

DANVILLE SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, Revised 12 January 2022
Tuesday, January 4, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.
Danville School Library & Zoom teleconference

Members present Bruce Melendy (Chair), David Towle, Tim Sanborn*, Clayton Cargill, Robert Edgar*; student member: Thomas Edgar* | *Zoom remote

Administration present Mark Tucker, David Schilling, Sarah Welch, Michael Concessi

Public present Rob Balivet, Abigail Bartell, Amy Bedor, David Cassidy, James Clark, Allison Despathy, Stacy Edgar, Katie Fiegenbaum (*Caledonia Record*), Simon Fisher, Molly Gleason, Emily Greaves, Marissa Hewitt, Amy Hornblas, Ginni Lavelly, Peter Mantius, Lindsey Mitchell-Wheeler, Carolyn Morrison, Beth Nishball-Williams. Melissa Ramsey, Luke Robbins, James Sexton, Shirley Snelling-Sexton, Sara Stinson, EllynMarie Theep, Nick Whites, Danielle Turo, Mary Wyand, Sharon [unidentified]

1 Call to Order [00:15:15] Bruce called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Roll call of directors present: Clayton - present, Dave T - present, Tim - present, Robert - present, Bruce - present.

Bruce informed the public attending the meeting either in-person or via Zoom that the Board did not need to know their names unless they became an active participant recognized to speak.

[00:17:03] Before continuing the meeting Bruce recognized Principal Schilling. Dave S informed the Board of the passing of Max Skorstad, Class of 2023, due to cancer a few days ago. He noted Max was an "incredibly talented musician" and a "phenomenal human being" and that he felt a remembrance of Max at this moment might best be had by listening to one of the last songs Max recorded with his father. Music [00:17:55-00:19:36]. Dave S indicated the School would be working with Max's parents over the next week or so to put together a school-community wide celebration of Max's life.

MOTION: Robert moved the Board adopt a one-minute recess, subject to the call of the Chair; Clayton seconded. Vote: unanimous. Motion ADOPTED.

2 Additions/Changes to the Agenda. [00:21:35] None.

3 Approve Minutes [00:21:44]

Robert indicated he had distributed to board an email containing 4 proposed amendments, and he indicated he was striking the 3rd one related to "Career, Technical and Training", as it was correct in the minutes as written. He further invited Dave S to address the reason for the deletion during the discussion of his CTE Proposal later in the meeting.

MOTION Clayton moved the minutes of the regular meeting of December 9, 2021 be approved, as amended by the Clerk (see addendum for 3 corrections); Dave T seconded. Vote: unanimous. Minutes APPROVED.

4 Administrative Reports

- **Superintendent** [00:23:08] [Report](#) received.

The Report indicates (1) open positions at all schools except Cabot and Peacham, (2) nursing and kitchen staff hires, (3) an increase in families opting-in to the covid-19 Test-to-Stay program, (4)

status of ESSER funds, (5) Act 173 and Pupil Weight Study still being legislatively unresolved, (6) the budget process being underway in all districts. and (7) newly adopted, required CCSU policies on special education and personnel files, as well as a financial conflict-of-interest procedure relative to procurement.

Clayton asked for an explanation of the situation with SU kitchen staff. Mark indicated that a few months ago the SU Board approved the provisional hiring of a substitute cook, because we were short-handed in the kitchens. Cook positions were vacant in Peacham (long-term leave and suspensions) and Walden (dismissal), and Tanika [the Food Service Director] has been filling in their positions by shuttling between the two schools, in addition to performing her Director responsibilities. A cook has been hired for Walden (starting January 19th), the Peacham cook's return is expected this month and a cook from Danville will be transferred to Peacham, once the Danville position is filled, which is imminent, allowing Tanika to relinquish her extra duties. With that, all 7 school kitchens will be fully staffed; the substitute cook will also cover for absences.

[Robert asked Mark to take a minute and provide an overview of ESSER funding: Does it come to the SU? How is it dispensed [among districts]? Who controls its spending ?

Mark stated that ESSER funds had been/are being distributed in 3 waves; ESSER I and II funds have been accessible for a few months, and ESSER III funds have received approval for release from AOE by the US Department of Education. We will learn tomorrow how that will occur. He noted that generally the fund releases have shown few strings attached initially and more strings attached to later funds. He pointed out that for months and at present there is an [SU ARC-ESSER public plan](#) [ARP = American Rescue Plan] provided on the SU website along with a questionnaire aimed at collecting public input on proposed expenditures. Now funds are preliminarily planned to be spent on afterschool programming, summer program and continuation of the grant funded positions that we filled this year using ESSER II monies.; these are listed in the plan. Also, if the Career. Technical Experiential Learning Proposal is approved, the ESSER III funds would support it for the first two years, FY23 and FY 24.

Mark and Clayton called attention to the Board of policies and procedures adopted by the CCSU board at its last meeting; these are referenced in the Superintendent's report.

