

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION -
MEETING MINUTES
December 12, 2023

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on December 12, 2023, in the Haddam-Killingworth Auditorium.

Board Member Attendance:

Board Member	Present	Absent	Board Member	Present	Absent
Prem Aithal	X		Dr. Nelson Rivera	X	
Lisa Connelly	X		Corey Roberts	X	
Jennifer Favalora	X		Suzanne Sack	X	
Shawna Goldfarb	X		Jennifer Voegtli	X	
Hamish MacPhail	X		Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X	
Heather Pach	X				

Also Present: Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Wihbey, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Miller, Board Administrator Sarah Kaiser, Principal Donna Hayward, Marcy Webster, Curriculum Coordinators Heather Rigatti and Jennifer Beermuender, Principal Brienne Whidden, Adrienne Foret, Student Representatives Madison Moriarty and Michael Perry

Visitors: Approx. 60

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board of Education Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Cougar Pride

BES Select Chorus

Superintendent Wihbey introduced Principal Whidden, Music Teacher Adrienne Foret, and the BES Select Chorus. The chorus performed two songs.

Superintendent Wihbey presented the new RSD17 logo designed by an HKHS student, a great example of Cougar Pride.

Parents and students left the meeting at 6:37 PM.

Superintendent Wihbey requested the Board to move the agenda items HKHS Field Trip request, Student Representative Report, and the Master Plan Update to item 3.

Dr. Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to move items 8.A., 6.A., and 9.A.a. to agenda item 3.

The motion was unanimously passed by a show of hands. 11-0-0.

HKHS Trip Request-Worldstrides Music Festival April 2025

Principal Hayward and Marcy Webster presented to the Board a proposal to approve an HKHS field trip to the Worldstrides Music Festival in Boston in April 2025.

Shawna Goldfarb **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the HKHS trip request to the WorldStrides Festival in April 2025.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Marcy Webster left the meeting at 6:45 PM.

Report from the Student Representatives

Madison Moriarty reported on two upcoming events happening at the High School. The first event is an Alumni Day, where students from last year come to talk to seniors about life after high school. The remaining student body will attend an elective fair at the second event. The students can hear more about elective courses from students before making course selections. Michael Perry spoke to the Board first about Thursday's upcoming Band concert. He also spoke about the 35th Annual Holiday Telethon taking place next week. All funds raised during the telethon will support Kindness Over Muscular Dystrophy.

Board Chair Sack spoke about an article from the HK News mentioning Madison Moriarty.

The student representatives and Principal Hayward left the meeting at 6:49 PM.

Master Plan Update

Jack Butkus from Arcadis presented to the Board a Master Plan status update report on the Master Plan project. He discussed where the district is in the process, upcoming meetings and decision dates, final option highlights, and challenges and opportunities.

The Board discussed and asked questions on items such as the number of sites vs. the number of buildings' differences and additional information on the space waiver.

Prem Aithal provided information on the survey that was conducted at the fourth conversation. He noted that one more survey will be issued to allow the public to provide feedback. The survey will be issued through town and school distribution channels and the newspaper. Paper copies will also be available at each town hall, library, and district central office. The survey will conclude by December 27th.

Jack Butkus left the meeting at 7:12 PM.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion to move items 7 and 8.G. to the next items on the agenda.

The motion was unanimously passed by a show of hands. 11-0-0.

Public Comment

Owen Miner of Haddam addressed the Board. He spoke on the topic of wearing hats during school hours.

Curriculum Textbook and Program of Studies Approval

The proposal for seven new textbooks was presented to the Board for a first read. The seven proposed textbooks included Integrated Science, AP Chemistry, AP Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Civics and Contemporary Issues, AP Spanish, and Health. This item will be brought before the Board as a second read in January.

Welcome New Board Members

Board Chair Sack welcomed Heather Pach of Haddam and Jennifer Voegtli of Killingworth as the new members elected to the Board. Both members introduced themselves to the Board and the public.

