



REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING MINUTES
Date: February 13, 2024

The Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education meeting was virtually held via Google Meets on February 13, 2024.

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 Jeffrey Wihbey, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Miller, Director of Finance and Operations Ben Whittaker, Director of Student Services Dr. Aaron Puzarne, Board Administrator Sarah Kaiser, Principal Donna Hayward, Assistant Principal Adam Apicella.

Visitors: 0

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM. She provided instructions to the public regarding the procedure to attend public comment.

The pledge of allegiance was recited. The Chair then asked if any community members were present for public comment. There were no attendees present.

Chair Sack discussed moving the Support Services Association Contract and the Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation discussion to the end of the meeting, which will be discussed in an executive session.

Lisa Connelly **MOVED** and Hamish MacPhail **SECONDED** a motion to move items 4.G. and 5.B. to after item 7.

Motion 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		

Public Comment

No community members were present.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Wihbey reported that he provided the Board with a copy of the Superintendent's proposed budget for review before the February 27th presentation meeting and workshop. A budget copy will be supplied to the Towns one week before the Joint meeting on March 5th.

Chair Sack inquired about the National Assessment of Educational Process and whether HKIS was chosen to participate in the program or whether they applied for the program. The Superintendent will follow up with the Board next month. She congratulated the Robotics team who competed in their 3rd competition, the HK musicians who were accepted into the Southern Regional Festival, Shylee Emigh and Caitlin Kukta for having their film accepted into the Eastern Connecticut State University's high school film festival, as well as Jennifer Beermuender and Judy Nacca for providing insights to other educators on reading.

Heather Pach inquired about additional information on the Student Services meeting with Connecticut Behavioral Health to review student progress. Director Puzarne will review and provide an update as it is available.

High School Opportunities Book Second Read

The Board discussed that the Board and the Curriculum Committee previously approved all the courses within the opportunities book. The Board will approve the opportunities book and the graduation requirements outlined within the book.

Shawna Goldfarb **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the presented High School Opportunites Book.

Motion 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		

Principal Hayward and Assistant Principal Apicella left the meeting.

Hearing Officer Selection

The Board discussed the appointment of hearing officers that can be used in the event of an insufficient number of Board members available to attend the hearing, concerns existing related to the impartiality of a Board member, or after discussion between the Board Chair and the Superintendent, and it is determined that use of a hearing officer best meets the needs of the district. The Superintendent has the authority to use a hearing officer as an expulsion hearing professional, and the Board will vote to approve the specific individuals to be utilized in those events.

The Superintendent spoke to the Board that this option would be used in the event that there would be an issue in obtaining Board member availability, and there would be the opportunity for consent between the Superintendent and the Board Chair to choose one of the Board approved hearing officers. Legal counsel has vetted all hearing officers and will undergo an internal vetting process before sitting on a hearing.

Lisa Connelly **MOVED** and Hamish MacPhail **SECONDED** a motion for the Board of Education to specifically appoint Elisa Barlett, Steve Sedor, Kyle McClain, and Michael Mackniak as impartial hearing officers for the purpose of conducting expulsion hearings.

Motion 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		

Consent Agenda

- Enrollment Report
- Personnel Report
- Approval of Minutes from the January 18, 2023, Board of Education Special Meeting
- Approval of Minutes from the January 22, 2023, Board of Education Special Meeting
- 2024-2025 School Calendar Revised
- First Read on Seven (7) Policies and Five (5) Items of Information
 - 2140-Retention and Disposition of Records and Information
 - 5131.914-Policy Regarding Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety
 - 5131.92-Use of Private Technology Devices by Students
 - 5163-Policy to Improve Completion Rates of the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
 - 6145-Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum
 - 6148-Equitable Identification of Gifted and Talented Students
 - 9323-Construction and Posting of Agenda

Items of Information

- 2140 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Retention and Disposition of Records and Information
- 5118.1 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Homeless Children and Youth
- 5131.914 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety
- 5163 R Administrative Regulations to Improve Completion Rates of the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- 6145 R Administrative Regulations for Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum

Jennifer Favalora requested that the 2024-25 School calendar be removed, and Heather Pach requested that policy 5118.1 R be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion to approve the consent agenda as amended without items of information number 5118.1 R and item E, the school calendar.

Motion 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		

The Board discussed the revised items in the 2024-25 school calendar. The calendar was presented to correct the errors, not substantive changes. The item will be a first read this month and a second read for March.

Heather Pach asked for clarity regarding the items of information policy 5118.1 R and if it applies to runaway youth aged 16-18. The Superintendent and Dr. Puzarne will research and provide an update to the Board with further details.

Hamish MacPhail **Moved** and Prem Aithal **Seconded** a motion to approve the calendar for a first read and the administrative regulation 5118.1 R with the contingency that we get the answer to the question for the second read.

Motion 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		

Assignment of District Representative for ECHMC Board

Superintendent Wihbey reported that the ECHMC Board ByLaws require that district staff members be part of the Board. He explained the changes ECHMC had made in their Bylaws regarding appointments. The Superintendent recommended that the Board appoint the Director of Finance and Operations, Ben Whittaker, to replace Prem Aithal as the second RSD17 designee to the ECHMC Board.

Prem Aithal **Moved** and Shawna Goldfarb **Seconded** a motion for the Board of Education to approve, per Eastern Connecticut Health and Medical Cooperative Bylaw 5.1, the appointment of Ben Whittaker as a representative to the ECHMC Board of Directors.

A friendly amendment was made to adjust the motion to appoint Ben Whittaker as a replacement for Prem Aithal as a representative to the ECHMC Board of Directors. Prem Aithal accepted the friendly amendment and Shawna Goldfarb seconded the amendment.

