

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, March 11, 2024, 6:30 pm - 8:00 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; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Ellie Romp; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen

Remote Attendance

Jason Chance

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum

Tim Williams

Meeting called to order by Interim Superintendent Tim Williams at 6:30 p.m.

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff

ACSD Staff present: Tim Williams, Interim Superintendent; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations; Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity & Student Services; Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching & Learning; Bruce Macintire, Director of Facilities

ACSD Student Representatives Eddie Fallis and Sophia Lawton also present.

Of note: 23 additional ACSD staff from Mary Hogan School (teachers and paraprofessionals) also present in person. Additional staff present online.

B. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Tim Williams

No public comment on agenda items.

C. Action: Board Reorganization - Election of Officers:

1. Board Chair

Tim Williams took nominations for Board Chair.

Joanna Doria nominated Barb Wilson for Board Chair. Brian Bauer seconded. Barb Wilson accepted the nomination.

Steve Orzech nominated Mary Heather Noble for Board Chair. Jamie McCallum seconded. Mary Heather Noble declined the nomination.

Tim Williams called for additional nominations; none were given. The vote for Barb Wilson as Board Chair was called. 12 Ayes and 1 Nay by Steve Orzech. Barb Wilson continues as Board Chair.

2. Vice Chair

Barb Wilson called for nominations for Vice Chair.

James Malcolm nominated Suzanne Buck for Vice Chair. Tricia Allen seconded. Suzanne accepted the nomination.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest nominated Mary Heather Noble for Vice Chair. Joanna Doria seconded. Mary Heather declined the nomination.

Barb Wilson requested additional nominations; none were given. Barb called the vote for Suzanne Buck as Vice Chair. 12 Ayes and 1 Nay by Ellen Whelan-Wuest. Suzanne Buck is the new Vice Chair.

3. Clerk

Barb Wilson called for nominations for the Board Secretary/Clerk position.

Suzanne Buck nominated Mary Heather Noble. Joanna Doria seconded. Mary Heather accepted the nomination.

Barb Wilson called for any additional nominations; none were given. Barb called the vote for Mary Heather Noble as Board Secretary/Clerk. All Ayes -- Mary Heather Noble continues as Board Secretary.

4. Appoint Truancy Officer

Barb Wilson called for nominations for Truancy Officer.

Tricia Allen nominated MUHS School Resource Officer Connor Sousa. James Malcolm seconded.

No other nominations were given. Barb Wilson called the vote and Connor Sousa was unanimously approved as the Truancy Officer.

5. Appoint PAHCC Representatives

Barb Wilson called for nomination of two Board Members to serve as ACSD Board reps on the PAHCC Board.

Mary Heather Noble nominated Steve Orzech. Tricia Allen seconded. Steve accepted the nomination. Barb Wilson called the vote and Steve Orzech was unanimously approved as the PAHCC Board rep.

Joanna Doria nominated Tricia Allen for the other position. Suzanne Buck seconded. Tricia Allen accepted the nomination. Barb Wilson called the vote and Tricia Allen was unanimously approved as the second PAHCC Board rep.

D. Establish Regular Board Meeting Date and Time

Upon establishment of the Board Chair and other Board Officers, Steve Orzech made a motion to amend the agenda to add an Executive Session to discuss the status of Labor negotiations per 1 VSA Section 313 (a) 1. Jamie McCallum seconded.

Steve expressed the need for the Negotiations Committee to update the full Board, and requested an Executive Session at the end of the meeting, after the second public comment period. There was brief discussion to clarify when the Executive Session would occur. Barb Wilson called the vote and it was unanimously approved. An Executive Session was added after Agenda Item K.

Barb Wilson then asked the Board about establishing a regular meeting time, and whether members wished to continue the same schedule.

Steve Orzech made a motion to maintain the current Board meeting schedule of every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Suzanne Buck seconded. There was no further discussion. Barb Wilson called the vote and it was unanimously approved.

E. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 2/12/2024 and 2/26/2024

Barb Wilson called for motions to approve the 2/12/24 and 2/26/24 meetings separately.

Jamie McCallum made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2/12/24 board meeting. James Malcolm seconded. No discussion. Barb Wilson called the vote. 11 Ayes, 0 Nays. Joanna Doria and Laura Harthan abstained.

Joanna Doria made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2/26/24 special board meeting. Steve Orzech seconded. No discussion. Barb Wilson called the vote. 10 ayes, 0 Nays. Elite Romp, Laura Harthan, and Tricia Allen abstained.

F. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm

James Malcolm read two sets of ACSD Bills.

1. Read by James Malcolm and Jason Chance on 2/19/24:

General Fund: \$283,797.93 (~\$175K of this is transportation, and \$90K for Teacher retirement)

Payroll: \$456.44

Payroll: \$957,657.34

2. Read by James Malcolm and Jason Chance on 3/4/24:

General Fund: \$801,932.11 (~\$535K of this is for health and dental benefits)

Payroll: \$553.54

Payroll: \$954,834.90

Payroll: \$275.13

McGilton Fund: \$6,309.53

James reported that 1 correction was made on the second set of bills and that they did not see any issues beyond that.

Motion to approve payment of the ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

G. Report of the Student Representatives

Eddie Fallis
Sophia Lawton

Eddie Fallis reported that MUHS registered 85 eligible students to vote prior to Town Meeting Day. MUHS is also hosting Neurodiversity Week in conjunction with an upcoming Unified Basketball home game. And the Senior Play (Legally Blonde) is this coming weekend. He encouraged people to buy tickets and attend.

Sophia Lawton reported that Hope Happens Here is hosting a trivia night at MUHS from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. on March 20th.

H. Report of the Superintendent

Tim Williams

1. April 8, 2024 Early Dismissal for Eclipse

Tim Williams reported that ACSD would have Early Release on April 8th for the Eclipse. This decision was based in part on the expected traffic and concern that busses would not be able to get students home as the eclipse is expected to occur right around the end of the school day. Administrators also want teachers and students to be able to enjoy the eclipse.

2. Free/Reduced Information

Tim Williams presented the Federal and State AOE Free & Reduced Lunch numbers for ACSD schools. The Federal FRL numbers are census-based; State AOE FRL numbers are based on other proxy poverty indicators, including Medicaid, SNAP, Head Start, etc.

Dr. Williams noted the differences between the State and Federal estimates (state estimates of poverty are much higher than federal), but emphasized the distribution of poverty across the District. Of note: Bridport, Mary Hogan, Ripton, Salisbury and MUMS are all above 40% poverty based on State AOE FRL for FY24. Cornwall and Weybridge the lowest, with Weybridge unable to report state AOE figures due to the small number of students in the category (anything less than 11 students is considered to be identifying as is withheld from reporting). Based on Federal data, FRL is highest for Salisbury (47.69%), Bridport (33.33%), and Mary Hogan (28.74%) and lowest for Cornwall (12.0%) and Weybridge (11.63%).

Board Questions:

Ellie Romp asked which figure determines ACSD funding. Dr. Williams responded that both figures are used to determine ACSD's funding. The Federal numbers determine the Title 1 funding eligibility for ACSD schools, and the State AOE figures are factored into the pupil weighting formula established by Act 127.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest asked Dr. Williams to again clarify the qualifying criteria between State and Federal poverty (FRL) estimates. Bottom line: the State uses more proxy data to capture students living in poverty, so is considered a bigger net.

Joanna Doria asked how the figures change every year -- The Census figures are provided by the Census Bureau for Federal FRL figures, and are likely based on algorithms since the actual census is only once every 10 years.

James Malcolm emphasized the different data sets, and how much higher the State figures are. Because Act 127 provides additional funding weight for students living in poverty, this should help explain why taxes are increasing so much. He also pointed out the challenge of getting accurate FRL figures with self-reported forms.

