

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, September 23, 2024, 6:30 pm - 9:15 pm
Middlebury Union High School Library 73 Charles Ave, Middlebury**

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; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Courtney Krahn; Matthew Corrente

Not In Attendance

Darcie Arensmeyer

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

5 min

Student representatives Sophia Lawton and Navah Glikman also present.

2. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Motion to adopt agenda.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

B. Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

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.

Millard Cox of Ripton thanked the Board for their service, and for the opportunity to speak in support of Ripton Elementary School. Over time it feels like the school is being emptied out. Before Act 46, they had a PreK program. After unification, PreK was removed from the budget,

and then the 6th grade was moved to MUMS (which he supported). Now there has been recent talk about moving the K-1 class from RES. It gives him anxiety, and he feels this continued emptying will result in the school's closure. He is requesting that the Board place a moratorium on closing any school for 2 years, to give everyone breathing room to adjust. Please resist moving any classes from small schools to other schools for a period of 2 years.

Tammie Johnson is an ACSD teacher who serves several ACSD schools, but is speaking in support of RES today. As a counselor for over 25 years, she understands that change is hard for all. She is specifically advocating for K-1 students at RES. They feel safe in their current classroom. Consider any change that you make and the impact it will have on those students. Everyone in that classroom wants to stay. If movement of students is needed, it should be conducted in a planned and thoughtful manner. The current option before the board is not in the best interest of those students. A student asked her, Why would they move kids someplace else when they just got used to being here? She did not know how to answer honestly. Every year, RES accepts a few high need students who have not thrived elsewhere and their experience at RES turns things around for them.

Michelle Faye of Ripton spoke up to voice concerns about the situation at RES and the resignation of staff. She has strong feelings about the survival of the school. The kids at RES are receiving an excellent education there, and the transfer of some Mary Hogan students to that learning environment shows the trust that the District has in the school. She is also asking for a moratorium on school closure for 2 years. RES lost PreK and 6th grade, small schools need time and space to problem solve and ensure that their kids can learn in their communities.

Sierra Thorton is a PE teacher serving ACSD (including RES) and is also a RES parent. RES emulates community. She has seen shy kids come out of their shells. The environment feels like a family. Students who need additional support are taken care of at the Ripton K-2 classroom. The configuration works for both the younger and the older students. Everyone wants what is best for kids - please keep the family together.

Liam Battjes is a special educator who serves RES students. He noted that the mantra at the school is "We All Belong," and thanked the teachers, administrators who leaned into this when working through this conflict. He hopes that everyone involved will continue to do so to foster creativity. There has been lots of turnover in ACSD, and he has been longing for stability. Thought he would find it in RES. He is asking: how can we do the work of cultivating belonging when staff barely feel that they do? Mary Hogan is a great place for students, but some students do better in smaller learning environments. We're Vermonters, why wouldn't we want this?

Hugh McLaughlin of Middlebury spoke to followup on a comment that Board member Brian Bauer made at a board meeting a few weeks ago: He believes ACSD should change its C30 policy concerning PreK. The current policy/procedure provides preferential PreK spots for host towns, and and students in other towns get the opportunity only if there are leftover spots. This isn't fair. He acknowledges that ACSD pays money toward PreK tuition at other facilities for any ACSD student, but there are not enough spots there either. Offering funding without a guaranteed PreK spot feels like an empty gesture. He believes ACSD should add another PreK classroom to Shoreham or Bridport, based on the likely enrollment. This would best serve the District's students.

Steve Cash of Ripton thanked Board members for their service. He shared some observations from his experience in Ripton over the last week. Parents of 85% of the students in the K-2 classroom were present for an 8 am meeting with the teacher. There is support for the classroom. He does not feel there is an emergency. There is more work to be done. Dr. Baker reached out to begin a community dialogue with Ripton. His past experience has been that discussions involving

RES have never been future facing. It has always been about what it going away and he hopes this can shift.

