

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

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, September 7, 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, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich and Pamela Zmek; and Director of Finance and Operations Jay Hubelbank

Audience members included: BES Principal Melinda McKenna; WMS Principal Alice Jones and Assistant Principal Eric Bergeron, Special Education Teacher Donna Marcinek; three members of the press and approximately seven members of the community.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Sordi called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Sordi led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Review of Minutes (Action Anticipated)

1. Special Meeting of August 11, 2010

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the minutes of 8/11/10 as presented*, second by Mr. Cosgriff. The **motion carried 6-0-1** with Mr. Baider abstaining.

2. Regular Meeting of August 24, 2010

Mr. Baider entered a *motion to accept the minutes of 8/24/10 as presented*, second by Ms. Zmek. The **motion carried 6-0-1** with Ms. Bulvanoski abstaining.

IV. Correspondence – None.

V. Report from Chairperson

Mr. Sordi reported that the process put in place by majority vote to create a report and move the reconfiguration issue to a vote is moving forward satisfactorily. He has met with the chairs of finance, facilities/transportation, planning and community relations to discuss on a more definitive level how he envisions the format of the final report. Committees are to include in their reports all measurable facts pertaining to reconfiguration. Meeting timelines were discussed and meetings will be posted. Each chair will meet with Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank prior to their first committee meeting to discuss information needed. He and Dr. Cronin will speak regularly about the report and vote. A minimum of 3 meetings will be scheduled by each committee over the next 3 weeks and will include public comment.

VI. Report from Superintendent

Dr. Cronin reminded the board of the 3 year strategic improvement goal of having 85% of students at or above goal on CMT/CAPT by 2012. His district improvement plan is in service to this goal, and to the strategic improvement plan, and involves the areas of curriculum, instruction and leadership. Each school's improvement plan also incorporates goals in math, reading, writing and school culture. All K-12 curricula will be completed by 2012 and in UBD format.

Dr. Cronin provided a number of graphic reports of CMT/CAPT data and took questions/comments from the board.

Mr. Suslavich said that it is not appropriate to look at scores for stand alone cohorts in our region, but rather we should compare to the state and comparable DRG schools.

Dr. Cronin responded that he believes it is critical to track improvement over time for our own students but that he would also be showing comparison data to the DRG.

Mr. Bauer asked if the 85% goal is in every grade, to which Dr. Cronin replied that it is.

Ms. Corsico commented that our students' progress over time is in contrast to what was occurring under the previous superintendent, when student performance declined over time.

Mr. Bauer asked for and received verification that the first comparison year, 2006, was the first for the generation 4 CMT.

Ms. Bulvanoski asked Dr. Cronin whether the state was providing much in the way of information on upcoming changes to testing, etc. and he replied that much of what is being released is around high school reform.

In response to comments that, statewide, grade three students struggled with the CMTs, Mr. Bauer felt seeing the progress of the DRG over time would be helpful. Dr. Cronin agreed and said he would get that information to Mr. Bauer.

Ms. Corsico asked if benchmark data from the end of last year is available yet, to which Dr. Cronin responded it is not but when it's in he will see how it may correlate to the CMT data.

Ms. Bulvanoski cautioned that when comparing ourselves to others in our DRG, it is important to note how long different programming has been in place – how many years schools have been using certain programs.

After Dr. Cronin's report, Ms. Corsico questioned Mr. Sordi on when the full board would be permitted to weigh in on the report process. Mr. Sordi replied that, as committees begin to meet, the chairs of those committees will report back to the board. She noted that he said during his report that he has met with individual chairs; but, she would have thought he would have met with the full board about this, and not done so out of the public eye. Mr. Baider commented that, as an example, he had met with Dr. Cronin to discuss the appropriateness of questions, and now his planning committee will meet tomorrow. Ms. Corsico asked who would put the letter together that will be sent home to parents, and Mr. Sordi said that this would be discussed at the next meeting. He drafted a letter, he added. Ms. Corsico asked if that would not be a letter the Superintendent would typically write, and Mr. Sordi replied that the letter is from the BoE.

Ms. Corsico commented that each committee meeting 3 times in 3 weeks places an unreasonable burden on those wanting to attend the meetings. If the timeline is kept, and the report is written by 10/12 and followed immediately by hearings when, she asked, would the full board see the full report before it goes to the public. Mr. Sordi said that the full board will review it prior to it going to the public.

