

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held Tuesday, May 19, 2015 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Board members George Bauer, Carol Ann Brown (7:47 pm), John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Michael Devine, Janet Morgan, Maryanne Van Aken, and Pamela Zmek; Superintendent Anna Cutaia-Leonard, Ed.D., Director of Finance and Operations Wayne McAllister, Director of Instruction Sue Domanico, Ed.D.; Board Clerk Deb Carlton and about 12 members of the community.

### **1. Call to Order**

Mr. Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

### **2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Bauer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

He indicated that the executive session on the agenda will be moved up to occur after item 6.

### **3. Student Representatives**

No report.

### **4. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the district meeting of May 4, 2015*. Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 5-0-2** with Ms. Morgan and Ms. Zmek abstaining.

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 4, 2015*. Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 6-0-1** with Ms. Zmek abstaining.

### **5. Presentation – Region 14's Finest**

Andrew O'Brien, Principal of Nonnewaug High School, spoke about his two honorees for Region 14's Finest, student Meaghan Riley and faculty member Devon Bares. NHS teacher, Barbara Losee, also spoke of Mr. Bares contributions to the school and both honorees received enthusiastic thanks and applause from the board and audience.

### **6. Information and Proposals**

#### **A. Board Committee Reports**

Finance: Mr. Devine reported having met on 5/11 and reviewing monthly financial statements. Also, the committee discussed a proposal related to the district's contract with Finalsight, which will be addressed later in the meeting.

Policy: Mr. Chapman reported having met on 5/11, as well, to plan for policy revision work which could begin as early as late summer. Meeting dates were proposed through the end of the year, and most urgent policies will be prioritized.

#### **B. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard introduced Michael Rafferty, who will assume his role as Director of Teaching and Learning on July 1. She spoke of the positive comments made about him by the interview committee, including his "I work for you" mentality, his student focused approach, and his humility and sense of humor.

Mr. Rafferty spoke briefly, thanking the Board and expressing how honored he is to be welcomed to Region 14. He looks forward to tapping into Region 14's finest, like Meaghan and Devon.

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard also reported that the results of her entry plan and long term improvement planning will be discussed at the June 15<sup>th</sup> BoE meeting. She has spoken, to date, with more than 200 individuals in the region and has learned a great deal and heard many perspectives. She is putting the pieces together in order to determine needs of all stakeholders. She offered a handout reiterating her bucket philosophy in her long term planning. Her goals are student centered, and she will also look toward improving communication as well as community involvement in our schools.

The handout included questions, and she wanted the board and audience to understand that student performance is not all about test scores, and test scores are not the only measure of student, or teacher, success. She hopes to show the benefit to the community of having an excellent school system.

Prior to 6/15, she urged board members to communicate to her any other priorities for the improvement plan.

C. Board chair's comments

Mr. Bauer informed the board that he is working with Sal Corda on topics for the retreat. He will forward them to the board.

### **7. Executive Session**

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of 1) discussion of the status of and strategy regarding pending and threatened claims concerning referenda, and 2) discussion of written communications protected by the attorney client privilege.* Entered by Mr. Devine and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 8-0**. The board entered executive session at 8:00 pm and returned at 8:34 pm.

Mr. Bauer read a prepared statement:

As most people know already, the Region 14 budget for the 2015-16 school year went to referendum vote on May 5, 2015, and the residents of Region 14 passed the budget successfully. The closing of the polls on May 5th also coincided with the official adjournment of the District Budget meeting that was initiated on the previous evening, May 4th, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

The District Budget meeting is a very short required proceeding, and involves the appointment of a moderator who reads a prepared statement regarding the upcoming vote, providing details of the budget amount, polling hours, etc... and then calls for a recess of the meeting to hold the vote the following day. During this meeting there are no vote or action taken. On the evening of May 4th, Mr. Paul Ciotti, a District Employee who was one of the few adults in attendance at the meeting, was nominated to be the moderator. At that time, it was not apparent to the Board that there was a problem with nominating Mr. Ciotti.

