

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

June 11, 2020

Virtual Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was live-streamed at the following link:

<https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/55fda1f2-0a31-4243-815f-351e148ceb32>

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

- I. CALL TO ORDER** Chairperson Beuparlant called the virtual meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.
- ATTENDANCE** **Present:** Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson), Cathy Grant (Secretary), Kristen Trahan (Vice Chair), Meagan Wicks and Christopher Wilson
Absent: Arikka Kalwara and Skart Paul
Also Present: Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent), Amy Suffoletto (Principal) and Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D. (Director of Student Services)
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. CITIZENS / COMMENTS** - None
- IV. GUESTS** - None
- V. CONSENT AGENDA**
MOTION #1 (6/11/20) was made (Trahan, Wilson) 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:
- An 8th grade graduation outdoor ceremony was approved by the UNCAS Health District on 5/28/20 and the Recreation Commission on 6/3/20. Graduation will take place tentatively on June 15th (rain date June 16) at 5 p.m. for graduates and immediate family members.
 - All live classes and regularly scheduled meetings will end on June 12th. Students and families will participate in engaging, alternative learning activities from June 15th-18th.
 - Surveys were sent to families regarding distance learning, returning Fall of 2020, and projected preschool needs on Friday, June 5th. Each survey will be reviewed for planning purposes and to make improvements. Students in grades 5-8 also received a survey of their experience with distance learning, which will be reviewed to improve our program for remote learning as needed.
- COVID-19 School Closure Timeline of Events:**
- As of March 16, 2020, VES closed due to COVID and is now closed for the remainder of the academic year per Gov. Lamont.
 - March 25th - April 9th all students were given at home learning packets. Parents collected packets and other belongings as available on March 25th.
 - As of April 20th, grades 3-8 moved to online learning through Google Classroom and are provided weekly learning plans.
 - As of April 20th, grades K-2 continued with a set of 9 day lesson plans and packets were picked-up by parents on this date. Beginning May 4th grades K-2 is using a blended approach to learning.
 - Preschool students have been provided a calendar of learning experiences and suggested activities by teachers. As of May 4th, preschool students were also provided additional activities on Seesaw for learning.
 - As of April 20th, faculty and students began using Google Meets/Hangouts for individual, small group and whole group learning experiences. These meets are initiated at the teacher's 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 and is projected to run through the summer if approved.
- Our Director of Maintenance, Brian Kallio, has been working with maintenance staff during the am and pm 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 a weekly school message is sent out on Friday with updates. Teachers communicate with families directly.

Students as a Focal Point

- **The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Student Leadership Award** for exhibiting leadership criteria includes a willingness to take on challenges, the capability to make difficult decisions, the ability to work with others, the ability to honor a commitment, and diplomacy. Congratulations to following students, Ilah Marsh and Nathan Lazourack, in receiving the CABA awards for the 2019-2020 school year.
- **The Connecticut Association of Schools Middle Level Scholar-Leader Award** in recognition of being a student who has distinguished himself in scholarship and leadership in our school and the community. Congratulations to the following students, Justyn Blanchard and Ava Delaney, in receiving the CAS award for the 2019-2020 school year.
- **8th grade students** had their photos taken by Frausini Photo on June 2nd and completed a graduation walk on stage that was recorded as part of their celebration. Video and pictures will be provided.
- **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. The Nurse's office and the front office have begun forwarding all records to confirmed High Schools.
- **Report Cards** - Parents and students were provided with grading guidance for Trimester 3 due to the current remote learning situation.

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Professional Development:** Faculty and Staff are continuing with ongoing professional development regarding online platforms, remote instruction, and the use of digital tools.
- **Teacher Evaluation Plan** - Faculty Informal/Formal Observations: Faculty members were provided with a summary of their Trimester 1 and Trimester 2 observations. Staff members were provided an end of the year evaluation.
- **Grants/Reports/Applications** - The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) - Site Eligibility Application was submitted June 3, 2020.

Building, Grounds, and Transportation & Safety

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

Community and Public Relations

- **Youth Service Bureau/Local Prevention Council** – Meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m., virtually at this time. YSB GRASP Programs are now being offered virtually to students. Grades 4-8 have completed online programs with NESS.

