

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

MEETING MINUTES

June 8, 2023 in the Central Office Conference Room at 7:00 p.m.

- I. CALL TO ORDER** - Chairperson Kate Beuparlant called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the BOE Mission Statement was read.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson)
Cathy Grant (Secretary)
Valerie Muschiano
Arikka Kalwara

Absent: Meagan Wicks (Vice Chair)
Sarah Thompson
Christopher Wilson

Also Present: Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent)
Amy L. Suffoletto (Principal)
Lloyd Johnson (Director of Student Services)
Dee Dee Jackman (BOE Clerk)

CITIZENS / COMMENTS – None

- II. GUESTS** – Bella Bruno and Elsa Kalwara, recipients of the CABA Student Leadership Awards, were recognized and congratulated for their accomplishments. Bella and Elsa were accompanied by their families.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION # 1 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Muschiano) for the Board to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

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

Students as a Focal Point

- Grade 8 has had multiple end-of-the year activities - Holiday Hill, a NESS trip, yearbook signing, pizza and a YSB sponsored bowling trip. They have had a great end of year together before they venture to high school.
- The Mad Science Energy Bus visited and let students in grades 2-8 explore renewable energy.
- PTO and YSB also sponsored a BMX assembly about motivation and setting goals for yourself.
- A big thank you to the Youth Service Bureau for sponsoring so many wonderful activities this year. Also to the PTO for the numerous activities they hosted.
- Trimester 3 Assembly is being held on Friday June 9, 2023 to celebrate all of the hard work.
- **Connecticut State Assessment Individual Student Reports (SBAC, CTAA, CAPT, CMT, Skills Checklist)** - 2023 testing season has been completed. 100% of students participated in our state testing.

- **School Lunch Program** - School lunch continues to be free through the end of the year. Updates will be made over the summer regarding payments. Our lunch staff was successful in adding more items to the menu for selection and allowing our students to try new things.
- **Upcoming:**
 - 6/9 Trimester Assembly and Last Day for Grade 8
 - 6/12 Graduation 5:30 p.m.
 - 6/13 Field Day (weather permitting)
 - 6/15 Last Day of School - 12 p.m. dismissal

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Meetings** - Regular meeting of the following committees were held, 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.
- **Grants/Reports/Applications**
 - **Connecticut Office of Early Childhood** - The monthly School Readiness Reports for the Voluntown Elementary School Pre School and School Readiness Program were submitted through the ECE reporting system.
 - **FY 22 School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grants** – Updated information has been provided by the Office of Early Childhood for the upcoming fiscal year. The grants were approved and are drawn down monthly in the grant system for expenditures.
 - **FY 23** allocations for the Priority and Competitive School Readiness Enrollment-based Grants have been disbursed. SR has received a sum of \$21,000.00 to be disbursed for programming. This money can be used to improve our program, which may be through building our Natural Playground.

Building, Grounds, and Transportation & Safety

- Brian Kallio, Director of Maintenance, continues to review, implement, and address needs within our school building and on our grounds.
- Anne Michaud, Director of Transportation, reviews and addresses needs within our transportation department.

Community and Public Relations

- **PTO** - Suggestions are welcome for the next school year. Contact Hailie Davis hdavis@voluntownct.org.
- **Youth Service Bureau/Local Prevention Council** – The YSB-LPC Advisory Board meets virtually on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Programs for the next school year are underway. Contact Melinda Bryan mbryan@voluntownct.org.

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

- Mr. Burrows distributed a Special Education Tuitions report and discussed a few recent high school transfers that have been made this week. He reported that a special education outplaced student has made excellent progress and will be returning to VES in the fall.
- The majority of our high school students engage, attend, and enjoy extracurricular activities. They work with their school's staff to plan their post-secondary education activities. For a few students, their experience is more challenging and fraught with roadblocks. On those occasions, I'm frequently called upon to assist the family in its problem-solving and solution-planning. I'd like to recognize the flexibility, support, and understanding Mr. Burrows provides our department in these cases. Recently, we've celebrated the accomplishments of a few of those students. In these cases, the availability of the Virtual Learning Academy has been valuable. A student completed his diploma requirements last summer, engaged in a company-endorsed specialized training program, and is now employed at an hourly rate well above the minimum wage with the potential of much more. Two other students were assisted through VLA in smoothly transferring schools. VLA's fees are reasonable and frequently our general ed. staff assists by being tutors who grade

VLA tests. Our mutual goal is that all Voluntown students receive the support necessary for them to succeed.

