

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held Monday, February 3, 2014 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members George Bauer, Carol Ann Brown, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Janet Morgan (9:15 pm), and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Finance and Operations Wayne McAllister; Director of Instruction Sue Domanico; Administrators Alice Jones, Kimberly Culkin, MaryLou Torre, Andrew O'Brien, Susan Ruddock, Eric Bergeron, Jose Martinez, Jeff Turner, and Bill Nemeck; Nate Levenson and Wallis Raemer from District Management Council; and Board Clerk Deb Carlton

Absent: Sophieane Bartlett and John Swendsen

Audience members included: *Voices* reporter Mike Preato and 4 additional members of the public.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:44 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Presentation

Mr. Levenson presented a powerpoint summary of the work of the District Management Council in Region 14, which focused on how struggling students receive support and which included both commendations and opportunities for positive change going forward. He took questions from the Board.

Mr. Chapman asked about next steps relative to the 5 opportunities Mr. Levenson outlined – could he rank them or prioritize them? What would be the financial impact? How do they relate to the strategic plan?

Mr. Levenson noted the retreat scheduled for tomorrow at which these things would be discussed. He stressed “reading, reading, reading” as the single best way to ensure student success; it is owed to all students that they read well and should be the first priority. To dramatically improve reading intervention, he said, would lead to changes in how we use paras; at the same time, our organizational structure will also change. He noted that if asked who is in charge of reading, most educators would say everyone is. But if everyone is in charge, then no one is. A second priority would be the academic piece at the secondary level, he said.

Mr. Chapman noted that the board has been asked before for an organizational structure, roles and responsibilities. It seemed to him that common feedback was around when intervention starts and stops, and the need to assess strategies and expectations. This will require internal strategic planning to look at the delivery of services side.

Mr. Levenson replied that the organizational structure should support a theory of action which, depending on what is in it, will step on a number of belief landmines and so must be done carefully. Changing the organizational structure should be the last thing, once a theory of action is set. A common mistake, he said, is to move too fast. The belief system must be addressed first and there needs to be a sustained effort over at least 2 years. On the third year, it should be “firing on all pistons” and no one will want to go back to the way it was. His belief is that the most gifted teachers should be with the most struggling students.

Mr. Chapman asked how to change a belief system?

Mr. Levenson said this is done if what is offered is better than what exists, and if what is coming is explained. Leaders need to believe it is a moral imperative and push through it. Whatever is done needs to be done well so the results will be made apparent to the families of students served. There needs to be commitment to go all the way; if the leadership does not buy in, if corner are cut or compromises made, it won't work and people won't want to continue and won't buy in.

Mr. Bauer asked whether Mr. Levenson found that the district sufficiently self-assesses its own practices.

Mr. Levenson replied that, in the reading and math examples, very frequent measures of growth are needed. Quick, real-time assessments show where students are succeeding, or not. Many in the leadership team, he said, know there are better ways to be doing things that are different from what is being done.

III. Review of Minutes

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 16, 2013*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 5-0**.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to add approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of 1/23/14 to the agenda*. Entered by Mr. Bauer and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 5-0**. Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of 1/23/14*. Seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 4-0-1**, with Mr. Chapman abstaining, not having been in attendance.

IV. Correspondence

Mr. Chapman noted emails in the form of informative links from Art McNally. Mr. Goeler and Mr. Chapman referenced an inquiry from a parent regarding a student allergy management team. Our attorney was consulted and it was found that our school based planning teams can be folded into a wellness committee; a meeting is upcoming and student allergies will be addressed.

V. Report from the Chairman

Mr. Chapman provided an update on legal activities. There was a conference/hearing on 1/31/14 at which the court denied a motion for contempt filed by the attorney representing the plaintiffs in the Arras, Miller, Miller, Murphy and Suslavich v. Region 14 case. The court also denied an order to stop the building committee from moving forward with the project. A motion to strike their case will be heard on 2/26, and there will also be motions for sanctions against the plaintiffs' attorney scheduled to be heard on 2/5. Mr. Chapman sees this as progress, and hopes to get this matter resolved soon.