Mary Slosar of Weybridge shared that there has been a lot of talk about a crisis and emergency action needed at RES -- she does not believe it was because of the K-2 classroom, but instead because of a break down in communication and trust. Now it appears to be getting better because of some repair work. She acknowledged that waiting to take action was a tough decision and controversial, but appreciates the board's willingness to do so. She wants the board to know that this conversation/action is not happening in a vacuum. We've heard of similar strategies that have been used by other districts to deal with small schools. Failing to acknowledge this does not show respect to observers and community members.

John Wetzel of Ripton thanked the Board for not rushing into a decision without knowing all the details. He hopes that all the details are truly examined before taking action. He supports all that has been shared by other Ripton residents. He also noted the comments made by RES employees. RES is not a failing school. It is going through a hardship and has support from the community. Mistakes are made when decisions are rushed.

Samantha Eisenberger of Ripton spoke up to express gratitude to Principal Meg Cheresnick and for her work with RES students.

Chris Gilbro of Ripton is a parent of a 2nd grader at RES. Their family followed RES online for a year before moving there from Austin, TX. His child hated school in Austin, but loves it here. His child has friends, feels safe and supported at RES. He has lots of appreciation for the environment and hopes the Board will leave it as is. There was an overwhelming feeling of unity when the parents in the K-2 classroom last met with the teacher.

C. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 9/16/2024 Barb Wilson 5 min

Board comments: Jamie McCallum stated that Brian Bauer emailed him with a concern about the draft minutes, in that they did not mention Jamie's comment about the 'conflict of interest' policy being restricted to a financial conflict of interest (and therefore not sufficient justification for requesting Joanna Doria's recusal from voting on the matter concerning the Ripton K-2 classroom). Brian felt Jamie's comment should be included in the minutes.

Mary Heather clarified that the policy she cited and quoted during the 9/16/24 board meeting was not the conflict of interest policy; rather it was Policy A5 - Code of Conduct for board members. Ellen Whelan-Wuest recalled Barb Wilson stating that the justification was a conflict of interest. Barb Wilson said that she was mistaken, and that the reason for the request for recusal was the Code of Conduct policy.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the minutes. Tricia Allen abstained. Brian Bauer voted nay.

Motion to approve the minutes with suggested correction.

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

D. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcolm 5 min

No ACSD Bills to report.

E. Report of Student Representatives Navah Glikman 5 min
Sophia Lawton

Navah Glikman shared that this week is Spirit Week at MUHS, as part of the festivities leading up

to Homecoming. The theme is Wizard of Oz -- today was "Green & Bling" and Tuesday will be "Twister Tuesday." The Spirit Week activities bring students together and introduces the freshman class to MUHS traditions. Clubs are back in session -- this weeks meetings include Student Coalition on Human Rights (SCOHR) and Model UN.

Sophia Lawton reported that the Senior Class took their senior photo. Hope Happens Here (the mental health awareness & advocacy club) is working on developing a website with resources. The Peer Leaders and freshman class had Bread Loaf Day last week, where they spent all day at the Bread Loaf campus doing fun team-building activities. One thing she wanted to report is that students have been complaining about extreme heat in the 3rd floor classrooms, and are hoping that air conditioning can be considered. Many people feel unwell during the school day when it is really hot in those classrooms.

- F. Executive Session: Personnel Related Issue per Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a)(3) Barb Wilson 20 min
and Labor Negotiations per 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)

Entered Executive Session at 7: 12 p.m.

Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 8:05 p.m.

Motion to enter into Executive Session for a personnel matter per 1 VSA 313 (a) (3) and to discuss Labor negotiations per 1 VSA 313 (a) (1).

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Steve Orzech Status: Passed

- G. Action on Support Staff Master Agreement Steve Orzech 5 min

Steve Orzech offered his gratitude to all the individuals involved in the negotiations process, including members of the ACEA Negotiations teams, Suzanne Buck and Jamie McCallum of the ACSD Negotiations Committee, Dr. Wendy Baker, and Dr. Tim Williams.

Note: Laura Harthan abstained from voting.