- ESY is Extended School Year. Many students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and a few students who receive SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Intervention) qualify for summer school. The justification is to prevent or mitigate regression of learned skills due to inactivity during the summer months. VES has run a summer school for many years. This year we are adjusting the dates of the school to respond to the school's closing for the asbestos abatement. This year we are planning to meet three days a week, 3 hours a day, for four weeks.
- Tech and Magnet School acceptances have been received. We have transferred IEP and 504 documents to the 8th graders' schools of choice. Transition meetings for each of those students with their next school are underway. The meetings are virtual and hosted by us with a representative of the receiving school. As a reminder, once a student enters a State Tech High School, that school becomes its LEA.
- At this point in the year, most department members have developed or completed CT-SEDS IEPs or 504 Accommodation Plans. The time demands are significant. After-school hours are needed to complete the documents in a timely manner as required by statutes. The Bureau of Special Education offered an additional Stipend Grant. The application was submitted by Mr. Burrows and was approved. The funds may be spent through the Summer of 2023. Voluntown qualified for a grant of \$10,000. The funds may be used for planning time, learning time, and professional development. It may also be used for substitute coverage for in-district and out-of-district training opportunities.
- Dr. Emily Casey, our consulting psychologist, is leading 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 those used previously. We purchased the evaluations for our department with grant funds. The training in the Feifer Assessment of Reading was completed in October/November. We're planning to engage in the training on the Feifer Assessment of Writing in September. Our Special Education teachers have begun administering the FAR.
- As of June 14, 2023, this Director has chaired 176 PPT/504/Parent Meetings distributed among the following schools: VES, The Learning Clinic in Brooklyn, EastConn's Northeast School in Killingly, EastConn's Autism Program in Columbia, Norwich Free Academy, Griswold High School, Griswold Alternative School, Wheeler, The Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, Norwich Transition Academy, and EastConn's Regional Transition Program in Danielson.

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

	10/1/2021		10/1/2022		6/1/2023	
	IEP	504	IEP	504	IEP	504
PreK -8	34	31	34	36	43	43
9-12+	20	15	18	18	14	18
TOTAL	54	46	52	54	57	61

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

- Calendar of Events for June and July 2023
- The District Enrollment Report noted 254 students in Pre-K to 8th grade and 126 high school students.
- \$109,715.28 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund from grants, rebates, and other unanticipated savings received.
- Letters of congratulations from the BOE to the following award recipients:
 - Bella Bruno – CABA Student Leadership Award
 - Elsa Kalwara – CABA Student Leadership Award
 - Autumn Kelly – CAS Middle-Level Scholar-Leadership Award

- Tess Beauparlant – Valedictorian and CAS Middle-Level Scholar-Leadership Award
- Amelia Boisclair – Salutatorian
- Posting, Advertising, Interviewing, and Selecting Highly Qualified Faculty and Staff
- CAGE Policy Highlights – May 12, 2023 (A Case for Educational Ethics); May 26, 2023 (End of Year Policy Considerations-Graduation Issues Reviewed)
- 22-23 Budget has a remaining balance as of 5/31/23 is \$932,749.01 or 13.62% of \$6,850,335
- The VES oil tank has been topped off with 6,801 gallons at \$2.779 per gallon totaling \$18,928. We have made arrangements for a tree service to come in as soon as possible to trim 2 large trees in front of the school and grind four stumps.
- Mr. Burrows noted that Voluntown was “held harmless” in regards to the ECS (Education Cost Sharing) funding and we will be allocated \$2,117,243 in each of the next two years. The Board will submit a letter of thanks to our Legislators for their pro-active work in making the ECS decision instead of using the lower amount determined by a non-profit organization formula.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Budget Approval for 2023-24

The Town approved the BOE budget proposal of \$7,055,334 representing an increase of \$205,001 or 2.99% above the 2022-23 approved budget of \$6,850,333 at the Town Meeting held on May 30, 2023.

This proposal includes:

- Negotiated salaries for teachers and classified faculty and staff with non-certified to be negotiated.
- The projected cost for outplacement of Special Education students based on identified needs.
- Projected cost of tuition based on the numbers attending eight designated high schools.
- A projected increase of 7.7% in the cost of health insurance premiums. A slight reduction in the overall amount for the 2023-2024 health benefits is the result of resignations.

2. Federal and State Grants

The following is a summary of short-term grants:

- 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 – Approved)
- ESSER II Bonus Special Populations Recovery Grant (\$25,000 – Approved)
- 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 approved and being 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 (submitted on 12/1/22)
- Special Education Stipend Grant #2: Application from CSDE will soon be distributed.

The above grants are additional allocations for a wide variety of COVID and other related 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 for our local school budget. These federal grants require us to maintain a “Continuity of Services” during this time to implement health and safety protocols and addressing learning loss during the time of COVID.

MOTION # 2 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Muschiano) to authorize the Superintendent to submit the Right to Read grant (up to \$5,500) by the July 15, 2023 deadline; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 3 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to authorize the Superintendent to submit a competitive After School Grant by the July 10, 2023 deadline; all in favor; motion passes.

3. Building Committee Update

The next Building Committee meeting will be held on June 20, 2023. The minutes to the May 9, 2023 Building Committee meeting were provided to the Board. The structural design and engineering specs for the installation of the gym HVAC system have been completed and will be available to the contractors who bid on the project. The state may release another competitive HVAC grant application. Any motion of BOE approval must include that the project meets our “educational specifications” in the wording.

