

MINUTES



Addison Central School District

ACSD Board

Board Meeting

Monday, November 25, 2024, 6:30 pm - 9:00 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; Courtney Krahn; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Ellie Romp; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Tricia Allen

Not In Attendance

Matthew Corrente; Nicole Carter

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

Gail Leach, Director of Human Resources also present.

2. Board Meeting Norm Reminder

Barb Wilson reminded Board members about Board norms and reflected on how the last Board meeting could have been better. She noted the importance of adhering to Roberts Rules of Order and read a few passages from the rules, stressing the importance of being recognized by the chair before speaking, and directing comments to the chair rather than specific board members unless asking clarifying questions. She also noted that she will work hard to make sure everyone gets an opportunity to speak, and said that she will call point of order with justification if interruptions occur. She also reminded Board members that while they are welcome share their own opinions and comments, they do not speak on behalf of the Board unless authorized to do so.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest asked whether the Board was operating under relaxed Roberts Rules. Barb clarified that the Board is still following Roberts Rules of Order for regular boards (as

opposed to small boards), but decided to modify the requirement to stand to address the Board. Ellen asked if the Board is allowed to suspend the rules if it wants to have an informal discussion. Barb confirmed that a Board member can make a motion to suspend Roberts Rules of Order for a discussion, but that it must pass with 2/3 majority.

3. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Motion to adopt agenda.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

B. First 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.

As a reminder, the public comment period is not designed to be a discussion, but rather an opportunity for board members to listen to constituents. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.

Molly Witters of Ripton voiced her appreciation for all the work the Board has been doing. She has listened to the last few Policy Committee meetings and appreciates the discussions happening there. She is hoping that the ACSD Board will consider relaxing guidelines for Policy C30 this upcoming year, to get a sense of the appetite for school choice in the District. She thinks this could be a good short term solution for schools like Ripton, buying time for the Board to explore long-term solutions without first emptying small schools.

C. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of November 9th and November 11th.

Barb Wilson 5 min

Motion to approve minutes from the November 9, 2024 and November 11, 2024 Board meetings.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

D. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcolm reported that he and Jason Chance has reviewed the ACSD bills on November 25, 2024 and presented them as follows:

General Fund: \$985,719.02

Payroll: \$801,502.32

Payroll: \$302,986.67

There were no identified concerns and he recommended approval.

Motion to approve the ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

E. Report of Student Representatives

Navah Glikman 5 min
Sophia Lawton

No Student Report.

F. Report of Superintendent

Wendy Baker 20 min

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations

Wendy Baker presented the list of ACSD appointments for Board approval, calling attention

to the following:

Kristen Carra is replacing Isabel Gogarty as the Health Education Professional at MUMS, and Ethan Miller is being appointed as a building-based substitute at Mary Hogan, a budget-neutral move that will provide more stability amidst the lingering vacancies at the school.

Steve Orzech noted the advantage of having building based substitutes, and encouraged the administration to consider making similar hiring decisions at the other elementary schools that are struggling to find consistent substitutes.

Note: Laura Harthan abstained from the vote.

Motion to accept the following appointments:

- a. Jocelyn Bushey, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 12/9/2024
- b. Kristen Carra, Health Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 6, Effective 12/2/2024
- c. Brendan Collins, Assistant Boys Hockey Coach, Effective 12/2/2024
- d. Ethan Miller, Building Based Substitute, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 12/2/2024
- e. Laura Murphy McIntosh, Assistant Nordic Ski Coach, Effective 12/2/2024

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

- a. Appoint Jocelyn Bushey, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 12/9/2024
- b. Appoint Kristen Carra, Health Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 6, Effective 12/2/2024
- c. Appoint Brendan Collins, Assistant Boys Hockey Coach, Effective 12/2/2024
- d. Appoint Ethan Miller, Building Based Substitute, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 12/2/2024
- e. Appoint Laura Murphy McIntosh, Assistant Nordic Ski Coach, Effective 12/2/2024

2. Paraeducator Vacancies and Substitute Availability

Dr. Baker reported that the paraprofessional vacancies persist in the District and that they are still struggling to fill positions and find adequate subs. There are currently 12 para vacancies – despite offering referral bonuses, generous compensation packages. They are all general education vacancies, since the administrative team has used available paraprofessionals to fill the positions dedicated to serving students on IEPs and other plans. Dr. Baker also reported that they are looking to hire a multi-team teacher to float at Mary Hogan to provide some additional capacity, and are also looking into creating and hiring part-time Community Assistant positions to provide additional assistance in school buildings around cafeteria and other types of support.