- **Principals** [00:29:46] [Report](#) received

The Report notes (1) the in-person 7-12 concert held, (2) the wood chip plant being fully operational and cost recovery of \$40K expected, (3) winter wellness at Craftsbury and Fenton Chester, (4) student involvement in NAEP [National Association of Educational Processes, "Nation's Report Card"] assessment, (5) the pK-6 PBIS celebration and (6) the full-text of welcome-back message of January 3rd to the Danville Staff from the Principals'.

Clayton asked if the whole building runs on the wood chip boiler. Dave S indicated the entire system is now fully operational. Clayton asked about surveillance testing on Tuesday & Thursday this week. Sara indicated it would occur Tuesday for sure. and Mark indicated there is an order in for test kits for Thursday.

Robert asked about the staffing for the two covid-19 testing procedures, in particular how they were threatened by a loss of funding? Mark responded that school nurses oversee the PCR testing, and the two LNAs we hired to handle antigen Test-to-Stay testing; the LNAs provide additional nursing support and rotate about the SU. Robert further inquired about the

impact of the Governor's proposal to shift Test-to-Stay from the school to parents. Mark said he had no idea, and he had not yet received any guidance on the idea. Both Dave S and Mark said all they knew about it was that provided in a *vt-digger* article a few days ago.

- **[Student Services]** [00:34:10] [Report](#) received. There were no questions posed; any should be directed to the Superintendent.
- **Student Representatives** [00:34:33] No reports. Students just returned to school; reports will be prepared for the February regular meeting.

5 Board Business

- **FY23 Budget** [00:34:48]. [Budget Report Initial](#) [Budget Report FINAL Revised](#).

Mark reminded the board that the budget proposed at this current meeting is not different with respect to revenues and expenditures from that presented by Mike at the board's last regular meeting, but all the state data necessary to calculate the tax impact had not yet been received (CLA in particular) at that time. Those data have arrived, and the tax impact of the budget has been completed and is a focus of Mike's presentation tonight.

Mike initially commented on the CLA [Common Level of Appraisal] by noting that when the CLA goes down, property values have increased, and that will push taxes up, and when the CLA goes up, property values have decreased, and that will drive taxes down. This year the CLA contributed to an increase in the tax rate of \$-0.13. He further noted the increase in the budget was 88% due to personnel costs (3.4 FTEs).

The *change* in individual contributions of the major variables to the homestead tax rate (cents per \$1000 in assessed property value) are:

- increases: [net] Education Spending (+\$0.15), CLA (+\$0.13), and
- decreases: Equalized Pupils (-\$0.02), Yield* (-\$0.31).
- net change: **\$ -0.04** (per \$1000 assessed property value).

*Yield was set this year at \$12,937, which is the contribution of the State to the school for each (equalized) pupil.

Pages 1-3 of the budget report summarize and show the calculations of this tax rate assessment and the impact of income-sensitivity, where applicable. The remaining 5 pages detail revenue sources by local, state and primarily grant sources, and expenditures by functions (spending change per category is shown in parentheses): Instruction (+3.3%), Student Support (+31.2%), Instructional Support (+3.2%), Administration (-3.6%) and Plant Operation/Transport (+17.0%) and Food Service (+11.6%). Statewide non-residential rates and rates based on Household Income are provided on page 2; the latter is determined by the State, the Board has no input.

Robert pointed out that the absolute, average *annual* increase in the Total Budgetary Expenditures from 2017 to 2022 was a pretty steady rate of \$250,000 per year, but in this current budget that rate is \$350,000 per year. He further noted also that for this year the Equalized Pupils' value might have been expected to be higher, but the count is a two-year average, and thus it includes last year's pandemic enrollment which sharply dropped. He concluded that the Yield was a "gift" from the Legislature helping to keep taxes down this year.

Clayton asked why the increase in Direct Instruction (salaries and benefits) was so large. (See page 5, top panel, Regular Ed Instruction, salaries & benefits show a combined increase of \$180K). Michael explained and Mark added it was due to (1) a new kindergarten teacher hired to handle an unanticipated spike in K enrollment following the pandemic year of FY21-22, (2) hiring in-house a behavioral interventionist replacing a position previously contracted (at greater expense) outside the School, and (3) the hiring of a part-time guidance counselor.

Robert pointed out that the projected spending for Extra-/Co-curricular activities for FY23 was zero, and in comparison, previous years' spending was in the tens of thousands; this appeared quite anomalous. These funds are targeted to student activities, such as student council, clubs, band, etc. He added that if these deletions are intended, then at least we should buy the kids tin cups and escort to the Town commons. Several minutes were spent addressing this problem, but no immediate resolution became apparent until Dave S was able to locate the proposed spending. Since this insertion affected numbers in other parts of the budget, discussion of this topic was tabled.

Later in the meeting this discussion was taken off the table when Michael conveyed that he had ironed out the difficulties the board had previously encountered. Specifically, in the section on Extra/Co-curricular activities the initial absence of any funding proposed for FY23 was a result of it having been assumed all these expenditures were ELO (Early Learning Opportunity) related, and they had been transferred to a budgetary category covered by ESSER funds. Actually only about 60% of these Extra-/Co-curricular funds were ELO. The non-ELO expenditures should have remained in Function 1420. Therefore, Michael restored the non-ELO stipends (\$20,000) and associated FICA benefits (\$1,530) resulting in the Total Budgeted Expenditures increasing by \$21,530 to \$6,723,233. This modest addition caused a *change* in the Homestead tax rate in the initial budget draft from a \$-0.041 to \$-0.036 in the final budget draft, a change small enough to keep the rounded-rate at \$-0.04.

