

The regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held April 8, 2019 at the Central Office of the Board of Education, 67 Washington Avenue, Woodbury CT.

Present: Janet Morgan, Carol Ann Brown, Mike Devine, Maryanne Van Aken, George Bauer, Pam Zmek, John Chapman. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. Olzacki, Wayne McAllister, Bill Nemec, Susan Greene, Jodie Roden, Mike Rafferty, Donna Marcinek, Julie Luby, Alyce Misuraca, NHS Scholastic Art Winners with their parents, CT Voices & Republican American reporters, approximately 3 other community members and BOE clerk, Natascha Schwartz. Mr. Lampart dialed in via teleconference.

Call to Order

Ms. Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a pledge to the flag.

Ms. Van Aken motioned to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 18, 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer
The **motion carried 8-0-0**.

Ms. Van Aken motioned to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 20, 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer
The **motion carried 8-0-0**.

Ms. Van Aken motioned to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 25, 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer
The **motion carried 8-0-0**.

Ms. Van Aken motioned to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 26, 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer
The **motion carried 8-0-0**.

Ms. Van Aken motioned to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 1, 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer
The **motion carried 8-0-0**.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Desjardins was asked by Dr. Olzacki to have the NHS Scholastic Art Award Winners come forward and asked that she say a few words. Ms. Desjardins commented that the Scholastic Art Awards are done every year and that this year Connecticut changed the rules regarding the number of portfolios awarded to students in which only 13 gold keys were awarded in the entire State. NHS won 1 gold portfolio, 2 silver portfolios, numerous individual gold and silver key awards and honorable mentions as well. WMS students also participated in the Scholastic Art Award and won a silver key and 2 honorable mentions. Ms. Desjardins commented that Art at NHS has grown so much and with all of the new facilities, the region can continue growing stronger. Lastly she mentioned that NHS drama students put on the musical "Into the Woods" and many of the art students were in the play as well as helped in designing and painting the sets. She thanked the board members for letting them come as well as to the students for all of their hard work.

Ms. Morgan announced that the last day of school barring no snow will be June 21, 2019.

Board Committee Report(s)

Finance/Facilities - Mr. Bauer mentioned that during the finance meeting this evening, the committee discussed at length an important item which took up a most of the time. He advised that Barry Bernabe gave a presentation of the NHS Renovation Project payback and that there will be no change of budget for 2019-2020 calendar year. The committee discussed the options on the table and that they are looking to get more information for permanent financing. The committee also discussed NHS transfer for renovation funds which will be brought to the BOE for approval this evening.

Building - Mr. Chapman advised that the next building committee meeting will be held on April 23rd. The minutes from the previous meeting are in the BOE packets for viewing. He advised that the NHS renovation project is on schedule. He mentioned that at some point before the end of June, he would like to arrange for a presentation to the BOE by the building project team to get a full update on where the renovation stands and to have a Q& A session as the project comes closer to being finished.

Board Chair's Comments

Ms. Morgan acknowledged some important announcements:

MES has been named by the CSDE as a school of distinction. She congratulated Dr. Rafferty, Principal Roden, the Instructional Leader, teachers and staff that all of their hard work is paying off. The Board would like to set up a night to have an open house with coffee and cake and to presentation the school with a banner to commemorate this wonderful honor.

Principal Roden stated that everyone worked so hard and was a collaborative effort. This hard work has given MES the opportunity to win this award.

Mr. Morgan – team beta successful, finished 5th 1st robotics Hartford new England see Will Pease's email and add in.

Dr. Rafferty was called up to answer questions regarding the roles of the instructional leaders which were brought up at the last BOE budget workshop. He highlighted that recently they took inventory of their work this year and developed a focus for next year's work. He indicated that understanding their roles is a complicated answer. He indicated that all but two provide direct instruction to students. The two district wide instructional leaders are connected to work across all four schools. One site leaders oversee and develop the 1:1 Chromebook roll out and the other is connected to a direct focus on improving math and science across the district.

He also went to indicate that beyond working with students, they have three areas of focus in developing the capacity of the staff. He highlighted three areas:

- 1) foundational learning around using the resource or new model;
- 2) learning and improving teachers' knowledge of the content;
- 3) improving high quality instruction.

He indicated that the instructional leaders provide professional development for teachers on a daily basis. He highlighted how they have helped ensure the implementation of the region's written curriculum.

Privilege of the Floor - none

Old Business

The motion for the comprehensive School Counseling Curriculum approval was moved from new business to old business as it was already discussed during prior meetings.

Ms. Van Aken moved that the Region 14 Board of Education approve the Comprehensive School Counseling Curriculum for Elementary and High School as presented. Seconded by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Ms. Morgan requested that the motion be amended to read Elementary and Secondary School to capture the Middle School in the motion, as this curriculum is all encompassing.

