

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, January 8, 2024, 6:30 pm - 9:30 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-Person Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescoock; Mary Heather Noble; Steve Orzech; Tricia Allen

Remote Attendance

Ellie Romp; Suzanne Buck

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum Barb Wilson 5 min

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

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff

ACSD Staff present: Tim Williams, Interim Superintendent; Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity and Student Services; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance and Operations; Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching and Learning; Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement; Bjarki Sears, Principal of Salisbury Community School and Acting Principal of Cornwall Elementary School; Joy Dobson, PYP Coordinator; Heather Gebo, Literacy Coordinator

Sophia Lawton, Student Rep to the ACSD Board also present
Eddie Fallis, Student Rep to the ACSD Board briefly present

Nicole MacTavish, Superintendent of the Hannaford Career Center also present

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items 10 min

No public comment.

- B. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 12/11/2023 5 min

James Malcolm noted a misspelling of Bruce MacIntire's name in the minutes; Ellen Whelan-

Wuest also noted an incomplete sentence on page 5. Minutes passed with corrections.

Motion to approve [revised] minutes from December 11, 2023.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

C. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcolm presented the ACSD Bills, read by himself and Jason Chance on December 26, 2023:

General Fund: \$1,123,072.59 (\$725,378 of this is PAHCC tuition; \$142,052 is student transportation)

Payroll: \$966,338.54

Payroll: \$181.93

Payroll: \$155.82

Motion to approve and pay ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

D. Report of the Student Representatives

Eddie Fallis 5 min
Sophia Lawton

Sophia Lawton reported that Quarter 2 is coming to a close. MUHS Student Council is working to make the Better Student Stakeholder group more diverse to reflect the makeup of the MUHS student population.

E. PAHCC Budget presentation

20 min

Dr. Nicole MacTavish, Superintendent for the Hannaford Career Center, provided a presentation on the Career Center's programs, enrollment, and budget, as included in the meeting materials. Of note:

- PAHCC will be adding Electrical, Plumbing, and Welding Programs to their offerings next year.
- In VT there are not enough people going into the trades to replace retirees -- CTE programming is greatly needed.
- Federal funding for trades has diminished significantly over the last several years.
- Given the unemployment rates, every graduate needs to be employable.
- CTE is an important tool in student retention (flexible pathways keep kids enrolled).
- PAHCC enrollment is increasing
- PAHCC funding also includes other sources: Collins Aerospace, Senator Leahy's high-tech manufacturing funding, and some Federal Perkins funding.

The PAHCC budget for FY25 is expected to increase between 10-11% -- preliminary forecast is \$31,259 per student. It is important to note that the cost of delivering the programming is pretty fixed, and that tuition per student decreases the more students are enrolled. She is working hard to increase enrollment.

Board Questions:

Jason Chance asked what the biggest barriers to enrollment are. Dr. MacTavish responded that the two biggest obstacles are: 1) High School schedules of sending districts, and 2) Required English credits of sending districts that can't be provided by PAHCC. There was some discussion about efforts to address these issues.

Suzanne Buck mentioned that PAHCC used to provide Math and English credits, so has been done. She also asked about the status of the Theater Arts program. Dr. MacTavish responded that enrollment in the program has expanded and that the program seems well-loved and attended. They are trying to find a partner university to offer college credit for the programming.

Steve Orzech commended Dr. MacTavish on her work in the 6 months that she has been leading PAHCC.

F. Report of the Superintendent

Tim Williams

1. Action: Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations

5 min

Steve Orzech asked Dr. Williams where the District stands with respect to paraprofessional vacancies. Dr. Williams said that the majority have been filled, but that there are still a few left. Ellen Whelan-Wuest asked if the pay increases have made a difference with recruitment. Dr. Williams feels that it has – ACSD is more competitive now.

Motion to approve the five appointments presented in meeting materials, including:

- a. Appoint Ashleigh Capek-Disorda as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1
- b. Appoint Scott MacDougal as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1
- c. Appoint Jane Phinney as a Paraprofessional, .50 FTE, Non-Union no step placement as less than 20 hrs/week
- d. Appoint Emily Pottinger as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1
- e. Approve the transfer of Gail Williams from Payroll Coordinator to Administrative Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union position no step placement

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

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2. Action: Set FY25 Tuition Rates

Matthew Corrente 5 min

Matt Corrente presented the details for the FY25 proposed ACSD tuition rates and FY25 tuition rates for the Addison County Special Education Collaborative (ACP).

Ellen Whelan-Wuest made a motion to set the FY25 ACSD tuition rate at \$16,972 for elementary (K-5) and \$22,394 for secondary (6-12). Suzanne Buck seconded. Barb Wilson called the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Jason Chance made a motion to approve the submission of the FY25 ACP tuition rate of \$43,638 per FTE to the VT Agency of Education on behalf of the Addison County Special Education Collaborative. Jamie McCallum seconded.

Joanna Doria asked a question about the distinction between projected costs and total allowable costs. Of note: transportation cannot be covered since this expense is covered elsewhere in district budgets.