MOTION Clayton moved the approval of a Total Budgetary Expenditure for FY23 of \$6,723,233; Dave T seconded. Vote: unanimous. Motion ADOPTED.

- **Facility Update.** No report. [01:00:50]

Dave S & Sara reported they intended to meet with the architects in the next few days and discuss different proposals seeking a reasonable cost.

Robert indicated a cost estimate was expected last month; was it available? Dave S and Mark responded that they had rejected the estimate and asked the firm to reconsider its cost proposal. Bruce phrased it as the architects needed to "sharpen their pencils." Robert asked if the number proposed could be shared with the board. Dave S cautioned that it was still being negotiated, and he did not yet feel it was a number for public consumption. Bruce supported the Principals and cautioned that we wait for a new number we can take to the community. Dave T agreed with Bruce, in that he thought the first number the public sees "is the one they are going to remember." It was added also that if it released later with the new number, then it can demonstrate work that has been done to lower it. Robert said that if that number has not been communicated to the Board, that he accepted that it was not yet public. Bruce said the Chair was open to a motion to make the number public, if any board member wanted to do so. No board member offered a motion.

Robert expressed his concern with the prospect of school bond issues being presented by the Board to the Town for approval. He alluded to the \$60M school bond issue voted down by a 3:1 margin in Harwood in November. Harwood had first proposed a bond issue about 7 years ago, and it failed.

Stemming from rejection the board formed a committee which had worked since then to educate the SU community and advocate for a newly developed proposal. The Harwood Board was surprised by the November rejection having been confident that it had assembled (and apparently sold) a passable bond proposal.

Robert said he offered this as a cautionary tale, and he spoke to the need for a committee to shepherd our proposal in the community and advocate for it, as opposed to just having minutes and a few public hearings alone do the work. "If we really think this something we need and not just want, the committee should be able to make a convincing argument, sticker shock or not, that this is a step in the best interests of the kids in the school and the community." He urged this been done soon.

Bruce agreed that once we have the cost number, we can go to the Town with it, and we can form a committee. Dave S added that the TruexCullins, our architectural firm, views such a committee as a necessary component of this process. It was observed that this is a community vote; it does not matter how individual board members might vote on it.

Lastly, Robert inquired whether a "school bond banker" or someone knowledgeable in such bonds could speak to the board for 10-15 minutes about how it should look at the bonding process and questions we should bear in our minds. Mark suggested he knew a person who would be able to do this and would inquire about their availability.

- **Programming update - Technical Education.** [Proposal](#) received. [01:13:35]

Dave S reiterated and elaborated on what he sees as a strong proposal for expanding "hands-on" learning opportunities at the School beyond what is already credibly offered. It is a viable pathway for a significant number of our students in their secondary years, although certainly not a need for everybody. He noted that in the past Danville has been rocked by different administrative initiatives re-focusing the High School to do different things (e.g. National Baccalaureate School, more sports focused), and each time that happens the faculty gets pulled in different directions without due consideration for where faculty strengths reside. He sees this program as continuing what is working and expanding it for a significantly larger number of students, whose learning strengths coincide with the focus of this program.

Additionally, he sees the program as a way to increase Danville's attractiveness to tuition students and to retain students who might consider transferring to other schools. He noted that Danville is unique in being the only public High School in the State for which two private Tech Centers have been designated. He noted that means our students have access to only half-day programs, but that if our school can enlarge and offer tech programs for 9th and 10th graders (in addition to those for Juniors and Seniors), it would be a great way to keep our own students in our community productive and growing through their graduation as well as to attract students who want to come to Danville.

Reacting to the educational disruption manifest in many kids as a result of the covid pandemic, Dave S views ESSER [federal] funds as supporting a two-year window to initially address the needs of this group of kids and to test the effects of the proposed programmatic expansion of a "hands-on": learning style. Pragmatically, he assesses that the full extent of the problem for kids caused by the coronavirus is uncertain --- "we do not know what we've lost" -- and this two-year federally supported window permits us the opportunity to figure out creative ways to fix this.

Bruce asked whether the program would involve getting the shop areas back up and running; he related the positive effects opportunities using that space had on his kids. Dave S said the shop is now used, but the program would use the physical space but rejuvenated and revised to support those that would use it as part of the program.

