

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**January 8, 2019**

*A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on January 8, 2019 at the Central Office Board Room. Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.*

**Members Present:** *Eric Couture, Peter Sonski, Sue Twachtman, Eileen Blewett, Brenda Buzzi, Gerry Matthews, Maura Wallin, Kathleen Zandi, Joel D'Angelo and Joanne Nesti*

**Members Absent:** *Suzanne Sack*

**Also Present:** *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Holly Hageman, Director of Finance, Martha Vaughn, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School, Donna Hayward, Student Representatives, Lauren Miller and Nolan Serbent, 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 7:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

**Public Comment:**

*Rachel Donnelly of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how she believes that restructuring this district is a huge change for the Town, Community and School and gathering input from the Community is important to have this be a successful change. She further addressed the petition against the HES closure that was signed by the Community, the hundreds of Save HES signs that are sprinkled around town, and the SAVE HES group that was formed to come to the Board meetings to ask questions and listen. Lastly, Rachel feels that the Board has failed to involve the Community at the appropriate levels.*

*Ming, Owner of the Higganum Village Market, addressed the Board. He said he is the owner of the Higganum Market, and bought the market because it was located in the center of town, and near a school which would bring traffic to his business. He spoke about the large number of people coming into his store in the afternoon after school commences, and is concerned if HES closes it will severely impact his business. He also stated he will not wait to sell his store if the school closes because his sales will decrease by at least 20%. Lastly, Ming spoke about Citizens Bank recently closing, and his business sales decreased by 15%.*

*Jane Baird of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how her two sons have benefited from the RSD17 school system and thanked the Board of Education for their hard work and for the wonderful education her kids have had. She addressed her concerns with the closure of HES, the impact it will have on the town businesses, and stated that the vibrancy of the school is reflected on the entire town. She further spoke about declining home values, and losing Swain Hill which is behind HES and used for recreational activities and also educational purposes. She asked that the Board reconsider its decision or postpone it.*

*Joe Rizzo of Higganum addressed the Board. He thanked for the Board for everything that they do and taking time to discuss Community members concerns with the closure of HES. He spoke about how support*

is growing to stop the closure of HES, and the Community members are willing to make sacrifices to pay to keep the school open. He spoke about voting on the budget, keeping the wonderful teachers in place at HES. He asked that the Board delay the process and listen to what the Community wants.

Approval of Minutes for the following Board Meetings:

- A. Approval of Minutes for the November 06, 2018 Board of Education Meeting
- B. Approval of Minutes for the December 4, 2018 Board of Education – Special Meeting
- C. Approval of Minutes for the December 4, 2018 Board of Education Meeting
- D. Approval of Minutes for the December 17, 2018 Board of Education – Special Meeting
- E. Approval of Minutes for the December 20, 2018 Board of Education – Special Meeting

Gerry Matthews **MOVED** and Brenda Buzzi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the Minutes A-E as presented:

Motion passed unanimously 10-0-0 by the following show of hands:

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

### Report from Student Representatives:

Student Representatives, Lauren Miller, and Nolan Serbent, updated the Board.

Lauren spoke about the Holiday Show, how they raised over \$14,000 for After the Storm which is a non-profit organization for breast cancer survivors that helps them after they received treatment. Also, she spoke about the Elementary School Holiday Concert for the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Levels that took place before the Holiday break.

Nolan spoke about the Class of 2018 Alumni speaking to the current Seniors about transitioning to college life which was guided by the Guidance Counselors. He also spoke about the Mr. HK Event, which will be held February 8<sup>th</sup> and is \$5.00 at the door. It is a comedy/beauty/talent show of 20 HK high school boys who will compete for the title "Mr. HK."

Principal Donna Hayward stated that Nolan Serbent received wonderful news; he will be attending Brown University next year.

Principal Donna Hayward, and Student Representatives, Nolan Serbent and Nicole Miller, left the meeting at approximately 7:30 p.m.

### Board Committee Reports and Future Meetings:

#### A. Facilities Subcommittee

No Report.

#### B. Finance Subcommittee

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He spoke about how the State changed its system for submitting reimbursement. He further addressed meeting with the State to see if it would reimburse

*the monies that aren't available for the project when they should be, due to the delays in the new system.*

*Superintendent Thiery also spoke about the Finance Committee's recommendation to keep flow of decision making the same, with everything going to the PBC for consideration and then having the PBC's recommendation go to the Board for final decision making. Lastly, Superintendent Thiery spoke about how all spending authorizations need to now go to the Board for approval that are new proposals/changes that change the bottom line dollar figure amount.*

*Peter Sonski **MOVED** and Brenda Buzzi **SECONDED** a motion to approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee that all future Change Orders in connection with the High School Renovation Project be exclusive purview of the Board of Education.*

*Motion passed 9-0-1 by the following votes:*

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

**C. Policy Subcommittee**

*No Report.*

**D. Communications Subcommittee**

*No Report.*

**E. Personnel and Evaluation Subcommittee**

*Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He spoke about how the Committee met and discussed reviewing the process for the Superintendent's evaluation mid-year. Superintendent updated them on personnel issues and looking at the year-long map of the P&E Committee.*

