

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held Monday, April 7, 2014 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophiezane Bartlett, George Bauer, Carol Ann Brown, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, John Swendsen, and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Finance and Operations Wayne McAllister; Director of Instruction Sue Domanico; Administrators Alice Jones, Kim Culkin, MayLou Torre, Eric Bergeron, Susan Ruddock, Andrew O'Brien, Jose Martinez, Bill Nemece, and Jeff Turner; Board Clerk Deb Carlton

Absent: Janet Morgan

Audience members included: about 12 additional members of the public

I. Call to Order

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to approve minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 17, 2014.*

Entered by Mr. Cosgriff, and seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 6-0-1** with Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

III. Presentation(s)/Reports to the Board

Mr. Chapman indicated that the objective of the meeting would be to review the budget in detail and to prepare to present it to the town officials tomorrow evening. Mr. McAllister explained that the leadership team had met repeatedly and reached consensus about class sizes, and he directed the board and audience to a multi paged handout which began with class size and enrollment estimates for BES. The same information was reviewed for MES; for that school, the low estimate of 39 Kindergarten students raised concerns. Rationale was given for this number, though it was acknowledged that if the number rises, another class will need to be added. Ms. Brown felt that, with enrollment declining, Kindergarten is where you would expect to see that begin.

Numbers at WMS were reviewed next, and Ms. Van Aken questioned why there are more certified teachers there than at the elementary level. Ms. Jones explained that there are always more certified teachers at the middle school level, that it is difficult to explain, but that the model we follow is very typical. She was asked if the number of paras at her school is necessary and she responded they are all IEP driven; there are no general ed paras at WMS.

The numbers at NHS were similarly reviewed. Mr. O'Brien noted a reduction of sections and larger class sizes. That school will lose 1 science and 1 Social Studies teacher.

Mr. McAllister concluded with financial impact, showing an overall reduction in staff of 1.5, for a savings of \$164,023. Applied to the earlier proposed budget figure, the new amount represents a 2.3% increase over last year, or \$738,794 more than the current year's budget.

Mr. Chapman questioned Ms. Culin about the five significant opportunities recommended by DMC, recalling that each one alone would require much work to do well, and that reading was agreed to be the #1 focus, followed by better allocation of paras, psychologists, and social workers. He isn't sure the budget addresses any of these suggestions and wants to be sure that in the coming year we are taking steps to plan and execute the opportunities that we have identified as highest value. Given the current metrics, the number of paras, the low ratio of paras to students being out of line with other districts, as well as caseloads for psychologists, he asked what we can begin to do now to make the most of budget dollars. He is interested in helping to roll out the changes for next year and asked if there were opportunities now to better deploy resources, consolidate, and potentially offset with the inclusion of a behaviorist.

Ms. Culin agreed reading is a priority – for all students – and is looking at how paras are assigned as they are all based on IEPs. It will take time to re-evaluate why paras are with students, and what alternative services will be provided if a para is not. Considerable planning is needed, including looking at the structures for interventions and a plan to reallocate resources in the most efficient way.

Mr. Goeler added that these decisions do not end with the budget. Reallocation of resources and core instruction in reading at the elementary level is the focus.

Mr. Chapman asked about next steps. Mr. McAllister said meeting with town officials tomorrow will be followed by adopting the budget for public hearing.

IV. Strategic Plan Status and Update

Mr. Goeler noted that the third quarter update of the strategic plan is on the website.

V. Privilege of the Floor

Barbara Bradbury-Pape, Woodbury, commended the board for listening to the parents and asked how the parents can now help the board. The board urged her to continue to be involved, come to meetings, and talk up the budget with her friends and neighbors and emphasize the need to vote. Ms. Pape wondered whether the district, when a large expenditure is coming, ever tries to "soften the blow" ahead of time, and was told we do. Mr. McAllister noted that this budget proposal includes \$390,000 for a debt service reserve, in anticipation of the debt service increasing with the building project. Mr. Chapman agreed that a 3-5 year rolling "look ahead" is needed.

VI. Facilities, Finance and Operations Update

Mr. Bauer reported that the Finance Committee has been busy with budget work; the board will meet with town officials tomorrow. Ms. Van Aken asked him where we are with the Building Committee. He responded that the Waterbury lawsuit has created a hold of sorts, although planning can continue. Also, we await the state's decision on whether or not we may go back out to bid for architectural and construction management services.

Ms. Brown noted that the Public Relations Committee will next meet on 4/21 at BES and will discuss ways the public can assist in passing the budget.

VII. Safety Update

Ms. Van Aken reported that background checks will soon begin. She summarized this evening's meeting of the Planning Committee, which included discussion on teacher professional development, efforts at the middle school to combine Social Studies with Language Arts to the benefit of students, and a decision to forgo adding lacrosse as a NHS sport for next year but to keep it under consideration for the future. She is interested in having Ms. Jones and members of her faculty come before the board to elaborate on the work they are doing in combining like disciplines to provide a richer experience for students.

VIII. Other Business

Mr. Swendsen reviewed work done by the Policy Committee to update/revise/delete policies as needed.

He brought 3 to the Board for approval. He requested a *motion to approve Board Policy 2140 Superintendent of Schools as revised*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 7-0**.

He requested a *motion to approve Board Policy 5136.6 Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco as revised*.

Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 7-0**.

He requested a *motion to approve Board Policy 1250 Visits to the Schools as revised*.

Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 7-0**.

Discussion followed regarding policy on SROs, as they are employees of the towns but in our buildings.

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Bauer entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Ms. Van Aken. The **motion carried 7-0**.

The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 8:35 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, 4/10/14