

1 **Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District (SVRTSD)**
2 **RGB Education/Facilities and Finance Joint Committee Meeting Minutes: Thursday, October 28,**
3 **2021, Zoom Online Meeting**

4
5 **RGB members present:** J. Kelly, F. Kinney, L. Johnson, Ken Swierad and AJ Williams

6
7 **CDC represented by:** Michael Lawler, Supt./Dir; and Rebecca Tattersall, Business Manager

8
9 **Recorder:** Sandra Redding, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

10
11 Chair Jackie Kelly called meeting to order at 9AM. There were no public comments, so the committee
12 listened as Supt. Lawler shared some information concerning SW Tech possible expansion into the
13 Northshire area of our district. There is a rising need for hospitality, culinary, auto and medical profession
14 workers that is not being met. Therefore, we see this as prime area for school and program expansion.
15 The difficulties are many in trying to establish actual classrooms with instructors in the Manchester area.
16 Real estate is very expensive whether leasing or buying. Supplies and equipment are hard to find for
17 purchase and even more difficult to get here due to transportation staff shortages. There is a growing
18 need for specifically trained employees in the many programs we now offer in Bennington at SW Tech.
19 We must research how to find funding, real estate, equipment, support staff and instructors to establish
20 training for this community to continue to grow and prosper. This is a huge challenge that will not be
21 solved in the immediate future, but will need time to research, prepare, educate the public and implement.
22 Also, there are potential partners from the business community, regional schools and state/federal grants.
23 We have great rapport with several large companies in our area which needs to continue to be developed
24 and utilized. Manchester is experiencing a growth spurt that we might benefit from as well.

25 Places to check out:

- 26 • Kaman
- 27 • Bennington Tutorial
- 28 • SVMC
- 29 • Manchester Recreation
- 30 • Burr and Burton Academy

31 Today's meeting is to create an awareness of what we see as to the growing employment needs of our
32 community as well as set in motion a plan to assist in the training and development of students, both high
33 school and adult in the most logical and economic ways possible. Also, we would endeavor to be as
34 environmentally conscious in planning and implementing new locations and programs. We might be able
35 to hold classes in unused areas of established buildings. It will take a bit of time and research to gather
36 all the information to lay the foundation and create a workable plan for future expansion. This will certainly
37 require capital investment and possibly, even going to the voters for a bond. This coming year should be
38 spent in researching, establishing and preparing presentations to the total community as to the needs and
39 potential solutions available and of course, the costs involved. It is time to build a master plan of one,
40 two, five and ten years to map out the forward progression and momentum needed to support our district
41 as we grow into the coming years. We, as a tech center, are not eligible for any further Covid or
42 Recovery funds at this time. Supt. Lawler has tried repeatedly to get answers and delve into why tech
43 centers were left out of a great deal of the funding. He has no further possibility of accessing any funds.
44 There was GEER Fund monies which were slated for very specific uses to get us thru the beginnings of
45 the Pandemic. We were left out of the ESSER funds and Lawler tried in vain to get that amended. So,
46 funding is a major issue to be considered.

47
48 Moving on to our continued open instructor positions, Lawler explained the difficulties in trying to hire
49 professionals to leave their specific fields to enter the education community in Vermont. A sharp
50 decrease in pay, years of additional college courses to be certified in tech education while holding down a
51 fulltime job and perhaps, raising a family is too much for most people to endure. We lose many
52 candidates when they discover the additional requirements needed from the state of Vermont. So, we
53 continue to be very fortunate in having two highly capable vocational tech specialists who are leading our
54 Manufacturing and Forestry programs at this time, Tim Mullen and Brian Foster. We continue to look for
55 any interested parties, but have confidence that our students are fully active and involved in their

1 programs at this time. It was suggested we reach out to retirees and/or military contacts for potential
2 applicants. We appreciate that suggestion and will check it out.
3

4 Information concerning the SW Tech facility was next on the agenda. We have several large projects like
5 the front entrance to the school and the windows in the culinary classroom and kitchen need to be
6 replaced. These would be considered capital improvement projects and funds would come out of the
7 capital funds. We would need an engineering study before any decisions could be made, but the front
8 entrance is becoming a hazard and cannot wait too much longer. Are there any grants from the state
9 available to help? Could Efficiency Vermont assist with energy efficient windows in culinary? RFBs will
10 be forthcoming to get a study underway.
11

12 The group moved into discussion of the finance situation and budget process for YR2023. Every year,
13 we begin the process with allowing teachers to create a wish list and then we work our way thru each one
14 to see what is really a necessity and what can wait. Obviously, we want to support our students to the
15 best of our ability and also, be aware of the financial burden to our taxpayers. It is a delicate balancing
16 act. Business Manager Tattersall informed the committees the total to fulfill all the needs of the center
17 could be 4.4 million which is up \$331,000 from last year, a jump of 8.15%. This could possibly bring our
18 tuition rate to \$25,495. if approved. As with every year, there are some costs that we have no control
19 over, such as health insurance benefits and employment contractual agreements. This accounts for more
20 than 80% of our yearly budget. Programs costs, supplies, facility costs and equipment make up the rest.
21 What is the request of the committee as to an acceptable increase that will not short-change students, but
22 will not over-tax the voters in our district? Tattersall and Lawler will re-work the numbers and see what
23 can be cut to come up with an agreeable FY23 amount. Costs of just about everything have increased
24 due to Covid and the supply issues happening everywhere. The committee would like to see the increase
25 under 4% if possible. They appreciate the very difficult work Lawler and Tattersall must do to keep the
26 budget as palatable as possible. So, the budget will be re-worked and presented to the finance
27 committee before the next board meeting, Monday, November 8th. The committee would like to see what
28 the differences would be with a 4% and a 6% increase. If the committee is in agreement at that time, the
29 budget will be presented to the full board for approval. If not, more work will occur and a special meeting
30 of the full board will be called to hear the final presentation. The announced tuition will be also presented
31 when the budget is ready for approval.
32

33 It is possible additional meetings may be needed concerning the budget. That will be discussed and
34 decided at the next meeting. Finance will next meet on Monday, November 8, 2021, 9AM with the full
35 board to follow at 10AM.
36

37 Motion to adjourn at 10:50AM by F. Kinney with second by K. Swierad. Motion carried unanimously.
38
39