

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, October 21, 2013 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 Susan Domanico; NHS Student Representatives Vincent Pistritto and Stephanie Lewis; NHS Principal Andrew O'Brien; and Board Clerk Deb Carlton
Audience members included: Bethlehem BoF member Mike Devine, one member of the press, and about 8 additional members of the public

I. Call to Order

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Presentations

Mr. Goeler asked Mr. O'Brien to present Region 14's Finest Awards for Nonnewaug High School. Mr. O'Brien recognized student Sara Velleca for her contributions to Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society and cross country and track. She was the clear choice of Mr. O'Brien's faculty for this award. Mr. Bauer presented Sara with her certificate and the Board's congratulations. Mr. O'Brien also recognized teacher Mike Sturges with a faculty achievement award, citing the positive atmosphere he creates in class, his energy, connection with students and differentiated assessment strategies, as well as his contributions to the community through activities such as Trick or Treat Street and The Bald and the Beautiful.

Mr. Goeler introduced Patrice McCarthy, the Deputy Director of CAFE, who provided the Board with a number of publications to assist them in running a productive meeting. She advised them that their authority is only as a single body and meetings are their only opportunity to discuss/deliberate. They are obliged to post meetings and allow attendance by the public; also, they must take and post minutes within 7 days. Though most all school districts provide more, minutes are only required to record who was present and results of any votes taken. Minutes are not transcripts but rather a summary of issues discussed, with 2-3 sentences on each discussion item. As to public participation, she advised that board meetings are meetings held in public, not public forums or public hearings. Privilege of the floor is not required but most districts allow for it, usually with a 3 minute time limit, and usually without engaging in conversation with speakers. Mr. Bauer asked whether most school districts televise meetings, and she said they do. Mr. Chapman described meetings as the balancing act of engagement with the community while conducting a meeting and trying to make decisions based on all input. She agreed, stressing it is important to value community input but that, as chair, it would fall to him to dial back privilege of the floor if it becomes a question/answer session. Ms. Morgan asked, if the public brings questions that the board cannot excuse itself and discuss privately, when are these issues discussed? Ms. McCarthy suggested the following meeting, if a BoE concern, or to the attention of the Superintendent if a student issue. He would then bring the resolution back to the board at a later date. Mr. Chapman asked how much of what is said during privilege of the floor should be recorded. She said not more than the person's name and a phrase about the issue raised. Mr. Cosgriff asked about the board as a subdivision of the legislature. She said they are agents of the state in terms of implementing the educational interests of the state on a local level. With regards to the budget, they interact with the towns. Ms. Van Aken asked, in her experience, how many privileges of the floor most districts allow. She said most have one, early in the meeting after review of the minutes.

III. Review of Minutes

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 7, 2013*. Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Ms. Morgan, the **motion carried 6-0-2** with Mr. Chapman and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

IV. Correspondence

None.

V. Report from the Chairman

Mr. Chapman thanked his colleagues for carrying on without him at the last meeting. He noted that Saturday's retreat was a good half day of discussing priorities, and progress was made on the construction of meeting agendas and other items. A meeting with the leadership team will follow. Decisions will be made as to where meetings will be held. He also thanked the student participants and appreciates their time given their own busy schedules.

VI. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Goeler addressed concerns raised by the public at the last meeting. Regarding merit scholars, NHS had one commended student in 2009, 2010 and 2012, and 5 commended in 2013. Additionally, 42 students earned AP Scholar designation last year which speaks to the number of students taking AP courses and also earning high scores.

He is looking to create a narrative summary of BoE minutes each month and take that to places where the public can pick up a copy and see what the board is working on. He reported that the District Management Council recently interviewed faculty members, is compiling data and studying survey data. They will narrow their findings to assess the highest impact areas for our district. He will meet with his economic development committee tomorrow to discuss ways to reach out to the business community, and will be looking at course offerings to see which prepare students to be career ready and business prepared. He offered a handout regarding the strategic planning and curriculum development progress, and he and Ms. Domanico spoke about changes to the educator evaluation document which they will inform the board of prior to sending to the talent department at the state.

Ms. Morgan requested an electronic copy of the document so that changes can be tracked.

Mr. Goeler also showed a template for the school improvement plans which mirror the format of the district one.

Vincent updated the board on activities at NHS and WMS, including blood drive, French toast fundraiser dinner, leadership conferences for FBLA and DECA, and sports events; also, he highlighted teachers transferred to WMS this year, talked about Make a Splash Day which is aimed at water conservation, spoke about the expanding strings program, money raised at Go the Distance, and efforts to increase club participation with a club fair.

Covering the elementary schools, Stephanie talked about recent book fairs, hot dog roasts, open houses, a bird assembly, student council elections, historical tour, principals' coffees, upcoming Halloween dance and parent conferences, and recognition of fire prevention month.

VII. Privilege of the Floor (agenda specific)

Mr. Chapman read the following disclaimer prior to opening the floor for agenda specific public comment:

The Board welcomes public participation and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 3 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. To protect the impartiality of the board, we will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about the Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with Region 14 schools. Such issues should be brought to the school administration. The board will not respond to comments made during public comment, except to clarify issues. When appropriate, district administration will follow-up at a later point in time.

