

**APPROVED MINUTES  
MARLBORO SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 6:00 PM**

**In Attendance:**

*Board:*

Douglas Korb (Chair)  
Dan MacArthur (Vice-chair)  
Celena Romo  
David Holzapfel  
Jude Robinson

*Administration:*

Bill Anton (Superintendent)  
Wayne Kermenski (Principal)  
Laurie Garland (Business Manager, WCSU)

*Faculty & Staff:*

Patti Donnelly  
Kate Tarlow-Morgan

*Members of the Public:*

Amelia Nick (*Deerfield Valley News*)  
Peter Barus (Recorder)

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

Mr. Korb explained that the meeting would be a chance to speak with Mr. Kermenski openly about what the board anticipates regarding the budget, and is not the budget meeting; November 19 will be the budget timeline meeting; Ms. Garland would attend in December, the final review TBA before the final Warning.

**Members of the Public**

**Members of the Faculty**

Mr. Kermenski reported that the staff wanted clarification and details on the motion about representation. Mr. Korb explained that the board would work on a communication outside the meeting, on which there was consensus.

**SVE Engineers Planning Approval (Vote)**

Mr. Korb displayed a proposal and explained that a vote was needed.

Mr. MacArthur explained that there were two proposals, the lower one on screen recommended by the architect, including analysis of the capacity of the foundations to support additional floors, without which additions cannot proceed.

Mr. MacArthur moved to approve expenditure of up to \$9,700 to hire SVE Associates for an engineering survey of the MES properties, as specified in their proposal. Second by Mr. Holzapfel.

In discussion, it was noted that the entire property would be included in the survey, as the architects don't have good data, to include an engineering narrative, turning lanes for Rte 9, potable water, septic system, cost estimates, and depth of footings.

Mr. MacArthur explained two motions, the second to be moved if needed, as things may be changed, septic location etc. Mr. Holzapfel suggested that a topographic survey might already exist in the town office.

On the Motion, **all in favor.**

Mr. MacArthur moved to authorize expenditure of up to \$3,600 to SVE Associates for additional items specified on their proposal, only if needed.

Mr. Holzapfel expressed concern about the topographic survey, noting that \$2,800 was a lot of money for something that may already exist, and would want the building commissioner to be informed about these two items..

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Mr. MacArthur noted that this could wait, citing part of alternate item 1, "...preparation of an existing-condition plan to support schematic design..."; not a survey of the property so much as a detailed survey so building additions can be done.

There was discussion. Ms. Robinson suggested amending the Motion to say the building committee has to sign off on these expenditures before proceeding. Mr. Holzapfel agreed that this was a prudent amendment.

Mr. Holzapfel moved to amend the Motion to authorize expenditure of up to \$3,600 to SVE Associates for additional items specified on their proposal, only after approval by the building committee. Second by Mr. Holzapfel. On the amendment, **all in favor**.

Mr. Korb called the question. On the amended Motion, **all in Favor**.

Mr. MacArthur will inform Banwell and SBE Associates know.

The board will await formal proposals by mail.

## **Budget Pre-Planning (Discussion)**

### **Administrative Questions for Board**

Mr. Kermenski raised the question of what could be done this year, as many things had changed, a renovation going on, the pandemic emergency, in the past four years a lot of staff turnover; and suggested it was a good time to start forecasting while focusing on this unique year, on key things to do within a month that would help the budget process; and things to do 3 to 5 years hence, noting that change is constant, encouraging being proactive, having the discussions inform the budget, see the budget working for the community instead of the community working with the budget.

(From the Principal's Report)

*PRE-Budget considerations:*

*Teacher's salary schedule is still unknown and is integral to building an accurate budget.*

*Updating the Staff benefits and procedures handbook including salary schedules for specific positions. Let's complete this by December 1st.*

Mr. Kermenski noted that:

- Entering budget season with no teacher's contract, the budget will have to be more conservative than usual, not knowing those numbers in advance.
- The handbook could use an upgrade, salary schedules for staff, increase in communication for staff benefits, clarity about financials (how much they make this year, next year, create consistency around the budget); there is a draft from WCSU (Ms. Garland) and the Brattleboro Benefits and Procedures handbook.

