

July 6, 2010

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

A Special Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, July 6, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

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

Audience members included: BES Principal Melinda McKenna, WMS Assistant Principal Eric Bergeron, as well as staff members Jodie D'Alexander, Helen Stewart and Donald Marsh; three members of the press and eighteen members of the community.

**I. Call to Order**

Dr. Cronin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Dr. Cronin led the Pledge of Allegiance

**III. Election of Board Chairperson**

Dr. Cronin explained procedure for the election of officers and began by requesting nominations for Chairperson. Ms. Bulvanoski nominated Mr. Baider and Ms. Corsico seconded that nomination.

Mr. Suslavich nominated Mr. Sordi and Mr. Bauer seconded that nomination.

Hearing no further nominations, Dr. Cronin asked for any discussion prior to the vote.

Mr. Cosgriff noted that, although Mr. Sordi is qualified to serve as Chair, if elected he faces the issue of negotiations; also, as he is related to a Region 14 employee, there is a possible conflict of interest and the need to recuse himself from meetings, decisions and negotiations.

Hearing no further discussion, Dr. Cronin directed Board members to record their vote on paper ballots provided. Results were read aloud by the clerk, and **Mr. Sordi** was named **Chairman** by a vote of **5-3**. He proceeded with the remainder of the business of the meeting.

**IV. Election of Board Officers**

Mr. Sordi requested nominations for Vice Chairperson. Mr. Suslavich nominated Mr. Baider and Mr. Bauer seconded that nomination. Ms. Corsico nominated Mr. Cosgriff and Mr. Baider seconded that nomination. Hearing no further nominations or discussion, Mr. Sordi directed Board members to record their votes on paper ballots, which were then read aloud, and **Mr. Baider** was named **Vice Chairman** by a vote of **5-3**.

Mr. Sordi requested nominations for Secretary. Ms. Bulvanoski nominated Mr. Suslavich and Ms. Zmek seconded that nomination. Mr. Suslavich nominated Ms. Zmek and Mr. Baider seconded that nomination. Hearing no further nominations or discussion, Mr. Sordi directed Board members to record their votes on paper ballots, which were then read aloud, and **Ms. Zmek** was named **Secretary** by a vote of **5-3**.

Mr. Sordi requested nominations for Treasurer. Ms. Corsico nominated Mr. Cosgriff and Ms. Bulvanoski seconded that nomination. Mr. Bauer nominated Mr. Suslavich and Mr. Baider seconded that nomination. Mr. Cosgriff nominated Mr. Bauer and Mr. Baider seconded that nomination. Hearing no further nominations or discussion, Mr. Sordi directed Board members to record their votes on paper ballots, which were then read aloud, and **Mr. Suslavich** was named **Treasurer** by a vote of **5-2-1** over Mr. Cosgriff and Mr. Bauer respectively.

July 6, 2010

Mr. Sordi requested nominations for Assistant Secretary/Treasurer. Mr. Suslavich nominated Mr. Cosgriff and Mr. Bauer seconded that nomination. Mr. Sordi nominated Mr. Bauer and Mr. Cosgriff seconded that nomination.

Hearing no further nominations or discussion, Mr. Sordi directed Board members to record their votes on paper ballots, which were then read aloud, and each candidate received 4 votes. Mr. Cosgriff withdrew his name and then, because Mr. Bauer would require 5 votes to be named to that office, ballots were recast and **Mr. Bauer was named Assistant Secretary/Treasurer by a vote of 6-0-2.**

**V. Executive Session**

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to move to Executive Session for an update on legal matters*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. The motion was then amended to *include both legal counsel and Dr. Cronin at the session*. Mr. Baider seconded the amended **motion which carried 8-0**. The Board moved to executive session at 7:17 p.m. and returned at 8:30 p.m.

**VI. Board Appointments**

Mr. Sordi requested motions to approve the following appointments:

- i. Board Clerk – Debra Carlton

Ms. Bulvanoski entered a *motion to approve this appointment*, second by Mr. Baider, **motion carried 8-0**.