Many thanks were exchanged between the Board and Amy Suffoletto and praise was given to the staff and administration for putting relationships first; adjustments to schedules to accommodate the needs of the parent's/student's needs; for being tried and true; and for seeing us all through this epidemic with success.

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

- The Student Services department has planned a Virtual Extended School Year Service this summer for our students with IEPs who are at risk for regression. The dates for this summer school are June 29 to July 30, 2020. Three of our special education teachers and one of the speech therapists have committed to providing services. Each student will participate in an online tutoring session with their special education

teacher for 30 minutes a day, four days a week; Monday through Thursday. The students receiving speech therapy will receive a 30-minute session once a week (our usual summer session service).

- During the initial days of the COVID-19 school shutdown, PPT and 504 Accommodation meetings were not conducted. Once we began to realize that school may remain closed for the balance of the school year we explored options to conduct virtual meetings. Since May 5th we began hosting Virtual PPT meetings using Google Meets. We are “catching up” on the Annual Reviews missed during the shutdown while also conducting those meetings needed to be held for our 8th graders with their chosen high school representatives and for students needing Transition/Vocational Services post-high school. The CT State Dept has indicated that districts will not be penalized for conducting meetings after their usual due date.
- We’ve been pleased with the high degree of support offered by the technical high schools for our 8th-grade students with IEPs. Not one who was initially accepted was refused admission by the school’s inability to meet the accommodations and services required by the student’s Individualized Education Plan.
- As of June 11, 2020, this Director will have chaired 165 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 in Pre-K to 12+ receiving special services:

	<u>IEP</u>	<u>504</u>
Pre-K to 8	48	24
9-12+	20	12
Total	68	36

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

- Mr. Burrows expressed appreciation to Amy Suffoletto, Lloyd Johnson and the Faculty for all the work they’ve done. He also gave thanks to the Board of Education for their flexibility in making decisions and their support for the educational program.
- Calendar of Events for June and July 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; \$96,408.40 in 2018/19; and as of 6/11/20 \$69,420.26 has been returned to the Town for the current 2019/20 fiscal year.
- Review of membership on District-Level Committees and Curriculum Related Committees. It is important to note there were many activities that required distance learning and the scheduling of committee meetings has been delayed until future dates. The Health Insurance Committee did meet. Other upcoming meetings to be scheduled include: Transportation, Wellness, School Safety, Technology, IAQ/TfS/Safety, and Curriculum Steering.
- A discussion was held regarding the possibility of forming a Re-entry Committee for the next school year and, if so, that a variety of people should be involved, such as a teacher, bus driver, nurse, etc. to gain different perspectives/concerns. The Superintendent will advise if a committee is needed depending upon the long-awaited decision from the Governor on how the State will proceed with re-opening plans/requirements in the fall.
- Updated BOE Contact sheet and Committee Assignments
- EASTCONN letter regarding 2020-21 Tuition and Fees for Student Program Services
- CABA Policy Highlights on fostering a positive school climate remotely
- CABA Liaison for June
- Our Technology Consultant, Jim Ward, has worked with faculty and staff, families, and the community in providing technology support on a daily basis and continues to manage the online platforms and access for teachers and students. COVID-19 has required an assessment of our technology capabilities and we have met any challenges through budget transfers to upgrade internet access, equipment, and adjustments to meet the varying needs of students.