Chris Pratt, ACSD staff and representative from the ACEA Support Staff Negotiations Team thanked the Board and the Negotiations Committee. He noted that years ago, the unification of the district illuminated the inequities in compensation between teachers and support staff in Middlebury and those working in the outer schools. It took nearly 8 years from the District to resolve those inequities for the Support Staff contracts and the team is especially grateful to the Board and the Negotiations Committee for doing this work. He expressed special gratitude to Dr. Baker for elevating the respect paid to the professional staff in the district, noting the inclusion of all support staff in the District's Opening Day. Chris also mentioned the importance of the District's commitment to supporting retirement benefits for these employees.

Motion to approve the ACSD-ACEA FY25-FY26 Tentative Agreement as presented in the Board materials.

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Brian Bauer Status: Passed

- H. Report of Superintendent Wendy Baker 45 min

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations

Dr. Baker presented the appointments for board approval.

Motion to approve the following staff appointments:

- a. Lindsay Audet, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/30/2024
- b. Appoint Brianna Blackwell, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/23/2024

c. Appoint Jessica Myers, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/23/2024

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

a. Appoint Lindsay Audet, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/30/2024

b. Appoint Brianna Blackwell, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/23/2024

c. Appoint Jessica Myers, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 9/23/2024

2. School Staffing "Equivalence" Calculations & Policy D4 Presentation Matthew Corrente

Matt Corrente provided an overview of school staffing "equivalence" and "comparability" based on Policy D4 - Title I Comparability. This establishes the groundwork for equity-based budgeting, and educates the board on what ACSD currently does to try and demonstrate 1) equivalence in the distribution of resources across its schools based on enrollment numbers, and 2) comparability, or the comparison of resources given to schools with a high number of students living in poverty against those given to schools with a low number of students living in poverty. Matt walked the board through the calculations (all provided in the meeting materials). Highlights:

- Equivalence examines the distribution of resources based on enrollment only (not need), so student service resources are not figured into those calculations.

- Comparability asks: how do schools with high poverty compare to schools with low poverty (in terms of the resources they receive). Title I schools with > 100 students must stay within 10% of the District average ratio for non-Title I schools.

- Title I funding must supplement general ed fund resources, and not supplant (or replace) general ed fund resources.

- The numbers used for calculations are based upon budgeted staffing (not filled positions).

- The process involves finding the median student/staffing ratio and aiming to ensure that all schools are resourced and operating within an acceptable standard deviation of that median ratio.

- ACSD median students:classroom teacher ratio is 13.4. Mary Hogan School and Cornwall School have the highest numbers, Shoreham and Bridport have the lowest numbers.

3. Budget Drivers Presentation Session #1

Matthew Corrente

Matt Corrente provided an overview of the FY26 Budget Drivers Presentation #1 (slides included in meeting materials). The presentation was divided into two sections: 1) External Budget Drivers over which ACSD had no control, and 2) ACSD Budget Drivers. Highlights:

EXTERNAL BUDGET DRIVERS:

- Uncertainty around Education Funding at State Level. The Executive Branch is forcing cost containment and pushing for education funding reform, while the Legislative Branch is arguing that cost containment is impossible due to all the other demands placed on the Education Fund (e.g., free lunch program, deferred maintenance on school facilities, mental health services, etc.). This means ACSD will have to develop an adaptable budget that anticipates changes to factors.

- Return of Excess Spending Threshold (or how does ACSD's education spending per pupil compare with the state average?). Act 183 reinstates the threshold and sets the limit at 118%. ACSD's current budget (no increase) is exactly at 118% of the state average spending/pupil. For ACSD, any budget increase will trigger the double-taxation penalty.

- Increases to Healthcare Costs. Anticipated increases will likely exceed current budget constraints.

- Decrease to ACSD's tax rate discount from implementation of Act 127's new student weighting system. Last year ACSD received a \$0.13 discount to its EDTR to cushion the impact of Act 127's new student weighting calculations since the District was negatively impacted by the change. The discount for FY26 will decrease 20%, making the discount around \$0.10 instead. This will have an impact of about \$0.03 additional to the base EDTR for the district.

