

# MINUTES



## Addison Central School District

### ACSD Board

### Board Meeting

Monday, December 9, 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; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Steve Orzech; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

### **Remote Attendance**

Joanna Doria

### **Not In Attendance**

Suzanne Buck

#### 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

Note Emily Blistein, ACSD Director of Communications & Engagement also in attendance in person. The meeting included several community members in the audience and ~30+ community members participating remotely.

#### 2. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Barb Wilson invited board members to make a motion to approve the agenda. Jason Chance made a motion to approve the agenda as warned; Jamie McCallum seconded.

Barb Wilson made a motion to amend the agenda to increase the amount of time dedicated to public comment to 20 minutes, and proposed limiting speakers to 2 minutes each for their comments. Brian Bauer seconded.

Tricia Allen made a motion to amend the motion to amend by revising the increased time for public comment to 30 minutes, and maintaining the 3-min per person time limit. Jamie

McCallum seconded. After brief discussion, Barb Wilson called the vote. It passed with 10 'ayes' and 1 'nay.'

Barb Wilson then called the vote on the original motion, as amended (to increase the time allowed for the first public comment period to 30 minutes and maintain the 3-min time limit per person). It passed with 10 'ayes' and 1 'nay.' Barb Wilson explained that the first public comment period would be 30 minutes; after which the Board would resume the meeting to conduct its business, and invited anyone who isn't able to speak during the first comment period to remain and speak during the second comment period. She also invited participants to email their comments to the Board. She read the parameters around public comment.

Motion to approve the agenda, as amended to allow 30 minutes for the first public comment period.

Move: Jason Chance 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.

Emily Blistein maintained the sign-up for public comment, alternating between participants attending in-person and those attending remotely. Preference was given to ACSD stakeholders.

Corey Selover of Lincoln (formerly of Middlebury) shared that they identify as transgender and provided an emotional testimony. You can't stop people from being transgender -- they know, they have tried everything: self harm, prayer, drinking, everything. Finally when they were in their mid-20s, they met another transgender person and realized that they weren't alone. Meeting this person didn't make them trans, nor would reading a book about transgender people. Instead it planted a seed that maybe they deserved to be happy as they are. The Trevor Project has published statistics that show nearly 45% of trans people have considered or attempted suicide. Their 1st memory was telling their mother at 4 years old that they were a girl. "Maybe I could have skipped my suicide attempts. Maybe I could have lived with joy instead of fear. Banning books won't stop kids from being trans, but it may stop kids from being able to grow up."

Margie Latham of Middlebury spoke out against the request to ban books in ACSD schools. This request isn't serving anyone's well-being. We should listen to people in the LGBTQ+ community. It would be a travesty for books to be banned in Vermont.

Maurice Bissonnett of Middlebury spoke against the request to ban books. He noted that the trans community is one of the most marginalized, but that trans people have always existed in many cultures throughout time. In some countries, native populations have specific language to recognize these individuals. It's only recently that people have felt safe enough to talk about it. He cited the Trevor Project stats already shared. In Vermont, there are probably only 3,000 people who openly identify as trans. These are our neighbors, kids, students, family and friends. They should feel like they have a place in our community. During this past election, the Super PACs spent \$35 million on ads against this small portion of our population. Books don't make people trans; books make people feel accepted.

Sheena Wilson of Middlebury said she is so sorry to hear about the degree of suffering that

others have endured from this hatred. She recently moved to Middlebury from North Texas, where she witnessed religion creeping into schools and book bans centered on stories dealing with race, gender, and perspectives of other marginalized people. She does NOT want Vermont to become North Texas. She did not move here to have to protest these kinds of request. Banning books limits students' perspectives and reinforces that only certain people are considered valid. We should be proud of education in Vermont and should not let a small group of parents have this much control.