- Our Food Service Director, Tom O'Connor, and the Child Nutrition Meal Service program offers meals on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Griswold Middle School Cafeteria to all Voluntown students. Based on recent information on this meal program, which started on March 16, 2020, Voluntown and Griswold are making efforts to continue it through the summer months to allow access to nutritional meals, especially during this time of pandemic. Mr. O'Connor has traditionally been a guest at the July Board of Education meetings to give a summary report about our Food Services program, access to USDA Commodities and upcoming priorities. He is currently reviewing available grants to replace an older warming unit in our kitchen.
- Our Director of Maintenance, Brian Kallio, has been working with maintenance staff to continue cleaning procedures according to the state recommendations and they have been completing needed repairs and maintenance within the building. Our approach of utilizing a summer cleaning crew will start at the end of June and work Monday through Thursday throughout the summer.
- The Superintendent reviewed the NFA Foundation Grant of Tuition Relief for partner school in 2020-2021 which means Voluntown will realize \$27,141 in savings. This action was a positive response from a recent communication sent to the Superintendent to NFA expressing concern about the 3% increase in tuition for the 20-21 school year. The NFA Board of Trustees recently announced that the grant would be used to allow for tuition relief to its partner districts. Voluntown quickly replied to express our appreciation. These savings from NFA will restore recently reduced funds for tuition, maintenance items, and technology upgrades that were implemented to keep the 20-21 school budget proposal at a 0% increase.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS – Reviewed in Consent Agenda and in the report by the Superintendent

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. 2019-20 and 2020-2021 Budgets

The current 2019-2020 budget was utilized to pay off the last lease-purchase payment due next year in order to develop a 0% or no dollar increase budget for 2020-2021. This also resulted in a no MIL increase in order to consider the local taxpayer during this time of economic and COVID-19 challenge.

The approved budget for 2020-21 of \$6,785,196 which represents an 0% increase or 0% over the 2019-20 approved budget of \$6,785,196 was approved at the virtual town meeting held on 6/9/20. In the process of developing a 0% budget increase, there were decisions to delay capital improvement items, additional high school tuitions, and technology upgrades.

A summary of 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 above is a total increase of \$104,165 and subtracting the total decreases of \$116,025 this equals an overall decrease of \$11,860. This is the equivalent of \$3,953 decrease per year in the school budget for the above four years.

Education Cost Sharing Grant or ECS decreases of \$96,332 per year by the State of Connecticut

- 2017-2018 Received a decrease of \$327,766
- 2018-2019 Received an increase of \$118,357 (Thank you for a last-minute vote by legislators)
- 2019-2020 Received a decrease of \$86,575
- 2020-2021 Receives a decrease of \$89,346

The above decrease in ECS funds equals a total deduction or cutback of \$503,687 and a subtraction of the one-time increase of \$118,357 equals an overall decrease of \$385,330 for an average of \$96,332 per year. The state funding formula increases total ECS funds over the next several years. Larger municipalities are projected to receive increases whereas Voluntown receives one of the largest

decreases in actual dollars for the entire state. Hopefully, our legislators will make some adjustments for a more equitable formula. This constant reduction in state funds has been compensated, not by property tax increases, but by carefully developed reductions and cutbacks in staffing, health insurance savings, transportation adjustments, consistency in Special Education costs, utilizing available grants, carefully sequencing or delaying capital improvement projects, and other financial savings.

Board of Education and Board of Selectmen Budget History

- 2017-2018 equaled \$8,403,537 with BOE at 80.75% and Town at 19.25%
- 2018-2019 equaled \$8,709,235 with BOE at 79.10% and Town at 20.90%
- 2019-2020 equaled \$8,749,273 with BOE at 77.55% and Town at 22.45%
- 2020-2021 equaled \$8,801,589 with BOE at 77.09% and Town at 22.91%

The approved 2020-2021 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.

2. Wheeler High School – Third reading of contract.

Peter Nero, Superintendent of Schools, and the North Stonington Board of Education followed through with our Voluntown request to revise the draft of a tuition policy. This new policy is based on current enrollment and revised their previous proposal which was based on the NFA October 1 enrollment policy to determine the tuition invoice for the next school year.

This revised contract has a straight tuition for Voluntown and is 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. Our attorney has reviewed this contract and his minor revisions were accepted by North Stonington.

Once the Board of Education has approved the contract, we will revise the policy for designated high schools by adding Wheeler High School to the list. This means our 8th graders will start in September

with the high school review process and be allowed to consider enrollment in North Stonington for the 2021-2022 school year.

MOTION #2 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Trahan) that the Board approves the contract with Wheeler High School; 4 in favor and 1 abstain (Wicks). Motion carries.

3. 2019-20 Board of Education Performance Self-Evaluation (Fourth reading)

MOTION #3 (6/11/20) was made (Wilson, Grant) that the Board approves the BOE Performance Self-Evaluation as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.

