

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
November 6, 2018

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on November 6, 2018 at Central Office in the Board Room. Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

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

Members Absent: *Sue Twachtman, Joel D'Angelo and Kathleen Zandi*

Also Present: *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Director of Finance, Martha Vaughn, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Middle School, Dr. Jennifer Olsen, and Board Clerk, Jamie Sciascia*

Visitors: *Approximately 25*

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:

Kathryn Rizzo of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about her concerns with the HES closure; specifically, relating to the approach and data that was used in making the decision. She believes that HES is viable in the center with access to playgrounds, trails, basketball courts, etc. Kathryn believes that a visible center is wise to having support for passing budgets and supporting the building. She believes that the small savings of the school closure will create long term harm for the Town of Haddam. Kathryn requests to table the decision of closing HES until a professional demographer is obtained.

Gina Block of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about the decision of HES closure, how she has a 2-year-old daughter and she would be denied the opportunity to attend if it closes. She stated that the process that took place has had very little transparency and the public has had little opportunity to comment on direction of decision. Further, Gina spoke about how there will be a big economic impact to businesses in the center of town. She spoke about having concerns with the birthrates that were used, young families are buying and building homes in the towns and children are too young to enroll and not being counted in those birthrates. Further, she spoke on the future property values decreasing if HES closes. Gina stated she wants it to go to referendum and get town input.

Jola O'Connor of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how she lives in Haddam, and her two children are enrolled at HES. She addressed the study that was done by Wesleyan students and wanted to know if the Board would consider other resources that are out there that have more reliable and accurate data since this is a big decision. Jola stated that she is concerned with families moving into the Town of Haddam that are not enrolled in school system; therefore, their counts are not taken in the birthrates. She stated that this could potential create in five years costing the town more money in end. She stated that businesses, students, staff, and parents are not happy about this decision.

Jennifer Petrillo of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about the petition that Community members signed not to close HES and handed a copy to the Board members. She addressed the numbers/data that she received, and her biggest issue is the enrollment projections data and stated that it was inaccurate. Jennifer stated that if a school has to close, it should be Burr or no school at all. Lastly, she stated that this is not a decision that town wants, and asked the Board to reconsider their decision before too late.

Sean Donnelly of Haddam addressed the Board. He spoke about the petition that is at one of the businesses in the center of town and how the owner gets called and harassed about it. He asked the Board to reconsider their decision for all the businesses in the Higganum center.

Approval of Minutes:

Approval of Minutes for the following Board Meetings:

- A. Approval of Minutes for the September 18, 2018 Board of Education – Education Session Meeting
- B. Approval of Minutes for the September 25, 2018 Board of Education – Special Meeting
- C. Approval of Minutes for the October 10, 2018 Special Meeting
- D. Approval of Revision of Board Minutes for the March 6, 2018 Board of Education Meeting
- E. Approval of Minutes for the October 15, 2018 Board of Education – Special Meeting

Maura Wallin **MOVED** and Eileen Blewett **SECONDED** a motion to approve the Minutes A-E as presented:

Motion passed unanimously 8-0-0 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"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Maura Wallin	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Eric Couture	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Gerry Matthews	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Sue Twachtman	Absent	Kathleen Zandi	Absent
		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, were not in attendance due to school being closed for Election Day. Superintendent Thiery gave a brief update to the Board.

Maura Wallin **MOVED** and Peter Sonski **SECONDED** a motion to move up Item 9A Washington, D.C. Trip set forth under new Business.

Motion passed unanimously 8-0-0 by the following show of hands:

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"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Maura Wallin	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Eric Couture	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Gerry Matthews	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Sue Twachtman	Absent	Kathleen Zandi	Absent
		Joanne Nesti	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>

New Business

- A. **Washington, D.C. Trip – April 29th – May 1, 2020**

Dr. Jennifer Olsen updated the Board. She spoke about how this is the 21st year of the Washington, D.C. trip, and has been important part of 8th grade ever since. Dr. Olsen spoke on

the trip details; dates are from April 29th through May 1, 2020, the entire 8th grade will be going. They will be visiting everything that is important: the Holocaust Museum, African American Museum, and visiting all the monuments. The trip costs \$565,00 for each person, there are 17/18 chaperones attending, there are two fundraiser activities to raise money and scholarships are available to anyone that can't afford part or all of the group expenses. Dr. Olsen stated that the trip is a wonderful experience, and the students look forward to it. Lastly, Dr. Olsen addressed the qualified bus drivers that will be driving the students on the trip.

