

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Dean Houle, Chairperson
Anne Fischer, Vice Chairperson
Laura Bush, Secretary
Kyle Percy, Treasurer
Michele Arn
Amarjit Buttar
Terri Goldich
David Kemp
William Nicholson

January 9, 2012

DRAFT MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A regular meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held at the Administration Building on Monday, January 9, 2011.

Chairperson Houle called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present when the meeting was called to order were Ms. Arn, Mrs. Bush, Mr. Buttar, Mrs. Fischer, Ms. Goldich, Mr. Kemp, Mr. Percy, and Mr. Nicholson. Also present were Dr. Conway, Mrs. Murasso and Mr. Purcaro. Student Representatives Katie Ashmead and Courtney Wheeler also attended the meeting.

1.0 Consent Agenda

- 1.1 (a) Approval of the minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on December 12, 2011

Mr. Buttar moved to pull Consent Agenda Items #1.1 (a).

Mr. Buttar noted that the following should be added to the December 12, 2011 minutes, Section 2.0, #2.1 Communications: **Mr. Buttar shared that this was a historical moment where four Board Chairs were sitting and are serving as board members.**

Mr. Buttar moved to amend #1.1(a) as noted. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Bush and passed unanimously.

2.0 Secretary's Report

2.1 Communications

Mrs. Fischer handed out "Vernon Gets Moving" forms from the Vernon Wellness Council to board members to keep track of the number of minutes that they are exercising. They can count their steps for the month of January going into February. Mrs. Fischer will collect the forms in February.

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Mrs. Bush shared that the Agricultural Education - FFA is having a Pasta Dinner on January 20th from 6 - 8 p.m. at the Tolland Agriculture Center in Tolland. Advance ticket purchase prices are \$10 for adults and \$6 for children. Tickets purchased at the door are \$12 for adults and \$8 for children.

Mr. Percy reported that he attended the Carbs & Coffee Breakfast at Vernon Center Middle School with principal, Mr. Michael Cain. The breakfast lasted about 45 - 60 minutes and 10 - 12 fathers attended. Mr. Percy thanked Mr. Cain for this event.

2.1 Opportunity for Board of Education to Add/Delete Agenda Items

There were no changes to the agenda.

2.3 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Student Representatives Katie Ashmead and Courtney Wheeler reported the following:

- There is an Agriculture Education Interview Night on January 10th for incoming freshman.
- There is a Project Graduation Meeting on January 17th at 7:00 p.m.
- There is an Agriculture Education -FFA Pasta Dinner on January 20th. This is a major fundraiser for the group.
- There is a Cocoa & Cram for Freshman on January 25th from 2 - 4:00 p.m.
- There is an Advisor/Advisee Meeting on January 24th.
- Exams start on January 26th and continue through January 31st.
- There is a Parent Group Meeting on January 26th.

3.0 Community Forum

No one addressed the Board.

4.0 Personnel

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4.1 Retirement Announcements

Dr. Conway reported that there are ten teacher retirements this year. Most of the teachers are retiring after 35 years of teaching and they are veteran teachers. Dr. Conway was grateful for their years of service and she was delighted to present the names of the retirees:

2 Teachers from Vernon Center Middle School: Francis Ashline and Ellen LeSure

1 Teacher from Maple Street School: Barbara Brahaney Amodio

2 Teachers from Northeast School: Deborah Luniewsky and Lyn Nielsen

4 Teachers from Rockville High School: Susan O'Brien, Mark Olsen, Susan Smith, and
Heather Styckiewicz

1 Teacher from Skinner Road School: Sherry Bedore (retired as of 10/1/11)

4.2 Administrator Retirement

Dr. Conway shared with the Board that Jill Goldberg, Fine Arts Coordinator, has submitted her letter of retirement effective at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. Dr. Conway noted that Mrs. Goldberg has served the district for 35 years and that she has been a teaching administrator.

The Board thanked Mrs. Goldberg for her years of service.

Mr. Percy moved to accept the retirement of Jill Goldberg, Fine Arts Coordinator, effective at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nicholson and passed unanimously.

