

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, August 20, 2012 in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophieazane Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, John Swendsen, and Pamela Zmek; Director of Finance/Operation Jim Reese; Principals Alice Jones and Andrew O'Brien; Director of Special Services Kim Culkin; Food Service Director Peter Brooks; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

Absent: Board members Gary Suslavich and Maryanne Van Aken

Audience members included: two members of the press and three members of the community

I. Call to Order

Mr. Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Presentation

Mr. Goeler called upon Andrew O'Brien and Alice Jones to outline their proposal for common planning time (CPT) at Nonnewaug High School and Woodbury Middle School, designed to include more instructional time and opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively. They proposed dismissing students at their two schools at 1:49 pm on Mondays only to allow for CPT and provided rationale and goals for this change. Ms. Jones elaborated on the value of Advisory, which will occur twice per month and will tuck in with the Monday schedule.

III. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 16, 2012*. Entered by Mr. Cosgriff and seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 5-0-1**, with Mr. Bauer abstaining.

IV. Correspondence
None.

V. Report from the Chairman

Mr. Bauer thanked fellow board members for electing him to serve as Chairman of the Board of Education this year. He said he would like to continue the board's good work together with the superintendent, administrators, teachers and community to increase the quality of education for our students. He said he looks forward to working collaboratively to achieve our goals, and also looks forward to strategic planning that focuses not only on satisfying State mandates but primarily keeps student achievement the top priority. He welcomes conversation and ideas through email, phone calls or possibly office hours prior to board meetings because open communication enhances decision making.

He also indicated that committee assignments are complete and named the Chairs of each: Mr. Swendsen will chair Policy/Bylaws/Ethics; Ms. Zmek will continue to chair Public/Community Relations; Mr. Chapman will take over Facilities/Enrollment/Transportation; Mr. Suslavich will continue as Finance chair; Mr. Cosgriff retains Negotiations; Ms. Bartlett will chair Personnel/Grievances; and Ms. Van Aken will continue as chair of Planning/Curriculum.

Lastly, Mr. Bauer read a prepared statement, attached hereto.

VI. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Goeler informed the board that he had accepted, regretfully, Melinda McKenna's resignation from her position as principal of BES. Within the month, she will begin her new position as director of instruction and curriculum in North Haven. Melinda did a great job at BES and will be missed significantly, he said.

He also reported on the progress of the agriscience ad hoc committee. After three meetings, the group agreed on costs and a formula to determine them and will now work on plans to present the findings to the community.

He noted that Mr. Reese will be leaving us shortly, although he has agreed to stay on a bit longer. Seven applications have been received to date for the permanent position, and he has met with a retired business manager who would handle the operational end on a short term basis, while Helen Stewart would pick up additional financial responsibilities in the interim. He asked for further direction from the board.

Mr. Bauer suggested that the Finance and Personnel committees meet with the interim candidate as soon as possible.

Mr. Goeler also reported having met with Jonathan Costa regarding the strategic planning process. A committee to include members of the Boards of Finance and Selectmen, as well as teachers, administrators and community members will be formed. Mr. Costa will also be the keynote speaker at the opening convocation on 8/29/12. Mr. Goeler also met over two days with his leadership team this summer and the work that was completed with that group.

VII. Privilege of the Floor (agenda specific)

Pam Gengenbach, Woodbury, suggested that members of the board and/or administration attend a town meeting to answer questions regarding the agriscience program, since the people who contend that the program costs the district money are generally at those meetings.

Mr. Cosgriff added that there would be value to meet with and then obtain a statement from the Boards of Selectmen and Finance that they endorse the information presented regarding the cost of the program before rolling it out at a Board meeting.

VIII. Report from the Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Reese reported that the MES asbestos project is nearing completion and floor tiles will be done by Wednesday. The burner conversion is moving forward and design to build proposals will be received until Friday. The Yankee Gas contract was signed and this is on schedule for completion by the end of October. Replacement of roof shingles in areas of leakage at WMS is also almost completed, bus routes have been published, and purchasing is underway in the schools – many requisitions are being processed. Finally, the business office has closed out the 2011-12 year and the auditors have been in. The ED001 is in progress, too.

IX. Committee Reports

None.

Mr. Goeler provided educational specifications for Nonnewaug High School, to be utilized by the Building Committee.

X. Old Business

Mr. Reese outlined revisions to the lease/purchase agreement.

Ms. Zmek entered a *motion to approve the revised Technology Lease/Purchase agreement.*

Seconded by Mr. Chapman, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to increase the price of school lunches by \$0.30*, seconded by Ms. Bartlett.
Mr. Reese explained that while the cost of the program has gone up, revenue remains about the same and requested and increase in lunch prices from \$2.40 to \$2.70 at the elementary schools, and from \$2.80 to \$3.10 at the secondary schools. Manager Peter Brooks answered questions from the board, as did Mr. Reese.
The **motion previously made and seconded carried 6-0.**

XI. New Business

Ms. Zmek entered a *motion to add to the agenda discussion and possible action on increasing graduation requirements at NHS*. Seconded by Ms. Bartlett, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to increase the graduation requirements for the class of 2016 from 21 to 23*. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zmek in order to allow for discussion and a presentation by Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien provided a detailed explanation of the rationale and benefits of gradually increasing the number of credits required to graduate from NHS over the next several years and took a number of questions from the Board.