Mr. Kermenski asked if the board saw value in this.

Ms. Romo discussed a comparison between WCSU and WCSESU regarding certified staff, and willingness to look for December 1; and that negotiations would occur next week, there would be more clarity then, and there would be time to modify the budget. Mr. MacArthur offered to work with Ms. Romo, develop rough draft, pull together data from other SUs, accommodate changes for certified staff. It was agreed to form a small committee to accomplish this.

(From the Principal's Report)

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*What tax rate do you have in mind?*

Mr. Korb asked about tax rates, noting that the town had been promised the Weighting Study fight; and citing a need to lower last year's rate. Mr. MacArthur suggested setting a target of \$1.80 to \$1.85. Mr. Korb noted that these numbers are not known but can be estimated. Ms. Robinson noted that it had been \$1.99. Mr. MacArthur acknowledged that a lot of details would have to get thrashed out to get there, but it's good to have a target; if it comes out at \$1.99, it will have to be modified. Mr. Korb noted that under an equity system it would have been \$1.55; and the need to avoid/waive penalties; and with no idea what the pandemic will do in the future, yield will come down, but still might be higher than the middle-of-the-road.

Mr. MacArthur explained that part of the tax rise was due to the penalty; and the need to get below the penalty phase, spend up to that dollar amount, without doubling the impact on taxpayers. Mr. Holzapfel noted that the penalty had cost nearly \$200,000.

Ms. Robinson reported that in her work, every year two budgets were created, one operating, one fund-raising (more creative, less certain) that she had heard what was promised, but a pandemic wasn't promised; and was willing to fight for more, a longer term investment for the school; taxes don't typically go down, but it's ok setting the lower line, and then encouraging the fund-raising budget; we already think this way, do creative visioning in a thoughtful way, to know the case that can be made with that vision; the story is important to people; and would not want to tax people out of the town.

Mr. Holzapfel agreed that Mr. MacArthur's is a good working number. Mr. Kermenski noted some thumbs-ups on the videoconference screen; that it was helpful to have that number; and the yield should be known by December 1; that the EQP will be an estimate, close to hold-harmless this year. Mr. Korb noted that the staff should be known the next day; and the December meeting would be the big one, maybe there would be two.

Kermenski explained that the next two bullets in his report were about programs in the school:

- after-school funded by 21(c) would continue it next year;
- nearly \$17,000 from the general budget spent on that;
- the program is appreciated, but there is a need to question whether the service is being provided, and its impact on school overall, it doesn't just run by itself, there is a lot of activity during the day;
- hidden costs were substantial;
- there had not been high levels of FRL, so grants were harder to get;
- almost half the students stay after school for L'After;
- specials could be changed to support teacher salaries after school, as in Guilford, where a PE teacher comes in late and stays;
- a bus could leave after L'After; or not provide the service anymore, also a possible conversation;
- the grant was approved for next year;
- L'After was a part time job for the director, 20 hours a week, under \$20,000;
- instructors get \$20 after school, are not as highly trained, handle tired kids, extended childcare;
- there are other options, and it is going to cost more.

Ms. Romo asked for clarification on expenditures out of the general fund, whether that was after the grant. Mr. Kermenski explained that this was in addition to the grant; it needed funding from the general budget, that was \$17,000 last year.

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(From the Principal's Report)

*Do we continue an after school program? We may lose the grant and it is very difficult to hire a director and instructors.*

- *Do we extend the day?*
- *Do Specials teachers work from 9:30-5:00 in order to run after school clubs?*
- *We currently pay 16.6K out of the general budget*

Mr. Anton explained that when funding for after school programs started at 100%, it went down, and year four stabilized at 50%; another \$16,600 is loaded into that; grant pays for the director, the program easily costs \$33,000.

