



Serving the Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury

Regular Meeting of the Board of Education

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

<https://zoom.us/j/94838468045>

ID: 948 3846 8045 Phone: (646) 558-8656

Minutes

Present:

Pam Zmek, Presiding Chairperson

Janet Morgan

Carol Ann Brown

Michael Devine

James Crocker

Jonathan Kapstein

*Tikva Rose (arrived 7:06 p.m.)

Absent

George Bauer

Also Present:

Dr. Joseph Olzacki, Superintendent

Wayne McAllister

Tina Tanguay

Mark Harutunian

Declan Curtin

Wendy Nelson-Kauffman

Recording Secretary, Patricia Paige

1. Call to Order

Presiding Chairperson, Ms. Pamela Zmek called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Introductions

Ms. Zmek indicated that the board is hoping to return to in-person meetings in October. Plans are to hold future meetings in The Flanders Room at Mitchell Elementary School.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Special Meeting, Monday, August 17, 2020

A motion was made by Ms. Janet Morgan and seconded by Ms. Carol Ann Brown to accept/approve the minutes as presented; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously 6/0/0.

Special Meeting, Monday, August 31, 2020

A motion was made by Ms. Janet Morgan and seconded by Ms. Carol Ann Brown to accept/approve the minutes as presented; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously 6/0/0.

*Ms. Tivka Rose joined the meeting

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Olzacki visited all schools today, the first day of the new-year, likening the students to Christmas morning with all of their excitement. He reported that approximately 10% of the students are partaking in Distance Learning thus far.

With many parents driving students to school, traffic patterns will need to be examined a little closer.

In an abundance of caution, Pre-K opening day has been postponed until Monday, September 21, 2020. The date change is due to information that was received at Central Office indicating that a BES staff member needed to quarantine due to contact tracing. All indicators point to zero exposure to the pre-school community.

The restored bell at Mitchell School opened the new-year and was rung by Floyd Judson, the oldest living graduate of Mitchell Elementary School. Alexander Losh, a kindergarten student and distant relative of Mr. Judson, was also on hand and sounded the bell. Principal Andy Komar stated that students will be chosen each day to ring the bell at the start and end of the school day.

A. Covid 19 Update: Mark Harutunian

Mr. Harutunian indicated that the first day of school went very well. At the close of the day, teachers were asked what worked, what didn't work, and where does there need to be improvement? He continued by stating that he has been in constant contact with the health directors from both Torrington and Pomperaug, Mr. Robert Rubbo and Mr. Neal Lustig respectively, who continue to forward information from their agencies, as well as, from the state.

Mr. Harutunian provided mask protocols to parents/students prior to the first day of school. The information outlined the proper way to wear a mask and right vs. wrong masks.

Dr. Olzacki had conversations with the head custodians at each of the buildings prior to the start of school and thanked them for their hard work for ensuring that the students, faculty and staff came back to classes in a safe and clean learning environment.

B. Teaching and Learning: Wendy Nelson-Kaufmann

Ms. Nelson-Kaufmann rolled out Google Meet to the secondary students, an interactive live streaming app, which was received much better than originally anticipated. Students were asked to respond to a survey about the app, with an approximate 50% student participation rate. The survey yielded many encouraging comments.

A slide presentation was offered on “Creating the ‘New Normal’” which summarized the professional learning that was provided to staff last week. Three priorities were emphasized; emotional wellbeing for students, finding the priority academic gaps from unit 1 and promoting technology use to prepare students for pivot to remote learning.

A brief question and answer period ensued immediately following the presentation.

C. Athletics: Declan Curtin

Mr. Curtin prepared a report outlining the first week of fall sports. To date, there are 146 athletes registered for the season. The athletes were happy to learn that the board made the decision to reconsider their original stance on sports participation and allow certain sports to commence. Topics covered included conditioning, liability waivers, medical trainer responsibilities, football, volleyball, scheduling, fans, videotaping, the tennis courts, concluding the report with the Athlete’s Council.

Of relevance, was the CIAC Press Release dated 9/4/20, which indicated that a decision was made by the association with recommendations from the Department Public Health to not go forth with 11v11 football. “Without DPH support, the CIAC cannot move forward with a full contact season as it would place superintendents and boards of education in the impossible position of acting against the recommendation of a state agency.” It was determined that high risk full contact football is no longer a viable option.

D. Maintenance Update: Wayne McAllister and Tina Tanguay

The buildings have been thoroughly cleaned and there is a new verification process in place which occurs every morning. A form was established as a daily check list to be used for high traffic areas. Mr. Wayne McAllister met with the head custodians and also reviewed the process with the union; all are on board. The form is reviewed daily with the building administrator to address what has been accomplished and what still needs to be addressed.

Each custodian has been equipped with a new tool belt that holds cleaners and rags for continuance cleaning. The Electrostatic Sprayer, its use and process was explained. Deeper cleans will occur on Wednesdays when all students are partaking in remote learning.

5. **Committee Report**

N/a

6. **Board Chair's Comments**

Ms. Zmek read a statement on behalf of Board Chairman, George Bauer, who was not able to join the meeting. On behalf of the Region 14 Board of Education, he welcomed district families to the 2020/2021 academic year.

7. **Old Business**

There was no Old Business

8. **New Business**

There was no New Business

9. **Other Business**

Ms. Zmek shared that there will be a board retreat on Saturday, September 26th commencing at 8:30 a.m.; agenda to follow.

10. **Adjournment**

*A motion was made by Ms. Janet Morgan and seconded by Carol Ann Brown to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:57 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; **motion carried unanimously 7-0-0.***

Respectfully Submitted,



*Patricia Paige
Board Clerk*

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