Mr. Bauer moved to amend the original motion on the table to: Move that the Region 14 Board of Education approve the Comprehensive School Counseling Curriculum for Elementary and High School as presented. Seconded by Ms. Van Aken. **Motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

New Business

Ms. Van Aken moved that the Region 14 Board of Education name Saturday, June 22, 2019 as the Graduation Date for the Nonnewaug High School Class of 2019 and seconded by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Ms. Van Aken moved that the Region 14 Board of Education approve the following mandated policies supplied and revised by CABE Policy Services in addition to Pullman and Comley, having been reviewed and recommended by the Policy Committee:

- 3323 – Soliciting Prices (Bids and Quotations)
- 3326.3 – Board of Education Credit Card
- 3410 – System of Accounts
- 3435 – Fraud Prevention and Investigation

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bauer. The committee discussed the possibility of approving the policies tonight and decided to vote on them at the next BOE meeting.

Ms. Morgan requested a motion to withdraw the original motion on the table.

Ms. Van Aken moved to withdraw the original motion and seconded by Ms. Zmek. **The motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Mr. Bauer moved that the Region 14 Board of Education approve and adopt the Superintendent's proposed budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020 in the amount of \$35,256,560 as presented to the Board and seconded by Ms. Van Aken.

The board discussed the motion on the table and Mr. McAllister gave some insight as to how he was able to lower the original Superintendent's proposed amount.

Mr. Devine commented that the budget itself seems rather high. He went on to state that 2.72% represents the debt service and the region will have to go out for bonding in July. He mentioned that voters need to understand that we need to do this to get a favorable bond rating. While some may not like this amount we don't have much choice. He hopes that voters consider the whole picture when voting.

Ms. Zmek asked Mr. McAllister to give the BOE member the numbers on Special Education reduction relating to transportation and tuition. Mr. McAllister and Ms. Morgan confirmed the amount of \$54,107 is for tuition and \$13,188 is for transportation. Ms. Zmek thanked Mr. McAllister and Dr. Olzacki for negotiating the region through this difficult time.

Ms. Brown commented that the public has not faced the facts that the debt service coming even though the board has spoken about it endlessly. She went on to state that the community always seem surprised, not realizing that the amount includes the debt service. They were able to cut costs without cutting programs and it has all been done within limits with what we have. She emphasized the importance of the Library Media Specialists and that voting down the budget will cost more money and is dangerous. She would like the community to look at the budget in terms of the 2.72% being debt service which we cannot do anything about.

Mr. Bauer thanked Mr. McAllister, Dr. Olzacki, and the staff who had to roll up their sleeves to work on the budget. He believes it is a good budget to mitigate for contractual increases. He went on to mention that the capital outlay is showing the public that we are responsible by keeping the buildings maintained rather than holding out and having to incur extra costs. He went on to state that the operational increase is just over 1%, which is below the 10-year average for the district. Also the BOE members heard from both communities about the importance of the Library Media Specialist positions which helped the members prioritize to keep the positions. The biggest chunk of the budget amount is the NHS renovation project. He said that students are already feeling the great effects. He believes that despite the debt service, the BOE has a good budget to present.

Ms. Van Aken thanked Mr. McAllister for being here and for guiding the ship though the financial waters. She stated that she is struggling for the first time in 11 years, whether she would like to support this budget or not. She went on to state that she has been confused throughout the entire budget process this year. We are taking out the H.R. position which is an important position for this district and the region has been well served by this position. She's looked at the information that has been received by the BOE members over the past few days from other districts and it seems that the salary is not far off from other districts. She advised that she had asked on a few occasions for a plan for the position moving forward, and she stated that there has been no concrete plan as to what we are going to do with this important position. Was not clear and consider as had hoped. She is very concerned that there is no plan in place at the moment. She commented that perhaps it's her trying to get used to a new style of presentation this year, but if was not as clear and concise as for her as she would have hoped and doesn't feel like it tied to a long term plan. She is struggling with this and she doesn't want to hurt kids or programs and she knows that a no vote would do that, but wanted to iterate that she was not enthralled with the process this year.

Ms. Morgan thanked everyone for the work that went into the budget process this year. She advised that the renovation project puts the region in a unique position and we keep hearing how it's going to hit the debt service. She stated that she is also in a unique position in her other capacity as Fire Marshall, to see the renovation as it has been going on. She was amazed to see the new auditorium and to see all of the hard work that the building committee has done and that it will pay off in the long run. She stated that it might hit us hard in the budget process but it is important to know that the students will and are already reaping those benefits that we are paying for. We did vote to support the project, so now we have to pay for the project and that it is coming along really well. Ms. Morgan stated that she has heard Ms. Van Aken's concerns and that the team is working on it and are getting stuff in place. She stated that our HR director hasn't done a bad job, but we need to do things differently and that everyone understands that and that they do hear your concerns.