*Gerry Matthews **MOVED** and Maura Wallin **SECONDED** a motion to approve the Washington, D.C. Trip as presented.*

Motion passed unanimously 8-0-0 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"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Maura Wallin	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Buzzi	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Eric Couture	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Gerry Matthews	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Sue Twachtman	Absent	Kathleen Zandi	Absent
		Joanne Nesti	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>

Board Committee Reports and Future Meetings:

A. Facilities Subcommittee

Eric Couture updated the Board. He spoke about how the Committee met last night and briefly discussed the capital plan moving forward. Eric spoke about the Burr oil tank being one of those items to be replaced for next year. He further discussed progress of trying to improve the high school football field and will have more detail to report next month.

B. Finance Subcommittee

Suzanne Sack updated the Board. She spoke about budget-to-date, monthly expenditures over \$5,000, and how the Committee reviewed the PBC finances. Lastly, she addressed the bonding for the high school renovation project.

C. Policy Subcommittee

No Report.

D. Communications Subcommittee

No Report. There was a brief discussion from the Board members about the Facebook page which hasn't been rolled out yet.

E. Personnel and Evaluation Subcommittee

No Report. Brenda Buzzi spoke briefly about Exit Interviews. She asked when those Exit those interviews happen. Superintendent Thiery stated that when a resignation is received, the employee receives a standard letter back from him thanking them for their service. Within that letter it states, if you would like to set up an Exit Interview, please call which some do and some don't. Brenda stated how she noticed a lot of people leaving the District and is curious as to why. Board members raised concerns if turnarounds were up and also spoke about the possibility of the P&W Subcommittee handling the Exit Interviews.

Board Liaison Reports:

A. Healthy Communities – Healthy Kids Council

No Report.

B. LEARN

Suzanne Sack and Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. Suzanne spoke about how LEARN officially opened their Special Education School in New London. Superintendent Thiery spoke briefly about what LEARN can do for the region, Farmington Valley Diagnostic Center. He stated that it provides a huge resource and is a work and progress. Lastly, he briefly addressed how they are taking students on pilot seat for a 1 year.

C. Park & Recreation

Peter Sonski updated the Board. He stated that the Committee met last Wednesday, the Fall programs are going well, communications from the Park and Recreation and School continue to remain acceptable. Peter addressed the remediation that was completed in the white house and how it was successful. This was due to a mold issue. Lastly, Peter stated that Park & Rec remain concerned about potential loss of space.

D. Haddam Board of Selectmen

No Report.

E. Killingworth Board of Selectmen

Eric Couture updated the Board. He stated the Committee met a few weeks back with Tom Hogarty, Eileen Blewett and Suzanne Sack regarding the status of the building project. He spoke about what has gone well/not so good within the project, any financial issues and the overall timeline of projects being completed.

Old Business

A. High School Energy and Facilities Upgrade

a) Report from Public Building Committee

Board Chair, Nesti, updated the Board. She spoke about the PV Project and how the delivery of racking system and solar panels are still on track. She also stated that the energizing system will be completed in the early part of May. Superintendent Thiery stated that all anchors are on the roof with the exception of Field House roof. He also spoke briefly on the new roof, how it produced 4 leaks from all the rain. He stated that Silktown quickly identified each leak, repaired them as well as any wet ceiling tile. There is a 30-year warranty on the roof. Board Chair, Nesti, spoke about the Interior/Exterior Lighting projects that still continue to be a topic of discussion; some items on the punch list still need to be taken care of. Superintendent Thiery will further address these items in Executive Session. Lastly, Superintendent Thiery briefly touched on the 3 boilers that are up and running which are heating the pool and school and the 3 that remain to go in.

