

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2021 – 6 p.m.
Newbury Library Media Center/Virtual
(Revised and APPROVED 02/10/21)

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Mary Duran (B), 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, Assistant Principal Mr. Andrew Bakulski, Student Representatives Mr. Xavier Langendoerfer, and Ms. Alexa Carroll

ABSENT: Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH)

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Sexton Read called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

PUBLIC PORTION: Ms. Kelly O’Dell Longhi, and Ms. Laura Martin, New Hartford residents, respectfully and sincerely expressed concerns pertaining to student remote/hybrid learning, requesting that the Board of Education provide clear information regarding when/if students will be returning to full in-person learning. Ms. Sexton Read, Dr. Palmer, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Amara, and Mr. Bakulski thanked and expressed appreciation to them both for coming to the Board of Education meeting and sharing their thoughts and concerns, and provided information on positivity guidelines, distancing guidelines, contact tracing, and the challenges of keeping all students and staff members safe with the goal of getting back to full in-person learning as soon as safely possible. It is a very difficult situation, and administration is constantly and continually reevaluating the circumstances; at this time, unfortunately, unable to provide a definite date for the return to full in-person learning. Questions and discussion followed, and both Dr. Palmer and Ms. Sexton Read emphasized that a reduction of positivity rate in the four member towns would create an environment to bring students back to full in-person learning as soon as possible. Again, Ms. Sexton Read expressed appreciation of, and thanked Ms. Longhi and Ms. Martin for coming to the Board meeting and sharing their concerns/ thoughts with Board members, and provided assurance that Board of Education members along with administration and staff are doing their very best to get all students back as soon as safely possible.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Crone, to **APPROVE** Board of Education Minutes of December 9, 2020, as presented. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Fragale. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: Ms. Duran. **MOTION PASSED.**

REPORTS

STUDENT REPORTS

Mr. Langendoerfer and Ms. Carroll provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: Hybrid model of learning and appreciation of intense effort and supportive teachers, mixed opinions of remote/hybrid learning models, COVID safety measures, Wednesday schedule challenges, sport updates, and appreciation of elimination of mid-terms relieving some of the pressure and challenges. Ms. Sexton Read and Dr. Palmer thanked them both for their great reporting and sharing the student perspective.

PRINCIPALS’ REPORTS

Mr. Amara provided Board of Education updates pertaining to half-day Professional Development Plan, SEL continuing work being done, and elimination of mid-terms this year, and will join Dr. Palmer in providing a COVID update.

Mr. Franklin provided Board of Education updates pertaining to the Social Studies Department manner of handling the teaching of the difficult political landscape and opportunities presented for what can be learned from these experiences and where the country can go from here. Mr. Franklin advised of upcoming CIAC meeting for final winter sports plans, and will also join Dr. Palmer and Mr. Amara in the COVID presentation update.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Palmer began her presentation with thanks to both Xavier and Alexa for their teacher acknowledgment, and also expressed grateful appreciation for the work of the administrative team. Dr. Palmer advised she is very happy to be back in the hybrid model, and that it's great to see students.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Amara joined Dr. Palmer and provided a Board of Education update regarding COVID-19. Overview of cases, review of protocols, students in Remote Learning Model, internet stability, learning hub addressing staffing issues, student reviews, and the goal of full in-person learning and the return of all students to school as soon as safely possible. Additionally, Dr. Palmer provided updates pertaining to: vaccine availability, special education students and staff acknowledgement, additional Coronavirus Relief funding, chrome book issue update, and Agricultural Education recruitment numbers.

Questions and discussion followed with regard to different perspectives and risk tolerance within the member communities. The District is working very hard for the children, to keep everyone safe and continue to educate as best as possible, always mindful of CDC guidelines inside, and outside of school as well. Dr. Palmer advised there would not be a vaccine mandate.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Mr. Gaskins provided Board of Education updates pertaining to: benefits consortium and current cap with upcoming member meeting, addition of insurance cyber coverage, audit report with no findings or recommendations, and transfer report presentation.

MOTION by Ms. Fragale, seconded by Mr. Jerram, to **APPROVE** Transfer Report as presented. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Sexton Read thanked administrators for all that they are doing during this most difficult time.

OLD BUSINESS

Dr. Palmer provided brief update pertaining to Revised 2021-2022 School Year Calendar.

MOTION by Ms. Crone, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **APPROVE** the Revised 2021-2022 School Year Calendar. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Sexton Read advised of Draft Timeline Budget Calendar for review – advising that both Barkhamsted and New Hartford Public Budget Meetings may be held on the same night, and the calendar will be finalized when dates confirmed and with further discussion going forward.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Sexton Read advised of and acknowledged two items of correspondence received in support of all students returning to full in-person learning as soon as possible.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

MOTION by Ms. Bell, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **CANCEL** second regularly scheduled January, 2021, Board of Education meeting. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Duran, **TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION** at 7:26 p.m. for the purpose of discussion and possible action on Superintendent’s contract and performance review. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Entered into Executive Session were: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone.

Exited Executive Session at 8:40 p.m., and the following MOTION was made:

MOTION by Ms. Fragale, seconded by Ms. Bell, to **RENEW** Dr. Palmer’s contract, and **APPROVE** a three (3) percent increase for the 2021-2022 school year. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Fragale, to **ADJOURN** at 8:42 p.m. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran, 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: February 10, 2021, 6:00 p.m. – location to be determined (in-person/virtual).