

February 8, 2024, in the Central Office Conference Room at 7:00 p.m.

- ATTENDANCE** **Present:** Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson)
Meagan Wicks (Vice Chair)
Cathy Grant (Secretary)
Arikka Kalwara
Valerie Muschiano
Sarah Thompson
Christopher Wilson

CITIZENS / COMMENTS – None

- II. GUESTS** -- Nate Quesnel, the new Head of NFA or Norwich Free Academy, presented highlights about NFA and the effective transition they recently made from one school year to the next. There was a review of the process for developing the 2024-2025 budget proposal, effective collaboration with the partner school districts, the current process of negotiating the 2025-2030 contract with the partner school systems, and highlights of the many achievements of our Voluntown students at NFA. The Board expressed appreciation for this presentation.

MOTION # (1) (2/8/24) was made (Kalwara,Grant) for the Board to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

1. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Submitted by Amy L. Suffoletto)

February 5th Grade 8 Night Girls Basketball and Cheer
February 8th Grade 8 Night Boys Basketball
February 12-16 Spirit Week
February 16th Student Pep Rally
February 16th Early Dismissal 12pm - Professional Development
February 19-20th No school
February 22nd Family Math Night Luau 5-6:30pm
February 27th PTO - SKATE INN 5-7pm

Students as a Focal Point

- **“Own Your Best”** Presentation by Jay Bakoulis -NFA teacher of the year- spoke to grades 6-8 with an inspiring message for students to own their best in everything they do in their life. His message supports being the best version of yourself!
- **The Energy in Action Program** visited grades K-2 and promoted keeping our environment clean and healthy with good energy practices.
- **School Newsletter** is updated and sent out weekly on Fridays. There is a lot of information in the newsletter including parent information, upcoming student events and other community information. Subscribe to our newsletter from our website.
- **Kindergarten 24-25:** Final information regarding Kindergarten enrollment will be available in February. Val Lord has attended multiple meetings as part of the process and gathered information regarding the waiver process for parents.
- **Winter Sports:** Boys and Girls Basketball as well as cheerleading is almost completed for the season! Semi-finals and Finals.
- **Spirit Days:** In conjunction with promoting our cafeteria breakfast and lunch themed spirit days are planned to boost meal purchases and school spirit.
- **Eagle Study Circle:** Students in grades 6-8 are invited to participate in our after-school program that supports academic studies. Middle level teachers offer tutoring and other support for students to improve their understanding of topics and overall academic success.
- **School Lunch Program:** The school lunch program saw an increase of numbers this past year due to free breakfast and lunch. For the 23-24 school year, funding will support FREE breakfast for all students and free lunch for free/reduced qualifying students. Full pay is \$3.75 per lunch meal. Students should grab a breakfast and enjoy. Ala Carte - Ice Cream will be sold on Wednesdays.
- **Connecticut State Assessment Individual Student Reports (SBAC, CTAA, CAPT, CMT, Skills Checklist):** The 2024 testing season will begin soon. SBAC testing will take place after April vacation.

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Curriculum/Committee Work:** Teachers continue with professional learning that promotes new initiatives, learning strategies, while working with their grade level teams on curriculum and implementation of programs. This year teachers will focus on Into Reading and Into Literature, aligning writing instruction/practices and expectations, additionally aligning Science, and Social Studies items into the ELA documents, as well as other curriculum areas to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students. Revamping of pacing guides, benchmark assessments, and report cards will also be throughout this year.
- **Meetings:** Include regular meeting of the following committees as needed: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, TEAM, Wellness, Student Services Department, Safe School Climate, Crisis Intervention Team, Transportation, School Readiness Council, Indoor Air Quality/Tools for Schools/Safety, School Security and Safety, JHS/HS Transition, and a Faculty Meeting monthly as determined logistically.
- **Professional Development:** Teachers and Paras continue with professional learning as determined for school year 23-24 on early dismissal days, committee meetings and professional learning and grade level work takes place. In addition to time afforded to the curriculum work needing to be completed.
- **Teacher Evaluation Plan / TEAM:** Any plan updates will be reviewed with the PDEC committee and according to State guidelines. The TEAM program is being monitored by assigned mentors and supporting our new teachers.
- **Grants/Reports/Applications:**
 - **Connecticut Office of Early Childhood:** The monthly School Readiness Reports for the Voluntown Elementary School Pre School and School Readiness Program have been updated for submission by the monthly due date.
 - **FY 23 School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grants** have been awarded and received.
 - **NAEYC Accreditation:** Accreditation is through 2027 and SR staff continues to work in the portfolio to ensure all action items are met and completed regularly.

