

**APPROVED  
MINUTES  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
June 14, 2016**

**PLACE:**

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

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Harman, Chair; Mesdames Hagerty-Ross, Zuro, Sullivan, McNamara, and Stein; Messrs. Burke, Dineen, and Martens.

**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 100.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Harman called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. The next Regular BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 28, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at the Darien Board of Education Meeting Room. Mr. Harman said that any public comment should be made except those pertaining to the lights, since there will be an option for that later.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

**Presentation of Superintendent's Citizenship Awards**

Dr. Brenner welcomed all children and families attending tonight, saying there is no better moment than the opportunity to honor students and those for doing the right thing. He has had a chance over the past couple weeks to meet with each of the students receiving the award and it makes him proud to be Superintendent.

Each Principal or Assistant Principal gave a brief introduction of their student:

Hindley School – Charlotte Ward  
Holmes School - Anastasia Zerboulis  
Ox Ridge School – Charlie Hughes  
Royle School - William Daniel  
Tokeneke School – Katie Keating  
Middlesex Middle School – Skyler Bennett  
Darien High School –Armstrong Noonan & Jennifer Schrenker

Town of Darien  
Darien Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
June 14, 2016

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Harman advised there was nothing at this time.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Shelly Skoglund, Leroy Ave, CDSP Co-Chair, noted that the parents appreciate how the schools are working on communication to parents, highlighting the chain of command, facilities planning, and the one to one initiative. She wanted to address that she has been hearing excitement, confusion, and concern regarding using the escalation pathway. Families understand that schools are going through changes, but it is not always clear as to why. She asked that we continue to try and be proactive with communicating with the families of Darien.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT'D

**Stadium East Update:** Dr. Brenner updated that work is set to begin the day after graduation and it is his expectation that the work will be done quickly as they have a very short window to be ready for the fall. Dr. Brenner advised of a conservative finish date of 10/1 dependent upon the weather. They have and will be having weekly Tuesday meetings with the construction company and will keep the Board updated.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

### May 24, 2016 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- \*\* MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 24, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- \*\* MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH SEVEN IN FAVOR AND TWO ABSTENTIONS (MCNAMARA AND SULLIVAN).**

### May 24, 2016 Regular Meeting

- \*\* MR. DINEEN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 24, 2016 REGULAR MEETING.**
- \*\* MR. BURKE SECONDED.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH SEVEN IN FAVOR AND TWO ABSTENTIONS (MCNAMARA AND SULLIVAN).**

## BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Sullivan advised that the Facilities Committee met and reviewed the master plan, coming up with several action items. Much work will be done over the summer including creating a Building Condition Report.

## PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

### A. PRESENTATION: REPORT ON HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES AND AWARDS; PROFILE ON HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2016 (File #2511)

Mr. Ribeiro presented a PowerPoint presentation, showing comparison data of this senior class with those of past years. He discussed several statistics including college admissions, trends, and the percentage going early decision.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **To what degree is the current Test Optional movement having any impact?** (Mr. Ribeiro advised yes, more schools are going to test optional and more kids are considering applying to those schools. He advised the student can still take the test and send it into Test Optional Schools. But if a student doesn't test well, he/she now won't be hurt by not being good test takers.) b) **Is there a way to track those students who are undecided, to see what their ultimate decision was?** (Yes, the data does move a little bit after we get the data through the first year of college.) c) **Is it possible going forward if we can be shown data of completed applications versus incomplete?** (Yes.) d) **Two years ago there was a problem with the new Common Application because of an interface change, is this process as seamless as you would like? Specifically with the number of guidance counselors and all the recommendations they need to write – how do we help you with this?** (Mr. Ribeiro advised, yes, when we review the data, we are comparable. We would love it if it could be lower, but that is wishful thinking.) e) **Apart from these issues, we are clear sailing?** (Yes, but there is a new application coming up next year, the Coalition Application. We are trying to familiarize ourselves now so we can trouble shoot, but Colleges are also very accommodating to new systems, extending deadlines if needed.) f) **Athletics: can we have some information for students going early decision. The numbers are starting to be skewed. This particular class is a very athletic, so early decision numbers are higher.** (Dr. Brenner advised what the guidance office doesn't get is which athlete has been slotted. He then gave an example of being slotted by using the Early Decision system. He also noted they have to be careful when giving information that they do not identify students in process.)