Mark agrees with everything they have said and pointed out the High School benefits from many tuition students from other districts or attending by choice. Some number of those kids would be attracted to or benefit from this program. and if one of the local academies beats us to the punch on this, we would likely lose those kids, because they will go to the Academy for the 9th and 10th grade years knowing that they're going to go into their tech program later on. I just want to remind the board we've been able to do a lot of things at Danville, because we have that extra tuition money which comes in every year. I agree with Dave S who sees the potential for growing that tuition enrollment, but we also want to prevent others from poaching kids from the Danville community. Once they come here for the 9th and 10th grade classes, they're basically in the Danville culture and likely to stay for their 11th and 12th years

Mark said the number of kids returning to the school with covid-induced problems was more than we expected. We need something to backstop learning loss in these kids and arresting of their social social-emotional growth due to their disconnection from the school and their peers. We need to give them something that gives them a reason to be in school somewhere. Why not Danville? Dave S emphasized these problems were was not a fault of teachers, but putting many of these kids back in the same learning environment is both problematic and unrealistic; we need to try something different.

Sarah affirmed the remarks of Dave S and Mark. She indicated that this program is something our kids need -- that covid has shifted education. We need to be able to shift with it to be able to socially and emotionally support them. Last year gave many of them a lot of opportunities to work outside school, some with multiple jobs, and now we're asking them when they're back to fit in the Traditional School model, and they don't necessarily fit. And I think this provides kids -- even the kids we assume don't fit that mold because maybe they should try harder or whatever like that -- opportunities to explore programs and pathways that would not experience otherwise.

Robert sought clarification of the role of the School Board with respect to the proposal. A short discussion resulted in agreement that the Director works with the Principals, is supervised by the Superintendent, and is granted a contract requiring Danville Board approval. He further asked if the Director position was to be advertised as open to all qualified. Mark said it would in accord with Human Resources' policies and procedures.

Robert then described the State CTE program as consisting of about 15 centers, each with a Director and on average serving c. 400 students. He asked whether because Danville's program would consist of many fewer offerings and serve a much smaller set of students, did it merit a full-time director? He suggested as an alternative the hiring of an administrative assistant to the principal to absorb some of the principals' burden and permit the secondary principal to focus more on tech program development.

Sarah argued that the role of the principal, especially right now with covid, doesn't allow for attention to running a tech program. We need have in place for ESS, building trades and things like that a dedicated person who will oversee them. We are not talking about a third principal. but rather somebody with specific experiences in both the education world and also specific experience in tech

programming and the abilities to do it well for the benefit of our kids. I don't think wearing the hat of a principal permits that.

Mark informed the board that this needs to be a director-level position; we need this person to be able to supervise and direct the teachers for providing instruction in this program, and under the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) that requires an administrator to be assigned legally those duties. CBA requires any supervision and evaluation of a licensed teacher be provided by a licensed administrator, and that calls for somebody with administrative license.

Robert clarified that his alternative proposal was that the principal remain the main focus of interacting with this program and the assistant to pick up other duties besides the program.

Dave S said that the way he wrote this job description was for a person with intense focus on this program. He thought it would be a disservice in the school to redirect a principal to this specific level of programming. High School in the traditional sense deserves an instructional leader; the director position requires a strong leader to run a different program and requires a different skill set. The duties of this position of Career Tech Ed director and leader of alternative general High School programming with a heavy focus on students meeting Career Technical Experiential learning needs are different. He summarized that this program has a level of skills, a level of instruction and a level of student engagement which is aligned with those tech centers, but it is not one of those tech centers.

Lastly, Robert expressed concerns about the delegation of responsibilities and expectations between the principal and director positions since the proposal involved a substantial transfer of resources from the principal to the director position. He found the proposed transfer of the Facilities Director position to the new Director problematic as it would largely eliminate the principal having control of their schools' own building and grounds. He said he expected that duties and domains to be spelled out clearly in their contracts in an unambiguous and fully transparent manner, and not made "on the fly."

Dave S informed the board that there had previously been a legislative bill to reduce the non-instructional duties of a principal so they could spend more time as an instructional leader; this part of the proposal was offered with that reduction in mind. He indicated he remained flexible on the need to shift it.

Bruce said it depends on the person we hire -- we may get a person who says that they want to oversee the facilities or not. Also, he added, Sarah could do it.

Tim contributed that facilities management could be put on Sarah as the building principal, What is your opinion knowing that somebody other than you is managing or taking on that task for you.

Sarah said it's something she could take on although she admittedly has not been as involved in the renovation of the building as Dave S has, but I could do that. She noted we have a very strong facilities manager who we trust, so I am not opposed to having somebody else who is trusted within our Danville community to take that on or join in existing weekly meetings. Admittedly there are activities associated with managing facilities that take away from our being able to be in our classrooms and then with our kids, she added.

Tim responded that he had just asked if it would be accurate to say that Dave S has been more

involved in that process right now that you are. Sarah said "yes". We know we're comfortable having a principal in the building with a different person managing the facilities, so I think that alleviates that concern specifically? He noted that Sarah had plenty of things on her plate, so to have somebody who is experienced and already addressing the needs is a benefit.

Clayton asked whether the newly proposed director position and Sarah's job leave some middle ground that needs administrative coverage, excluding facilities management. Sarah added that the instructional leadership component requires a principal to support our middle school and high school high school teachers; a Dean of Students or Assistant Principal are different positions, often with a disciplinary focus. She sees taking on all of preK-12 as too much.

