



**SPECIAL MEETING OF BOARD OF EDUCATION  
January 18, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Board of Education Goal:**

**Montville graduates will possess the skills and dispositions to navigate complex tasks. Our graduates are communicators, information consumers, problem solvers, and independent learners. They exhibit empathy, perseverance, inclusivity and self-awareness.**

**Library Media Center**

**Item 1. Call to order/ Pledge of Allegiance / Moment of Silence – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Chair Wills Pike called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Board members attending were: Bob Mitchell, Carol Burgess, Bonnie Bacon, Timothy Shanahan, Tina Grove, Erika Striebel, Donna Funk and Lisa Terry.

Also participating were: Superintendent of Schools Laurie Pallin, Assistant Superintendent Dianne Vumback, Recording Secretary Pamela Rodgers, Administrators Paula LaChance, Greg Gwudz, Rob Alves, Jill Mazzalupo, David Gollsneider, William Klinefelter, and Liz Dumond and Board Liaison Joseph Jaskiewicz.

**Item 2. Alterations to the agenda**

*None.*

**Item 3. Presentations**

- a. Montville Marvels: Principals Will Klinefelter, Liz Dumond and Jill Mazzalupo

It is recommended that the Board of Education acknowledge the following students, teachers, and community members in the areas noted.

**Mohegan Elementary School** - For being an exemplary role model to his peers and selfless towards others: Jack Yon

For always going above and beyond for the Mohegan School Community: Krista Scarano

**Murphy Elementary School** – For encouraging and inspiring students during math instruction: Ashley Kobelski.

For reading all 15 of the 2024 Elementary Nutmeg Book nominees: Rylee Borkenhagen

For being a kind classroom leader who gives his best effort on all assignments: Kason Peterson

**Oakdale Elementary School** - For his efforts in overcoming obstacles and consistently demonstrating improvement in decision-making: Jeremiah Aquilina

**Item 4. Citizens' Comments (regarding agenda items only)**

*None.*

**The Board welcomes public comments at Board meetings. When you speak, please clearly state your first and last name and your address so that we can reach out to you after the Board meeting. Please try to limit your comments to 3 minutes. The Board's protocol is that they do not respond to citizen's comments at the meeting. They do, however, listen carefully and follow up after the meeting as appropriate. Your comments may lead to further dialogue at a future Board or sub- committee meeting or a follow-up phone call from a district administrator for more information**

**Item 5. Letters and Communications**

*None.*

**Item 6. Approval of the consent Calendar**

Motion: To approve the consent calendar as presented.

Moved by: Timothy Shanahan

Seconded by: Erika Striebel

Vote: Carried (9-0)

**a. Budget Update: Kathy Lamoureux**

*Superintendent Pallin explained*

*ARP ESSER Grant – As we reported to you earlier, we have slowed our use of the ARP ESSER grant as much as we possibly can because the state has received from the federal government official notice of a 14-month extension for liquidation (but not obligation) of funds. We would not be able to use ARP ESSER grant funds next year to pay wages for district employees but we could use it to pay for other costs that might help us more evenly distribute the impact of the end of this grant funding on our operating budget. We will present a plan to you for closing out these grant funds when we present the operating budget.*

*Tennis Court Project – Originally our bond called for \$750,500 for the tennis court replacement and \$219,395 for track resurfacing. As we have already discussed the tennis courts have come in over budget and will end up costing about \$925,000. This leaves us only \$75,000 for track resurfacing. You will see the remainder of the cost for the track work in our FY 2025 capital request.*

*Tyl Roof Project – This project should go out to bid shortly and is on track for work commencing at the end of the school year.*

*Kathy will provide more details about the position of the operating budget at our next meeting.*

*Please hold Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> for discussion of the 2025-2026 operating budget.*

### **Item 7. Old Business**

- a. District plans to address new kindergarten legislation

*Superintendent Pallin explained - In the Board materials is a flyer which will be sent to all Montville families and distributed by social media regarding district compliance with new kindergarten entrance age and waiver legislation. Dianne and I met with a team of elementary administrators and kindergarten and preschool teachers to develop this process.*

