

MINUTES



Addison Central School District

ACSD Board

Board Meeting

Monday, October 23, 2023, 6:30 pm - 9:00 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-Person Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Eddie Fallis; Ellen WhelanWuest; Heather Crowley; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescocock; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Nicole Carter; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck

Remote Attendance

Ellie Romp; Jason Chance; Tricia Allen

Not In Attendance

Tim Williams

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Other ACSD Staff present: Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity and Student Services; Heather Crowley, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations; Jen Kravitz, Principal of Mary Hogan School; Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement (remote)

Eddie Fallis ACSD Board Student Rep also present.

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items No public comment.

B. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 10/9/2023 and 10/18/2023

Approval of meeting minutes for October 9 and October 18, 2023 were done separately:

Jamie McCallum made a motion to approve the minutes of October 9, 2023. James Malcolm seconded. Joanna Doria requested edits to the draft minutes to reflect a question she had asked during the ESSER Grant Update portion of the meeting. She also noted that in the SEPAC update portion of the Committee Updates agenda item, she had reported that the SEPAC intends to provide a report to the ACSD Board in Spring 2024, but not specifically March of 2024. Mary Heather asked Joanna to email the specific edits, and indicated that she would also check the video recording.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the motion to approve the minutes of October 9, 2023 as amended. The motion passed. Ellen Whelan-Wuest abstained.

Jamie McCallum made a motion to approve the minutes of October 18, 2023. Steve Orzech seconded. No further discussion. Barb Wilson called the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm presented a summary of the ACSD Bills, read on October 16, 2023.

- Payroll: \$1,035,834.58

- General Fund: \$1,530,705.00 (Note: \$471,000 of this is to Bread Loaf Architects & Construction for the MUHS Kitchen Project, \$521,000 is the VEHI employee health and dental, and \$147,000 is District Debt).

Motion to approve and pay the ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

D. MCTV Root Cause/Path Forward

Barb Wilson introduced Kurt Broderson Executive Director for MCTV to discuss the issue at the October 9, 2023 Board meeting, in which MCTV accidentally live-broadcasted the audio of the Board's closed Executive Session.

Kurt offered his sincerest apologies for the incident, noting that MCTV understands the gravity of the mistake and that trust has been lost. He provided a summary of actions taken in the immediate aftermath, as well as a technical explanation for what occurred. The audio was from the camera microphone, which is not usually used, but was live in this circumstance. He also provided a summary of how the risk of a similar mistake can be minimized, noting that the rush to set up for a Board meeting right after a committee meeting in the same room presents

challenges. He also noted the difficulty in breaking for Executive Session at the beginning or middle of the Board meeting, rather than simply packing up and leaving early for an Executive Session at the end of a meeting. He made a few recommendations and then offered to take questions.

Barb Wilson explained that normally the Board would arrange for an Executive Session at the end of a meeting, but that the attorney's schedule prohibited that. Steve Orzech expressed significant concern about the legal ramifications of what happened, noting that the legal burden is placed on ACSD and not MCTV. He questioned whether it was worth having MCTV continue to live-stream Board meetings in the future, especially since ACSD provides a zoom link and also records the sessions. Mary Heather Noble also expressed concern and disappointment in the event, but feels that MCTV's streaming service enables ACSD to reach a portion of the community that won't access zoom meetings. Brian Bauer expressed agreement. James Malcolm asked if there was a way for the Board Chair or other Board member to be able to check the live stream to make sure Executive Session is secure before proceeding. He indicated that the incident is a good lesson. Others agreed that prevention efforts put into place in the future would increase the level of trust. There was no other Board discussion about altering the live-streaming arrangement with MCTV.

E. Report of the Student Representative

Student Board Representative Eddie Fallis reported that MUHS has created a BIPOC affinity space, and that the Student Government is meeting to follow-up on other efforts that can be made to prevent racism and support BIPOC students in the building. He also reported that the MUHS administration has selected another student representative, but it has not yet been announced. He expects the new representative will be joining board meetings soon.