Mark noted that a board evaluation committee had recently noted that he had not given enough attention to evaluating instructional practices, but he explained this was simply a time constraint. Viewing the principals sympathetically and not critically, he said that Dave S and Sarah don't have the amount of time they would like to have to do instructional leadership with their staff, especially when being challenged by additional and different needs with their kids coming out of the pandemic situation. We need strong instructional leadership at the secondary level and at every level.

1

Mark further indicated that it's easy to fall into a trap right now of designing specifically what each of these positions is going to do without knowing the missing piece here. We don't know what the candidate pool looks like; we don't know the skill set which will be brought to the table. We may find it useful to designate responsibilities with newly available skills sets in mind. He reiterated that we don't know what we don't know yet about the candidate pool, so he was a little uncomfortable that we are micro-designing a program sitting here in a board meeting. When no one's made a decision yet whether or not you can call this a good idea or not.

In response Dave T offered that he thought it a good idea. Bruce noted that we're going to be advertising the position, but it's going to be Dave S-- correct? Mark said he did not think you can find anybody better than Dave S for this position.

Clayton spoke to its absolutely being a good idea to include this in the high school education for students at this school. He considered it very important to improve the high school education, and it should be a focus of ours to make it a better high school for every kid that is here and every kid that could potentially come here. If this is a step toward making the high school better, he was for it.

Tim recalled that during the Act 46 process that we reflected on what our schools do well and what we could do to improve that, and he thought that process as having identified an area that we can improve upon. It and the covid situation have created situations where we are seeing not only deficits in kids but, we're seeing a lot more experimental education. We're seeing people really branching out and trying new ways to reach all kids. Concerns about the cost of an administrative position are eliminated by the proposal being tied to ESSER grants. He has drawn confidence in the proposal from the strength of the people who are sitting around the table and who have developed and argued for it and sees it as a program we will want to invest in two years. So, it could benefit kids, and if that's the case, that's what we're here for.

Robert sought clarification of what was a "good idea". Mark responded that it was that the curriculum designed to enhance the tech and experiential educational opportunities was a good idea. To him that was the key question at the moment; the rest were details. Robert said program organization structure and curriculum were different issues, but that if the question of a "good idea" addressed the desirability of the curriculum, he was fully supportive of it.

Bruce indicated we've heard from 4 who think it is a good idea. and he strongly thinks it is a great idea. He asked for a motion to move forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Beth Nishball-Williams spoke in support of the proposal.

My name is Beth Nishball-Williams; this is my first year here in Danville.,. Although I am a Danville resident, for the past 10 years I was teaching at Spaulding High School, and my caseload as a special educator was kids at Central Vermont Career Center, formerly known as the Barre Tech Center.

I can tell you a number reasons why this is an incredible idea. One is there's a huge shortage of skilled trade workers in this state, and I am at the end the baby boomers and once we retire (and I've got four more years) what's going to happen? So, first and foremost is something that needs to happen. The Chair referred to when his were here ... But just get caught and things like Building Trades , things like drafting , things like Auto Repair Small Engine repair -- ll those things go by the wayside, even the Arts. So, kids that aren't traditional learners, they aren't getting what they need. And I saw that as a person who was working with freshman through seniors, and once that freshman program at the Barre Tech Center at that time ended, it was bedlam.

Dave worked there. I know what he's capable of. So, I can tell you that when you're at a CTE School, there's a director , there's also an assistant director, and the assistant director is doing the things that the director doesn't have enough time for. To have somebody who goes between the two makes no sense whatsoever. If this grows perhaps you apply for these things --that I don't know how that works -- and I will be here then so. I'm not even going to go there. Somebody had said something about 10% of the population; I have to say that I know that 10% of the population here, and I can tell you that part of the problem with this whole shortage is also the younger generation. And I can tell you first and foremost my two kids --- everything is college prep and not all kids are college material, including my older one who went to college. There was just something on the news before I left to come here about an electrician who is having some kid go work with him, and he's paying him to teach him, because you can't find anybody. So, all these things makes so much sense. I think about the students I have and granted some of them aren't even special ed education kids or just kids that I know because they're friends of some of my kids, and a lot of these farming kids would benefit

if they could have a diesel tech program or something along those lines that would help them.

Going and sitting in an English class and having to learn about poetry, truthfully, I can

appreciate that it's not for everyone, and having to read Walt Whitman and explain things doesn't fit everyone. [Interjected comments by Dave S were basically inaudible.] And so, the number of times I hear "what am I going to use this for ?" and when I can find an answer to that I'll say it. Once again I know I'm a special educator but my students are friends with other people , so people come in and I help with whatever -- like the Statue of Liberty. And I hear from all of them, because those kids aren't college material per se, in the sense that going to St Mike's or UVM or whatever -- going to be VTC possibly -- given their study skills, but there are other things. VTC seems to go by the wayside a number of times -- people don't think about it. I love this proposal, because this is something that is near and dear to me, and I just think that more than 10% of the population of the school will benefit from that.

