

**Minutes**

Regular Meeting of the BoE  
Monday, January 4, 2021; 7:00 p.m.  
Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/94140003671>  
Meeting ID: 941 4000 3671  
Phone: (646) 558-8656

**Present:**

George Bauer, Chairman  
Janet Morgan  
Carol Ann Brown  
Michael Devine  
Jonathan Kapstein  
Tikva Rose  
James Crocker

**Absent:**

Pamela Zmek, Vice Chairperson

**Also Present:**

Dr. Joseph Olzacki, Superintendent  
Wayne McAllister, Director Finance and Operations  
Tina Tanguay, Assistant Director of Finance and Operations  
Edward Belinsky, Director of Agriscience  
Jennifer Ortiz, Director of School Counseling  
Mark Harutunian, Covid 19 Liaison  
Patricia Paige, Board Clerk  
Patrick DiSarro, Communications Specialist

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**1. Call to Order**

Mr. George Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

**2. Introductions**

Members of the Board introduced themselves

**3. Approval of the Minutes**

**A. Regular Meeting dated Monday, December 7, 2020**

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

#### **4. Superintendent's Report**

##### **A. Covid Update**

Positive Covid diagnoses persist for both staff and students in the district. Mr. Harutunian provided the most up-to-date numbers for both classifications. The Pomperaug and Torrington Area Health Directors stated that they anticipate a spike in two weeks due to holiday gatherings and traveling occurring over the break. Mr. Harutunian also commended the superintendent for his decision to close school until January 19<sup>th</sup> and is hoping to be past the spike by the time students and teachers return from remote learning.

Torrington Health Director, Mr. Lustig, asked that a plan be devised for vaccine distribution. Logistics for dispensing the inoculation are currently under consideration. A master staff list has been created and a survey was e-mailed to all Region 14 employees for the purpose of gathering information as to whether or not there were underlying health concerns. Those who indicated health vulnerabilities will be a priority when the vaccine becomes available.

A policy committee meeting is planned for Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup> to address the Covid 19 vaccination.

##### **B. Remote Learners**

A main concern brought on at the onset of the pandemic encompassed the social and emotional well-being of the students. The RULER Program, which was constructed for use for students in grades k-8 to promote five key emotions, has shown success for students at the elementary schools.

Ms. Jennifer Ortiz, the district's Counseling Coordinator, is providing support to families by conducting home visits. The level and type of support takes on a different face depending on the grade level, with some as simple as connectivity issues to more serious matters, which may require additional outside interventions. Most parents want to be heard and feel supported in their efforts.

#### **5. Committee Reports**

##### **A. Financial Committee**

Mr. McAllister reiterated what was presented at the Finance Committee meeting, which was held just prior to the regular meeting.

He began his presentation by addressing an e-mail received from a concerned tax payer regarding the minutes of Tuesday, November 17, 2020 where it was noted that the district was in a favorable position, to having a \$250,000 shortfall and cutting the CCRC position a few weeks later. Mr. McAllister added context to the comment to provide clarity and further stated that the statement reflected the district's position, at that point in time, or the date of the meeting, and was based on October financial information.

Mr. McAllister sent an e-mail to the Department Heads and Principals on November 6<sup>th</sup> confirming expenditures from the current 20/21 budget had been frozen. Expenditures from the Purchased Services, Supplies, and Dues and Fees budget lines

would be considered on a case-by-case basis. He is making every effort not to end the year in a negative position.

Current 20/21 budget challenges include shortfalls in AgriScience Revenue; Special Education Tuition-AgriScience; Pre-School Tuition; Cafeteria Fund and special services needs for both incoming and current students with the largest deficit occurring in the cafeteria fund.

A second question posed by the concerned tax payer, and once again addressed by Mr. McAllister, related to the September 21, 2020 minutes, specifically the Covid 19 financials, asked why, if there was a minimal impact to the budget at that time, that the CCRC position has now been eliminated. It was explained that those minutes spoke to grant purchases and reflected specific Covid 19 acquisitions that the administration was looking to fund and were allowable through the CRF and ESSER grants. Those permissible purchases would be reimbursed through the grants and thus, would have a minimal impact to the budget. He completed the commentary by stating the administrators have done well to plan their approach to cover the Covid 19 expenses, even prior to receiving the grants and always with the safety of the students, faculty, and staff at the forefront.

#### B. Public Relations Committee

Ms. Carol Ann Brown provided a brief summation of the latest meeting of the Public Relations Committee. Items discussed during that time included Region 14 publications, i.e. newsletters, brochures and the like. Ms. Pam Zmek noted that there is no consistency in dissemination of publications.

Ms. Brown highlighted some of the recent holiday events and thanked everyone for their participation.

The FFA Committee will meet tomorrow night. Ms. Brown will obtain some sample brochures to share, which promote the Agriscience program at the high school.

## 6. **Board Chair Comments**

Mr. Bauer publicly recognized and thanked the Woodbury Lions Club for their significant donations to the two food banks.

Mr. Bauer read letters into the record in support of Ms. Kathy Green, whose position in the CCRC program at the high school has been eliminated. Letters were received from Madison Dannenhoffer, Gabriella Binette, David Albert, Haile Sirois, Hannah Ferris, Elyza Bruce, Maria Duncan, Christine Lavaway, Nicole Natale and Josh Meeker, Kelly O'Donnell, Kiley Bushka, Victoria York, Amanda Wochek, Maura Yocis, Ashley Piencka, Elena Eschmann, Thayer Lehman, and Helena Gwiazdoski.

Letters and comments on the subject of Distance Learning were received from Melissa Wesaw, Kathy Velky, and Mike Burke.

7. **Old Business**

There was no old business

8. **New Business**

A motion was made by Jonathan Kapstein and seconded by Tikva Rose to add an item under new business to formally recognize Wayne McAllister, as the longest serving Director of Finance and Operations in Region 14 and for his outstanding efforts; all in favor none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Jim Crocker and seconded by Carol Ann Brown to recognize Mr. Wayne McAllister as the long standing Director of Finance and Operations and the signification contribution to the district he has provided; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

9. **Other business**

There was no other business

10. **Executive Session**

A motion was made by Janet Morgan and seconded by Jim Crocker to enter into Executive Session to discuss written attorney client privileged communication from the Board's attorney regarding the Agriscience program and obligations from sending towns; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously. The Board entered executive session at 8:53 p.m. and invited Dr. Olzacki, Tina Tanguay, Wayne McAllister, and Ed Belinsky.

**Public Session**

The Board returned to Public Session at 9:48 p.m.

**Motion**

There was no motion

11. **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Jonathan Kapstein and seconded by Jim Crocker to adjourn the Meeting at 9:50 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*