VI. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Goeler described tomorrow's DMC strategy summit as "boosting academic return on investment." He reported on his recent activities, including his speech at National Honor Society inductions where he spoke about "grit," the retirement party for Wilma Narciso at the Painted Pony, elementary concert at NHS, Team Beta sleepover at WMS, attendance at the girls basketball game v. Lewis Mills, WMS pancake breakfast that raised about \$800, and his induction into the Tribury Rotary this Thursday. He thanked people for reading his blog, and also noted a one hour conference call with the commissioner today.

Ms. Domanico also shared a report and said the last few weeks have seen a major focus on assessments. In district assessment work has included MAP training for staff on 1/17; principals are creating schedules for piloting assessments in grades 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Testing will occur throughout February; MES, BES, and NHS are taking only math and reading, while WMS will also include language. Data will yield information about student progress toward mastery of standards and help teachers focus on areas of need. This testing will be done on our own timeline, has flexibility and will be a good warm-up for state assessment field testing.

New information released by the CSDE about Smarter Balanced field testing is being shared with administrators, teachers and parents. Each school has selected a window for pilot testing: MES is 3/18-4/4; BES and WMS are 4/28-5/16; and NHS is 4/7-25. Tests are untimed but schools are planning about 3 ½ hours for each grade for each content area. The field test is a "test of a test" and the district will receive little data back. Test developers will use information to make the test reliable, valid and fair when it goes out live in 2015.

Mr. Chapman asked if data from assessments is being collected in-house this year. She replied that yes, we are continuing with existing assessment tools but are also looking to streamline and to develop a comprehensive assessment plan. He understands that this is a transition year, but Mr. Chapman wondered if teachers still have a way to look at student growth. She said they can, and can use fall and spring test data to establish initial groups, but this is not frequent enough to impact daily instruction. MAP has immediate turn-around, and was to begin today.

VII. Privilege of the Floor (agenda specific)

Krista Ryan, Woodbury, spoke at length about her daughter's experience in R14 schools. She and Diane Stockwell had previously headed up a special education parents' group as a way to support parents of children with special needs. She found much of what Mr. Levenson spoke about to be true and she feels the gap between her daughter and typical peers has widened each year. She fears she did not advocate enough for her and she is frightened for her daughter's future. She believes Ms. Culkin is overwhelmed with all she has to do and is not assessing her staff. She urged the board, now that they know what is going on, to do something about it.

Jeanne Ross, Woodbury, echoed Ms. Ryan's thoughts as she, too, has a child who struggles. She called for a change of mindset with regard to the role of parents. She owns her responsibility as a parent and feels we need to partner with her on that. She finds there is no effort to offer parents resources, so they seek them out on their own, but then meet with resistance in having them implemented. She considers it a cultural thing and was encouraged tonight to hear that there are next steps in the plans. She has been discouraged to hear the things that staff has said about her since she has always supported R14. Climate matters, she said.

VIII. Report from Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. McAllister reported that a recommendation for wireless contracts using the Board's Regulation # 3323(a) (bid process) will be made during new business. Walkthroughs were done and 8 bids received. This work will be covered under the technology grant. Also, an RFQ was done for health insurance broker of record and the Finance Committee conducted second round interviews last Monday. He and Jackie Rinaldi did follow up visits to both firms on Friday, checked 3 references for each and are ready to recommend Lockton Benefits.

Mr. Chapman asked Mr. Ciotti whether there is a schedule in place for the implementation of the wireless equipment, urging that this be addressed as soon as possible. Mr. Bauer asked the goals for the wireless capabilities and was told it will make the online assessments easier and will also have many instructional benefits in the classroom.

Mr. McAllister also reported a meeting today regarding the renovation project and debt service, and impact on mill rate. Delays with the court cases are affecting this. A debt service reserve fund of \$1,000,050 over the next two budget cycles will be proposed to the towns so that, as debt falls off, this reserve will mitigate impact. It will be part of the budget process, and Bethlehem's input will also be needed.

IX. Committee Reports

For Public Relations, Ms. Brown reported that group will next meet on 2/19; NEAT TV has picked up; there are 2 new roundtables to show; the NHS parent group indicates that NEAT TV is the best way to reach parents; and she believes the board and district need to go to the people and to the groups, not ask them to come to us.