F. Report of the Superintendent

Barb Wilson referenced the Superintendent's report that was included in the meeting materials, and invited questions/comments.

Mary Heather Noble called attention to the student achievement data included in the report, noting in particular the significant achievement gaps that exist between students from historically marginalized communities and those who are not -- she urged that this should be the focus of the Board's energy and work moving forward with the Strategic Plan and other decisions. She again expressed concern about the District's inability to report student achievement by school for the small rural schools without compromising student privacy -- the cohorts are also too small to provide any meaningful statistical data about school performance to inform data-based decision making. It doesn't seem like best practice.

Jamie McCallum agreed that it is a problem, but that the answer to the problem is to do qualitative research. Right now we have certain students in the population that are left out of the equation, so we should find ways to gather qualitative data without identifying them (e.g., interviewing teachers and principals). It just takes more time. Mary Heather and James Malcolm both pushed back, questioning the methodology for the purposes and repeating that the data sets are too small to

generate valid statistics. Ellen Whelan-Wuest expressed appreciation for the Interim Superintendent grouping the data for all rural schools together, and questioned the value of presenting the data separate for each school. Why not report all the elementary schools together like this?

Lindsey Hescock asked how "historically marginalized" was defined. Nicole Carter responded that it is based on state-defined designations, and includes FRL, BIPOC, recipients of Special Education, etc. She referenced Act 182. Lindsey noted that it is both helpful and unhelpful to examine the rural school achievement data grouped together like that, and that there is an ongoing conversation about the achievement gap between some of the schools themselves, so she agrees with Mary Heather's comment.

Steve Orzech noted that this is a larger discussion that should be scheduled for another time. Barb Wilson agreed. Joanna Doria clarified that this is one test, and that there are other measures of student achievement too. She hopes the District is collecting different types of data too.

1. Action: Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations

a. Appoint Andre Bergeron as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of Master Agreement

Approval of the ACSD appointments was done in two motions: one for the custodial staff, and one for the paraprofessional and building-based substitute positions.

Suzanne Buck made a motion to 1) Appoint Andre Bergeron as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE,

Step 1 of Master Agreement, and 2) Elevate Jack Ryea from a part-time Custodian to a 1.0 FTE Custodian, Step 5 of Master Agreement. Jamie McCallum seconded. There was no Board discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Suzanne Buck made a second motion to 1) Appoint Heather Drake as a

Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of Master Agreement, 2) Appoint Hannah

Harding-Minton as a Building Based Substitute, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union, and

3) Appoint Samantha Willard as a Paraprofessional, 1.00 FTE, Step 5 of Master

Agreement. Mary Heather Noble seconded. Jamie McCallum asked what a

'building-based sub' is. Nicole Carter explained that it is a substitute teacher that is specifically designated to work in a particular school. They will be working in the same school because the need for subs in that school is great. Steve Orzech also explained that they are paid like a long-term sub, rather than a daily fee. He also took the opportunity to thank Central Office administrators for these appointments, as they are in response to the critical need at Mary Hogan School.

- b. Appoint Heather Drake as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of Master Agreement
 - c. Appoint Hannah Harding-Minton as a Building Based Substitute, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union
 - d. Elevate Jack Ryea from a part-time Custodian to a 1.0 FTE Custodian, Step 5 of Master Agreement
 - e. Appoint Samantha Willard as a Paraprofessional, 1.00 FTE, Step 5 of Master Agreement
2. Action: Motion to approve the prequalification criteria as written and proceed with the next steps to solicit General Contractors for the upcoming Mary Hogan Elementary School ESSER project.

Matt Corrente explained that this is a standard gate the Board must go through to authorize the administration to solicit bids for the Mary Hogan HVAC project. James Malcolm clarified the spending deadline for this projects earmarked ESSER funds: September 2024.

