

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, April 23, 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, Gary Suslavich, Maryanne Van Aken, and Pamela Zmek; Director of Finance/Operations James Reese; NHS Principal Andrew O'Brien; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

Absent: Board chair Charles Cosgriff and member John Swendsen

Audience members included: two members of the press and, following the Region 14's Finest presentations, about four members of the community

I. Call to Order

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

II. Presentation – Region 14's Finest – Nonnewaug High School

Mr. O'Brien called a number of students to the podium to be recognized for contributions to their school. He told of the Senior (Citizens) Prom which was planned and executed by students from a variety of organizations within the school, including class council, FBLA, culinary, computer, video, music and floriculture. He told the audience that the students did something very special and that, for some of the guests, fulfilled a lifelong dream of attending a prom. He said events such as this show that the high school can be the hub of the community.

He presented certificates to: Jonas Berry, Jake Dominello, Heidi Duchaine, Dale Eriksen, Amanda Famiglietti, Ian Fignon, Taylor Garre, Jess Gustafson, Dan Nolte, Evan Ortiz, Sarah Schivera, Hayley Strasburger, Elishka Tyler and Taylor Verbickas.

Mr. O'Brien recognized faculty member Mike Murphy for his exceptional efforts both in the classroom as a physics teacher at NHS, and for his commitment to Team Beta and the robotics program at the high school. Mr. Murphy was recently honored with the Woody Flowers Award, a prestigious award given to mentors on the strength of their own students' essay submissions. Mr. O'Brien asked Mr. Murphy to come forward to receive a Region 14's Finest certificate and then invited three of the many students and adults who had come to support Mr. Murphy to say a few words. Carolyn Michener noted that Mr. Murphy had been a great role model for her and that she could not think of anyone more deserving of a Region 14's Finest award. Patrick Dunham hoped to be half the man Mr. Murphy is when he grows up, and Becca DiSarro noted that only 51 mentors worldwide receive the Woody Flowers Award each year, making that achievement all the more impressive.

III. Presentation – Update on Secondary School Reform at Nonnewaug High School

Mr. O'Brien reported on the high school's goal of "purposeful growth over time." He spoke of his long term growth plan, NEASC, CT secondary school reform, and the challenges of new leadership. He outlined 7 standards for accreditation, heterogeneous grouping in Civics class, increased graduation requirements, and plans for possible block scheduling at his school. He took comments and questions from the Board.

Mr. Suslavich asked for documentation, at a future planning meeting, of how heterogeneous grouping affects the top end students. He would also like to review what staffing needs will look like in years to come; and, he expressed concern that all students do not have a lunch period, which is required.

IV. Review of the Minutes

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the minutes of the District Meeting of April 2, 2012 as written*. Seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0**.

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V. Correspondence

None.

VI. Report from the Chairman

None.

VII. Report from the Superintendent

Mr. Goeler spoke about the district's strategic planning process and moving from how things are done presently. This will go well beyond the number of credits to graduate and number of assessments, and that the essential questions to be asked in developing a common vision and strategic plan are: What are the critical skills and dispositions for all students to realize success in post-secondary schools and careers? What are the learning experiences all students need to have to develop those skills and attributes? How do we know the degree to which each student understands, can apply, and transfer that understanding to solving new and real problems? How can technology ensure each student has the ability to access information? What are the most effective resources and tools for learning? How can we ensure that we not only prepare our students to get into college, but have them complete college? How will we use these questions to provide context for the varied interests/initiatives circulating, such as Secondary School Reform, Common Core State Standards, 21st Century Learning, the NEASC evaluation of NHS and the recommendations that will come our way, and the facilities project we so desperately need. He reported that he will meet with Jonathan Costa on Wednesday to begin to discuss how the Board will address these questions. When Mr. Costa meets with the Board, he will help them to formulate "one really good goal." Mr. Goeler also read a letter he had sent to the faculty inviting them to join a curriculum and professional development council he is forming.

VIII. Privilege of the Floor

Tom Arras, Woodbury, appreciated Mr. O'Brien's presentation. He commented on inadequate funding for out-of-district agriscience students and cited a \$4800 state average shortfall. For Region 14, he contends, \$1,000,000 is lost each year because of this and feels the Board has not done enough to make this right. Prior boards and administrations have lied to the public about the agriscience program making money or even breaking even, he said. At the polls, he wants voters to decide whether to pay for these out of district students whose parents do not pay taxes in this town.

Molly Hill, NHS student, expressed concern over the heterogeneously grouped Civics class proposed in Mr. O'Brien's presentation. AP US History, she said, is a 2 year course and, as it is, there is barely time to prepare for that exam. By taking a semester of that time out for Civics would present problems, she felt.

Art McNally, Woodbury, was concerned about the concept of block scheduling and less classes per day. When he was in school, he had 6 periods per day and learned a lot. Mr. Goeler explained that it is no less time per day, simply structured differently. Civics is currently incorporated into the 2 year history requirement; the new format, he said, would pull it out and make it its own course.

Miss Hill returned to ask whether the history department at her school had been consulted about this, and was told it had been. She expressed concern about holding students' attention in a 90 minute, block scheduled class. She was told that varied instruction and group work would be part of such a format. She recommended implementing structure and requiring teachers to vary instruction, in order to prevent a situation where teachers would simply require students to do more problems from the textbook to take up the 90 minute time period.

