

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION - EDUCATION SESSION
January 22, 2019

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on January 22, 2019 in the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School Media Center. Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Members Present: *Brenda Buzzi, Gerry Matthews, Kathleen Zandi, Maura Wallin, Eric Couture, Eileen Blewett, Peter Sonski, Suzanne Sack, and Joanne Nesti*

Members Absent: *Sue Twachtman and Joel D'Angelo*

Also Present: *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Holly Hageman, Director of Technology, John Mercier, Information Systems Analyst, Denis Recchia, and Board Clerk, Jamie Sciascia*

Visitors: *Approximately 20*

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting: *Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

Public Comment:

Chip Frey of Higganum addressed the Board. He spoke about the Public Building Committee process, specifically, with the Solar Panels being delivered in an untimely fashion. Chip further spoke about his frustration with the Auditorium bridge project as well as the sound table booth. He briefly spoke about the Field House lighting and the Boiling Project. He addressed the pool temperature being cooler and the school itself being on the cooler side due to the issue with the boilers being placed wrongly. He feels that the boiler problem wouldn't have occurred and money wouldn't have been wasted if someone would have listened to him; therefore, he is asking the Board for someone to be held accountable for this issue so it doesn't have to happen in the future. He read a letter from town resident, Jeff Lloyd, who serves on the Engineer and Solar Committee in town. Lastly, Chip briefly touched on his resignation from the PBC.

Andrew Becker of Middletown (former resident of Haddam) addressed the Board. He has two sons, both of whom graduated from the HK District and both of whom went to HES. He would like HES to remain open, and believes the school has a great reputation and does a good job. He further spoke about how he is an attorney and represents the Rossi's, who own Rossi property, and who have prepared a multi-use property design in the center of Higganum Village, for residential, commercial and some retail. Andrew stated that this project is only possible if the school is part of the Higganum Village, which is part of atmosphere so it shouldn't close. He stated that the plans for the Rossi's development is 85 residential apartments and would definitely draw some attraction to families due to HES being close by.

Aydin Caginalp of Haddam addressed the Board. He thanked the SCP for the excellence of their hard work and believes that their analysis and presentation has been thorough regarding HES and restructuring. He stated how he is disappointed by reaction of the Community and how there is a definite decline in population. He further spoke about a Wall Street Journal Article that was recently published "At a 30 Year Low, US Birthrates Shows Striking Difference Between The States". He further spoke about the low birthrates, Wesleyan study, vacant buildings in Haddam, and the businesses that are in the center.

Alyssa Caparaso of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about her concerns with the closing of HES and feels that once it happens, it will be a domino effect that the town won't be able to recovery from. She further stated that she feels that the BOE has pressure from State regarding budget cuts and the decline in enrollment numbers. Alyssa spoke about how selling HES will be difficult due to the type of building it is and the savings would be minimal or none and asked the Board to move with caution. She briefly touched about the Haddam's Volunteer Fire Station and the potential risk of higher taxes. Alyssa spoke about the owner of Higganum Market selling if HES closes, and the Rossi's wanting a school open in their property design. Lastly, Alyssa stated how invested the Community is and asked the Board to share ownership of the restructure issues, give access to data, and make it as transparent as possible.

Melissa Moore of Higganum addressed the Board. She has two children, her son being in 1st Grade at HES. She stated how she has been an Educator for 15 years in another school district and is concerned with class sizes increasing once the merger between HES and Burr occurs.

Teri Everett of Terri's Package Store addressed the Board. She spoke about if Ming, the owner of Higganum Market, sells from the closure of HES, it would be such a significant loss to the Higganum Center. Further, Terri stated that there has been a dramatic decrease in people coming to her store since Citizens Bank closed. She briefly touched on the old Morgan High School finally being sold.

Board Liaison Reports:

A. Curriculum Council
No Report.

B. Curriculum Subcommittee
No Report.

Old Business:

A. High School Energy and Facilities Upgrade

a) Report from Public Building Committee

Board Chair, Nesti, updated the Board. Board Chair, Nesti, spoke about how the Photovoltaic Project is still scheduled in March to receive the Solar Panels and the Boiler is a work in progress. She presented two invoices from work that was completed by Shea Electric and Mercury to the Board for approval.

Eric Couture updated the Board. Eric spoke about the Auditorium Project having a few minor items left to do which included the lift and the paneling of the Bridge. He also stated that there is a few Exterior lighting to be installed by Mercury.