Mr. Harman thanked Mr. Ribeiro for his presentation.

## **B. FOLLOW UP REPORT ON SENIOR INTERNSHIP PROJECT AT DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL**

Mrs. Dunn came forward to present a PowerPoint presentation (File #2512) on the Senior Internship Project. She then introduced DHS teacher, Mr. Francis Janosco and thanked him for his tireless work. The program has grown exponentially.

Mr. Janosco spoke about the Internship Program. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year of program and the 1<sup>st</sup> year the entire senior class participated in program. 324 seniors completed work at 213 sites. He addressed that last year he was asked to draft and send a thank you letter to last year's sites and they will do so again this year. Mr. Janosco produced a packet to give guidance of the program to all sites and created an independent study project for those not participating in the Internship Program. He then introduced Ms. Nancy Sheed, Jacob Levy and Paige Adams.

Ms. Sheed is a small business owner completing her second year participating in the internship program. She has only had motivated, eager and happy students and stressed what a positive experience it has been for her. Her interns have done a myriad of projects and she was happy to take them to client meetings, do research and any other task she needed. She noted if the students she had were a representation of the future work force, she was very happy about that.

Jacob Levy, student, spoke to his work at a local string instrument shop. He noted how interesting his time was there, sanding, polishing and doing minor touch ups to instruments ranging from \$3,000 in value up to over \$20,000.

Paige Adams spoke to her time at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer center in Harrison. Her experience was more educational than work. She advised it was hard to get permission for the internship due to its sensitive nature but once received, given an id badge, lab coat and sent right in to work amongst physicians. She scrubbed into surgical procedures, used an ultrasound machine, molded a radiation mask and was even acting assistant on a bone marrow biopsy. Paige said what an amazing experience this was and she was offered two undergrad research positions.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **As the program has grown, are the students finding the employers themselves? Will the employers continue taking interns years in a row?** (Mr. Janosco advised in the beginning, the school had their hand on finding sites, but now we depend on students to do that work. They are given a list of past 2 years' sites and have ongoing relationships with employers, but do depend on seniors finding new sites.) b) **What are ideas to take this to the next level?** (Mr. Janosco noted if he were in control, he would move towards offering multiple options, better than having the standalone internship only. The Internship Program is a great fit for about 80% of the students, but he does think that they can develop alternatives for more choices in the future for those opting out.)

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Albertus VanDenbroek, Linda Lane, noted he has always been a supporter of sports: coaching in the past and also contributed to the turf field. He has two granddaughters on the field hockey team and sports matter in his family. He is here to support the light installation, but Darien is unique in regards to the location of the high school. It is in the middle of a residential neighborhood and safeguards need to be put in place. He is confident that the Board, with review to the light project, will come to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Lenis Koontz, Middlesex Rd., has lived in Darien since May 1988. He commented on how refreshing it is to be around such bright and enthusiastic people in the Board meeting today. He presented and walked through a PowerPoint (File #2513) provided. The first four slides focused on who can use the stadium lights, when they can be used, and when they are off, and how many night games are scheduled. He is concerned about the immediate neighbors and beyond that, the games played between two teams from different towns. He is under the impression this is not required, as Greenwich and Westport do not permit outside teams to play on their field. Mr. Koontz also is concerned about the cutoff of 7 p.m. and asks if it is necessary and desirable to keep young out on the field past this time? His next 4 slides request the board engage a sound and light engineer to ensure nuisance is minimized using latest technology. Also, when the plans for DHS were originally created, there were trees in the diagram surrounding the school. He asks that this be included in the current light project. He noted the parking and trash problem after big events and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak

Ms. Janice Lockhart, High School Lane, has lived in Darien for 20 years. She is concerned about after games and the problems with liquor and drugs. She asks that the Police patrol the area and the cars that are left behind. She is also concerned about the environment in regards to the trash.

