

**APPROVED  
MINUTES  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
October 27, 2015**

**PLACE:**

Darien Board of Education  
Meeting Room  
7:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ms. Hagerty-Ross, Chair; Mesdames Stein, Zuro, Sullivan and McNamara; and Messrs. Dineen, Martens, Harman, and Burke (arrived at 8:26 p.m.).

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None.

**ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:**

Dr. Dan Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susie DaSilva, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services; Mr. Michael Feeney, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources.

**VISITORS:**

Approximately 25.

**CALL TO ORDER.**

Ms. Hagerty-Ross called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. She said the next Regular BOE meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Meeting Room.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT.**

Ms. Hagerty-Ross greeted everyone and acknowledged a full agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT.**

Mr. Jay Hardison, of Nearwater Lane, came forward said that he had three comments. First, he said his comments from the last meeting were not included in the minutes. He said he may have missed them but if they were not in the minutes; that's a mistake and that needed to be included in the public record.

Second, regarding his email to the entire Board, there is now a serious credibility issue not only with him, but with many other people regarding the security guard issues at the high school. At the Education Committee meeting of the RTM two or three weeks ago, five or six people told Mr. Hardison the story, but the email from the Board said that the administration could not confirm it. Now he said there are two diametrically opposed stories.

Finally, Mr. Hardison reiterated his willingness to meet and added that there was a need for an independent investigator for this stuff. Since the Board is so confident in their assertions that these things have been investigated but this could not be confirmed, then there shouldn't be any problem with meeting or bringing someone from the outside to look at this stuff. He said that the Board was probably aware that many people in town know about the stories. In one case, there was a police report that substantiates the incident completely.

Mr. Hardison concluded by saying that he thought if his comments were not included in the minutes, they should be.

Ms. Hagerty-Ross indicated that Mr. Hardison's comments had indeed been included in the minutes on page five.

Ms. Laura Keegan, 2 Barjune Road, Norwalk, CT, came forward to speak about school bullying. She then read the following statement into the record:

My name is Lori Keegan and I'm here to speak to you about school bullying.

The Legislature of the State of Connecticut amended the Connecticut State Statutes that addressed school bullying with Public Act 11-232. Our State Senate and Congress recognized that the bullying laws needed to be addressed and strengthened so they did so.

Please be reminded that Public Act 11-232, now State Statute, requires that all school employees including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians and aides receive annual training on the prevention, response, and reporting of school bullying. They must also be trained in suicide prevention.

She then displayed a small photo frame containing photographs of a teenage boy.

This is Bart Palosz. He was a 15 year old student at Greenwich High School. Bart committed suicide two years ago because he was relentlessly bullied at school. He was bullied from the time he began middle school right up to the 1st day of his sophomore year at Greenwich High School. Even after many phone calls and notes to school officials from his family, Bart's cries for help went unheard.

If this State Statute was complied with by the Greenwich Public School System, Bart would have had a better chance and would not have been subjected to the cruel bullying that lead to his suicide.

The Greenwich Public Schools failed this young man.

It is my mission and promise to the Palosz family that I will continue to raise awareness in schools about bully prevention all in memory of Bart Palosz. I'm hoping that you will recognize the importance of this subject and make it a Board of Education priority.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.**

Dr. Brenner announced that the three athletic fields were close to completion. Dr. Brenner said that both he and Dr. DaSilva had been able to watch the Middle School Quiz Bowl event. He said that there was great enthusiasm. Six teams were sent to New Jersey and the Darien teams placed well. Dr. Brenner congratulated the participants on their achievements.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

### October 13, 2015 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- \*\* MR. DINEEN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION ON OCTOBER 13, 2015.
- \*\* MR. HARMAN SECONDED.
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (SULLIVAN).

### October 13, 2015 Regular Meeting

- \*\* MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON OCTOBER 13, 2015.
- \*\* MR. HARMAN SECONDED.
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (SULLIVAN).

## BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS.

Ms. Zuro spoke about the Reiss Fund Committee that met for the first time on the October 22 and said Dr. Brenner, Dr. DaSilva and Mr. Feeney were present. The group reviewed their purpose, procedures, and fundraising timeline.

## PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS.

### A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING A SURVEY OF THE DILLER PROPERTY

Dr. Brenner asked Ms. Mary Flynn, the Recreation and Parks Commission Chairman, to come forward to speak about the Diller Property. Ms. Flynn said that the Parks and Recreation Commission had created a list of project priorities. The Commission would like to have an updated survey because the last one was done before the new high school was built. She requested that the Board allow the Parks and Recreation Commission to survey the Diller property.

