

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, March 4, 2013 at Bethlehem Elementary School, 92 East Street, Bethlehem, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophieazane Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Maryanne Van Aken and Pamela Zmek; student representatives Jordan Zitnay and Vincent Pistritto; NHS Principal Andrew O'Brien and teacher Taryn Fernandez; BES Interim Principal Eric Bergeron; Director of Special Services Kim Culkin; Resident Trooper Cono D'Elia and his wife, Allison; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton  
Absent: Board members Gary Suslavich and John Swendsen  
Audience members: Region 14 faculty and staff members Katie Yocis and Linda Butkus; *Voices* reporter Mike Preato; community members Deb DeSorbo and Jim Crocker

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Region 14's Finest – Bethlehem Elementary School**

Mr. Bergeron recalled that former principal, Melinda McKenna, had introduced him to local Resident State Trooper Cono D'Elia, describing him as a really nice guy who is great with young children –he has a bunch of them himself. Mr. Bergeron has found Officer D'Elia to be an immense help to him with issues of safety and he has been a great resource for the school, even setting up an office within the building which has allowed for consistent support. He was pleased to recognize Officer D'Elia as one of Region 14's Finest. Mr. Bauer presented him with a certificate which read: For your commitment to the safety of students, families, faculty and staff of Bethlehem Elementary School. Your positive presence and consistent support are greatly valued and appreciated.

**NEASC – Preparation for Visit**

Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Fernandez provided the Board with an overview of what to expect with the upcoming NEASC visit, including schedule of event and opportunities for them to be involved. They explained the accreditation cycle, who would be visiting, how they would shadow students, the seven standards, a timeline from 9/2010 to 3/2013, the methodology used in evaluating the school, and the final stages of accreditation including how and when findings would be released.

Mr. Goeler said it is important to note that NEASC is in support of Common Core State Standards, our strategic plan, the teacher evaluation process and other initiatives, and that the NEASC visit is an opportunity to tie all of these things together.

Mr. O'Brien added that findings would be released within 60 days of the visit, and Ms. Fernandez urged the Board to review standards 5-7 to know what sorts of questions could be posed to them.

Mr. Goeler noted that NEASC uses a pre K-12 lens, although they are evaluating the high school, and Mr. Chapman asked if similar evaluations are ever done of K-8 programming and was told they do. Mr. Cosgriff also saw the potential value of such an evaluation.

**III. Review of the Minutes**

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 4, 2013.*  
Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0.**

**IV. Correspondence**

Mr. Bauer referenced two pieces of correspondence. Education Connection is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to high school seniors; and the Woodbury Selectman's Office is requesting participation from the district on a proposed conservation development subcommittee.

**V. Report from the Chairman**

Mr. Bauer deferred his report until later, as his items appear under new and old business.

**VI. Report from the Superintendent**

Mr. Goeler called on agriscience student, Jordan Zitnay, to report. Jordan spoke on a number of topics, including National FFA Week, teacher appreciation breakfast, FFA quiz, themed days, tests for chapter degrees, and a recent poverty dinner. Students will pursue opportunities to help the humanitarian food aid organization, Kids against Hunger.

Mr. Goeler noted that March is Board of Education Appreciation Month, and thanked Board members for their service. He noted NHS boys and girls basketball teams will compete for championships this week. The BES principal search has been narrowed to 6-7 candidates; a committee will be formed to interview these. A DF/O candidate withdrew from consideration; however, Mr. Goeler has another for the committee to interview tomorrow. He attended an ASAP meeting on 2/5, an emergency response meeting on 2/7, and his teacher evaluation committee continues to meet regularly. He and Mr. O'Brien recently attended professional development at Education Connection. The Woodbury BoF addressed its auditor's report on the agriscience program on 2/13, revealing findings that the program is even more financially advantageous than the agriscience subcommittee had determined it was. Ms. Van Aken is interested in having the town's audit report displayed on our website. Or, as suggested later in the evening, if the town would display the report on its own website, we could provide a link to that through ours. Mr. Goeler will meet with town officials next week; the ad hoc safety committee met on 2/26 to discuss short and long term safety plans; a focus monitoring group from the State is looking at our out-of-district placements, a process that will continue over the next few months; the leadership team met with an attorney on topics such as sharing information about students as they move from school to school within the district; and he enjoyed reading to Ms. Guay's class on Friday for Read Across America. The Columbia Readers/Writers reunion is in NYC this weekend; he and a number of our faculty will attend. Budget workshop dates are: 3/11 from 5-7 pm, 3/12 from 5-7 pm, 3/16 from 9-11 am, 3/19 from 5-7 pm and 3/23 from 9-11 am.

**VII. Privilege of the Floor**

Jim Crocker, Woodbury, asked if the town's auditor's report has been published. Mr. Chapman responded that, if it has, he has not seen it, nor had Mr. Bauer.

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

None.

