

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

**Present:**

Presiding Board Member, Jim Crocker  
Jonathan Kapstein  
Tikva Rose  
Christopher Matta  
David Butkus  
Michael Devine

**Absent:**

George Bauer  
Carol Ann Brown

**Also Present:**

Wayne McAllister, Acting Superintendent  
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations  
Ed Belinsky, Director of Agriscience

Patricia Paige, Board Recording Clerk

**I. Call to Order**

Vice Chairman and Presiding Board Member Jim Crocker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

**III. Introductions**

Board members introduced themselves

**IV. Approval of the Minutes**

There were no minutes to approve

**V. Acting Superintendent's Report**

**A. School Opening Update**

Each administrator provided a brief impression of the first day of school, which was read by Mr. McAllister; photos from the elementary schools were displayed. Administrators reported that students were energized, excited to be back with their friends and happy to have hot lunches available once again; a positive first day for all.

An enrollment comparison was also provided and depicted an increase of 16 students district-wide over last year at the same time from 1,595 students to 1,613; a turnaround from what the trend has been.

**B. Personnel Report**

Mr. McAllister read the new hires and resignations for September 2021 into the record.

**C. Agriscience Update**

Mr. Ed Belinsky, the Director of Agriscience, offered a program update to the board. He acknowledged a number of students, who were recipients of various local, state, and national awards and recognitions, both individually and/or as part of team efforts in various Agriscience chapters.

Brand new to the program this year are the Timber Team and Nonnewaug Chapter of the 4H. The Timber Team is on their 3<sup>rd</sup> competition, competing at the Bethlehem Fair this weekend. Students participating in the Nonnewaug 4H Chapter will have the opportunity to attend fairs and compete in livestock showings.

**VI. Committee Reports**

**A. Finance Committee**

Ms. Tanguay provided a financial summary for the month of August. To date revenue collected through August 31, 2021 equaled \$5,733,487 or 15.2% of what was budgeted; expenditures totaled \$4,752,036 or 12.6%. Trending on target.

Ms. Tanguay also spoke to the lunch program and the transition to EdAdvance, who has been contracted to manage the district's food services; hot lunches are once again being offered. Menus can be found on the district's webpage.

Most of the scheduled summer projects have been completed. Of note were the boilers at Mitchell Elementary School and the roof at Bethlehem Elementary School.

**VII. Board Chair's Comments**

Mr. Crocker spoke to the vision of building a highly successful, performance team and professional work environment. A vision which also strives to embolden each student with the ability to thrive and be prepared for all of life's wonders, including opportunities and challenges.

He also addressed transparency as being valuable, except in times when it may impose on the privacy of others; however, the board will continue to strive for transparency wherever possible.

**VIII. Privilege of the Floor**

**Nick Paproski**

Supportive of the vaccinations and masking measures; questioned the seating arrangements at Bethlehem Elementary School; student seats are uncomfortable and lend themselves to poor ergonomics; there is no evidenced-based infection control principle that would support floor seating, which is an unnecessary deviation from what is normal and customary; urged BES to return to table or desk seating.

### **Corinne Hawksley**

Spoke on behalf of many parents in the community, who hold a great concern over the effects that the current Covid protocols have on the students - mentally, physically, and emotionally. Will not co-parent with the government or any other interest group; she decides what is best for her children. Commented on the negative effects of mask wearing; believes in choice and parental rights.

### **Lisa Amatruda**

Two topics of discussion; Dr. Olzacki's investigation report and masking the children. Questioned the leaderships' ethics regarding the termination of Dr. Olzacki. Asked the board who is making the decision to continue masking the children; begged the board to push back from the state and fight for the children.

### **Christine DeCicco**

The redacted Dr. Olzacki investigation report is unacceptable; why is elected official's name redacted; tax payers deserve to know who cut the line; was there a promise made by board or Dr. Olzacki. Appears board hid its last meeting; was due to have a public review of a course that was previously discussed, rather it was quietly approved without feedback from parents. Urged the board to stay in their own lane.

### **Diane Macleod**

Parent of an immune comprised student; chose to homeschool; spoke to the mask mandate; public schools must follow public health guidelines; parents have choices if they don't like the mask mandate i.e. homeschool instruction or private institutions. Believes those who are upset are the vocal majority; doesn't want the board to be confused just because someone has a loud voice.

### **Thea Alfes**

Her son was attacked and bullied while in school and on the bus; concerned for his safety due to an incident that occurred on the playground just before Covid hit; pulled her son out of school; still upset over what occurred. The town deserves to know who has abused the public's trust; masks and 6' social distancing do not protect; need to come together as a community and figure this out.

### **Benjamin Carey**

Less than 350 children nationwide have lost their lives due to Covid; asked the board to stop scaring children and to stand up for what is right for students.

### **Dawn Cipriano**

Constitution was designed to control government, not the people; it is from the bottom up, not the top down. This region operates to divide and conquer the community; lack of transparency is overwhelming and tremendous and it's done intentionally.

### **Bonnie May**

Inquired whether or not the town has protocols involving mask wearing; perhaps grade level protocols; noted that according to Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director at CAPSS, Critical Race Theory is not being taught in any of the schools in Connecticut; would be beneficial to the town to know difference between Critical Race Theory and inclusionary

education.

**Casey Rushin**

Requested board members to stop playing with their phones when individuals are participating in public comment; sent an e-mail asking that the district staff wear blue and have a moment of silence acknowledging the passing of Trooper Mohl; disappointed that the acting superintendent did not bring it before the board.

**Beth Ramos**

Very upset about the seating arrangements at Bethlehem Elementary School; wants her child off the floor.

**Alyssa Detmer**

Continues to oppose the mask mandate; has faith that one day the boards' hands will no longer be tied; withdrew her child; hopes to get her back in school.

**IX. Old Business**

There was no old Business

**X. New Business**

**Executive Session**

A motion was made by Jonathan Kapstein and seconded by David Butkus to enter into Executive Session for discussion/possible action on ratification of proposed collective bargaining agreement between Regional School District No. 14 Board of Education and Nonnewaug Paraprofessional Union Local 1303-257 of Council 4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO dated July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024; all in favor; none opposed; the board moved into Executive Session at 8:20 p.m. and invited Acting Superintendent Wayne McAllister and the Director of Finance and Operations, Tina Tanguay.

**Public Session**

The board returned to Public Session at 8:29 p.m.

**Motions**

Michael Devine moved that the Region 14 Board of Education ratify the proposed collective bargaining agreement between Regional School District No. 14 Board of Education and Nonnewaug Paraprofessional Union Local 1303-257 of Council 4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO dated July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024; seconded by David Butkus; all were in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Michael Devine moved that the Region 14 Board of Education authorize the Board Chair to sign said agreement, subject to any further necessary legal review; seconded by David Butkus; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

**Agenda Amendment**

Mr. Devine moved to amend the agenda to include an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Attorney/Client Privileged information under Item X, New Business; seconded by David Butkus; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

**Executive Session**

Mr. Devine made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Attorney/Client privileged information; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously. The board entered into Executive Session at 8:32 p.m.

**Public Session**

The board returned to Public Session at 9:13 p.m.

**Motion**

There was no motion

**XI. Other Business**

There was no Other Business

**XII. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by David Butkus to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Paige". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P".

*Patricia Paige  
Board Clerk*

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