

(UNAPPROVED)

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

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**

February 11, 2021  
 Virtual Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

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*This Zoom meeting was streamed live to the public on the Voluntown School YouTube Channel:*

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3I7dOmnXMxoTlNHzaSZ1zw>

*Public comments were able to be made by emailing [djackman@voluntownct.org](mailto:djackman@voluntownct.org) up to 1 hour prior to the meeting.*

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- I. CALL TO ORDER** Chairperson Kate Beuparlant called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson)  
 Meagan Wicks (Vice Chair)  
 Cathy Grant (Secretary)  
 Valerie Muschiano  
 Christopher Wilson

**Absent:** Skart Paul  
 Arikka Kalwara

**Also Present:** Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent)  
 Amy Suffoletto (Principal)  
 Dr. Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D. (Director of Student Services)  
 Dee Dee Jackman (BOE Clerk)  
 Sean McKenna (Superintendent of Griswold Public Schools)  
 Erin Palonen (Principal of Griswold High School)

**CITIZENS / COMMENTS** – None were received.

Chairperson Beuparlant read the BOE Mission Statement.

**II. GUESTS**

Sean McKenna, Superintendent of Griswold Public Schools and Erin Palonen, Principal of Griswold High School, shared a slideshow presentation to the Board that reviewed the following:

- ContexEDU/Highlander which utilizes different learning models: Full In-Person; Hybrid; Fully Remote
- School Community Voice (SCV) Team consisting of school leaders, teachers, community members and parents, which prioritizes professional development and initiatives
- Round One and Two Surveys distributed and analyzed by the SCV Team to redefine priorities at a district level and data used to show overall wellness and emotional well-being of students. Problem-solving techniques were focused on as well as ongoing gap analysis and confirm the effectiveness of learning.
- Vision of a Graduate – to become a critical thinker, a resilient problem solver, an effective communicator, an engaged citizen and a proposed addition of a truth seeker

A question-and-answer session was held and Board members were informed of their concerns for disengaged students. The Griswold school system monitors attendance and academic data through home visits and calls and offers support through their Senior's Academy and SRBI Learning Labs which are offered four days per week.

Dr. Johnson noted how commendable their support and planning has been with students from Voluntown.

Erin Palonen stressed that they try to make sure students are prepared to leave high school and are constantly evolving/changing curriculum to help students learn and succeed.

Sean McKenna stated that Griswold schools "educate for excellence" and utilizes the Future-Focused Schools Collaborative as presented by the AASA (The School Superintendents Association)

Academic course offerings (with AP options) were given as well as the wide range of sports and athletic interests. Also reviewed was the work of preparing students for the future through their academic advisors/guidance counselors through college and career fairs.

Mr. Burrows noted his appreciation for Sean's and Erin's work and collaboration with Voluntown.

### III. CONSENT AGENDA

Christopher Wilson commended VES for instilling civic duty by recruiting students to serve on the Youth Service Bureau. Current "student" members of the YSB-LPC Board are Ella Malek, Steven Steniger, Arianna Page, Anna Dimino and Blake Laney, all which participate in board decisions and who's opinions/ideas are valued.

**MOTION #1 (2/11/21) was made (Wilson/Grant) that the Board approves the Consent Agenda as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.**

### IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

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

Mrs. Suffoletto happily announced the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School at VES.

#### COVID-19 School Closure Update:

- The VES Reopen Committee continues to meet (now biweekly) to review, discuss and address issues that arise and make modifications to the plan to be released in an updated version.
- VES families, staff and students are commended for their efforts to stay healthy and in-person. Their dedication to remaining well is always noticed and appreciated.

#### Students as a Focal Point

- Free meals have been extended through June, 2021 for all students through the school lunch program.
- Starting on December 1st, students in K-3 have been given a grab and go breakfast daily. Students in grades 4-8 are offered breakfast as they leave the building. Breakfast is also offered as students enter the building for grades 4-8 or any student that has not had breakfast.
- All chrome books have been distributed down through kindergarten. Younger classrooms are working on using a Chromebook, keypad and its applications.
- Eighth grade students are visiting high schools (some in-person, some virtually) to aid in their high school choices.

#### Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- Professional Development: a PD day was held on January 15, 2021.

- There have been many committee meetings and STAR testing has is being done. Even though students are not required to take the SBACs due to the pandemic, staff and students are still preparing as they normally would have.

**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 related to a safe reopening of school.
- Terry Chenette, Director of Transportation, modifies bus runs as schools open and close.