- ii. School Physicians

- a. Andrea Needleman, M.D., Health Director, MES, WMS

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve this appointment*, second by Mr. Cosgriff, **motion carried 8-0**.

- b. Charles McNair, M.D., NHS

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to approve this appointment*, second by Mr. Suslavich, **motion carried 8-0**.

- c. Andrew Wells, M.D., BES

Ms. Bulvanoski entered a *motion to approve this appointment*, second by Mr. Bauer, **motion carried 8-0**.

- iii. School Dentist – James Bauer, D.M.D.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve this appointment*, second by Mr. Cosgriff, **motion carried 8-0**.

**VII. Review of Minutes**

Mr. Sordi requested motions to approve the minutes of the following meetings:

1. Special Meeting of June 28, 2010

Ms. Zmek entered a *motion to approve these minutes*, second by Mr. Baider, **motion carried 5-0-3**. The three Board members not yet on the Board at the time of that meeting abstained.

2. Regular Meeting of June 28, 2010

Ms. Zmek entered a *motion to approve these minutes*, second by Mr. Baider, **motion carried 5-0-3**. The three Board members not yet on the Board at the time of that meeting abstained.

**VIII. Correspondence**

None.

**IX. Report from the Superintendent**

None.

**X. Privilege of the Floor**

Debbie Sapack, Woodbury, congratulated new Board members. She thanked Dr. Cronin for the changes he has made to the Region's schools. Initially, she said, she was not happy with the reconfiguration of the elementary schools, as she lives very close to MES; yet, she has seen the benefits and is now pleased. She has witnessed in her children both academic and social benefits as well as the ease of transition from one school to the next. She noted increased opportunity for professional development for teachers, good

July 6, 2010

use of available space for inclusion of the preschool at WMS, and recognizes that an in-house preschool program is most effective.

**Natalie Scott**, Woodbury, also welcomed new members, noted she has lived in town for 17 years and has 3 children in the schools. Understanding that reconfiguration is now in jeopardy of being reversed, she hopes the Board will consider the educational and social needs of the children prior to another change. Her high school child was part of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class moved to WMS due to overcrowding at MES. Her youngest had started at MES in Kindergarten, went to BES for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, loved her school and teachers and made friends from Bethlehem that she retains at MES.

Ms. Scott noted that it was during the difficult middle school years that students previously met peers from Bethlehem for the first time, and those students were considered the new kids, and students now enter middle school on academically the "same page." She is concerned over losing what has been gained, and the financial cost of that. She suggests directing funds toward building needs at NHS rather than reverting back to the broken way things were.

**Cheryl Malloy**, Bethlehem, thanked Board members for volunteering to serve in order to make a difference in the education of all students in Bethlehem and Woodbury. She welcomed the new members and looks forward to them working together as a team. New members spoke of need to communicate and listen to other viewpoints which she hopes they will do. Her family moved to Bethlehem 6 months before the schools were reconfigured and it proved frustrating but as time passed, she realized the benefits of reconfiguration outweighed inconveniences. Her own education in R14 included her awkward transition as a Bethlehem student entering WMS. Now students are together from kindergarten through high school, there is no "institutionalized segregation" between 2 towns and we are one community as a school district. She pointed out that all K-5 students receive the same curriculum, a level academic playing field, friendships between towns, full day kindergarten, and an enriched environment for her two children at MES that feels like a family. She expressed thanks to Dr. Cronin and board members for their effort and commitment. She and her husband are happy with the district due to the changes which have occurred under Dr. Cronin's leadership.

