

**Missisquoi Valley School District**  
**MVSD Board Meeting Minutes**  
**MVU School Library**  
**January 9, 2024**

**6:00pm**

**Location:** The MVSD Board and Administration participated at the MVU School Library for this meeting. The meeting was held hybrid with remote access for the community and other interested persons

**Date:** January 9, 2024

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**Board Members**

Jen Chevalier, Chair, Devin Bachelder, Don Collins, Tobias Maguire and Peter Magnant with Kelly Badeau, Joanne Johnston, Meaghan Conly and Renick Darnell-Martin participating remotely.

Absent from the Board Meeting: None

**Administration and Visitors Present**

Julie Regimbal, MVSD Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, MVSD Business Manager, Tania Hayes, Director of Student Services, MVU Principal Dan Palmer, Janet Hatin, MVU Science Programs, Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary, and Northwest Access Cameraperson. Participating remotely: Wendy Cunningham, Co-Director of Student Services Programs, Bonnie Moulton, Director of Human Resources, Kosha Patel, Director of Curriculum, Beth Ann Miller, Director of After School Program, Christie Martin, MVU Co-Principal and MVU students Brooke Rainville and Kirby King, visitor Jennifer Raynak, the School Board Secretary and Northwest Access Cameraperson.

**Call the Meeting to Order**

Jen Chevalier called the business meeting to order at 6:04PM

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Correspondence, Visitors and Public Comments**

Jennifer Raynak is working on the MVU Musical and stated that the lighting fixtures in the theater are in poor condition and really needs to be replaced with LED lighting which would be much more cost efficient. She offered her assistance in obtaining grants to assist with this process.

**Agenda Review – None**

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**MVSD Vision and Values:**

The Missisquoi Valley School District supports students in finding success along the path they choose guided by our Portrait of a Graduate.

## **Approval of the Minutes**

Jen Chevalier sought approval for the December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 minutes. *Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the December 19<sup>th</sup> minutes. Peter would like to clarify in the minutes that the motion after the executive session failed. The board voted 8-0 to approve the minutes with the revision.*

## **Administration Reports**

Dan Palmer provided the highlights of the MVU Report including an update on the Aspirations Committee continuing work, MVU's Operation Holiday, Climate Assessment Data, Holiday Concerts, Middle School Student Council and Social Studies. Don Collins commended Dan Palmer for his leadership on the Ag Committee.

Julie Regimbal reported that J.R. Cox created the video explaining Act 127 for the region. Bonnie Moulton and Lora McAllister proposed in order to bolster school pride that they distribute MVSD Hats throughout the district to students and staff. The Franklin County Superintendents are arranging a legislative breakfast in our county. This year's breakfast will be held on Monday February 5<sup>th</sup> at the Northwest Career and Technical Center from 8 to 9:30 a.m. The statewide calendar is extremely challenging with trimesters vs semesters, length of day, and tech centers are hoping for a more statewide cohesive calendar.

The board discussed the vacancies for the school board director and that they currently only have petitions from Franklin for the school board and a petition for the treasurer.

## **Presentation and Discussion Items**

### **Girls Hockey Teacher Appreciation Night Update (Brooke Rainville & Kirby King)**

Brooke Rainville and Kirby King were present to provide an update of the Teacher Appreciation Night. Brooke reported that they invited all the MVU teachers and support staff to the girl's hockey game taking place on January 20<sup>th</sup>. They will be giving them t-shirts stating that we choose you as teachers because they want to show their appreciation to them.

Julie Regimbal stated that the Heisman High School scholarship is awarded to outstanding high school seniors for being an outstanding, accomplished scholar along with being community minded and athletic. Jen Chevalier had the honor of recognizing Brooke Rainville as a 2023 High School Winner of the Heisman High School Scholarship.

## **Science Department Update**

Janet Hatin of the MVU Science Department thanked everyone for the renovation of the MVU Science Classrooms including modern equipment, cabinets and running water. This resource has made a huge difference for students providing hands-on activities with up to date technology and software. This has provided a source of pride for both teachers and students bringing energy and excitement to the science department. There are about 50 students presenting good quality projects at the February 8<sup>th</sup> MVU Science Fair.