Grace Vining of Middlebury (MUHS 2022 graduate) zoomed in from college to voice her opposition to the proposed book ban. She echoed what others had said. She was very upset to hear about the attempt to ban books. These books validate others' experiences and validate how people see themselves. It is important to accept people as they are. It is much more dangerous to tell someone that they can't or shouldn't exist in the body and identity they feel.

Jack Mayer of Middlebury is a retired pediatrician and provided a list of reasons that banning books is a bad idea for society. He stated that the most banned book in the United States is 1984 by George Orwell, which is noteworthy. Banning books violates free speech and the Constitution, undermines education, restricts information needed to democracy, inhibits free thought, and endangers free expression and tolerance. Parents can make decisions about what their own children read, but it is not okay for parents to make decisions about what everyone else can and cannot read. Students deserve to see themselves in the books they read. Erasing people from literature creates "otherness."

Poppy Rees of Middlebury is a parent of ACSD students and the Director of Religious Exploration at the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist church. Her faith calls her to fight for inclusion and unity. There is so much power in people being able to see themselves in literature. These books are in service of growing kids who learn to include others besides just cis, white, heterosexual people. Inclusive stories help to grow kids who will not bully, hurt, kill, or legislate against others who do not fall into that narrow category. Sparkle Boy is not even about gender -- it is simply a story about the type of clothing a boy likes to wear.

Mary Slosar of Weybridge applauded all who have already spoken. It is so inspiring to see our community show up for this. She agrees that having this instructional material helps others open up to diversity and inclusion. She wonders what the Board and Administration can do about this, and cited Policies D22 and D23. She encouraged the Board to look at these policies to think about ways to call out the need for these materials.

Danielle Boyce of Middlebury spoke up in support of the teachers and in opposition to the proposed book ban. She believes she is raising a kind and inclusive person. It is just as important for non LGBTQ+ students to have these materials, too. For some, this may be the only way they learn about these differences and it is crucial for them to learn about the range of human experience.

Jess Venoble-Novak of Middlebury is a parent and also identifies as transgender. They decided to move to Middlebury when giving a public comment in another District where a Board member and Administrator had told them their family was not valid. Now when their family joins a child care center or library, they gift the adults in the institution these exact books because they are backed by educators. This community has already created space for families like theirs -- and credits the inclusiveness to a culture that values instructional materials like these books.

At the end of 30 minutes, Wendy Baker summarized the instructional materials review process per District Policy. She credited the Addison Independent for a thorough description of the process. The decision on the parent's requested review has been appealed to the

Superintendent and Dr. Baker is currently reviewing the material. She will likely be making her decision and recommendation in January. If the parents decide to appeal again, it will come before the Board in a public hearing. Dr. Baker also explained that ACSD employees are highly valued and that the District has taken many steps to support them in this process. She noted that some of those steps will not be public and asked the community for its understanding.

Steve Orzech also explained that Board members are not able to comment specifically on this matter because they must remain neutral should it come before the Board in a hearing.

- C. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of November 25, 2024 Barb Wilson 5 min

Motion to approve the minutes of November 25, 2024.

Move: Jamie McCallum Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

- D. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcolm read a summary of the ACSD Bills, which were read by himself and Jason Chance on December 9, 2024.

Payroll: \$747,565.64

Payroll: \$324,501.54

General Fund: \$923,794.31 (note: almost \$600K of this is for employee healthcare benefits, and \$139K is for the second installment to PreK providers.)

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 Rep report.

- F. Report of Superintendent Wendy Baker 55 min

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations

Dr. Baker shared the resignation of Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Teaching and Learning, effective December 2, 2024. She explained that Nicole was leaving in part to care for her father. She noted that District Office could forward cards and well wishes to Nicole as requested by Board members.

Motion to accept the resignation of Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent, 1.0 FTE, Effective 12/2/2024.