Mr. MacArthur asked about educational and social benefits from after school programs; and approved of the idea of employees in the school who wanted that extra time. Mr. Kermenski explained that the program leader could provide more social benefit, more time to socialize with neighbors; academically, math, science, social studies, ELA, were of little social benefit; but being with the director could be an amazing experience. Mr. Holzappel noted that it was never meant to be an academic program, it was meant to be extracurricular, extending kids' experience, like taking things apart to see how they work; that it was a misreading to tack it to academics. Ms. Donnelly observed that it was hard to put a price on children not going home alone, spending 3:00 to 5:30 by themselves.

Mr. Korb noted some of the frustrations of the after school program for parents, signing up; etc, but would not vote to end some kind of support for kids, not just childcare, but exposure to something new, fun, worth looking at; and expressed appreciation for Mr. Kermenski bringing it before the board.

Ms. Tarlow-Morgan suggested exploring possibilities for after school, an alternative to specials coming in the afternoon, the energy of volunteering parents; lower the budget that way; pay somebody to teach children after school; not academic.

Mr. Korb noted that the decision was not necessary immediately or this year, a larger discussion was needed.

Ms. Robinson noted that sports had been integrated, soccer, cross country, the after school programs could turn more into an athletic program, worth revisiting at some point.

Mr. Kermenski had coached basketball in after school programs; but there have not been enough people to run the program; a way to support it must be found, and it will cost more. Mr. Korb noted that half the parents support it; but that leaders cap the number of students at their comfort level; a reliable leader for a certain routine number of kids is needed, and a volunteer is unlikely at that level of commitment.

(From the Principal's Report)

*What do we want our food program to look like? How comprehensive?*

Mr. Kermenski suggested thinking about where we want to land; valuing what we have, but it's expensive because of the quality; if keeping the comprehensive program going, it will cost more than what other schools are spending.

Ms. Romo recalled having a hard time staffing it over three years, hard to keep people around, an extra burden on Ms. Chaine, Mr. Kermenski making sandwiches when someone was out sick; maybe worth looking at a contract service; and suggested a holistic approach.

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Mr. Korb suggested that if the program was outsourced it would lower the quality of the food; should put quality first. Mr. MacArthur suggested exploring local people doing local food; can't spend another \$25,000 on top of a contract service, but might spend more if there was quality advantage; but administering the program is a load on the office. Mr. Korb suggested a local education council to help with this.

Mr. Kermenski suggested hiring a substitute who could move between districts as needed, who would learn each kitchen, an assistant chef floater paid through the WCSU. Ms. Romo asked about Mr. Medina, and Mr. Anton noted that the pandemic has brought the administrative reality of administering local programs, whether paying a fee to a contractor, or paying a premium for administrative costs, not an easy fix.

Ms. Robinson noted that the issue was brought up through AMP, looking for leadership and expertise; as president of AMP this was possible, AMP was a current vehicle for this; it was a big lesson for the town and the students about who controls the economy; keeping it local is a good thing for the town; impacts are sometimes very far from a plate of food; and as to costs, the burden on administrators needed to be understood and weighed against other factors, like how hard the job really is. Mr. Kermenski noted that only organic oats and wheat were used, because of herbicide contamination. Mr. Korb suggested project approach.

Mr. MacArthur discussed sharing a floating chef, possibly with Dover and NewBrook. Mr. Anton suggested that Mr. Kermenski discuss this with the principals, and return to the board.

(From the Principal's Report)

*What does the Town of Marlboro (board, community, families, students) want JH to look like? Will the town continue to support two teachers? Can we continue to afford 2 teachers for less than 20 students?*

Mr. Kermenski noted that this has been a major issue for a couple of years; JH had almost two full time teachers with the same number of students the other classes have, except kindergarten had one, and this for the good reasons that licensure is required for middle school students, specialization starts at JH level and is expensive (salaries); what options exist include reducing to one classroom, one teacher, but not teaching staff; and discussed other ratios; an area that needs exploration; and asked for the board's thoughts.