## **VII. Privilege of the Floor**

**Candace Fernandes**, Woodbury, objected to the board's plan to have its own committees prepare the report on reconfiguration. She does not believe the public can receive objective information from the current committee chairs who have been given enormous latitude and control. The chairs were appointed by Mr. Sordi, and each has spoken publicly against reconfiguration and been endorsed by the activist group formed to reverse reconfiguration. The three senior members of the board chair no committees, while 3 of the 4 committees are chaired by members with no prior board experience. Assigning these committees to produce the report is anything but unbiased, she said. The preparation of the report is out of the hands of the full board and in the hands of only a few, and the number of meetings in a short span of time removes many of the watchful eyes of the public and press. She urged reconsidering and soliciting an unbiased third party, and reaching out to the entire community and not just those with whom Mr. Sordi already agrees, for the good of our students.

**Pam Gengenbach**, Woodbury, has the opposite opinion and feels the report and subsequent vote puts the issue back in the hands of the people. Too much weight is being put on the report, she said, and emotions should not be reflected in it, but benefits and drawbacks of each configuration should be. She said that state guidelines for interpreting testing data were not used in Dr. Cronin's presentation and we should be comparing to the state. She read a number of passages from the state testing manual. She compared the

region to an alcoholic and said we must first admit to a problem before it can be fixed, and should not just say the data looks better than last year's.

Mr. Baider commented that the integrity of the information provided to the committees comes from Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank. The committees are not creating the data. There will be an earnest effort to hold all meetings in public with public comment.

Ms. Corsico noted that meeting dates have not yet been given. Mr. Sordi said they would be given to Dr. Cronin's assistant for posting.

**Silvia Ouellette**, Bethlehem, asked to keep in mind that CMTs are just one measure of a student's success and all the eggs should not be in one basket. She worries when people see information like the anonymous report left out at the last meeting. Data driven decision making should be looked at, too. The professionals in the schools keep data on each student and state mandated tests don't measure the quality of the education in the schools. If looking at success, she hoped the board would not be looking just at CMT/CAPT because this would be not only ignorant, but only one measure of success. Region 14 teachers, she said, have specific goals for each of their students.

**Eileen Budrewicz**, Woodbury, worries that people are trying to highlight data to show whether or not reconfiguration is good or not. What should be looked at, she said, is what is best for our students, those from Woodbury and from Bethlehem.

**Tim Drakeley**, Woodbury, urged committees to find families who were displaced by the movement of the town line years ago which sent Woodbury students to Bethlehem and see how that went for them. This would be good feedback, he thought, and similar to the difficulties some families are having now.

#### VIII. Report from Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Hubelbank reported that fire marshals did walk throughs of all facilities and all standards were met for opening school. He noted much work done to the fields this summer, including seeding and aerating, but there has been no rain and the fields are not irrigated. Coaches are rotating use of them and efforts are ongoing to make them as playable as possible. The remaining TV equipment is in and the next meeting should be broadcast live. Transportation is off to a good start with buses running on time and stops/routes being addressed as needed. He also noted a federal grant totaling \$128,000 passed through by the state is being used to maintain positions.

Mr. Drakeley shared information with Mr. Hubelbank and Mr. Sordi regarding the possible use of a water wheel to irrigate the fields.

#### IX. Old Business

Mr. Sordi outlined that, during executive session on 8/24, the members present unanimously authorized him to have Mark Sommaruga, Esq., move forward with a timeline agreement for Judge Pickard for the restoration of two K-5 schools for the 2011-12 school year. The agreement, which is being put in place, would allow for a 10-47(c) vote to amend the regional plan prior to the date specified. Atty. Sommaruga asked for that authorization to be in the form of a motion. Mr. Sordi requested a *motion to accept the "Motion for Judgment and Stipulation," dated 8/18/10 and pertaining to Docket No. LLI-CV-07-4006100-S John M Pratt, Jr. v BOE Regional School District 14 as presented and authorizes Atty. Sommaruga to enter into this agreement. This agreement will be presented to the Superior Court – Judicial District of Litchfield.* Mr. Suslavich entered the motion as read by Mr. Sordi, second by Mr. Baider, and the **motion carried 6-1-1** with Mr. Cosgriff voting no and Ms. Bulvanoski abstaining, not having seen the document.

