

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, August 15, 2011, in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; former Interim Superintendent Gregory Little; Board members Sophiezone Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Buildings/Grounds Michael Molzon; Director of Network Operations and Technology Paul Ciotti; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton

Absent: Board member Pamela Zmek

Audience members included: approximately 12 members of the community and two members of the press

I. Call to Order

Mr. Cosgriff called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Cosgriff led the Pledge of Allegiance

Following the Pledge, Mr. Cosgriff asked everyone to remain standing while he offered thanks to Dr. Little for his service, and welcomed Mr. Goeler and Mr. Reese. He then requested a moment of silence for Miss Emily Ayre, the daughter of one of Region 14's teachers who passed away suddenly during the past week.

III. Review of the Minutes

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 18, 2011*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bauer, and the **motion carried 7-0**.

IV. Correspondence

None.

V. Report from the Chairman

Mr. Cosgriff noted that board members had received committee assignments for this year.

He also spoke of the commencing of teacher negotiations, with a 10/4/11 start date, 11/23/11 mediation, and 12/18/11 arbitration date, if needed.

VI. Report from the Interim/Superintendent

Mr. Goeler also expressed his appreciation to Dr. Little for his service. Regarding the transportation issue, he believed a solution had been reached and thanked Dr. Little, Ed Arum, and also Michelle Pennella from First Student for finding a solution to the problem. He asked Dr. Little to explain what that would be.

Dr. Little gave background on North Woodbury families affected by the configuration of the elementary schools, who are now sent to Bethlehem Elementary although their daycare arrangements are in Woodbury. He spoke of the district's recent past practice of busing to daycares, and the desire to be family friendly as long as this is not cost prohibitive. He anticipates the board will act later in the meeting to approve daycare transportation for the coming year.

Mr. Goeler noted that new teacher orientation will be held this year on 8/29/11; professional development at WMS and NHS and unpacking at BES and MES will be on 8/30/11; and opening convocation will be held on 8/31/11. Students report back to school on 9/1/11.

Mr. Bauer requested a *motion to add to the agenda, under new business, consideration of proposed Grievance Settlement with the Nonnewaug Secretarial Association and Bargaining Unit Member, for discussion and possible action*. The motion was entered by Ms. Van Aken, seconded by Ms. Bartlett, and the **motion carried 7-0**.

VII. Privilege of the Floor

Mary Connolly, Woodbury, commenting on Dr. Little's earlier report, noted that the district has been busing to daycare centers for more than just a few years.

Valerie LeBlanc, North Woodbury, is fine with sending her children to BES but has been trying to get an answer on the transportation issue all summer. The letter sent home from the school did not indicate changes in busing accommodations. She thanked the board for putting this item on the agenda tonight. The separation of the kids by school must happen, but their daycare should remain constant, she said. She was appalled by a comment about the district not being a "taxi service;" she is a taxpayer in the town she lives in and needs bus service to the town where her children are being sent.

Jeanne Hawley, Woodbury and licensed daycare provider, thanked the board for addressing the issue and the bus company for facilitating the solution. The process, she said, has been extremely frustrating and, 2 weeks before school starts, families still don't know about child care arrangements. Communication has been unclear, school assignments were given but not busing changes, and parents found out by word of mouth and panicked. There were no answers at all from central office, or the answer was "no." There seemed to be no interest in this issue until the new board came on in July.

Rachel Neri, Bethlehem, noted that choosing daycare is a big decision involving much research and Ms. Hawley has been the choice for her children. She also noted no communication from the schools that transportation could be an issue this year. She feels the daycare options in Bethlehem are very limited, and Ed Connection's hours don't suit all parents' schedules. Safety and trust issues have been established between families and their daycare; there have been many changes for the children in a short time; we are 2 towns but one region and she feels a barrier being re-established.

