

(Please note: these minutes are in draft form and not yet approved by the Board of Education)

A Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, October 18, 2010, at 7:30 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.; Board Chair Stephen Sordi, Board members Scott Baider, George Bauer, Linda Bulvanoski, Charles Cosgriff, and Pamela Zmek; and Director of Finance and Operations Jay Hubelbank

Audience members included: BES Principal Melinda McKenna; Mitchell Elementary School Principal MaryLou Torre; Director of Special Services Kimberly Culkin; Region 14 teachers Vinita Chapman and Tricia Dannenhoffer, two members of the press and approximately fifteen members of the community.

Absent: Deborah Corsico and Gary Suslavich

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Sordi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Sordi led the Pledge of Allegiance

**III. Review of Minutes (Action Anticipated)**

Mr. Sordi requested a *motion to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting of October 4, 2010*. Motion entered by: Mr. Cosgriff. Second: Mr. Bauer. Mr. Sordi cited 2 excerpts from the minutes that did not accurately convey the spirit in which his comments were made. Because 2 board members were not in attendance, he decided the minutes should be tabled. Mr. Cosgriff withdrew his previous motion and entered a *motion to table approval of the minutes*, seconded by Mr. Bauer, and the **motion carried 5-0-1**. Mr. Baider arrived during this discussion and, therefore, abstained.

**IV. Reconfiguration**

Mr. Sordi explained that sample referendum questions had been supplied to the board by Atty. Sommaruga. He suggested the board review these further, but that he would wait until the full board was present for discussion.

He requested a motion to approve the letter to parents that he and Dr. Cronin drafted. Ms. Bulvanoski felt the letter should be signed only by Dr. Cronin, as all communication to parents comes from him. Mr. Sordi explained that the intent was to show that the board and administration are working together to keep the public informed, but Ms. Bulvanoski felt protocol would call for the letter to come from Dr. Cronin alone. Mr. Sordi asked for a *motion to approve the content of the letter to parents*, entered by Ms. Zmek, second by Mr. Bauer. The **motion carried 6-0**.

Mr. Sordi asked for committee reports. Mr. Bauer reported that at the most recent Facilities Committee meeting, information was presented regarding enrollment projections three years out, including the Prowda kindergarten projections, the board's recommended class sizes, and North Woodbury boundary line. The projections support both configurations, he said, though 4-6 additional teachers would be required for a K-5 configuration.

Mr. Baider reported that the Planning Committee's work has been completed and is being put together for the report. The only item remaining is a teacher survey which is being considered and the options and details are being discussed with Dr. Cronin.

Ms. Zmek said that the Public Relations Committee met on 10/4, and is waiting for the drafting of the language of the referendum question and the board approved committee reports to plug into the report, to be followed by the public hearing with powerpoint.

V. Correspondence

None.

VI. Report from Chairperson

Mr. Sordi reported that the board met with a representative from CABA who reviewed with them FOI, Roberts Rules and how to operate as a board. He also reminded the board of the CABA conference and asked them to let Mr. Hubelbank know if they planned to attend.

VII. Report from Superintendent

In the area of curriculum, Dr. Cronin reported that curriculum has been written for Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and Pre-Calculus this year. Teachers are piloting those courses, and have met with the curriculum coordinator around the Algebra I curriculum. The state curriculum is the model. Benchmark assessments will be used for all high school math courses.

In the area of instruction, Dr. Cronin explained that principals are working with staff on Best Instructional Practices; teachers submitted reflections on a lesson activating prior knowledge; the 11/2 workshop will move on to the next two phases: lesson initiation and lesson content, and these will be implemented after the workshop. Administrators, he said, have been developing the workshops. Alice Jones and Eric Bergeron developed the activating prior knowledge piece, presented it to administrators who presented it to their staffs. The next presentation will be done by Jose Martinez and Jeff Turner.

Regarding professional development, Dr. Cronin spoke of walkthroughs conducted with administrators and coordinators, the first of which will be in late October at NHS. Also included on these this year will be lead teachers, from the elementary schools, team leaders from the middle school, and some department chairs from the high school.

Mr. Baidier asked, as new curriculum is put in place, are test/quiz scores looked at to help assess the new curriculum? Dr. Cronin replied that they are. Ms. Bulvanoski explained to him that this is the purpose of benchmark assessments.

VIII. Privilege of the Floor

**Katie Yocis**, Woodbury, a resident of North Woodbury and an NHS chemistry teacher, explained that her children were affected by reconfiguration. Previously, they were zoned for BES which created the situation of having friends from Bethlehem, but participating in Woodbury activities and feeling like the odd kids out. Reconfiguration created inconveniences for her family but she is so happy with the way it is now and it has been 100% worth it all to her to see her children so happy. Her children didn't get to go to their "neighborhood school" but, as things are now, they are friends with everyone. She also spoke of how the science curriculum has changed at the elementary level. Teachers who were afraid of science now embrace it thanks to a teacher who was able to bring them along. Her best teachers are other teachers, she said. The separating of teachers does them a disservice, too. She also remarked that she does not seek tax advice from her hairdresser. She urged the board to follow the direction of educational experts.

**Sydney Bowen**, MES student, went to a lecture at NHS where she was told kids should be listened to, and she asked the board to listen to her since she is the one in the classroom, and not the adults. She has made so many new friends, and she thinks the board must not realize how many friends will be separated if reconfiguration is reversed.