Matt Corrente provided some explanation about how the proxy data are reported/gathered and direct certification FRL versus self-reported FRL forms.

Mary Heather Noble asked about how the FRL figures play into the data Dr. Williams shared in one of his prior weekly reports that included the AOE's District Snapshot for student achievement, school health & safety, and the "equity index." How does the state's algorithm for equity index take FRL data into account?

Dr. Williams responded that the figures are a very important part of the Equity index, as students living in poverty is considered a disadvantaged subgroup that now receives additional weight in education funding. The FRL figures are important for identifying and tackling the achievement gap and should inform how resources are distributed. Mary Heather requested a follow-up presentation on this relationship, noting that this is the core of the District's strategic plan work.

3. Action: Approve MUHS Learning Center project for bid solicitation

Matt Corrente and Bruce Macintire provided information on the proposed MUHS learning lab project. The MUHS leadership team proposes an update to the learning lab section of the library to:

1. create a centrally located, welcoming and accessible space for academic support at the core of MUHS, and
2. provide flexibility to the learning lab space to enable faculty and students to utilize the space for independent study, personalized learning, and flexible pathways to graduation.

Some background: this section of the library had been previously used as a computer center before each student was equipped with a Chromebook. The previous use of the space had become obsolete, so was essentially being used as a storage area. Current MUHS admin wish to return this portion of the library to its intended learning purpose, and have temporarily established a learning lab for academic support. However, the space is not ideal, as it does not have permanent walls to provide privacy and disturbance-free space for academic intervention.

The proposal: installation of a large window wall/partition to provide a bright, welcoming space for supported learning, with additional closed-door office and conference space for confidential meeting purposes. Additional power outlets to accommodate equipment. Bruce Macintire has obtained preliminary estimates for the work (\$320,000), but needs Board approval to solicit bids. They hope to be able to complete the work during summer 2024 to complete the space in time for the 2024-25 school year. The requisition action is not to approve the project, but rather to allow Bruce to solicit bids for the work to support a decision later.

Board questions:

Brian Bauer expressed concerns about proceeding with a vote without knowing how much the project would cost.

Jason Chance asked for clarification on the square footage. Is it sufficient space for the intended purposes? Bruce responded that this is the space currently being used for support services, which used to be located in the hallway connecting MUHS to PAHCC. This is a better location and will get more student traffic, but has limitations w/r/t acoustics and privacy.

Eddie Fallis asked about the glass wall/partition structure -- how does this accommodate the need for privacy? Bruce responded that the library and special education stakeholders both wanted the space to be bright and welcoming flexible for multi-purpose. The proposal also includes a separate office and meeting space to provide privacy.

Tricia Allen asked how the project development was coordinated with the library staff. Bruce confirmed that library staff were consulted and included in the design along with staff from student services. Both departments participated in the architect survey that informed the design. Phase II would propose additional renovation of the library itself.

Steve Orzech asked whether the \$320K estimate was to prepare the plans or to complete the project. He expressed concern about the expense and wondered about alternative plans to reduce the scope and cost. Bruce and Matt responded that the \$320K estimate was obtained from a professional estimator (who was also used on the kitchen project and was pretty accurate). Matt explained that the difference in cost between the window wall and a sheetrock wall is probably between \$30K and \$40K, but that the sheetrock wall would not achieve the desired outcome expressed by the stakeholders.

Mary Heather Noble asked about the funding source -- will the project be funded from the Capital Reserve Fund? What other projects are proposed for that money? Matt responded that this and the Mary Hogan HVAC work are the most-developed plans for upcoming work. There is about \$3.1M in the fund. This project would be in the ballpark of \$320K and the Mary Hogan HVAC work is already funded with FY24 ESSER funds and the remainder in the FY25 budget (ie. likely won't use capital reserve funds). Matt noted some additional work needed at Central Office (not yet fully estimated) and acknowledged that other deferred maintenance needs are looming, but that those needs have domino-effect expenses and will likely need to be part of a bond initiative.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest noted the reason for this current proposal is to take advantage of the summer to complete the work, and also mentioned that the Facilities Committee had discussed work at Central Office likely being in the ballpark of \$500 - \$660K.