Stuart Kimble, Middle Road Turnpike, Woodbury, has sent his children to CAST for so long now and doesn't want to change that. His children are broken up enough with the new school; he wants to be able to have peace of mind about daycare. As for the 1 year solution, he requests a longer arrangement. He thanked the board for their work, hoped they could see the concerns, and urged remembering it's about the kids.

Julie Clark, Creative Arts Studio (CAST), noted the problem will not end after one year; childcare is like extended family; thanked the board for their attention to the matter.

Suzanne Dionne, Woodbury, noted that Ed Connection costs much more than CAST (\$75/week) and space is also limited in that program. She doesn't feel it is fair to dictate which daycare children attend.

VIII. New Business

1. Approval of daycare transportation

Dr. Little outlined the busing plan. He first stood by the "taxicab" comment, clarifying that it did not pertain to transporting to licensed centers. The issue was inherited by him, he said, and fell through the cracks. He referenced board policy about transporting to and from place of residence only unless approval is given for a different location. Education Connection is group of which we are a member and this is a service they provide. He has determined that about 22 BES students will need transportation from Woodbury daycares and First Student will provide a bus at no cost. He noted that central office previously had no knowledge of where children go for before/after school care. It's a win/win to provide transportation to the 3 licensed Woodbury centers, he said.

Mr. Bauer entered a *motion that the Board of Education continue the practice of providing transportation from three licensed day care providers in Woodbury, to and from the day care sites, to Bethlehem Elementary School and back to the day care providers, for the 2011-2012 school year only.* The motion was seconded by Ms. Bartlett.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Suslavich felt we are opening Pandora's Box and asked what about family day care arrangements? He felt a distinction was being made between for-profit and not-for-profit, and asked if counsel had been consulted about how we could be affected on the long term. He said this issue was not well vetted in the writing of the (10-47c) report.

Mr. Chapman asked were we not just adopting for another year what has been past practice? During that time, the policy can be given the attention it deserves.

Ms. Van Aken said she is concerned about the families affected by reversing reconfiguration. These parents have been left in a lurch at a late hour. It may be a Pandora's Box but, as a small community, we do many things other districts would not, and can limit this by narrowing the service to licensed centers. She agreed the current policy needs to be updated.

Ms. Bartlett asked the center directors present whether space in their programs still exists? They said it did.

Mr. Bauer noted that we've transported to religious education, etc., too. He asked how many years are left on the bus contract. (there are 2)

Mr. Suslavich wished to modify the motion to include a parent sign-off that they understand the arrangement is for one year only.

Dr. Little said he had spoken to counsel about this. He feels it should be done because it's the right thing to do, and that it be done this year because it is a transition year.

Mr. Suslavich wanted to clarify that a bus was cut from this year's budget because it was not needed, not for the purpose of eliminating daycare transportation.

Mr. Goeler suggested further study of this issue, sooner rather than later.

The motion previously made and seconded carried 5-1-1, with Mr. Suslavich voting no and Mr. Cosgriff abstaining due to a possible perceived conflict of interest, as his wife operates a preschool in Woodbury.

Dr. Little suggested a letter be sent home through daycare providers explaining the action taken by the board tonight.

2. Approval of Out-of-State/Country Field Trips

- A. NHS Agriscience students to National FFA Convention, Indianapolis, IN, October 18-22, 2011, via air transportation and including approximately 50 students and 5 chaperones

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve this field trip*, seconded by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- B. NHS Agriscience students to Royal Winter Fair, Toronto, Canada, November 10-13, 2011, via coach bus and including approximately 40 students, 1 chaperone (plus parents)

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve this field trip*, seconded by Mr. Swendsen. **Motion carried 7-0.**

3. Review of Use of Facilities

Mr. Reese submitted 2 use-of-facilities requests by local groups, as well as the board policy and forms for use of facilities. Being brand new to the district, he sought clarification on appropriate use. It was decided that the requests would be handled at central office.

4. New Certified Staff Hires

Mr. Goeler distributed a summary of all new certified staff hires made this summer for the board's review.

