

MONITOR OF THE MOUNT VERNON CITY
SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC HEARING 3
FINANCIAL ISSUES

August 5, 2025

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Moderator:

1. Demario Strickland

- State Monitor:

- Kimberly Young Wilkins

- Mount Vernon City School District Representative:

Mark Raimondi

AGENDA

- Presentation on the NYS legislation regarding school district financial performance and desired outcomes (Kimberly Young Wilkins)
- Opportunity For Public Comment
- Next Steps in Process

MEETING PROTOCOLS

- After the monitor has finished her presentation, we will open the meeting up for questions.
- Anyone who submitted a request to speak will be given 4 minutes to talk and will be called upon by name when it is his or her turn.
- Anyone who did not submit a request to speak prior to the hearing can still submit comments to

kyoungwilkins@mtvernoncsd.org

STATUTORY AUTHORITY OF THE MOUNT VERNON MONITOR

Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2025 requires the Commissioner to appoint a Monitor to the Mount Vernon City School District to provide oversight, guidance and technical assistance related to the academic and fiscal policies, practices, programs and decisions of the District, the Board of Education, and the Superintendent.

APPOINTMENT OF MONITOR

- On July 1, 2025, I was appointed by Commissioner Betty Rosa to be the monitor of the Mount Vernon City School District.

REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

- Chapter 56 of the laws of 2025 requires that the Monitor of the Mount Vernon City School District hold three public hearings within 60 days of their appointment.
- The first hearing, which focused on governance and intervention issues and the role of the State Education Commissioner, the NYS Education Department, and the Board of Regents, was held on July 22, 2025.
- A second hearing on the academic status of the district and the duties and powers of the monitor was held on July 29, 2025.
- The videos of those hearings are available on the school district website, as are the PowerPoint presentations.

REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

- The purpose of this third hearing is to explain the role of the Monitor in providing oversight and assistance in fiscal matters of the Mount Vernon schools and to take public comment on the fiscal status of the school district.

SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Every NYS school district, apart from the Big Five cities of New York, Yonkers, Rochester, Syracuse, and Buffalo, operate on an annual budget that must be approved by the voters of that community. All registered voters of the school district who have resided in the district at least one month are eligible to vote. It is not necessary to be a homeowner.
- The Chief Executive Officer of the school district is the Superintendent of Schools, who manages the day-to-day operations of the district schools. In turn, the Board of Education appoints the Superintendent and is responsible for the management and operations of and policy-making for the school district.
- School boards are elected by the voters of the community. The Mount Vernon school board has nine members, each of whom is elected to a three-year term, plus an ex-officio student trustee.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL STATUS

- In the 2024 fiscal year, the Office of State Comptroller designated Mount Vernon as one of two districts in the State in “Significant Fiscal Stress.”
- The district had operating deficits in all but one year between 2019 and 2024.
- As a result, during that period, fund balance declined from \$33 million to \$7 million.
- A contributing factor to these deficits has been declining enrollment: from over 8,000 students in 2013-2014 to under 6,500 in 2023-2024, as well as 0% tax levy for a number of years.

Disparate Times Have Called For Drastic Measures

- If action was not taken, the Mount Vernon School District was projected to exhaust its fund balance in the 2025-2026 school year.
- The district took the painful action of deciding to close three schools in June 2025. The district has projected a savings of almost \$17 million in the 2025-2026 through these closures.
- The district projects that expenditures will increase by less 0.4% in the 2025-2026 school year, while voters approved a 3.3% increase in the tax levy.
- As part of the State monitor legislation the district also received a “spin up” in State Aid of \$8 million.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MONITOR

- Serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of the board
- Assist the board to adopt a conflict-of-interest policy that ensures board members and administrators act in the district's best interest
- Develop a proposed financial plan and a proposed academic improvement plan for the district no later than November 1, 2025, for the 2025-2026 school year and the four subsequent school years.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MONITOR

- Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year budget, ensure that the budget is balanced and consistent with the district's long-term financial plan.
- Assist in resolving any disputes and conflicts between the superintendent and the board and among members of the board.
- Authority to disapprove travel outside the State paid for by the district;
- Recommend cost saving measures including, but not limited to, shared service agreements; and;
- Notify the board in writing regarding violations of the academic and/or financial plan.
- Provide semiannual reports on the academic, fiscal, and operational status of the District.

FINANCIAL PLAN

- The Monitor and board must develop a five-year financial plan no later than November 1, 2025.
- The financial plan is likely to result in recommendations regarding many of the topics below:
 - a. Budget Development
 - b. Cash Flow Management
 - c. Expenditure (Internal Controls)
 - d. Reimbursement Claiming Processes
 - e. Human Capital Needs, Policies and Trends
 - f. Long-Term Planning
 - g. Indebtedness
 - h. Organization Structure and Internal Operations Efficiencies
 - i. Facilities and Transportation
 - j. Resource Planning to Support Academic Needs
 - k. Contracting Process

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

- Next, we will allow persons who have signed up to speak a maximum of four minutes to make their comments and/or ask their questions.

NEXT STEPS

- A record of this public hearing will be made available on the district's website at <https://www.mtvernoncsd.org/>.
- Answers to any questions that were not addressed in this hearing that are relevant to the topic will also be available in the public record.
- We thank you for your participation in this evening's hearing and look forward to working together with the administration, school board, and the community, to stabilize and improve upon the fiscal performance of the Mount Vernon public schools.