4. Asbestos Abatement Update

Mystic Air will be monitoring the work of the contractor for the asbestos abatement project that will begin during the week of June 19, 2023 in the 1954 and 1970 sections of the school building. High quality carpets will also be installed. Mr. Burrows noted that the Early Childhood wing carpets will also be replaced utilizing BOE funds.

5. Technology

Mike Creaturo, who was selected as the Tech Coordinator, is currently in training and reviewing our Cyber Security Insurance. We are in the process of securing quotes.

Upgrades have been made in the central office conference room towards broadcasting BOE meetings in the near future.

6. Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools for 22/23 (3rd reading)

MOTION # 4 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Muschiano) to move the Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools to Executive Session; all in favor; motion passes.

7. BOE Evaluation for 22/23 (3rd reading)

MOTION # 5 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to approve the BOE Evaluation for 22/23 and authorize the Superintendent and BOE Chair to sign it; all in favor; motion passes.

Cathy Grant expressed her thanks to Adam Burrows, Lloyd Johnson, and Amy Suffoletto for all that the Board has been able to accomplish this year.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel

MOTION # 6 (6/8/23) was made with both regrets and congratulations (Grant/Kalwara) to accept Laura O’Lari’s retirement notice as a Paraeducator; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 7 (6/8/23) was made with regrets (Grant/Kalwara) to accept Angela Gardella’s retirement notice as a Paraeducator. The Board thanks her for her 28 years of service at VES; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 8 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Grant) to accept Tony Rizzuto’s resignation as the Foreign Language Teacher; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 9 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to accept Sherry Bishaw’s resignation as a Custodian effective June 15, 2023; all in favor; motion passes.

2. **Faculty/Staff Update** – A status update as of 6/8/23 was distributed. Mr. Burrows shared that there has been a shortage of Foreign Language teachers and that several schools are having difficulties finding candidates for that position.

MOTION # 10 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to authorize the Administration to proceed and make appropriate personnel adjustments to support certified staffing levels as proposed by the Principal to hire a first and third grade teacher to replace a resignation and a vacancy created by a re-assignment; all in favor; motion passes.

3. **Upcoming BOE Meetings**

MOTION # 11 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to tentatively schedule a Special Board of Education meeting on Thursday, June 22, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of making end-of-the-year decisions about negotiations, personnel, and budget priorities; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 12 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Muschiano) to cancel the July 13, 2023 BOE meeting and hold the next regular meeting on August 10, 2023; all in favor; motion passes.

4. **NFA 2025-2030 Contract**

MOTION # 13 (6/8/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to authorize the Superintendent to send a request to NFA for the Voluntown Board of Education to negotiate the 2025-2030 contract and consult with the school attorney, as needed; all in favor; motion passes.

5. **Office of Early Childhood Voluntown School Readiness Liaison for 23/24**

MOTION # 14 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Grant) to support the decision of the School Readiness Council to forward the name of Amy Suffoletto to the Board of Selectmen to officially appoint her as the Voluntown School Readiness Liaison to the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood for 2023-24; all in favor. Motion carries.

6. **Safety on Route 138** – Tabled until the August BOE meeting.

The Board requests that the Selectman attend the August BOE meeting, if possible, to discuss the status/actions related to the safety on Route 138.

X. UPCOMING MEETING(S)/AGENDA ITEMS:

- “Tentative” BOE Meeting – Thursday, June 22, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room
- BOE Meeting – Thursday, August 10, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room
- Building Committee Update
- Technology Update
- NFA 2025-2030 Contract Update
- Personnel and Faculty & Staff Update
- Safety on Route 138
- Food Service Director – lunch prices set, if needed

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION # 15 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to invite the Superintendent of Schools into Executive Session at 8:26 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Personnel, Non-Certified Negotiations; the Superintendent’s Evaluation for 22/23, and Administrative Contracts; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 16 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to invite Fred Dorsey into Executive Session to discuss matters related to Attorney/Client privilege; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 17 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Muschiano) to move out of Executive Session at 9:25 p.m.; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 18 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Grant) to approve the Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools for 22/23 and authorize the BOE Chair to sign it; all in favor. Motion carries.

MOTION # 19 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to authorize the BOE Chair to sign the contracts with adjustments for the Principal, and for the Superintendent and Director of Student Services in order to post them on the Town Website; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 20 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to authorize adjustments in 22/23 administrative salaries based on extra time for the principal and in compliance with TRB 45% guidelines for the other administrators; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 21 (6/8/23) was made (Kalwara/Muschiano) to approve adjusting Principal's salary based on available balances; all in favor; motion passes.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION # 22 (6/8/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to adjourn at 9:26 p.m.; all in favor; motion passes.

Witness

Date

Attest

Date

Respectfully drafted and edited by:

Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk

Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools

APPROVED AT THE 8/24/23 BOE MEETING