**Board Liaison Reports:**

**A. Healthy Communities – Healthy Kids Council**

*Gerry Matthews updated the Board. He spoke about how the Committee met recently and Sean Macauley explained how the program was able to assist many students who have difficulty in their lives. He addressed the increasing problems with students vaping and the easy access students have to vaping materials. Lastly, Gerry spoke about how students are confiding in other friends who are having trouble with depression. One student suggested putting together a "care package" (cards, chocolate, etc) to lift their spirits. Currently, there is no funding to get this up and running and Gerry suggested YFS look into a grant for this.*

**B. LEARN**

*No Report.*

**C. Park & Recreation**

*No Report. Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He met with director of Park and Rec last week about the various changes and how it may impact them. It was agreed they would meet*

monthly for 30 minutes in order to make sure they are on the same page.

**D. Haddam Board of Selectmen**

*No Report.*

**E. Killingworth Board of Selectmen**

*No Report.*

**Old Business:**

**A. High School Energy and Facilities Upgrade**

**a) Report from Public Building Committee**

*Board Chair, Nesti, updated the Board. She spoke about Solar Project and the work Shea Electric has been doing installing the racking as it comes in. The timeline for the panel delivery is still set for mid-March. Board Chair, Nesti, stated that the Lighting Project is just about completed and also spoke briefly about the Auditorium Bridge being close to completion. Lastly, she briefly touched on the stage lift that the PBC has approved. Five to eight weeks is the estimate for delivery and installation of the lift.*

*Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He spoke about the Boiler Project moving along and the process of moving boilers to comply with building, maintenance and fire codes in the final stage of preparation.*

**b) Approval of Invoice for Photovoltaic Project**

*Sue Twachtman **MOVED** and Eileen Blewett **SECONDED** a motion to approve the invoice in the amount of \$318,477.52 to Shea Electric as presented:*

*Motion passed unanimously 10-0-0 by the following show of hands:*

Suzanne Sack	Absent	Joel D'Angelo	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>
Peter Sonski	YES <u>√</u>	Eileen Blewett	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>
Maura Wallin	YES <u>√</u>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>
Eric Couture	YES <u>√</u>	Gerry Matthews	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>
Sue Twachtman	YES <u>√</u>	Kathleen Zandi	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>
		Joanne Nesti	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>   </u>	A <u>   </u>

**B. Report of the Strategic Capital Planning Committee**

*Board Chair, Nesti, updated the Board. She spoke about the discussion the Committee had with commercial realtor H. Pearce about what the next 4-5 weeks will be, continuing marketing and targeted emails to publicize the availability of the HES property. She addressed the RFP Process, and they will publically open the proposals that they receive on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Board Chair Nesti, did confirm that there have been 3 walk-throughs of the building since they put the RFP was released in November 2018. Also, she spoke about the presentation that was given to the Committee by a group of Community members regarding an Economic Plan for Higganum Center. Board Member, Joel D'Angelo, stated it was a PowerPoint presentation with the focus being HES and the cost to the center of the school vacating the property. The Committee advised the next step for the group should be sharing their pain with town leadership in Haddam. The next step for them is sharing that plan with town leadership. Board Member, Peter Sonski, stated that he will introduce the building more formally to LEARN.*

Superintendent Thiery spoke about the Planning Committees provided an update on what the administration and committees have been working on. He further addressed the enrollment reports that are provided on a monthly basis on the projected new numbers for the restructured schools. He spoke about the Committees being subdivided into certain groups and planned activities to join the two school communities together. The goal is to communicate to the public dates and events happening in the spring time. He addressed the Intermediate program development master schedules, the various programs and how it will fit into the building. The goal in January is to have staffing identified by position and then in February/March, identify staffing by personnel. Board Member, Maura Wallin, asked for a breakdown of how many students will be in each grade, which Superintendent Thiery said he will provide to her. Superintendent Thiery handed out a design of the Intermediate School and Middle School and walked the Board through each classroom/pod. He addressed how intervention services, special education services and the school counselor will be in the Intermediate School pod. He spoke about how they will continue to vet it and this will be shared with the Middle School staff, and then the intermediate school and elementary school staff to follow. He further spoke about programs, recess, and specials. Board Member, Brenda Buzzi, raised concerns about older children being around younger children in school during programs. Superintendent Thiery went over the process of the different program modules at the Intermediate and Middle School Levels as well as class sizes. He spoke about how they won't be sharing teachers other than French/ Spanish and Specials (Art, Music, PE). Lastly, Field Trips were addressed.

**Consent Agenda:**

The donations on the Consent Agenda are made to the school system as a whole, and the Superintendent may direct any monies to specific schools or programs at his discretion.

- A. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$66.00 from Lathrop Vending, Inc. and funds will be deposited into the Principal's Discretionary Account. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal at Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- B. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$1,000.00 from CT Street Rod Association to be used for the purchase of supplies and equipment for the electrathon engineering project. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal at Haddam-Killingworth High School.