Mr. Sordi addressed distributing materials at board meetings. He said he reviewed board policy and consulted with Dr. Cronin. He requested the following procedure be followed: all information offered by board members will be channeled through the chair; information offered by administration will be channeled through Dr. Cronin and the chair; and information presented by the public should be done in a manner where there is no question as to who is offering the information provided. He said that this procedure is for documents or handouts or any other means of distributing information which would possibly confuse an individual attending such meeting.

He addressed board minutes. The board secretary and board clerk will work together to prepare minutes, which will then be sent in draft form to all board members for review. Minutes will be presented at the next regularly scheduled meeting for changes and/or approval.

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

Dr. Cronin requested a *motion to approve the resignation of Lisa Fishman Martin*, entered by Mr. Suslavich, seconded by Ms. Zmek and the **motion carried 8-0**.

He requested a *motion to approve the appointment of Harris Daigle, String Instructor, MES*, entered by Ms. Bulvanoski, seconded by Mr. Bauer, amended to strike the word "interim" and seconded by Mr. Baider and the **motion carried 8-0**.

He requested a *motion to accept the appointment of Kathleen Bischoff, 0.5 preschool teacher*, entered by Mr. Suslavich, seconded by Mr. Baider, and that **motion carried 8-0**.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to approve the following extra duty position at NHS*, verifying that they are appropriately funded and asking that they be listed in the minutes:

- Art Blais, Assistant Football
- Kathy Brenner, Field Hockey
- Peter Carlson, Assistant Baseball
- Tracey Catanzaro, Assistant Cheerleading
- Jim Chappuis, Golf
- Kevin Clemente, Girls Tennis
- Rob DeJoseph (Volunteer), Wrestling
- Toby Denman, Boys Soccer and Baseball
- Sarah DePolo (Volunteer), Unified Sports
- Leeza Desjardins, Cheerleading
- Tim Drakeley, Basketball
- Arleigh Duff, Cross Country, Track
- Tyler Elmore (Volunteer) Baseball
- Fran Gelzinis, Volleyball
- Jeremy Greco, Freshman Basketball
- Dave Green, Wrestling
- Tom Greet (Volunteer) Assistant Cheerleading
- John Lawless, Assistant Volleyball and Gymnastics
- Chris Martinelli, Assistant Football and Wrestling
- Chris McGrath, Assistant Girls Soccer
- John Oko, Football
- Bob Oppici, Boys Track
- Katherine Parlato, Assistant Softball
- Tammy Platt, Assistant Boys Soccer and Unified Sports
- James Pollard (Volunteer) Cheerleading
- Patricia Reed, Cheerleading
- Jeanne Ross, Assistant Field Hockey

Nick Sheikh, Girls Soccer and Boys Tennis  
John Somero, Girls Basketball  
Mark Sorrentino, Gymnastics  
Ken Sperry, Assistant Basketball  
John Stolle, Assistant Football  
Gary Tilbe (Volunteer) Assistant Wrestling  
Drew Valla, Assistant Girls Basketball  
Lauren Valla, Freshman Girls Basketball  
John Zappone, Softball

Ms. Zmek seconded that motion and the **motion carried 8-0.**

Ms. Corsico entered a *motion to approve the appointments of the following district coordinators:*

Nicole Cowles, K-12 Math Coordinator  
Amy Perras, K-12 Music Coordinator  
Nadine Pratt, 7-12 Science Coordinator  
Carol Tomkalski, 6-12 Director of School Counseling

The motion was seconded by Mr. Cosgriff, and the **motion carried 8-0.**

Ms. Corsico also entered a *motion to approve the appointment of Amy Perras as Junior Chorus advisor, MES*, second by Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 8-0.**

**XI. Board Announcements**

Mr. Baider repeated that the planning committee would meet tomorrow and that the agenda is on the website. The public is welcome.

**XI. Privilege of the Floor**

Ms. Fernandes appreciates the right to vote, yet objects to the process to formulate a report. Ms. Corsico, she said, brings eight years experience yet serves on only one committee and chairs none. Mr. Sordi is directing everything. She appreciates Mr. Baider's comments but does not believe this is an inclusive process.

Ms. Gengenbach acknowledged ownership of the information left on the agenda table at the last meeting. She said her mapping of data was per state guidelines. At a previous meeting, she said, a board member handed out information on cohort scores. She was trying to put the information out the right way.

**XII. Executive Session**

None.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Baider made the *motion to adjourn*, second by Mr. Suslavich. The **motion carried 8-0** and the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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