Motion to approve the prequalification criteria as written and proceed with the next steps to solicit General Contractors for the upcoming Mary Hogan Elementary School ESSER project. Move: Steve Orzech Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

3. Presentation: Budget Development #1

Matt Corrente presented Budget Development #1 from the meeting materials, focusing on expected budget increases for each cost center, based upon meetings with ACSD leaders. He said that he is nearing the end of individual cost center budget meetings, and that the next presentation will have more clarity.

Highlights from the presentation:

-- Matt continues to work on re-organizing budget line items by cost center, so some expenses have been re-assigned to different cost centers to more accurately portray where the expenses actually occur. They are also fine-tuning the Special Education & Student Services Department to reflect the hierarchy between the two (Special Education is within Student Services). He noted that this Department is hit the hardest by sunseting ESSER funds, since several

interventionists have been funded by this money. The current plan is to absorb the 6.5 FTE of ESSER-funded personnel.

-- Matt noted that the FY24 budget was designed to provide some contingency funds for facilities needs, so he anticipates this Department's budget to remain level for FY25. The contingency funds should provide enough to deal with immediate needs -- and the focus is on projects that will not involve major systems overhaul (or triggering a domino effect of addressing issues currently "grandfathered in"). He also noted the need to address some non-classroom space concerns at MUMS: conference space, library space, special education spaces and gym space. The Facilities Department is recommending investing in design to address these needs.

- IT budget is also expected to be level-funded, with minor increases. They are recommending purchasing a vehicle to assist with transportation of IT equipment between ACSD campuses. This would likely be a cost savings to ACSD, as it could also be used for team transport instead of busses for small teams. Lindsey Hescocock wondered why the purchase of a vehicle wouldn't be in the Facilities Dept budget -- Matt explained that the cost would be split between IT and MUHS, because that is where the use is focused.

-- The Central Office and School Board cost center expenses include legal fees, professional dues and fees, and will also incur increased insurance costs. Jamie McCallum asked if this included the IB fees -- Matt said that those fees are housed in the Professional Development and Curriculum cost center.

-- The Professional Development and Curriculum Department budget is expected to increase significantly, mainly due to the absorption of the ESSER-funded Literacy Coordinator's salary and benefits. However, Matt expects the IB fees to significantly decrease, as they have worked to negotiate a new fee structure for the PYP (ACSD is arguing that the small rural schools should not be charged as individual schools but rather as portions of the district-wide PYP, much like the MYP fees work for MUMS and MUHS).

-- Matt noted some challenges with reporting the Food Service Department figures, in part because much of food service expenses are actually funded through the State's Universal Meals program. His reports to the State have been problematic because there are other cost center personnel & equipment costs that are not covered by the Universal Meals program. They are still working to determine the best way to organize and present the information for this cost center.

-- Individual school budgets were also presented along with enrollment. Anticipating level funding, with some exceptions. The Dean position at MUMS is an ESSER-funded position that would be absorbed into general fund, and there was a requisition from MUHS to consider design of a turf athletic field. This request drew some criticism from Board members. Jamie McCallum asked if the presentation was based on the school's wish lists. Matt acknowledged that

the presentation includes expenses that each building leader would like to see included.

-- Matt also included a table with comparative per-pupil costs between MUHS, MUMS, Mary Hogan School, and all the rural schools combined. Expenses were broken down by building staff expenses, facilities expenses, IT, and transportation. Special Education costs were not included. Lindsey Hescoock noted the significant difference in per pupil building (staffing & supplies) cost between the combined small elementary schools and Mary Hogan School. Matt's final slides also included pie charts illustrating the proportion of spending on personnel and other expense categories: 85% of the general fund is spent on personnel; 75% of student services is spent on personnel, but 14% of student services budget is spent on contracted CSAC services that would otherwise be classified as personnel.

