

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2020 – 6 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Ms. Lisa Fragale (C), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Superintendent Dr. Judith Palmer, Director of Finance & Operations Mr. James Gaskins, High School Principal Mr. Gary Franklin, Middle School Principal Mr. Fran Amara, Student Representatives Mr. Xavier Langendoerfer, and Ms. Alexa Carroll

ABSENT: Ms. Duran (B).

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Sexton Read called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

PUBLIC PORTION: Questions and comments from the Public can be sent to the following email address: publicinput@nwr7.org

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Fragale, to **APPROVE** Board of Education Minutes of November 11, 2020, as presented. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: Mr. Gauthier. **MOTION PASSED.**

REPORTS

STUDENT REPORTS

Mr. Langendoerfer and Ms. Carroll provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: Distance Learning experiences and smooth transition due to teacher supports with increased dialog, zoom working well and much more organized than last year. Daily schedules help to keep on track and it's nice to still have interaction with classmates and friends. Some students feeling overwhelmed and anxious and there has been regression in winter sports, however, overall both representatives expressed gratitude for very supportive teacher roles and ease of transition. Questions and discussion followed, and Ms. Sexton Read thanked both for their important input and efforts, and she was happy to hear staff are so tuned in to their students. Additionally, Ms. Sexton Read feels confident that total remote learning will not be for the balance of the school year, and again thanked both student representatives for the work they are doing in their roles.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Mr. Amara provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: smooth and organized transition to Distance Learning; he's very proud of the preparation of both students and staff to make this happen. Additionally, Mr. Amara advised of strategies to assist students struggling and resources available, School Counselors' work and efforts in the area of mental health, re-engaging students with attendance issues, and turkey basket efforts and Holiday Angel Program. Questions and brief discussion followed.

Mr. Franklin provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: Chromebook distribution for every student due to the State of Connecticut's initiative, virtual component for clubs and activities that will continue during the virtual learning process, academic performance tracking, turkey baskets and food pantry donations, holiday concert update with video component, and school play is recording tomorrow. Additionally, Mr. Franklin advised that the District has been very mindful of both the academic piece plus social and emotional piece in the transition to Distance Learning, and he is very encouraged with the organization and preparedness of teachers and students. SAT and PSAT data is being reviewed with additional information to follow. Questions and discussion followed pertaining to block schedule and expectations for screen engagement, and both Xavier and Alexa shared their current experiences.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Palmer began her presentation thanking and expressing sincere appreciation and gratitude for the work and efforts that teachers, students, administration, nurses, support staff, custodians, athletic director, IT, Shared Services, and school community families put forth for a smooth and successful transition to all Distance Learning. She presented an outline of COVID-19 cases and effects within the school community, and with the assistance of both Mr. Franklin and Mr. Amara, provided a summary of the contact tracing process, positivity rates, differences between every case, importance of completing the work quickly and well, and difficult decision making process with the guidance of state and area health departments on our ability to transition back to the Hybrid Learning Model. Dr. Palmer is grateful for the flexibility of being able to transition between models, and will provide an update by the end of this week upon further assessment.

Dr. Palmer commended IT Director, Chris Fray, along with Administrative Assistant staff members for their handling of potential overheating problem with distributed Chromebooks and replacements.

Ms. Sexton Read noted that the responsibility for contact tracing within our school, in addition to nursing staff, is falling on administrative staff and the reality of what that looks like in addition to their already full time position responsibilities. Dr. Palmer thanked Ms. Sexton Read for her understanding and insight, and again advised that everyone is doing their best and she is grateful and confident we will get through this making sure that families stay well and safe. Ms. Kenneson thanked administration, teachers, and staff for their difficult work and dedication.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Mr. Gaskins provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: current year, 2020-2021 budget and additional Coronavirus Relief Funds, 2019-2020 audit process update, 2021-2022 budget preparation and anticipated offset with stable enrollment, facility update pertaining to duct cleaning, walk-in cooler/freezer, AgEd generator schedule, tent update, facility cleaning and sanitation commending custodial staff for their diligence, work, and flexibility, and food services' continued initiative to offer food for all students in need regardless of current learning model. Questions and brief discussion and clarification followed.

OLD BUSINESS

UPDATES

Ms. Sexton Read advised of very generous gift to our Music Department from the Estate of Russell J. O'Connor, Jr., in the amount of \$10,000, bequest in support of the Band Program for supplies, band instruments, and music lessons for deserving students. Dr. Palmer has begun working with Mr. Lesieur, Music Department Chairperson, in support of these funds, and is extremely grateful and appreciative of this bequest.

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Crone, to **ACCEPT** with pleasure, gratitude and appreciation the Bequest from the Estate of Russell J. O'Connor, Jr., to be used in support of the Band Program and deserving students. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Palmer presented the 2021-2022 School Calendar for Board approval. Questions and brief discussion followed.

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Fragale, to **APPROVE** the 2021-2022 School Calendar as presented. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: Mr. Gauthier. **MOTION PASSED.**

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

Dr. Palmer, once again, gave thanks, gratitude and appreciation for IT Director, Mr. Chris Fray, and his outstanding work and efforts during this critical time. Ms. Sexton wished everyone a safe and healthy holiday season.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Gauthier, seconded by Ms. Kenneson, to **ADJOURN** at 7:24 p.m. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa H. D'Aprile
Board Clerk

Next Board of Education Meeting: January 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m. – location to be determined (in-person/virtual).