5. Search/Seizure Policy

Mr. Goeler referenced the district's search/seizure policy with advice that it be implemented in a way that conforms with the community's expectations. He asked to be allowed to work with his leadership team, and law enforcement, to implement it appropriately.

6. Grievance Settlement

Mr. Bauer entered a *motion that the Board execute the proposed Grievance Settlement with the Nonnewaug Secretarial Association and bargaining unit member*. The motion was seconded by Ms. Van Aken.

Motion carried 6-0-1, with Mr. Suslavich abstaining.

IX. Report from Director of Finance/Operations

Mr. Reese, beginning his third week on the job, deferred to Mr. Molzon and Mr. Ciotti to update the board on summer projects completed this summer.

Mr. Molzon reviewed an extensive list of work done in each building, including movement of classrooms between the elementary schools, cleaning, service/repair/maintenance projects, safety inspections, and grounds/athletic facility improvements. He thanked his staffs at the elementary schools in particular: Scott Polek, Dennis Powell, Jim Fraser, Stewart Clarke and, summer help, Adrian Peck and Dave Chapman at Mitchell Elementary; and Bruce Beeman, Walter Carey, Hank Chabot and, summer help, Nick Miller and Aaron Walters at Bethlehem Elementary for their help this summer.

Mr. Ciotti spoke about installation of Windows7, computer upgrades, Powerschool, resolutions of issues with exchange servers, installation of SmartBoards, new computer lab at BES, drops installed in special ed suites, rewiring of media classroom at NHS, reworking licensing agreements with Microsoft at a savings of \$18,000, and an additional savings of \$7,000 over three years with our anti-virus/spam appliance, and future implementation of NAS with data replication to create data redundancy.

X. Old Business

1. Board of Education Bylaws

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion that the Board of Education suspend Policy 9314 Recruitment and Selection of Administrative Employees, 2151 (a) and Recruitment and Employment 4010, for the hiring of the high school principal*. Second by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 7-0**.

2. Administrative Search Process for High School Principal

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion that the Board of Education approve the Administrative Search Process proposed by the Superintendent in a memo dated 7/15/11 to Dr. Little and Chairman Charles Cosgriff*. Second by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 7-0**.

XI. Board Announcements

Mr. Suslavich added his thanks to Dr. Little for pinch-hitting here for 5 months, and to Ed Arum for his interim service. He welcomed Mr. Goeler and Mr. Reese.

Mr. Bauer reported that the building committee is working diligently and will include other committees in its work.

XII. Privilege of the Floor

Ms. Clark from CAST took exception to a comment made earlier by a board member that paying \$25 allows one to open a daycare center. She assured him that strict guidelines must be met for state licensing.

Ms. Connolly noted that licensed centers serve more children and require transportation, whereas a home provider can usually use his/her own car. She also recalled that her own daughter used transportation to daycare in 1996, so this is a longstanding practice in Region 14. She did not like the earlier comments about not busing across town lines and reminded the board that we are a K-12, not 6-12, region.

Ms. LeBlanc took offense to the suggestion that parents sign a waiver to show they understand this is a one year arrangement. She also explained that not everyone has family support and licensed centers are important. There are only 2 licensed centers in Bethlehem and neither has operating hours that work with her schedule. With 2 years on the bus contract, she urges keeping transportation in place. She reminded the board that she and others were deemed not to attend their "hometown school," and that only Woodbury children are affected by this issue. She hopes the board will reach out to the community for participation on a transportation committee.

Ms. Hawley urged communicating with all parents early in the year next year to prevent this from happening again.

XIII. Future Business

Ms. Van Aken voiced interest in revisiting the idea of a resource officer.

Mr. Goeler anticipated reporting on state test results in early October.

Mr. Goeler also thanked Ms. Van Aken for her efforts in contacting CABA about the BoE retreat.

XIV. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 7-0.**

The Board of Education meeting concluded at 9:39 p.m.

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, 8/17/11