- \*\* MS. MCNAMARA MOVED TO APPROVE ALLOWING THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION TO CONDUCT A LAND SURVEY ON THE DILLER PROPERTY.
- \*\* MR. DINEEN SECONDED.
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### B. CURRICULUM UPDATE - SRBI

Dr. DaSilva then presented her report and narrated a PowerPoint presentation. (File #2413)

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Looking at Tier 3, where would the student go from there? And how long should the student be in that Tier?** (Dr. DaSilva said that when the staff had exhausted the options, there would be a team meeting. SRBI is not a long term program. It is meant to be short term and very structured that will support the student. Regarding how long a student should be in the program, there are guidelines for the resources, but it varies from website to website. Dr. DaSilva said that she suggests to parents not to base their work on length of time in the program. She then gave an example of two students who were below grade level and progressing at different rates.) b) **For a student who is in Tier 3 and the interventions prove to be successful, where do they go?** (Dr. DaSilva explained that the students

should move either up the model or down the model. The level of accountability for the teacher should never change in terms of intervention or progress monitoring. The Tier 3 student should move down the levels over time.) c) **Could you give us a brief summary of the communication protocol with the parents?** (Dr. DaSilva said when a student was entering Tier 1, the classroom teacher will call the parents. While it is fluid, the teacher needs to be specific in terms of the fact that the student is entering Tier 1, what the goal is, what the procedure is, and how the progress monitoring will be done. The teacher must also let the parent know when she/he will be in contact with the parent regarding how the student is progressing. For the students in Tier 2, the classroom teacher will also call the parent with the support of the interventionist, and this will be followed up with a letter. This is because the goal of the classroom teacher may be different than the goal of the interventionist. During the call, the teacher and interventionist will identify the goals and then follow up with a letter. The parent will be contacted again around six or eight weeks for a progress report. The same will be done for the students in Tier 3.) d) **Do each of the five elementary schools have unique intervention specialists for literacy, writing, and mathematics?** (Dr. DaSilva said that this was correct. A major goal for the District this year is to attain consistency. She reviewed the staffing expectations.) e) **Could you give us more information on what benchmarks are being used for K-5, the middle school and the high school for literacy and mathematics and how often they are being assessed?** (Dr. DaSilva said it was a fairly comprehensive list and they are normally done three times a year. Soon we will add the AIMSWEB universal screener. This also helps with assessing the data points for any given student who may be struggling and need to be moved into a different tier. There are also informal assessments done along with other assessments, such as the DRA.) f) **Regarding Tier 3, you mentioned that the interventionists would be trained. Will the Special Education staff be trained as well?** (Dr. DaSilva said that the administration would like to grow the capacity of their Special Education staff and interventions. The SESS interventionists have been invited to the meetings so they can hear what is being done in regular education and the type of programs being done. They are a part of the conversations and will continue to be a part of those conversations.) g) **My question is about the early years when it is new for everyone. How will the staff determine the average number of SRBI students in each class?** (Dr. DaSilva briefly explained how she was doing it with her former colleagues and how they tried to balance it. At the Tier 1 level, it is too fluid, but at Tier 2 and Tier 3, the placement is important because of the additional tracking that a teacher would need to do throughout the school year.) h) **Do we have any kind of guidelines and the numbers of students involved from other districts about what the percentages were?** (Dr. DaSilva said she has access to what her experience was, but did not think that she would have access to information from other districts. Once the benchmarks are identified, the students are either meeting the benchmarks or missing them, then the staff decides whether any given student should receive additional support and what kind of support. The student's best placement is in their own classroom.) i) **For those children who are above the norm and in an accelerated class, would they ever be eligible for interventions at Tier 1?** (Dr. DaSilva said that the staff would be looking at the grade level benchmarks and the intervention is designed for below grade level support.) j) **Do you have a timeline for the data warehouse?** (Dr. DaSilva explained that the administration was looking at three different companies with different strengths and weaknesses. We will continue to use the tracking form designed here in Darien that is very comprehensive. There are some logistical issues but we will continue to use it until we have a digital warehouse created and can look at an individual student across time.) k) **With the implementation of the universal benchmarks that will roll out in January, are they like an SBAC or just like a routine part of the school day?** (The universal screeners are designed not to take a long time. They are designed to identify who may be at risk. There are many reasons why that assessment can be used alone. It gives the staff a sense of how the student is performing across the nation and in Darien.) l) **Do you plan on giving the information back to parents?** (No, it is not intended to compare children against one another. It's not provided in that kind of way. It is not diagnostic or identify areas that the staff that needs to address.) m) **Is there any consistency on how to share these probes with the elementary school parents? Would it be something that would be across the board?** (Probably the biggest

