

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

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

August 24, 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 7:09 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
 Sarah Thompson

Absent:

Meagan Wicks (Vice Chair)
 Christopher Wilson

Also Present:

Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent)
 Amy L. Suffoletto (Principal)
 Dee Dee Jackman (BOE Clerk)
 Thomas O'Connor (Director of Food Services)
 Tracey Hanson (Voluntown First Selectwoman)

CITIZENS / COMMENTS – None

- II. GUESTS** – Tracey Hanson, Voluntown First Selectwoman, reviewed signage options in front of the school that will post the reduced speed limit of 25 in the school zone. Tracey reported that there is approximately \$20,000 set aside for Capital Projects. Tracey reported that the DOD installs the signs but the Town pays for it. The Town has also requested a stop light at the intersection of Route 49 and 138 by Bronson's Hardware and Pools, a three way stop sign at 138 and Rockville Road and reducing the speed limit into town. The Town has also submitted a grant proposal for additional sidewalks across the street from the school and also on Gate Street and a walking path in the park towards Pendleton Hill Rd. The Board of Education requested to be kept informed of these upcoming projects and proposals.

Our second guest, Tom O'Connor, Food Service Director, praised our 2 kitchen staff members (Corrine Proulx and Christine Driscoll) for their hard work and dedication to the food production at VES. He noted that kitchen upgrades have been completed (new oven, hoods, deck oven and 4 burner range) and that the annual audit review went extremely well. Thanks also to Brian Kallio for all his assistance. Mr. Burrows noted that VES has received our Healthy Food Certification.

MOTION # 1 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Thompson) for the Board to approve free breakfast for all students. Lunch is free for all Free and Reduced pay students. Full pay students will pay \$3.75 per lunch and \$0.40 for milk. All in favor; motion passes.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION # 2 (8/24/23) was made (Thompson/Kalwara) 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

- **PK Registrations/Screenings** - PK and K Registrations/Screenings were held on June 12th for resident and non-resident students. At this time, our program is at 44 students and fulfills the grant requirements for required school readiness spaces. A non-resident waitlist has been created.
- **Extended School Year/Summer School** - This program July 5-July 27 TWTU 9am-12:00am. Enrollment was 10 students.
- **Welcome to our new staff** - Julia Lavin (Grade 3), Sarah Seifert (Grade 1), Ester Ewen (Spanish part-time), Jutta Fedor (Night Custodian part-time), Cynthia Cook (Night Custodian part-time), Gillian Geyer and Carol O'Donnell (Paraeducators).
School Lunch Program - The school lunch program saw an increase of numbers this past year due to free breakfast and lunch 22-23. For the 23-24 school year, funding will support FREE breakfast for all students and Free lunch for free/reduced qualifying students. Full pay students pay \$3.75 per lunch meal.
- **Connecticut State Assessment Individual Student Reports (SBAC, CTAA, CAPT, CMT, Skills Checklist)** - Completed and all student reports will be sent to families when received in September 2023. Review of testing and action items will be done in September and throughout the school year.
- Thank-you to our custodial staff for their efforts this summer in preparations for our school building to be open. We have thoroughly cleaned and reorganized all of the classrooms.
- Thank-you to our central office staff and office staff for their work during the summer months to ensure a smooth transition back to school.

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Curriculum/Committee Work:** Teachers have been working in the lower school learning about the science of reading. Upcoming PD 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.
- **VES Website-** Great effort has been made to update and post current information/resources for families.
- **VES Google Calendar** - Staff continues to utilize the Google Calendar tool, which highlights the important events taking place at VES and in our community.
- **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.
- **Teacher Evaluation Plan**
- Any plan updates will be reviewed with the PDEC committee and according to State guidelines.
- **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 continue to work in the portfolio to ensure all action items are met and completed regularly.

Technology, Building, Grounds, Transportation & Safety

- Mike Creaturo, Technology, has been working all summer on the IT needs within the building. Mike has been working with Jim Ward on all of the beginning of the year needs as well.

- Brian Kallio, Director of Maintenance, continues to review, implement, and address needs within our school building and on our grounds related to reopening of school. He has worked to maintain our building over the hot summer months.
- Anne Michaud, Director of Transportation, continues to review and address needs within our transportation department. Anne has finalized bus routes for all bus runs and has been a huge asset to our transportation department this year.

Community and Public Relations

- **PTO** - Suggestions are welcome for the 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. Contact Melinda Bryan mbryan@voluntownct.org.

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

Mr. Burrows gave a verbal update that there have been some tuition savings with Special Education Enrollments.