### **Item 8. New Business**

- a. Appointment of Willie Quiñones as Director of Facilities

*Superintendent Pallin explained - We are very pleased to present to you this evening our new Director of Facilities Willie Quinones. Wills Pike represented the Board in this search. Willie lives in New London and has served as director of facilities in North Stonington and currently in East Windsor. Both superintendents were highly complimentary of Willie's work, telling me that would rehire Willie without hesitation. His current superintendent told me he has nothing but positive things to say about Willie. Willie was described to me as someone who has the highest integrity and a tremendous work ethic and holds the respect of all. Willie will start in Montville on Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> and while Steve will leave prior to his start, Steve will return for several days of overlap with Willie after he begins. We look forward to Willie's start and introducing him to our team.*

- b. Capital Plan presentation

*Superintendent Pallin explained - This plan is a draft and will be modified with updated costs for wireless projects and the door access system. We will also review and add roof work to the plan based upon the results of roof studies which we just received yesterday for all schools except Tyl which will get a new roof this summer.*

c. District Master Plan presentation

*Superintendent Pallin explained - Last month, I reviewed the transportation section of the district master plan. This month I would like to draw your attention to the plans for each of the school facilities. The purpose of the master plan is to take a look at the current condition of our buildings, future work potentially looking out beyond the five-year capital plan, and compliance with codes, technology needs, and programmatic needs. This plan was developed for submission with the HVAC grant and for use when trying to look at long term facilities' projects like the a/c and roof projects. It begins with our district enrollment study and projects enrollment for 10 years (which shows that our enrollment 10 years out is projected to be the same as it is this year). It includes the air conditioning study and future planning for the transportation department and then moves into specific information about each of our schools. We have included statistics for each of the buildings such as the age of the building and of building components like flooring and windows, dates of renovations, information about utilities, etc. Maps of buildings and grounds are provided. We have shown capital improvements for the past five years and upcoming plans for capital expenses by building. Steve and Nic have evaluated the current conditions of the buildings and the technology and finally we have engaged stakeholders in providing feedback about the educational spaces, core facilities, athletic and play facilities, technology, and other areas. Collection of stakeholder feedback is still underway at the elementary schools and will be added to this document. The results of our roof studies will also be added once we have had a chance to review them. Please take a look at the plan and forward comments or suggestions to us.*

d. Discussion to Schedule tours of schools and bus garage (invite District Parent Advisory Group)

*Superintendent Pallin explained- In past years, as part of the capital planning and budget process, we have conducted tours of our facilities over two evenings. With so many new Board members and an engaged and interested District Parent Advisory committee, we will schedule tours in the upcoming weeks.*

- e. New security grant and funding for cameras at Mohegan and Oakdale Elementary Schools

*Superintendent Pallin explained- Included in your Board documents are funding requests we had placed through the security grant for cameras at Mohegan and Oakdale. These were not funded through the grant and at this time we are not aware of when the next grant application will be opened. You had requested I bring these forward for possible funding through the 2% account. I would like to hold on this for another month, because I think we might be able to fund them through a transfer from employee benefits which currently has an overage in the operating budget, but we are still reviewing that to be certain.*

- f. Consideration and action to approve AP African / American studies course as recommended by the E&E Committee

Motion: To approve AP African / American studies course as recommended by the E&E Committee

Moved by: Carol Burgess  
Seconded by: Bob Mitchell  
Vote: Carried (9-0)

*E&E chair Bob Mitchell explained- Addition of an AP level African American studies course was approved by E&E last month for submission to the full Board.*

- g. Superintendent's mid-year evaluation

To be discussed in executive session at the end of the meeting

#### **Item 9. Information Items**

- a. Communication Committee Meeting February 1, 2024; 5:00 P.M. Large Conference Room

#### **Item 10. Committee and Liaison reports:**

- a. Policy – No meeting.
- b. Education Evaluation – No meeting.
- c. Communications Committee -*Lisa Terry – Presentation by Erika Haynes from the CT State and School Finance Project on funding for education in Montville, will take place on Feb. 1 at 5:00. Board members are encouraged to bring additional community members to hear the presentation*
- d. Montville Education Foundation – *Laurie Pallin - Golf tournament will be August 12<sup>th</sup>. They are exploring the possibility of a spring pickleball tournament fundraiser.*

- e. LEARN - Bob Mitchell – Business meeting held last week introducing new Board members, realistically all learning (toddler through high school) could be done at magnet schools.
- f. CABE/NSBA – Carol Burgess – CABE Board retreat this morning, went over goals. CABE breakfast well attended. Discussed reading program but did get push back from Legislators. A spirited discussion took place at the legislative breakfast.
- g. Montville Youth Services Bureau- No meeting until March.
- h. Student Board Representatives - No reports as students are home studying for midterm exams.
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- i. Principal's Comments

**MOH** – William Klinefelter- Started a before and after school Fitness and Sports program for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Well received with a large turnout, helps with decision making, character and leadership. The program is led by a volunteer parent.