- State CLA Adjustment. The State is adjusting the Property Yield to factor the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) upfront in the calculation. However, this will make the EDTR look larger than it did last year -- FY 25 EDTR was \$1.50, and adding the State CLA adjustment changes it to \$1.99.

- Note: ACSD and other districts that have complied with all state mandates are being penalized by these changes because the spending thresholds are based on a state average, which includes other districts with much lower per-pupil spending because their budgets haven't included resources needed to comply with state mandates.

ACSD BUDGET DRIVERS

- We want to work in pursuit of District goals, but must do this within the guard rails that have been established.

- Wage Increases to licensed and professional staff: \$1,833,000, or \$737/pupil.

- Other anticipated drivers include tuition fees at PAHCC, insurance costs, transportation (which will increase 4.5% by contract), and facilities repair and maintenance.

BOARD COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

Barb Wilson noted that the Board needs to be thinking about how to explain all of this to the community.

Mary Heather Noble commented on the challenge ahead and expressed frustration with the state drivers. It's almost like they are setting Districts up for failed budgets. She asked how the Finance Committee is taking this information to identify a budget number because she does not feel confident about the voter supporting any increases in this climate. The belt will need to be tightened. James Malcolm said that the belt is always tightened, and that the crucial question is how/to what extent.

4. Ripton -K-2 Grade Configuration

Dr. Baker requested moving this agenda item up, in the interest of the attendees who provided public comment in support of RES. She reported that due to a heroic effort on the part of the Ripton Community and staff at RES to come together, the issue with the K-2 classroom is at a different place.

The K-2 parents met with Melissa Giroux last week, and she now feels comfortable with staying at RES to continue teaching the K-2 class. Dr. Baker reported that the situation will continue to be monitored and that the District Office will continue to offer its support to ensure that kids are learning in a supported quality learning environment.

Dr Baker also reported that she had met with Ripton community members, including a member of the select board, to discuss the challenges facing RES. They are expecting to receive around 28 students next year, and the District and community need to think about ways to bring the school forward in a different manner. All agreed that this is an important conversation to initiated. She reported that the community has really come together and is taking the situation at RES very seriously. She commended the Board for its willingness to discuss such a difficult issue in open session. The District has posted an advertisement for a 0.5 Principal position at RES, which is consistent with the Weybridge principalship. At this time, there is no necessary action for the Board's consideration.

Ellie Romp asked whether anything needed to be done to remove the original motion from consideration. Barb Wilson responded that it is sufficient for the record to reflect that no action is needed. Mary Heather Noble offered kudos to the community and the RES for coming together, and thanked Dr. Baker for fostering that cooperative conversation. She commended Dr. Baker for protecting the professionalism of ACSD staff and for reminding everyone involved about their roles and having respect for each other's roles. She hopes the Policy Committee will work to provide recommendations for the full board to consider to prevent this issue from happening again in the spring when classes are assigned for the next year. There will continue to be difficult conversations that will require everyone to mind their roles and respect one another. She believes this board can do it.

Ellie Romp made a motion to formally remove the amended motion that had been tabled from the 9/16/24 board meeting from consideration. Brian Bauer seconded. Barb Wilson called the vote and it passed with 11 votes. Steve Orzech voted Nay.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest expressed appreciation for the collaborative work that Dr. Baker and the Ripton community conducted.

I. Action: Ripton K-2 Grade Configuration Barb Wilson 15 min

J. Report of the Chair Barb Wilson 15 min

1. Superintendent Performance Review Process Document Draft Discussion

Barb Wilson apologized to Board members -- she thought she had sent a draft of the hybrid Superintendent Evaluation Model that the Executive Committee had reviewed with Dr. Baker, but had attached an incorrect document. She did not get the correct document to Darcie Arensmeyer for inclusion with meeting materials, so this agenda item will be tabled until the next Board meeting.

