

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 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

July 23, 2020

Virtual Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

A recording of this meeting will be posted on the school website. This meeting was live-streamed at the following:

<https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/7d99a29d-8db8-4ad0-a732-ed389cafb184>

and

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXdF6kZOMhDVNetgDX2MAQ>

I. CALL TO ORDER Chairperson Beuparlant called the Google Meet virtual meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

BOE Members Present: Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson), Arikka Kalwara, Meagan Wicks and Cathy Grant (Secretary)

Absent: Christopher Wilson, Kristen Trahan (Vice Chair) and Skart Paul

Also Present: Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent), Amy Suffoletto (Principal), Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D. (Director of Student Services), and Selectwoman Tracey Hanson, who helped create a Zoom meeting for the BOE and joined the meeting after the recess.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. CITIZENS / COMMENTS - No comments/questions were received up to one hour prior to the meeting.

IV. VOLUNTOWN REOPENING PLAN

1. Review of Updated Reopening Plan for 2020-21

Amy Suffoletto began her presentation on the Reopening Plan for VES. A slideshow is available on the school website reviewing the plan for a “full, safe, and appropriate” reopening for the Fall of 2020. The Reopening Plan, a Reopen Form and Informational Guide are also available, as well as a Q&A Form for staff and parents to submit with comments, questions and concerns, all of which will be addressed in upcoming Committee meetings.

The Reopen Committee has identified priority areas that must be in place which include:

- the safety of the students and staff;
- the development of appropriate educational opportunities;
- the awareness of social and emotional well-being of students, families and staff;
- and the expectation that all children will achieve at the expected grade level by June 2021.

Student and Staff Expectations were reviewed:

- Stay home if feeling ill.
- Morning self-screening is required.
- Face coverings and masks are required.
- Social distancing is required.
- Frequent hand washing or sanitizing is expected.
- Students may not change buses.

Plans/Tracks that are currently being planned for are dependent upon the state level/spread of COVID-19 and the mandates put forth from the State of Connecticut:

- **In-person Learning:** With minimal/no spread of COVID-19 in Connecticut, 100% of students and staff attend every day with all State guidelines and expectations in place.

- Remote Learning Track: An option available during the time of in-person learning where some students with medical concerns, illness, quarantine or other reason will learn at home with parent/guardian support in place. A weekly learning plan and support will be provided by the school.
- Hybrid Track: Should the spread of COVID-19 in Connecticut reach a moderate level, the school will operate at a reduced capacity (82% of students and staff attend, with no in-school Preschool) and parents/guardians engage with materials and support from the school.
- All Distance Learning: Learning takes place completely at home for all students as a result of school/district closure as mandated by the State.
- Homeschooling: Curriculum, learning and instructional materials are completely parent-led and parent-funded. No materials or support is given by the school. A letter of homeschool intent/notification must be filed with the Superintendent's office to withdraw from public school education if a parent chooses to homeschool their child.

More information and support is offered by the State of Connecticut Remote Learning Hub and can be found at <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Academic-Office/CT-Learning-Hub>.

Communications were received during Amy Suffoletto's presentation that some people were unable to access and view the meeting with the Google Meet link provided. Due to this technical difficulty, Selectwoman, Tracey Hanson, requested time to create a Zoom meeting that could be live-streamed and more easily accessed by the public via YouTube.

MOTION #1 (7/23/20) was made (Wicks, Grant) to take a recess at 7:42 p.m. to rectify the technical difficulties that the public was experiencing and attempt to restart the meeting again via Zoom: all in favor. Motion carries.

MOTION #2 (7/23/20) was made (Wicks, Kalwara) to restart the meeting at 8:07 p.m.: all in favor. Motion carries.

Amy Suffoletto restarted her presentation and reviewed the above information again. She also mentioned that a focus on everyone's social and emotional needs will be addressed, especially at the beginning of school. This was followed by a Question and Answer session between her and the Board.

- The Board presented concerns about the student's wearing masks all day and Amy assured them that plans were in place for the students and staff to have "mask breaks" and outside time with social distancing guidelines practiced.
- For at least the first few weeks of school, all students will receive active screening/thermometer checks before entering the school.
- Another topic of discussion was hot-spot travel notifications and it was stated that if a family is traveling or having possible COVID-19 exposure, they can choose the Remote Learning Track for a time to safely quarantine and it is hoped that families will be honest and transparent on that issue.
- Non-essential visitors will not be allowed in the school at this time.
- Water fountains will not be used. Students will be asked to bring and use individual water bottles.
- Lunches will be served in individual homeroom classrooms.
- All but four rooms in the school now have air conditioners, and air handlers are also in use to help in preventing overheating issues.
- The school ventilation system of air handlers has been checked and serviced and air filters will be changed more frequently to maintain indoor air quality. Classroom fans will be adjusted to maintain appropriate air flow up and away from classroom occupants.
- Specials (Art, Music, etc.) will be held in individual homeroom classrooms and P.E. will be held outdoors, as weather allows, while practicing social distancing guidelines.