3. Ripton Community Discussion Update

Dr. Baker reported that she had met with about 50 Ripton residents about the challenges around the expected enrollment at Ripton Elementary School for the next academic year and beyond. They discussed the difficulties with class configurations, which would result in either a K-3 classroom to meet the 10 student minimum recommendation per the class size policy, or a K-2 classroom of 6 students. Dr. Baker said it has been a productive ongoing conversation with lots of ideas and considerations. She shared a two-part request that the group would like the Board to consider: 1) Surveying Ripton families about their interest in having their students remain at RES with the current circumstances (to allow families to anonymously express their honest opinions), and 2) Surveying ACSD families to see if there would be a sufficient number of students interested in enrolling at RES to stabilize the

population for the '25-'26 academic year while the Board is determining long-term solutions. These requests have come from 3 of Ripton's leaders -- they are hoping the Board will consider this as it moves forward with its FY26 budget planning.

Mary Heather Noble asked a clarifying question about the request: Are Ripton families specifically requesting school choice to invited interested ACSD families to attend Ripton for the '25-'26 academic year, or to attend any other ACSD elementary school? Dr. Baker responded that the Ripton community is looking to fully examine all possible solutions. If there is a possibility that ACSD is considering substantive changes for '26-'27, Some Ripton residents are hoping to keep RES open while these plans are being developed, so students aren't being bounced around. Others are worried about the possibility of multi-grade classrooms. So the immediate request is to survey ACSD families to gauge interest in attending Ripton. One possibility might be to approach families who home-school their children to see if they might be interested in attending Ripton -- there are 76 home-schooled students in ACSD.

James Malcolm noted that this issue around enrollment is now primarily an education/curriculum delivery and social/emotional well-being issue, rather than purely an economic or facilities-driver issue.

Joanna Doria agreed. There were 15 people who came to the Ripton community meeting who provided anecdotal evidence about the RES learning environment. She appreciates the thought about reaching out to home-schooling families and believes that moving an entire school to another school seems drastic. This request feels more like performing due diligence and also understands that the Policy Committee is grappling with this as well.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest noted that the Policy Committee has heard different versions of this request, more specifically around gathering community input before making big decisions -- which she thinks most board members would agree is important. She expressed concern about relying on surveys, since response rates are often very low. It is one tool, but not the only tool. Unfortunately the District has 2 different time tables -- there is the immediate issue of enrollment at Ripton, but then there is the boarder issue of unstable/unpredictable enrollment at several other ACSD schools. She thinks surveying the community for the broader District-wide question of school choice is important, and not the only thing that should be done to get community input, but worries that there may not be time to do this work for Ripton for next year.

Suzanne Buck expressed the equity aspect of school choice -- that if it is offered, it should be open to all ACSD families with transportation included. She also noted the uncertainty around the State's legislative action around this issue this coming spring, and how it will impact class size/school size requirements.

Jamie McCallum expressed appreciation for the discussion. He has also been thinking about school choice as a tool for problem solving around this issue, and likes the idea of surveying the community. Getting a sense of what families are thinking would be very relevant to the Policy Committee's work around C30 and D6.

Steve Orzech noted some of the problems with surveys, and how many families are not represented in the responses due to factors that interfere with access, whether it be poverty, language, time, etc. He also expressed concern about the narrative that school choice is the magic bullet to solving the enrollment problem, and has grave concerns about the equity implications for school choice -- specifically the likelihood of schools remaining or becoming more segregated by socioeconomic means.

Barb Wilson offered a recap that there appears to be Board interest in continuing the discussion at a future Board meeting, and due to the timing of the FY26 budget development, suggested focusing on the immediate request around surveying District families to gauge interest in attending Ripton Elementary -- to see whether this changes the enrollment issues at that location. Barb and the Executive Committee will add this to an agenda for a future meeting.

4. Equity Budgeting Update

Dr. Baker announced that Matt Corrente and his wife recently welcomed their baby, Emerson Francis Corrente into the world. Matt is now on leave, but he has been accompanying Dr. Baker in meetings with ACSD school principals to discuss student data, equity-based budgeting and staffing resource plans for next year. She noted that the Principals' plans are due after the Thanksgiving break. She assured the Board that she and Matt have been working since August on several different budget scenarios so the District can meet the Board's financial goal.

She is hoping to meet with the Finance Committee the week after the break to share ideas and options for meeting the Board's FY26 budget target. If the Finance Committee recommends carrying forward, she hopes to have another budget presentation on the December 9, 2024 Board meeting. The meeting on December 16th is expected to focus on tax rates, and they are hoping to share the first spending plan in the first week of January.