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

- a. Accept Resignation of Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent, 1.0 FTE, Effective 12/2/2024

2. Budget Presentation #3 - Reduction Strategies & Foundational Cost Stacking

Matt Corrente guided the Board through Budget Presentation #3, which included Reduction strategies to offset the impacts of major drivers (healthcare and labor costs), and a summary of the Foundational Forecast stacking style of budgeting. The presentation is available at <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1733498524/acsdvtorg/tjgpiew61ubwxytxox8h/FY2>

## MENU OF BUDGET REDUCTION STRATEGIES:

- Reduce ESSER positions -- \$620,000 or \$376/pupil. This would include 4 academic interventionists (1 literacy at MUHS, 1 math at MUMS, and 2 K-5), 2 behavioral interventionists, and 1 Aspire Coordinator. Dr. Baker reminded the Board that the budget is still being developed to shift resources where needed, so this does not necessarily mean removing positions where there is need. These are all sunseting positions from a specific funding source.
- Surplus reduction -- \$225,000 or \$136/pupil. The idea is to trim non-personnel contingency funds to provide enough to cover contingencies but not such a significant rainy-day fund.
- Facilities Construction Funds -- \$285,000 or \$173/pupil. Because the Mary Hogan HVAC project is complete, the non-ESSER portion of this project will no longer need to be funded.
- Healthcare Budget Adjustments -- \$300,000 or \$181/pupil. This includes auditing the healthcare lines and tighten to align with actual staff usages (the district budgets for healthcare that is not always used by staff because they use benefits from other family members).
- Reduce General Ed. Para Positions -- \$236,400 - \$472,800 or \$143-\$287/pupil. This is roughly 5-10 para positions. Many of the positions are currently vacant, so the idea is to take the money budgeted for these unfilled positions and direct it toward other needs.
- Student Services Streamlining -- \$600,000 or \$376/pupil. Use a caseload quota to adjust student: teacher ratio. Reduce pandemic behavioral specialists, and reduce staff and facility costs with the ACP programs.

## Board Questions:

Jamie McCallum asked what "consolidate" means in this case -- Dr. Baker responded that it means identifying duplicative work, so it is not necessarily losing people but consolidating work/tasks to make better use of the resources. She noted that the ACP was designed for 3 districts, but ACSD is the main user & provider, so there is room for efficiency improvements.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest clarified that these are just a menu of possibilities, and that we won't know what is actually being recommended for reductions until we have a better picture of the instructional and student service budget needs.

## FOUNDATIONAL COST FORECASTING (starting with Slide #11):

Matt Corrente introduced the architecture of the block-style budget, and provided some cost details for a few of the Blocks as follows:

Block 1 -- Operations (facilities, tech, food service, transportation, debt load): \$8M, slides 13-17.

- Debt Load will decrease \$119,554 due to the end of a construction loan in Bridport
- Transportation will increase 4.5% or \$1,428,340 per contract agreement
- Tech expenses will decrease \$1,406,765
- Facilities will increase by 1.5% or \$4,547,561

-- Food Service will increase by 200% or \$300,000 (note this is the amount that is not reimbursed by the state, and is mostly due to increased food costs and increased wages. The state does not increase reimbursement rates due to inflation.)

Block 2 -- Tuition (to PAHCC and Universal PreK Providers), \$2.3M

-- PAHCC tuition is expected to increase by 10% or by \$1,776,816  
-- UPK tuition is increasing by 6% to \$540,893 (note this includes a 0.3 FTE UPK coordinator salary, which is split between ACSD, ANWSD, and MAUSD).

Block 3 -- Instructional Triangle -- To Be Discussed at December 16, 2024 Meeting

-- FY25 budgeted \$23,862,881 for Direct Instruction Personnel  
-- FY25 budgeted \$1,671,156 for Administrative Personnel  
-- FY25 budgeted \$776,781 for PD and Curriculum Personnel

Block 4 -- Non-Personnel Costs (contracted services, supplies, dues & fees), \$2,764,883

Block 5 -- Student Services -- To Be Discussed at January 6, 2025 meeting

Block 6 -- Student Opportunities Funds (field trips, KEEC, sports & activities) -- To Be Discussed at January 6th meeting

Block 7 -- Equity Investments (targeting personnel and programming to meeting equity/student achievement goals) -- To Be Discussed at January 6th meeting.