**IX. Committee Reports**

**Bylaws:** no report

**Public Relations:** has been working on a superintendent's advisory committee, invitations for that went out; committee will meet tomorrow

**Facilities:** has not met, but will plan to meet on 3/11 after the budget workshop

**Finance:** no report

**Personnel:** DF/O interview tomorrow

**Planning:** no report

**Negotiations:** paras are still out, not yet settled; dates for secretaries have not been set yet

**Building:** will report under old business

**X. Old Business**

**Building Improvement Project:** Mr. Bauer indicated that after the special board meeting on the building project, there was discussion about renovating to new to maximize reimbursement. He asked board members to weigh in. Ms. Van Aken favors the larger project but needs to be realistic about what the community will support in a difficult economy; she is also aware of the needs of the other schools.

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Mr. Cosgriff agreed, and suggested meeting with BoS/BoF members to inform them of what is in the different packages.

Mr. Chapman suggested inviting them to a building committee meeting. Each proposal has its pluses and minuses, he said, and need to be looked at in terms of what each accomplishes, and assigning a dollar value to each part in order to break it down. Priorities need to be established and communicated, along with the realization that more than half of the money is for classroom space, and the reasons for this have to do with CCSS, NEASC, etc.

Mr. Bauer added that a referendum date needs to be determined, and whether it will be parallel to or after the budget. Mr. Chapman felt the feedback received will show them what they should do.

**Special Education Opportunities Review:** Mr. Bauer requested a *motion that the board endorses the district to employ District Management Council for a comprehensive Special Education Review as reviewed by the Planning Committee and initiated if funds are available in 2013 and through a line item in the 2013/2014 budget.* Ms. Van Aken entered the motion and Ms. Zmek seconded. Discussion followed.

Mr. Goeler sees this as an opportunity to use best practices while saving money. He is confident that the company is a reputable and analytical organization which would work with us, not against, and by becoming members, we would receive sustained assistance in meeting our goals.

Ms. Van Aken felt that because they look at both special and regular ed, the savings can be significant.

Mr. Chapman asked whether professional development is included or would they just identify the need for it.

Mr. Goeler said that, as part of the membership, they would direct us to it.

Ms. Zmek feels this review is overdue, and that all references from other districts were positive.

Mr. Chapman asked the time frame of the review and was told about 3-4 months. He asked for Ms. Culkin's input, and she replied that she has been in the loop on this proposal and she, too, has received only positive feedback on the work of this group.

**The motion carried 6-0.**

**Strategic Planning Document:** Mr. Goeler described this as a draft and a topic needing more time. He reviewed it with the Board, pointing out p. 9 which illustrates having all systems working together, as well as goals and mission statement. Ms. Van Aken asked when it would be finalized and he said by the end of this school year though, as a living/breathing document, it will always be in motion.

Mr. Chapman asked whether goals related to performance as a metric, how we compare to other schools in our DRG or some other measuring stick, had been considered. Mr. Goeler said they were not, though as everything in education is now metric based, we will know where we stand. Mr. Bauer wanted to publically thank the Strategic Planning Committee, and then asked Mr. Goeler how well poised we are now to meet the many standards and requirements. He acknowledged there is much work to be done. The document shows a number of tasks and goals with a corresponding person who will be responsible, and a number of these are assigned to a curriculum director, which he hopes to keep in the budget.

## **XI. New Business**

### **Approval of Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trips**

1. NHS Music Department to Orlando Florida Spring Music Festival, April 11-18, 2013 (during Spring Break), for approximately 50 students, 6 faculty chaperones, and 4 parent chaperones, via commercial bus and funded by students' families

2. NHS Students to First Robotics Championship, St. Louis, Missouri, April 24-28, 2013, for approximately 20 students, faculty chaperone and 4 parent chaperones, via air transportation and funded through student activities fund and students' families

3. NHS Civics Students to Washington, D.C., May 15-17, 2013, for approximately 20 students and 2 faculty chaperones, via commercial bus and funded by students' families

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to approve all three of the out-of-state/overnight field trips listed on the agenda*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0**. Mr. Goeler had assured the board that the Orlando trip would not include an extra vehicle carrying equipment and chaperones, and the board was assured that all 3 trips are student funded.

#### **Policy – First Read**

The Board was furnished with two policies: Acceptable Use 6165 (Revised) and Bring Your Own Device 6166 (New) and asked to review them with the goal of approval at the next meeting.

#### **XII. Board Announcements**

Mr. Chapman wished his fellow Board members a happy BoE Appreciation Month.

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

Mr. Crocker expressed displeasure at the idea of outsourcing teacher evaluations. He could not imagine having the most valuable resource available for evaluating staff, and then outsourcing that responsibility instead. He also asked whether budget workshops are open to the public and was told that they are.

Deb DeSorbo, Woodbury, asked whether school improvement plans are also part of the workshops and was told by Mr. Goeler that they have been done through his office, the leadership team has been developing them, and they will be presented at a BoE meeting.

Katie Yocis, Woodbury, said that, as a parent with children 4 years apart, she has seen large changes in curriculum and is concerned that, with so many things to be done, it is difficult to teach to a very specific type of student. There is no leveling and differentiation is becoming very difficult for teachers in this changing environment. Professional development on effective differentiation is much needed, she said. Also, students are not taught effective time management in test taking; they are not taught test taking tools and strategies, such as skipping questions that are too difficult for them.

#### **XIV. Adjournment**

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. The **motion carried 6-0**. The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Sophieane Bartlett, Secretary  
Regional School District #14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 3/5/13