B. Report of the Strategic Capital Planning Committee

Suzanne Sack updated the Board. She stated that the Committee has met and spoke about Dr. Holly Hageman's presentation on Introduction of the Intermediate Program, issues learned in community meetings, closure and merging of HES and Burr have been identified and addressed, bussing etc., adequate parents, teachers and administrators had input, each committee is set up, all working on identified specific goals in set up of school. Suzanne stated that Dr. Hageman and Superintendent Thiery are doing a magnificent job with all of this. Suzanne further spoke about how the Board reviewed and approved the RFP which has gone live and is available for people to respond to within

90 days. She also stated the both the First Selectwomen in each town have been updated on the status of all projects.

Peter Sonski updated the Board. He spoke about the RFP process, how Pearce Real Estate is distributing notice to various commercial agencies and developers and spoke about how the inquiries he has received so far are from organizations within consulting work engineering and other firms.

Board Member, Brenda Buzzi, spoke about the Haddam Elementary School closing. She spoke about how she was elected and only around February timeframe learned of all this information. Brenda stated that when this all came about, she voted no to close it and did her own research from there. Brenda spoke briefly on how she feels the HES is a huge mistake in closing, and passed out information specifically key points on Ken Gronbach, who is a demographer, and how he stated that closing HES is a temporary solution to a permanent problem.

Board Chair, Nesti, asked for the Board to be given more time to review the information that was just given to them.

There was Board discussion about talking about this in the SCP Committee meetings and if Board did want to put this topic as an Agenda item on a later date. Board Member, Maura Wallin, suggested that Ken Gronbach should come to one of the meetings to address his concerns with HES closing and also asked that the Board have a further conversation about the data to make sure information is accurate.

After Board discussion, this item was tabled until the Board can discuss it further. Board Member, Suzanne Sack, stated that this should get the proper attention and discussion it deserves.

C. RSD17 School Calendar 2020-2021

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He stated that there is no statutory time limit to approve the 2020-2021 Calendar; however, they are trying to produce calendars 2-years in advance. Superintendent Thiery also stated that the State removed the mandate to follow other Regional School Districts and students are in school 182 days of which 180 are mandatory. The 2019-20 calendar has already been approved. The Board had further discussion and then a motion was made.

Peter Sonski **MOVED** and Eileen Blewett **SECONDED** a motion to approve the RSD17 School Calendar for 2020-2021 as presented.

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

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

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 \$42.62 from Lathrop Vending, Inc. which will be deposited into the Principal’s Discretionary Fund Account. Submitted by Donna L. Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- B. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$545.00 from an anonymous donor to be used as Scholarship Funds for the Annual 8th Grade Washington Trip to be deposited into the HKMS Student Activity Fund. Submitted by Dr. Jennifer Olsen, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Middle School.
- C. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$95.00 to be deposited in the SAF Account. The donor requests funds to be divided evenly between the library and music department. Submitted by Donna L. Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- D. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$500.00 from the KES PTO to be deposited into the KES Student Activity Account – Field Trips. Submitted by Dennis J. Reed, Principal of Killingworth Elementary School.
- E. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$106.31 from Coca-Cola vending machine sales to be deposited into the Student Activity Account – Principal Account. Submitted by Dennis J. Reed, Principal of Killingworth Elementary School.
- F. Acceptance of a donation of miscellaneous musical instruments from Brian Dougherty to be used in The musical program at Killingworth Elementary School. Submitted by Dennis J. Reed, Principal of Killingworth Elementary School.
- G. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$1,500.00 received from the CT Association of Schools to be used by our Unified Sports program. Submitted by Dr. Jennifer Olsen, Principal Haddam-Killingworth Middle School.

Gerry Matthews **MOVED** and Brenda Buzzi **SECONDED** a motion to accept Items A-G listed on the Consent Agenda with great appreciation.

Motion passed unanimously 8-0-0 by the following show of hands:

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

New Business:

B. Budget Timeline

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He went over the Budget timeline which includes the Superintendent’s presentation, joint meeting and workshop dates.

Further, the Board had discussion of holding a joint meeting with the Town of Haddam and Town of Killingworth as well as the Board of Finances within both towns before the end of the year 2018 to talk about the budget, etc. Board Member, Suzanne Sack, spoke briefly about how the Finance Committee is considering proposing a new process to the Board on a new way to present the Budget.

