

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, September 3, 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; Principals Alice Jones, MaryLou Torre, Andrew O'Brien and Susan Ruddock; Director of Instruction Susan Domanico; and Board Clerk Deb Carlton

Audience members included: Bethlehem Board of Finance member Mike Devine, Sgt. Joe Roden, one member of the press, and about eight additional members of the community

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Presentation**

Sgt. Roden thanked the Board for supporting the idea of School Resource Officers (SRO) and said the officers hired bring a wealth of experience and are very dedicated to their work.

Ms. Jones introduced "Officer Tom" Federowicz, who she said hit the ground running as the WMS SRO. Officer Tom thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve and hopes to not let them down.

Mr. O'Brien introduced Officer Ron Currier, whom he described as a great fit for NHS. Officer Currier described the school as having a great atmosphere and thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve the community of Woodbury and Bethlehem.

Ms. Torre introduced Officer Craig Tibbals, whose first order of business at MES was Kindergarten bus orientation. The students have welcomed him immediately and he will be a partner in keeping the school safe, she said. Officer Tibbals thanked the Board for choosing him for MES, which he considers a great fit for him.

Ms. Ruddock introduced Officer Norman George who also participated in bus orientation at BES and will attend open house. He is completely inserted into the fabric of the school already, she said, and part of the BES family. She thanked the Board for their efforts in keeping the kids safe, physically and emotionally. Officer George said the school is a great fit for him; thanked the board for choosing him; and said it is an honor.

Tom Brayton told the Board of his plans for his Eagle Scout project. He was honored to have had Dawn Hochsprung as his elementary principal at BES and plans a memorial stone bench and garden as his project, to be constructed this fall, hopefully. He will seek community support to maintain the garden, and will also hold a pasta dinner to raise funds.

Mr. Bauer will help out with communication with the Lions Club and the town.

Mr. Chapman said the Board will review details like size/type/scope and will put this item on the next agenda.

The principals reported on the opening of school.

Mr. O'Brien told of freshman orientation which included coaches and club advisors, said the first day was energetic and everyone was glad to see friends again, and now it is business as usual. He looks forward to the anticipated NEASC report, and a bolstered advisory schedule in line with what WMS has.

Ms. Jones spoke of a great opening of school, noting the presence of NHS student Vincent Pistrutto and realizing what a quick 3 years middle school is. Her staff's greatest joy is when the kids return, she said, and many teachers came to her, and to Eric Bergeron, to say what a great start to the year this was. Her school will be looking at CMT data showing high levels of reading for her students, and will work to make them better writers, too, and thinkers.

Ms. Ruddock had a wonderful beginning of the year and enjoyed being able to introduce herself to all classes. She spoke of the many new initiatives facing staff and that the work is cut out for us. She recognizes the teachers need her leadership and that we are all in it together and will work together because everyone takes the charge seriously.

Ms. Torre reported that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students were delighted to see their hallway painted lilac and hydrangea. She found the dedication of all teachers on day-one amazing; buses are running well, and parents are delighted that

the students are happy to be back to school. She spoke of the new math program, which will require investment on the part of teachers to make it work, as well as readers' workshop, and the new teacher evaluation plan. She could see at the first faculty meeting that everyone realizes there is a lot on the plate, but they want to make it work.

Mr. Goeler thanked the principals for their great leadership.

**III. Review of Minutes**

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 19, 2013*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 7-0-1**, with Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

**IV. Correspondence**

None.

**V. Report from the Chairman**

Mr. Chapman expressed how good it was to hear the principals' reports and to meet the SROs. He thanked the community for its support of the SRO initiative, which seems to be starting off well and took a lot of hard work to accomplish. He was not able to attend the opening convocation due to business travel, but will represent the BoE and meet with faculties at all 4 schools in the near future to carry the message of cooperation between the Board and faculty. The district has been given resources to make things happen, and he looks forward to a busy and productive school year.

Mr. Chapman also marked the passing of Mr. Duncan McDougal, offering condolences to his family and thanking him for always holding the Board's feet to the fire.