Board Questions:

Steve Orzech asked about the ESSER positions and the projected amount to be saved. He questions whether \$620,000 was accurate, given the amount that is typically budgeted for personnel costs. He also noted that the schools where the positions were coming from were not identified, but one can deduce that they will likely come from Mary Hogan. Dr. Baker responded that the cuts will come from across the District, and that the information will be available in the January 6th presentation, because that will provide more granular details about which school will be making changes (cuts and/or investments to meet student need).

### 3. State Budget Drivers Update

Dr. Baker explained that the budget presentation on December 16, 2024 would include the latest details on State Budget Drivers. Board questions on these factors will be taken then.

## G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson 5 min

### 1. January Board Meeting Schedule Update

Barb Wilson thanked Board members for their hard work in recent months. She explained that the Executive Committee has determined that the Board needs to pass the FY26 budget by January 21st so that all ACSD member towns have the information in time for printing of their Town Reports. She proposed a revised meeting schedule for January to accommodate the timeline.

After some discussion, Board members agreed on the following schedule:

January 6 at 6:30 pm  
January 13 at 6:30 pm (regularly schedule meeting)  
January 17 at 6:30 pm

Mary Heather Noble noted the need to host a public meeting before January 17th, to allow for public input on the proposed budget before final Board approval. The Communications & Engagement Committee will need to select a date, and will likely make it a virtual meeting.

## H. Report of the Board

20 min

### 1. Policy Committee

#### a. C30 (School Residence) and D6 (Class Size) Policy Work Update Jamie McCallum

Jamie McCallum provided an overview and update on the Policy Committee's work regarding D6 - Class Size and C30 -- School Residence. After much discussion, the Policy Committee has focused primarily on updating Policy D6 to provide a process to follow in the event that minimum class size standards cannot be met. The proposed changes added a definition of "class" as "defined as a group of students composed of one or two grades of students unless otherwise authorized by the superintendent," and also include the following Policy Contingencies:

1. If a class exceeds or is projected to exceed the upper limit of D6 requirements and the superintendent determines the integrity of the instructional environment is jeopardized, the superintendent has the authority to divide that class into two sections that meet policy guidelines.
2. If a class is projected to have a size that is below the minimum D6 requirements and the superintendent determines the integrity of the instructional environment is jeopardized, the superintendent will invite families across ACSD to indicate if they prefer to have their student move to that school and class.
3. The superintendent will ensure that any movement of students across schools will take class and school capacity into account ensuring compliance with D6 across all schools.
4. If indicated preferences do not adequately ensure class sizes that comply with D6, the superintendent can assign a cohort of students—the entire class—to another school. In this case, ACSD will provide transportation for these students to and from their assigned school.
5. Families will have the option to attend a different school than the one they are assigned by the superintendent, in accordance with policy C30. In this case, ACSD may not be able to provide transportation for their student to and from school.

Steve Orzech noted that the proposed changes should provide the Superintendent with tools needed to remedy classrooms that do not comply with the D6 policy, and Laura Harthan explained that the work was heavily centered on student success, student outcomes, and creating the conditions for predictability from grade to grade.

Ellie Romp confirmed that combined grade classrooms would still be allowable, and wondered if the changes allow for a Superintendent to move students at the family's request. Dr. Baker explained that D6 does not provide for that, but C30 does. Movement of students per D6 would only be due to a classroom not meeting the minimum

enrollment requirement.