Note: Tally for the vote: 11 Aves and 1 Nay by Brian Bauer.

Motion to allow Facilities Director to proceed with soliciting bids for the proposed MUHS Learning Lab project as presented and discussed.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: James Malcolm Status: Passed

4. Action: Approve Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations/Retirements

Tim Williams presented the list of ACSD Faculty/Staff Appointments, Retirements, and Resignations for Board approval.

Board Questions:

Ellen Whelan-Wuest noted the number of paraprofessionals included in the list.

Tricia Allen asked where this leaves the District w/r/t vacancies. Dr. Williams and Matt Corrente said that there are currently 17 open FTE positions -- 6 are for paraprofessionals.

Jason Chance noted how many of the resignations are at Mary Hogan and asked what is going on. Tim Williams said that the teachers and staff in the room would likely provide public comment on that issue.

Note: Laura Harthan abstained from the vote.

Motion to approve ACSD Faculty/Staff Appointments, Retirements, and Resignations as presented, including:

- a. Appoint Johnna Devino as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 8 of the support staff agreement
- b. Appoint Simon Kiel as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of the support staff agreement
- c. Appoint Kayli Manning as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of the support staff agreement
- d. Appoint Alex Ramage as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2 of the support staff agreement
- e. Accept the resignation of Heather Crowley, Executive Assistant effective 3/29/2024
- f. Resignation of Amy Jensen, Paraprofessional effective 2/6/2024
- g. Resignation of Michael Lenox, Special Educator effective 6/30/2024
- h. Resignation of Melissa Lynch, Paraprofessional effective 3/4/2024
- i. Resignation of Heather McDonough, Paraprofessional effective 3/8/2024
- j. Resignation of Samantha Willard, Paraprofessional effective 2/27/2024
- k. Retirement of Eva McDonough, School Nurse effective 6/30/2024

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Steve Orzech Status: Passed

- a. Appoint Johnna Devino as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 8 of the support staff agreement
- b. Appoint Simon Kiel as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of the support staff agreement
- c. Appoint Kayli Manning as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of the support staff agreement
- d. Appoint Alex Ramage as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2 of the support staff agreement
- e. Accept the Resignation of Heather Crowley, Executive Assistant effective 3/29/2024
- f. Accept the Resignation of Amy Jensen, Paraprofessional effective 2/6/2024
- g. Accept the Resignation of Michael Lenox, Special Educator effective 6/30/2024
- h. Accept the Resignation of Melissa Lynch, Paraprofessional effective 3/4/2024
- i. Accept the Resignation of Heather McDonough, Paraprofessional effective 3/8/2024
- j. Accept the Resignation of Samantha Willard, Paraprofessional effective 2/27/2024
- k. Accept the Retirement of Eva McDonough, School Nurse effective 6/30/2024

I. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson reported on a few items:

1. She had provided a quote to Addison Independent to personally thank voters for supporting the budget, but it wasn't submitted in time. She is suggesting providing a LTE/statement from the full board to say the same thing, and wondered if Board members supported this idea.

Mary Heather Noble expressed support for the idea, noting the impact of the budget on taxpayers. She believes the Board is near/at the limit of taxpayer support and is worried about being able to pass a bond for long term facilities work. She believes acknowledgement of their support in this climate is the first thing to be done in starting the conversation about moving toward more financially sustainable operations.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest also expressed the need to repeat the external factors that drove the budget up in the first place, to again educate taxpayers on the broader picture. She cannot emphasize this enough.

