

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Region 14 Board of Education
Monday, August 2, 2021; 7:00 p.m.
Flanders Room
Mitchell Elementary School
Live Stream Available:
<https://vimeo.com/event/353466/videos/469991820/>

Present:

George Bauer
Jim Crocker
Jonathan Kapstein
Tikva Rose
Christopher Matta
David Butkus
Carol Ann Brown
Michael Devine

Absent:

N/a

Also Present:

Wayne McAllister, Acting Superintendent
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations
Patricia Paige, Board Clerk

I. Call to Order

Board Chair George Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

III. Introductions

Board members introduced themselves

IV. Approval of the Minutes

A. Regular Meeting dated Monday, June 7, 2021

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by Christopher Matta to accept/approve the minutes as presented; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

B. Special Meeting dated Monday, June 14, 2021

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by Jim Crocker to accept/approve the minutes as presented; all in favor; none opposed; David Butkus abstained; motion carried.

C. Regular Meeting dated Tuesday, July 6, 2021

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by Jim Crocker to accept/approve the minutes as presented; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

V. Acting Superintendent's Report

A. Update on new curriculum; first read

Several new curricula were brought before the board for a first read; Animal Assistant Therapy, African American/Black, Puerto Rican/Latino History and Medical Emergencies with CPR/First Aid Certification. Ms. Wendy Nelson Kauffman provided a brief synopsis of each course.

Much of the board discussions pertained to the African American/Black, Puerto Rican/Latino History; an elective, being offered beginning September 2021 and mandated effective September 2022. Students will examine how historical movements, legislation and wars affected the citizenship rights of these groups and how they both separately, and together, worked to build US cultural and economic wealth and create more just societies. The curriculum was written by the state and they will provide the resources, mostly electronic.

Ms. Carol Ann Brown, having taught in Puerto Rico, felt that the course should be integrated into the American History Curriculum where it belongs. Given the demographics of Region 14, she felt the exposure would be beneficial.

Mr. Crocker suggested taking a Saturday morning to hear what is being taught, to see if it is a fit for the district.

It is anticipated that all three courses will be brought back to the board for a vote to accept/approve, though the African American/Black, Puerto Rican/Latino History is mandated by the state.

During this commentary, a decision was made to establish an Ad hoc Curriculum Committee of the Board. Mr. Jonathan Kapstein will chair, members Michael Devine and Carol Ann Brown will partake.

B. Correspondence

The office of the Acting Superintendent recently received letters from retirees Lisa Gagain and Maria Sortito expressing their gratitude for the retirement gift sent on behalf of the Board and Superintendent. They also conveyed how fortunate they were for the opportunity to work in the Region 14 School district.

C. Personnel Report

The Personnel Report for the month of July consisted of a number of new hires and several resignations. The new hires were comprised of grant-funded positions, vacancy replacements and transfers. Mr. McAllister read into the record the names and positions for each classification.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Agenda items discussed at the Finance Committee meeting included a monthly financial summary for July and a food service update. Of note, with the retirement of cafeteria manager Peter Brooks and with the approval of the board, Region 14 will contract with EdAdvance for the 21/22 school year. The plan provides managerial oversight of the food service program and all food service staff remaining as Region 14 employees.

B. Policy Committee

A meeting of the Policy Committee was held on Tuesday, July 20th. Topics covered encompassed Tuition-in Students, Covid-19 Related Policies and a history on Chief Nonnewaug as it relates to the high school's mascot.

Gov. Ned Lamont signed a bill to legalize adult, recreational use of cannabis and with that, the district may need to tighten up policy to address this new legislation. The item was tabled for subsequent conversations.

C. Safe Schools

On Friday, July 30th, the Safe School Committee met; Officer Rich Marsh was also in attendance. Officer Marsh will provide Risk Assessment Planning and Alice Training; dates to be determined. Safe School Climate, Background Checks, and administrative representation on the committee were additional topics of discussion.

VII. Board Chair's Comments

Mr. Bauer revisited the committee assignments with board members and updated participants for the Agriscience Committee.

On June 29th the board forwarded to Dr. Olzacki and his attorney, a letter providing written notice of their reasons for considering his termination. As allowable, Dr. Olzacki has requested a hearing before the board. That is expected to take place in mid to late August.

Mr. Bauer provided a response to a previous Privilege of the Floor comment regarding the evaluation and hiring process for the position of Superintendent.

VIII. Privilege of the Floor

Kathy Lopez Perry

Ms. Perry has three special needs children in the district. She spoke to mask mandates, that they should be a parent's choice. She asked that the Board not believe what the state is doing regarding CRT or Critical Race Theory. She doesn't want to be segregated. Her concern is what is being taught to her children about her heritage. Will it be the true history? She implored the Board to stand up for constitutional rights. Mandates are not laws; the CDC is not the governing body. The government is dividing us.

Alyssa Detmer

Ms. Detmer provided Covid 19 survival rate statistics; Connecticut is one of seven states mandating that masks be worn in school. She spoke to the negative effects of prolonged mask wearing by children and adults, which include bloody noses, increased carbon dioxide, headaches, brain fog, as well as SEL consequences. Does this provide students with an optimal learning environment? How will students with medical and religious exemptions be protected? They deserve the same liberties of everyone else. Asked that the Board please consider the whole student when making further recommendations and guidelines.

IX. Old Business

A. Covid Update

The Region 14 Covid Dashboard is currently void of any diagnoses and isolations.

Mr. McAllister read from the latest update issued by the Connecticut Department of Education/Department of Public Health published July 25, 2021 regarding mask use.

Current Executive Order regarding mask wearing in school buildings and other settings can be found here: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/LamontExecutive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-12A.pdf>

Federal Order (CDC) requires mask use on public transportation, including school buses. Updates to mask guidance for the Fall 2021 school year will be finalized in the coming weeks.

Mr. McAllister also participates in weekly Covid19 Health and Safety webinars which are held on Tuesdays with DPH/SDE. He continues to gather information and will update the board accordingly.

X. New Business

There was no New Business

XI. Other Business

There was no Other Business

XII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by Tikva Rose to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



*Patricia Paige
Board Clerk*

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige, Board Clerk