

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION – EDUCATION SESSION
MEETING
February 15, 2022

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on February 15, 2022 in the Haddam-Killingworth High School Auditorium. Board of Education Chair, Suzanne Sack, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Members Present: *Hamish MacPhail, Brenda Buzzi, Lisa Connelly, Corey Roberts, Jennifer Favalora, Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Joel D'Angelo (Arrived at 7:30 p.m.), Dr. Nelson Rivera, Shawna Goldfarb, Peter Sonski and Suzanne Sack*

Members Absent: *None.*

Also Present: *Superintendent of Schools, Jeffrey Wihbey, Director of Operations, John Mercier, Director of Finance, Ann Adriani, Dr. Kris Lindsay-Stevens (Via Remote), Student Services Coordinator, Tonya Gorgone (Via Remote), and Board Clerk, Jamie Sciascia (Via Remote)*

In-Person Visitors: *Approximately 10*

The Board meetings are videotaped and posted on the RSD17 Website under Board of Education, BOE Meeting Schedules & Minutes for public viewing.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YQ-ADre-b7fZyU9PzGZryfSX-1cR8qOQ/view?usp=sharing>

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting: *Board of Education Chair, Suzanne Sack, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

*Dr. Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Hamish MacPhail **SECONDED** a motion to add on to the Agenda under Board Liaison Reports, Town Selectmen Reports for Haddam and Killingworth.*

Motion unanimously passed By Way of Show of Hands from All Board Members.

Superintendent's Report

A. School News

Superintendent Wihbey updated the Board. He spoke about the Teaching and Learning Area—ELA Mid-Year Assessments for K-8 Students, Completion of two Professional Development Days, Developed the Perkins Grant Application, the new Scoreboard was installed in the HKHS Football Field, E-Rate Submissions have been finalized and would cover replacement of District WIFI System and Finance Conducted Budget Hearings. Superintendent Wihbey spoke about KES celebrating the 100th Day of School, HKIS holding its first Choral Concert in over two years, Student Council is in the process of collecting supplies for the military around the world, the Wrestling team at HKHS has been ranked in the top 10 in the State for the first time and at the Middle School they held a Luminary of Hope Event.

B. Masking Update

Superintendent Wihbey updated the Board. He spoke about how the CT General Assembly voted to lift the School Mask Mandate on February 28th and will now be left up to school Districts to develop

Mask Guidelines. He spoke on his three Goals: Health and Safety of Students, Staff and Families, Keeping Schools Open and Ensuring Best Instructional Environment for the Students. He will set up methodical procedures on how to get this accomplished with due diligence. Superintendent Wihbey spoke on moving towards making masking an option to parents, but still recommends masking at this time. He further addressed what he has done in the last week, what the next steps are and, further, to make a plan, closely monitor Covid data, meet with Student Councils as well as meet with Town Leaders. He spoke briefly about quarantine guidance coming from the DPH, Teacher Substitutes, making sure students feel safe and supported with whatever decision their families make regarding mask wearing and asked the Community for their patience as we work towards this outcome.

Superintendent Wihbey will report the last day of school to the Board tomorrow due to snow day accumulation. The District Calendar is also located on the RSD17 Website for public viewing.

*Joel D'Angelo **MOVED** and Brenda Buzzi **SECONDED** a motion to move up on the Agenda before Item 4A, Item 5A, Special Education CIP set forth under New Business.*

Motion unanimously passed By Way of Show of Hands from All Board Members.

Public Comment

Board Chair, went over the Public Comment Process.

Joseph Taliercio from Haddam addressed the Board. He urged the Board to eliminate mask wearing from students and staff and asked that they leave it as a parents' option which would give a sense of normalcy back into the children's lives.

Jennifer Banaletti from Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about Covid statistics currently, and believes that we need to unmask all children because it causes a negative impact to them. She also asked that the Board make mask-wearing optional and leave it as a parents' choice.

Board Secretary, D'Angelo, read the below Public Comment emails into the record.

Kim Barris from Killingworth addressed the Board. She provided a link to a short video from another parent in a different School District regarding use of masks. She felt that RSD17 should write a letter to the State Department of Education asking that they let RSD17 have control of the school in respect to wearing of masks.

Danielle Cappello from Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how she feels masks should be made a parents' choice.

Elizabeth Proctor from Killingworth addressed the Board. She spoke about homeschooling her daughter ever since the mandatory mask mandate was in place and asked that the Board make masks optional to parents so she could re-enroll her daughter next year.

Kristen LaViola from Killingworth addressed the Board. She spoke about how since the mask mandate is soon ending she asked that they remove the mask wearing for the students.