**Maryanne VanAken**, Woodbury, spoke about the event Sydney referred to, "What's Up with Our Kids?" which about 75 attended. The kids were inspired by it, she said, have met with Dr. Cronin and want to start a young peoples' prevention council.

**Lynne Frederick**, Woodbury, felt she may have quoted incorrect bus cost increases at the last meeting, and distributed business office generated tables that she perceived to show sizeable increases in bus costs

during the first year of reconfiguration. Legal costs were also higher. She had calculations of salary that teachers are receiving for time when students are not present, due to the minutes cut off of the middle and high school day. She asked if her figures were accurate and was told by Mr. Hubelbank that they were not. Mr. Sordi felt her topic was more suitable for a Finance Committee agenda. That committee meets this Wednesday, he said, and what she was suggesting would take time to understand and would be better presented there. Ms. Frederick also noted that she'd sent an email to the full board regarding Mr. Kolesnik's assertions at the previous meeting.

**Pam Gengenbach**, Woodbury, said people are passionate about one configuration or the other. Parents are their children's advocates and will have a voice when they vote. People shouldn't feel something has been taken away – something was taken away 4 years ago. At the facilities meeting she wondered if a possible enrollment spike would max out either school in a K-2/3-5 configuration. She would want to see whether 2 K-5s would handle an enrollment spike better.

**Eileen Budrewicz**, Woodbury, worries about maintaining the quality of education that has been created since Dr. Cronin arrived. The organizational chart includes coordinators who are paramount to student success. Two K-5 schools will require a minimum of 4.8 teachers and at least a 1% budget increase. A higher budget may result in positions lost, she pointed out.

**Christine Lavaway**, Woodbury, cited the importance of communicating to the community the impact, including financially, of reverting back to K-5 schools. She also felt it important that people understand that we would again be asking a small group of families (in North Woodbury) to do what no one else does. As the schools are now, everyone does the same thing. Children go to school not in their community but as a community. In communication from the board, she urged including items like how this configuration is not based on how it affects our family, but allows us to act like a true community.

#### **IX. Report from Director of Finance and Operations**

Mr. Hubelbank reported on the progress of Energy Education, adding that implications for staff in the cold weather will be addressed. A report on the program is slated for December/January. He acknowledged concerns regarding the fields, as rain has been sparse and consequently the fields are not in good shape. Teams practice and play on the same field giving them no rest. Research is being done on costs to upgrade and utilize the well for irrigation. Upgrades to NEAT TV including new equipment have been received; Mr. Parkhouse's students are being trained in the use of it, and cameras will be installed in the LMC for better angles and coverage of meetings and events. Having approved the refinancing of the current debt, we will be going out into the market on that. Also, on-line payment options for parents are being investigated, for everything from prom tickets to field trips, yearbook, and food service. Webster Bank, he said, has a good system for this, and he will be looking to move forward with this payment program.

#### **X. Committee Reports**

**Facilities** – Mr. Bauer reported on payment to O&G for the BES sidewalk work. Eleven additional hours were needed for compliance requirements. That percentage of overage is unacceptable, he said, but O&G has been very helpful to Region14 over the years and, therefore, he felt it should be approved. He entered a *motion to authorize payment to O&G for 11 additional hours at \$94/hour for the BES sidewalk project for a total of \$1,034*. Second by Ms. Bulvanoski. **Motion carried 6-0**. Mr. Bauer also updated the board on the condition of the WMS tennis courts. Premier Turf is in the second of a 5 year maintenance contract and the board is keeping tabs on how the surface is holding up, with the idea that the same surface might be used on the high school courts.

**Personnel** – Mr. Sordi reported that this committee met on 10/7 to review the unfilled dean of students/athletic director position at the high school.

**Special Education** – Ms. Zmek reported earlier that this committee discussed an oversight panel for high risk cases, welcomed Ms. Culkin, discussed a special services study and mini workshops to be conducted by her, and an upcoming IDEA/504 workshop on upcoming legislation in that area. They heard a SEPTA update, and upcoming meetings are 11/15 and 12/20.

**XI. Old Business**

None.

**XII. New Business (Action Anticipated)**

Dr. Cronin requested *a motion to approve the appointment of Walter Culup, Jazz Band Advisor, NHS and Kaeley Belval, student, to film NHS basketball games with staff supervision.* Motion entered by Mr. Cosgriff, second by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 6-0.**

**XIV. Announcements**

Mr. Bauer also noted that the “What’s Up with Our Kids?” program went very well and was good information back and forth with the community. He also attended the 10/14 legislative open house with an array of speakers, and which was testament to the quality of our agriscience program. He commended the work being done by Bill Davenport.

**XV. Privilege of the Floor**

Ms. VanAken described the well on the NHS fields as a “real gusher” and felt it would be well worth looking into using it again. It was last utilized in about the year 2000, she thought.

Vinita Chapman, Woodbury, asked if the board will share information from the special meeting and the possibility of a lawsuit by Atty. Kolesnik. She also asked how prepared they are for the economic ramifications of expenses needed for renovations to MES.

Mr. Sordi responded, regarding her first question, that the board intends to move forward with its planned referendum.

**XVI. Executive Session**

None.

**XVII. Adjournment**

Mr. Cosgriff entered *a motion to adjourn.* Second by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 6-0.**  
The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Pamela Zmek, Secretary  
Regional School District #14 Board of Education