(From the Principal's Report)

*Junior High Options:*

- 1. (2) full time teacher who have dual certifications*
- 2. (1) full time teacher and (1) .5 teacher who have dual certifications*
- 3. 1 teacher with an assistant, a waiver would be needed since this teacher would not have all 4 certifications (math, science, social studies, and ELA)*
- 4. Investigate middle school choice*

Ms. Romo recalled that under Act 46 there had been desire to shift the direction for JH, more social opportunities, intramural partnerships, preparing for ninth grade and beyond, getting ready for high school; staffing in a student-centered way, for social/emotional support; having had three kids move through to BUHS and understanding the importance of preparation.

Mr. MacArthur suggested not exploring middle school choice; that research (he would share) was in favor of small rural 7 and 8 students staying in their local school; agreed that MES can't continue with two full

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time teachers; asked what kind of waivers would be possible to teach all the courses; and suggested experience of the last few years indicated MES should explore shifting to one full time teacher. Mr. Kermenski discussed the listed options; k-8 school with a k-6 teacher may be expanded to teach middle school, could be a viable option; and regarding a middle school teacher with 2 out of 3 certifications and a waiver, asked what other schools did. Mr. Anton noted the small population, limited solutions; and that a superintendent can obtain a waiver for a k-6 elementary licensed teacher that allows teaching 7 and 8 (fits option three); and this was different from Dummerston, where there is a licensed middle school teacher for ELA and Social Studies, and another licensed teacher in middle school science and math.

There was discussion of waivers; of the difficulty of retaining a part time teacher over time; the anticipated population for 2021; finding teachers with four certifications, or who would be willing to obtain more; optimal allocation of teachers and classrooms, noting that with seven teachers a change in configuration presents real challenges of changing relationships and positions, the impact of teacher seniority, turnover, costs.

It was noted that tuition is about \$15,000, with 20 kids about \$300,000 to be a sending school; people did not want to reduce services, they wanted to expand them; the problem of providing higher salaries, more opportunities; the renovation process if running as prek-6, versus another configuration;

Mr. Kermenski suggested investigating the issues, pulling the town in, making comparisons; and looking at one teacher, how that compares with school choice; for \$300,000 a lot of other ways would have to be examined; and MES is still a good Vermont school, near 100 students; need to go through the process without jeopardizing a lot of other options.

There was discussion of prek-6 vs prek-8. Mr. MacArthur explained that in gross terms, Brattleboro tuition is \$18,000; having JH in-house costs a little more than sending them to Brattleboro.

Mr. Kermenski asked the board's guidance, as to what options to pursue.

MacArthur suggested a smaller JH program, to lower tax rate, get through the pandemic, then see what next year brings; noting that at present tax rates, more likely cutting back services.

There was consensus on bullets three and four for next year (from the Principal's Report):

*3. 1 teacher with an assistant, a waiver would be needed since this teacher would not have all 4 certifications (math, science, social studies, and ELA)*

*4. Investigate middle school choice*

Mr. Anton explained that

- teacher classroom assistants do not exist in the WCSU;
- only teacher assistants or paraeducators exist to serve IEPs;
- general non-IEP teacher assistants or paraeducators don't exist in any schools, for budget reasons;
- that as of January 1, 2021, every employee in the district is eligible for full family benefits at up to \$25,000 per year, per individual; that the benefits are equal regardless of salaries;
- MES class size is below 13 on average, a reasonable level that may or may not need the investment in assistants/paraeducators.

Mr. Anton asked, in light of this, whether this (assistants/paraeducators) was an investment the board would continue to make; and also noted that the student: teacher ratio was 12.8, k through 8, and asked whether the board would consider directing the administration not to have 1.8 teachers for 7-8.

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Mr. Anton also suggested IT services such as repair and maintenance could be purchased through the WCSU at a cost savings over in-house.