**Community and Public Relations**

- PTO - The PTO is looking to host more virtual events and any suggestions are welcome.
- Youth Service Bureau/Local Prevention Council – The YSB-LPC Advisory Board meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m., virtually at this time. There have been so many successful programs this winter thanks to the YSB. The YSB-LPC Board is preparing a Vaping Program to educate students and the community about the dangers of vaping.

Cathy Grant expressed her gratefulness to the teachers in Voluntown for their great attitudes and the support they've given to their students through all of the difficulties this year.

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

- As previously reported, our department, following established procedures, uses Pupil Personnel Services designation as an SRBI for related services to our youngest students. For the most part, this provides services to students with delays in Speech/Language, Fine and/or Gross Motor development. We determined that a limit on the length of time those services may be provided before considering a referral to Special Education or our Section 504 Accommodation Planning Team needed to be set. On January 15th, 2021, the department met virtually and reached a consensus that PPS services will be provided for a calendar year. At that point, the team will schedule an Initial PPT or Section 504 Meeting to determine eligibility.
- As of February 11, 2021, this Director had chaired 104 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, The Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, United Services Inc. in Willimantic, Ellis Technical High School in Danielson, Norwich Transition Academy and Norwich Technical High School in Norwich, EastConn's Regional Transition Program in Danielson, and EastConn's 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	40	28
9-12+	<u>20</u>	<u>13</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>41</b>

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

- Calendar of Events for February and March 2021
- The District Enrollment Report noted 254 students in Pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 129 high school students.
- \$16,215.20 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund from grants received.
- CABE Policy Highlights for January 22, 2021: COVID-19 Leave Policy; Special Education; OCR Rules
- CABE Policy Highlights on February 5, 2021: CABE Policy Manuals Enhanced; Website Accessibility for the Disabled; Title IX; Gifted Students Affect Classmates in Heterogeneous Classes
- CABE Liaison Newsletter for February 2021: Policy, Advocacy, and Professional Development
- A 24-page listing of "Education-Related Bills as of February 2, 2021" with descriptions of the "proposed" bills moving forward in the State of Connecticut legislative process over these next few months.

- A CAFE communication regarding the “25th Annual CAFE Student Leadership Awards” with a submittal deadline of March 31, 21. We have annually honored two students, who will be announced at a Board meeting later this school year.
- A communication from Norwich Free Academy announcing that Madison Collins, Grade 12, has been recognized for academic excellence as a Student of the Month for January, 2021.
- An update about our School Food Services Program noting that 4,619 meals were served during the month of January, 2021, and we are projected to receive a USDA reimbursement of \$12,883.49 for our combined free school lunches and also the Grab-an- Go Breakfasts. (Special note: We also received \$2,716 from the State of Connecticut based on the Board’s approval of HFC or Healthy Food Certification requirements)
- A recent CSDE memo noting 12-31-21 as the last date for securing payment of approved CRF or COVID Relief Funds. Mr. Burrows expressed thanks and appreciation to Rachel Ricard (Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools) and Darlena Loranger (Accounts Payable/Payroll Manager) for documenting all approved expenditures. We received \$41,189.32 on 12- 28-20 and \$135,449.63 on 1-27-21 for a total of \$176,699 in CRF funds that were used for fully funding, prior to 12/31/20, such things as PPE, security upgrades, A/C Upgrades, a remote learning teacher, a part-time custodian, bus monitors, and a wide range of cleaning supplies during this time of COVID-19. All of the above have helped us keep our K-8 students in school all but six days since the start of the school year.
- Mr. Burrows noted a recent Day news article stating that 10 area municipalities have requested extensions for completing the annual audits due to the complexities and challenges related to COVID-19 expenditures. Voluntown has completed the annual audit on time.
- Connecticut school systems received notice from the CSDE about the allocations for another grant titled “Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II) and Voluntown was listed as receiving \$144,864. The actual grant application is to be distributed and we will be applying for financial support related to the continuation of some programs which were funded by the CRF funds as well as extended summer learning opportunities.
- We are in the final stages of completing the documentation of the cost of the Heating Oil Tank Replacement Project. The CSDE Form ED-049F was submitted to the state noting a total cost of \$190,368.51 and this will be reviewed by the state for “eligible” costs. We are listed, based on a number of local wealth factors, to receive a 65% reimbursement rate for eligible costs. It is estimated the Town will receive approximately, or in the range of, \$123,629 which will be deposited in the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund.
- The Governor announced the next two-year budget proposal. Voluntown previously was listed to receive cuts of \$89, 346 in the ECS or Education Cost Sharing grant for each of the next two years. This recent proposal by the Governor slightly increases our ECS grant. A projection by the School and State Finance Project lists Voluntown as receiving level ECS funding of \$2,117,243 for the next two years. This change from the previous proposed cuts in ECS will be helpful in developing a school budget proposal with a sincere understanding of the cost-impact to local property taxes and meeting the needs of all students.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. 2021-22 Budget Preparation Process**

This 2/11/21 second draft of the budget proposal for 2021-2022 is \$6,872,173 and represents an increase of \$86,976 or 1.28% over the 2020-2021 town approved total of \$6,785,196. It is apparent that this initial proposal will need to be reviewed and adjusted over these next few months as we prepare for the annual town meeting as well as consider the financial needs of the community and the state final ECS or Educational Cost Sharing grant for 2021-2022.