goal for the district is to create consistency across the five elementary schools. Communication will be another part of the Professional Development on November 3rd. That will allow the parents to walk away feeling comfortable with what the teacher has shared. It will support the goals that the teacher is working on with the student and allow it to be supported at home.) n) **SRBI has been in our District for eight years, but has not been consistently delivered. The issue is how we are going to make sure that the Board and the parents are receiving feedback and that the intervention is happening on the school level. In the past, we were receiving updates periodically. We just need to make sure that our parents are receiving communication from all the schools that there are benchmarks that can be shared and the program is underway.** *Mr. Burke joined the meeting at 8:26 p.m.* (Dr. DaSilva said that there were many good things that have been happening with SRBI during the last 8 years. The momentum is there and the teams are excited. Dr. DaSilva said that she had been involved in a number of calls and meetings with staff about RTI issues. Dr. Brenner pointed out that Dr. DaSilva has experience in using SRBI and the District is benefiting from her abilities.)

### **C. PRESENTATION OF STUDENT DISTRIBUTION (CLASS SIZE) REPORTS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLESEX MIDDLE SCHOOL. (FILE # 2414)**

Dr. Brenner said that he would take questions as he displayed the PowerPoint slides.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **There are four classes in that group. Two were significantly under 25 and two were over 25? Can this be evened out?** (Dr. Brenner said this was because the administration needed to balance this against the students' other classes. Some of the students did not want to move into different classes because they liked their teachers and classes.) b) **In the summer, when the scheduling is being done, there are two classes of 25 and then two classes, one with 12 and another 17, was this balanced out?** (Dr. Brenner explained that when it is broken down, it always coming down to the electives. It would be wonderful to balance it, but would have to be done by half point. Dr. Brenner said that the administration could take a look.) c) **To what extent is the scheduling affected by the facilities?** (Dr. Brenner said that the scheduling is right up against the facility capacity.) d) **Based on the past experience, do you have a comment on the teacher class loads?** (Dr. Brenner said that the teachers were pleased with the load. Teachers in the District have the opportunity to work favorably with their students because of the smaller class sizes.) e) **English always seems to historically have the larger class sizes of over 24. The jump in English from middle school to high school needs to be reviewed. I'm wondering about the role of the larger English classes in middle school?** (Dr. Brenner said that he hadn't studied that question. He said that Dr. Boccanfuso would most likely be able to comment about the middle school. Dr. Boccanfuso said that it was a function of the team structure.) f) **The overall trend in enrollment is moving up. In the past the Board had told the middle school that if they needed additional staff to let the Board know because the Board would like to see the same things that happened in the high school happen in the middle school.** (Dr. Boccanfuso pointed out that often there are additional students that arrive in September. If there is a problem in math, the team tries to address it as quickly as possible, but sometimes the student does not want to leave his/her team. While the larger classes happen, the middle school administration tries their best to keep the classes small. After the math test results are known, the administration tweaks the schedules as much as possible.) g) **So we couldn't just add an English teacher?** (Dr. Boccanfuso said that was correct. An additional English teacher would require the rest of the instructional team members to be added.) h) **I think this conversation is linked to the facilities discussion in terms of space. When I look at our class size policy, I still don't understand the differences between optimal and recommended and the breakpoint.** (Dr. Brenner said that the last time the issue of optimal, recommended and breakpoint was reviewed was in 1987. The administration could review that if the Board would like them to do so.) i) **Yes.** j) **I am concerned about the class sizes when it comes to 24. Is the team structure optimal? Are we trying to force a round peg into a square hole? Should we focus on**

**that first rather than the team structure?** (Dr. Brenner said that he had not begun to have this conversation with others yet. It is something that he would entertain. There are different types of team structures. Often the move to this type of middle school model is because there is recognition of how chaotic that period is developmentally for students. Having the same team members working with the student is very beneficial. There are different ways to implement the team and that can be reviewed. If the desire of the Board is to have class sizes under 24 at the middle school, then it is the administration's obligation to do this.)

