

A Special Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held Thursday, January 23, 2014, in the Central Office Conference Room, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members George Bauer, Carol Ann Brown, Charles Cosgriff, Janet Morgan, and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Finance and Operations Wayne McAllister; Board Clerk Deb Carlton

Unavailable to attend: Board members John Chapman, Sophieane Bartlett and John Swendsen

Audience members: Woodbury First Selectman Bill Butterly, community member Eileen Budrewicz, reporters Rick Harrison (Rep-Am) and Mike Preato (*Voices*)

Ms. Van Aken called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon

Ms. Van Aken requested a *motion to approve the following out-of-state/overnight field trips:*

- a. NHS agriscience students to Washington, D.C. for horticulture themed trip, 4/3/14-4/5/14, for approximately 47 students and 6 faculty/parent chaperones, via coach bus, student funded*
- b. NHS music students to Disney Music Festival/Performance, Orlando, FL, 4/10/14-4/17/14, for approximately 55 students and 7 faculty and parent chaperones, via coach bus, funded by revenue generated by fund raisers and student funds*
- c. NHS business students to DECA International Career Development Conference, Atlanta, GA, 5/2/14-5/7/14, for five students and one faculty chaperone, via air transportation, funded by NHS DECA and student funds*

Motion entered by Ms. Morgan and seconded by Mr. Bauer. Discussion followed.

Mr. Goeler explained that the trips all support the programs to which they are related, will be well supervised with chaperones known to the district who have been appropriately vetted.

Mr. Bauer asked about background checks, feeling the parents would qualify for that process.

Mr. Goeler said they are checked through the state's sex offender registry, are all volunteers we have worked with before and who will not have unsupervised contact with students. Asked if this complies with our administrative regulation regarding volunteers, Mr. Goeler said they fit with our current policy. The accompanying regulation is still being developed by the Ad hoc Safety Committee.

With regard to that, Ms. Van Aken said she is looking for a firm date to roll out that regulation, and this will be discussed at tomorrow's meeting of that committee. She wants all procedures and paperwork in place for August and she will work to develop a timeline for the regulation to go into effect.

Ms. Brown asked whether all current volunteers will go through the new background check procedure and was told they will.

The motion previously made and seconded carried 5-0.

For the purpose of discussion, Ms. Van Aken entered the following motion: *To authorize the Region 14 Board of Education's attorney to bring legal action against, and seek attorneys' fees and any other available remedy from, the plaintiffs in the case of Arras, Miller, Miller, Murphy, and Suslavich v. Region 14 wherever and whenever appropriate.*

Second by Mr. Cosgriff. Discussion followed.

Mr. Goeler offered support of the motion in the form of a handout detailing legal fees incurred for the Waterbury case, as well as those charged for the Litchfield decision, which has concluded.

Mr. McAllister reviewed the handout with the board which shows, to date, \$33,575.91 in attorney fees for the Waterbury case through December 2013. He anticipates the January bill will put the total close to \$40,000. The declaratory judgment in Litchfield Court cost the district \$19,864.26 in total.

Mr. Goeler noted that we continue to incur costs for the Waterbury case. Our attorney seeks the authorization to do whatever is necessary to recover these costs.

Ms. Van Aken noted that the Waterbury plaintiffs never chose to join in the Litchfield case and sees evidence in the two sets of legal bills of where the taxpayers' money is being wasted. She would like our attorney to have every tool available in the toolbox and sees this authorization as the way to give him this. The taxpayers, she said, are owed this money back. The plaintiffs' motivation was obviously not to determine the legality of the referendum, as shown in their claims.

Mr. Goeler added that the Waterbury case was based on the premise that the referendum was illegal.

Mr. Cosgriff felt that the variety of claims being made in the Waterbury case not having to do with the referendum, such as those accusing "unfair acts and practices in the conduct of trade or commerce" as well as Constitutional violations, should be made known to the public.

Mr. Goeler noted that Attorney Sommaruga had reviewed these at a BoE meeting.

Mr. Cosgriff urged reviewing it again, to illustrate what is dragging this out.

Ms. Van Aken believes the latest accusation is that we are somehow in contempt of court. She agreed that an update at the next Board meeting would be in order.

Ms. Morgan asked for clarification that all monetary charges will be sought, including those incurred by Attorney Sommaruga in *seeking* this relief.

Mr. Goeler explained that there is always cost/benefit analysis in determining action such as this. Attorney Sommaruga acts as an agent of the Board and would consult with him, Mr. McAllister, and the Board before moving forward.

Mr. Bauer requested a re-read of the motion to be clear on what the Board is authorizing. He assumes it would include seeking Attorney Sommaruga's fees.

Ms. Van Aken re-read the motion on the floor.

Mr. Bauer would like to see Attorney Sommaruga conference with the towns to be sure they are in agreement with any action he might take.

The motion previously entered and seconded carried 5-0.

Ms. Morgan entered a *motion to adjourn*. Seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 5-0**.

The special meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 12:18 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, 1/23/14