Mr. Anton noted that “Junior High” is an obsolete term-of-art, now called “Middle School”, a matter of philosophy since studies of the adolescent brain show the need for specific age-related learning targets; and whether MES has a middle school or a middle school choice program, this would be the recommended focus.

Ms. Robinson discussed preparation for high school, and the challenge of finding multiple-certified teachers; that there were several full time assistants at MES; and whether the cost of a .9/.9 in JH would be prohibitive if following Mr. Anton’s guidance. Mr. Korb concurred, and suggested that lowering the number of assistants might be necessary; and asked Mr. Kermenski if 0.5 FTE assistants could be possible.

Mr. Kermenski noted that in a prek-8 school, because of the range of math and reading abilities in the upper grades it is more efficient to teach math to third graders than to fourth graders, and the assistant allows forming two groups for the purpose; and that with the reading groups, 19 kids in 3-4 is a broad range of reading abilities; 5-6 is more diverse, but solved with two teachers; in the lower grades, just for getting children dressed going in and out of the building, bathroom breaks, etc. assistants are crucial; reducing assistants would require reassigning personnel; and the difference between single and family health plans is \$15,000.

Mr. Korb suggested that Mr. Kermenski look into the FTE requirements for small children. Ms. Romo suggested looking at teaching by certified staff, and developing a robust MTSS system, rather than assistants for older grades; for example, a certified teacher who functions as classroom support, noting that the need for assistance is quite different for the older students.

Mr. Holzapfel observed that the assistants have always been well qualified, whether certified or not; that they always operate under the direction of a certified teacher; that a teacher with 23 students must have an assistant, or it is merely crowd control; in 5-6 a full time assistant would be necessary, but for 3-4, moving between those rooms is complex, given the range of age-related learning abilities; and this is almost always at odds with budget considerations.

Mr. Korb suggested that increased opportunities were needed for middle school, based on a survey from Act 46; a science lab, for example.

Mr. MacArthur asked how the student: teacher ratio compared with surrounding areas. Mr. Anton explained that there were 103 students in Townshend, prek-5 (103 divided by seven classrooms, 14.7); they range from about 13 to about 18; don’t have assistants beyond prek; and noted strategic differences, that the argument for support is different at different grades, mixed grades, etc., and a teacher would be preferable to an assistant in a supporting role. Mr. Anton noted that option 2 and 3 could pull a full teacher out of the ratio. There was discussion.

Mr. Korb noted that the principal had laid out the existing situation, and the board would direct him to make changes for the upcoming budget at the request of the board; and that it should be clear that these decisions were not Mr. Kermenski’s, but directed by the board.

Mr. Kermenski noted that all appreciate what they have and value these programs, and understand that some of them will have to be cut; that the (tax rate) target of \$1.80 to \$1.85 indicates that everything cannot be done, there will be cuts, the importance of these programs to our community, and that the academic achievement of students helps guide the next steps, which will be challenging; and there were cases for

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everything listed, but also that the ratio comparison to other districts, all working with the same numbers, shows a reality that must be accepted; there will be some very hard either-or decisions.

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**Vision Examples**

Mr. Kermenski discussed the mission statement, the next step of bringing it to life; measuring progress; and the changes over the past two years on many fronts; and strengthening the vision. Ms. Robinson discussed the after school program, declined over time, not necessary to the mission; could facilitate more sports programs, maybe with a social component; in favor of L'After. Mr. Kord discussed the need for *some* after school program. Mr. Kermenski suggested that a strong vision would be helpful in next year's budget decisions.

**Other considerations**

Mr. Korb discussed specials needing a stronger focus, less moving in and out and being removed from specials if they need support; and had asked Mr. Anton to invite Ms. Betit-Hancock to the next meeting to discuss the programs and how better to support students, use time better; programs in place many years need to be examined in light of the general trauma of the pandemic emergency, should the board direct the principal to return with a prioritized list of specials.