Ms. Tiernan Cavanna, Old Farm Road, has three boys and fully supports the light installation.

Ms. Robin Nelson, Arrowhead Way, advised she and her husband both grew up with stadium lights and thinks it is important to offer a safe social activity. She has three kids all involved in field sports and hope they can enjoy this in the future.

Ms. Stephanie O'Malley, Circle Road, said she is in favor of the lights. She thinks it creates a wonderful spirit for the community and safer in practice. She also brought up that some of the youth leagues are coached by dads who can only be home at a certain time to make practice.

Mr. Dan Kearney, Leroy Ave, moved to Darien because it is a lovely residential area. He wants the Board to keep in mind this is a residential town. Living near the school, he likens it to being a trash keeper. He picks up trash every morning after a game and noted that many of the people in favor of the lights, do not live near them.

Ms. Maggie Cellar, Old Farm Road, lives across from Tokeneke School. She thinks everything the town does is spot on. She noted it was a valid point living across from the school, but has not had a problem.

### **C. FURTHER DISCUSSION ON STADIUM LIGHTS AT DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL**

Dr. Brenner started with his intentions of framing the conversation with a video, then would answer any questions they had. Dr. Brenner then presented a video showing the technology used on a University's field lights. Dr. Brenner shared a graph of sound levels and advised if the speakers are installed correctly, a proper balance can be found. The experience will be different to what is happening now. Dr. Brenner thinks the Board needs to have conversation around 3 areas: 1) The time cutoff of 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. 2) the landing strip effect and its significance, and 3) allowing non DHS teams to play on the field.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **On the issue of time, 7:00 p.m. versus 8:00 p.m., it's important to be a good neighbor, but to the parents' point, coaches for the DJFL are working fathers who rush home from their jobs to coach. If the practice is extended, it would give them more time to come home and get to the field. Believes that as use goes on, an intelligent decision can then be made. We don't want to lock ourselves into something that cannot be adjusted.** b) **There could be a way to compromise. Perhaps lights out at 7:00 p.m. on Monday and Tuesdays, then 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday and work up to 8:00 p.m. by the weekend. Also we need a way to gauge if it is a hard stop at 7:00 p.m. as there are sure to be growing pains. 8:00 p.m. for five nights in a row is a lot of playing time.** c) **Clarifying questions – the temporary lights expire in 2017. Part of the discussion needs to be if the kids playing at town hall would then be moving to the high school field.** d) **There is also a traffic issue. We cannot have kids coming from town hall moving over to the high school. There needs to be a separation. Think we need to know more about DJFL's plan to use the lights.** (Dr. Brenner advised he was here tonight to provide a recommendation around what would be done. He noted we do not have control of the town lights, only of our own. He said the Board could request to P&Z to be sensitive to certain concerns had, but do not have control.) e) **The temporary lights are loud, these new lights would be quiet. Perhaps 7:30 p.m. is a compromise.** f) **Working off of the package passed out, on page 8 the current proposal is for 8:00 p.m. Does this apply to Darien youth and Darien sports?** (Dr. Brenner said yes, we would be making the commitment to no later than 8:00 p.m. No games would be played unless it's a varsity game.) g) **What does "other activities" mean?** (Dr. Brenner advised this was for movement to grow in the future.) h) **Historically, looking back at DJFL – they have needed lighting. Others leagues have professional coaches, we should pay attention to the notion of creating time for them to finish practice.** i) **We also need to be mindful if we have a wet fall, then have one day of beautiful weather, there will be a back-up of people who want to practice.** j) **It all comes down to scheduling. What time does the high school get off fields and does it leave enough time?** (Dr. Brenner said part of this is a work in progress because we have the ability to have games into daylight savings time, but it is unclear how it will turn out. Regarding traffic, there will only be 2 days of increased traffic. No other sport draws such a crowd to the stadium; we do not have this problem with field hockey or soccer. What I'm looking for is an ok to move forward with the lights. Dr. Brenner advised the next steps would be to fill out an application and adhere to parameters set. The