Peter Sonski suggested to wait to see what the Committee has to offer before making a vote on the Budget Timeline. This Agenda item will appear on a later date.

From the Superintendent:

A. Legislative Update

Superintendent Thiery updated the Board. He handed out materials from the Shipman and Goodwin conference he attended a few weeks back regarding the points of the major legislative changes. Also, Superintendent Thiery spoke about how CAP is working with Shipman and Goodwin to put together a template of standard best practices.

B. 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.

C. 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 now available on the RSD17 Website for further viewing.

From the Director of Fiscal Operations:

A. Budget Transfers

No Report.

Board Discussion/News/Suggestions: None.

Public Comment:

Kathryn Rizzo of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about the District restructuring, and appreciated Superintendent Thiery coming to HES to speak about it. She addressed the intermediate programs and how fantastic it sounds, with utilizing the wonderful assets of the middle school. She stated that when this all was presented to the Community on the HES closing, it was based on the decreasing enrollment numbers and budgeting. Kathryn stated that she can't support data that has been provided by a Wesleyan study, specifically, by 3 undergraduate students. She stressed the fact that demographers should be doing the study since this is a big important decision. Kathryn asked the Board to bring forward more robust data making sure this is the right decision.

Myles Crete of Haddam addressed the Board. Myles spoke about his concerns with the data that was presented, and suggested to the Board to let some Community parents sit in on these major decisions so the Community gets updated accordingly.

Jennifer Petrillo of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about saving HES school, how the town does not want the school to close and addressed the hours she spent away from her family. She further spoke about how the data numbers aren't adding up and how the Community is confused by the enrollment data that was provided by Wesleyan students. Also, Jennifer spoke about the longer bus rides which parents don't want, how the students are upset with the closing, houses are decreasing in value, and voiced her concern on rushing into this decision. She asked the Board to reconsider closing HES.

Peter Baird of Higganum addressed the Board. Peter spoke about his two sons enrolled in the HK system, and thinks the schools are fabulous. He has concerns with the economic development of it and the planning and zoning side of it. Peter further stated that this is the center point, people go to the grocery store, package store, walking to center, and believes closing the school will have a direct impact of the businesses and bringing money into the town.

Katie Packtor of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how the closing of HES will affect the economic impact of center of Higganum. She believes the educational program that is being worked on by Dr. Hageman is inspiring. She spoke about how there is little savings in this decision, how the town will suffer from it as well as businesses and home values.

Sean Donnelly of Haddam addressed the Board. He spoke about how he is seeing tension within the parents from Burr and HES about which school is better and asked how we are going to mold both the Burr Community and HES Community together. He further spoke about the Veteran's program that is being held at HES and said it would be nice for the Board members to attend.

Shawna Goldfarb of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how she has kids in the HK Middle School and how the education within the District is wonderful. She addressed the future businesses like Pratt and Whitney and Verizon which are opening up multiple positions and could drive families into the Higganum/Haddam area. She stated closing HES will hinder students from coming in.

Gina Block of Higganum addressed the Board. She thanked the Board for their hard work and stated how she currently serves on the Planning and Zoning Board. She stated that we should look at this in a holistic manner, and talk to P&Z and other town committees about planning a school system.

Board Chair, Nesti, thanked all the Community members who were in attendance for coming to the meeting.

Brenda Buzzi **MOVED** and Eric Couture **SECONDED** a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss a contractual matter.

Motion passed unanimously 8-0-0 by the following show of hands:

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

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:50 p.m.

Executive Session:

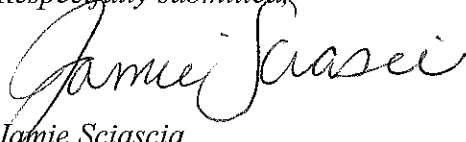
Howard updated the BOE on a contractual matter involving MJ Daly and the state of the Boiler Project.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:25 p.m.

Adjournment:

Board Chair, Joanne Nesti, called for the meeting to adjourn at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jamie Sciascia
Board Clerk

Approval: 
Eileen Blewett, Secretary

Date: 1/8/19