Subsequent to the meeting, it has been brought to the attention of the Board that this selection did not comply with statutes regarding town meetings since Mr. Ciotti was not a resident of Region 14. After consulting Region 14 Counsel, and with the full knowledge that both State Elections Enforcement Commission and the Town of Woodbury have expressly declined to intercede in this matter, the Board of Education considers this procedural matter to be closed. However, while this Board recognizes the error made in selection of the moderator, the work we are engaged in to revise and update Board policies gives us the opportunity to make consistent changes that reflect legal and procedural best practice moving forward.

Unfortunately, certain individuals may seize upon this procedural error in order to further their own agenda to undermine and discredit the Board and Superintendent and try to plant the seeds of mistrust in our community. These are the kind of negative actions and motivations that even lead to burdening taxpayers with legal fees and draining resources from the educational needs of students. We believe as a board in continuous positive improvements and appreciate and understand the value of the resources the towns provide us to educate our students.

The board understands the trust and legal responsibilities the towns place in us. The Board's actions have been and will continue to be transparent and we appreciate the confidence and trust of the citizens of Region 14 as we continue our journey and aim for excellence together.

### **8. Privilege of the Floor**

Gary Suslavich, Woodbury, asked whether Mr. Bauer's statement was the belief of the whole board or just himself. If it is the board's collective statement, he hopes the board goes on record as a body, as it never has before, and says the law doesn't matter.

Barbara Perkinson, Woodbury, thanked Dr. Cutaia-Leonard for addressing the questions for her "bucket list" and feels this is a step in the right direction as far as letting the public know how the money is being spent. She hopes the bucket list will grow. Regarding Mr. Bauer's statement, she hopes it will be made public in the newspaper since there will still be people who don't understand. For future reference, she advised the board to review statutes regarding public hearings and district meetings.

**9. New Business Requiring Board Action**

Mr. Devine entered the following: *Move that the Board of Education approve an out-of-state, overnight field trip to Battlecry@WPI Robotics Competition, Worcester, MA, May 24-25, 2015, for twenty NHS students, one faculty member and four background-checked chaperones, via bus transportation, and financed through the team's student activity account and student funds (\$150 per student).* Seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 8-0.**

Ms. Van Aken entered the following: *Move that the Board of Education approve the continuation of service contract with Finalsity, through July 2020 at \$25, 250 per year, as well as a one-time \$15,000 fee for the redesign of the district website.* Second by Mr. Devine.

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard indicated this proposal had been discussed in Finance committee, and it was decided to bring it to the full board. The district has worked with Finalsity since 2004; but, it is time to move into the new century and get the website more to where we need it to be.

Mr. Ciotti provided information about the proposal and took questions from the board. He noted the major change will be to reduce the number of pages, and to consolidate others. A main goal is to use responsive design that can be used with any device. He showed the total number of site pages and the rate of views for many of those. He showed screen shots of the website as it currently appears as well as how it will look once redesigned. He spoke about Finalsity and their web services, including their positive track record with the district to date. Finally, he showed a timeline for the project completion.

Dr. Cutaia Leonard said this will be a lot of work for the IT department, and the commitment is to have it ready for 8/24/15. There will be more work after that date, regarding functionality of the school sites, and how schools use the website as a communication tool instead of just adding another link, and another, and another.

The **motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Chapman entered the following: *Move that the Board of Education approve the negotiated contract between Regional School District 14 and the Nonnewaug Secretarial Association, effective July 1, 2015-June 30, 2018.* Second by Mr. Cosgriff.

Mr. Cosgriff spoke of the effective and pleasant negotiation process with this group, and Mr. McAllister outlined fiscal impact. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Chapman entered the following: *Move that the Board of Education approve the negotiated contract between Regional School District 14 and the Cafeteria Workers' Association, effective July 1, 2015-June 30, 2017.* Second by Mr. Cosgriff.

Mr. Cosgriff spoke of the effective and pleasant negotiation process with this group, and Mr. McAllister outlined fiscal impact. **Motion carried 8-0.**

**10. Future Meetings**

Mr. Bauer reviewed upcoming meetings:

- A. Monday, June 1, 2015, Regular BoE Meeting, 7:30 pm, NHS LMC
- B. Monday, June 8, 2015, Board of Education Workshop, 6:00 pm, COCR
- C. Monday, June 15, 2015, Regular BoE Meeting, 7:30 pm, NHS LMC

**11. Adjournment**

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, second by Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 8-0.** The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Carol Ann Brown, Secretary  
Regional School District #14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 5/22/2015