

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, September 11, 2023, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury VT & Virtual Connection**

ACSD District Vision and Mission

OUR VISION

Our vision is for all ACSD students to reach their full learning potential, have a sense of belonging in our schools, and enrich our community and the communities where they live in the future.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion for learning and growth among our students.

In Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Courtney Krahn; Eddie Fallis; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Heather Crowley; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescocock; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Nicole Carter; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tim Williams; Tricia Allen

Not In Attendance

Ellie Romp

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum Barb Wilson

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff Barb Wilson

Other ACSD Staff present: Tim Williams, Interim Superintendent; Heather Crowley, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity & Student Services; Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching & Learning; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations; Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement; Kelly Landwehr, Head Nurse at MUHS

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, Consultant, and Eddie Fallis, Student representative to the Board, also present.

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items Barb Wilson

Mary Slosar of Weybridge stated that she has several questions about the draft Strategic Plan included in the meeting materials. It doesn't feel like a Strategic Plan for a school district -- it contains mostly recommendations on Equity, and does not have any academic-focused goals and strategies with metrics, such as developing MTSS and developing a universally designed curriculum. She is confused about the process -- it seems like the Board should be doing the high-level goal setting to be implemented by the administration and staff, so why is

an outside entity leading this process? She wonders why the plan doesn't have more metrics, and the goals around access seem curious since there is nothing in the plan that proposes an analysis of the baseline conditions.

B. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 8/28/2023

Barb Wilson

James Malcom noted the inclusion of time estimates for the agenda items and the total meeting time -- they don't add up and don't represent the actual meeting time.

Heather Crowley said that she would try to remove those from the minutes, since they are primarily a guide to keep the Board on the agenda schedule.

Motion to approve the minutes of August 28, 2023.

Move: Jason Chance Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

C. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcom

James Malcolm reported that they have not received any ACSD bills since the last Board meeting on 8/28/2023.

D. Report of Student Representative

Eddie Fallis

Student Representative Eddie Fallis reported that MUHS Principal Caitlin Steele and others have begun recruiting another student rep to serve on the Board with him. The first few weeks have gone well, and student athletics and activities have just begun.

E. Report of the Superintendent

Tim Williams

1. Action: Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations

Tim Williams reported that all ACSD hires will come to the Board for approval prior to their start dates. This process was not followed during the summer, but will be followed moving forward. He presented two appointments to the Board for approval:

Appoint Katie Prouty as a Intensive Needs Paraprofessional as a 1.0 FTE, Step 1, per the ESP Master Agreement.

Appoint Connie Selleck as a Classroom Paraprofessional as a 1.0 FTE, Step 15, per the ESP Master Agreement.

Board Questions: Brian Bauer wanted clarification as to whether these positions were new positions or filled vacancies. Tim Williams stated that they were filled vacancies, and that the administration will seek Board approval before creation of any new positions.

Motion to approve the appointments of Katie Prouty as a Intensive Needs Paraprofessional and Connie Selleck as a Classroom Paraprofessional per the Superintendent's recommendation presented in the meeting materials.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

a. Appoint Katie Prouty as a Intensive Needs Paraprofessional as a 1.0 FTE, Step 1, per the ESP Master Agreement.

b. Appoint Connie Selleck as a Classroom Paraprofessional as a 1.0 FTE, Step 15, per the ESP Master Agreement.

2. Action: Fuel and Propane Bids

Matthew Corrente

Matt Corrente presented the memo with the bids for fuel oil and propane services for the

2023-24 academic year. He is recommending awarding the contract for fuel oil to Champlain Valley Fuels and the contract for propane to Fyles Bros, as the lowest bidders.

Motion to award the Fuel Oil bid for 2023-24 to Champlain Valley Fuels at a fixed price rate of \$3.13 and the Propane bid for 2023-24 to Fyles Bros. at a fixed price rate of \$1.45.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Brian Bauer Status: Passed

3. Discussion of Strategic Plan with Equity Focus

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak reviewed the Strategic Planning Process to date, and presented the updates that have been made since the last discussion. She emphasized that the focus on Equity is not meant to replace or ignore other academic initiatives in the District, but also noted that a Strategic Plan, by nature, should be focused in its scope.

Emma reviewed 3 concepts that have been added to the Strategic Plan language:

- Equitable budget, funding & staffing of facilities and integration with the Facilities Master Plan,
- Use of data for assessing progress (defining the metrics), and
- School placement

She noted that the Specific strategies and goals were not modified much because the team wanted Board agreement on the above language. Many members of the Action Team have also since moved on (students have graduated, some staff have left ACSD). She then opened it up for Board feedback, expressing the hope that the Board could agree on the modified Strategy language, with plans to approve the draft at the next Board meeting.