Bruce added that he was a strong advocate of tech ed and used his kids as examples to illustrate their taking different learning paths through high school and into college resulting in each but each becoming successful.

Robert followed the public comment by indicating he had heard no opposition to the learning goals of the proposal. He reported his support for the proposal resided in having considered the goals of experiential learning, the Vermont statues on career and technical education, the Agency of Education initiatives to promote career and tech education, sampling several CTE centers, and scientific support derived from National Academy of Sciences findings and recommendations on the conduct 6-12 education -- all of which agreed well with the proposal. [01:51:49]

The following motion was made before was made before the public and Robert's comments and voted on afterward.

MOTION Dave T moved that we approve the position of technical education director contingent on grant funding; Clayton seconded. Vote: unanimous. Motion ADOPTED

- **Conflict of Interest in Procurement** [Conflict of Interest document](#)

Mark informed the Board of a federally imposed requirement applicable to all persons in the SU involved in the procurement of items using any federal funds. That requirement was an annual, written agreement with a Conflict of Interest Statement, which was adopted by the CCSU Board on 12 December 2021, and which binds all district boards. Each board member must agree to be bound as an individual, and so he requested that we sign and return the COI forms to the Central Office. His comments to the Danville Board closely paralleled those to the CCSU Board on this matter, and so they are reported in the following as represented in the minutes of the 12 December CCSU Bd meeting.

This procedure and the resulting statement to be signed by all board members or supervisory union employees who are involved in any aspect of the procurement process came about as the result of an audit. Mark

Tucker makes clear that this is being brought to the board as a procedure and not a policy at the advice of the Agency of Education, who makes clear that this procedure must be agreed to by the board, despite the fact that it isn't a policy. He asks that the board acknowledges this procedure to meet the audit requirement. The subsequent result will be that each board member or employee whose immediate family may have a conflicting interest in any procurement situation will be asked to sign this document, to make clear that no financial gain.

- **Public Comments**

[02:14:36] **James Sexton** said he was from Essex Junction and that he has spent the majority of the last 4 months going all over the northern half of the state addressing the mask mandates that the state has issued and many schools have adopted. Indicating he had friends in this area who have been personally affected by the mask mandates,* James stated that Danville School has mask mandates for the students and all these schools around here do also. He called attention to Amy Hornblas' ** study called the *Vermont Mask Study* which proves that masks are harming kids physically and mentally. He continued by reporting that former FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb has recently on Sunday's CBS' *Face the Nation* said that cloth masks are ineffective. He further said that "the mask that you all expect everybody to wear is a paper mask and has a warning label right on the right in the bottom indicating they are not for personal protection." He wanted to know "why do you people keep on forcing kids to wear masks that are harming them, where all the proof is that they don't work or they do harm them?"

* Bruce interrupted at this point to inform him that in that he was not a resident of Danville, the board did not necessarily have to listen to his communication, but he was going to permit him to speak. Words were exchanged with which James claimed he had a right to speak, and Bruce advised him that he did not, but Bruce said he was not going to argue with him further and asked him to continue

** Bruce noted Amy was present and probably intended to speak, but James noted her name was not on the screen. and that was why he was talking about the study. [Amy was physically present at the school but not on camera.]

[02:17:01] **James Clark** said he had four kids who go to Walden School, and I ... [unclear assertions] ... about Superintendent Tucker, having been threatened with [being reported?] to DCF [Department of Children and Families] and contacts he has had with Vermont State Police and the Agency of Education. At this point Bruce advised him that his complaints belonged before either the Walden School Board or the CCSU Board, not the Danville Board. James said he had been before the other boards and had never been told that. Why not? he inquired. Bruce could not explain why not, but stressed that should have been their response. James was dismissive claiming "all you guys are part of the same thing ... you just don't want to listen to the people who elected you into those positions."

James made clear that the mask mandates were only a recommendation from the State, given there being no state of emergency, and it was up to the board to enforce them, because the State Police and DCF "will not unless there is actual evidence of a child being harmed." He claims that he sends his kids to school without a mask; he reports purported threats from Principal S and

the Superintendent of reporting him to DCF. He adamantly declared his kids are entitled to a public education.

Lastly, he concluded by stating that he is working with a couple of parents in Danville, and "I'm going to help them as much as I humanly possibly can ... to remove some of you guys out of those seats, because we've got people and places that shouldn't be there, and I am running for school board." He asked Superintendent Tucker "to try to fight some of these mask mandates

APPROVED MINUTES – 4 January 2022 REVISED

Page 12 of 15

because if I can get on the school board in Walden, one of my requests will be to remove you as superintendent. "

Bruce thanked Mr. Clark for his willingness to run for school board office.

[02:21:21] **Shelley Snelling-Sexton** asked "how much is your school district being paid to make these mandates?" Bruce responded that it is being paid nothing and added that he understood there are incentives out there, but we are not involved in that. Shelly asked again if Danville "were getting any of the two-million-dollar reward money." Bruce indicated "no."

