

**F.O.I. Compliance** – Subject to BOE approval

## REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Date:** October 18, 2023

### Special Meeting – VRHS Media Center

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

<b>Attendance:</b> (√ = attended)	<u>Region 4 BOE</u>		<u>Administration:</u>		<u>Other:</u>
	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: 6:00 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 an update on administrative actions taken to date regarding the mold findings at JWMS, and recommendations for next steps from Superintendent White. This evening, he said that he has a number of informational administrative updates to share with the Board, as well as recommendations for immediate next steps.

However, before he shared those updates, he said he wanted to take a moment to dispel any rumors that may be circulating in the community. He wanted to reassure the community that although we do not have a definitive date for when re-entry to John Winthrop will occur, JWMS is fixable and will be reopened. Superintendent White then went on to share the following information and updates; Board members asked questions and actively participated in discussion throughout the following updates.

Superintendent White and Finance Director Bob Grissom, discussed what Administration has learned, after a site visit with Town of Deep River Building Department and Fire Department officials, regarding the feasibility of placing temporary, portable offices on the grounds of VRHS. They learned that any structure on premises for more than 90 days would be treated as a permanent structure and would therefore be subject to the necessary building approvals from the town.

He also shared that he had met with building leaders and teacher leaders today from JW and Valley to discuss how these spaces could best be utilized if obtained. Is it important to note that these spaces would be primarily for adult use. The building administration will determine locally what exceptions may be appropriate for limited student use (e.g. 1 on 1 student engagement), however, these are not appropriate for general instructional use per their conversation with building and fire officials. Each portable office has room for 3 separate work spaces, providing for adult work spaces, as requested by teachers, and also helping to open up available student space within the school.

Based on all of the mentioned conversations he is recommending to the BOE this evening that we proceed immediately to secure 3 portable office spaces to be located on site, as designated by the building principal, and approved by local officials; and to expend the funds necessary for any related town fees, site preparation (including concrete work, electrical and IT work).

Rick Daniels made a motion to direct administration to proceed with procuring three office space units and to develop a plan for how the Board will mobilize the necessary capital reserve funds to pay for ongoing needs. It was seconded and a discussion was held.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to direct administration to proceed with procuring three office space units and to develop a plan for how the Board will mobilize the necessary capital reserve funds to pay for ongoing needs.

Superintendent White shared an update on the status of the RFPS that were discussed last week. The mechanical engineering services RFP was finalized, and posted to the district website on Monday, Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>, and it was noticed in the local papers today. There is a mandatory walk-thru for interested bidders on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> and proposals are due by Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Opening of submittal packages will occur at the Central Office on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and Board members will be invited, and are encouraged to attend. The Finance Office will send out an invitation to Board members.

The emergency request for project management has been sent to multiple firms in accordance with best practices. The due date for responses on that is Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>. Per counsel, this was the way we can fast track this particular request without relying on the public bidding process.

Superintendent White said he was pleased to share that tomorrow, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>, our maintenance staff for JWMS and Valley will be trained by EnviroMed professionals in the safe use of PPE to safely enter the building for general building maintenance and access. We do not anticipate that maintenance staff will be performing mold remediation work.

He was also pleased to share that the Movable Inventory and Decontamination Protocol Determination will begin this Friday, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> when EnviroMed engineers will be in our building to begin the process to identify items for removal and determine a decontamination / cleaning protocol that would allow a items to begin to be removed from John Winthrop to be either placed in storage or moved to Valley Regional to support teaching and learning needs. Part of this process will be determining how and when staff and community members may be able to retrieve personal effects from the school. This is an important step towards reopening John Winthrop to students, staff and community.

Superintendent White shared that our consultant, EnviroMed is actively developing the cleaning specification to remediate the physical plant. This specification will be necessary to procure the services of remediation experts. This information will also be used to ensure that the building has been completely cleaned prior to re-entry. Once we have procured an engineering firm, the work of cleaning will begin shortly thereafter. According to our professionals, it is imperative that the mechanical engineers we engage with, through the RFP process, be allowed to enter the building and analyze it "as is", but as soon as that has occurred, we should be ready to have the building cleaning remediation experts working concurrently to clean the building, while the mechanical engineer completes their work.

Superintendent White shared an update on the status of the pending insurance claim. He said that while he had hoped to have more information to share this evening about the outcome of our claim status, no final determination from insurance has been received yet. However, we have been informed that Utica has elevated our claim to their large claims division for further consideration. The insurance company has identified a couple of sources of water intrusion which may make us eligible for certain coverage under our policy.

Superintendent White shared an update regarding the Eversource Energy Efficiency project. He said they recently had a positive phone call with the contractor working with Eversource on this funding

opportunity. He anticipates receiving a letter of agreement from Eversource by early next week. To remind everyone, this opportunity which will consist of replacing 30 of the building's 32 unit ventilators (the other 2 were just recently replaced), replacing the building control system (including installing sensors throughout the building to measure temperature and humidity), replacing all pipe insulation that has been compromised, updating wiring where needed, and potentially replacing valves.

Additionally, as part of the aforementioned project, we would be upgrading to LED lighting throughout the building. This scope of work is valued at approximately \$500,000, of which we would be repaying only \$250,000 after Eversource incentives, and which would be repayed through our energy bills for the next 5 years, based on estimated cost savings due to energy efficiencies. This project should realize savings to the district beginning in year 6 as proposed.

Superintendent White shared next steps. There is a Region 4 BOE Regular Meeting on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. By that time, he will have additional information updates to share, as well as the outcomes of our site walk thru on the 25<sup>th</sup> with engineering firms.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> we will be determining if there is a need for any an additional special meetings to ensure timely action by the Board on any supportive actions that may be necessary.

Opening of submittal packages will occur at the Central Office on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and Board members will be invited and are encouraged to attend.

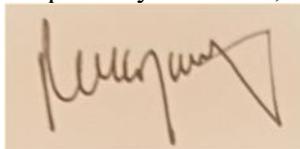
There was Board consensus that everything is moving forward in a responsible manner, as quickly as possible.

**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: Jennifer Blalock, JWMS Teacher and Chester resident; Tim Bragdon, Chester; and Denise Dalton, VRHS teacher.

The next Region 4 BOE meeting is scheduled for November 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 6:00 p.m. as regularly scheduled.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in brown ink on a light brown background. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Rick Daniels".

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