IX. Report from the Director of Finance/Operations

Mr. Reese provided updated copies of the budget and informed the Board that the flyer would be mailed on Friday. He reported on work done over the break, including painting in the agriscience building, HVAC work, the floor in the meat cutting room, retrofitted lighting, and fan motors.

He provided copies of a memo in which required changes to the district's pension plan were outlined, and offered the Board time to review it before acting on it next week. Since the changes are required, Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the addendum to the July 1, 2010 restatement of the Regional School District 14 Pension Plan*. Seconded by Ms. Van Aken, the **motion carried 6-0**.

X. Committee Reports

Ms. Zmek reported that the Public Relations Committee had just met. A budget coffee will be held tomorrow at MES at 7 pm, another at Memorial Hall on 5/1 at 7 pm, one on 5/2 with the Democratic Town Committee at the Rec House in Woodbury at 6:30 pm, and at the Senior/Community Center on 5/3 at 1 pm. Frequently asked questions have been added to the website. Ways to get the word out on the accomplishments of our students was also discussed by her committee. Their next meeting will be on 5/7 at 7 pm.

XI. Old Business

Much discussion on the building and maintenance projects preceded action by the board. Mr. Chapman was interested in reactivating the building committee and giving them a clear charge and direction to ensure that any referendum accomplishes something meaningful for the district. Ed specs, he said, are critical to this, as well as a time frame in order to get the building committee moving.

Mr. Suslavich noted next to no dollars in the budget for maintenance. For a major building project, even if all the plans line up perfectly, nothing will be done at MES for at least 2 years. He encouraged taking half a million for asbestos abatement and other maintenance issues at MES, because the board needs to do something now.

Mr. Chapman agreed, but wants to show the community that we are moving forward on both fronts. He realizes that if the big project does not pass, we have done nothing. The small bond project makes sense unless it creates backlash from the community who want to see major improvements; or, if the small one passes, the fear is that nothing after it will. He stressed setting a timetable for all to see, and getting the building committee going.

Ms. Van Aken heard loud and clear from the community that they want to go out with the big project. If the maintenance bond fails, she did not think it would take long to go out with the larger one. She, too, urged getting the building committee working on that project.

Mr. Suslavich restated that review by the State would take a long time. The first work done at MES would happen two years from now.

Ms. Bartlett agreed and wants to fix the problems that exist right now at that school.

Mr. Bauer offered to work with Mr. Reese and the architects to formulate a proposed timeline.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve \$325,000 for asbestos abatement at MES*.

Mr. Chapman wanted one more "go around" with Mr. Molzon to check his numbers.

Mr. Suslavich noted that this is a clock issue.

Mr. Chapman wished to see a plan/timeline.

Ms. Van Aken reminded the board that the community says they will support an accelerated building project. She favored letting the maintenance bond wait.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to authorize \$350,000 for asbestos abatement/tile removal at MES*, seconded by Ms. Bartlett.

Mr. Chapman would prefer to wait on such a motion until the timetable has been set and a building referendum has been committed to.

Mr. Suslavich responded that this is, effectively, like saying we will do nothing for a year.

Mr. Reese suggested the option of directing the administration at this time to do the necessary preparation to bring the asbestos project forward.

Mr. Suslavich, having withdrawn his previous motions, entered a *motion to task the administration to initiate the process to begin bonding for abatement and asbestos removal at MES at a cost of approximately \$350,000*.

Seconded by Ms. Bartlett, the **motion carried 6-0**.

XII. New Business

Discussion revolved around a request from the town of Woodbury, based on a complaint from a resident, that the Board change the date of its second meeting in May because it conflicts with one of the two annual town meetings. Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to change the date of the second Board meeting in May from May 21st to May 22nd*. For the purpose of discussion, Ms. Zmek seconded the motion.

Ms. Van Aken felt this would set a bad precedent. The board is not a town board/committee and may, therefore, meet on the same evening as a town meeting. The Board, she said, would next be asked to work around Bethlehem meeting dates conflicts are always possible when there are evening activities.

When asked whether this date was considered when creating the list of board meeting dates for the year, it was reported that town meeting dates were requested of the town clerk last November, but not received, so the board meeting list was created without taking them into consideration.

Mr. Suslavich felt it would be appropriate to accommodate the request.

The motion carried 5-1, with Ms. Van Aken casting the no vote.

The board was also given copies of the 5 year Technology Plan, on which they will be asked to act at the next meeting. Jeff Turner, the district's data administrator, will be at the next meeting to answer any questions the board may have.

XIII. Board Announcements

Ms. Van Aken reminded the board and audience of the prescription drug take back event this Saturday, 4/28, from 10 am to 2 pm. Also, 5/7 is Grad Nite day at the Charcoal Chef and a portion of sales will go to that cause.

Mr. Suslavich expressed concern that the band left prior to spring break for its trip, which he believes sends a bad signal when students are discouraged from extending the break by leaving early or returning late. He also asked about board approval for that trip, and was told that this trip was inadvertently not brought to the board by central office staff. He was further concerned about information he'd received that a second vehicle, a van, was on that trip and carrying all the chaperones, which he felt missed the point of having chaperones. Mr. Goeler said he would look into this matter.

XIV. Privilege of the Floor

Mr. McNally, not having received an updated budget, reminded the board that the Woodbury Board of Finance asked for a 0% increase. He said it looks like the board is not going to listen. Maintenance is important, but there are still things to be cut.

XV. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Suslavich. **The motion carried 6-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 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, 4/25/12