

# 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

November 27, 2023

## APPROVED MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar at Vernon Center Middle School in the Library on Monday, November 27, 2023.

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

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

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

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 Vernon Center Middle School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)**

Mr. David Caruso, Principal of Vernon Center Middle School, introduced VCMS Teacher Ms. Joann Stavens-Martin, who brought along three of her students, Ainsley, Roman and Mason, to tell us what “VCMS 101” is all about. The students displayed a PowerPoint presentation on the screen, which detailed what the course offers. The course is designed to help 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students enjoy a positive Middle School experience by creating opportunities for students to better connect with the VCMS community. In the course, students develop skills for successful school navigation, communication, self-advocacy and involvement. This is a full-year class that meets every other day opposite the student’s PE/Wellness Class. The course helps students to navigate the transition from Elementary

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School to Middle School, manage multiple class assignments, adapt to a variety of classroom expectations, develop strong interpersonal skills, develop skills to handle stressful situations, manage emotions to have a successful day and understand their personal responsibility to uphold the VCMS SOAR values. They accomplish this through “Meeting Mingles”, “Team Building” activities, the use of Aspen, Google and Email and by exemplifying their VCMS Core Values known as “SOAR” (Safety, Organization, Achievement, Respect and Responsibility). When they exemplify the SOAR values, they earn VCMS Eagle Bucks that can be used to purchase items such as school supplies, fun little fidgets or an “Eagle for a Day” lunch pass, just to name a few. When asked if they like this course, the students all agreed that this a great program and really helps them to adjust to the new experience of middle school.

### 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

No reports were given due to the students being absent from the meeting.

### 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 Regular Board of Education Meeting held on

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November 13, 2023

Mr. Testa had one correction on page 6 of Consent Agenda item 7.1(a). He asked that the statement on line 9 of the paragraph be changed from “*Vernon Public Schools had a higher absenteeism rate than the State and we need to work on this*” to “*Although Vernon Public School’s chronic absenteeism rate (percentage of students missing 10% or greater in the number of days enrolled) was lower than the State average, this remains an area of focus to improve upon*”.

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

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

## 8.0 Personnel

### 8.1 Employee Group Census (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. Testa provided the Board with data regarding the Vernon Board of Education Census as of November 22, 2023. The data included the employee count within each of 8 bargaining units as well as positions for salary and hourly non-affiliated staff and Adult Education staff. The District has a total of 826 paid employees. We currently have three certified positions open: two in Special Education and one for Pre-K.

## 9.0 Teaching and Learning

### 9.1 Follow-Up on November 7, 2023 PD Day (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa provided the Board with an update on the PD Day Sessions that took place on November 7, 2023. He referred to a chart provided in the Board packet that listed the responses of all who participated in 39 Professional Development sessions throughout the day. The sessions were 90 minutes each and each staff member participated in four sessions during the day. There were some staff members that took part in one session which lasted for multiple sessions. With a rating of 1 – 4, 4 being the highest, participants gave their opinion of each session attended. The feedback was positive; there really were no negative comments. The next PD Day will take place on April 2, 2024. Mr. Testa said he will share the feedback with the Board once the sessions have taken place.

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## 10.0 General Business

### 10.1 Board of Education Meeting Calendar (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary began by saying that the Board of Education currently meets twice per month. He noted that when the Board recently performed a self-evaluation, one of the areas to improve upon was community outreach. He suggested that, if the Board moved to meeting once per month, which totals 11 regular Board meetings throughout the year, there would be more time during the year to hold “Focus Groups” with community organizations and attend community events as a group, so that people in the community would be able to speak with them about issues of concern. Board Chair Paul Grabowski then opened the floor for discussion. Board members each had the opportunity to express their thoughts. Many liked the idea of moving to one meeting per month in order to focus on community outreach; a few had reservations about holding one meeting per month, but did see the value in allowing more time throughout the year for community outreach. Mr. Grabowski did say that if an emergency issue came up, the Board could certainly hold a “Special Meeting” to address it. As for the Focus Groups and Community Events, it was suggested that the Board should consider holding approximately 5 Focus Groups and attending 5 Community Events throughout the year. Attendance at these events would be reported on in the Board Liaison reports each month. After much discussion, the suggestion was brought before the Board to vote upon.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve the 2024 Board of Education Meeting Calendar, with 11 meeting dates, as discussed and presented

SECOND: Ms. Wintress

VOTE: Unanimous

### 10.2 Board of Education Member Liaisons and Committees (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. Grabowski reviewed the Board Liaisons and Committee assignments sheet with the Board. Dr. Macary said committee meetings should start back up once the Budget meetings have taken place with all schools and departments. We will hold a meeting on January 8, 2024, where the Superintendent’s Proposed FY25 Budget will be presented to the Board.

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## 10.3 Update on Attendance at CABE/CAPSS Convention (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary said the convention was well attended and thanked all Board members who were able to attend. The sessions were great, including one on “AI” and one on Career Pathways. Mr. Wintress said the student choir that performed was wonderful. Dr. Macary was also honored at the convention for being named Connecticut’s Superintendent of the Year. Board members and Dr. Macary’s family were there to take part in this great recognition. Mr. Grabowski noted that many individuals came up to him to express how much Dr. Macary has helped them in advancing their careers and that he is a great mentor. We should be proud to have him as our Superintendent and we are in great hands as a District. Dr. Macary thanked Mr. Grabowski for his kind words and the Board for their part in helping to make the District what it is.

## 10.4 CABE Board of Education “Board of Distinction Award” (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary announced that the Vernon Board of Education has won the “*CABE Board Leadership Award; Level II – Board of Distinction Award*”. Our Board has received this award for the past several years (7 or 8) and were 1 of 17 School Districts to be honored this year on November 17th at the annual CABE/CAPSS Convention in Mystic. Dr. Macary said a press release will be going out soon to all regarding this honor. State Commissioner of Education Charlene Russell-Tucker expressed how very proud she is of all the work that the Vernon Board of Education does for students.

## 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.

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Dr. Macary announced that CABE is looking for someone on our Board to serve on their Board of Directors as a Representative of Area 3 – Vernon. If any Board member is interested in serving, please contact Dr. Macary.

**13.0 Adjournment**

MOTION: Ms. Colt made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM  
SECOND: Mr. Thrall  
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary