

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, June 3, 2013 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, Maryanne Van Aken and Pamela Zmek; NHS Physics Teacher Mike Murphy; Woodbury Music Foundation members William Geddes, Marc Kroll, Lynne Kearney and Bob Clarke; Region 14 Strings Instructor Harris Daigle; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

Absent: Board members George Bauer, John Chapman, and Sophieazane Bartlett

Audience members included: about 4 members of the community

I. Call to Order

Mr. Suslavich called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance

II. Presentations

Mr. Geddes presented Mr. Goeler with a check in the amount of \$8160.00 from the Woodbury-Bethlehem Community Music Foundation to cover the cost of strings instruments for elementary and middle school students unable to afford or obtain instruments of their own. Mr. Daigle had identified this need, and they responded with a grant. Since 2005, the Foundation has provided over \$50,000 in grants, mostly to Region 14.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Suslavich thanked the group for their many contributions to our schools.

Mr. Murphy's students reported on Team Beta's recent activities and achievements. Becca DiSarro, Alex Williams and Matt Pivarnik told of the World Championship competition in St. Louis, CT Regionals, Spring Electrathon Race, CT State Championship hosted by CIAC, the Battlecry competition at WPI, and the Where is Wolcott competition. The team was awarded the Excellence in Engineering Award at CT Regionals and Becca was named to the Dean's List. The student provided a powerpoint with pictures of the various events.

Ms. Zmek thanked both student and parents for all they do for Region 14 and for being a great inspiration to all.

Mr. Cosgriff thanked Mr. Murphy, as well as Mr. DiSarro, for their time and the knowledge they share with students.

Mr. Swendsen added that he has seen these students at various venues and commended them for their presence in the community.

Ms. Van Aken commended the students for representing our schools so well, adding that they are why the Board is here, why they do what they do. She asked them to come back again soon.

III. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Suslavich requested a *motion to accept the minutes of the emergency meeting of April 19, 2013*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 5-0**.

The minutes of the special meetings of May 13 and May 16 were tabled.

Mr. Suslavich requested a *motion to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of May 20, 2013*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 5-0**.

IV. Correspondence

None.

V. Report from the Chairman

None.

**VI. Report from the Superintendent**

Mr. Goeler reported back on the board's request for expectations of student performance on standardized tests based on internal assessments done throughout the year. The high school has been focusing on reading and understanding primary sources, extracting and organizing information to support controlling ideas, and preparing for the writing across disciplines section of CAPT. At the middle school, Dr. Rigazio-Digilio has been providing instructional support on visible learning and metacognition; developing and using common formative assessments, benchmarks, progress monitoring for intervention, and regular data review. Along with direct assessments in writing three times annually, teachers are also incorporating Columbia Writing Project unit assessments and using aligned rubrics to monitor progress. At the elementary level, weekly CMT memos outline weekly focus areas in literacy and/or mathematics. Mid-year math assessments were done in December; strategy building on DRP assessments and direct assessment of writing prompts in January. Columbia remains the focus and mirrors CCSS.

Mr. Goeler also noted the lack of a third candidate from either member town at the recent nominations meeting. Bethlehem brought the matter to court, a compromise was reached, and a second nominations meeting will be held on June 6<sup>th</sup> and elections will follow a week later, on June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Also, a FOI request was received from Rick Harrison of the Republican American. The district will allow him access to all emails received and sent by Mr. Turk during the month of April.

Interviews with finalists for the BES principal position will be conducted with the board on June 6<sup>th</sup>, and with finalists for the Director of Finance/Operations on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Goeler highlighted his recent activities, including observations at the high school with the leadership team on 5/21; interviews for BES principal on 5/21; a meeting with Kim Culkin and Nate Levenson on 5/22; pig roast and roll out of the town's new hummer on 5/24; and a superintendents' leadership forum last week, along with MaryLou Torre and Eric Bergeron. He noted Jose Martinez's good work with teachers on math standards, adding that new math programs are needed at WMS and NHS. He has met with his advisory council and will hope to meet once more before the end of the school year.

**VII. Privilege of the Floor**

Jim Crocker, Woodbury, asked for continued discussion of academic performance because he feels we don't speak of that often enough. Only once before has he heard of it, when principals came to report on test results. Reports should be offered on performance that are metrics driven. He calculates that we spend more than 80% of CT schools, and MES performs at 60%. WMS is best, he said, at 81% but he asks how to justify laying off 3 teachers at a school performing at a mediocre level. Safety is a first priority, but student performance is the major focus. He would like to see a management plan designed to raise performance; otherwise, we are just hoping, and that is not a game plan.

Mr. Goeler assured him that all budget decisions are with gains in student performance first. Numbers of teachers are related to teacher to student ratio. He added that professional development is very important to teacher effectiveness.

Ms. Zmek added that she hopes, for next year, even over the summer, that a District Improvement Plan be in place.

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

None.

**IX. Committee Reports**

**Bylaws:** the committee met on 5/30 and will request action under New Business

**Public Relations:** no report

**Facilities:** no report

**Finance:** no report

**Personnel:** reported under Planning

**Planning:** met together with Personnel to discuss moving finalists for BES principal and Director of Finance/Operations forward to the BoE. Also discussed leveling and weighting of high school classes, Title IX as relates to athletics, and the safe school climate survey. Ms. Van Aken stated her interest in discussing the results of that survey.

**Negotiations:** will meet with secretaries tomorrow; the other group is still ongoing; notification of commencement by October of administrator negotiations was received from the CSDE. Mr. Cosgriff requests all BoS and BoF members be notified of this negotiations session.

**Building:** met last Tuesday about what can/cannot be said and what can/cannot be on the website at this time.

Ms. Van Aken noted a meeting of the Ad hoc Safety Committee tomorrow evening at 6 pm and to include the BoS and BoF in a discussion of administering the SRO program.

X. Old Business  
None.

XI. New Business

In order for discussion to occur, Mr. Suslavich requested a motion related to the building use request.

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to approve the building use request by Chabad Lubavitch of NW CT to use the Bethlehem Elementary School facilities for 31 days, from 6/24-8/16 for a child day camp for the reduced fee of \$2925.* The motion was seconded by Ms. Zmek. Discussion followed. Ms. Van Aken read into the minutes a correspondence from John Chapman to his fellow board members, which stated:

I have read the Board Policy, the application form, comments from Director of Facilities, and have the following points to be made as part of the Board's discussion on this matter at the June 3, 2013 regular meeting which I am unable to attend:

1. The fee being assessed is not consistent with the Board policy. This organization falls into Group "G", an out of town organization - as it is based in Litchfield per the application. In this case, the fee that should be charged in order to be consistent with policy is significantly higher (i.e. 10x) and that presents significant concerns.
2. Mike Molzon presented many concerns about the use of the facility during the summer which do not appear to have been addressed in any of the application documents. Notwithstanding the problem of an incorrect fee schedule, the issues raised by Mr. Molzon appear to raise many valid problems regarding the preparedness of facilities for the upcoming school year, scheduling asbestos abatement in 2 closets, and obtaining sign off from the school lunch director.
3. The BOE policy on facility use also requires a certificate of insurance to be furnished that meets with our expectations, and we have not seen such certificate. The policy further requires that district personnel supervise and/or observe all activities, including the use of kitchen facilities. Costs for this are assumed to be covered in the Group G fee schedule.
4. Lastly, while this organization was allowed to use BES last year under an incorrect fee schedule, the BOE policy specifically allows for revocation of permission at the discretion of the Superintendent or Board. Unfortunately, what was agreed to last year was not presented to the Board for discussion, and we must be consistent moving forward with facility use policy unless we, as a Board, are willing to waive portions of the policy. I do not support such a waiver at this time.

In closing, I believe that even if this organization agrees to pay the required fee, there are still significant concerns that have not been addressed regarding the use of the facility. If those concerns are mitigated and specifically addressed to the satisfaction of the Board and Administration and the organization will pay the fee required as Group "G", then under those circumstances I will support the application.

Ms. Van Aken added two additional concerns to Mr. Chapman's: 12 classrooms are to be moved this summer, and the water tank is to be flushed causing water to be turned off for several days.

Mr. Goeler indicated that a 4/26 email from the group was his first indication that the use form they had submitted in January had not been responded to. They had never heard back from the DF/O. He indicated that Jim Reese had determined the fee charged to this same group last year and Mr. Turk had not indicated to him that the fee was wrong. The director of the group agreed to the terms and was willing to pay in total up front. He heard nothing further until Mr. Chapman's email voicing concerns.

Mr. Swendsen said the board had been made aware of this request a few weeks ago. He is still trying to understand what happened here and why the out of town fee schedule was not followed and is concerned about facilities needs over the summer.

Ms. Van Aken pointed out that we have an approved policy for building use and that our first obligation is to our own students, and to having the buildings ready for the next school year.

Mr. Suslavich recalled other instances when the fee schedule was not followed exactly.

Ms. Zmek predicted increased use requests in the future as our buildings are improved, and urged tightening up on the policy so similar mistakes will not be made. August 16<sup>th</sup>, she said, is too close to the start of the year, and with water issues, asbestos abatement and teachers moving classrooms, she felt we need to be good stewards of our facilities and our kids come first.

Hearing nothing further, the **motion previously made and seconded failed 0-5.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion that the Board of Education approve \$750 to commission legal counsel to update 15 policies and corresponding regulations, and \$5500 to update 55 critical policies, for a total of \$6250.* Ms. Van Aken seconded the motion. Mr. Cosgriff stressed addressing the bylaw related to meetings conflicting with town meetings. Mr. Suslavich stressed posting all policies on the website and also requested a list of what the 55 critical policies are. **The motion carried 5-0.**

## **XII. Board Announcements**

Ms. Van Aken thanked the Registrars of Voters from both towns for facilitating two referenda very close together this month. (Board elections will now be held on June 13<sup>th</sup> and the Building Referendum is scheduled just five days later, on June 18<sup>th</sup>) She also urged community members to come out and be nominated for the BoE this Thursday, as three candidates are needed from each member town.

Ms. Zmek offered thanks to the town of Bethlehem for footing the bill for costs associated with re-opening BoE nominations.

Mr. Cosgriff urged the community to be a witness to the process and to come out on Thursday.

Mr. Suslavich also urged voters to exercise their civic responsibility by voting in the upcoming election and building referendum.

Mr. Swendsen reported that Mr. Bauer had a successful surgery and is doing well.

## **XIII. Privilege of the Floor**

**Tom Arras**, Woodbury, had a problem with students marching in the Memorial Day parade advocating for the building project. He considered it abuse, disrespectful, and didn't think the kids who were "put up to this" knew what they were doing. He also doesn't like that the public hearing was not televised and that the architect erred in his estimate of the tax burden for the 25 year loan. He had estimated \$8000-8500 and the bank quoted \$11,641 which Mr. Arras felt was "50% higher." He is also troubled about supporting out of district agriscience students, whose parents will not pay for these improvements and feels it is erroneous to say the agriscience program doesn't cost us anything.

**Pat DiSarro**, Woodbury, urged the community to visit FixNHS.com where all the factual numbers can be viewed and so that citizens can decide for themselves. As to the comments about the students in the parade, he commented that the RTC and DTC each had representation in the parade and it is not a politics-free zone. The students, he said, know what is at stake and knew exactly what they were doing.

**Chris Ford**, Woodbury, went to a BoE meeting in West Haven where he approximates 120 people were present and it was very impressive. He urged people to go to a Facebook page called stopcommoncoreinCT.

**XIV. Adjournment**

Ms. Van Aken entered a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. The motion carried 5-0.  
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:11 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

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Maryanne Van Aken, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer  
Regional School District #14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 6/6/13