[MVU Administration Reports](#)

[MVSD Administrator Reports](#)

## **Student Service Update**

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Tania Hayes provided an update of the MVSD Student Services providing data on student numbers qualifying for Special Education services. She showed where the MVSD child count went from 313 students in 2018-2019 to 383 students in 2023-24 representing 23% of the ADM student numbers. She stated that this is a pretty high number with the statewide average running about 17 to 18% of students. She stated that the needs are higher with mental health having an impact especially after the pandemic. Statistics show nearly 20% of children and young people ages 3-17 in the United States have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder, and suicidal behaviors among high school students increased more than 40% in the decade before 2019. The out of district placements have increased from 20 students to 32 students for the same time frame. Julie stated that it is harder to find alternative schools due to increased cost for staffing, and staffing shortages. The extraordinary cost of funding has benefitted MVSD. Children need to be educated in the least restrictive environment. The MVSD ongoing work with the following: Develop and Enhance our SEL instruction/ Behavioral systems to be more "proactive" and "trauma responsive" Expand our continuum "In- District" - Tier 2 interventions; Alternative Classroom in Swanton/MVU and Regional Collaboration with other districts.

### **FY25 Budget Draft 5**

Lora stated that Draft 5 totals \$53,222,437, an increase of \$8,238,870 or 18.% increase. She went over the following revisions: Increased Afterschool Program local share to Scenario 3 presented 12/19/23. Local support to \$343,500 from \$204,000 with increased corresponding Medicaid revenue, an increase of \$584,350 to the Capital Project line as proposed on 12/19/23. Additional increase of \$3,910,000 to Capital Project line - additional MVSD Capital Improvement Plan projects as prioritized and proposed by the Facility Committee. Increase to Tech Instructional and Technology Administration software lines due to additional student, staff and administrative technology resources and inflation.

Lora went over Draft 5 of the FY25 budget by departments and provided deeper explanations of some of the revisions/increases. Instructional Programs, Special Education, Capital Projects are the highest costs of the budgets. The only staff additions are one Social Studies teacher and Business education teacher. They have added two custodians under the Plant and increased supplies, purchased services and repairs as a result of increased cost due to inflation. They have budgeted an athletic trainer and contracted out for referee services. They budgeted for school based clinicians that they hope to fill. Some of the special education costs including psychological services, speech and language, Occupational therapy and physical therapy services have been offset by IDEA B grant. They have budgeted \$194,000 for Early Childhood tuition for 50 students. The board went over the support for the After School Program Expansion. Tobias Maguire preferred scenario 2 whereas the other board members either supported scenario 3 or were leaning towards 3 with the local share offset by Medicaid funds. The Capital Projects were increased by about 4 million.

Devin explained the impact of Act 27 can be best explained by slices. Slice one: Act 127 was passed by the State Legislature and is designed to reallocate state education funds to disadvantaged students. Additional funding is available that was not previously available. The law is based on the understanding that certain categories of students cost more to educate and Vermont's education system uses the term "pupil weights". Those categories include low-income students, English language learners, etc. Students who fit into those more expensive categories are "weighted" more, and the more weight a district has, the more money it can spend without raising local tax rates. These new weights benefit MVSD. MVSD's opportunity to rectify the same level of spending with the same level of equalized tax rate. MVSD can utilize the additional funding available to us at the same equalized tax rate, meanwhile keeping our additional interventionists, math program and purchasing a reading program that is beneficial to students. Slice 2: There is a space in between with no change in the equalized tax rate to a 5% increase in the equalized tax rate. The new system includes a provision intended to protect communities from any huge homestead tax increases from one year to the next. If a district's spending would cause a jump of 5% or more in the local homestead tax rate, the increase will still be capped only at 5% and the education fund will make up the difference. The law implements

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5% caps on tax rate increases for five years. This is an insurance premium to mitigate the risk of larger tax rate increases in the future. Because of the uncertainty of possible changes to the law in the future, the district does not want to lock ourselves in so this is why we are spending on planned one time capital projects that have been part of our five year capital plan. This is our risk management scenario. Slice 3: If MVSD spends above the 5% cap, then the district should go beyond to a maximum of 9.9% with no additional tax rate implications. If a district reaches 10% or more, it will trigger a review by the Secretary of Education, per the law. This is a way that MVSD can support our students and one time facility projects as a wise strategic strategy and use it as an insurance premium to guard against large increases later on.