**CEM** – Liz Dumond –All elementary schools are currently gathering reading benchmark data which will be used to evaluate services being provided to students.

**OAK** – Jill Mazzalupo – The 3<sup>rd</sup> SRO started, fitting in extremely well with staff and students.

**MHS** – Rob Alves – Agree, the 3<sup>rd</sup> SRO is very kid friendly and a great addition. The Holiday Concert will be held on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### 10. Report on District Operating Plan

- a. Report from Director of Special Services – Paula LaChance

*This month I wanted to share information about the curriculum and work that is happening within the TA.*

*The transition academy students are working on their personal finance as well as a unit on disability awareness. Over the past month they have been learning about the deaf community and different accommodations for people who are deaf. They have also learned about different ways to communicate with people who are hearing impaired. Students are learning how to sign basic phrases such as “please, thank you, nice to meet you” in ASL. In the next unit they will be learning about people with vision impairments. They will all do an individual project as a culmination of the unit.*

*Each day Monday-Thursday the students also go out for their community-based experiences. They participate in vocational activities whether that be working at Mohegan Sun, Dog's World or the Country Market here in town. Fridays are set for their health and wellness activities with this month's activity being Yoga in Groton.*

*Additionally, we are beginning to develop transition activities for two students that are currently at the high school but will be attending the Academy next year. Starting in*

*February one student will join the TA for their Fitness Friday classes and activities and the other student will join for vocational experiences at the Country Market and Coogan Farm. Lily, our TA teacher, is very excited to get to know them and start their transition to the program. \*

b. Report from the Assistant Superintendent – Dianne Vumback

*January marks the beginning of some of our summative assessments.*

*First is the English language proficiency assessment for our multilingual learners. LAS Links is the state mandated assessment we use and it monitors the language development of multilingual learners in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing and comprehension for academic achievement and college and career readiness.*

*All ML/EL students in grades K-12 take this assessment, which is about 90 minutes long. We have 98 ML/EL students. We use our EL tutors and our district EL coordinator to administer the tests. We have created a schedule over the last two years that has resulted in less classroom interruptions and earlier completion. This is important as we want them in class learning!*

*New last year, they now offer an alternate assessment for students who are identified as multilingual called CAAELP (Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency). Eligible multilingual students are those with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Last year we had one student eligible, this year we have three.*

*We are almost done testing at the elementary level. We are making great progress at the secondary level; however, we have had some issues with absences. Regardless, we anticipate completion district wide by the end of January.*

*Students exit EL/ML status and no longer receive English language acquisition support if they get an overall score of level 4 or 5 AND a 4 or higher on the reading and writing scores.*

*This testing is very important and is part of the accountability index for school districts. Similar to academic growth measured by Smarter Balanced in ELA and Math, the “growth toward English language proficiency” indicator is the average percentage of growth target achieved based on LAS Links for all English learners. There are growth scores calculated for literacy (Reading & Writing) and oral (Speaking & Listening).*

*Additionally, we use the scores to identify appropriate programming for our students.*

c. Report from the Superintendent – Laurie Pallin

*Waiver Meeting with CSDE:*

*Wills and I met with CSDE this morning. We stated that we understand that the program which we use to teach vocabulary and comprehension did not meet the state's waiver criteria and we are currently reviewing all of the state approved programs to select a new program. We explained that we are prepared to move forward in the most positive way for our students while ensuring alignment with legislation in these areas.*

*We also clearly stated that we have never been, and never will be, satisfied with less than 100% of our students developing into successful readers. We have worked for many years on an MTSS process in reading that starts with the strongest possible tier 1 program and then provides layered and targeted tier 2 and tier 3 supports to every student based on individual needs. We continue to work on improving this process and I'm certain we will never feel like we're done with that work. We have always been willing to do the hard work of curriculum and program improvement, related professional development, and assessment analysis. We accept the work which we will now need to do to adopt a new program.*

*We asked for reconsideration of our waiver request solely for the following reasons:*