**Maria Duncan**, Woodbury, has lived in Woodbury since 1998 and has children in the preschool and in third grade. She was not initially in favor of reconfiguring the elementary schools as she lives close to MES. She has not found that the bus ride has interfered with activities and the education received at BES has been top notch. Reversing the current configuration, she believes, would be detrimental. Full day Kindergarten has been a step forward and she urged waiting to see this third grade's test scores. She appreciates the forward thinking that has accomplished these goals. The candidates who won spoke of public input and she noted that there are two sides. She spoke of the initial ruling for R14 and subsequent appeals. She hopes the new members have not gotten on the board in order to undo the reconfiguration.

**Pam Gengenbach**, Woodbury, corrected Ms. Duncan's assertion that Pratt/Scherf had appealed, noting that R14 appealed the reversed decision on the rehearing of the case. She contended that all the unlevelled playing field problems were administrative, and contends that the regionalization plan calls for K-5 schools. She refuted that the preschool was accommodated at WMS due to reconfiguration, said busing cuts time off the day, said that kindergarten enrollment is at an all time low and there would be room at both schools for full day kindergarten, and that a change to the plan requires a vote. She contends that the benefits seen in the elementary schools are not due to reconfiguration.

**Jeanne Ross**, Woodbury, noted that the challenges facing the board are immense. She looks forward to them meeting their campaign promises to be open and truthful, facilitate honest discussion, to listen, improve the quality of education, build responsible budgets and bring civility to board meetings. She is cautiously optimistic that they can and hopes they will find a way to work with and support Dr. Cronin.

July 6, 2010

Failing to support our educational leader, she said, will be detrimental to the educational quality they stated as a priority. Civility begins with the respect the Board demonstrates to Dr. Cronin. The advances he has made are vast, she said, including in curriculum, particularly language arts in reading and writing in the lower grades, and the collaborative efforts of teachers. She was disheartened by the vote on rolling over Dr. Cronin's contract and comments made about the superintendent. She believes this board, and particularly the new members, need to find a way to create a positive working relationship with Dr. Cronin, a proven educational leader.

Ms. Ross also asked of Mr. Sordi whether speakers will be permitted to "correct" or clarify information or whether, as the chair, he will require that speakers address the board only and not those of the public who have spoken previously. He assured her that he would.

**XI. Report from Director of Finance and Operations**

None

**XII. Old Business**

None.

**XIII. New Business**

Mr. Sordi requested a motion to approve Board of Education regular meeting dates through December 2010. Mr. Baider initiated discussion of possibly amending board by-laws to allow for only one meeting per month instead of two. Therefore, Mr. Baider made a *motion to table approval of the meeting dates presented*. Mr. Bauer seconded that motion. That motion was subsequently withdrawn. Mr. Bauer mentioned the desire to alternate locations of meetings between the towns of Woodbury and Bethlehem and Ms. Zmek added her need for assurance that meetings would be once again taped. Mr. Hubelbank could not make that assurance regarding the new technology set to be implemented for taping, as he did not know the capabilities for taping at alternate sites. Mr. Suslavich explained to Ms. Zmek that it is the live feed to the cable channel that presents challenges. Ms. Zmek suggested uploading taped meetings so they could be linked to the Board of Education website, which wouldn't require special equipment. Mr. Suslavich pointed out that current by-laws require meetings be held on the first and third Monday of the month, unless a holiday, and that they be at 7:30 pm. There was discussion that the meeting time had been amended in the by-laws and that dates were sometimes adjusted around holidays and town meetings.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion that the August 23, 2010 meeting date be set and that, thereafter, meetings be held on the first and third Mondays of the month, or Tuesday if a holiday occurs, and that for the time being meetings be held at NHS until feasibility at alternate locations can be determined*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Baider and the **motion carried 8-0**.

**XIV. Board Announcements**

Dr. Cronin called to the Board members' attention to the notebooks provided for them this evening. He assured them that the contents would be self-explanatory and asked that they look them over and familiarize themselves with the material in order to discuss anything they would want to at the next meeting.

Mr. Bauer noted that the website had been updated and looked improved.

**XV. Adjournment**

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to adjourn*, second by Ms. Bulvanoski. **Motion carried 8-0**.  
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

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