

VOLUNTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION
195 Main Street, Voluntown, CT 06384
Phone: (860) 376-9167 www.voluntownct.org
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: Adam S. Burrows

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

May 14, 2020

Virtual Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was live-streamed at the following link:

<https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/c8bc3e55-57e9-4df5-94e0-ebf263f143dc>

A recording of the meeting can be found on the school website.

- I. CALL TO ORDER** Chairperson Beauparlant called the virtual meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
- ATTENDANCE** **Present:** Kate Beauparlant (Chairperson), Cathy Grant (Secretary), Kristen Trahan (Vice Chair), Arikka Kalwara, Meagan Wicks and Christopher Wilson
Absent: Skart Paul
Also Present: Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent), Amy Suffoletto (Principal), Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D. (Director of Student Services) and Tracey Hanson (First Selectman)
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. CITIZENS / COMMENTS** - None
- IV. GUESTS** - None
- V. CONSENT AGENDA**
MOTION #1 (5/12/20) was made (Wilson, Trahan) that the Board approves the Consent Agenda as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.
- VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**
- 1. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT** (by Amy L. Suffoletto)
- COVID-19 School Closure Update**
- As of March 16, 2020, VES closed due to COVID-19 and is now closed for the remainder of the academic year per Gov. Lamont.
 - March 25 - April 9, all students were given at-home learning packets. Parents collected packets and other belongings as available on March 25, 2020.
 - As of April 20, students in grades 3-8 moved to online learning through Google Classroom and are provided weekly learning plans.
 - As of April 20, grades K-2 continued with a set of 9 day lesson plans and packets were picked-up by parents on this date. Beginning May 4, grades K-2 is using a blended approach to learning. They began using an online application called Seesaw and received packets delivered by bus drivers.
 - Preschool students have been provided a calendar of learning experiences and suggested activities by teachers. As of May 4, preschool students were also provided additional activities on Seesaw for learning.
 - As of April 20, faculty and students began using Google Meets/Hangouts for individual, small group and whole group learning experiences. These Meets are initiated at the teachers discretion and needs.
 - Classroom teachers, service providers, and the K-4 interventionist are providing support services to students to the greatest extent possible.
 - Our Technology Director, Jim Ward, has loaned approximately 100 Chromebooks to families in need. He has worked with families in providing technology support on a daily basis with devices and giving information on how to secure free internet. Additionally, he is managing our online platforms to ensure teachers, students and families have access to available sites. Our website has been updated by faculty and administration to provide families with information and additional learning resources.
 - Our Food Service Director, Tom O'Connor, and the Child Nutrition Meal Service program continues to offer meals Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays 10am-2pm at Griswold Middle School Cafeteria to all Voluntown Students. Families receive meals for two days at a time for all children under the age of 18. This began on Monday, March 16, 2020.
 - Our Director of Maintenance, Brian Kallio, has been working with maintenance staff during the a.m. and p.m. shifts to continue cleaning procedures according to the state recommendations. He and his staff have also been completing repairs and maintenance within the building.

- Streamlined communication is our focus; On our Facebook page specialists post activities daily, and also a weekly school message is sent out on Friday with updates. Teachers communicate with families directly.
- Eighth grade students were honored with yard signs to recognize their last year at VES on Friday, May 8. VES PTO sponsored the purchase of the signs. The 7th and 8th grade teachers, as well as myself, visited each student's house to recognize their soon-to-be accomplishment. We are currently working on plans for a virtual graduation ceremony and follow-up items, while following state recommendations.