decision of when to turn off the lights is a Board decision.) k) **Let's use the example of 7:30 p.m. as a recommendation, can we then have someone take a look to see if that would actually work with the programs?** (Dr. Brenner said there are a few variables involved.) l) **Isn't it the logical thing to do to create an application that gives most flexibility and that works best for neighborhood, teams etc.? Could we then ask neighbors to trust our judgment and not have a hard cutoff? We could get authority for 8:00 p.m. but have an internal policy for 7:00 p.m. If we go to P&Z and set something, it would be hard to change.** m) **Let's go for 8:00 p.m. with the understanding that we are not looking to reach that every night.** n) **In analysis of the football schedule, do they even need 8PM? Is that what other towns are doing?** (Dr. Brenner advised that this is not a High School Football issue. It is a youth team issue. The Varsity team still gets priority.) o) **Could Town Hall push back?** (Dr. Brenner said no, not unless they get a variance. It's not one we control.) p) **I think that before we go ahead and make a decision, we should reach out to DJFL to see if there is a true need for 8:00 p.m.** q) **I think it's important that the board knows what they are voting on and not a guess. I would like to see a schedule – what does it look like. I don't think its right to put a P&Z application in without knowing what the schedule is.** r) **Are we also assuming that scheduling of the activities will not change in consecutive years?** (Dr. Brenner said he can make a mock schedule, the issue would be the days when they have games – when they are the fields beyond what they currently use it for, that's where the DJFL is going to take the hit. Realistically, if 8:00 p.m. is in there, the pressure to use the field, if you have 8:00 p.m. would be extraordinary and a policy needs to be built to remedy this.) s) **I think a point needs to be made to understand the schedule before a decision is made. Neighbors are giving up a lot and I want to resist our temptation to do the easiest thing, one way or the other.** t) **If we go down the path of 8:00 p.m. and the temporary lights expire, is then the town off the hook for providing temporary lights? This is a wild card.** (Dr. Brenner said that it is no longer a requirement to host FCIACS, saying that it's not ideal to host when our kids are not in the final.) u) **On page 7, where it says unchanged since 2008 – can we take out “..series”** (Yes.) v) **Other points are the screening and landing strip issue.** (Dr. Brenner advised there is a solution for that, but it comes with an expense. We would have to take a step back and ask where they are being placed. The property line is wetland so that is an issue also. These all come with an associated cost.) w) **I don't think there is space now to plant trees.** (Dr. Brenner said that P&Z could technically have you plant, but engineering needs to look into this.) x) **What about outside: parking, police, trash...** (Dr. Brenner assured the Board they are in constant contact with Police and are confident they are managing the traffic issue and are very conscious of what is scheduled on the property, as it applies to maintenance folks after games. We should not wait until wind pushes away trash that belongs to us. I will come back with a mock schedule, engineer information and we can look to possibly putting it on a future agenda with an action item.) y) **Also reach out to DJFL.**

#### **D. UPDATE ON TOWN GARAGE AND IMPACT ON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Mr. Michael Lynch advised they were happy with the plans to move forward with the town garage.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Is there any need to revote on Ed specs?** (Mr. Lynch said no, the specs were a planning tool and there is no reason to adjust.) b) **So from a square footage standpoint, you are getting more space?** (Mr. Lynch said yes.) c) **Is there any meaningful change with extra space?** d) **When they agreed to move to Renshaw Road, it was agreed that charges were not supposed to go up.** (Mr. Lynch confirmed that even though utilities have gone up, they actually pay less now than in 2011 and 2012.) e) **Could you please summarize the construction timeline?** (Mr. Lynch advised that the timeline is not finalized. The Architect was just hired and has been authorized to draw up blueprints.)