Technology, Building, Grounds, Transportation & Safety

- Mike Creaturo, Technology Coordinator, continues to support IT needs within the building.
- Brian Kallio, Director of Maintenance, continues to review, implement, and address needs.
- Anne Michaud, Director of Transportation, continues to review and address needs within our transportation department and has made adjustments, as needed.

Community and Public Relations

- **PTO** - Suggestions are welcome for the school year. Contact Hailie Davis hdavis@voluntownct.org. Voluntown PTO is looking for parent members. Without parent members, we will not be able to host events. Consider supporting an upcoming event.
- **Youth Service Bureau/Local Prevention Council** – The YSB-LPC Advisory Board meets virtually on the third Wednesday each month at 5:00 p.m. YSB programs have been running and students enjoy their offerings. Contact Melinda Bryan mbryan@voluntownct.org.

2. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES (Lloyd A. Johnson, PhD)

- The C-Pen is a device that reads text line-by-line and can also dictate the definition of a word chosen from a line of text. We have them available in the school for students with Dyslexia. This month the sales representative will be providing refresher training on their use to our department's staff.
- Dr. Emily Casey, our consulting psychologist, led our department members in exploring the Feifer Assessments of Reading and Writing. She has administered these new assessments recently for a few of our students. These assessments are more accurate in identifying Dyslexia and Dysgraphia than previously used. We purchased these assessments for our department with grant funds. The training in the Feifer Assessment of Reading was conducted on October 13, 2022. The training on the Feifer Assessment of Writing was conducted on September 21, 2023. Our Special Education teachers have begun administering the FAR. We have acquired the Feifer Assessment of Mathematics designed to identify Dyscalculia (learning disability in math). Our staff will receive training on that assessment on January 23, 2024.
- By January 11, 2024, this Director will have chaired 97 PPT/504/Parent Meetings held with the following schools: VES, The Learning Clinic in Brooklyn, EastConn's Northeast School in Killingly, EastConn's Autism Program in Columbia, Norwich Free Academy, Wheeler High School, Griswold High School, Griswold Alternative School, The Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, and the Norwich Transition Academy.

The census of students in Pre-K to 12+ receiving special services is as follows:

	10/01/2021		10/1/2022		2/12/2024	
	IEP	504	IEP	504	IEP	504
PreK -8	34	31	34	36	36	37
9-12+	20	15	18	18	17	13
TOTAL	54	46	52	54	53	50

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

- Calendar of Events for February and March
- The District Enrollment Report noted 240 students in Pre-K to 8th grade and 125 high school students.
- \$11,885.50 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund from grants, rebates, and other unanticipated savings received.
- Email from Tracey Hanson, First Selectman regarding cybersecurity preparedness
- Policy # 9321.2 (Remote/Electronic Board of Education Meetings) for informational purposes and review
- Fitness Test CAS/CIAC Memo from Joe Velardi, the Connecticut Coordinator for Health and Physical Education
- Notification from the CSDE regarding Voluntown's compliance with submitting the 2023-24 Healthy Food Certification (HFC)
- Tuition Rates for Magnet schools
- 2023-24 Revised School Calendar with a projected last day of school on June 14, 2024
- 403(b) Vendor List Appendix 1
- CABE memo on *A Guide for Board of Education Chairs*

- CABE Policy Highlights – January 18, 2024 (The State BOE Adopts the Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners/Multilingual Learners); January 29, 2024 (Increasing Educator Diversity, Challenging Behavior Reporting Form, Notice of the Availability of Mediation Public Act 23-137-Section 45)

MOTION # (2) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Thompson) to approve the removal of obsolete equipment (35-year-old snow blower and 32-year-old broken cafeteria tables and offer them to the Town of Voluntown prior to proper disposal; all in favor; motion passes.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Budget Preparation Timeline for 24-25

Mr. Burrows distributed and reviewed the second draft of the 24-25 Budget Proposal of \$7,320,252. which represented a 3.75% increase or \$264,918. over the 23-24 budget of \$7,055,334.