James Malcolm noted that ACSD was on an island with this school budget vote, as all the other districts in the county were unable to pass their budgets. He is relieved, but unsettled by what feels like a close call -- we have a lot to address moving forward.

Joanna Doria also noted that the Board needs to keep challenging itself to keep the community in the conversation as it contemplates this work.

Barb observed overall support for issuing a Board Statement. She will send a draft ASAP to get it submitted to the Addison Independent by Wednesday's print deadline.

2. Barb Wilson asked Board members to email her with their committee preferences by Friday 3/15 so the Executive Committee can make assignments at its next meeting. She mentioned the possibility of another committee to oversee strategic plan implementation. She also mentioned the possibility of a Board Retreat in May to discuss these strategic plan/equity/financial sustainability questions.

3. Barb Wilson reported that the Executive Committee had revised and augmented some of the On-Boarding materials and would like to develop a more formal Board Procedure for on-boarding to ensure consistency over time. Steve Orzech suggested having Board mentors assigned to new members. Mary Heather Noble asked any members interested in acting as a mentor to email Barb.

4. Finally Barb Wilson mentioned that she hopes to work with the Executive Committee and other committee chairs to develop a work plan for this new Board session, including a Board critique. James Malcolm cautioned against over-committing or over-scheduling the Board, given the unforeseen urgent matters that often arise in Board work.

J. Report of the Board

Barb Wilson invited any brief updates from Committee Chairs.

Mary Heather Noble thanked everyone who assisted the Communications & Engagement Committee with Budget voter outreach, including the admin and Finance Committee.

Jason Chance mentioned that the Facilities Committee has been working on developing a scope of work for repairs/updates needed at Central Office. The ballpark price range is between \$500-\$600K. They are also looking at how to tackle facilities in the Strategic Plan implementation.

Steve Orzech noted that the PAHCC budget passed, and expressed gratitude, especially considering all the school budget hurdles. He is glad to see broad community support for the Career Center.

1. Committee Updates

K. Public Comment - Any Topic

Deb Levesque, Raven Payne, Adam Gould, Melissa Flint, Jenna Hogan, Jessica McCauley, and Megan Sears --all teachers from Mary Hogan School-- took turns reading from a prepared statement provided below.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest requested they email the statement to the full board. James Malcolm thanked them for their statement and explained that although the Board cannot engage in a two-way conversation during public comment period, it takes the statement seriously.

The Statement:

"Intro

Good evening.

Several teachers from Mary Hogan join you tonight to express our concern for the safety and academic growth of our school's children. Over the course of this year, Mary Hogan parents and staff have periodically shared their concerns with you regarding the wellbeing of our students and staff. Because issues involving safety and compromised academic learning continue to arise daily, we are here tonight to collectively ask for the support of our board and the Middlebury community as we seek action to bring about positive change.

Before moving on, we wish to explicitly state that we could not ask our Leadership Team to care more or work harder on behalf of the students and staff at Mary Hogan. We also wish to recognize and appreciate the steps that have been put in place thus far. Among them, implementing a Student Response Coordinator has made a notable difference, and we hope this role will become permanent. However, despite our leadership's tireless efforts and the unwavering care and commitment of our staff, we lack the personnel and systems to adequately meet the needs of our students.

Mary Hogan is a microcosm of our society. The behaviors of some Mary Hogan students reflect the increasing volume and intensity of our broader community's mental health challenges. Our principals are frequently called away from meetings or other aspects of their administrative roles to support student behavior. Often, there are multiple classroom evacuations within the course of a week. These incidents not only deprive students of learning time, they also compromise our students' sense of safety. With some frequency, hallways are blocked off. At times students must exit the building to travel between learning spaces. Our goal tonight is to illustrate the level to which these scenarios and other challenges manifest themselves within our school on a daily basis. Classroom teachers will share how these behaviors detrimentally impact the safety and academic growth of their students. Additionally, faculty members will propose action steps that established research, coupled with our own professional experience, suggest will help restore our ability to educate Middlebury and ACSD's children in the safe, supportive manner they deserve. Thank you.