**D. PRESENTATION OF OCTOBER 1ST DISTRICT ENROLLMENT REPORT AND PROJECTIONS AND SPACE UTILIZATION INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATION. (FILE #s 2415 AND 2416)**

Mr. Feeney then presented a summary of the Enrollment package. He said that the table of Contents and Executive Summary were inadvertently left out of the scanning. He added that there had been an additional error in regards to the figures for the Heights.

Board questions and comments and responses: a) **How close were the enrollments to the actual enrollments for the Heights?** (Mr. Feeney said he did not remember. Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that there were 25.) b) **We're tracking the new build at Kensett?** (Yes.) c) **How built out is it?** (Mr. Feeney said he believed that all the units were built but not all rented.) d) **However, the developer is coming back to build more. We need to watch that.** (Yes.) e) **It looks like the correlation between the number of the births in Darien and the actual kindergarten enrollment has widened during the last five years.** (Mr. Feeney agreed that this has been an issue during the last few years and noted that it had been the biggest challenge in terms of kindergarten enrollment.) f) **Have you taken into account the redevelopment of the Noroton Heights area? Do we have any insight into this?** (Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that a presentation had not been done on this yet.) g) **Do they need to hear from us in terms of the effect of a new development?** (Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that the Board had done this with the Kensett, which was supposed to be age restricted. Dr. Brenner will be meeting with Planning and Zoning. She said that the developer will tell the Board that there will not be a major influx of children because the apartments are smaller and there will not be more students coming into the District. Discussion followed including a suggestion that the developer be required to construct a new elementary school along with the housing units.) h) **We should have a fairly good history of what the developers say and what they actually build. We should have that analyzed before we see the plans. The Heights is restricted by the State in terms of how many children can be in the development. Kensett is not and I can't imagine that there won't be more students coming into the District. This is the earliest that we as a Board have been aware of the developments. It's important to note that none of those projections or thoughts has been factored into this because the Board has no data.** (Dr. Brenner said that he had spoken to the Town Planner and Planning and Zoning to inform them of the realities of the facilities. When the Milone & MacBroom study is completed, it will give the Board a better picture of the situation. He said that he anticipated meeting with Milone and MacBroom in November.) i) **The elementary enrollment is decreasing, but the middle school and the high school are increasing. Is this the bubble moving through?** (Yes.)

Mr. Feeney said that the Space Utilization would tie in to the enrollment.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Is it the opinion of the administration that the current status is optimal?** (Dr. Brenner said that currently the buildings can handle the number of students. In terms of space utilization, based on the current enrollment, the buildings are adequate for this year and next year.) b) **The high school cafeteria has been declining for the last five years. There have been some additional spaces provided for the students. At what point do we make substantial changes so the students can eat in a timely fashion?** (Dr. Brenner said that he knew that this area would be addressed by

Milone and MacBroom regarding space utilization and they would provide a better answer in regard to the cafeteria. He said that he expected them to come to the Board with potential solutions. They have clearly identified that issue.) c) **Right now we have ELP in three schools. Is the plan to put it back into two schools next year?** (Dr. Brenner said that there was not enough space to put the ELP program back into two schools next year.) d) **What kind of feedback are you receiving with Milone and MacBroom in terms of the high school in terms of seating and tables?** (Dr. Brenner said that he eats there at least once a week and depending on the cycle, there are days when the seats are at a premium. The weather is also a factor, since there is seating outside. There is only limited space. The fact that the area is tiered with concrete walls also reduces the flexibility. However, the students are so great, there hasn't been a problem.) e) **Could you comment on the Special Education enrollment?** (Dr. Brenner then reviewed the enrollments for the Special Education students. There has been a trend from 2011 in the low 600s that dropped down into the 500s but now the trend is moving back up over 600. He said that he would review these figures more thoroughly.) f) **I keep hearing about universal Pre-K. Is it mandated? Will that affect Darien?** (Dr. DaSilva said that the program was for urban areas and priority school districts.)

#### **E. FURTHER REVIEW OF PROPOSED 2016-2017 BUDGET CALENDAR. (FILE #2417)**

Dr. Brenner said that the original calendar was a bit disjointed. He mentioned that he had been involved in day long meetings that took place on Saturday that were very productive.