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

- Calendar of Events for August, September, and October 2023
- The District Enrollment Report noted 241 students in Pre-K to 8th grade and 125 high school students.
- \$17.19 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund from grants, rebates, and other unanticipated savings received.
- Kainen Esclaera and McHale letter announcing Frederick Dorsey's retirement as school attorney
- EASTCONN letter and copy of their By-Laws regarding their Board of Directors
- Approved 22-23 YSB-LPC Board Self-Evaluation
- Approved 22-23 BOE Self-Evaluation
- Thank you card from Elsa Kalwara for her CABA sponsored Board of Education Award
- CSDE letter acknowledging receipt of the district's corrective action plan regarding one clarification based on the Administrative Review of Voluntown CNPs
- Letter to Dr. David Kalla, NFA Board of Trustees Chairperson, to open negotiations to the 2025-2030 Contract
- Letter to Tracey Hanson, Voluntown First Selectwoman, regarding the safety on Route 138
- Thank you letters to Senator Heather Somers and State Representative Brian Lanoue for the work they did in the "hold harmless" of the ECS, or Educational Cost Sharing, grant funds for the next two fiscal years
- CABA/CAPSS Convention flyer and registration information – November 17-18, 2023 – Mystic Marriott Hotel, Groton
- CABA Policy Highlights – June 9, 2023 (Student Representatives to the BOE Technology Update); June 23, 2023 (Review of New Legislation with Policy Implications); July 7, 2023 (Summer Work); July 25, 2023 (Required Annual Due Process Notification)
- Also distributed was the CAPSS Survey showing the Longevity of Superintendents, which listed Mr. Burrows as one of the long-serving Superintendents with 18 years of service.
- The 2023-24 Faculty/Staff Assignments were distributed along with the District-Level and Elementary School Curriculum Related Committees Reports.
- Mr. Burrows also provided an update regarding the Solar Panel and Electricity Expenditures and the CT Solar Lease Power Purchase Agreement True-Up Analysis from 4/1/22 through 3/31/23. Our cost for this True-Up is \$4,281.47. The solar panels generated 295,654.64 kwh at the CT Solar rate of \$0.095 for a total cost of \$23,805.72.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. 22-23 End-of-Year Budget and Function Object Report

A Voluntown Referendum on June 7, 2022, officially approved the Board of Education budget for 2022-2023 of \$6,850,333 which represented an increase of \$65,136 or 0.96% over the 2021-2022 budget of \$6,785,196. As noted in the 6-30-23 Function Object Report of all expenditures for 2022-2023, a total of \$17.19 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown.

Mr. Burrows thoroughly reviewed the End-of-Year Budget Summary. He noted that a list of transfers will be available at the next BOE Meeting.

MOTION # 3 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Thompson) to accept the 22/23 End-of-Year Budget Summary as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

2. Budget 23-24 Beginning-of-the-Year Update

A Voluntown Town Meeting on May 30, 2023, officially approved the Board of Education budget for 2023-2024 of \$7,055,334 which represented an increase of \$205,001 or 2.99% over the 2022-2023 budget of \$6,850,333. This budget considered the financial needs of the community as well as the state final ECS or Educational Cost Sharing grant for 2023-2024. A special thank you is extended to the community for their support. We are now in the process of making a transition to another school year and working together to support students in their academic and social-emotional growth.

3. 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.
- 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. We will be able to use some of the funds to secure part-time Social Worker services from Preston.

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.

4. Building Committee Update

The next Building Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 12, 2023. The Agenda for that meeting was provided to the Board along with the minutes to the May 9, 2023 meeting and an Asbestos Abatement Financial Report.

Priorities will include a review of the projects completed this summer:

- Mini-Splits for two classrooms (Completed)
- Central Office needs a repair or upgrade on the office side of the building (Gathering Quotes)
- Video Surveillance completed by CT Communication (ESSER III - \$78,879 and change order)
- Telephones: A contract for **\$14,752** signed with CT Communication (completed)
- Asbestos Abatement: Hallway completed; Talevi Contract for 6-24; Approve Mystic Air payments
- Board Meeting Room Public Access Project: Completed \$5,755
- Building, Grounds, Playground Repairs, Trimming, Doorway Exit, and other improvements
- Securing a contractor for the Gym HVAC system being partially funded by ESSER III funds of \$84,449
- Updating the Capital Improvement Plan for the school system

5. Asbestos Abatement Update

The asbestos abatement of the “T” comprised on the 1953 and the 1970 hallways began on June 19, 2023. It was completed in a week. The installation of carpeting these hallways began as soon as Mystic Air authorizes the safe completion of the abatement. This schedule fit our plans to use VES as the location for students to attend Summer School which was held from June 27 through July 27. The oil tank replacement funds were allocated for the asbestos abatement of the “T” in the 1970 and 1953 parts of the school and based on quotes there will be enough funds to complete the next phase schedule for June of 2024. We are in the process of scheduling Televi and Mystic Air to complete the next phase of this asbestos abatement program which will begin the day after school is completed for the 24-25 school year.