James Malcolm noted that the Finance Committee needs to select a meeting date for the first week of December to keep make the timeline work. He asked committee members to confer after the meeting.

5. Chapter 3 (Recommendations) - An Evidence-Based Approach to Identifying an Adequate Education Spending Level in Vermont (Picus Odden & Associates)

Dr. Baker opened the discussion about the commissioned Picus Report (An Evidence Based Approach to Identifying an Adequate Education Spending Level in Vermont), and what it may mean for ACSD.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest mentioned a recent meeting with VT legislators and the sense that the numbers and figures in the report are derived from schools and school districts operating at a much larger scale than Vermont, and wondered how the recommendations and findings in the report can apply to Vermont School Districts. She asked Dr. Baker to provide some context, based on discussions and expertise in the education community -- how are people grounding this report in Vermont's reality?

Dr. Baker first reminded Board members about the opportunity to participate in a public meeting with the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont on December 2nd at 5:30 p.m. at MUHS.

She then noted that the report has a lot of research-based recommendations that are relevant and applicable to Vermont schools, mostly around class size (ass opposed to school size). There are ways to increase class size in ACSD and other Districts without incurring large capital expenses. The recommended class sizes for K-3 is 15 students -- this is what she and other superintendents in the Champlain Valley are focusing on.

She also said that the Picus Report is developed by educational economists, so support for

students relies heavily on tutors and other methods (e.g., extended school day, additional summer programming, etc.) – which is research-based and more cost-effective than the academic interventionalist method that is currently practiced. She believes this is also worth looking into. Dr. Baker noted that the Picus Report really focuses on efficiency and doesn't take into account capital improvement costs. She and other education leaders are focusing on strategies for student improvement, and she expects the legislature will focus on efficiency and class size.

Brian Bauer remarked that he read a lot of the report, and although the authors were upfront that some of the recommendations do not fit exactly with Vermont's circumstances, there are many things that might apply. We should examine what is applicable and use it. He also said that we should look at the 2016 reports that were done by the same authors to see what was recommended then -- any changes?

Steve Orzech said he read the report and sees a lot of good recommendations. ACSD has schools that are only 10% of the recommended school size and class size. The authors not only looked at fiscal impacts, but also examined efficacy with student outcomes, so there is a lot of validity to the recommendations. He is not as quick to dismiss the report as others are. It's not a thought experiment, and he expects that the legislature will be taking the recommendations very seriously. He does not feel it benefits ACSD to rely on anecdotal evidence and statements unsupported by fact. If the Board says it is going to make data-based decisions, it should take the recommendations seriously.

Dr. Baker also noted the recommendation about instructional coaches, and how that might help ACSD with providing higher quality instruction in the classroom -- this is a research-based recommendation that debunks the practice of simply adding more practitioners in the room. The more important variable to improving student success is not the number of adults in the room, but the quality of instruction from trained and licensed educators. Right now there is concern about how many high-need students are being attended to by unlicensed educators.

Dr. Baker concluded that there are several good research-based recommendations for classroom-based changes, but is less confident in some of the school-based conclusions -- and recommended that board members read some of the cited articles from this section of the paper (on page 14 of the report).

G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson 5 min

1. Educational Quality Standards Adoption (July 2025)

Barb Wilson shared the slides and video of the VSBA webinar that she attended about the Educational Quality Standards, and advised other Board members to take the time to watch the recording. She pointed to slide #25 as the beginning of the School Board's Role in complying with the new EQS. The good news is that the work that ACSD is already doing aligns nicely with the EQS -- this underscores the importance of moving forward with the Strategic Plan goals. She noted the ongoing work on the rubrics, and mentioned that Suzanne Buck may have additional information about what compliance with the EQS actually looks like.

H. Report of the Board

15 min

1. Communication & Engagement Committee

Tricia Allen

Mary Heather Noble reported for Tricia Allen: The C&E Committee met last week to continue its work on some website changes to improve stakeholder access, and spent the rest of the meeting talking with Dr. Baker and Emily Blistein about planning for budget communications.

They discussed which visuals have been most effective to improve understanding about the budget, equity-based budgeting, etc. and how to conduct voter outreach and the budget becomes clearer. The C&E Committee talked about connecting with the Finance Committee to develop budget outreach materials, and would also like to host an in-person or virtual public meeting (or both) in mid-January before the Board approves the budget. The C&E Committee would also like to use MCTV as a resource for voter outreach as well.

Brian Bauer mentioned going out to Shoreham for the October 22, 2024 pre-budget outreach meeting, and that few people knew about it. He also noted that many people don't have the money to purchase a paper. Mary Heather acknowledge this, mentioned that she was also at the Shoreham meeting.