Board Questions & Comments:

Steve Orzech observed that the budget process seems to be driven by the District asking each school what it wants, rather than the other way around. This has resulted in unbalanced funding. We are level funding schools but increasing the budget for central office -- that doesn't feel right. There is also a significant disparity between the funding for the combined rural schools versus Mary Hogan School. The combined rural schools have more administrators and \$800,000 more building-expense funding than Mary Hogan, but Mary Hogan school has more students. This is a huge budget driver. There is a huge imbalance in resource distribution. Mary Hogan is adequately staffed and they are doing a great job but we are getting into a budget crunch. What criteria do we use to evaluate this? He also mentioned the facilities question and consolidation -- this board has yet to discuss it. This is an equity concern. It is incumbent on us to look at this, and he would like the Board to either consider forming an ad hoc committee, or charging the Finance Committee to look at this.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest said that she asked Matt Corrente and Tim Williams to provide staffing numbers similar to what was done in 2021 during the Facilities Master Planning in case this question came up. She thinks that the Board needs to hold staffing and staffing ratios at the center of the discussion. It always bothered her that the 3- and 4- school models called for dramatic increases in students per classroom, at Mary Hogan as well. We need to be clear that we need to be talking about students need, and that having fewer adults in the buildings would not be beneficial for anybody.

-- Mary Heather Noble agreed with both Steve and Ellen. It is a difficult conversation to have, but the only way to really address excess spending is to look at personnel costs and consolidation should be considered to relieve that. 75-85% of the ACSD budget is spent on personnel, so if the Board is to really get a handle on excessive spending, it must look at this option. It is imperative to base this on student need, rather than just arbitrarily cutting staff. The Board prior to this one already did much of that work during the Facilities Master

Planning process, and we will need to continue it. She does not advocate for drastic action for FY25 since we will be transitioning to a new Superintendent, but the issue cannot be ignored.

-- Joanna Doria agreed that the Board needs to focus on student need. We need to identify the problem that needs to be solved. The Board has seen a lot of budget numbers, but it has also heard a lot of teachers and parents provide public comment about the need at Mary Hogan. She sees a capacity problem and that classrooms should not be so densely populated. There was a vision for a universal district that transcends old town boundaries, but there is also the individual student need. She agrees that the Board should be looking at this but actually identifying the problem it is trying to solve.

-- Lindsey Hescocock agreed with all of the comments so far, but pointed out the inequities between Mary Hogan resources and rural school resources considering the student populations. She advocated for a creative solution to spread the student population among all the schools (e.g., school choice, magnet schools). She agrees that this is something the Board should be talking about alongside the budget talks. Let's try to think creatively.

-- James Malcolm stated that the Board is not going to solve the issue tonight, and lamented hearing about "getting creative," when he and a few others who have been on the Board for a long time have spend hundreds of hours working on this.

-- Barb Wilson agreed about tabling further discussion and asked the Board what it would like to do -- does it want to create an ad hoc committee to examine this? The Board also needs to guide administration for FY25 development, recognizing that major shifts will likely need to wait until a new Superintendent is in place.

-- Suzanne Buck suggested adding it to the agenda for the next Board meeting. Barb agreed to do so.

G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson presented the Board Work Plan that the Executive Committee had prepared, and explained how the plan was organized. She then invited questions/feedback, particularly anything that might be missing. Suzanne Buck recommended the addition of the VSBA annual meeting, since the ACSD Board is a member of the organization. She also suggested adding reports from regular testing/surveys so the Board can anticipate when it will receive these results.

James Malcolm emphasized the importance of including the Superintendent Goal-Setting and Evaluation, and suggested that the Board consider the timing of such efforts. In the past, the Board has conducted Superintendent Evaluations right after on-boarding new members, which has been awkward. Steve Orzech expressed the need to include a line item for receiving academic progress reports on a regular basis. Barb Wilson directed him to Item 5.8 in the plan, which references progress reports for

the Strategic Plan. The academic progress reports can be a specific element of this item.

1. Work Plan Update/Review

H. Report of the Board

1. Communications & Engagement

Mary Heather Noble reported that the draft Board Update for Fall 2023 has been sent to all Board members for feedback -- she has received comments from a few people, and is hoping to send out Tuesday 10/24 or Wednesday 10/25. The Committee is thinking about engagement activities around the Strategic Plan once it is approved, and hopes to tag onto the "Friends-of" parent groups at ACSD schools to do some of this outreach work. Mary Heather also shared that the Committee would like the Board to consider doing a Boardwide gesture of gratitude for ACSD teachers and staff prior to the Thanksgiving Break.