Experiences

Good evening.

We are the first grade classroom teachers at Mary Hogan School, Melissa Flint, Adam Gould, Frankie Wisnowski and Raven Payne. Collectively, we have nearly 50 years of teaching experience and extensive training in instructional practices and using a trauma-informed approach in our classrooms. This training includes Responsive Classroom, district based professional development workshops focused on supporting children from backgrounds with trauma, graduate level coursework with renowned specialists Ross Greene and David Melnick, as well as courses on executive functioning skills and working with children with ADHD.

In our classrooms, we foster community building and problem-solving and as teachers we can often address minor behaviors. However, we have seen an increase in highly disruptive

behaviors over the past several years. This year, Mary Hogan School has implemented an incident report protocol and the amount of unsafe incidents has been extraordinary. We have seen desks tipped over, chairs thrown, materials and student work destroyed, bookcases cleared, as well as verbal threats to both students and adults. Both adults and students have been kicked, punched, bit, and slapped by other students. There have also been a number of times when profanity has been projected through the classroom and halls for other students to hear.

When we have been forced to evacuate a space due to a child having unsafe behavior, we immediately have left our rooms without teaching materials and found a safe space to work in the school with the rest of the class. This has happened many times, sometimes multiple times a day, with loss of learning time for our students. In some incidents, we have been blocked from leaving the classroom due to dangerous actions. We have also been blocked from returning to our rooms, remaining outside the building for 45 minutes because our entire hallway was closed due to unsafe student behavior. These hallways are closed off for travel for the entire school as we all navigate the halls by taking alternate routes, which sometimes forces us to travel outside unexpectedly. Not only have we had to evacuate from our classrooms, we have also evacuated from common spaces in the school. These examples undoubtedly cause secondary trauma to other students as well as the student who is in crisis. We are greatly concerned about the wellbeing and safety of all of the students and staff at our school.

Teams are everything, especially when teaching is hard. It is how we work together to help each other to teach and support our students. We couldn't ask Jen Kravitz and Stephen McKinney to be more supportive of us and our students. They have been incredible! They have asked Xanthe Kilzer and Marissa Hennings, behavior specialists, to facilitate social skill building in small groups during math rotations in first grade. We are team teaching during literacy, alongside academic interventionists and special educators with a tiered intervention system. We are meeting students where they are at and giving them the academic support they need. According to research, we should see a decrease in behavior with a tiered system of support and that is not the case. We are using a trauma informed approach in our classroom through our professional development we've had inside and outside our school. So that our students can have a space to feel seen and valued, we have held grade-wide meetings, as well as daily Morning Meetings in each of our classrooms. We have implemented alternative schedules and behavior plans for specific students on top of trying to care for all of our students. Many of these interventions and teamwork approaches have happened at other grade levels, as behavioral issues occur across many settings and grade levels in our school.

While we are all here because we value our work with children, it would be a mistake to ignore the fact that some of these situations also cause trauma for adults working in the school. It can, and often does, lead to compassion fatigue, extreme stress and anxiety and, more often than we would like to admit, physical injury. It's no wonder it feels like an impossible task to be fully staffed, not to mention retain our current colleagues.

We are all keenly aware of the fiscal and policy challenges the board routinely faces. Please know we are incredibly grateful for your commitment and service. We also implore you to hear what we're sharing. There are few professions that would willingly tolerate workplace conditions like this, not to mention feel like it's a place one would choose to work at or want to send their children to. We don't want to be alarmists. We are sharing because we care about all of our students and want to feel safe. This is a problem in our community that cannot be ignored and will take all of us to solve. Thank you for listening.

Hard Asks

We are writing to advocate for the continued presence of a Student Response Coordinator (SRC) at Mary Hogan School. Since the addition of this position in October, the contribution has

been invaluable. The SRC has not only established positive relationships with students and faculty, but has also demonstrated a deep understanding of our community's needs.