Suzanne Buck asked if the Board has always set tuition for the Addison County Collaborative Program (ACP). Matt Corrente responded that this is the first time, but is being done so to provide a foundation for making the program available to students who need it. Jamie McCallum asked if all spots were filled, and noted a mistake in the presented numbers. Steve Orzech noted the correct figured.

Mary Heather Noble made a motion to revise the original motion to approve the FY25 ACP tuition rate of \$43,368 per FTE. Joanna Doria seconded. Barb Wilson called the vote and the revision to the original motion passed.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the revised motion to approve the submission of the FY25 ACP tuition rate of \$43,368 per FTE to the VT Agency of Education on behalf of the Addison County Special Education Collaborative. The revised motion passed unanimously.

3. Tier I Curriculum Overview

Courtney Krahn 25 min

Courtney Krahn presented an overview of the ACSD Tier 1 curriculum work from the slide presentation included in the meeting materials. Of note:

- Factors that influence the tier 1 coordinated curriculum include state & local drivers (Act 173, state education quality standards, IB framework, Strategic Plan, and state-required continuous improvement plan); best practices in curriculum development (technology, horizontal and vertical alignment, etc.); state and local assessments (standardized testing and screening assessments); and need-based professional development and collaborative structures (e.g., IB, literacy training, etc.).

- ACSD's commitment is to provide a guaranteed coordinated curriculum so that students across the district are all prepared with mastery of the same proficiencies using the same standards, and that students are adequately prepared as they move from one grade to the next. This is the expectation. Courtney shared some slides with Then-Now-Next comparisons on how the District has evolved over time to move toward this commitment. The District's adoption of IB allowed it to lay the foundation and is further ahead in this effort than most districts in Vermont.

- Specific examples of horizontal and vertical alignment were described, and examples of types of assessments to monitor student progress in proficiency were also presented. The IB framework allowed local instructors to collaborate and develop a coordinated curriculum that layers skills and proficiencies in the unit concepts. All of ACSD's curriculum has been developed by its own teacher teams.

Board Questions:

Ellen Whelan-Wuest asked about how common transferrable skills (e.g., self management, critical thinking, communication, research, etc.) are handled. Courtney noted that while all of the skills are developed in the context of the current curriculum, there is not yet a firm structure that dictates when these skills will be specifically taught -- this is ongoing work.

Steve Orzech observed that the IB program provides the backbone of the coordinated curriculum, and asked how the tier 1 curriculum can be guaranteed in mixed-grade classrooms. Mary Heather echoed this question and also asked about the level of effort the District has spent on horizontal alignment (bringing all school buildings to the same curriculum expectations) verses vertical alignment (prepping students for the next level). Courtney said that the District has expended significant time and energy developing both and

that it will always be refined. There is a lot of backwards design in the curriculum development to ensure that students receive what they need for the next grade level. She conceded that the delivery in mixed grade classrooms can be tricky.

Suzanne Buck asked about how the curriculum ensures achievement of state standards. Courtney explained the "cross-walking" effort to design content based on standards and layer in additional literacy and math skills into units of inquiry.

4. State Representative Peter Conlon - Act 127 Overview 10 min

State Representative and former ACSD Board member Peter Conlon joined the meeting to take questions about the implementation of Act 127 and Act 173, and the implications for the FY25 budget. He explained that this budget season is shaped by a confluence of several factors, including the roll-out of these two laws and the other fiscal pressures caused by inflation, healthcare costs, etc.

Steve Orzech asked Peter to clarify the limitation on the spending increase and how the resulting 5% tax cap works over the 5-year phasing in period. Notes from Peter Conlon's response:

- The <10% spending increase limit is based on the prior year's budget, not just on the FY24 budget figures. So districts are allowed to increase their spending by as much as <10% each year to keep their tax rate increases to 5% intervals. The idea is to allow districts to gently ease toward the increased tax rates imposed by the implementation of Act 127 (new student weighting formulas).

- If districts do nothing to control their annual increases, the penalty is swift and significant (no 5% tax rate cap to ease in -- it would jump to the actual tax rate based on the new Act 127 figures).

- If districts continue to increase their spending, but still keep it within the <10% limitation, they may still find that their cumulative spending creases will result in unbearably high tax rates at the end of the 5-year period.

- There is also concern that the State will not be able to financially sustain this "grace period" for all districts that meet the spending limit criteria. There was substantial concerned discussion about negative outcomes even if the district "follows the rules."

Board Questions:

- Jamie McCallum asked about how real the danger of penalty was if most district would not likely be able to comply with the <10% spending increase limit. Peter Conlon explained that the structure for qualifying for the 5% tax cap over 5 years was to allow districts to adjust to the new pupil weighting formula and resulting distribution of education funds. If districts are not careful with their spending they will have to justify it in front of a state board.

- Mary Heather Noble noted the similarity between the current budget climate and the pre-COVID state spending threshold. This sounds like the same story -- the state is forcing districts to address excessing spending. We can't keep asking for more.

- Ellen Whelan-Wuest clarified the 5% cap as an incentive rather than a penalty. Others noted the danger of simply postponing the fiscal cliff over a 5 year period if no efforts are made to cut spending within the phase-in period for Act 127.