Motion 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		

Budget Transfer Requests

Director Whittaker reported to the Board on the two budget transfers brought to the Board for approval. He explained that the requests were first brought to the Finance and Facilities subcommittee and were recommended to be brought to the Board for approval. The transfer 2024-1 pertained to Professional Services from salaries and 2024-2 pertained to equipment purchases from training.

The Board briefly discussed the transfers and how they will be reflected in the 2023-2024 budget. There was additional discussion on the amount of the transfer to professional services matching the contract amounts and a request was made for information on the equipment that was purchased for the Project Lead the Way. The Superintendent will provide a follow-up to the Board next month.

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to accept the presented budget transfers 2024-1 and 2024-2.

Motion 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		

Ten (10) Policies and (4) Items of Information Second Read

Superintendent Wihbey told the Board that as some of these policies are approved, the district will create Administrative procedures connected to the policies and will share the procedures with the Policy Committee and then the full Board.

The Board also discussed policy 4111.3: Increasing Educator Diversity Plan. A discussion of the plan work and the progress of the work being developed. A request for additional information to determine if the Board will need to approve the plan before submission to the Department of Education by March 15th. Prem Aithal also requested that it also be included in the Strategic Plan.

Chair Sack also spoke on a procedure follow-up for Policy 5115: Admission to the Public Schools at or Before Age Five.

Dr. Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Hamish MacPhail **SECONDED** a motion for the Board of Education to approve the second read of the policies presented in the agenda.

Motion 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		

Master Plan Update

Director Whittaker provided the Board with a status plan update for the Master Plan. He noted that Arcadis was asked to prepare a one-page update that will be supplied to the committee and then the full Board next month. He then gave a summary update on options 8, 9A, and 9B. Director Whittaker reported on the contract term lengths ending with Tecton and Arcadis. The Board discussed the information presented and requested additional information for options 8, 9A, and 9B, which will be further discussed. The Board will convene to discuss when the additional information is received.

Personnel & Evaluations Subcommittee

Corey Roberts reported that the committee met on February 12th and discussed the following items:

- The upcoming Nurses' Negotiation
- Superintendent's 2023-2024 goals
- Superintendent's Mid-year evaluation
- Subcommittee goals and work schedule

Finance & Facilities Subcommittee

Prem Aithal reported that the committee met on February 7th. The committee discussed the following finance items:

- A possible alternative for the check disbursement report
- Professional services line details
- Audit update. The district requested an extension to February 29th and will request an extension for one additional month. The auditors plan to present the audit findings to the committee and then the full Board in March.
- Compounding inaccurate accrued purchase orders related to prior years.
- At the next meeting, they will discuss the topics of special education, the master capital plan, and the professional services account.

Shawna Goldfarb reported that the committee discussed the following facilities items:

- Subcommittee goals
- Master plan updates and processes
- Security audit process

Chair Sack requested that Prem consider any purchase order accruals that are prior to last year and are in this year's audit to be refunded against payments already in this year vs. putting it in next year's budget.

Prem Aithal also discussed the budget workshop process. He provided a schedule of the departments/schools and when they will present their budgets. There was a request for Board members to submit questions a week prior to each workshop to facilitate the workshop process.

Policy Subcommittee

Hamish MacPhail reported that the committee met on February 5th. The committee reviewed the policies that appeared on the first read at tonight's meeting. The committee is currently updating based on legislative and statutory updates. They are also looking to create a plan to update policies so that there is a refresh cycle and best practices.

Communications Subcommittee

Lisa Connelly reported that the committee met before tonight's Board meeting. The committee discussed goals, the master plan communications are on hold, and the most recent joint meeting link will be included in the next summary. Also, they discussed budget communications. She requested that any community questions regarding the budget be sent to the committee.

LEARN

Jennifer Favalora reported that they have been working on the Educator Diversity Plan and legislation.

HK Youth and Family Services

Heather Pach reported that they are continuing the goals of mental health prevention, family connections, and overall wellness. She reported on some events that are taking place:

- February 27th will be Burnout Be Gone: A Modern Guide to Healthy Parenting Part I Event featuring Erica Cuni.
- March 16th will be the family hikers' event.
- March 19th will be the Burnout Be Gone: A Modern Guide to Healthy Parenting Part II.

Heather also noted that Denise Grodzicki has joined HKYFS to offer counseling services for children and adolescents. She also advised that the Youth Voices Count results are in, and they will be shared with the district admin and the Board of Education and then with the community in April.

Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department

Jennifer Voegtli reported that the next meeting is scheduled for the 28th.

Haddam Board of Selectmen

Heather Pach shared the Board's updates with their Board on 2/12. She reported that they discussed the Higganum Cove and creating a preservation there at the meeting. The Town was looking at the possibility of collaborating with the High School students. There is the potential for students to gain community service hours. Also, there was a conversation about the students creating a logo for the commission. Heather directed them to the High School guidance and administration for further discussion.

Killingworth Board of Selectmen

Dr. Zandi reported that the Killingworth Board met, and she provided the summary report to them. She noted that the meeting's main discussion was regarding the budget.

Board Chair Sack requested a motion for the Board to go into an Executive Session. Superintendent Wihbey requested the Board to include Assistant Superintendent Miller and Director Whittaker in the conversation.

Dr. Nelson Rivera **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to go into Executive Session including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Director of Fiscal Operations.

Motion 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		

The Board entered an Executive Session at 8:16 p.m.

The Board discussed the SSA contract. Director Whittaker and Assistant Superintendent Miller left the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

The Board discussed with Superintendent Wihbey the Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 8:36 p.m. and completed the agenda.

Corey Roberts MOVED and Prem Aithal SECONDED the motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

Board Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

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