- Classroom cohorts will be established, emphasizing the grouping of students by the same class/group of students and teachers so they each function independently as much as possible.
- The School Social Worker/Guidance Counselor will be spending time in each classroom to aid in the social/emotional well-being of students.
- Certain toys and furniture will be removed in classrooms to allow for appropriate spacing, and the school will follow the State Daycare guidelines for Preschool.

Superintendent Burrows expressed appreciation for the work of the Reopen Committee, which has met throughout the month of July to publish the Voluntown Reopening Plan. All Connecticut School Systems are required to submit individual Reopening Plans to the State Department of Education by July 24, 2020. The State will review plans and identify best practices and develop additional suggestions and recommendations to successfully and safely reopen schools, which closed by Executive Order on March 16, 2020.

The Voluntown Reopening Plan will continue to undergo changes and revisions and these changes will be shared with families as they occur. The Superintendent explained that the State published a template of questions that needed to be answered in submitting the plan. A Reopen Committee was formed and will continually monitor and review the everchanging information/guidelines provided by the State.

The following is a list of the Members on the Voluntown Reopen Committee:

Adam S. Burrows -----	Superintendent of Schools, Chair and Point of Contact
Amy L. Suffoletto -----	Principal and LEA COVID-19 Health and Safety Liaison
Lloyd A. Johnson -----	Director of Student Services
Holly Santiago -----	School Nurse
Brian Kallio -----	Director of Maintenance and Facilities
Terry Chenette -----	Transportation Coordinator
Thomas O'Connor -----	Director of Food Services
Rachel Ricard -----	Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Parent
Andrea Kelly -----	SRBI Teacher and VEA
Angela Gardella -----	Paraprofessional and CSEA
Kate Beauparlant -----	Board of Education Chair and Parent
Jim Ward -----	Technology Consultant
Kathy Groth -----	Counselor/Social Worker
Tracey Hanson -----	First Selectwoman and Parent
Patrick McCormack -----	UNCAS Health Director
Amanda Page -----	Parent

Superintendent Burrows received a memo from the State and mentioned that more directive changes may still come and further adjustments may need to be made to the Voluntown Reopening Plan. This means our Voluntown Reopening Plan may have additional revisions prior to the first day of school for students for the 2020-21 school year. Dr. Johnson noted that additional recommendations/changes may be needed for Special Education students as well.

The Reopen Committee will continue to meet weekly (Tuesdays) until a final plan is established, approved and submitted. The Superintendent mentioned that Brian Kallio, Director of Maintenance and Facilities, along with the extra custodians that have been hired throughout the summer have been busy cleaning and preparing the school to reopen. The State guidelines are allowing buses to operate close to capacity with requiring that all students and operators wear face coverings. VES plans to keep siblings together on the bus and practice as much social distancing guidelines as much as possible.

Lloyd Johnson stated that the Special Education Department has been successfully identifying students' needs at this time. Future PPT/IEP meetings will be held virtually to limit physical contact and maintain social distancing guidelines. Remote Track learners can still receive Special Education Services, but a plan will need to be established once it is determined how many In-School students

versus Remote Track students there will be. The Student Services Department is determined and dedicated to meet the needs of all students.

MOTION #3 (7/23/20) was made (Wicks, Kalwara) to authorize the Superintendent to submit the Reopening Plan to the State Department of Education: all in favor. Motion carries.

2. 2020-21 Calendar Adjustments

The Board discussed the possibility of having the entire first week of school consist of Early Dismissal days to aid in the transition of returning to school for both students and staff. The calendar presented to the Board now has the week of August 24-28, 2020 as Professional Development Days to allow the faculty and staff time to prepare for the return of students. The first day for students is now scheduled for Monday, August 31, 2020, which will have an early dismissal at 1:00 p.m. This will be followed by three full days and ending with another early dismissal day on Friday, September 4, 2020. There was a discussion of making September 1, 2, and 3 early dismissal days as well to allow students time to adjust to the return to school.