We are still waiting for some school systems to set the high school tuitions rates for the 2024-2025 fiscal year which may require some adjustments in the budget proposal for review at the March 14, 2024, Board of Education meeting.

The Governor released his budget proposal for 2024-2025 and it was important to note that we kept our Voluntown ECS or Educational Cost Sharing grant allocation at \$2,117,243 which has been this same amount for six years in a row. There is a proposed formula developed by the School Finance Project, a nonprofit that cuts our Voluntown ECS and the state legislators have made the decision to keep existing allocations. This means the 2025-2026, if the formula is used, will significantly cut this grant.

This timeline has been developed in cooperation with the Board of Selectmen to keep them informed about educational priorities, needs of our students, and the goals of our school system based on a long-term Strategic Plan developed through a comprehensive “Community Conversation” process.

Thursday	03-14-24	Updated 24-25 budget proposal presented to Board of Education
Tuesday	03-19-24	24-25 Budget Proposal is sent to the Town Clerk for public dissemination
Thursday	04-04-24	Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. and BOE 24-25 budget approval
Monday	04-22-24	Budget proposal for 24-25 delivered to Town Clerk for dissemination
Tuesday	05-07-24	Possible annual Town Meeting to vote on Budgets at the Voluntown Elementary School gymnasium at 7:00 p.m.

2. Federal and State Grants

The following is a summary of short-term grants:

2021 through 2023

- COVID Relief Fund (\$176,639 – Expended)
- Elementary/Secondary Emergency Relief Funds or ESSER I (\$32,674 – Expended)
- Elementary/Secondary Emergency Relief Funds or ESSER II (\$136,204 being expended)
- American Rescue Plan or ARP-ESSER III (\$306,105 being expended)
- Special Education Stipend Grant (\$20,000 Expended)
- ESSER II Special Education Recovery Grant (\$30,000 – Expended)
- ESSER II Bonus Special Populations Recovery Grant (\$25,000 – Expended)
- ESSER II Bonus Dyslexia Recovery Grant (\$3,250 - Approved)
- Homeless Grant (\$1,770 – Application Submitted)
- USDA School Lunch Program Equipment Grant (\$25,000 Expended)
- Comcast local grant to school systems (\$3,500 Expended)
- Sp. Ed. Grants (\$10,000 for Certified and \$5,000 for Non-certified – Expended)
- HVAC Grant request of \$170,000 to State of Connecticut (denied)

2023 -2024

- A Mental Health 3-year federal-state grant has been approved for our school system and we will receive allocation of \$25,150 in 23-24, \$25,150 in 24-25, and \$17,605 in 25-26 for a total amount that equals \$67,905. These funds secure part-time Social Worker services from Preston. There were necessary edits to the Mental Health grant which have been addressed by the Central Office.
- Received a Title IV grant for \$10,000 to purchase technology instructional supplies
- Received Title I (\$42,320) and Title II (\$5,878) grant funds totaling \$48,198 to partially support our SRBI (Scientifically Researched-Based Interventions) program that offer reading and math support for identified students.
- Right to Read grant (\$33,000 – recently submitted)
- SERAC Vaping grant (\$2,265 – approved)
- A security infrastructure grant application process was recently released by the State of Connecticut.

MOTION # (3) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Muschiano) to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to submit an application for a CT Nonprofit Organization Security Infrastructure Competitive Grant Application for up to \$50,000 by the March 1, 2024, due date; all in favor; motion passes.

The above grants are additional allocations for a number of priorities especially related to improving air quality in schools throughout the nation, addressing learning loss, supporting technology connectivity, additional PPE of Personal Protective Equipment, etc. These funds were not used to replace the day-to-day and year-to-year school expenditures from our local school budget.

3. NFA 2025-2030 Contract Update

The Partner school districts have been in communication with the Head of NFA and are in the process of negotiating the 2025-2030 contract.

4. 24/25 School Calendar

The 24/25 School Calendar was provided to the Board along with calendars from EASTCONN, LEARN, and NFA.

MOTION # (4) (2/8/24) was made (Muschiano, Grant) to approve for distribution the 1-27-24 version of the 2024-2025 School Calendar for the Voluntown Public School System; all in favor; motion passes.