As a member of the Student Support Team, the Student Response Coordinator has efficiently processed incident reports and provided crucial follow-up with families, staff and students. The SRC's proactive approach has significantly contributed to creating a supportive environment for our school community. In many instances, this person has been the immediate support needed when teachers called for assistance. The absence of the SRC in January resulted in disruptions in counselor provided student services and increased burdens on the majority of staff members, most especially administration.

The role of a student response coordinator has become essential in addressing the increasing number of behavioral incidents. For instance, since the start of data collection in October, there have been over 200 behavior incidents reported in the first grade alone. Without the Student Response Coordinator's presence, our counselors and administrators are stretched thin, responding to a higher volume of incidents, leading to disruptions in student services and administrative availability.

We believe that maintaining the position of a Student Response Coordinator is crucial for the continued well-being of our school community. The presence of this position not only enhances our ability to respond to behavioral incidents effectively, but also allows other members of our school community to focus on their designated responsibilities.

We urge the board to consider the ongoing need for a Student Response Coordinator at Mary Hogan School and to prioritize the well-being and support of our students and staff.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Given the issues brought up tonight, these are our requests as staff.

As already mentioned, we desire the continued presence of a Student Response Coordinator at Mary Hogan Elementary School.

We ask for budgetary and staff resources to provide greater capacity in the Wellness Learning Center at Mary Hogan to support more students.

We ask that the board looks intensively at incident report data and social emotional student needs when deciding how to efficiently and effectively use the current ACSD budget. We are not asking you to compromise resources in other schools, but rather to look at adding resources to successfully support the Mary Hogan community through the end of the year while the district continues to plan for next year.

We also ask for 4 teachers to be maintained at every grade level at MH for 2024-25 and beyond. This would assist in reducing class size to restore our ability to educate Middlebury's children in the safe, supportive manner they deserve.

Conclusion

Before leaving, we wish to thank each of you for listening to our concerns and proposals. While we recognize that this is a challenging time for school districts, financially; we also recognize the far greater cost of not addressing these issues.

Thank you."

Mary Slosar from Weybridge noted that some of the issues referenced in the teacher statement may be grounded in how ACSD schools address behavior problems. She noted how moving students to the District's smaller schools can be beneficial because some students function better in the smaller settings. She also made a clarification about Neurodiversity Week at MUHS -- it is

to celebrate neurodiversity rather than simply bring awareness to it.

Addie Listner, a Middlebury College Student spoke up to provide some statistics on racial incidents in Vermont schools, and how the VT Anti-Racism Network can partner with school districts to find solutions and make a change. She invited the Board and District to reach out for future collaboration.

Amy Clapp, Teacher at Salisbury Community School spoke up in support of her colleagues at Mary Hogan School, and noted that similar behavior issues have happened at some of the smaller schools as well. She expressed appreciation for the work being done to address it.

Megan Dishaw, Mary Hogan parent also spoke in support of the Mary Hogan teachers. Her child was significantly impacted by violence at school and had to move him to another class to escape the issue. She appreciated the option, but noted all of the new challenges her child must deal with (adjusting to a new teacher & classroom, etc.) and shouldn't have had to. She also mentioned that their family had the resources to advocate for change and pay for follow-up therapy to help her child cope with the struggle, but that many families do not have that option.

L. Adjournment

Upon completion of Public Comment, Barb Wilson asked for a motion to enter the Executive Session that was requested by Steve Orzech at the beginning of the meeting.

Mary Heather Noble made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Labor negotiations per 1 VSA Section 313 (a) 1. Ellie Romp seconded. There was no discussion. Barb Wilson called the vote, and the motion to enter Executive Session unanimously passed.

Entered Executive Session at 8:15 p.m.

Left Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 9:12 p.m.

Suzanne Buck made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Steve Orzech. Motion unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

*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.