Students as a Focal Point

- **8th Grade High School Update** - Mrs. Vaillancourt, Ms. Kadar, and myself are working with the designated high schools and moving forward in the admissions process.
- **Pennies for Patients** - During the month of March, our students and staff collected money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Collection activities included: sticker days, paper penny recognition days, hat day, pie day - in honor of pi day to name a few. The final amount collected for this charity is \$5,106.58 this year. Total overall \$93,433.83! Thank you to Jackie Vaillancourt for organizing this service learning project each year with the National Junior Honor Society Students.
- **NJHS Induction** - The Trimester 1 and Trimester 2 National Junior Honor Society Induction Ceremony was held on March 12, 2020 in the VES Library to welcome new inductees into the NJHS. Congratulations to Aannin Kalwara, Jacob Zelinsky, Veda Barber, Ava Delaney, Mandy Segerstrom, Chloe Sanders, Arianna Page, Abigail Matheson, Ella Malek and Elizabeth Fedor. Thank you to Jackie Vaillancourt and Megan Glidden, our Co-NJHS Class Advisors, for planning and organizing this event.
- **State Summative Assessments (SBAC/CTAA ~ Grades 3-8 and NGSS/CTAS ~ Grades 5 and 8)** - These assessments, due to the closure, have been cancelled by the State of Connecticut for the 19-20 school year.
- **Report Cards:** Report cards were sent home on March 19, 2020. Parent teacher conferences were not held in person, only via phone or email as needed.

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Professional Development:** Regional professional development was held on March 13, 2020. The Connecticut Science Center presented an in-depth training regarding the Elements of the NGSS standards. Staff also attended a presentation on our new learning platform IXL, in addition to other selected in-house professional development.
- **Grants/Reports/Applications**
 - **Connecticut Office of Early Childhood** - the Monthly School Readiness Reports for the Voluntown Elementary School Preschool and School Readiness Program have been updated for submission by the monthly due date.
 - **FY 19 School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grants** - Both of these grant applications have been waived by the State of Connecticut for the 19-20 school year.
 - **Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) - Site Eligibility Application** - Instructions were provided on May 4 to all Child Nutrition Programs. Further guidance will be provided by the State Department regarding child nutrition programs.

Building, Grounds, and Transportation & Safety

- Summary of the 2019-2020 Safety Drills: Fire (5); Earthquake Drill (1); Lockdown Drill (1); Evacuation Drill (1)

2. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES REPORT (by Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D.)

- Members of the Student Services Department are engaged in providing and supporting at-home lessons designed to meet their students' special needs and to comply with their IEP goals and services to the greatest extent possible. Using Google Meets, teachers are meeting individually with their students conducting lessons and facilitating their engaging in grade-level activities. Team members meet through Google Hangout 2 to 3 times a week to coordinate their efforts. Mrs. Suffoletto and I conduct an online meeting every Wednesday morning with our department members. We've also begun planning small group virtual meetings to allow students to see and talk with each other while engaging in a planned activity facilitated by one of our teachers.

- Not knowing when schools will reopen and at the suggestion of the CT Special Education Department Bureau Chief, Bryan Klimkiewicz, the department has planned a virtual summer Extended School Year Service for our students with IEPs who are at risk for regression. The tentative dates are June 29 to July 31. Three of our special education teachers and one of the speech therapists have committed to providing services.
- During the COVID-19 school shutdown, PPT and 504 Accommodation meetings were not conducted. Now that we know that school buildings will not be reopened this school year, our department is beginning to schedule virtual meetings. We will attempt to “catch up” on the ones missed while also conducting the ones needing to be held on their due dates. The CT State Dept has indicated that districts will not be penalized for conducting meetings after their usual due date. The Federal Government has not released districts of their legal obligations to administer special education as legislated.
- We are scheduling virtual PPT and Team meetings. Our first priority is the 8th graders with IEPs or 504 Plans. Their meetings include representatives of their high school of choice, their parents, themselves, their case manager, a regular education teacher, and myself.
- It has been a pleasure and a humbling experience to see how competently and enthusiastically our staff have taken on this new and groundbreaking responsibility. They are working more hours and learning new strategies to reach and effectively engage their students. I appreciate the leadership Mrs. Suffoletto has provided our school community by dealing with the day to day challenges of transforming our school into a virtual learning community. Mr. Burrows’ support for all our efforts and provision of needed materials and services has been steadfast and appreciated.
- As of May 8, 2020, this Director has chaired 135 PPT/504/parent meetings distributed among the following locations: VES, The Learning Clinic in Brooklyn, EASTCONN’s Northeast School in Killingly, EastConn’s Autism Program in Columbia, NFA, GHS, GAS, The Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, United Services Inc. in Willimantic, Ellis Technical High School in Danielson, Norwich Technical High School in Norwich, EastConn’s Regional Transition Program in Danielson, and Quinebaug Middle College in Danielson.
- The census of students Pre-K to 12+ receiving special services:

	<u>IEP</u>	<u>504</u>
Pre-K to 8	48	24
9-12+	22	11
Total	70	35

3. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (by Adam S. Burrows)

- Calendar of Events for May and June, 2020
- The District Enrollment Report noted 265 students in Pre-K to 8th grade and 130 high school students.
- The BOE received grants, tuition payments and other funds that have been returned to the Town account. (\$77,542.59 in 2017/18 and \$96,408.40 in 2018/19). \$43,905.26 has been returned to the Town for 2019/20.
- Updated 2019-2020 School Calendar
- CAFE Liaison for May
- SNAP P-EBT (Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer) Program brochure
- Declaration of Local State of Emergency for the Town of Voluntown, Connecticut
- Leave of absence request due to COVID-19
- Virtual Committee Meetings-The Superintendent stated that during this last month of school the following committees will be scheduled to document progress: Insurance, Transportation, School Safety, Technology, Wellness, and Curriculum Steering.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS - Reviewed under Consent Agenda

VIII. OLD BUSINESS**1. 2020-21 Budget Development Session (Adjustments and Approval Process Changes)**

The fourth budget proposal for 2020-21 is \$6,824,259 which represents an increase of \$39,063 or 0.58% over the 2019-20 approved budget of \$6,785,196 was reviewed and discussed. The Board Members, in an effort to prevent a MIL increase impacting the town in these challenging times, agreed to allow the Superintendent to make further adjustments so that there would be a 0% change to the 2020-21 school budget.

MOTION #2 (5/12/20) was made (Trahan, Grant) that the Board approves a 2020-21 budget proposal of \$6,785,196 which represents an increase of \$0 or 0% over the 2019-20 approved budget of \$6,785,196; All in favor. Motion passes.

This 5/14/20 approved budget includes:

- Negotiated salaries for teachers, and classified faculty and staff with the non-certified being negotiated
- The projected cost for the outplacement of Special Education students based on identified needs
- Projected cost of tuition based on the estimated numbers for attendance at seven designated high schools
- A projected increase of 5.0% in the cost of health insurance
- Projected energy costs for heating fuel, propane, diesel/gasoline and electricity (with estimated savings due to recent energy efficient upgrades)
- Continuation of the 10-11-18 Board of Education decision to eliminate a full-time Assistant Principal
- Continuation of budget savings from a classroom teacher eliminated in 2019-2020 due to declining enrollment
- Elimination of an SRBI (Scientificallly Researched Based Intervention) Tutor
- Elimination of a current 1.0 FTE School Counselor position and reassignment and transfer of these responsibilities to the current 0.5 Social Worker to a 1.0 FTE position for budgetary savings
- Elimination of a 7th and 8th grade writing teacher due to declining enrollment and reassignment to SRBI needs and continuation of existing library responsibilities
- A proposed reduction in transportation costs due to declining enrollment and efficiency initiatives through being one of a few school systems with our own department that offers flexibility and cost savings to meet all projected needs
- Technology upgrades based on an obsolescence strategy for upgrades to maintain a consistent budget
- Delay of any Capital Improvement requests for the town by including any items in the school operating budget
- This proposal does not include a Foreign Language Teacher that has been under review for several years.