**VI. Report from the Superintendent**

Mr. Goeler hoped everyone had a nice Labor Day weekend. He began by calling on Agriscience student and FFA Historian, Rebecca Reznek, for her report. She spoke of the first FFA meeting of the year, on 8/22, and freshman icebreakers; on 8/27, officers served as school guides for freshmen; students operated a milkshake booth at the Goshen Fair last weekend and alumni had a chili booth; teams will go to the Big E 9/13-14 to prepare for Nationals; and a college/career fair is scheduled for 9/24.

NHS student Vincent Pistrutto also reported on a smooth first three days of school. Efforts will be made to select a second student representative to the Board. When asked, Vincent spoke of his audition and selection for the National Concert Band.

Mr. Goeler spoke of the two day new teacher orientation, the very moving swearing in ceremony for SROs, and a very positive opening convocation. He greeted buses on the first day with Mr. McAllister and brought bagels to the bus drivers. The teacher evaluation committee met briefly about the evaluation plan which includes 4 goals and involves all teachers. He visited all schools Friday and again today.

Ms. Domanico also reported on the various activities in which the elementary math specialist has been involved, including setting up functional offices and meeting spaces at both schools, introducing her role to teachers and students, coordinating the distribution of program materials, manipulatives and resource library enrichment items, and evaluating alignment and effectiveness of the new My Math program. She also spoke of events which have occurred since the district submitted its plan for teacher evaluation and the challenges we face moving forward, including moving to the new version of the rubric, developing goals related to student growth, and sorting out required meetings and numbers of observations.

Mr. Chapman expressed concern about whether the plan submitted to and approved by the State is still one that keeps us in compliance, and he also asked how the training went.

Ms. Domanico indicated that the teachers are anxious to comply; we have models to look at and will work collaboratively with teachers, departments and administrators to see that the appropriate level of rigor is there. Time will be set aside on Mondays, when students are released early, for rich collaboration; also, administrators can begin collecting evidence almost immediately and are having discussions with teachers regarding goals already.

Mr. Bauer saw us between a rock and a hard place; training was done a certain way and is now being changed up. He asked if there is any technology or programs that could assist with the changes. Ms. Domanico explained there are core requirements from the State to set parameters; beyond that, districts may choose rubrics, vendors, etc. The State, however, does offer "carrots" for choosing certain products.

**VII. Privilege of the Floor (agenda specific)**

Tom Arras, Woodbury, spoke regarding proposed changes to the agenda format that may limit privilege of the floor to one time per meeting. He discourages that because people's schedules may cause them to miss the first one or not be able to stay for the second. Also, the second PoF allows for comments on items discussed during the meeting.

Art McNally, Woodbury, asked if BoE committee assignments are on the website and was told they are. He asked about the postponed Building Committee meeting of 8/27; had the committee met, he asked, what would have been discussed? Also, he wanted to know what steps the Board will take to ensure that the posting error for the building referendum does not happen again, and when the Board will take responsibility for the "illegal vote" rather than put the towns through the expense of litigation.

Mr. Bauer and Mr. Chapman explained that the Building Committee is getting RFPs – for survey work, commissioning, and testing - ready for when the work of the committee can resume. The 8/27 meeting was postponed because, at that time, there was no information or guidance available about the status of the lawsuits; however, the meeting will be rescheduled. Mr. Chapman indicated that a status report will be given at the next BoE meeting, and that steps for seeing that this type of error does not happen again will include developing and initial/sign off type checklist for QA/QC.

**VIII. Report from Director of Finance and Operations**

Mr. McAllister required authorization to list his as well as Mr. Goeler's names as signatures for submitting reimbursement claims to the CSDE. He requested a motion to that effect.

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to authorize Jody Goeler and Wayne McAllister to sign the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs*. Seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 8-0**.

**IX. Committee Reports**

For Policy, Mr. Swendsen said the committee will meet next Tuesday, and will send out a meeting schedule soon. The next batch of policies will be given at the next BoE meeting for first read, and this will finish the "most critical."

For Public Relations, Ms. Brown will adopt a meeting schedule of 6:30 pm on the night of the second BoE meeting of the month, and will contact the PTO reps and assemble a committee that includes community members as advisors. She noted three great recent news articles: the Voices article on NHS English teacher Conor Gereg, the one about Ms. Domanico, and one regarding art scholarships.