Election of Board Officers

Board Chair Sack discussed that Board members had inquired if they could discuss the position of the Board Chair prior to the nomination and election process, and Sack asked legal counsel if this was allowed. Legal counsel confirmed it was allowed and that this discussion could also happen in executive session.

Jennifer Favalora **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion that the Board enter into an Executive Session to discuss the election of a Board Chair. The motion was amended to include the Superintendent.

Motion unanimously passed from the following Voice Votes 11-0-0. The Board entered Executive Session at 7:27 PM.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 9:28 PM.

BOE Chair

Hamish MacPhail nominated Jennifer Favalora for Board Chair. Jennifer Favalora declined the nomination. Shawna Goldfarb nominated Suzanne Sack. Board Chair Sack explained that nominating her is an out-of-order nomination based upon current Bylaws unless the current Bylaw was suspended.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion that in accordance with Board Bylaw 9314, the Board hereby suspends Section 3 of Bylaw 9120 for the purpose of making the current Board Chairperson eligible for election to serve a new term as Board Chairperson.

Motion passed from the following Voice Votes 9-2-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	☐ YES X NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	☐ YES X NO ☐ A		

Shawna Golfarb moved to nominate Suzanne Sack as Board Chair.

Board Chair Sack called for a vote.

The vote passed for Suzanne Sack from the following Ballot Votes 10-1-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A

Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	☐ YES X NO ☐ A		

BOE Vice-Chair

Prem Aithal moved to nominate Jennifer Favalora as Board Vice-Chair.

Board Chair Sack called for a vote.

The vote passed for Jennifer Favalora unanimously from the following Ballot Votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

BOE Treasurer

Hamish MacPhail moved to nominate Prem Aithal as Board Treasurer. Shawna Goldfarb moved to nominate Shawna Goldfarb as Board Treasurer.

Board Chair Sack called for a vote.

The vote passed for Prem Aithal from the following Ballot Votes. 10-1.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	Prem Aithal	Dr. Nelson Rivera	Prem Aithal
Lisa Connelly	Prem Aithal	Corey Roberts	Prem Aithal
Jennifer Favalora	Prem Aithal	Suzanne Sack	Prem Aithal
Shawna Goldfarb	Shawna Goldfarb	Jennifer Voegtli	Prem Aithal
Hamish MacPhail	Prem Aithal	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	Prem Aithal

Heather Pach	Prem Aithal		
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BOE Secretary

Hamish MacPhail moved to nominate Lisa Connelly as Board Secretary.

Corey Roberts moved to nominate Kathy Zandi as Board Secretary.

The vote passed for Kathy Zandi from the following Ballot Votes. 6 -5.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	Kathy Zandi	Dr. Nelson Rivera	Kathy Zandi
Lisa Connelly	Lisa Connelly	Corey Roberts	Kathy Zandi
Jennifer Favalora	Kathy Zandi	Suzanne Sack	Kathy Zandi
Shawna Goldfarb	Lisa Connelly	Jennifer Voegtli	Lisa Connelly
Hamish MacPhail	Lisa Connelly	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	Kathy Zandi
Heather Pach	Lisa Connelly		

Discussion of Board Committee Leadership and Membership

Board Chair Sack discussed the subcommittee structure with the Board. The Board Chair, after deliberation with the input of the Executive Committee, will communicate with all Board members to appoint a member to chair and members to serve on each subcommittee. In the interim, current chairs will lead any meetings scheduled until a new chair is appointed.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Wihbey updated the Board on the following areas:

- The capital priority list. This is a summary of the identified priorities for each building location.
- SPED Program Review. The onsite program review was conducted on November 20-21st. New Solutions will continue the work in January, conducting focus groups of staff, faculty, parents, and Board members.
- Reading Waiver. The State Department of Education approved the District's reading waiver request in a letter received on December 1st. Superintendent Wihbey thanked Jennifer Beermuender and Judy Nacca for all of their work and leadership during the process.
- Kindergarten Entry Legislative Changes. Parents of students with birthdates ranging from September 1st to December 31st are allowed (per state language) to request early entry to K. The waiver process requires an assessment to determine readiness.