The budget process is a cooperative approach between the Town and Board of Education to allow for community input. The goal is to develop a budget proposal with a sincere understanding of the cost impact to local property taxes during these challenging economic times. Our ultimate goal is to meet the educational needs of students.

A summary of Voluntown school budgets documents the cost savings efforts of the Board of Education.

2017-2018 budget was a *decrease* of \$11,403

2018-2019 budget was an increase of \$104,165

2019-2020 budget was a *decrease* of \$104,622

2020-2021 budget was \$0.00 or 0%

The increase of \$104,165 with subtracting decreases of \$116,025 equal a decrease of \$11,860 for these

four years. This means the school budget has actually decreased by \$3,953 as an average over the previous three years.

Note: The Board of Education has an expenditure only budget. We receive funds from such sources as a Magnet High School Transportation Grant, Adult Education Grant, insurance rebate for safety performance and others.

2017-2018 \$77,542.59

2018-2019 \$96,408.40

2019-2020 \$43,905.26 (as of 4-13-20)

2020-2021 \$72,618.75 (Projected based on the average of the above three year total of \$ 217,856.25.)

- There was a discussion about the listing of revenues in the Town of Voluntown annual budget summary report that will be presented at the Budget Hearing on Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
- It was noted that the Excess Cost grant funds was listed as “0” for the last several years. This revenue should be considered when determining the MIL rate and fund balance of the town. It was also mentioned that the heating oil tank replacement expenditures are now being reviewed at the State Department of Education and it is anticipated the Voluntown will receive a reimbursement of approximately \$130,000 to be deposited in the town's undesignated fund.

Academic Achievement of Voluntown Elementary School Students

It is important to note that during this time the English/Language Arts and Mathematics performance of our grades 3-8 on the “Standards-Based Achievement Consortium” or SBAC administered in the spring of 2017, 2018, and 2019 were both #1 in our statewide 16 town reference group. Voluntown is in “DRG F” (District Reference Group) determined by median family income, parent education/occupation, single parent families, free/reduced-price meals, families speaking a language other than English at home, etc. The scores for ELA and Math were based on a State Department of Education report listing the “Percent at Level 3 and 4 that Meet or Exceed the Achievement Level” for CT school systems. Other school systems have visited our school to observe classrooms as well as review our curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation of student performance processes and procedures.

Tuesday 05-26-20 Public online public hearing to review 20-21 budget proposals by the Boards of Selectmen and Education

Tuesday 06-09-20 Projected date to vote on the Town and Board of Education Budgets at 7:00 p.m. at an online virtual meeting

2. J-1 Request

This request cannot be processed due to the many travel and other restrictions related to the Executive Orders by the Governor because of COVID-19. There is interest in a future review of such requests when we return normalcy and a healthy environment.

3. Wheeler High School, North Stonington

Peter Nero, Superintendent of Schools, and the North Stonington Board of Education have followed through with our Voluntown request to revise the draft of a tuition policy. This new policy is based on current enrollment and does not consider their recent proposal which was based on the NFA October 1 enrollment policy to determine the tuition invoice for the next school year.

Our straight tuition proposal for Voluntown is now based on the annual number of students actually enrolled at Wheeler. If a student withdraws, Voluntown would pay for the number of days actually attended. If a new student registers during the school year, Voluntown would pay for all of the remaining actual days of the school year. This approach makes Wheeler highly competitive and their responsiveness to our request is appreciated.