5. Safety on Route 138

Kate Beauparlant reported that Selectwoman Tracey Hanson has received a communication that DOT (Department of Transportation) has authorized the installation of flashing speed signs on Route 138 in an effort to slow down traffic in the area of VES.

6. Policy and Regulation # 6142.101 – Student Nutrition and Physical Activity/Wellness (3rd reading)

MOTION # (5) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Muschiano) to approve Policy and Regulation # 6142.101 on Student Nutrition and Physical Activity/Wellness; all in favor; motion passes.

7. Policy and Form # 6162.51 – Survey of Students (5th reading)

MOTION # (6) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Grant) to approve Policy and Form # 6162.51 on the Survey of Students; all in favor; motion passes.

9. Policy and Form # 6172.3 – Home Schooling (2nd reading)

MOTION # (7) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Grant) to approve Policy and Form # 6172.3 on Home Schooling as amended; 6 “for”/ 1 “opposed” (Muschiano). Motion passes.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Policy # 1331 – Smoke-Free Environment (1st reading)

Also provided to the Board on this issue were the following:

- Letter to JHS Parents and Guardians on vaping awareness
- SERAC Adolescent Learning and Leadership Institute ALLI
- SERAC 21 for a Reason: Vaping informational flyer
- Policy # 5131.6 on Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco Use (informational only)

The Board suggested buying smoke free zone signs to place around school grounds.

MOTION # (8) (2/8/24) was made (Muschiano, Kalwara) to approve Policy # 1331 on a Smoke-Free Environment; all in favor; motion passes.

2. Policy # 4111.3 – Minority Recruitment Plan (1st reading - Tabled)

3. Policy, Regulation and Forms # 5111 – Admission/Placement

MOTION # (9) (2/8/24) was made (Wicks, Kalwara) to approve Policy, Regulation and Form # 5111 on Admission/Placement; all in favor; motion passes.

4. Personnel

MOTION # (10) (2/8/24) was made (Thompson, Kalwara) to accept the resignation from Linda Lozado as a Bus Driver; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (11) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Thompson) to approve Brendan Merrill as a part-time Bus Driver; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (12) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Thompson) to approve Lisa Marie Montecalvo as a Paraeducator; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (13) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Muschiano) to approve the Volleyball Program and accept Emilee Nelson as the Head Coach and Andrea Kelly as the Assistant Coach; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (14) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Kalwara) to approve Darlena Loranger and Kayla Barber as Co-Coaches for the Drama Program; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (15) (2/8/24) was made (Muschiano, Thompson) to accept Kayla Barber and Emilee Nelson as Co-Coaches for Track & Field; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (16) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Kalwara) to approve an immediate adjustment in the contract for Donna Pendill-Brown, Certified Speech and Language Therapist, from 0.8 FTE to 1.0 FTE; all in favor; motion passes.

5. PreK Field Trip

MOTION # (17) (2/8/24) was made (Muschiano, Thompson) to approve the PreK Field Trip to the Providence Children's Museum in Providence, RI; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # (18) (2/8/24) was made (Grant, Muschiano) to approve an out-of-state YSB field trip to Westerly, Rhode Island; all in favor; motion passes.

6. School Use Request

MOTION # (19) (2/8/24) was made (Kalwara, Thompson) to approve the School Parking Lot Use Request for the Farmer's Market on Sundays from July 4 to October 6, 2024; all in favor; motion passes.

7. Special BOE Meeting with Attorney, Dan Murphy

MOTION # (20) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Grant) to schedule a Special BOE Meeting on March 28, 2024, for Professional Development with the School Attorney, Dan Murphy; all in favor; motion passes.

X. UPCOMING MEETING(S)/AGENDA ITEMS

- Regular BOE Meeting – Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office
- Special BOE Meeting – Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office with Attorney Dan Murphy
- Budget Preparation Timeline 24-25
- Safety on Route 138
- NFA 2025/30 Contract Update
- Personnel
- Policies # 4111.3 – Minority Recruitment Plan (2nd reading)

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION # (21) (2/8/24) was made (Wilson, Wicks) to adjourn at 9:40 pm; all in favor; motion passes.

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Respectfully drafted and edited by:

Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk

Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools

Darlena C. Loranger, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and HR Specialist

APPROVED AT THE 3/14/24 BOE MEETING