Amber Gibb from Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how she has three children within the District and feels that the mask wearing has negatively affected them and other students. She further asked the Board to remove the masks from students.

Stephanie Evans from Killingworth addressed the Board. She spoke about her three children being enrolled in the HK District, spoke on different types of masking options and how kids are getting bullied at the Middle School for their vaccination status.

The policy for Public Comment is a 5-minute limit per person, 20 minutes for each specific topic. Tonight's Public Comment Discussion was mask-wearing and exceeded the allotted time limit.

There were 22 Letters Submitted to the Board for Public Comment since the last meeting regarding masks.

19 Advocating For No Masks Mandate
2 For Continuation of Masks Mandate
1 Neutral on Mask Wearing

All letters not read in Public Comment will be submitted to all Board Members for viewing.

New Business

A. Special Education CIP

Dr. Kris Lindsay-Stevens presented the 21-22 Special Education Continuous Improvement Plan. She spoke on three Goals: Improve the Mental Wellness of Students, Improve the Provision of Nursing Services and Continue to make Improvements to the Preschool Program.

Dr. Kris. Lindsay-Stevens and Tonya Gorgone left the meeting at approximately 8:31 p.m.

Board Liaison Reports

A. Curriculum Subcommittee

Dr. Kathy Zandi updated the Board. She spoke about how the Committee met and saw a demo of the View Boards at HKIS. The Committee is making a recommendation to the Board to replace all the existing Smartboards. She also spoke about the estimated costs of same. Lastly, Dr. Zandi went over how Project Lead the Way is looking to purchase new Robotics for the Middle/High School. She addressed the associated costs of same.

B. Communications Subcommittee

Shawna Goldfarb updated the Board. She spoke about how the Committee met and discussed new Goals. She spoke about how they are moving away from Streaming the Board Meetings Live on April 30th and also will no longer be reading Public Comment emails into the record. Board Meetings can still be held remotely until June 30th and then that policy will be revisited. Shawna spoke briefly about putting together a FAQ to be housed on the District website and will be forwarded to the Board for review before posting.

C. Finance Subcommittee

Peter Sonski updated the Board. He spoke about how the Committee met and discussed how the work of the Auditors has been delayed due to implementation of the new Financial Software. He discussed how Emergency Repairs this year are at a high number totaling \$116,000 which will come out of the Operating Accounts. Peter also spoke about the impact of the high cost of fuel.

D. Town of Haddam Selectmen

Brenda Buzzi updated the Board. She spoke about how the Selectmen are appreciative of the Board's Communication and expressed gratitude for the early notice of the Joint meeting.

E. Town of Killingworth Selectmen

Dr. Zandi updated the Board. She spoke about how First Selectwoman Gorski inquired about seeing the Audited Fund Balance when available. Selectwoman Gorski mentioned how she loves the Cougar Pride segment of each Board Meeting. She also gave her compliments on the remarks given by Superintendent Wihbey and Board Chair, Sack, regarding Public Comment during the last Board meeting.

Consent Agenda

A. Exhibit A - (First Read) Policies in series 3000 for Deletion, Retention, or Repeal and Replacement, and Deletion of Policy 6146.1 - Aquatic Activity Safety; Administrative Regulations as Items of Information

*Brenda Buzzi **MOVED** and Joel D'Angelo **SECONDED** a motion to accept the Consent Agenda item as presented.*

Motion unanimously passed by Way of Voice Votes.

Kathleen Zandi	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Peter Sonski	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Lisa Connelly	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Joel D'Angelo	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Brenda Buzzi	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>

Shawna Goldfarb	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Jennifer Favalora	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Nelson Rivera	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Hamish MacPhail	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Corey Roberts	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>
Suzanne Sack	YES	<u>√</u>	NO	<u> </u>	A	<u> </u>

Old Business

A. District Central Office Staffing Needs*

Superintendent Wihbey addressed the Board. He spoke about the two staff positions they are recommending to add to the Central Office Team: one in Human Resources Management and the second position as an Executive Compliance Coordinator. He spoke about the process in terms of hiring, salary and looking at the Budget. The Board had discussion at length regarding same.

It was the Consensus of the Board that Superintendent Wihbey put together an on-boarding plan for immediate hiring of this year's position and put the hiring of next year's position in the Budget for Board to review and discuss at the upcoming Budget Workshops next month.

Adjournment:

Board Chair, Sack, called for the meeting to adjourn at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jamie Sciascia
Board Clerk*

Approval: _____ Date: _____
Joel D'Angelo, Secretary