The motion previously made by Mr. Cosgriff was amended. Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion that the graduation requirements for the class of 2016 and beyond be increased; students must earn a total of 23 credits, to include 4 credits in Math and 3 credits in Science*. Seconded by Ms. Zmek, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to approve the Agriscience trip to the All-American Invitational Dairy Judging Contest in Harrisburg, PA, 9/16-17, 2012*. Seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to approve the Agriscience trip to the World Dairy Expo Invitational Dairy Judging Contest in Madison, WI, 9/30-10/2, 2012*. Seconded by Ms. Zmek, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion to approve the Agriscience trip to the National FFA Convention, Indianapolis, IN, 10/23-27, 2012*. Seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, the **motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Swendsen entered a *motion for discussion and possible action on changes to the 2012-13 school calendar*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cosgriff.

Mr. Goeler explained the need to amend the 2012-13 school calendar to reflect the Common Planning Time proposed by Ms. Jones and Mr. O'Brien. In addition, a third parent conference day is needed at the elementary level, so he requested 11/28/12 be added to the calendar as a conference day.

The **motion to accept the changes as presented carried 6-0.**

XII. Board Announcements

Ms. Zmek reminded the board of the upcoming CABE convention, offering to carpool. Board members were urged to notify central office of their desire to attend so registration could be done by the early registration date.

XIII. Privilege of the Floor

None.

XIV. Executive Session

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to add executive session to the agenda for the purpose of discussion of ongoing negotiations, and to invite Mr. Goeler and Mr. Reese to attend*. Seconded by Mr. Chapman, the **motion carried 6-0.**
The board moved to executive session at 9:35 pm

XV. Adjournment

Ms. Zmek entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Chapman. The **motion carried 6-0**.
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 8/22/12

STATEMENT,
Region 14 Board of Education Meeting, 20-Aug-2012

In June of 2011, as part of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education's (the "Board's") ongoing oversight of District operations, and with the introduction of an Interim Superintendent and a new Business Manager and Director of Special Services, the Board initiated an audit of its procedures relating to past and current special education expenditures. The Board engaged the services of special education consultant, Jane Currie, Ph.D., to review the Region's historic and then current procedures for approving expenditures related to placing special education students in schools outside of Region 14 and approving the provision of special education services by outside contractors. The consultant conducted a comprehensive review of records related to expenditures for out of district placements and services. In addition, the consultant reviewed invoices, purchase orders, copies of checks, records of excess cost grant submissions for FY2009 and FY2010, as well as policies and procedures for recommending and paying for tuitions and related costs for out of district special education placements. The consultant also interviewed personnel knowledgeable of the current process for approving and issuing such expenditures including the new Business Manager and recently hired Director of Special Services.

The consultant concluded that the District's current policies were consistent with generally accepted practices but made some recommendations for improvement. The Board asked the new leadership in Business Services and Special Services to incorporate suggestions from Dr. Currie into their practices and to work to improve communication and training regarding these procedures. As a result of the audit, the Board has revised and clarified its procedures to improve the communication between Business and Special Services and to further strengthen the checks and balances on the procedures for special education expenditures and to ensure compliance with school district procedures and legal requirements. Both the Business Services and Special Services employees have received additional training in the procedures for approving and processing special education expenditures.

The audit did find some instances in the past where the procedures utilized were unusual or insufficient. For instance, it was discovered that documents had been submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education (“CSDE”) during the 2009-10 school year as part of a request for State reimbursement that contained inaccurate information. The Board immediately notified CSDE who determined that the Region had received some State reimbursement for District expenditures during the 2009-10 school year in error. The Region is working with the State to address this matter. As the Board must respect its responsibility under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act to maintain the confidentiality of information directly related to students, further details regarding the specific reimbursement cannot be provided.

In confirmation that the District’s Special Education operations are currently working efficiently, accurately and in the best interests of the students, during the 2011-12 school year, the Region was randomly selected to participate in CSDE’s (1) Special Education Data Application and Collection (SEDAC) Desk Audit; and (2) IDEA program/fiscal compliance review/Desk audit. CSDE reviewed the accuracy of the information reported to the federal government regarding students with disabilities and the Region's documentation for verification of policies and procedures related to special education. The Region was determined to demonstrate accuracy of reported information and was commended for its diligence and commitment to the timely and accurate reporting of information. CSDE concluded that the District’s special education procedures and policies required no further action or adjustment.

The Board’s policy subcommittee will continue to review the Region’s policies relating to these matters and will ensure that the improvements to the procedures that have made during the 2011-12 school year continue to be implemented with fidelity.