For Finance, Mr. Bauer reported to rounds of interviews for health insurance agent of record. He was pleased with the input and healthy discussion. There will be a recommendation under new business.

For Facilities, Ms. Morgan reported having met and hearing a proposal for lighting at the schools; also, enrollment and transportation updates were given; minutes are posted on the website.

For Planning/Personnel, Ms. Van Aken reported having met this evening and hearing from a parent interested in transitioning lacrosse from a Park and Rec sport to a NHS one. He will return with survey results and budget numbers, in the hopes of starting as at club team at NHS in spring 2015. Ms. Domanico also provided a nice presentation on assessments, she said.

Ad hoc Safety will meet on 2/28, Ms. Van Aken also reported.

For Building, Mr. Bauer reported that representatives from Milone and McBroom spoke to the committee about their experience and knowledge of the NHS fields and offered perspective on the field lay out. The committee also discussed RFQs for architectural services.

Mr. Chapman sees an opportunity for value engineering in the NHS field work.

For Negotiations, Mr. Cosgriff reported the Administrators' contract is ready and will be presented in executive session at the next meeting.

X. Old Business
None.

XI. New Business

The board had previously received a proposed bylaw on Order of Business for regular board meetings. Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to approve Bylaw 9325.2 as the new agenda format for meetings*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff. Ms. Morgan asked where such things as old business would be discussed. Mr. Chapman explained that any necessary business can fall under a number of categories depending on the nature of the issue and that the new format is not intended to be prohibitive, as discussed at the retreat. Item 8, it was decided, would be changed from "New Business" to "Other Business." The **motion carried 6-0**.

Policy 1212, previously approved, had been slightly revised to reflect the draft regulation under review by the Ad hoc Safety Committee. It now strikes the line that calls for only volunteers with unsupervised access to students as those who will be background checked. Policy 1212 now reads that *all* R14 volunteers will submit to background checks. Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to approve Policy 1212 as amended*. Seconded by Ms. Morgan, the **motion carried 6-0**.

Mr. Goeler included in packets a slight revision to the Board's No Smoking policy. Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to add the revision to policy 1331 to the agenda*. Seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0**. Mr. Goeler explained that the regional action council had suggested inclusion of electronic cigarettes to the types of tobacco related products banned from school grounds and this had been added to the existing policy. Mr. Chapman entered a *motion to accept Policy 1331 as amended*. Seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0**.

Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to add to the agenda discussion and possible action on health insurance agent of record*. Seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 6-0**. Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to choose Lockton Benefits as health insurance broker of record, effective 6/30/14 for a fee of (amended) \$55,000 annually for 3 years*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. **Motion carried 6-0**.

Regarding the wireless infrastructure project at BES and MES, Mr. Bauer entered, and Ms. Van Aken seconded, each of the following three motions:

Motion to award the Hardware bid for the elementary school wireless infrastructure project in the amount of \$85,620 to CDWG, 2 Corporate Drive, Shelton, CT. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion to award the Installation bid for the elementary school wireless infrastructure project in the amount of \$18,940 to Fusion Cable Systems, LLC, 246 Federal Road, Brookfield, CT. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion to award the Engineering Services bid for the elementary school wireless infrastructure project in the amount of \$1,825 to AOS, Inc., 296 East Main Street, Branford, CT. Motion carried 6-0.

XII. Board Announcements
None.

XIII. Privilege of the Floor
None.

Mr. Chapman entered a *motion to add an Executive Session to the meeting agenda, for the purpose of an administrative personnel matter*. Seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 6-0**.

XIV. Executive Session

Mr. Chapman entered a *motion to go into executive session for the above stated purpose*; seconded by Mr. Cosgriff.

Motion carried 6-0. The Board entered executive session at 9:50 pm

The Board returned from executive session at 11:15 pm.

Mr. Chapman entered a *motion to have the Personnel/Planning Committee be appointed as the Superintendent Search Committee*, seconded by Ms. Van Aken. **Motion carried 4-0-2** with Ms. Brown and Mr. Bauer abstaining.

XV. Adjournment

Mr. Cosgriff entered a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Van Aken.

The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 11:20 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

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, 2/7/14