

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, April 2, 2012 in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophieane Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, Maryanne Van Aken, and Pamela Zmek; Director of Finance/Operations James Reese; Director of Buildings/Grounds Michael Molzon; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton
Audience members included: about five members of the community and two members of the press

I. Call to Order

Mr. Cosgriff called the meeting to order at 9:07 p.m.

II. Review of the Minutes

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of March 5, 2012 as written*. Seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 7-0-1**, with Mr. Swendsen abstaining.

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of March 19, 2012 as written*. Seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 6-0-2**, with Mr. Swendsen and Mr. Suslavich abstaining.

III. Correspondence

None.

IV. Report from the Chairman

None.

V. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Cosgriff requested a *motion to approve the Superintendent's 2012-13 School Budget*, entered by Mr. Bauer and seconded by Ms. Van Aken. Considerable discussion followed.

Based in part on what was said at the hearing, several board members favored looking for further reductions in the budget.

Mr. Suslavich wanted to get closer to 2% by perhaps eliminating the maintenance worker, reducing the social workers, downgrading the curriculum administrator and other small items to bring it closer to 2%. Mr. Chapman felt moving forward with what was in front of them was important, and to reach 2% would mean an inability to increase services. He felt promoting a budget that supports increased services to meet upcoming challenges was wise. Pulling back supports when the "business" isn't doing well will "choke the plant," he suggested. Changing the culture is needed, not stripping down to the roots and muddling through. Mr. Cosgriff agreed with the idea of not continuing to muddle through, particularly with regard to curriculum and professional development.

Ms. Van Aken restated her support for 4 full-time social workers – if the towns are not providing these services, she said, then we need to provide support for students. Having these professionals in place will help up bring outplaced students back. Our facilities, she added, are as they are due to long term neglect.

Ms. Bartlett acknowledged the need to increase funding to make the district function but she did not believe 3.47% will pass and asked whether other options exist for cuts.

Mr. Bauer asked where the 1.2% over-expenditures this year are, and was told in the areas of health insurance – due to increased staff and low budget estimates – and fuel oil. Mr. Bauer would like to see a comprehensive plan that transitions over a couple of years, minor reductions along the lines of what Mr. Suslavich suggested. Facilities needs will involve added costs.

Ms. Zmek asked about the proposed music teacher, declining enrollment at WMS as kids move up to that school, and expressed the need to let the towns know that the board is listening and to find small reductions.

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Ms. Van Aken suggested eliminating the half time maintenance worker, the WMS para, and downgrading the assistant superintendent of curriculum to a director of curriculum in order to cut approximately \$90,000.

Discussion continued on that idea.

Ms. Bartlett suggested 0.5 FTE school psychologists at the elementary level.

Mr. Suslavich felt a missing piece of the staffing chart is related to Title grants. He also felt that as outplaced students are brought back, as described in Kim Culkin's plans, staff could be added or adjusted to respond to this.

Ms. Van Aken prefers bringing existing staff back to 1.0 FTE to adding new staff as needs arise.

Mr. Suslavich pointed out that different services are provided by psychologists and that Ms. Culkin has explicit plans related to those positions.

Mr. Chapman cautioned against moving toward micromanaging. Ms. Culkin had clearly articulated recommendations and he felt the board should go with that, not provide her with only some of what she needs to carry it out.

Mr. Swendsen felt it would be difficult to predict what number would pass. Mr. Goeler felt that he had provided the board with as much information as he could and that they would now need to act.

Mr. Chapman believes there are many in the community who expect the board to move forward and put children first.

Mr. Suslavich contended that with 1 ½% reduced revenue at WMS, technology, 1% in facilities enhancements, the budget is more like a 6.75% increase when all of that is taken into account. He doesn't want to take out the credit card because those bills will come due in years to come; rather, the district should find the right level of services that the community can afford in order to put children first.

The motion previously entered and seconded was withdrawn.

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adopt the Superintendent's budget with the following modifications: removing the part time maintenance worker, removing the paraprofessional at WMS, and reducing by approximately \$20,000 the cost of an assistant superintendent of curriculum by replacing it with a director of curriculum.* The motion was seconded by Ms. Zmek and the **motion carried 7-1**, with Mr. Suslavich casting the no vote.

VI. Privilege of the Floor

Scott Baider, Woodbury, thanked the board for their time and effort in arriving at this difficult decision. He felt 5 year comprehensive plan would make future budget planning easier. He suggested focusing attention on what people should expect this district to look like going forward.

Pat DiSarro, Woodbury, commented that the board listened, lowered the number and are a well-functioning group of people.

VII. Report from the Director of Finance/Operations

None.

VIII. Committee Reports

None.

IX. Old Business

None.

X. New Business

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to approve Saturday, June 23, 2012 as the date of NHS graduation.* Seconded by Mr. Swendsen, the **motion carried 8-0.**

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to approve the DECA International Career Development Conference out of state field trip, 4/27-5/2.* Seconded by Mr. Bauer, the **motion carried 8-0.**

XI. Board Announcements

Ms. Van Aken announced a medication take back event on 4/28 at the Woodbury Police Station from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, and urged citizens to clear out their old medications from their cabinets.

Regarding the 4/11 workshop, Mr. Molzon asked that board members let him know what it is they would like him to provide.

XII. Privilege of the Floor

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Bauer. The **motion carried 8-0**.
The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

John Chapman, Secretary
Regional School District #14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 4/4/12