- The foundational skills program which we use to teach phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and rapid automatic naming is part of a state approved core program (Open Court),*
- We met the waiver rubric criteria in these areas as demonstrated by our district's "yes" scores indicating that the curriculum uses "explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction" for phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and rapid automatic naming.*
- The Open Court Foundational Skills program meets criteria for a scientifically research-based program.*
- Adopting the full Open Court program is not an option we will pursue. We used to use the full Open Court program, and while we saw gains in foundational skills, we did not see gains in comprehension. Our students' comprehension improved when we switched from Open Court to our current program so while it would be the easiest thing for us to do, a full Open Court adoption would be a step backwards for us.*



*We closed by explaining that we are not dismissing the possibility of a complete change, but we would like a compendium of programs including Open Court Foundational Skills and Word Work to be one of the options we are able to consider. If approved, and this is the direction we choose, we would be happy to submit to the state a detailed scope and sequence showing the articulation and coordination of the two programs.*

*The meeting went very well and we felt that we were heard and our request will be seriously considered.*

*Tech School Transportation: We received several calls with concerns about tech school transportation on days when towns with technical schools make different weather-related closure decisions than Montville. This occurs on rare occasions. We are required to provide transportation to tech schools when it is "reasonable and necessary." On days when we have no school, but tech schools are open, we do not transport to tech schools because we have determined that there is a risk to students' safety. On days when we have a two-hour delay, but tech. schools start on time, we transport students according to our two-hour delay schedule and they arrive to school late. The recent issue is concerning days when Montville starts on time, but at least one of the tech or vo-ag schools are delayed. On these days, we cannot accommodate morning transportation to the tech school. We cannot transport to the tech school at their regular starting time because that town has determined their roads are not safe (e.g. Norwich's recent flooded roads). We cannot support transportation at the two-hour delay time because we are in the middle of our own district runs at that time. (Accommodating a tech school two-hour delay would mean starting tech runs at 7:30 however our district routes run from 6:00-8:45.) We cannot support transportation when our runs are completed because that would put our drivers over hours. Especially complicated would be a day when one tech school needs transportation on time (our tech drivers clock in at 5:15 a.m.) and one is delayed and would require transportation after our district runs are completed (which would have the driver finishing a.m. runs about 11 a.m.). This would force overtime situations on drivers and have contractual implications. Tech runs involve five buses which pick up students around town for about an hour. These buses then all go to a hub stop at Mohegan where students transfer to 4 buses (one goes to Grasso, two go to Norwich Tech, and one goes to Ledyard. We simply cannot accomplish this set of runs when we are running both a regular and a delayed schedule at the same time. I have checked with our Board's attorney regarding the potential conflict between our legal requirement to transport tech schools and these scenarios. The statutes regarding transportation to technical schools require the provision of "reasonable and necessary" transportation by districts and our attorney has advised us that this would fall under that statute as not reasonable. This scenario (Montville starts on time and a Tech School is delayed) is not common. I believe it has happened twice in my five years as superintendent.*

*Social Media Posts – We are aware of recent social media posts regarding student incidents at our schools. These posts are based on small bits of true information and a great deal of elaboration. We have responded to every parent who has contacted us directly about a concern. We will never respond on social media and we will never provide confidential information about a student situation. We urge residents to bring concerns directly to administration and not to violate student confidentiality or spread partial truths over social media.*

**Item 12. Citizen’s Comments**

*None.*

**Item 13. Board Chair Remarks Wills Pike**

*We had a Zoom meeting today with State of CT. Laurie was brilliant on how she articulated the program. State officials were engaged and paid attention to what was being said.*

*Social Media on the Montville forum –Disturbed by recent social media posts. Individual Board members should not comment on these posts.*

*We have a very busy six months ahead. It is going to be a challenging budget year. Thanks to the Town councilors who attended the meeting.*

**Item 14. Future Agenda Items**

*Survey for pathways programs requested by Tina Grove. This will first go to E&E Committee.*

**It is anticipated that the Board will enter executive session for the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent**

Motion: The Board moved to enter executive session for the purpose of conducting the mid-year evaluation of The Superintendent, inviting Superintendent Pallin into the session

Moved by: Bob Mitchell  
Seconded by: Tim Shanahan  
Vote: Carried (9-0)

The Board entered executive session at 7:45 p.m.

The Board exited executive session at 8:17 p.m.

**Item 13. Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved by: Bob Mitchell

**Town of Montville  
Special Meeting of the Board of Education  
January 18, 2024**

Seconded by: Tim Shanahan  
Vote: Carried (9-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

Wills Pike, Chair  
Montville Board of Education

Bob Mitchell, Secretary  
Montville Board of Education

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_