4. Capital Improvement Plan

- In the process of developing the 2020-2021 budget proposal and the sincere desire to propose a 0% budget as well as support no MIL increase, all school Capital Improvement projects originally place on the list developed for the Town of Voluntown were delayed for a future year. Any needed facility and maintenance expenditures will be encumbered in the proposed 0% 2020-2021 school budget.

5. COVID-19 Update

- Schools and other organizations throughout Connecticut were closed by Executive Order by the Governor on March 16, 2020 for the remainder of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This required suspension of scheduled events. The school administrators along with the faculty and staff implemented a series of distance learning programs that were well attended and quite successful for our youth.
- Our school system along with the parents and, above all, the students made many adjustments to implement changes, especially as related to distance learning.
- Efforts were made by our small school system to make timely decisions to guide the process to successfully make things happen with timely communications, record keeping, and common-sense approaches.
- *We have reviewed bulk purchasing of PPE to prepare for COVID-19 challenges. Dr. Johnson mentioned that the State Education Resource Center (SERC) has agreed to provide this valuable support and service and has developed an online portal to assess your interest and need for purchasing these supplies.*
- *Mr. Burrows noted that our small school system uses a number of statewide purchasing services. We also have CREC (and EASTCONN) that have created an ordering process that allows us to obtain bid prices on many items. SERC will be another statewide bid source for bulk purchasing option for us to access to help obtain the best price.*

6. Social Worker Job Description (Second reading)

MOTION #4 (6/11/20) was made (Trahan, Wilson) that the Board approves the Social Worker Job Description as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.

7. BOE Mission Statement (Second reading)

8. BOE Goals for 2020-21 (Second reading)

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Summer School Staff

MOTION #5 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wicks) to approve Katelyn Stockford, Emilee Penman and Sue Dander as Summer School Certified Special Education Teachers; all in favor. Motion carries.

MOTION #6 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wicks) to approve Donna Pendill-Brown as the Speech/Language Pathologist; all in favor. Motion carries.

2. Summer Custodians

MOTION #7 (6/11/20) was made (Trahan, Wilson) to approve Marissa Loranger, Melanie Fargosa, Angela Gardella and Gary Chenette as Summer Custodians; all in favor. Motion carries.

3. **2019-20 Evaluation of the Superintendent**
MOTION #8 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wicks) to move the 2019-20 Evaluation of the Superintendent to Executive session; all in favor. Motion carries.
4. **Sacred Heart Intern**
MOTION #9 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Trahan) that the Board accepts Melissa Miller as the Sacred Heart Intern for 2020-21; all in favor. Motion carries.
5. **Administrative Goals (First reading)**
6. **School Calendar for 2020-21**
MOTION #10 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wicks) that the Board approves the updated School calendar for 2020-21 as presented; all in favor. Motion carries.
7. **Building Use Requests**
MOTION #11 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wilson) to approve the building use requests from the Town Hall for the Primary on 8/11/20 and the Elections on 11/3/20; all in favor. Motion carries.
8. **Faculty and Staff 2020-21 Assignments**

X. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING

- Upcoming BOE meeting will be held on July 9, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
- 2019-20 Evaluation of the Superintendent
- COVID-19 Update
- BOE Mission Statement (Third reading)
- BOE Goals (Third reading)
- Administrative Goals (Second reading)
- 2019-2020 Function-Object Report and Remaining Balances
- Guest: Tom O'Connor – Food Services Director

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION #12 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Wicks) to move into Executive Session at 8:48 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Negotiations and the Superintendent's evaluation and contract; all in favor. Motion passes.

MOTION #13 (6/11/20) was made (Grant, Trahan) to authorize the BOE Chair to sign the contracts of the administrators for 2020-21 school which was based on the recently approved budget; and to arrange for posting the contracts on the town website to comply with State Statutes; all in favor. Motion passes.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #14 (6/11/20) was made (Trahan, Wilson) to adjourn at 9:09 p.m.; all in favor. Motion carries.

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 7/9/20 BOE MEETING