Mr. Kermenski noted Spanish not taught in k, prek doesn't get many specials, prek-8 has art, music, instruments 1-8, rhythms in prek-4 (except in pandemics), PE once a week, though required 2 days a week (the PE assessment is equal to the science assessment, and Vermont takes physical wellbeing seriously); Spanish in 1-8, library and tech for most classes with more integration at upper grades; Spanish had been 2 days, not 1.

Ms. Robinson suggested that PE is critical, questioned having both music and band; all arts essential, but priorities should include band; rhythms has a rationale. Mr. Korb noted that PE is a legal requirement, this has conflicted with rhythms, and art and Spanish stand alone.

Ms. Romo suggested that with a clearer vision, specials decisions would be easier; supporting all student learners should be part of the vision question. Ms. Donnelly concurred that specials have been frenetic. Mr. Korb discussed focus, student viewpoint.

**Executive Session (Legal)**

Mr. Holzapfel moved to enter Executive Session. Second by Ms. Romo. All in favor.  
The board entered Executive Session at 8:30 PM.

*Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, November 9, 2020*

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**Appendix**

**November 5, 2020**

Pre-budget Meeting

Wayne Kermenski

PRE-Budget considerations:

- Teacher’s salary schedule is still unknown and is integral to building an accurate budget.
- Updating the Staff benefits and procedures handbook including salary schedules for specific positions. Let’s complete this by December 1st.
- Do we continue an after school program? We may lose the grant and it is very difficult to hire a director and instructors.
  - Do we extend the day?
  - Do Specials teachers work from 9:30-5:00 in order to run after school clubs?
  - We currently pay 16.6K out of the general budget
- What do we want our food program to look like? How comprehensive?
- What does the Town of Marlboro (board, community, families, students) want JH to look like? Will the town continue to support two teachers? Can we continue to afford 2 teachers for less than 20 students?
- What tax rate do you have in mind?

**FY21 Current Staffing against FY22 enrollment**

Classroom	FY22 # of Students	Teachers
Preschool	16	1.0 FTE teacher 1.0 FTE assistant
Kindergarten	13	1.0 FTE teacher
Primary	16	1.0 FTE teacher 1.0 FTE assistant
3/4	19	1.0 FTE teacher 1.0 FTE assistant
5/6	23	1.0 FTE teacher 1.0 FTE assistant 0.1 FTE
JH	16	.9 FTE teacher .9 FTE teacher
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	

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SPED staffing		1.0 FTE teacher 2.0 FTE SPED paras
Specials		Art Music Band Rhythms PE Spanish Library Technology
Health		Counselor Nurse Interventionist Food Director Facilities Manager (4) Bus Drivers
Administration		Principal Office Manager WCSU office

Junior High Options:

1. (2) full time teacher who have dual certifications
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3. 1 teacher with an assistant, a waiver would be needed since this teacher would not have all 4 certifications (math, science, social studies, and ELA)
4. Investigate middle school choice

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Refining our vision.

- *When budgets get tight, having a strong vision and mission will help guide tough decisions.*
- **Create a year-long Road Map** to develop a vision statement and unpacking our current mission statement.
  - Core of any vision should focus on the most vulnerable students - academics/social/emotional/health

Some examples include:

*\*Please refer to the VT MTSS document for specifics.*

- Liberal arts education - Offering many different and varied specials
- Authentic education system - place/play/project-based learning

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- Social and environmental justice focus.
- STEM
- Art-Integration focus

**Wayne's considerations:**

- A lifelong commitment from K-4 teachers to expand their knowledge of specialized math and reading instruction.
- Creating and sustaining a school-wide Social and Emotional program with well defined levels of supports, staff roles and building space.
- Building renovations to support the school's vision.
- Do we consider partnering up with another organization/school such as, [Big Picture Learning](#), [EL Education](#), [Place-Based Education](#), a sister school, **River Valleys District**, etc...
- Week-long summer retreat for classroom teachers led by the administration. This retreat will focus on meeting the goals found in the Marlboro School's Continuous Improvement Plan.
- How much do we want to put in the budget for building maintenance? Knowing that our building needs many repairs.