Mary Heather Noble thanked the Policy Committee for its work on a very difficult topic, and expressed appreciation for how well the Committee worked together. She noted that her questions about split classrooms and the number of grades allowed in a single classroom have been answered. She wondered why the Committee did not recommend a change to the minimum classroom enrollment size to align with the minimum size for cohort reporting of student achievement data. If our Strategic Plan goals are focused on student achievement, the Board and public ought to be able to see the data to monitor the District's progress without compromising student privacy. She also wondered if the Board would want to set a standard for a classroom size before triggering the Superintendent to seek volunteers to fill it -- perhaps the classroom should be at least halfway to the D6 minimum (or at least 5 students)? Just something for the Committee to consider. Mary Heather noted that "Class" might be better expressed as "Classroom" to avoid confusion with socioeconomic class. And she noted some equity concerns with the proposal of having the Superintendent seek volunteers to fill an under-enrolled classroom: 1) transportation -- if this is not provided to volunteer families, the opportunity to move is really only available to families with the time and means to transport their own child; 2) impact of movement on other small school classrooms -- if a volunteer student causes a D6 issue in their own assigned school, they would not be allowed to move, so it seems that the opportunity is again only available to students from larger schools (Mary Hogan and Cornwall).

Ellen Whelan-Wuest said that these concerns are valid and underscore the complexity of the larger problem. She agreed that the Policy Committee should examine some of these concerns and could also try to address them when working on the longer-term solution with C30 policy changes.

Jason Chance asked if the changes eliminate the possibility of a 3-grade classroom, like the K-2 classroom in Ripton. Dr. Baker explained that it would only be allowed with the Superintendent's permission, and that it would need to be a justified exception. She also clarified the student data reporting requirement that Mary Heather brought up: the required reporting is by grade, not by classroom -- ACSD is far from meeting the minimum cohort size for this in the small schools, so this would be an issue to tackle with the long-term solution. Jason also asked why the Board wouldn't want to specify single grade classrooms -- if it is so effective, why isn't it being done in all the classrooms? Ellen and Dr. Baker explained that it is currently being used in several ACSD classrooms, sometimes due to enrollment, but sometimes due to student dynamics. There are benefits, and the literature is not conclusive about multi-grade classrooms being inferior to single-grade classrooms. There are operational efficiency reasons, but not necessarily educational reasons.

Jamie McCallum thanked the Board for the feedback and said that the Policy Committee would discuss at the next committee meeting on December 10th. They will keep the D6 Policy revisions on the agenda for a first read-warning, so the Board can continue its work on D6 at the Dec 16th Board meeting.

## 2. Facilities Committee

### a. Action: Maple Broadband Mary Hogan Easement Approval

Jason Chance explained that the Facilities Committee has received an 18' by 38' easement request from Maple Broadband for ACSD land at Mary Hogan School (to



house communications equipment). The property is owned by ACSD and leased by the Middlebury Parks and Rec Department. The request has been through legal review by the ACSD attorney and has also been approved by the Middlebury Selectboard. It is a permanent easement that will be entered into the land records.

Steve Orzech asked a question about the safety of electronic equipment. Jason noted that the utility equipment is for communications -- there will be some electricity, but it won't be a high-voltage unit. Ellie Romp asked if the Community Gardens in the park would need to be relocated. Jason said he didn't believe they would need to be moved. Mary Heather Noble confirmed that Parks and Recreation was aware of the project.

Jason also gave the Board a heads up that a similar easement request for ACSD land on the Ripton Elementary School Property would be forthcoming in January 2025.

Motion to authorize the Board Chair to execute the utility easement deed between ACSD and Addison County Communications Union District dba Maple Broadband for the 18' by 38' parcel on Mary Hogan Drive as warned in Exhibit A of the meeting materials for the December 9, 2024 Board meeting.

Move: Jason Chance Second: James Malcolm Status: Passed

#### I. Ripton/ACSD Attendance Survey Discussion

Barb Wilson 15 min

Barb Wilson re-opened the conversation regarding Ripton residents' request for the following:

- 1) Survey of Ripton families to determine their interest in remaining at RES for the '25-'26 academic year, given the current enrollment circumstances. [and]
- 2) Survey of ACSD K and 1st grade families to find volunteers to attend RES for the '25-'26 year.