[02:22:58] **Amy Hornblas** indicated she was from Cabot and submitted a copy of an open letter she had presented to the CCSU board. A dozen medical providers recently sent a letter to the Danville Select Board. In the letter they refer to the results of a study called "Return to training in the covid-19 era."* It is also cited by the CDC, and comes with a list of evidence ???and of benefits and the safety of masks. Here are some quotes:

... Our findings demonstrate that physical activity with a face mask is associated with a mild and significant rise in carbon dioxide which is more prominent as the level of the workout is increased. Previous studies show that wearing an N95 respirator during aerobic activity is associated with increased carbon dioxide in the exhaled breath, at rest and at any level of exertion. Previous research has found that in the dead space under the mask carbon dioxide and oxygen levels were significantly above and below, respectively, the ambient levels relative to workplace standards set by OSHA. Prolonged exposure to mildly increased levels of carbon dioxide is commonly referred to as sick-building syndrome and may cause headaches, fatigue, difficulty concentrating and increase in heart and blood pressure. The effect that short-term elevations of these blood CO₂ levels have on physical and cognitive performances is unknown. [We don't know what this is going to do, she added. And it was beyond the scope of the study and should be evaluated (perspectively?)]. Subjects with obstructive lung diseases, such as asthma or COPD, (10% of children have uncontrolled asthma in our state), and heart disease should undergo meticulous evaluation before attempting physical activity with a mask. The safety of face masks should be evaluated in specifically designed studies before considering physical activity with a respirator in these unique populations.

This is the study cited by your own medical providers here in Danville. In light of this evidence provided by your local medical professionals I urge you to schedule an emergency school board meeting specifically to assess the school's current practices around the use of masks to see if they are sufficient to protect the health of our students and staff. Thank you.

* [Added by the Clerk: Epstein, D, and 8 others (2021, Epub 2020) Returning to training in the COVID-19 era: the physiological effects of face masks during exercise. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* 31(1):70-75.]

Amy also said she brought with her a FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] request for Superintendent Tucker for "an opportunity to inspect or obtain copies of public records that pertain to communications, correspondence, such as emails and text, and recorded meetings to or from [him] and all the administrators and all school board members from the union schools pertaining to the subject of masks from July 2020." She said she has approached the SU now for a long time ago to the present with concerns and questions, but that she has not been getting any answers -- "so I figured this is a good way to do it."

Mark responded by informing her that the SU did not respond to FOIA requests, as they referred to Federal law to which the SU was not subject in this case, but that the proper channel for her request was under the Public Records Act of the State of Vermont. He indicated that if he received her request via that channel (PRA), he would then take it.

Bruce noted that the [*Vermont Mask Survey*] was shared at the CCSU board meeting and that it had been communicated to the Danville Board by its representatives on the CCSU board. Amy said she did not see any response or any public discussions. She was wondering where these discussions are happening. Where you developing these policies? she asked. Bruce said the emails will show that there has really been no formal discussion. Mark suggested she go back and read all the minutes and that's where the discussion has occurred. She further inquired "Have any adjustments be made since the October 1st meeting?" Bruce referred her to Danville school board minutes.

[02:28:00] **Amy Bedor** of Danville said that although she and Mark had talked in the past that she likewise did not feel like she has gotten an adequate response, so she assumed he had not looked into what Allison and Amy had presented, which she characterized as well-cited research

Mark responded that he did not believe their [comments] were valid. He did not believe Amy's study was valid or that the materials that Allison sent to him are coming from reliable sources. He stressed that we rely on the recommendations of Vermont Health Department, and those are the recommendations that I'm following. We will continue to follow Health Department recommendations. He said told both of these people to take their concerns to the Health Department.

Amy countered that "You say you're following the health department; it's so easy to just say you're following someone else, but your job is to be able to analyze and be objective when you make decisions" She questioned that the board was even trying to validate its position on masking. She indicated that she started by not being on the same page, but I have simply been open-minded, and I can't believe you guys are so good at seeing a need at the school and saying let's fix it -- let's adapt, and we were not doing so here. She said she loved Danville school but did not see why we [the board] can't be open-minded. Regarding medical decisions being made for people, she explained that if there is a valid or even a reasonable doubt that they're not good for kids to be on all day, and nothing's happening about it ... -- that it's just blindly being cut off. She continued that if it was researched and validated, and we had a discussion about it -- but "it is so blindly closed off."

Bruce offered that the board was in a difficult position. It wasn't that long ago the Haverhill [NH] School Board decided to not have a mask mandate, and then there was an outpouring of letters to the editor on how irresponsible the school board was to allow that to happen. A special meeting occurred last night to further discuss it. but I don't know where it went or what happened. We understand people's concerns, but we are in a difficult position as a school board.

[02:30:52] **Allison Despathy** greeted the board by saying she was here again standing up for the kids. She recognized our saying we wanted to do what's best for the kids but questioned that were doing so.

APPROVED MINUTES – 4 January 2022 REVISED

Page 14 of 15

... She reported that there are 28 other states with lower vaccination rates, in which kids are not required to wear masks.