2. Facilities Committee Jason Chance

Jason Chance reported that the Facilities Committee met on November 14th. They have finalized the Capital Improvement Planning RFP and plan to send that out in early December. The Committee hopes to get responses by January 10th, which will be reviewed at the January 15th Facilities Committee meeting.

3. Finance Committee James Malcolm

James Malcolm reported that the Facilities Committee would be meeting after the Thanksgiving break to hear the administration's options for meeting the Board's budget target.

4. Policy Committee Jamie McCallum

a. Action: Policy E20 (Community Use of School Facilities)

Jamie McCallum presented Policy E20 for final Board approval.

Motion to approve Policy E-20 Community Use of School Facilities as presented.

Move: Ellen Whelan-Wuest Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

5. Negotiations Committee Steve Orzech

Steve Orzech reported that all agreements have been signed and are operational. The committee is in recess for now but may need to meet on occasion to consider side letters.

6. Addison Central SEPAC Update Joanna Doria
Suzanne Buck

Joanna Doria reported that roughly 30 people came to the SEPAC meeting on November 20th. It was a powerful discussion centered around school-home communications for students on plans. Dr. Baker approached SEPAC with the question about how to refrain from emailing sensitive student disability information and remain supportive to families. She thought the meeting felt notable because of the facilitation provided by SEPAC leadership. There was active engagement from families, and they felt safe sharing their experiences and concerns. She hopes the Board will think about using SEPAC as a resource in the future, and invited Dr. Baker to share her impressions.

Dr. Baker shared that it was a good discussion that identified some training needs within the District and provided collated feedback from families. It was evident that families felt supported by the group, which is a primary function of the SEPAC. She looks forward to continued conversations.

7. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center Update Steve Orzech
Tricia Allen

Steve Orzech reported that the presentation from Dr. Mactavish on the expected PAHCC

budget is being delayed by a month because they have just hired a new Business Manager in the middle of budget season.

Dr. Baker noted that she and Matt Corrette are working closely with Dr. Mactavish to get the best surrogate figures as possible while they are waiting for the budget numbers.

8. VSBA Regional Update Suzanne Buck

Suzanne Buck reported that the VSBA is hosting a pre-candidate training webinar on December 10th for people interested in running for the school board. She also mentioned that Sue Ceglowski was recently on Dave Sharpe's new educational broadcast on MCTV. Finally, VSBA is still waiting for the final Educational Quality Standards rubric from the AOE.

9. Middlebury Community TV Update Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson also reported the educational programming that Dave Sharpe will be offering through MCTV. He will be reaching out to each of Addison County's Superintendents to discuss the state-wide educational concerns.

10. Parks and Recreation Update Mary Heather Noble

Mary Heather Noble reported that the Parks and Rec Department Board has not met, and that it appears the Town is doing some department reorganization again. However, she did report that she and Scott Bourne have located the expired lease agreement between ACSD and the Town of Middlebury, and have connected Dr. Baker and team with the Assistant Town Manager to begin the process of updating and renewing the agreement.

I. Second Public Comment Period Barb Wilson 10 min

(see description for First Public Comment Period)

Mary Slosar of Weybridge offered the following comments:

- She found the discussion around the Picus Report very interesting and wanted to underscore the importance of licensed teachers and quality instruction. She has heard anecdotally that some of the concern around IB is that all professional development is focused on IB and not other education topics.

- She heard many references to family engagement around the budget, policy development, etc. She wants to caution the Board and District against doing this in a less than sincere way. She senses that this has happened historically and that it has led to a lack of trust.

- Re: the request to survey. She is a survey researcher. There are good surveys and bad surveys. The Hannover equity survey is a bad survey, and the Superintendent survey is just a feedback mechanism. Good surveys need real investment and time, and she can provide resources.

J. Executive Session: Personnel Matter per 1 VSA 313(a)(3) Barb Wilson 20 min

Entered Executive Session at 8:01 p.m. Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 8:37 p.m.

Dr. Baker presented a resignation for Board approval: Alex Ramage, paraprofessional at MUHS.

Suzanne Buck made a motion to accept the resignation of Alex Ramage, paraprofessional at MUHS. Steve Orzech seconded. There was no further discussion.

Barb Wilson called the vote and it passed with one abstention from Laura Harthan.

Motion to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter per 1 VSA Section 313 (a) (3).

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

K. Board Reflections

5 min

Brian Bauer wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Steve Orzech suggested having a designated timekeeper for public comments.

L. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 1h 45m

*Public Comment Guidelines:

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