Board discussion:

Several Board members expressed concern that the draft Strategic Plan placed too much emphasis on Equity measures, and not enough focus on academic goals. Several were also confused about whether the document presented was the draft Strategic Plan in its entirety, or whether it was just an Equity component of a larger effort. The majority of Board members did not feel the draft was sufficiently complete for approval at the next meeting.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest strongly suggested that when the plan is approved and solidified, the Implementation Team include a few Board members to ensure fluid communication and appropriate direction.

Brian Bauer noted that the Strategic Plan as drafted was all about establishing a learning environment, but lacked specificity on academic measured.

Steve Orzech and Mary Heather Noble also observed that this Board clearly does not yet feel comfortable approving a Strategic Plan that does not have more academically-focused elements, especially considering the post-COVID literacy concerns in the District.

Jamie McCallum expressed concern about the Board's relinquishing control over the specifics of the plan, and has concerns about the scope. Ellen Whelan-Wuest and Jason Chance also expressed concerns about certain specific recommended actions in some areas (and the impact of some prescribed actions), and other very vague action steps without metrics for follow-up and assessment. Barb Wilson wanted clarification on how the plan articulates the District's educational expectations for its students. Brian Bauer also expressed reservation about the philosophy captured in the draft Strategic Plan and questioned whether it is moving the District toward a philosophy that really reflects the

community. He is concerned that the plan is slanted toward only a few perspectives.

Tim Williams was asked about his experience with developing Strategic Plans for school districts. His experience in PA was that the State prescribed a very narrow focus only on academics, and said that this flexibility to involve the community and address other broader District matters like equity is good -- but that more work clearly needs to be done to include both the Equity measures and academic/facilities planning. He cautioned the Board about deferring and delaying the Strategic Plan work to the point of abandoning the project, like what appears to have been done with the Facilities Master Plan.

Mary Heather Noble, James Malcolm and Steve Orzech mentioned the history of the Facilities Master Plan in relation to the Strategic Plan. Mary Heather noted that the Facilities Master Plan was paused in part due to the pandemic -- the influx of ESSER funds delayed the District's looming financial cliff, but the Board had also agreed that the Strategic Plan w/Equity focus needed to be completed and was supposed to serve as the "North Star" for District decisions re: facilities, staffing, and other resource distribution. She emphasized that the Facilities decisions have not gone away; just postponed, and that the Strategic Plan work will ultimately serve that decisions-making effort. We will feel the financial pressures again soon.

Suzanne Buck thanked Emma Mulvaney-Stanak and Emily Blistein for their work with the Action Team, and thanked the participants in the process -- it is important work that they've done. The Board just wants to elevate the presence of academically-focused strategies in support of the Board's goals. Ellen Whelan-Wuest also repeated the importance of community voice in the draft so far -- this is not a slanted document; it's so important to have a plan that includes these voices. She also noted the role that the leadership transition has had in the challenges around the planning process, and again emphasized the importance of keeping the Board involved in the implementation phase. Eddie Fallis also supported the addition of more academically focused strategies in support of the Board's goals, noting that if academic outcomes are inequitable, the plan isn't working.

Board members agreed to have Tim Williams meet again with the leadership team to discuss how to improve the plan, and where to go from here. Emma Mulvaney-Stanak invited Board members to continue providing feedback, and to get it to her asap. She and Emily Blistein both emphasized the importance of preserving the work of the Action Team, noting the trust that has been built in the process. The District wants to maintain that trust and relationship to work toward equity improvements. Barb Wilson asked whether an Ad Hoc Committee needed to be formed to assist this work. Tim Williams said he would meet with the District leaders to discuss and get back to her about that.

F. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson

1. Superintendent Search Update

Barb Wilson reported that she has been in touch with Judy Sclair-Stein of MacPherson & Jacobson. The Superintendent position was posted on September 1st. She has already received some interest from candidates and expects to have a good candidate pool.

Lindsey Hescoock asked whether the Board was going to discuss the OpEd in the paper from a former ACSD employee about racism in the middle school. Tim Williams reported that they had already issued communications to the MUMS staff and families, ACSD community, and

provided a response in the following issue of the paper. Barb Wilson also noted that the District is moving forward with a proposal from the equity/anti-racism consultant that had been sought after the incidents last academic year. Steve Orzech suggested that the matter should be brought up if the Board had a problem with the response provided by the administration, but that ongoing work seems to be moving in the right direction. Barb agreed that the group needed to continue with the meeting agenda.