She surmised that members of the board feel powerless and that we don't have a say in this -- that maybe we just have to do what you're being told to. In response to Bruce's commenting on there being people on both sides, she proposed that we give the decision on masking to the parents -- which she called the "bottom line." She reminded the board that they can see people on CNN saying cloth masks don't work, and that tests we are using are experimental and tests for both viable and non-viable viral particles, which "will not culture out." These tests are not going to be specific enough to be helpful; they do not even differentiate what type of coronavirus we are talking about, and these are emergency, youth authorization, experimental vaccines, masks and tests. And we are requiring the children to use these, when we specifically know they are not acceptable.

The board needs to have some real community conversations where we can come together and say what is the best approach. She noted the CDC at this point is saying over 50% of children have natural immunity -- it is the best gold standard protection ever. She asked what are we going to do as a community; we feel helpless. "You guys seem to feel helpless, " because all you are saying is that it is based on the Agency of Education and the Department of Health, and "That's not good enough -- Where is there evidence?" She pointed out that the same study the doctors referenced is one Amy H. referenced also. She admonished the board that the science is out there, but the board is not seeing it.

She returned to an appeal to parental rights, challenging the basis for our decision and asking us to give it to the parents -- show us what you're doing -- there is no evidence. She asked what is our trigger -- when are you are going to actually be able to say let's get back -- when AOE and Department of Health say so? She did not see either likely to do that.

Finally, she brought up problems with the PCR test, noting that she alerted the board to these 2 years ago. "I know you guys are in a tough position, and you're trying to protect the kids, but what is best for the kids? The best is for the kids to be able to breathe fresh air. That is a fundamental human right. " She asserted this was not a political issue for her -- I'm standing up for fundamental human rights." Thank you.

Bruce thanked her for making some very good points, and he certainly understood her concerns\.

[02:34:34] **Simon Fisher** identified himself as not a Danville resident but a member of the faculty at Danville School. He said he would like to thank the board and the administration for supporting and protecting our school community as best they can and protecting his colleagues and his family by requiring masks be worn in the building. Thank you.

[02:35:14] **Carolyn Morrison** identified herself as a Danville resident. She showed the board a picture of her daughter's mask that she came home with right before Christmas break, the same mask she put her

on the bus with that morning. I sent an email to her teacher about it, but the teacher was getting ready for Christmas break and wasn't really that excited about discussing it at the moment. And her excuse of why the mask was wet is that they were playing outside before they got on the bus She was concerned her daughter had been wearing the same mask for seven and a half hours, but then about 5 minutes later wondered "why in the hell is she wearing a mask outside." So, she is going to have a full conversation with the teacher tomorrow that has been scheduled. She claimed the teacher hasn't followed up on the emails.

She stated that a lot of kids hate going to school. She was dreading sending them to school this morning because for two weeks they could breathe fresh air. "They came home; they ripped those things off their faces and threw them at me. Yes, she said, I fully support Parent's Choice. My husband had covid a while back; we didn't wear masks; no one else in the house caught it. I don't think the damn masks do anything; it's not a personal protection thing." She said she did not put on any face mask where she works. I'm wearing one here out of respect for you folks. She continued "I would love to have more conversations with you guys and the school on why kids aren't getting more breaks -- My son said he is not allowed to take them off. I said to him that you're allowed to take breaks. She queried why are the teachers not allowing kids to take breaks -- yes, they feel scared to take breaks -- that's a real issue. She concluded that I have to tell my kids when they get on the bus to stand up for themselves, because you're the only one there to do it -- I'm not there to do it for you. Thank You.

Bruce said that's a situation that I think you're handling correctly, but your question should go to the administration before it comes before the school board.

[02:38:04] **James Clark** said he just wanted let all the parents know that if you don't want to send your kids to school with a mask, then they don't have to wear one. The school can't force a child to wear one; they can't deny them the right to a public education -- end of story. There is a Vermont statute which protects your child from that, and I know that I'm one hundred percent correct, because I've called superintendents and all over the state and it's The only thing they can do is maybe move your child 6 feet in social distance -- that's all they can do. They can't tell your child they can't go in the building; it's a public building, and I've already contacted a lawyer, because they try to say that your kid can't go in and the lawyer said but why not? -- it's a public building, you pay for it. It is just that easy. I send my kids to school with no masks, and no one's going to stop my kids and tell my kids they have to wear one. Because if a school board member puts their hand on my child, I will see them in court. And I do have the money to do so.

Bruce: Thank you, sir.

9 Adjourn [02:39:46]

MOTION Clayton moved to adjourn the meeting; Dave T seconded. Vote: unanimous. Motion ADOPTED. Bruce adjourned the meeting at. 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Edgar (Clerk), 11 January, 2022, Revised 12 January 2022

Meeting video record [2022-01-04 DSB Reg B.mp4](#), 715 MB, 02:40:27

The next Regular Meeting will occur on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 6:00 pm

Corrections to Minutes Special; Meeting of 9 November 2021

p. 2, paragr. 1, line 2": "...released, and an analysis"

p. 3, paragr. 1, line 6: "...so no ~~estimate of the~~ tax rate estimate is yet merited,"

pp. 5-7: Headers need to be raised several lines on each page.