

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

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophieazane Bartlett, George Bauer, Carol Ann Brown, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Janet Morgan, John Swendsen, and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Finance and Operations Wayne McAllister; Director of Instruction Sue Domanico; NHS Principal Andrew O'Brien, student representatives Stephanie Lewis and Vincent Pistrutto, and Board Clerk Deb Carlton

Audience members included: *Voices* reporter Mike Preato and about 15 additional members of the public.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve minutes of the Special Meeting of 2/3/14*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff, and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0-2** with Ms. Bartlett and Mr. Swendsen abstaining.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve minutes of the Regular Meeting of 2/3/14*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff, and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0-2** with Ms. Bartlett and Mr. Swendsen abstaining.

III. Presentation(s)/Reports to the Board

a. Region 14's Finest – Nonnewaug High School

Mr. Chapman called on Mr. O'Brien to provide this recognition.

Mr. O'Brien honored student Katie Rupar for her spontaneous a cappella performance of the Star Spangled Banner at a recent basketball game when technical difficulties prevented the prerecorded version from being played. He noted her initiative and school spirit. Vincent presented Katie with her award certificate.

Mr. O'Brien also recognized school nurse Bonnie Westerberg, R.N., for providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for students, as well as for her work as staff advisor to the Leo Club. He described her as an inspiration to all who know her. Vincent presented Ms. Westerberg with her award certificate, as well.

c. District Council Management Update

Mr. Goeler reported that the DMC report was reviewed at a recent administrators' retreat at which Nate Levenson was in attendance. Reading will be the main goal to focus on and to direct resources to. The administrators will meet again on Friday to look at how resources will be allocated and budgeted for. He also phone conferenced today with DMC to continue working with them on implementation in order to produce desired results.

b. Brenda Wilson – NWEA

Ms. Domanico welcomed Ms. Wilson to speak about the products being utilized in district. Ms. Wilson explained standards, the need to identify each student's entry point, computer adaptive assessments used to hone in on individual abilities, and customized assessments with more detailed information. NWEA is kid-centric and informs strategies that "assess to teach." Ms. Domanico explained that faculty will get NWEA training during an upcoming PD day and noted a first round of testing has been completed.

Mr. Chapman asked about lessons learned and how to roll this out most effectively since it is a lot to digest.

Ms. Wilson urged allowing teachers to fail, to experiment with it and to look at it over time in order to begin to teach at instructional level as opposed to grade level. She advocated giving teachers time, encouraging students to understand and take responsibility for assessments, and providing resources. It will take 3-4 years for growth to stabilize, she said. She responded to a number of parent questions on how teachers are to teach to 25 ability levels.

IV. Strategic Plan Status and Update

Mr. Goeler spoke about a second update to the plan, and said an update would be given at the next meeting. He said Ms. Domanico's PD council meets regularly, time and resources have been devoted to the assessment piece, and math nights have been held at BES, MES and WMS. He is back to blogging again, has hosted a roundtable that is viewable on NEAT TV, and spoke about data teams and a systems oriented approach, all of which will be in a formal report on the 18th.

He also noted parent emails regarding elementary class sizes, explaining that numbers are always fluctuating. He predicts the need for an additional grade 1 teacher next year at MES and a grade 3 teacher at BES.

V. Privilege of the Floor

Catherine Ringeisen, Woodbury, spoke at length about concerns over class sizes at MES, the stress on the teachers, and the struggles of the children. She asked the board to bear in mind that these early years are building block years and she is afraid the students are not getting enough attention and there is insufficient time to complete things. She believes many parents share her concerns.

Mr. Chapman noted receipt of the parents' emailed concerns and found them to be well articulated. The board will look closely at these areas of concern.

Lisa Rubacha, Woodbury, echoed Ms. Ringeisen's concerns at the 3rd grade level, too. The difference between second and third grade is huge, she said, and the pressure is evident, there is so much to do, teachers and students are working so hard, but it is very strained with the number of students per class. To the idea that class sizes are affected by late registration over the summer, she suggested flyers at the preschools and at the libraries. Another parent asked about whether there is a board liaison to the parents, and was told that, traditionally, the PTO is the parents' connection to the board.