4. **2019-20 Board of Education Performance Self-Evaluation** (Third reading)
5. **Regulation # 4112.51 – Employment/Reference Checks** (Third reading)
MOTION #3 (5/12/20) was made (Trahan, Wicks) to approve Regulation # 4112.51 on Employment/Reference Checks as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.
6. **Capital Improvement Plan**
MOTION #4 (5/12/20) was made (Grant, Trahan) to approve the Superintendent’s recommendations to make changes in the Capital Improvement Plan by delaying requests to the Town for one year and placing any minor capital improvement projects in the 20-21 budget proposal; all in favor. Motion carries.
7. **Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teachers**
MOTIONS #5-10 (5/12/20) was made to rescind the previous BOE motions to non-renew the following non-tenured teachers:

• MOTION #5 (Grant, Trahan)	Alyson Paige	All in favor
• MOTION #6 (Kalwara, Trahan)	Emilee Penman	All in favor
• MOTION #7 (Grant, Trahan)	Kayla Berard	All in favor
• MOTION #8 (Grant, Trahan)	Amanda Gould	All in favor
• MOTION #9 (Grant, Trahan)	Chelsea Burns	All in favor
• MOTION #10 (Grant, Trahan)	Kathleen Groth	All in favor

Motion passes.
8. **Eighth Grade Graduation**
MOTION #11 (5/12/20) was made (Wilson, Grant) to authorize the Principal and the 8th grade staff to decide/plan an appropriate graduation for the 8th grade students; all in favor. Motion carries.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. COVID-19

These are unprecedented and challenging times due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. School Systems in Connecticut, as per an Executive Order by the Governor, have been closed since March 16, 2020. Our faculty has definitely displayed the ability to effectively work together to implement a number of strategies to maintain an education program for our students. A special thank you to our faculty, staff, parents, and above all, the students for their efforts to work together to maintain social distancing as well as implement distance learning.

2. FEMA

Our school system has submitted a Municipal COVID-19 Information Request to the Town as part of a request form from the state’s Office of Policy and Management which lists possible items to receive 75% *reimbursement* of eligible items. Currently the list is at \$86,728 of projected COVID-19 related expenses through June 30, 2020. This is a wait and see situation. Any FEMA reimbursement funds will be deposited in the town's general fund because it involves funds that we have already expended to meet the COVID-19 challenges of implementing distance learning.

3. Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Funds or ESSER

The Connecticut State Department of Education Chief Financial Officer recently sent an update from the U.S. Department of Education. We were informed that the USDE is making available \$111,068,059 for Connecticut as part of the approximately \$13.2 billion allocated to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). Based on the state published a distribution list of allocations, Hartford receives the greatest amount at \$10,331,142. Barkhamsted

receives the lowest amount at \$6,905. This CARES Act is a grant based on a percentage of each Title I grant to each school system. Voluntown is listed to receive \$32,727 as a direct deposit into our school federal grant account.

- 4. **Social Worker Job Description** (First reading)
- 5. **BOE Mission Statement** (First reading)
- 6. **BOE Goals for 20-21** (First reading)
- 7. **Authorize Submittal of IDEA Part B Grant Sections 611/619 for FY21**
MOTION #12 (5/12/20) was made (Wilson, Wicks) to authorize the Superintendent to sign/submit the IDEA Part B Grant Sections 611 and 619; all in favor. Motion carries.

X. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING

- Upcoming BOE meeting will be held on June 11, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
- Budget Preparation Timeline and Process for 2020-21
- Wheeler High School
- 2019-20 BOE Self-Evaluation (Fourth draft)
- Capital Improvement Plan
- COVID-19 Update
- Social Worker Job Description (Second reading)
- BOE Mission Statement (Second reading)
- BOE Goals (Second reading)
- Summer School Staff

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION #13 (5/14/20) was made (Kalwara, Wicks) to move into Executive Session at 9:21 p.m. for the purpose of discussing negotiations and the Communications Policy; all in favor. No action was taken.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #14 (5/14/20) was made (Trahan, Wicks) to adjourn at 9:37 p.m.; all in favor. Motion carries.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Witness	Date	Attest	Date
Respectfully drafted and edited by:			
<i>Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk</i>			
<i>Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools</i>			

APPROVED AT THE 6/11/20 BOE MEETING