K. Report of the Board 20 min

1. Communications & Engagement Tricia Allen

Tricia Allen reported that the C&E Committee had hoped to put forward a procedure document to accompany Policy 21, but that it wasn't included in the meeting materials. She will present this at a future meeting to get board approval on the procedure for public comments, etc. It is also time for the fall Board Update, so she reminded Committee Chairs to submit their updates to her by Monday 9/30/24. She also reported that the Committee is looking to create a web form to allow people to easily contact the full board with concerns and

questions. Finally, the Committee had also discussed the question about rotating board meetings, and that if doing so isn't feasible, the Committee is developing a list of other suggested outreach options.

Mary Heather Noble noted her recollection that the Board had not officially decided on the rotating meetings question. Tricia added that the C&E Committee agrees about the importance of committing to visiting member schools and doing meaningful engagement especially if the Board won't be having meetings there. There was some discussion about the technical challenges of holding meetings at outer schools, and that these are also a challenge for MCTV. Barb suggested continuing to hold board meetings at the MUHS library and having a signup for other engagement opportunities. There was some additional discussion about the possibilities.

2. Facilities Committee

Jason Chance

Jason Chance reported that the Facilities Committee met on 9/18/24 and received an update from Bruce Macintyre about recently completed projects in ACSD. The Committee is moving forward with the process of hiring an outside firm to assist with the AOE pre-approval process, and will be bringing this before the board in the future.

3. Finance Committee

James Malcolm

James Malcolm reported that the Finance Committee is scheduled to meet on 10/7/24 to discuss the latest quarterly report and begin the work of developing the FY26 budget.

4. Negotiations

Steve Orzech

No additional news to report.

5. Policy Committee

Jamie McCallum

Jamie McCallum presented the four policies included in the meeting materials for Board Action. All policies have been previously presented to the board and reviewed/discussed.

Several board members thanked the Policy Committee for its hard work.

Motion to adopt the following policies as presented in the meeting materials:

A5 Code of Conduct

A30 Role and Adoption of School Board Policies

E20 Community Use of School Facilities

F1 Travel Reimbursement

Move: Jamie McCallum Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

a. Action: A5 -CODE OF CONDUCT

b. Action: A30 - ROLE AND ADOPTION OF SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES

c. Action: E20 - COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

d. Action: F1 - TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

6. Addison Central SEPAC Update

Joanna Doria
Suzanne Buck

Barb Wilson reported that MCTV has approached Dr. Baker about receiving payment for some of MCTV's recording and streaming services since they will no longer be supported by Comcast funding. Kurt Broderson has offered to provide a presentation to the board. More

on this later.

7. Middlebury Community TV Update

Barb Wilson

8. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center Update

Steve Orzech
Tricia Allen

Steve Orzech and Tricia Allen reported that the PAHCC Open House is scheduled for Thursday 10/3/24 at 6:30 p.m. Steve also reported that enrollment from MUHS is down significantly this year (~50%), and much of this is being attributed to the new MUHS schedule. Fewer students mean higher tuition. This is an issue that is being discussed among all sending District superintendents. More on this later.

9. Parks and Recreation Update

Mary Heather Noble

No news to report.

L. Second Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

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Steve Cash of Ripton thanked the Board again for its deliberations. He recognizes that the Board has lots of irons in the fire and appreciates the time spent on the RES matter.

Mary Slosar of Weybridge stated that ACSD is in a unique situation to approach budgeting differently. In the past the Board seems to have tweaked what was put in place the prior year. Now there is an opportunity to budget based on what we want rather than what we've done. She also noted the importance of understanding the difference between supplementing resources and supplanting resources for special education services, and thinks it is worthwhile to consider the methodology for determining 'baseline.' She acknowledged that this will be a tough budget season but that people will support it if students are supported.

M. Board Reflection

Jason Chance 2 min

Jason Chance provided a reflection -- during the last three weeks board members have asked a lot of each other, and he is proud of how the Board handled a very difficult conversation.

N. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 42m

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