

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION – EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**  
**August 21, 2012**

*A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on August 21, 2012 in the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School Media Center. Board of Education Chair, Karen Perry, called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.*

**Members Present:** *Susan Dean, Sue Twachtman, Joel D'Angelo, Peggie Bushey, Amy Jacques-Purdy, Karen Perry, and Becky Valenti,*

**Members Absent:** *Chet Harris, Steven Banaletti, Jonathan Wintsch and Jaime Lehane*

**Also Present:** *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery and Board Clerk Larissa Johnson*

**Visitors:** *12*

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting**

*Board of Education Chair, Karen Perry called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

**Board Liaison Reports**

**A. Curriculum Council Update**

*No Report.*

*Susan Dean **MOVED** and Joel D'Angelo **SECONDED** a motion to move Item 4 - New Business up in the agenda ahead of Item 3 - Old Business. Motion passed by the following votes:*

Amy Jacques-Purdy	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Peggie Bushey	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Becky Valenti	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Twachtman	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Chet Harris	Absent	Steven Banaletti	Absent
Jaime Lehane	Absent	Susan Dean	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Joel D'Angelo	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>	Karen Perry	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/>
Jonathan Wintsch	Absent		

**New Business**

**A. Community Conversations – Presentation**

*Erika Fleig presented on the event HK Community Conversations about Education which was held on June 2, 2012 and funded by a grant from the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund. There were 53 participants in attendance which included parents of students of all ages, professionals from the community, Board of Education members, RSD 17 teachers and administrators, and state legislators. The conversation starter question was “What can we do in our schools and our community to inspire and help parents and community members become more involved in our children’s education?” The discussion groups considered three approaches to addressing the question. Erika Fleig reported on*

what the responses were from parents, teachers and administrators, and the community. Some of the major themes she reported were: 1) Communication and awareness are critical for parental and community involvement; 2) Technology can/should be used to foster parent and community involvement and should complement other more traditional means of communication (paper communication, meetings, etc.); 3) The need to define what it means to “be involved” for both parents and the community. The group came up with a number of different recommended actions. The group plans to have a follow-up meeting and hopes to continue this discussion and perhaps be able to have an additional discussion next year. Erika Fleig reported that all participants felt that the conversation was useful and 80% of participants thought that the conversation was very useful. Howard Thiery then reported on some of the actions he and the Administrative team have taken to address some of the recommended actions, including upgrading the district website, starting a Facebook page, which has over 500 subscribers and 9,000 distinct hits, offering “Window Walks on Education” which will be weekly tours during the school day allowing members of the community to have a glimpse at what a regular day at school is like, as well as setting consistent standards on classroom communication. An interactive discussion between the Board, Howard Thiery, Erika Fleig, Cheryl Chandler and Cathy Ino followed. The Board and Cathy Ino thanked Erika Fleig for her presentation and thanked HK Community Conversations for holding the event.

## **Old Business**

### **A. Donation of Swan Hill Trail Signs**

The Board discussed the donation of Swan Hill Trail Signs. Howard Thiery said that he consulted the District’s attorney as well as insurance consultant. The District’s attorney stated that the District should have sovereign immunity similarly to municipalities and have a statutory defense to any claims which could arise resulting from public use of the Swan Hill Trail running over school property. The insurance consultant informed Mr. Thiery that any claims which may arise from public use of school property and the Swan Hill Trail would fall under the General Liability policy held by Zurich, which is an \$11 million policy, which he felt was comprehensive for any claims which could arise. Howard Thiery also added that the Swan Hill Trail was recently reviewed in the Hartford Courant. Board Chair Karen Perry added that she and the Board think that the creation of the trail is wonderful and exciting. While Howard Thiery awaits confirmation of the information he received regarding liability matters, the Board Chair suggested that the Board table the approval of the signage for until the next meeting.

### **B. Policy 5131.81: Electronic Devices**

The Board discussed Policy 5131.81: Electronic Devices at length. Board Chair Karen Perry talked about how when she first read the proposed policy, she thought of exclusively in terms of how it would impact the high school, not realizing how it might impact the middle and elementary schools. Upon further consideration, she said she felt some concerns about how this policy might impact younger students and their parents, such as by undermining parents’ own rules about their children’s use of technology, inappropriate use of cameras, access to inappropriate materials online, use of gaming devices at school, and the inhibition of social development which might result from students texting during lunch and at other times where students should be socializing. The Board invited input from some of the Administrators present. Haddam-Killingworth Middle School Assistant Principal, Neil English talked about the current rules in place at the Middle School, and some of the success and failures of the current policies. Both Neil English and Principal Mim Wagner agreed that with a more broad policy in place, they would still be able to create and enforce regulations which might address some of the concerns the Board has about inappropriate uses of technology. Charlie Macunas, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School talked about current student cell phone usage and he talked about

*one incident where students' possession of cell phones actually assisted in communicating a critical transportation issue with parents which would have otherwise not been possible under the time constraints the school faced. He also talked about how current free smartphone applications could easily replace an expensive educational tool that teachers like to use in the classroom. The Board discussed further researching policies in other districts and consulting other sources to better inform their decision on the policy.*

## **Adjournment**

*Board Chair Karen Perry called for the meeting to adjourn at 8:56 PM.*

*Respectfully submitted,*



Larissa B. Johnson  
Board Clerk

Approval:  Date: 9/4/2012  
Susan Dean, Secretary