**Capital Project Priorities**

Peter Magnant reported that the facilities committee made recommendations on the projects that can be completed within next year's time frame.

He listed the following projects:

Highgate Brick School Roof \$750,000, Gym Basketball hoops, \$20,000, HVAC \$300,000, Fire Alarm in the Brick Building \$100,000, White/Brick Building Space Study \$200,000.

MVU Parking Lot Phase I \$500,000, Field Hockey Scoreboard \$10,000, Parking Lot Lights \$125,000

Swanton Babcock Roof Insulation \$500,000, Central Roof Valley \$25,000, Central HVAC & Electrical \$712,000 All of the above total \$3,826,350 and keeps MVSD under the 10% threshold.

Julie stated that this will bring MVSD to the 9.9% threshold taking advantage of the 5% cap and the tax capacity. Peter stated that these projects are needed and have been part of the facility projects plan and have been put off due to lack of funding. Lora stated that in order to complete these projects next year, we may need to sign a letter of interest prior to town meeting. Devin stated that by spending the 5% cap, we will reduce risk mitigation in the future. Lora explained that we will probably see a significant tax increase for FY26 without the benefit of the 5 percent cap. The community input budget meeting is scheduled for January 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at MVU. The community can provide input to the board and the board will have an opportunity to incorporate the suggestions before the January 23<sup>rd</sup> board meeting. They will prepare different scenarios for the community input meeting such as tax rate information, history of tax rate and budget points.

To view the full discussions and presentations, please follow the video link below:

[MVSD Board Meetings on Northwest Access TV](#)

**Warrants**

Check Warrants

Devin Bachelder read the check warrants as follows:

Accounts Payable:	\$	1,303,633.10
Payroll-Checks:	\$	51,390.97
Payroll and Other Disbursements:	\$	1,736,753.86
Payroll Deductions	\$	680,083.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,771,882.92</b>

Joanne Johnston moved, seconded by Renick Darnell-Martin to approve the check warrants totaling \$3,771,882.92. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

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## **Food Service Action**

Lora reported that MVSD needs to go out to bid for school food service. The State has a scripted Request for Proposal (RFP) template. If the board or administration would like to see more fruits and vegetables, more hot lunch staff etc, it could be inserted in the RFP. They need to send the RFP to the State by January 22<sup>nd</sup> for a 30-day review. Then they can send it out to bid for a 30-60 time period, pre-bid conference, then go back to the State for review. The contract is awarded in May. She asked the board if they would like to go to the opportunity eligibility provision. We currently fall under the universal services feeding all students for free. MVSD has more low income students and we would qualify for this provision. The advantages is there will not be any free and reduced lunch applications, students do not need to stand in line to provide a number, and the administrative burden is much less but may result in a smaller surplus. Once approved for this provision, you are qualified for five years. This will be easier for families and less of an administrative burden. This should improve access for breakfast and will secure supper for the After School Program. This is a federally subsidized program and we would have the same quality.

Don Collins moved, seconded by Tobias Maguire to move to a community eligible program for food service. The board approved 9-0.

Other: Tobias Maguire asked if the district were to administer another program and become the fiscal agent such as we run for the Indian Education program, would the board be made aware of this proposal? Both Lora and Julie said yes because this would require additional MVSD staff time and would increase our liability, so this proposal would need to be brought to the board.

Don Collins suggested that MVU Lighting in the theater should become a priority. Peter would like to talk to the Facility Director and it should be discussed at a facility meeting. Lora feels it should follow a process.

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## **Future Agenda Items**

Future agenda items: Budget, District Attendance Committee Update

## **Future Meeting Dates and Sites**

The next school board meeting will take place on January 23, 2024 in the Swanton School Library at 6:00pm. The budget community input meeting will be held on January 16<sup>th</sup> at MVU at 7pm.

## **Meeting Adjourn**

Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Don Collins to adjourn the meeting at 9:04pm. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

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