4.3 Instructional Coaching

Dr. Conway shared with the Board that at the last board meeting the teacher coaches gave an overview of their coaching at the schools and reported how they have made an impact on teaching. The coaches also shared at that meeting that a survey was being

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sent to teachers and that they would be sharing the results of that survey at the next meeting with board members.

Mrs. Judy Latonie, Reading/Language Arts & Social Studies Coordinator, shared the results of the December 2011 survey with the board and highlighted some of the research which supports this model of professional development and systems reform.

Mrs. Latonie highlighted the following:

- The survey was sent out to 56 teachers in grades K-5.
- 35 surveys were returned.
- The surveys had an overwhelming positive tone and teachers were very appreciative of the coaches.
- Coaching is very helpful to learn new strategies and has impact on student achievement.
- Gains have been made in a short time.
- Students are excited about books and reading.
- Teachers value the coaching model.
- Coaches are resources to teachers and can respond instantly to requests.
- The teacher coaches have interacted so far with 60% of the K-5 staff.

Mrs. Fischer referred to the article titled "Coaches as System Leaders" and questioned whether the coaches spent time with the principals so that they are learning also and whether the coaches were teaching different methods throughout the district.

Mrs. Latonie noted that the coaches are building a track record in Vernon and that she is honored to work with them.

6.0 General Business

6.1 Donation to Vernon Public Schools from Dunbar Jewelers

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Dr. Conway shared with the Board that Dunbar Jewelers hosted a fundraiser for the Tolland and Vernon Public Schools and that they would like to donate 5% of their sales of their Chamilia beads from the two days after Thanksgiving to Vernon Public Schools. The amount of their donation is \$224.30.

Dr. Conway has asked the principals of all the schools what they would like to do with the donation. The principals wanted the donation to be used district-wide. Dr. Conway contacted Steve Phelps of the Wellness Committee and he was quite pleased with the offer of receiving the donation for the district-wide Wellness Committee. Dr. Conway also shared this information with Dunbar Jewelers.

Mrs. Bush moved that the Board of Education approve, with gratitude, the donation of \$224.30 from Dunbar Jewelers to Vernon Public Schools. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buttar and passed unanimously.

6.2 Donation to Northeast School Library

Dr. Conway shared with the board that Mr. and Mrs. Harry Delisle would like to donate \$25 to Northeast School Library in memory of Shawn O'Flinn. Shawn O'Flinn was the mother of Jesse Young, a former student at Northeast School who passed away two years ago.

Ms. Goldich moved that the Board of Education approve, with gratitude, the donation of \$25 from Mr. and Mrs. Delisle to Northeast School Library in memory of Shawn O'Flinn. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Bush and passed unanimously.

6.3 Truancy Counselor Report

Dr. Conway shared with the Board that a little over a year ago, with the Ed Jobs Fund, Mr. William Bilyak was hired as the district's Truancy Counselor/Residency Officer for grades 6 - 12. Mr. Oz Ramos from Vernon Youth Services, has been the Truancy Counselor for grades PK-5 and the district did not have anyone for the middle school and high school.

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Mr. Bilyak, Truancy Counselor, provided the Board with a report highlighting his position as Truancy Counselor/Residency Officer in Vernon Public Schools. He shared how his role is a vital key component to the Vernon Community Plan to improve attendance rates for all Vernon students leading to the successful outcome for our students to graduate.

Mr. Bilyak highlighted the following:

- His duties are to focus on counseling students and their parents/guardians who are having issues with attending school on a regular basis. This includes both youth that are truant by state statute and students that are having attendance problems in general.
- Vernon Center Middle School attendance for 2009/10 was 94.7%. Attendance for 2010/11 increased to 95.2%.
- Unexcused absences dropped significantly.
- Students are receiving additional counseling, letters sent home, phone calls, and meetings - including home visits which are very powerful.
- He collaborates with Oz Ramos from Vernon Youth Services Bureau, Juvenile Detention, and also with the Department of Children and Families.
- He has performed residency checks and has found families not living in Vernon but have children that continue to attend school in Vernon. These residency checks are saving Vernon thousands of dollars.

Mr. Kemp questioned why students were not in school - what the specific reasons were.