She noted that the topic was warned on the agenda as an action, if the Board would like to take an action, but that it is not required.

James Malcolm noted that if he was an ACSD parent, he would have a lot of questions that would need to be answered before responding to a survey about sending kids to RES, including whether the school would be open in 3-4 years, what a student would gain from transferring to Ripton. He thinks folks might be conflicted about responding.

Dr. Baker explained that the reason behind the request from the community was if the Board is making decision about moving students due to the D6 Policy, they would like to know whether anyone might be interested in going to RES and whether it has any impact on the school's compliance with the D6 class size policy (as a final resort before moving students). She noted that it might be best to check in with RES families first before inquiring with any other ACSD families, since there are only 2 students in this case.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest wondered what information should be provided with the survey to educate families about the options, and also suggested putting thought into designing the questions to be as clear as possible. She noted that this request seems to be grounded in Ripton's curiosity about whether there may indeed be families who would like to attend RES if the C30 policy weren't so rigid.

Joanna Doria agreed with the points that James and Ellen made about information that should be included in the survey, and also emphasized the importance of timing. The questions may evolve depending on the potential change to policy D6. For instance, if K-1 students are moved due to

the class size issue, and siblings are allowed to follow, this might affect the whole school environment and influence family responses w/r/t their desire to remain at RES. It makes sense to allow the policy change to play out so people have appropriate information.

Jason Chance asked about the implementation of the proposed D6 policy change, and how the Superintendent decides how many students of each grade would be allowed to transfer. What happens more students from one grade volunteer than from another grade? Would the District try to keep it half-and-half, or would it be okay for 5 K and 14 1st graders to be in the same class? Dr. Baker explained that it would be the Superintendent's responsibility to determine the best instructional environment, which is case-specific and ultimately depends on the students themselves.

Mary Heather Noble expressed her continued concern about the effort that might go into recruiting a minimum of 8 students to move to RES instead of moving 2 students. She also wondered about making sure volunteer families would commit to staying at RES if moved, so that this process doesn't have to be repeated every year. She noted that the Board should be prepared for the possibility that finding a long-term solution for C30 might take a while, so appropriate care must be put into creating stable classroom environments rather than asking families to move so a nearly empty classroom can get to 10 students.

Laura Harthan explained that the Policy Committee did not view it as active recruitment, but rather notifying families that an opportunity exists and allowing families that would like their students to attend RES to take the opportunity.

Dr. Baker mentioned Joanna's point about the possibility of siblings following -- and how that might also impact the Policy Committee's

Barb Wilson reminded the group that this survey is just for the RES classroom, and just for the '25-'26 year. She also noted that the results of the Ripton family survey may determine whether a broader survey of ACSD K and 1st grade families are even surveyed.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest echoed Laura's characterization of the survey request, explained the due diligence of making sure that all efforts to fill a classroom with students of other interested families have been exhausted before moving a cohort of students (however small) from their assigned school.

Dr. Baker also suggested that the Policy Committee consider giving the first option for change to the families in the town most impacted (e.g., do they wish to stay and try and see if students from other towns wish to attend, or would they rather be moved?).

Barb Wilson asked the Board about next steps. Laura Harthan expressed her support for conducting the surveys, but said that surveys should wait until the Board has made a decision about the D6 policy changes. Jason Chance asked if the conducting the survey needed to be a Board motion or action. Dr. Baker explained the desire to have alignment between the Board and District Office on this specific question.

Steve Orzech expressed his concern about school choice being seen as the magic bullet, and frustration that school closure is not also being included in the discussion. He suggested surveying the community about school closure as well.

Barb Wilson said that the Board would take the matter up again, pending final decisions on Policy D6.