Mr. Chapman commented that he is in a quandary with budget. He believes that the process that was undertaken was not collaborative in bringing people into discussions. He doesn't believe that people get much out of presentations out of watching a video when the Superintendent is present and can speak to them directly about his command of the budget and was an opportunity lost. Not only to show the vision, mission, and goals that are sought by the Superintendent, but as the BOE takes this budget on, it needs to be clear that it becomes the BOE's budget. For the board members to say that they're not sure of things and figure them out as we go carries risk. Mr. Chapman continued by stating that he is nervous if Ms. McAllister doesn't show up in the morning. He mentioned that the region has a difficult road ahead and as hard as this year is, this is an easy year in comparison to what is coming as he sees no thought as to what the next two or three years will look like for education, programs, and staffing. The debt service is a big heavy lift and there are many good things associated with it but there will be pain to feel over several years in the budgeting process. He iterated that we need to trust each other and pull together and to take ideas from a diverse group into the budget workshops so that we make smart decisions. If we rely on one focal point that is the arbiter of all information that is given to us, then we are not operating with the best fact set. He believes that although the time which was spent was not wasted, but could have been far more productive and would feel much better with the ability of implementing the budget as it is ultimately the board's responsibility. He would like to send a clear message of support to the administration that put their hard work into this budget and to the students. His doubts are from an execution standpoint that if Mr. McAllister should not show up, is this is doable. There are certain parts of the budget that are still hanging and as a board this becomes the board's budget and he doesn't feel comfortable with that.

Mr. Chapman wanted to discuss a letter which was received by the BOE from Principal Roden asking the BOE to reconsider keeping the third 1st grade section. He felt that it wasn't properly addressed and wanted clarity. Ms. Morgan asked Dr. Olzacki if as part of the budget process, when he sat down with his administrators, was it discussed at length with his team whether to keep three 1st grade and was it a team decision, knowing that if there were more students, that we'd add the 3rd class.

Dr. Olzacki advised that it had been discussed numerous times and Mr. McAllister confirmed that. Ms. Morgan also asked Dr. Rafferty if his recommendation is to move to two classes. Dr. Rafferty answered that considering the historical legacy of class sizes, to go to two classes would be in line with what we have done with previous budgets. Ms. Morgan stated that Principal Roden did send a letter to the board members yesterday advocating that she would like to see three 1st grade classes, we did discuss it at other board workshops and had come to the realization that it wasn't feasible to have 14 students per class, from a financial standpoint. She went on to state that it also wouldn't be fair to any of the other grades who have many more students than that. Mr. Chapman wanted to clarify that he wasn't trying to open a can of worms by stating the region should go to three 1st grade classes; it was more to make sure that the board is cognizant of the request. Mr. Chapman went on to state that he thinks that the discussion they just had was very productive. Ms. Van Aken stated if over the summer, as the board has done in the past, if there is an influx of 1st grade students, the board can revisit. Ms. Morgan stated that it was reiterated at the last BOE workshop.

Lastly, Mr. Chapman commented that it would have been nice to have Mr. Molzon in the room when the discussion came up regarding the capital outlay, so that when the board members go out to the public, that they had the background and context. He stated that he feels that the context is missing from budget with the future years and around the individual items themselves which would have been beneficial to them to defend in the community.

Mr. Lampart advised that he supports the budget and that a lot of hard work went into it and he feels that it was well explained and he will support it. He reiterated other comments that the biggest amount is for the renovation project.

The motion carried 6-1-1, with Ms. Van Aken opposed and Mr. Chapman abstaining.

Mr. Bauer moved that the Board of Education schedule and warn the Annual District Meeting for Monday, May 6, 2019 at 7:00 PM at the Board of Education Room, located at 67 Washington Avenue in Woodbury, CT concerning the 2019-2020 budget, with said meeting to be adjourned to a referendum on Tuesday, May 7, 2019 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury, CT. Seconded by Ms. Zmek. **The motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Ms. Van Aken moved that the Secretary of the Board of Education is authorized, in such official's discretion, to prepare and cause to be printed and distributed explanatory text regarding the 2019-2020 budget referendum scheduled for May 7, 2019, with such explanatory text subject to the review and approval of the District's legal counsel and to be prepared and distributed in accordance with Section 9-369b of the Connecticut General Statutes. Seconded by Mr. Bauer. **The motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Ms. Morgan requested a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Van Aken moved to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. Bauer. **The motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Natascha Schwartz, BOE Clerk

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Natascha Z. Schwartz, Board Clerk, 4/18/2019