Mr. Bilyak shared the different reasons for students not attending school, which included: students telling parents they were sick when they weren't, transportation issues, students taking full days off of school to attend appointments, etc.

Also questioned was residency issues. Mr. Bilyak reported that he has investigated 12-15 residency issues. Dr. Conway noted that some of the residency issues are due to homelessness.

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Mrs. Patricia Buell, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, shared with the Board that once students start missing school days, tests, etc. the dropout rate increases. There are social and emotional issues which compound the situation. The high school works on a plan right away for intervention by using a team approach.

6.4 Technology Committee Report

Dr. Conway reported that the Technology Committee met recently with the Information Technology Director, Kevin Lemoi, who gave a presentation of the current state of technology in the district, the gaps and the direction of the district for the future.

Mr. Lemoi provided the board with a brief overview of the technology plan for the district.

Mr. Lemoi highlighted the following in his report:

- There are 2,964 pieces of technology in the district (hardware only).
- The district has 1,033 desktop computers. 42% of those are at the end of their life. There is old technology that is being unused. If they were to be replaced it would cost the district \$355,200.
- There are 23 district servers. 57% are old. The total replacement costs for the oldest servers is \$120,000.
- The infrastructure is old.
- The Vernon Public Schools wireless network has issues with connectivity, speed and reliability.
- There is no district-wide back-up plan.
- Vernon Public Schools have unreliable technology, slow internet, no standardization.

Mr. Lemoi shared the following ways to improve technology in the district:

- Finish interconnecting the schools with fiber and take advantage of the fiber plan with the Town of Vernon

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- In 2012/2013 update the firewall which would cost \$24,851. This is essentially critical for faster internet.
- Upgrade wireless networks at the middle school and high school, starting with the high school.

Mr. Lemoi also shared the upgrade costs which would be done in phases. He suggested:

- purchasing and installing 7 new 1Gb switches for wireless networks at the high school using the Universal Service Funds (USF) ,
- CAT6 Cable installation using USF funding (\$5,000),
- Rockville High School wireless install (\$143,125.50) - funding from budget,
- 21st Century Classroom and Cloud Computing, and
- initiating BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology) which is very cost effective.

Mr. Lemoi also spoke about moving beyond PC's, smartboard replacements, and the new district website.

Mrs. Bush moved that the Board approve a special meeting at which the Information Technology Director, Mr. Kevin Lemoi, will present a detailed technology plan for the district. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arn.

Ms. Goldich moved to amend the motion to include an invitation to Town Council members, the Mayor and the Town of Vernon's Information Technology Staff. The motion, as amended, was seconded by Mrs. Bush and passed unanimously.

6.5 Finance Committee

6.5(a) Year-to-Date Budget

Dr. Conway shared with the Board that the Year-to-Date Budget included in their packet was not the most recent copy. They should have received an updated copy in their email.

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Mr. Purcaro reviewed the financial report with the Board. The Finance Committee met prior to the board meeting.

Mr. Purcaro noted the following:

- All but \$2.6 million of the \$47.46 million budget has been obligated.
- Encumbrances are up-to-date.
- Special Education excess cost grant reimbursement may be reduced from 100% to 72% of eligible expenditures; Vernon budgeted based on 65% reimbursement. The excess cost grant has been capped at about \$140 million since 2008-09 and is budgeted at that level through 2012-13.
- Fuel oil pricing has not been locked in yet by the consortium. The consortium raised our cap to \$3.10/gallon. The business office is looking into the dual use of fuels in some of the schools.
- Magnet school and open choice tuitions will stay steady.
- School bus bids are being explored.
- The district is projecting \$215,521 in the Universal Service Fund.
- The school construction projects are complete except for the Rockville High School generator project. The high school is awaiting the testing of the generator.

7.0 To Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

Dr. Conway shared with the Board that our contract with our service provider for our vernonschools.com website calendar has expired. Therefore, there is a different format to the calendars in the board packets.

Mr. Percy noted that he liked the calendars in the packet; the format was easy to read.

8.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Relative to Agenda Items

There were no questions from the press.

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Ms. Arn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Bush and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Bush
Secretary