

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, May 20, 2013 at Bethlehem Elementary School, 92 East Street, Bethlehem, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, Maryanne Van Aken and Pamela Zmek; Board Counsel Mark Sommaruga, Esq.; student representative Vincent Pistrutto; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

Absent: Board members George Bauer and Sophiezone Bartlett

Audience members included: three members of the community

I. Call to Order

Mr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. and requested a moment of silence for the people of Oklahoma City who had just sustained tornado damage, the extent of which was not yet known.

II. Presentation from Board Counsel

Attorney Sommaruga provided the board with written legal guidance as it enters the quiet period preceding the building referendum. He answered questions about what the board can and cannot do and urged them to call SEEC at any time if there are questions. He stressed not using students as couriers for information other than time/place of referendum and other purely factual information such as the cost of the project. Asked whether access to the school for pictures, etc. can be permitted, he stressed that access – if permitted by board policy – should be no different for those in support or not supporting the project. Minutes on the website are public record and therefore not a problem, even if they include comments in support of the project. An example of an infraction would be if a link was created that led people to a grouping of minutes that all included supporting statements for the project.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to authorizing the board to publicize neutral materials, pending review by legal counsel, for explanation of the Nonnewaug High School renovation project scheduled for a referendum on June 18, 2013.* Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Regarding the recent nominations meeting and outcome of it, Atty. Sommaruga assured the board it had acted properly in holding that meeting even in the absence of a third candidate from each town. Every opportunity to run for a seat was offered to the public, including that the meeting began almost 30 minutes late, and the statement issued by the district was accurate. The deadline for petitioning candidates has passed and the deadline to register as a write-in candidate is looming, so anyone interested in being a write-in candidate should be contacting the town clerk of his/her town if interested in that option.

III. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of May 6, 2013.* Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Ms. Zmek, the **motion carried 5-0-1** with Mr. Suslavich abstaining.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to accept the minutes of the special meeting of May 10, 2013.* Entered by Ms. Van Aken and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 4-0-2** with Mr. Suslavich and Mr. Swendsen abstaining.

Minutes of the special meeting of May 13, 2013 were tabled.

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to accept the minutes of the special meeting of May 16, 2013,* entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Ms. Zmek. Polling the board, the vote count was 3-0-3; therefore the minutes were tabled.

IV. Correspondence

None.

V. Report from the Chairman

Mr. Chapman wished Mr. Bauer a speedy recovery and, on behalf of the board, wished him all the best.

Vincent Pistrutto caught the board up on events and activities at the schools since March, including writers' workshops, CMTs, DARE graduations, weather/science units and math assemblies, field trips and drum troupe performances at the elementary schools; and sports, Team Beta, school play, prom and music news from the high school.

VI. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Goeler gave summary of his recent activities. He met with members of the boards of selectmen and finance on May 9th; was elected to serve as LCSA vice chair at a meeting on 5/10; participated in focus monitoring to examine the district's special education outplacements on 5/14; had his car washed by the NHS wrestlers on 5/18 and stopped by the WSF tag sale at the Hollow; and received feedback on the Teacher Evaluation plan on 5/10. He noted Memorial Day upcoming, asking that everyone remember those who served in the military to preserve our freedoms.

VII. Privilege of the Floor

Paula Paolino, Woodbury, asked for clarification from Atty. Sommaruga about sending information home in students' backpacks even if that information is neutral, and was told that time/place/question is permissible. She also referred to minutes from the 3/18 meeting, at which the topic of frequency of parent conferences had been tabled and never brought back up. She asked what the State mandate is and when the conversation about complying with it will be had.

Mr. Goeler indicated he has talked with many superintendents about this mandate and is looking at ways to invite parents in to the schools to meet with teachers more frequently.

Ms. Paolino asked if he feels one conference per year is enough. Mr. Goeler responded that there are many ways for schools to be accessible to parents that do not necessarily require another ½ day of school missed. He is looking for flexible ways to satisfy the mandate.

Jim Crocker, Woodbury, asked who on the board is participating in the work of the District Management Council hired to look at our special services. Mr. Goeler indicated he would let him know at the next meeting, after meeting with Nate Levenson this week.

Mr. Crocker also asked about evaluating teachers, and wanted to know whether the teacher's manager (principal) will be his/her primary evaluator. Mr. Goeler indicated that he/she would be.

VIII. Report from the Director of Finance and Operations

None.

IX. Committee Reports

Bylaws: no report

Public Relations: no report

Facilities: no report

Finance: Ms. Van Aken reported on a recent meeting of this committee. The auditor's report was reviewed, Mr. Heaven's company was awarded a contract, and our current insurance broker was retained.

Personnel: will meet jointly with Planning regarding the Director of Instruction position on 5/30 at 6:30 pm

Planning: no additional report

Negotiations: ongoing with secretaries and paraprofessionals.

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Building: has begun its quiet period on the NHS referendum

Ms. Van Aken renewed her interest in scheduling an ad hoc safety meeting. Mr. Suslavich indicated that Thursday would not work for his schedule and that he would attempt to schedule something next week.

X. Old Business

Mr. Suslavich renewed his interest in receiving expectations from the principals on how students should perform on State tests based on assessments performed throughout the year. He understands that results are not yet in for the State testing, but feels principals should have some idea of what they are expecting to see.

XI. Board Announcements

Ms. Van Aken informed that Sgt. Roden will host a Woodbury Police Department pig roast at Hollow Park on Friday from 4-8 pm to benefit the troopers. ASAP will also have a table set up that evening. She understands the event to be no charge, but donations will be welcome.

XII. Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Crocker believes teachers make the most difference in the success of students. The local community did a great job in getting the budget passed, he said, and he believes the board should consider revising the cuts to teachers and get that money from somewhere else.

Vincent Pistrutto commented on the practice testing done at the high school to familiarize students with the new generation of tests, reporting that many software issues were experienced and that it is a very different type of test. He also commented on practice lockdown drills, reporting that some teachers need window shades on their door areas to prevent intruders from seeing the students in the room.

XIII. New Business

Mr. Chapman requested a *motion to move to Executive Session for the purpose of personnel performance evaluation – Superintendent – and review of legal counsel written opinion on the same, and to include Atty. Sommaruga*. Entered by Mr. Suslavich and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 6-0**.
The Board went into executive session at 9:05 pm.

XIV. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken entered the *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. The **motion carried 6-0**.
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 10:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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, 5/22/13