Eric Couture **MOVED** and Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to accept Items A-B listed on the Consent Agenda with great appreciation.

Motion passed unanimously 10-0-0 by the following show of hands:

Suzanne Sack	Absent	Joel D'Angelo	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>
Peter Sonski	YES <u>√</u>	Eileen Blewett	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>
Maura Wallin	YES <u>√</u>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>
Eric Couture	YES <u>√</u>	Gerry Matthews	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>
Sue Twachtman	YES <u>√</u>	Kathleen Zandi	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>
		Joanne Nesti	YES <u>√</u>	NO <u>  </u>	A <u>  </u>

**New Business:**

**A. Asset Disposal Request from HKHS**

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He spoke about donating the books, the age of them and how expensive it would be to ship overseas if someone wanted them.

Gerry Matthews **MOVED** and Eileen Blewett **SECONDED** a motion to approve the Asset Disposal Request from HKHS as presented.

Motion passed unanimously 10-0-0 by the following show of hands:

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

#### From the Superintendent:

##### A. Legislative Update

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He stated that he has been watching and paying close attention on the State level. He stated that he reached out to welcome all the new legislators, and is looking forward to establishing relationships with them.

##### Personnel Report

Superintendent Thiery advised that the Personnel Report has been provided in the BOE Packet. He stated if anyone had any questions on the report, please feel free to contact him directly.

##### B. Enrollment Report

Superintendent Thiery advised that the Personnel Report has been provided in the BOE Packet. He stated if anyone had any questions on the report, please feel free to contact him directly. Also, the monthly Enrollment Report is available on the RSD17 Website for public viewing.

#### From the Director of Fiscal Operations:

##### A. Budget Transfers

No Report.

#### Board Discussion/News/Suggestions:

Board Member, Brenda Buzzi, spoke about revisiting the decision of the Board of Education regarding the closure of Haddam Elementary School. She wanted to bring a motion to the table about this; however, since it wasn't on the Agenda and the community wasn't aware of such, Superintendent Thiery advised that that would not be following proper procedure. Board Member, Buzzi, asked for this item to be put on the next BOE meeting agenda. Board Member, Maura Wallin, stated she is in support of same and will follow up with Board Chair, Nesti, to add this action item on the Agenda.

#### Public Comment:

Christine Palm, State Representative for Haddam, Chester, Deep River and Essex, addressed the Board. She said she is the newly elected state representative for the above towns, and she was in attendance to offer her help and services regarding the closure of HES without taking a position. She said she has also reached out to the Haddam First Selectman. She briefly touched on state reimbursements.

Pam Crum of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how she feels the Board should provide the community with documentation of additional demographic analysis performed by a professional firm, a current facility assessment for each of the elementary schools done in the last year by a professional

*Architectural/Engineering firm. Also, Pam asked for financial assessment performed by a professional third party to provide the net cost savings from closing HES and the reorganization of the school system. She asked that the Board pause the restructuring process until the above information is provided and taxpayers are satisfied.*

*Steve Abbatello of Higganum addressed the Board. He spoke about how he lives near HES, and feels that the Board should have tried to find someone to occupy the building ahead of making a decision to close it. Further, he feels that there will be great financial impact for the town, spoke on enrollment declining and how people are already leaving.*

*Dagmara Pypa of Higganum addressed the Board. She came from Poland, at 13 years old, speaking no English. She told a brief story about how she went to private school and was bullied when she went on the bus. She is concerned about younger children being on the bus with older children and feels that bullying can occur. She stressed the importance of her children's education and believes we live in a beautiful community and appreciates what the Board does for the children.*

*Jeff Sturges of Haddam addressed the Board. He thanked the Board for the December 21 update on how they will restructure Burr and inquired on how soon the one at the Middle School will be made public. Superintendent Thiery will make it public as soon as possible since they are still going through the final stages. Jeff spoke about the pods of the Middle School and suggested to the Board to make it as clear as possible to the Community members who don't understand the way the Middle School is built so everyone can be on the same page. Jeff also spoke about the presentation by Dr. Kris Lindsay that occurred at the BOE meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>, keeping small class sizes which have been operating under the standard limit. He suggested before we close HES to make sure the Board is not making a mistake. Lastly, he spoke about the small amount of savings in closing HES and how the community is against this decision.*

*Shawna Goldfarb of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about the presentation the community group presented to the SCPC, and she stated how it was emailed to the Committee and will also email it to the full Board. She further spoke on how the community did what they were asked to do, and are also in communication with Town Selectmen, Town Committees and have been put on their Agendas. Shawna stated that based on recommendations to them, they are asking for a delay in the closure and structuring process in order to get the motions they need and complete their work.*

**Adjournment:**


*Board Chair, Joanne Nesti, called for the meeting to adjourn at 9:03 PM.*

*Respectfully submitted,*



*Jamie Sciascia  
Board Clerk*

Approval:



*Eileen Blewett, Secretary*

Date:

2/5/19