2. Facilities

Jason Chance reported that the Facilities Committee meeting was cancelled to make room for the Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Committee meeting. The Facilities Committee will meet in November.

3. Finance

James Malcolm reported that the Finance Committee has not met since the last Board meeting.

4. Negotiations

Steve Orzech reported that the Negotiations Committee has not yet met since the last board meeting.

5. Policy

Suzanne Buck reported that the Policy Committee has several policies that will be coming to the Board soon.

6. Addison Central SEPAC Update

Joanna Doria reported that the next regular SEPAC meeting is on November 2nd in the MUHS library, and will include a listening session beforehand. Also on the calendar is a literacy presentation by Heather Gebo on November 14th.

7. Middlebury Community Television Update

Barb Wilson reported that the MCTV Board met and discussed the accidental live streaming of audio from the Board's Executive Session.

8. Parks and Recreation Update

Lindsey Hescocock reported that she has been in touch with Scott Borne, the new Director of Middlebury Parks & Rec. He is working with the board to establish its regular meeting schedule, and will connect with her when that is done.

9. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center

Steve Orzech reminded the Board that the PAHCC Open House is on November 9, 2023 from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

10. Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee

Barb Wilson reported that the Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Committee had met earlier in the day and made good progress. They will meet again on October 30th and probably once more before reporting to the full board.

I. Public Comment - Any Topic

Josh and Meghan Dishal of Middlebury provided statements. Mr. Dishal thanked Joanna Doria for tying her comments on the budget presentation to the letter of concern presented to the Board by Mary Hogan Interventionist Sarah Ingersoll at the last Board meeting. This gets to why they are here tonight. He referenced the points made by Mary Heather Noble, Ellen Whelan-Wuest, and Nicole Carter regarding use of paraprofessionals to get additional adults in the classroom verses having trained, qualified professionals. He can only speak for his student's experience at Mary Hogan -- but his understanding is that educators are asking for more adults in the room. And that this will make/is making a difference. He presented a question to the Board: are you addressing longer term concerns, or are you addressing immediate needs at Mary Hogan?

Ms. Dishal added that their son is in one of the hardest kindergarten classrooms. Her observation is that there is a big difference when there are additional adults in the room. She understands the long-term goal of wanting higher-qualified professionals with systems to support learning, but there is an immediate need.

Barb Wilson explained that the public comment period is not intended for a back-and-forth exchange, but said that the Board knows that Central Office is working to address the immediate needs at Mary Hogan. The Dishals expressed appreciation, but added that transparency from all levels is necessary to assure parents, because they have a child who is bright and normally loves school but he is stressed and afraid to come to school, not knowing what is being done. Barb expressed the importance of working with the classroom teacher, principal and superintendent on the issue as well. Ms. Dishal said that they've had meetings, but feel it goes beyond the teacher and building administrator. The Board and community should be aware of this issue.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest said that she has heard this from other parents at other schools as well. She stressed the importance of having an adequate number of adults in classrooms, and referenced the challenges around moving 6th grade students to MUMS without adequate staffing, and how poorly that worked. We need to be honest with ourselves and the community about that.

Mary Heather Noble invited the Dishals to email any and all board members to continue the conversation. Public comment is not the only way to engage. Mr. Dishal thanked the Board and said that he agreed with everything Steve Orzech said about the District-wide allocation of resources, but that he does not agree that Mary Hogan is adequately staffed.

J. Executive Session: Superintendent Search - Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a) (3)

Entered Executive Session at 9:00 p.m. Exited Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 9:40 p.m.

Motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Superintendent Search - Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a) (3).

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: James Malcolm Status: Passed

K. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Heather Noble, Board Clerk

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Ellen Whelan-Wuest Second: Suzanne Buck 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.