

Minutes

Board of Education - Special Meeting
Wednesday, February 3, 2021 @ 7:00 PM
Zoom Meeting

<https://ctreg14-org.zoom.us/j/98059713187>

Meeting ID: 980 5971 3187

Phone: (646) 558-8656

Present:

George Bauer, Chairman
Pamela Zmek, Vice Chairman
Carol Ann Brown
Michael Devine
Jonathan Kapstein
Tikva Rose
James Crocker

Absent:

Janet Morgan

Also Present:

Dr. Joseph Olzacki, Superintendent
Wayne McAllister
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations
Mark Harutunian, Covid 19 Liaison
Neal Lustig, Director of Health, Pomperaug Health District
Patricia Paige, Board Clerk
Patrick DiSarro, Communications Specialist

1. Call to Order

Mr. George Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Introductions

Members of the board introduced themselves

3. Board Appointment

A motion was made by Mr. Jim Crocker and seconded by Mr. Jonathan Kapstein to accept/approve the formal appointment of Ms. Tina Tanguay as the Director of Finance and Operations; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Olzacki provided a brief bio highlighting Ms. Tanguay's work experience and credentials.

4. **Approval of the Minutes**

A. Regular Meeting dated Monday, January 19, 2021

A motion was made by Mr. Jonathan Kapstein and seconded by Mr. Jim Crocker to accept/approve the minutes with the following amendments:

Item 4; subsection C, Vision of a Learner; add the following names; Bonnie Knapik, Children's Librarian, Woodbury and Agriscience student, MARRISA UVA as members in attendance and sharing their work.

All in favor; none opposed; Ms. Pamela Zmek abstained; motion carried.

5. **Superintendent's Report**

A. Covid Update:

Mr. Neal Lustig, Pomperaug Health Director, had very good news to report on for the region. He has observed a downward trend, from a peak of 138 Covid cases just following the Thanksgiving Holiday, to 25 cases currently; a dramatic drop. Current Covid cases continue to involve school aged children, 10-18 years of age and less nursing home residents. He noted that it is pretty likely that towns will begin to drop off the state zone map as things improve.

At the state level, there were 480 cases and a positivity rate of 4%. He attributes this as the vaccine working and is working well. The health district is planning a mass vaccination clinic in Woodbury around February 23rd/24th and most likely will include those who are 65 years of age and older.

Covid 19 Liaison Mr. Mark Harutunian offered the latest statics for the school district since the return of students on January 19th. He provided information on how to access the Covid 19 Dashboard on the district's webpage.

B. Leukemia & Lymphoma Society/Students of the Year

Meghan and Hannah Kostka, students at Nonnewaug High School, are running a fundraising campaign as a part of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's, *Students of the Year*, a competition amongst high school students across the country to raise the most money for the society. As part of the campaign, a Red Out day will be held on Friday, February 12th.

A flyer has been disseminated to the Region 14 staff and is also housed on the district's webpage with a link to the fundraising page. Their target goal is \$10,000.

6. **Committee Reports**

A. Finance Committee

Ms. Tanguay reviewed the monthly finance status report; the budget freeze remains in effect with only the absolute needs of the district being considered.

The district has received the entire amount of funds from the CRF grant (Coronavirus Relief Fund) in the amount of \$221,844. Ms. Tanguay noted that she is now able to reimburse the general fund and also plans to reimburse the towns for their portion of

last year's general fund monies for expenses incurred in 2019/2020 for sprayers and other PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) purchases.

She is currently reassessing the anticipated revenue and expenses with Grab and Go meals, which consist of both breakfast and lunch since the return of students on January 19th.

The district received a state school reimbursement for approximately \$10,000. Also looking to be reimbursed for the Healthy Food Certification grant, but not certain of the dollar amount as of yet.

B. Public Relations Committee

The committee met on January 25th. The upcoming budget schedule was discussed, as well as, the Grip and Grin program.

Ms. Tikva Rose and Mr. Jonathan Kapstein will provide a brief, one page newsletter to the public with an update on board issues; subject to board approval. Because the document is timely, discussions were held on when to disseminate. Chairman Bauer noted that all drafts should be approved by the entire board. To accelerate the process, it was suggested to e-mail the drafts and include a time advisory.

Next meeting of the committee is scheduled for February 22nd.

7. **Board Chair Comments**

Chairman Bauer recently received an e-mail from Mr. Bill Geddes of the Woodbury/Bethlehem Community Music Foundation stating that if you are an Ion Bank customer, you may vote for your favorite non-profit in the community awards program. Each vote will receive \$25.

Correspondence was received from the citizens of Woodbury and Bethlehem regarding the recent vaccination clinic and were read into the record. Letters were received from Jim Colby, Joy Maini, Sara Kate Walkup, Jennifer Higgins, David Butkus, Garrett Walkup, Nicole Natale and Bridget Calabrese.

Not read into the record due to time constraints were letters from Paul Zulpa, Sarah Smith and Stephanie Chapman.

Chairman Bauer read a statement he crafted to address disinformation in the news and social media. He offered several points and noted that if mistakes were made, the district will own up to them. He went on to say that the district worked hard for the staff to get the appropriate safety measures to keep everyone safe and that the issue is impacting the district. Updates will be provided.

8. **Old Business**

There was no old business

Prior to entering into executive session, Ms. Tikva Rose was allowed to read a statement she prepared regarding transparency of the board. She finds it increasingly difficult to do her job with regulations that stifle her ability to talk to her fellow board members and the public. She would like to get back to in-person meetings to allow for in-person public participation.

9. Executive Session

A motion was made by Mr. Michael Devine and seconded by Ms. Pamela Zmek to enter into executive session for discussion of and possible action on 1) performance of central office school administration regarding the vaccination program, 2) response to related NTA complaints, and 3) performance of the Superintendent; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously. The board entered into executive session at 8:23 p.m. and invited in Dr. Olzacki, Mr. Wayne McAllister, Attorney Mark Sommaruga, and Mr. Mark Harutunian.

Public Session

The board returned to public session at 11:32 p.m.

Motions

Ms. Carol Ann Brown moved to authorize the board counsel to retain an outside investigator to examine the performance of the Superintendent of Schools, and the office administration with respect to the vaccination program; seconded by Ms. Pam Zmek, 6 aye; Mr. Michael Devine was a nay; motion carried.

Ms. Tikva Rose moved that the Board of Education form an ad-hoc committee whose mission is to review Covid-19 protocols and concerns and whose membership consists of district nurses, trainers, and two Board of Education members; 6 aye; Mr. Jonathan Kapstein abstained; motion carried.

10. New Business

There was no new business

11. Other business

There was no other business

12. Adjournment

A motion was made by Tikva Rose and seconded by Jim Crocker to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 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