Ms. Morgan indicated that the Facilities/Enrollment/Transportation committee will meet on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm. Finance will follow the same pattern and meet at 7:30 pm on those nights, said Mr. Bauer.

Ms. Van Aken's Planning/Personnel committee will meet prior to the first BoE meeting of each month, at 6 pm, beginning on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

As previously mentioned, the Building Committee will reconvene after the district hears from the courts.

Mr. Cosgriff reported success with regards to negotiations. He noted the very successful sessions with the custodians, particularly. The paras have finally settled, too.

**X. Old Business**

Mr. Chapman tabled the topic of changes to the meeting agenda.

The topic of the memorial bench was covered in the earlier presentation.

Ms. Morgan remained concerned about the issue with the NHS play, asking whether this has yet been addressed.

Mr. Goeler said he had met with Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Bauer, and will meet with the play director this week.

Ms. Van Aken wondered if a memorial bench is also planned at MES and it was suggested that the Board wait to see if a proposal is received.

**XI. New Business**

The Board discussed higher than desired enrollment numbers in both Kindergarten and Grade 3.

Ms. Morgan asked why these numbers were not known before the start of school, and worried about the effect to students who may now be reassigned to new classes if additional faculty is added.

Mr. Goeler indicated that he knew we were on the high end of recommended sizes, but that students move into district during the summer and only a few here and there will cause a situation such as this.

Mr. Chapman noted that staffing was tight, with not much allowance for new students.

Mr. Goeler saw options of either adding paras or creating new classes.

Mr. Chapman urged looking at physical space, from where in the budget funds would come, and analyzing best use of staff. Ms. Van Aken stressed equity between the 2 buildings, too, and maintaining an equal educational experience.

Mr. Bauer noted that modifications to recommended class sizes allow for 18-22 in Kindergarten with the addition of a para. He suggested a review by the Facilities/Enrollment/Transportation committee in order to move more quickly on a solution.

Ms. Van Aken suggested, if additional classes are formed, that volunteers first be sought in order to minimize upheaval. She also urged looking at the class size guidelines, which have not been revised in years.

Mr. Goeler will plan to have a recommendation at the next BoE meeting.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve the agreement between Regional School District 14 and Teamsters Local Union No. 677 International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers of America July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2017.*

Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 8-0.**

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve the agreement between Regional School District 14 and the Paraprofessional Union Local 1303-257 of Council 4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, July 1, 2012-June 30, 2015.* Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 8-0.**

**XII. Board Announcements**

None.

**XIII. Privilege of the Floor**

Mr. McNally returned to read from an article suggesting that the Common Core is a domestic spying program being used to track citizens, and urged the Board to be aware of the potential for this. He also said it would have been useful for the audience to be able to be looking at copies of the contracts being discussed and approved earlier.

Mr. McAllister explained that, until they are approved by the Board, these documents are not yet public documents. (Copies of both agreements were made available to audience members after BoE approval)

Deb DeSorbo, Woodbury, questioned the addition of a security clause in the district's Use of Facilities form. The requirement to monitor all doors and account for everyone coming in and out of the building when it is reserved for use by a group will make use of the district's facilities impractical. Ms. DeSorbo was told this would be looked in to and she will be contacted.

Alice Pistrutto, Woodbury, parent and R14 Instructional Assistant, agreed it was a great start to the school year. She thanked the Board for the SROs. She also advocated for the lowest possible numbers in Kindergarten, but felt IAs could assist in larger classes. She also felt that, done properly, splitting classes and moving students can work. She also asked the board to consider how it supports musicians. Unlike athletes, students involved in music must cover expenses such as admissions fees, transportation, and private lessons. She asked the Board to consider the cost of families – some of whom are unable to support their students' desire to pursue music – as compared to what is expected of parents of athletes.

**XIV. Executive Session**

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to enter executive session regarding status involving a teacher and central office administration and to include Mr. Goeler*. Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 8-0**. The Board moved to executive session at 9:41 pm.

**XV. Adjournment**

Following executive session, Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to adjourn*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 8-0**.

The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:55 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, 9/10/13