This initial proposal includes:

- Changes from the 1/14/21 initial proposal are an increase of \$8,261 in overall Regular education tuition accounts and an increase of \$6,781 in overall Special Education tuition accounts. There is a decrease of \$34,701 for the purchase of a van in Transportation #2700-442 with the intention of

utilizing funds from the current 20-21 budget based on adjustments developed from unanticipated federal and state grants related to COVID-19 challenges.

- Negotiated salaries for teachers, non-certified, and classified faculty and staff.
- The *projected* cost for the outplacement of Special Education students based on identified needs.
- *Projected* cost of tuition based on the numbers attending eight designated high schools.
- An initial *projected* increase of 8.0% in the cost of health insurance.
- *Projected* energy costs for heating fuel, propane, electricity, and diesel/gasoline.
- *Projected cost of a Foreign Language teacher.*

Thursday	02-25-21	Board of Education “Budget” Meeting (if needed)
Thursday	03-11-21	Updated 21-22 budget proposal presented to Board of Education
Thursday	03-18-21	21-22 Budget Proposal is sent to the Town Clerk for public dissemination
Thursday	04-08-21	Public Hearing about the 21-22 education budget proposal and Board of Education approval of the 21-22 budget proposal
Thursday	04-22-21	Approved budget proposal for 21-22 delivered to Town Clerk for public dissemination
Tuesday	05-04-21	Possible projected date for annual Town Meeting to vote on the Town and Board of Education Budgets at Voluntown Elementary School gymnasium at 7:00 p.m.

The overall goal is to make every effort to develop a budget proposal with a sincere understanding of the cost impact to local property taxes and meeting the educational needs of all students.

There was a time for questions and answers about the budget proposal. Discussion was held regarding a Foreign Language Teacher, bids for a new van, and prepaying as many expenditures as possible from this year’s budget.

## 2. COVID-19 Update: Coronavirus Relief Grant and Reopen Committee Update

The Reopen Committee coordinates issues related to meeting the challenges of COVID-19. This committee promotes the wearing of masks, social distancing, and washing of hands in the ongoing quest to maintain a healthy environment. The committee coordinates activities with the UNCAS Health District and the Office of the Voluntown First Selectwoman in follow-up activities that might involve monitoring any testing as well as contact tracing.

Vaccination rosters are being formed for when school staff will be able to receive the vaccine.

## 3. Bylaw #9327.1 – Board Member Use of Internet/Social Networks (Second reading-no action)

### IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Policy # 4212.42 – Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers** (First reading)  
**MOTION #2 (2/11/21) was made (Wilson/Grant) to approve Policy # 4212.42 on Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers; all in favor. Motion carries.**
2. **Policy # 6161.3 – Comparability of Services** (First reading)  
**MOTION #3 (2/11/21) was made (Grant/Wilson) to approve Policy # 6161.3 on Comparability of Services; all in favor. Motion carries.**
3. **Policy # 6159 – Individualized Education Program/Special Education** (First reading)  
**MOTION #4 (2/11/21) was made (Muschiano/Wicks) to approve Policy # 6159 on Individualized Education Program/Special Education; all in favor. Motion carries.**
4. **CAPSS Blueprint** – A 15-page report titled “CAPSS Blueprint: Transform Connecticut’s Public Schools” was provided and reviewed.

**5. Request to Use the School**

**MOTION #5 (2/11/21) was made (Wilson/Muschiano) to approve the School Use Request from the Voluntown Economic Development Commission for an outdoors Farmer’s Market on Sundays (8:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.) from July 11, 2021 through October 10, 2021; all in favor. Motion carries.**

**6. J-1 Request**

**X. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING**

- Upcoming BOE meeting: March 11, 2021
- Budget Preparation Timeline and Process for 2021-22
- COVID-19 and Reopen Committee Updates
- Personnel

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION # (2/11/21) was made (Wilson/Muschiano) to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.; all in favor. Motion carries.**

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