

REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION

Date: October 11, 2023

Special Meeting – VRHS Media Center

(To view a recording of this meeting, please visit our website www.reg4.k12.ct.us and select “Remote Meeting Recordings” under the BOARD OF EDUCATION Heading)

Attendance:	<u>Region 4 BOE</u>	<u>Administration:</u>	<u>Other:</u>
(√ = attended)	Kate Sandmann √	Brian White √	
	Richard Strauss √	Sarah Brzozowy √	
	Lon Seidman √	Bob Grissom √	
	Lol Fearon √	Mike Barile √	
	Alex Silva √	Mel Morgan-Hostetler √	
	Rick Daniels √		
	John Stack √		
	Jane Cavanaugh		
	Jennifer Clark		

Chair Sandmann called the special meeting to order at: 6:03 p.m.

Superintendent White provided opening remarks and shared that tonight’s meeting is a follow up to last week’s special meeting, in which the Board and community heard from our environmental consultant, Larry Cannon from EnviroMed Services who presented his report into the mold findings at JWMS.

This evening, they will be focusing the discussion on administration advising the Board of the administrative actions taken to date, as well as administration’s recommendations for immediate next steps to address the facilities issues at John Winthrop Middle School and to return our students and staff safely to that building, as quickly as possible, while doing so in a manner that is fiscally responsible for our towns.

Superintendent White said he also wanted to reassure our teachers that he, along with his administrative team are working tirelessly to address the situation at JWMS and also will do whatever they can to support them while at Valley.

He said tonight will be the first chance administration has had to be able to substantively update the Board on all of the administrative things they have been working on in the background while awaiting the final report to be compiled by our experts. To that point, administration has been working with a number of other professionals to try and address the situation at John Winthrop. He went on to share details on a number of those items including the funds expended to date for JWMS facilities needs to address already known issues, and to purchase learning materials and supplies to further support instruction for JWMS students while at VRHS. He also shared that he has been consulting with professionals regarding the feasibility of allowing individuals to enter the building if they wish to.

Additionally, administration has been working with counsel to develop RFPs for the first few steps necessary to address the issue at JWMS. This evening he is requesting the Board’s support to put out two RFPs. The first being an “Emergency Request For Project Management/ Owner’s Representative Services” and the second is an RFP for “Professional Services to Investigate and Determine the Root Causes of Moisture/Water Conditions and Resulting Mold and Preparation of Remedial Design”. The Board gave their support to put both of those RFPs out as quickly as possible.

Superintendent White also shared the current understanding of possible insurance coverage and said that we expect a determination from our provider in about a week, per their last communication.

Superintendent White shared that administratively, they will move forward with engaging the services of EnviroMed to create and provide training protocol for custodial and maintenance staff, and also engaging the services of EnviroMed to conduct a movable objects inventory and development of decontamination protocol.

Superintendent White recognized the hard and impressive work done to date by JWMS Principal Mel Morgan-Hostetler and VRHS Principal Mike Barile, along with other critical administration and staff who worked to open JWMS within VRHS in an incredibly short amount of time. Principal Barile and Principal Morgan-Hostetler shared an update on what they have been doing to continue to support students and teachers, and to address feedback and concerns now that the relocation is known to be for a longer period of time.

Finance Director, Bob Grissom shared administration's research into the cost, site requirements, permitting, and general feasibility for modular classroom space, and also for portable office space. Portable office space is the much less expensive option and much quicker option to provide extra, quiet work space, and a home base space for teachers, as they have requested. They are working on scheduling a site visit as soon as possible, with the necessary town officials, to learn more about required permitting, and possible site locations.

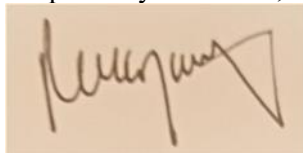
Public Comment: Some members of the public shared comments *(the entirety of which are able to be heard in the recording of the meeting available through the district website)*. Public comments were made by the following: Jesse Herman, Essex; Jennifer Blalock, JWMS Teacher and Chester resident; Scott Lacrosse, Ivoryton; Lauren Devin, Centerbrook; Sarah Field, Deep River; Rebecca Ingmundson, JWMS Teacher; Kathryn Ryan, VRHS Teacher.

The Board reiterated their commitment to supporting the administration to address JWMS, and the related feedback and concerns, as quickly as possible.

Another follow-up Region 4 BOE Special meeting has been scheduled for Oct. 18th @ 6:00 p.m. with the hope that updates may be provided on, if not all, then one or more of the following items: portable office spaces; the Eversource energy efficiency grant; and potential insurance coverage.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Rick Daniels'.

Rick Daniels, Secretary
Regional District #4 – Board of Education