MOTION #4 (7/23/20) was made (Wicks, Grant) to approve the 2020-21 Calendar Adjustments as presented and, if needed, additional adjustments, such as the need to make September 1, 2, and 3 Early Dismissal Days, may be presented to the Board at the next regular meeting (8/13/20); all in favor. Motion carries.

3. Financial Survey for projected COVID-19 Expenses sent to SDE: COVID-19 Expenditures and District Reopen Survey was due to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) on July 17, 2020.

The Superintendent expressed appreciation for the work of the Board of Education in developing and approving a 0% 2020-2021 Budget Proposal and authorizing adjustments in the 2019-2020 budget to prepare for any projected additional expenditures related to the reopening of school. Our school system currently has class sizes that will allow for appropriate social distancing, as per state guidelines. This has allowed Voluntown to make current adjustments within the approved 2020-2021 budget.

COVID-19 related expenses to our school system during the 2019-2020 budget year were submitted to the Town of Voluntown to apply for possible reimbursement by FEMA. Appropriate back-up documentation is available. If approved, the Town may receive a certain percentage of the cost of eligible items and those funds will be deposited in the Undesignated Fund of the Town of Voluntown.

Mr. Burrows reviewed the highlights of our District Reopen Survey that was submitted to the CSDE based on information available on July 17, 2020:

- Indicated returning to school: Students 84%, Certified Faculty 97%, Non-Certified Staff 100%
- Transportation: 28% may be using school-provided transportation and the remaining indicated a desire to provide their own transportation.
- School Buildings: One school building with appropriate space for social distancing, and one central office (the size of two joined together portable classes) are on school property.

Anticipated COVID-19 Related Expenditures beyond the approved budget

- District Personnel \$203,500
 - Non-Personnel \$362,200
- Total.... \$565,700

The above estimated financial information submitted to the State included a comprehensive list to help prepare for expenses. The State will review the list submitted by each school system to determine the projected needs of each municipality and possibly provide financial support.

- Personnel expenditures included: virtual learning support, substitutes, back-up nursing services, part-time custodians, bus monitors, back-up bus and van drivers, etc.

- Non-personnel expenditures included: online program enhancements, desk screens and other classrooms supplies, PPE or Personal Protective Equipment for students and faculty, ventilation enhancements, A/Cs for four rooms, plexiglass, cleaning supplies and equipment, additional space for an isolation room, carts for meal delivery, Wi-Fi upgrades, Chromebooks, other technology needs, a new van (currently projected for replacement in 2021-2022), bus driver protective equipment, and cleaning supplies for busses and vans.

Mr. Burrows expressed his gratefulness for the Board of Education's support, competency and preciseness in developing budgets and supporting the effective management and documentation of the expenditure of every penny. Over four years of budgets, Mr. Burrows noted the Board of Education budgets, when added, equal a decrease of \$3,000 per year.

Special Note-There was an averaged budget decrease of \$2,965 per year based on the following:

A summary of the cost-savings efforts of the Board of Education: Decrease of \$11,860 over four years

- 2017-2018 budget had a decrease of \$11,403
- 2018-2019 budget had an increase of \$104,165
- 2019-2020 budget had a decrease of \$104,644
- 2020-2021 budget had a \$0.00 increase or 0%

4. Schedule of Communications to the Public

Mr. Burrows reviewed the upcoming plan to communicate the Reopening Plan to the public.

- New website links have been added to the School website with the Reopening Plan, as well as links for the public to submit their comments and questions. As changes come in from the State, the Reopening Plan will be updated on the website.
- Special note from the CSDE received on 7/24/20: "Plans should be communicated to families and members of your local community so that clear and concise information is provided in a consistent manner. We are creating a page on the CSDE website to list links to all district plans which will serve as a central reposition of information for families, other district leaders and stakeholders, and to share best practices and innovative approaches."

5. Other

MOTION #5 (7/23/20) was made (Kalwara, Wicks) to hold a Special Board of Education Meeting on August 27, 2020 to review the Reopening Plan; all in favor. Motion carries.

V. NEXT MEETING – Thursday, August 13, 2020

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #6 (7/23/20) was made (Grant/Wicks) to adjourn at 10:09 p.m.; all in favor. Motion carries.

Witness	Date	Attest	Date
Respectfully drafted and edited by:			
<i>Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk</i>			
<i>Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools</i>			
<i>Amy Suffoletto, Principal</i>			
<i>Rachel Ricard, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools</i>			

APPROVED AT THE 8/13/20 BOE MEETING