Board questions and comments and responses: a) **When the Board works on the budget at night, there are questions that are raised and Mr. Feeney has some time to research the answers before the next meeting. If it was done all on one day, would it be possible to get that follow up information?** (Dr. Brenner said that it would because after the full day meeting, the questions would be researched and then the answers would be presented at the regular Board meeting as a discussion item. He added that he had done the budget in a similar manner to what the Board has done in the past, but it was easy to get lost in the details of which meeting covered what subjects.) b) **I've been part of an administrative all day budget process and there is a continuity that does occur. Whichever model we chose, CDSP needs to be available.** (Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that CDSP had already weighed in.) c) **Good, because they are a critical part of the budget process.** (Ms. Hagerty-Ross assured the Board that the Board would never make a decision without their input along with the parents. CDSP has been pro-active about this.) d) **I'm in favor of it for a variety of reasons because the Town has done it in terms of what each department has accomplished. It works well. Weather wise, it's a lot to ask for administrative staff to get here two or three nights a week during the wrong time of year. Finally, I am always interested in trying something different. If it doesn't work, then we go back to the old method.**

Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that the Special Education annual update would be moved to December 8th. She then read the following statement from CDSP email from stating that the representatives would be available on the 23rd.

In preparation for tonight's discussion about the three alternative budget schedules, we appreciate that you will schedule the budget meetings according to what works best for the Board and the Administration. However, we thought you might like to know that we have polled the PTOs for their availability on Sat the 23rd. All relevant CDSP leadership can attend any of the proposed meetings. All schools can send at least one rep. of four (two PTO chairs, two budget reps), but most can send more than that. The two schools with only one rep currently are able to attend and likely can make accommodations by asking additional PTO resources (e.g. vice chairs). We heard both excitement about

the prospect of a new discussion model and concern about attendance at a Saturday meeting. No one was overwhelmingly against trying the Saturday model. Many of PTOs were excited about the prospect of having the BoF and RTM committees in the room at the same time.

Ms. Hagerty-Ross said her biggest concern was the Administration's ability to answer our follow up questions. Dr. Brenner said that the Administration will explore having the meeting on the 9th and come back to the board.

#### **F. DISCUSSION OF 2016-2017 CONSOLIDATED GRANT. (FILE #2418)**

Dr. DaSilva then presented her report regarding the grant to the Board members. Tokeneke and Hindley were not eligible for the grant funding this year.

Board question and Administration's responses: a) **How did this compare to last year's numbers?** (Dr. DaSilva said that last year's number was actually higher than this year by approximately \$20,000. Dr. Brenner said that this was money that the State granted to the District. Dr. DaSilva said that they did actually collaborate with the State staff on this. The District was as pro-active as possible.)

#### **G. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON REVISION TO THE TEACHER EVALUATION PLAN.**

Dr. Brenner said that last year the Board approved a Teacher Evaluation plan that was submitted to the State. However, some of those who were involved feel that the information that was sent to the State was different from what was agreed upon. This may have been because of the changes in the administration. Dr. Brenner then gave an overview of the two key items where there were questions. He reviewed the details with the Board.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **What would the focus groups look like?** (Dr. Brenner said that it would be important to have structured groups and would most likely run one himself. It is important to structure them consistently and to reach a wide range of parents.) b) **But how would it be done in terms of quantity?** (Dr. Brenner said that he thought there could be about seven, but there could be more. He said that he would have to spend time and think about how to reach a cross section of parents from the various buildings.) c) **So this is not State formalized?** (Dr. DaSilva explained that the State does require the IGE but the District created their own form.)

**\*\* MS. SULLIVAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVISION TO THE TEACHER EVALUATION PLAN.**

**\*\* MS. MCNAMARA SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **PERSONNEL ITEMS. (FILE #2419)**

##### **Teacher/Administrative Appointments** **Resignations**

Ms. Cion presented the list of appointments and resignations to the Board for consideration.

**\*\* MS. ZURO MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS AS PRESENTED.**

**\*\* MR. HARMAN SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT.**

Ms. Stacy Tie, of Clock Lane, noticed that the budget calendar does not have ELP RC 26 listed. Also, regarding the enrollment, at the March 25th meeting, it was stated that the ELP would be totaling 10 classrooms in the next five years. This also means there will be two more coming in the next five years, which was not in the report. Finally, the Locust Hill Settlers development was not included on the Milone & MacBroom report. It is supposed to be age restricted, but should be added anyway.

**ADJOURNMENT.**

**\*\* MS. MCNAMARA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MR. HARMAN SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro  
Secretary