6. NFA 2025-30 Contract Update

A letter was sent to Dr. David Kalla, Chairperson of the NFA Board of Directors to open negotiations for the 2025-30 Contract with NFA.

Mr. Burrows reported that he personally met at the beginning of July with Nate Quesnel, the new Head of NFA, who has scheduled meetings with each of the Superintendents of the partner school systems. Follow-up group meetings will be held throughout the 23-24 school year to maintain excellent communication channels, review priorities, negotiate the 25-30 contract, and help students make smooth transitions as they complete their high school program.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel/Faculty & Staff Projections

The resignation letter from Nicole Vitali was provided to the Board.

MOTION # 4 (8/24/23) was made with regrets (Grant/Thompson) to accept the resignation from Nicole Vitali as a Paraeducator. The Board thanks her for her 15 years of service at VES; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 5 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to appoint Gillian Geyer as a Paraeducator; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 6 (8/24/23) was made (Muschiano/Grant) to appoint Carol O'Donnell as a Paraeducator; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 7 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to appoint Cindy Cook as a part-time Night Custodian; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 8 (8/24/23) was made (Kalwara/Grant) to appoint Juta Fedor as a part-time Night Custodian; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 9 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Thompson) to appoint Cibele Gagnon as an Intern; all in favor; motion passes.

2. Title IX Coordinator

MOTION # 10 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Thompson) to appoint Rachel Sahoo as the 23-24 Title IX Coordinator for VES; all in favor; motion passes.

3. School Medical Advisor

MOTION # 11 (8/24/23) was made (Muschiano/Thompson) to appoint Dr. Geller as the School Medical Advisor for 23-24; all in favor; motion passes.

4. Summer School Report with Expenditure Total

The Summer School Expenditure Report was distributed noting a total of \$12,406.96. Also included on this report was the cost of the Summer Cleaning Custodians of \$13,216.83.

5. Voluntown Capital Improvement Plan

Capital Improvements will be paid, if possible, by the annual Board of Education operating budget. VES is an older school with sections built in 1953, 1970, 1990, and 2000. Every effort is made to keep the school in excellent repair. The central office is 35-years old and needs a new HVAC system. We have made repairs and replacements, as needed, rather than build a new school. We have not requested special allocations of funds for unanticipated repairs, but we know that the Board of Selectmen would schedule a town meeting for the citizens to review a special allocation. We have had excellent successes in writing and receiving federal and state grants that have become available and some grants have paid for the complete cost of a project. Voluntown receives about 62% reimbursement for “eligible” expenditures for state grants that require full payment by the town prior to securing from the State Department of Education. The town, from time to time, does create accounts to create a local fund for an identified facilities update to keep the school in good repair. Our Maintenance and Facilities Budget is annually developed through our established IAQ/TfS/Safety Committee or Indoor Air Quality-Tools for Schools-Safety as part of a comprehensive approach to gather appropriate information, prioritize projects, and follow-through on frequent building inspections.

Completed and Upcoming Capital Improvement Projects (*Rough estimates for some projected costs*)

Project	Date	Projected Cost	Estimated Final Cost to Town
Boilers	2008	\$280,000	\$117,000 (<i>Balance paid by state</i>)
Tech Infrastructure Upgrade	2007	\$195,000	\$0.00 (<i>State Technology Grant</i>)
Security Improvements	2012	\$136,000	\$47,600
Roof	2016	\$1,104,304	\$435,000
Stairway to Field (with Rec)	2017	\$180,000	\$0.00 (<i>State Bond Commission</i>)
Pre-K Expansion	2017	\$95,000	\$0.00 (<i>Office Early Childhood Grant</i>)
Oil Tank Replacement	2019	\$200,000	\$66,000 (<i>\$112,742.49 paid state</i>)
Roof Top Air Handlers	2021	\$46,000	\$0.00 (<i>ESSER II Funds</i>)
Pavilion	2022	\$67,000	\$0.00 (<i>ESSER II Funds</i>)
Telephone System Upgrade	2023	\$14,752	\$0.00 (<i>ESSER III</i>)- <i>Funds Encumbered</i>
Video Surveillance Upgrade	2023	\$78,579	\$0.00 (<i>ESSER III</i>)- <i>Funds Encumbered</i>
Asbestos Abatement	2023/24	\$112,749	\$0.00 (<i>Oil Tank reimbursement to town</i>)
Security for all Entrances	2023	\$29,000	<i>ESSER and Operating Budget</i>
BOE Remote Access	2023	\$5,726	<i>Comcast Grant and BOE Funds</i>
Sound System	2023	\$8,300	<i>BOE Funds</i>

