – Students – Students with Special Health

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

Care Needs

- (j) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5141.5 – Students – Suicide Prevention
- (k) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5141.6 – Students – Crisis Response
- (l) Approval of Revised Board Policy #5142.1 – Students – Interaction with Non-Custodial Parents
- (m) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5144.3 – Students – Discipline of Students with Disabilities
- (n) Approval of Reviewed Board Policy #5145.2 – Students – Freedom of Speech / Expression

Mrs. Fischer noted that consent agenda items (e) and (g) will need minor changes, editing the language “his/her” to “their” and “him/her” to “them”. With that being said and noting that Board Recorder Diane Ritchotte will make those changes before publishing to the website, she asked for a motion to approve all consent agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l), (m) and (n).
SECOND: Dr. Buxton
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Certified Teacher Postings (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa reviewed a handout with the Board listing certified teaching positions that were posted on March 6th. We are also participating in the UConn Neag Education Recruitment Career Fair on March 28th. He hopes to fill as many positions as possible and will provide an update on the postings and Career Fair to the Board at the next meeting.

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 March 17th PD Day Schedule (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa presented the March 17th PD Day schedule to the Board, noting that it is a robust calendar that includes Health and Wellness sessions as well as Academic sessions. He will seek feedback from staff and will update the Board. He noted that he is already planning the August PD Sessions.

9.2 K-3 Reading Curriculum Waiver Submitted to the State (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa noted that the Board packet contained a copy of a very lengthy “K-3 Reading Curriculum Waiver” that was submitted to the State on February 27, 2023. The first 2 pages are an executive summary of the waiver. The process to compile data in order to meet the required February 28, 2023 submission deadline began in the middle of December with upwards of 120 hours of work performed to complete it. He said we are still waiting to hear back from the State; no timeline was given for their response. Dr. Macary said that he feels very strongly about the reading programs offered in Vernon, and feels good about our chances of receiving the waiver. We have a home-grown curriculum that he feels meets the needs of our students, and this shows in our students’ success. If our waiver is denied, the cost to purchase the required curriculum would be upwards of a million dollars. This would be considered an “unfunded mandate”. Dr. Macary said that many districts are submitting waivers as well. An update will be provided once we hear back from the State.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Superintendent’s Testimony on Reading Bill No. 1094, Presented at the Education Committee Public Hearing on March 1, 2023 (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary spoke of testifying at the Education Committee Public Hearing on March 1, 2023 regarding Raised Reading Bill No. 1094, an act concerning the implementation of Reading Models or Programs. He presented a copy of his testimony to the Board, which

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

highlights the Smarter Balanced Results in English Language Arts Grades 3-8 combined. After his testimony, he had an opportunity to speak with legislators and lobbyists. He is hopeful that Vernon Public Schools will be granted the waiver.

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

Director of Business and Finance William Meier III noted that the Finance Committee met this evening to review the Year-to-Date Budget. He presented two action items that he would like to ask the Board to consider: (a) the Healthy Food Certification 2023-2024 and (b) IT Equipment Bid Award

(a) Healthy Food Certification 2023-2024:

The Healthy Food Option was read aloud by Mr. Meier:

Healthy Food Option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Vernon Public School 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, 2023, through June 30, 2024. 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: Mr. Thrall moved that, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Vernon Public School 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, 2023, through June 30, 2024. 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

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton
VOTE: Unanimous

The Food & Beverage Exemptions were read aloud by Mr. Meier:

Food & Beverage Exemptions: The Vernon Public School 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: Mr. Kalina moved that The Vernon Public School 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

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

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.

SECOND: Ms. Colt
VOTE: Unanimous

(b) IT Equipment Bid Award

Mr. Meier announced that the Town Council has appropriated funds for this award; no Board of Education funds will be used. He read aloud the first of two motions for Board consideration:

MOTION 1: That the Vernon Board of Education awards the contract to ConvergeOne Solution for the purchase of IT equipment in an amount not to exceed \$666,433.31, and authorizes the Director of Business and Finance to execute all documents related to the bid award.

MOTION: Mr. Grabowski made a motion to award the contract to ConvergeOne Solution for the purchase of IT equipment in an amount not to exceed \$666,433.31, and authorizes the Director of Business and Finance to execute all documents related to the bid award.

SECOND: Mr. Kalina
VOTE: Unanimous

Mr. Meier then read aloud the second motion for Board consideration:

MOTION 2: That the Vernon Board of Education awards the contract to CPU Sales for the purchase of IT equipment in an amount not to exceed \$65,281.75, and authorizes the Director of Business and Finance to execute all documents related to the bid award.

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

MOTION: Mr. Grabowski made a motion to award the contract to CPU Sales for the purchase of IT equipment in an amount not to exceed \$65,281.75, and authorizes the Director of Business and Finance to execute all documents related to the bid award.

SECOND: Ms. Colt

VOTE: Unanimous

10.3 Establishment of the “Vernon Board of Education Scholarship” Committee (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mrs. Fischer announced that she needs a few volunteers to form the Committee who will review scholarship applications for the “Vernon Board of Education Scholarship”. Ms. Karen Colt and Mr. Paul Grabowski volunteered to serve on the Committee along with Mrs. Anne Fischer.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Mrs. Anne Fischer, Ms. Karen Colt and Mr. Paul Grabowski to serve on the “Vernon Board of Education Scholarship” Committee

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

VOTE: Unanimous

10.4 Approval of \$500.00 Donation to Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Dr. Macary announced that ECHN’s Vernon Family Resource Center has generously donated \$500.00 to Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) and is asking the Board to accept the donation. The funds would be used to purchase literacy materials for Adult Education families and the Family Learning Program.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to accept, with gratitude, ECHN’s \$500.00 donation to Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) as presented.

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

10.5 Mayor's Recommended Reduction to the 2023-2024 Proposed Board of Education Budget (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary announced that he received a letter from the Mayor's Office last week in which Mayor Champagne is recommending a reduction of \$400,000.00 to the 2023-2024 Proposed Board of Education Budget. The Mayor stated that this reduction would have no impact to student and classroom services. Dr. Macary said this was due to an anticipated increase of \$400,000.00 from the State's Excess Cost Sharing Revenue and would be a wash with no effect on the budget. We won't know until June how the funds will be distributed. There was a great deal of discussion and concern as to what would happen if we did not receive the additional revenue. Can we request that the reduction be returned to the Board of Education budget? In the end, the Board publicly expressed that they will only approve this because of their absolute confidence in Dr. Macary and his recommendation to them that the Board accept the reduction.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to accept the Mayor's recommended \$400,000.00 reduction to the Board of Education's Proposed 2023-2024 Budget as presented.

SECOND: Ms. Colt

VOTE: YES: Mrs. Fischer, Mr. Thrall, Dr. Buxton, Mr. Grabowski, Ms. Colt, Mr. Kalina and Ms. Wintress

ABSTAINED: Mrs. Rodriguez

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No updates were made.

Dr. Macary asked that Board members please try to attend the 2023-2024 Budget Presentation at the March 20th Town Council Meeting at 7:00 PM to show their support.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

**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
Paul Grabowski
Karen Colt
Mark Kalina
Stephen Linton
Deborah Rodriguez
Kristiana Wintress

March 13, 2023

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Thrall made a motion to adjourn at 8:38 PM
SECOND: Mr. Grabowski
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Buxton, Board Secretary