Barbara Bradbury-Pape, Woodbury, asked how class sizes are determined; as her child has progressed through the grades, K-3, class sizes have increased for the same group of children, from 16 to 25. Mr. Goeler indicated the board has guidelines on maximum class sizes, but that it is not a perfect science.

Jessyca Tucker, Woodbury, also expressed concern over class sizes and how well teachers can be expected to do with all the NWEA and other responsibilities; we expect so much, she said, but unless resources are provided and smaller class sizes are established, she doesn't know how they can accomplish what they need to. Background checking of volunteers was also asked about, and Ms. Van Aken said that, next month, we will begin a contract with a service that will check all volunteers who come into the schools.

Ms. Morgan asked parents to bear in mind that our buildings may not have physical space for classes of 15 and that number of classrooms is also a factor in class size.

Larry McDonald, Woodbury, and Zoning board member, questioned how an event (Earth Day) got moved to the middle school grounds without BoE approval.

Stephanie Lewis, student representative reporting for the elementary schools, updated the board on a BES student leadership workshop, winter concerts, dental health week, sports day, science fair, and a CT Historical Society field trip. Vincent Pistrutto, student rep reporting for WMS and NHS, read a winning chemistry poetry contest submission and talked about student council work on climate at WMS, and highlighted an ugly sweater fundraiser at NHS, noted students qualifying for Northern Regionals, reported on Team Beta's competition in Groton and gave a sports update.

VI. Facilities, Finance and Operations Update

Ms. Morgan had no facilities update; her committee will meet on 3/10. Mr. Bauer, likewise, will meet on 3/10 when the finance committee will review a budget timeline.

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Mr. Swendsen noted 4 policies for first read tonight; his committee will next meet on 3/18.

Mr. McAllister reported that work on wireless infrastructure began today at the elementary schools and should take 3 weeks to complete. He gave expenditures through January 2014 for the two lawsuits: the referendum declaratory judgment in Litchfield court cost the district a total of \$19,864.26. The case in Waterbury court for the suit filed by Arras, Miller, Miller, Murphy and Suslavich have costs through January totaling \$49,667.83. For both lawsuits, the district has paid \$69,532.09, and the Waterbury case continues on.

Mr. Goeler informed the board of his decision to allow a student whose parent moved within Woodbury but out of the MES busing area to finish the year at MES. The student will be expected to be enrolled at BES in the fall.

VII. Safety Update

Ms. Van Aken reported the Safety Plan is being finalized and is due to the state by 7/15/14. Background checks begin in a month for all volunteers. This will be a background, not fingerprint, check with a very quick turnaround. The safety budget will be finalized at a meeting on Thursday.

VIII. Other Business

b. Heat Retention/Shade Curtains

Mr. McAllister outlined the bid process for this project for heat retention/shade curtain systems in the agriscience greenhouses. He requested a motion to award the bid to J.C. van der Spek Greenhouse Services, Berlin, CT for the prices outlined in the board members' packets.

Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to accept the bid award as written in the memo from Mr. McAllister, for a total of \$17,030, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff*. Mr. McAllister noted that the project is funded through a state construction grant. The **motion carried 8-0**.

c. Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trip

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to approve the NHS Cheerleaders trip to Myrtle Beach, SC, March 13-17, 2014, for 18 students and 13 chaperones, via coach bus, funded by students/fundraising*. Seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 8-0**.

d. Policies for first read: 2140 Superintendent of Schools, 2141 Recruitment/Appointment of Superintendent, 2300 Administrators Code of Professional Responsibility, 2400 Evaluation of Administrators

Mr. Swendsen asked the board to review for approval at the next meeting. Mr. Bauer requested the board receive current versions of these policies for comparison.

IX. Executive Session

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to go to executive session for the purpose of review/possible action on the Administrators' Negotiated Contract for 7/1/2014-6/30/2017*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 8-0**.

The board went to executive session at 9:41 pm and returned at 9:51 pm.

Mr. Bauer entered a motion to accept the agreement between the Regional School District 14 Board of Education and the Nonnewaug Administrators' Group 7/1/2014-6/30/2017. Ms. Morgan seconded the motion and the **motion carried 8-0**.

X. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Bauer. The **motion carried 8-0**.
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:55 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, 3/7/14