Projected Future Capital Improvement Projects with Estimates Costs

Project	Date	Projected Cost	Estimated Final Cost to Town
Gym Sliding Door	2024/25	\$140,000	<i>Perhaps a special request to Town</i>
HVAC for Gymnasium	2023/24	\$84,700	\$0.00 (<i>ESSER III federal grant funds</i>)
Security- All Entrances	2024/25	\$29,000	<i>Operating Budget or grants</i>
Electrical Panel Upgrade	2024/25	\$16,000	<i>Operating Budget</i>
Central Office Repairs	2024/25	\$31,800	<i>Operating Budget</i>
Replace 32-year old Generator	2025/26	\$65,000	<i>Operating Budget</i>
Gymnasium Stage Curtain	2025/26	\$25,000	<i>Operating Budget</i>

HVAC replacement in central office, A/C in school library, rooms 27, 29, 36, and 38, electrical upgrades, and new buses will be needed in 2025/26. Our Transportation Committee monitors the “wear life” of all our vehicles and the costs of repairs and maintenance. We have had success in running our own bus company and utilizing a five-year lease-purchase program to minimize budget increases.

6. Budget Preparation Timeline for 24-25

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.

Please note: all of the following Board of Education meetings start at 7:00 p.m. and are open to interested citizens from the Voluntown community.

Thursday	08-10-23	Review initial draft of Board of Education 2024-2025 Budget Preparation Timeline and available information about the history of the actual expenditures for heating oil, propane, electricity) and transportation.
Thursday	09-14-23	Finalize all transfers in the 22-23 budget spending plan. Update the Board of Education 2023-2024 Budget Preparation Timeline.
Thursday	10-12-23	Review a six-year history of all “actual” budget expenditures.
Thursday	11-09-23	Current curriculum initiatives and projected 24-25 curriculum priorities
Thursday	12-14-23	Review 24-25 projected costs for Transportation and Maintenance
Thursday	01-11-24	Initial Superintendent summary proposal of 24-25 budget to Board
Thursday	02-08-24	Superintendent’s updated 24-25 Proposal submitted to Board of Education
Thursday	02-22-24	Board of Education “Budget” Meeting <i>(if needed)</i>
Thursday	03-14-24	Updated 24-25 budget proposal presented to Board of Education
Thursday	03-18-24	24-25 Budget Proposal is sent to the Town Clerk for public dissemination
Thursday	04-18-24	Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. about the 23-24 education budget proposal and Board of Education approval of the 23-24 budget proposal
Thursday	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 Voluntown Elementary School gymnasium at 7:00 p.m.

7. 23-24 School Calendar

MOTION # 12 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to approve the 23-24 School Calendar as amended with the 5/24/24 Early Dismissal changed from noon to 1:00 p.m.; all in favor; motion passes.

8. Policy # 3542.41 – School Lunch Service (1st reading)

MOTION # 13 (8/24/23) was made (Grant/Kalwara) to approve Policy # 3542.41 – School Lunch Service as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

9. Policy and Regulation # 3542.43 – Charging Policy (1st reading)

MOTION # 14 (8/24/23) was made (Thompson/Kalwara) to approve Policy and Regulation # 3542.43 – Charging Policy as amended; all in favor; motion passes.

10. Policy and Regulation # 5141.21 – Administering Medications (1st reading)

MOTION # 15 (8/24/23) was made (Muschiano/Grant) to approve Policy and Regulation #5141.21 on Administering Medications as amended; all in favor; motion passes.

11. Technology Manual 23-24 (1st reading)

Valerie Muschiano suggested additional wording or policies may need to be included in the Technology Manual regarding consequences for students and staff uploading videotapes or photos to social media. Other topics discussed were AI technology and the electronic retention of intellectual property. Further research will be done and discussed at the next meeting.

X. UPCOMING MEETING(S)/AGENDA ITEMS:

- BOE Meeting – Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room
- 22-23 Budget Transfers
- Budget Preparation Timeline 24-25
- Building Committee Update
- NFA 2025-2030 Contract Update
- Personnel (Paraeducator, Soccer Coach)
- Homeless Liaison
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Technology Manual 23-24 (2nd review)

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION # 16 (8/24/23) was made (Muschiano/Kalwara) to adjourn at 8:56 p.m.; all in favor; motion passes.

Witness	Date	Attest	Date
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Respectfully drafted and edited by:

Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk

Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools

APPROVED AT THE 9/14/23 BOE MEETING