2024 Board of Education Handbook Second Read

Jennifer Favalora discussed with the Board that the handbook has been updated for the first time in two years to include current material.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to approve the 2024 Board of Education Handbook.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

2024 Board of Education Meeting Calendar Second Read

Jennifer Favalora presented to the Board two options of the 2024 Board Meeting calendar. The Board discussed the change in meeting weeks and changes from the current calendar.

Shawna Goldfarb **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion to approve the draft option 2 of the Board calendar.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

2024-2025 School Calendar Second Read

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the calendar.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

4152.6 Family and Medical Leave (Certified) and 4252.6 Family and Medical Leave (Non-Certified) Policy Second Read

Dr. Rivera updated the Board that the committee reviewed this policy after the last Board meeting and obtained updates and legal guidance. The updates to the policy were to better meet federal and state guidelines and laws.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Shawna Goldfarb **SECONDED** a motion to approve these two policies.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

2024 Board Subcommittee Goals

The Board discussed the subcommittee goals and will table this item until the new or reinstated committee chairs have reviewed them.

Consent Agenda

- a. Enrollment Report
- b. Personnel Report
- c. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$500.00 in the form of a grant. This grant is from the Connecticut Association of Schools and will be deposited directly into the Student Activity Account to support the Unified Sports Program. Submitted by Dorothy Ventura, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Middle School.
- d. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$1500.00 in the form of a grant. This grant is from the Connecticut Association of Schools and will be deposited directly into the Student Activity Account to support the Unified Sports Program. Submitted by Eric Larson, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Intermediate School.
- e. Approval of Minutes from the November 14, 2023, Board of Education Meeting
- f. Approval of Minutes from the December 4, 2023, Board of Education Meeting Orientation
- g. Approval of Minutes from the December 4, 2023, Board of Education Meeting Workshop

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Shawna Goldfarb **SECONDED**, with gratitude, a motion to approve of the consent agenda.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 11-0-0.

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Committee Reports

Finance/Facilities Subcommittee

Fiscal Department Revenue and Expenditure Reports

Prem Aithal reported to the Board on the monthly Finance report. He spoke to the Board on the question posed at the last meeting regarding the threshold amount of the disbursement report. There is not a policy denoting an amount but the committee agreed to a \$10K threshold as acceptable.

Policy/Curriculum Subcommittee

Dr. Zandi reported to the Board on the topics discussed:

- Middle School Task Force update
- New textbooks proposal
- Two new courses -Tech Ed Computer Science and Personal Finance
- High Dosage Tutoring Grant
- Update on student attendance process

Personnel and Evaluation Subcommittee

Corey Roberts reported that Assistant Superintendent Miller brought to the committee and discussed a draft on staff banding. She also reported that the committee, in executive session, discussed with the Superintendent his contract and reviewed the Superintendent's goals.

Board Member Reports, Announcements & Comments

Liaison Reports

Haddam Board of Selectmen

Hamish MacPhail reported that he shared the report at the meeting. He also advised during the meeting that the survey would be distributed soon.

Killingworth Board of Selectmen

Dr. Zandi reported that there is a new Board of Selectmen in place. She provided them with the Board updates on items such as curriculum and the capital plan.

Executive Session

Lisa Connelly **MOVED** and Hamish MacPhail **SECONDED** a motion to add to the executive session an update on current negotiations.

The motion was unanimously passed by a show of hands. 11-0-0.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to go into executive session for personnel matters and include Superintendent Wihbey.

The motion was unanimously passed by a show of hands. 11-0-0.

The Board entered executive at 10:33 PM. Corey Roberts left the meeting.

The Board discussed the Superintendent's contract.

The Board discussed the Superintendent's goals.

The Board discussed the Bargaining Unit contract negotiations.

The Board left the executive session at 10:56 PM.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to ratify the Superintendent's contract as presented.

The motion was unanimously passed by a show of hands. 10-0-0.

Adjournment

Board Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 10:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser

Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: _____ Date: _____
Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Board Secretary