*Gerry Matthews **MOVED** and Brenda Buzzi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the invoice to Shea Electric in the amount of \$318,477.52 as presented:*

Motion passed 8-0-1 by the following votes:

Suzanne Sack	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/>	Joel D'Angelo	Absent
Peter Sonski	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/>	Eileen Blewett	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maura Wallin	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eric Couture	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/>	Gerry Matthews	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Sue Twachtman Absent

Kathleen Zandi YES NO A

Joanne Nesti YES NO A

(Finance Director, Martha Vaughn, advised Board Chair, Joanne Nesti, after the meeting adjourned that the motion for payment to Shea Electric in the amount of \$318,477.52 was approved at the Board of Education meeting held on January 8, 2019.)

*Eric Couture **MOVED** and Eileen Blewett **SECONDED** a motion to approve the invoice to Mercury Electric in the amount of \$111,944.86 as presented:*

Motion passed unanimously 9-0-0 by the following votes:

Suzanne Sack YES NO A

Peter Sonski YES NO A

Maura Wallin YES NO A

Eric Couture YES NO A

Sue Twachtman Absent

Joel D'Angelo Absent

Eileen Blewett YES NO A

Brenda Buzzi YES NO A

Gerry Matthews YES NO A

Kathleen Zandi YES NO A

Joanne Nesti YES NO A

B. Strategic Capital Planning Committee Report

Board Vice Chair, Suzanne Sack, updated the Board. Suzanne spoke about how the Committee met and went over the educational elements of the restructuring, transition of students, staff and parents and merging them into a new school. Transportation was discussed and she also stated that teachers voicing their thoughts about the new intermediate school have been listened to. She spoke about having Dr. Hageman give a presentation in beginning of February to the Community, then communication has to begin to go out to parents and teachers to come to the meetings and learn about what's going on. She briefly addressed HES and the RFP that is due on February 6th. Superintendent Thiery went over the RFP standard process, which included the business office opening the bid, logging them in, and making sure they met all criteria. RFP would be opened at 11:00 a.m. on February 6th and public can attend. The next step is consideration to meet to determine what it looks like once the envelope is open. Also, Suzanne is looking at the best way to communicate to the Town about results if it meets all criteria.

Board Member, Brenda Buzzi, spoke about Haddam First Selectwoman, Lizz Milardo's, letter that was addressed to Suzanne and Board. Board Chair, Nesti, is the process of responding to it before the presentation about Haddam Center on February 24th.

New Business:

A. Presentation on District Technology by the Director of Technology

John Mercier spoke on Network Upgrades which included Benefits and Pricing to the District and Telephone System Upgrades which included Benefits and Pricing. The Benefits that were addressed was replacing all the 10/100 network switches with 1 Gig (1000) network switches, replacing District firewall, utilizing Category 2 Erate funding, RSD17 will receive a 50% discount vendor proposal, use of Voice Over IP phone systems utilizing fiber lines for services, moving to Google G Suite and GMAIL for staff and students. Both John Mercier and Dennis Recchia answered any questions that the Board Members had regarding District Technology.

Public Comment:

Dave Barrett of Higganum addressed the Board. He stated that he has lived in town for 35 years, and moved entirely because of school system. Dave stated that his kids went to HES and now his grandkids are

attending such a wonderful school. He spoke about how he is upset that the school is closing without final figures and no one knows how much how money that will be saved. He is also concerned about higher taxes. Lastly, he spoke about how there are new families moving into the Community which would mean more kids being enrolled in the school system. Dave asked the Board to have all the facts and figures before closing HES.

Tim Golas of Higganum addressed the Board. He spoke about how he is one of the new families that just moved into the District and moved specifically for the school system, the culture of town, quaint center of town and being so close to HES. He stated how his daughter is Kindergarten and how it has been an amazing experience. Lastly, he spoke about the growing families coming into town, and that he feels closing HES is a bad idea specifically with such little savings. He asked the Board to have a professional study done, and Community would pay for it.

Jennifer Petrillo of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how the Board has heard from all types of Community members regarding the HES closure. Jen spoke about the empty building, crossing guard losing her job, the longer bus rides and the growing concerns of all the businesses around the school. She asked the Board to reverse their decision.

There is a Board of Education Special Meeting (Board Workshop) regarding Strategic Capital Planning on January 29th at 5:30 p.m. at Central Office.

Adjournment:

Board Chair, Joanne Nesti, called for the meeting to adjourn at approximately 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Jamie Sciascia
Board Clerk

Approval: 
Eileen Blewett, Secretary

Date: 3/5/19