1. Possible action to be taken

J. Second Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

Jordan Young of Cornwall is a 30 year resident and former Board member of the Cornwall School, a trained Sexuality Educator and Social Worker. He asked the Board to please not contribute to the erasure of gender diversity in literature, and recommended reading Jan Morris's "Conundrum." He said that many kids he's worked with have found themselves in books like these, are nourished by information that validates their experiences. Please allow students have access to the information they need to be themselves.

Mez Baker of Middlebury is a parent of 2 students at Mary Hogan and expressed gratitude for others who have spoken. Kids are curious about gender at a young age. It's not too early to introduce these concepts to them. The books in question are research-based age-appropriate materials. She wonders what kinds of policies might be developed to prevent book bans from happening? She is also thinking about how the District can address the public defamation that has happened to ACSD teachers. How can the Facebook posts be removed? The harm is public, and parent would like the remedy to be public as well.

Ari Graham-Gurland of Middlebury is a college student (MUHS class of 2023) who spoke in opposition of book banning. These were the books her parents read to her, coming from a family with two moms. She was raised by a supportive community with these kinds of books, and she believes this is why her family was accepted and why she felt normal having two mothers. It is crucial to keep these instructional materials available.

Liam Battjes is a special educator in Ripton Elementary and the former leader of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance Club at MUMS. Today he watched a 1st grade teacher read one of these books -- it is an invitation for all of us to become better. In his work he witnessed a lot of hostility directed at the GSA students -- these are the kinds of materials needed to make that change. The young kids are getting it. He went to a 2nd grade class and it was such a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Paige Pearson of Shoreham shared that she and her partner are a 2-mom family who raised their son in ACSD. She shared an anecdote about her son being confronted about his 2-mom family when he was younger, and how the classroom teacher read the story "Heather Has Two Mommies" to the class to address and educate the students about the diversity of families. She has always felt safe in Vermont and her heart broke when she heard about this request to ban books. She offered thanks to the Board and explained that her mother was indoctrinated by Nazis as a youth, and that it started with book bans. These materials are essential. If a book can help 1 person, it's worth it.

Steve Cash of Ripton expressed appreciation to the Board for its efforts in navigating all the complex issues. He was impressed to hear the Policy Committee's work. The questions that Ripton families have still need answering. He explained that some Board member comments about Ripton were tough to hear, especially enrollment-go-fund-me, recruitment, and finding open airplane seats. Ripton is small but still seems to produce such a big reaction. Equity does not mean equal or the same. You either try to create a District that thrives on difference or a District that does not.

Corey Hendrick of East Middlebury spoke in support of teachers and expressed his strong opposition to book banning.

Joanna Colwell of Ripton spoke in opposition to book banning. To anyone worried about a Kindergartener reading these books: don't be scared. They are meant to make people feel loved no matter their gender or identity. Please don't be afraid.

Elio Farley of Middlebury identifies as transgender and created Middlebury PRIDE to create community and provide representation. Two years ago they realized that their status as a trans person could prevent them from their dream of becoming a teacher, they realized this after a trans teacher in their hometown in IL was fired after their library was met with opposition. They want to emphasize that positive representation and queer community are life-saving.

Caitlin Gildrien of Leicester is the Vice President of the Rutland NAACP, which covers part of Addison County, and read a prepared statement to oppose book banning in ACSD. The NAACP is strongly condemns any attempt to ban books, especially in elementary schools. Book bans have been historically used to restrict intellectual freedom and control the narrative. It is an attack on the educational system to foster critical thinking. Book bans strip away humanity reflected in literature. Every child deserves and education that embraces diverse voices.

K. Board Reflections

Barb Wilson 5 min

Ellen Whelan-Wuest noted the courage required to speak in public and thanked everyone who showed up to provide public comment. It has been a pleasure.

Laura Harthan also expressed her gratitude to the community members who attended and spoke.

James Malcolm expressed gratitude as well, noting the difficulty of sharing emotional testimony. It is one of the hardest things to do, but you feel better having done it. He is feeling a lot of appreciation for the community tonight.

L. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 20m

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