#### **E. PRESENTATION AND ACTION ON REVISED TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS**

Ms. Cion and Dr. Da Silva presented a PowerPoint (File #2514) detailing the Mid-Year Conference, defining the mini observation pilot, detailing the CT rubric for effective service delivery in 2015, and presenting a corrective assistance plan for non-tenured teachers.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **We have seen what is involved in this process for years now, how do we know its working? How do we know we are seeing improvement?** (Dr. Brenner stated that the system is only as good as the evaluators. Sometimes we fall back on the instrument when it is the training you need to be looking at. The goal here is to make sure we are compliant with the State, but doing everything we can.) b) **What are the metrics or recording that goes into this?** (Dr. Da Silva said there is a rubric that is used to calculate a number of different scores. There is also the administrative judgment, which is reported to the state and informal observations and walk-throughs. Dr. Brenner suggests what is done in Darien is not done in Greenwich and New Canaan – but expectations are the same.) c) **If we look at the graph, "Great, needs improvement..." at the end of day, what contractual agreement is there?** (Dr. Da Silva commented that if get multiple "needs improvements", the system leaves room for action to be taken.) d) **The document states that the mini observation pilot is voluntary, why?** (Dr. Da Silva replied because it is a pilot. The goal this year was to allow the opportunity to push the teachers to grow, but also be conscious that is something new and not done in district before. Per Dr. Da Silva's experience in other districts, teachers are willing to do the work, so she doesn't foresee any issues.) e) **I would imagine some (teachers) are enthused and some don't want anywhere near them. How long until the pilot is turned into mandatory?** (Dr. Da Silva advised the goal is for teachers to share their enthusiasm and effectiveness of the model. They are guessing that those participating in the pilot will be excited about it.)

**\*\* MS. STEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVISED TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION PLANS.**

**\*\* MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**

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

## **F. UPDATE ON DISTRICT ENROLLMENT**

Dr. Da Silva spoke that a month ago they had reported on district enrollment, in particular the elementary school enrollment. She provided an update for the Board.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **What's the number for 5<sup>th</sup> grade?** (Dr. Brenner said 79.) b) **We have broken for those that don't reach threshold?** (Dr. Da Silva advised numbers could change either way; they are changing daily. Dr. Brenner said there is a lot of movement within the town. The good news is, as it stands now, if they didn't break then we can stay within budget.) c) **Do you have the space?** (Dr. Da Silva said, that is in question – we would be looking at computer lab. Space would be an issue, we would have to talk it through.) d) **What is the number for kindergarten?** (Dr. Da Silva said 19.) e) **And the guidelines for fourth and fifth grade?** (Dr. Da Silva replied with 21-26 is recommended, and 22-25 optimal.)

## **G. PROPOSAL TO ACCEPT THE CONTRACTS BETWEEN THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EVERSOURCE**

Mr. Feeney presented a package of the contracts (File #s2515-16) with the Board of Education and Darien High School and Eversource and Yankee Gas.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **With the provision that they can be self-insured are you comfortable with provisions?** (Mr. Feeney advised that the Town's attorney approved them as they are now. b) **With clarification on payback, is this on expected usage or minimum annual savings?** (Mr. Feeney advised it was on how much is consumed now.) c) **Does this require investment of a fuel burner in the High School?** (Mr. Feeney said yes.) d) **These are long-term contracts, are you comfortable with the obligation?** (Mr. Feeney advised they were comfortable with what was provided.)

**\*\* MS. ZURO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE CONTRACTS BETWEEN THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EVERSOURCE**  
**\*\* MR. BURKE SECONDED.**  
**\*\* THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**Personnel Items:** (File #2517)

**Appointments**  
**Resignations/Retirements**

**\*\* MS. SULLIVAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE PERSONNEL ITEMS.**  
**\*\* MR. BURKE SECONDED.**  
**\*\* THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Jill McCammon, Old Kings Highway South, would like to see some real conversation about if a child is not going to an Ivy league, then what other schools. Also, others who are not college bound, this needs to be discussed in a meaningful way. Ms. McCammon commented on the personnel report and that a change would impact ELP music program. She has seen significant changes over the last six 6 years; the ELP music program has changed to be more dynamic. Ms. McCammon also asked if in the teacher evaluation there is training of tenured teachers and does this include feedback to peers?

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. SULLIVAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**  
**\*\* MS. BURKE SECONDED.**  
**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro  
Secretary