- Suzanne Buck underscored the risk of the State not having enough funding if too many districts qualify for and use the incentive. If everyone gets the 5% tax rate cap, there won't be enough in the education fund and the State will have to pull other levers (commercial property tax, non homestead tax) to raise that money. They may revisit the legislation and take the 5% tax cap incentive away -- then districts will be really stuck.

5. Presentation: Budget Development #4: Property Tax Rates & CLA Matthew Corrente 30 min

Matt Corrente provided the ACSD FY25 Budget presentation #4, as included in the meeting materials. This presentation's focus was on:

- Impacts of Act 127 (the District's weights, a year-to-year comparison, and color-coded illustrations of how the limiting spending increases to <10% can still result in a fiscal cliff at the end of the 5-year phase in period).

- Current enrollment figures, ACSD's Long Term Weighted Average numbers and the resulting Equalized District Tax Rate (EDTR) Calculation.

- Common Levels of Appraisal (CLA) and Town Tax Rate projections.

Summary of presentation:

- ACSD's enrollment has decreased by 1.6%

- Declining enrollment/weight combined with increased spending create dual pressures on the District Tax Rate.

- The EDTR if 5% tax cap is lost is \$1.71; with the 5% tax cap, the EDTR is \$1.47.

- With a \$1.47 EDTR, the CLAs increase for all ACSD towns by a range of 1.91 (Middlebury & Weybridge) to 2.15 (Salisbury). These figures would be much higher and result in huge tax rate increases if the EDTR was \$1.71.

- Bottom line: ACSD must keep the spending increase below 10% or run the risk of gambling with the EDTR.

Board Comments and Questions:

- Mary Heather Noble underscored the importance of voters understanding the 5-year component to the narrative. The Board cannot act like this is just one tough budget year. This is 5 tough budget years and taxpayers may still get crushed at the end of it.

- Ellen When-Wuest acknowledged the challenge but also emphasized that we are talking about people when we talk about the budget.

- Suzanne Buck said the Board needs to talk about whether it can afford to keep everything open and educate our students equitably while still staying within the State's formula.

- Brian Bauer asked if the District is paying the full amount of healthcare for its employees.

- Steve Orzech explained that the District is paying 80% but that the rates on the 20% that teachers pay have also gone way up. He noted that moving forward with a capital bond project seems like an impossibility.

- James Malcom reminded the group that the legislation might change if the 5% tax cap is a

failed effort.

- Joanna Doria noted that it is so absurd for the education fund to have to shoulder a 16.4% increase in healthcare expenses.

G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson 10 min

1. Budget Outreach

Barb Wilson briefly updated the Board on the coordinated work between the Finance Committee and Communications & Engagement Committee to develop voter education materials for the FY25 budget.

2. Update on Dr. Baker's monthly visits to ACSD

Barb Wilson provided a brief update on Dr. Wendy Baker's visit schedule for the upcoming months, and noted that she is conducting the visits on her own time.

H. Report of the Board

1. Action: Approve Policy A22- Notice of Non-discrimination

Suzanne Buck 5 min

Suzanne Buck presented Policy A22 and A23 for Board approval.

Motion to Approve Policy A22- Notice of Non-discrimination.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

2. Action: Approve Policy A23- Community Engagement and Vision

Suzanne Buck 5 min

Action: Approve Policy A23- Community Engagement and Vision

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

I. Public Comment - Any Topic

10 min

Dennis Michael of Middlebury provided a comment. He is a retired law enforcement officer with 2 kids enrolled in the District. He also has a 4-year-old entering ACSD soon. He is concerned about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) flag flying under the American flag at Mary Hogan School. He has talked to 35-40 people who feel similarly. They don't feel there is any race, creed, or color better than the other. All are equal under the flag. He does not understand why the BLM flag is flying. He would like to see the BLM flag replaced with an All Lives Matter flag, or just the American Flag. He then expressed gratitude for being able to provide his comment, and commended the Board on its professionalism.

J. Superintendent Transition Framework

Barb Wilson 20 min

Barb Wilson presented a short slide presentation with an initial proposal for a Superintendent Transition Framework for Dr. Wendy Baker. The proposal takes advantage of Dr. Baker's availability over the next 6 months to include her in high-level planning and implementation of the recently approved Strategic Plan, and eventually transition her to part-time operational leadership at the end of the 2023-24 academic year before administrative leaders break for the summer. The idea is to enable a supported, structured transition while Central Office leaders are available and to invest in the Superintendent/Board relationship before her official start date.

The Board then entered Executive Session to discuss compensation details for the transition framework.

1. Executive Session: Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a) (3)

Entered Executive Session at 9:30 p.m.

Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 10:15 p.m.

Motion to enter Executive Session to discuss compensation details for Dr. Wendy Baker's transition framework, per 1 VSA Section 313(a)3.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

2. Action: Approve Superintendent Transition Framework

Motion to authorize Board Chair Barb Wilson to negotiate compensation and establish a formal Transition Framework for Dr. Wendy Baker, for an amount not to exceed \$25,000.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Tricia Allen Status: Passed

K. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Heather Noble
ACSD Board Clerk

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Tricia Allen Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 55m

*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.