2. New VT AOE Rules for School Boards

Barba Wilson provided a heads up to Board members about new Board Governance Rules from the Vermont Agency of Education. She strongly recommends that Board members watch the webinar about it, available on the VSBA website -- the Board will need to decide which work to tackle first. The good news is that this year's Board retreat work has already put us ahead.

Suzanne Buck noted that the VSBA's annual meeting is coming up on October 26th & 27th at Lake Morey. There is a fee for board members to attends, but it is an important meeting.

3. Middlebury Parks and Rec Representative

Barb Wilson said that she is looking for volunteers to serve as the ACSD rep on the Middlebury Parks & Rec Board. In the past few years, since nobody on the Board was available to serve, Karen Duguay was the citizen selected to represent Board interests. She no longer serves on the Parks & Rec Board, so we need to send a rep. Please reach out to Board if you are interested.

4. Addison Central SEPAC Representatives

Barb Wilson reported that a few people has expressed interest in serving as the Board rep on the Addison Central SEPAC, but that she has chosen Suzanne Buck and Joanna Doria to fill those spots. She thanked them and everyone else who expressed interest.

G. Report of the Board

Barb Wilson

1. Communications & Engagement

Mary Heather Noble

Mary Heather Noble reported that the C&E Committee had compiled materials to have at the Board tables for the ACSD back-to-school nights. She provided a quick peek at the folders each Board volunteer would be given for the event: photos of Board members, copies of the Superintendent Search Brochure and Timeline, copies of the draft Strategic Plan and Foundational Board Work for the planning process, and informational brochures about the Board's mission and role. She is also including suggestion cards for input.

After the back-to-school meetings, the C&E Committee will focus on the next quarterly Board Update, due out in October.

2. Facilities

Jason Chance

Jason Chance reported that the Facilities Committee is scheduled to meet on September 25th.

3. Finance

James Malcom

James Malcolm reported that the Finance Committee has worked with Matt Corrente to develop the Budget Timeline, and will be following the schedule to work with Principals to develop the budgets for each cost center. This year's budget drivers include the loss of ESSER funds and the implementation of the State's new pupil-weighting system. There are lots of complexities, and ACSD needs to consider worst-case scenarios.

James also reported that the 4th quarter report shows a fund balance of approximately

\$1,078,534 -- which is consistent with what was predicted.

4. Negotiations

Steve Orzech

Steve Orzech reported that the Negotiations Committee meeting on September 6th was rescheduled for next week. They are reviewing the contracts in preparation for negotiations, but have not yet been contacted by the Association -- so nothing has officially started yet.

5. Policy

Suzanne Buck

Suzanne Buck stated that the Policy Committee has not met since the last Board meeting.

6. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center Representatives

Steve Orzech
Tricia Allen

Steve Orzech and Tricia Allen reported that the Career Center's facility improvements are wrapping up and that the Open House will be coming up soon. They both encouraged Board members to attend to witness all the offerings that the Career center provides.

James Malcolm asked about whether the debris behind the Career Center can be cleaned up -- it's looking unsightly and unkempt. Matt Corrente stated that ACSD has asked for this as well.

7. Middlebury Community Television Representative

Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson reported that the MCTV Board has not met in a while, but will be meeting on 9/13/23.

H. Public Comment - Any Topic

Barb Wilson

Sam Ostrow of Middlebury stated that he is deeply concerned about Esther Charlstin's OpEd piece in the Addison Independent. The racism she experienced points to a cultural and structural problem at ACSD. The Board's duty is to rapidly address racism, and he hopes this will be a very public conversation. The Board and District need to take actions to support Esther and other BIPOC members of the ACSD community. He thanked Lindsey Hescocock for bringing the issue up during the Board meeting. Our duty is to act publicly, not to brush it under the rug. He would like to know how much anti-racism training the staff, faculty, Board and administration have received. Please make this a priority.

Mary Slosar of Weybridge expressed a need to build off of Sam Astor's point about training. There is a difference between offering training and requiring training. She sees this as an important distinction in training re: literacy too. She also believes there is a similar discrimination problem happening with respect to how staff refer to people with disabilities too.

Sepi Aleri of Weybridge also spoke out in response to the OpEd piece. She stated that her son specifically does not attend public school in VT because of this issue. He is of Iranian descent and has a Latin last name, and regularly experiences microgressions. People do things that they think are kind but are actually degrading. Her children attend school with Esther's children and it gives her chills to think about them experiencing racism like that in the school.

I. Adjournment

Barb Wilson

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Heather Noble
Board Clerk

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Jason Chance Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

***Public Comment Guidelines:**

Public comments are encouraged and welcome at each regular board meeting during the period designated for public comment. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. Citizens will be called to make their statement by the board chair. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.