Karen Miller, Bethlehem, spoke about how the Board represents the public, that she'd like to see the money go to the students and not to lawyer fees, that her prior concerns have not been added to this agenda and the board has not decided to re-do the building referendum vote.

Art McNally, Woodbury, thanked the board for including his written statement in the minutes, understands that they must do what the state mandates, but reminded them that they also represent the towns.

Tom Arras, Woodbury, asked about when the board discussed in an open forum decisions resulting from the error in posting the building referendum and moving forward before the lawsuit, and not allowing a legal vote.

VIII. Report from Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. McAllister is studying the feasibility of a school breakfast program about which the administrators have expressed interest. He will meet with Peter Brooks to discuss costs associated with it and will bring this to the Finance Committee. He also responded to the question of legal expenses, to date, for lawsuits. Our attorney will break out the costs of the 2 suits but, as of today, the combined cost is \$23,674.

IX. Committee Reports

For Policy, Mr. Swendsen had no formal report. He will meet with Mr. Goeler about revisions to the last group of policies approved. A comprehensive review of the 1000 series is next.

For Public/Community Relations, Ms. Brown reported that her committee met tonight and is working on more activities that involve the public and increased offerings on NEAT TV. She is pleased with news coverage in the papers, and welcomed the student reps and their reports. Her next meeting will be prior to the 11/18 BoE meeting.

For Facilities, Ms. Morgan's committee has not met and will next meet on 10/22 at 6:00 pm

For Finance, Mr. Bauer reported his next meeting is 10/22 at 7 pm. Also, Building Committee will not meet again until the legal issues are resolved.

Ms. Van Aken reported that Planning has not met, but has an upcoming meeting with the leadership team. Also, the Ad hoc Safety Committee will meet this Friday at noon.

For Negotiations, Mr. Cosgriff noted that administrator negotiations are ongoing; that group will meet next week.

X. Old Business

The Board approved policies received at the last meeting for first read.

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 4100 Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting*. Second by Mr. Bauer. Discussion followed around sequence of actions around reporting. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 5000 Equal Educational Opportunity*. Second by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 6143 Wellness*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 1140 Distribution of materials by students*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 1212 Volunteers*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. Discussion followed. Mr. Bauer felt the revision was excellent regarding background checks. All board members have endorsed this in the past for situations when volunteers have unsupervised contact with students. Because background checks are needed only for unsupervised volunteers, it will need to be made clear to district personnel that some volunteers will not have been background checked. Mr. Chapman directed Mr. Goeler to create an accompanying administrative regulation for this policy. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 1313 Gifts to School Personnel*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. Ms. Morgan thought the \$75 limit was high. Mr. Chapman noted that, often, money is pooled by parents so that one large gift can be purchased, and imagined that the dollar amount was probably reasonable. **Motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve Board policy 1331 Smoking in School Facilities*. Second by Ms. Van Aken. Mr. Bauer noted that the policy also references "other tobacco products," and wondered if the previous version had, too. Mr. Goeler responded that if it didn't, it should have. **Motion carried 8-0.**

XI. New Business

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to approve the WMS trip to Washington, D.C., for grade 8 students with faculty and parent chaperones, June 4-6, 2014, via coach bus and including hotel accommodations at Sheraton Pentagon City, Arlington, VA, funded by students' families at an estimated cost of \$500/student*.
Seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve the Agriscience trip to the National FFA Convention in Louisville, KY, 10/28-11/2, 2013 for 35 students and 5 faculty chaperones, via coach bus and funded by students' families*.
With a second from Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 8-0.**

XII. Board Announcements

Ms. Van Aken announced a Drug Take Back event this Saturday, 10/26, for 10 am til 2 pm at the Woodbury PD and, she believed, also in Bethlehem, sponsored by the DEA, resident troopers and the local ASAP group.

Mr. Bauer noted that, in addition to the excellent French toast fundraiser, Team Beta also recently visited the local library for a great outreach opportunity. He also noted the upcoming CAFE/CAPSS convention and recommended it as a worthwhile event.

Mr. Swendsen reminded everyone that October is fire safety month, urging the checking of smoke detectors.

Mr. Chapman gave a brief update of the actions in court. The straightforward Litchfield case received a hearing with Judge Pickard and it is hoped that a decision will be issued in November. The Waterbury case has become more complicated, and a third status conference is scheduled for 10/22.

XIII. Privilege of the Floor

Deb DeSorbo, Woodbury, asked how the new background check rule will be communicated to PTOs and parents, how much time groups will be given to comply, and whether afterschool events will be included.

Mr. Chapman replied that an administrative regulation will be needed first before the policy can be implemented and reasonable time will be allowed for compliance.

Ms. Miller returned to ask about an organizational chart for the district – she would like to have one – and also asked about per pupil expenditures, costs for online education for all grade levels, costs for food wasted in our schools, and asked how residency of our students is verified.

Mr. McNally returned to speak about the lawsuits, the posting error which makes it obvious that the vote was illegal, his prediction that the total spent on litigation will reach \$30,000, and urged including an agenda item for the next meeting to discuss doing the vote over.

XIV. Adjournment

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to adjourn*. Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 8-0**.

The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:10 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, 10/23/13