

LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience



in a Public School Setting

Regular Board of Education Meeting

November 1, 2023

Board Present: Steven Wilson, Chair; Mary Powell St. Louis, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Suzanne Thompson, Secretary; Laura Dean-Frazier; Anna James; Jason Kemp; Jennifer Miller (via Zoom); Martha Shoemaker

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

Others Present: Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti, High School Student Representatives; seven community members from LOL

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Steven Wilson. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Powell St. Louis, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 4, 2023 as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

III. Visitors

1. Report from Student Representatives

Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

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At LOLHS: October at the high school went great. Fall sports were in full swing and are wrapping up, with sophomore Chase Gilbert winning the cross country Shoreline Championship and the Class S State Championship and the girls soccer team playing in the shoreline championship this Friday. On the 18th, freshmen, sophomores, and juniors took the PSAT for the first time online. On Halloween, Student Council held a costume contest with prizes going to costumes that were the funniest, best duo, most eye-catching and scariest. It was a big success. The fall play, *Clue*, will take place on November 3 and 4. We are also looking forward to the Veterans Day assembly later this month, as well as report card night next Thursday and a blood drive for students and staff on November 13.

At LOLMS: October was an extremely busy month. Fall sports are finishing up after a very successful season. Many of the clubs are seasonal with new ones beginning including flight club, boys volleyball club, art club and Math Counts. In conjunction with LYSB, we brought in a state trooper who shared information and safety tips on social media and phone use. The 6th graders joined the Mile Creek and Lyme School 5th graders, while the 7th and 8th graders received their own presentation. Additionally, there was a parent presentation that evening. The first school dance took place on October 27. It was a costume dance which was the first one since pre-COVID. Students were super excited, and it was well attended. Last week was spirit week followed by an energy packed pep rally. A culminating activity for the month included the transformation of the library into a haunted mansion where students read scary themed material including work from Edgar Allen Poe and worked on problem-solving using virtual escape rooms. This created a highly engaging, creative and rigorous task for the students.

At Mile Creek and Lyme Consolidated School: During the month of October, students at Mile Creek focused on the concept of empathy. A school-wide community meeting was held to explain the meaning of empathy and to connect it with our first care and share initiative of the school year. During the month of October, we engaged in our "Socktober" initiative. Students and their families collected 1,938 winter clothing and self-care items that were then donated to The Madonna Place in Norwich for families in need. The students were rewarded for all of their hard work with a Harvest Fest on October 27 during which students had rides in horse drawn carriages and picked gourdes from a field behind the school.

Throughout October at Lyme Consolidated, students participated in a "spooky reading challenge" and voted to figure out the scariest book in the library. This culminated with an assembly on Tuesday that included a whole-school read aloud and dancing. On Friday October 27, the PTO supported a Fall Festival with a book sale, fun games and food provided by the Lions Club.

Several field trips were taken during the month at both schools including fifth grade students visiting the middle school for a presentation about social media, fourth grade students visiting the Mystic Seaport, third grade students visiting Camp Hazen to engage in team building activities, and first grade students visiting the Essex Steam Train.

In the Preschool Program: October was a busy month at the preschool. We took our monthly walk to the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, built fairy houses with our middle school book buddies, had school

pictures taken, and we wrapped up the month with black and orange day on October 31. We also had a new outdoor classroom delivered, which we are already using. Looking ahead to November, we will be learning about healthy eating, Thanksgiving, turkeys and family. Among other stories, we will read *Today is Monday* by Eric Carle and multiple versions of *Stone Soup*. In the classrooms, we will be making our version of stone soup, and we will welcome parents to eat with us on November 17. We are looking forward to the annual Veterans Day celebration during which we walk to the town hall, say the Pledge of Allegiance, and learn about the monument that is located there. In the creative arts center, we will make a turkey hat that includes three "thankful" feathers, and we will talk about what we are most thankful for. We will learn the letters G, H and I, and we will learn about graphing and sorting in math. The artist of the month is Piet Mondrian, the color is yellow, and the shape of the month is the square. We hope you all have a happy Thanksgiving.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

V. Administrative Reports

1. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the November personnel report which reflected vacancies for a part-time library media specialist at LOLHS and an elementary Spanish Teacher due to the recent resignations of Lucy Trost and Michele Tackett. Mr. Neviasher also reported that they anticipate a retirement effective at the end of November which will create an opening for a speech and language pathologist. Christine MacDonald has been hired as the secretary to the director of facilities and technology.

Questions were posed on whether reducing the library media specialist position to .5 FTE will be sufficient to meet needs and fulfill NEASC requirements. Mr. Neviasher explained how this staffing reduction will meet the needs of the students.

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the November enrollment report which reflected a total of 1,293 students in-house, same number as last month this time.

Mr. Neviasher gave an update on the progress towards the district goals.

Curriculum

Continue to document/revise curriculum in accordance with the five year Curriculum Revision Cycle.

- Grade levels meetings completed in October which included a review of the curriculum documentation process in grades 3-5.
- PK orientation with adaptations discussed based on the current template.

- High school math department adopting curriculum alignment and renewal as a department goal for the year.

Human Resources

In alignment with state guidelines, utilize the PDEC committee to revise the teacher evaluation plan, communicate new expectations, and provide introductory training to all certified staff.

- PDEC meeting to review professional development plans for this year taking place November 14.
- Michelle Dean attended CSDE training on new evaluation plan and will report out at PDEC meeting.

Community

Collaborate with the community via regular updates in an effort to maintain and enhance school-community relationships.

- Held meeting with neighbors for pump and treat system.
- *Focus on Education* newsletter printed and mailed.
- CABA award winner for social media, newsletters, website and calendar.

Facilities

In preparation for construction to begin in the summer of 2024, develop strategies to minimize classroom disruption, adhere to the approved budget and design, and continue to maintain existing facilities via the five-year plan.

- Met with Eversource to discuss possible additional savings for PK-8 project (heat pumps, lower costs).
- Revisit cost efficiencies for bleachers.
- Held special Building Committee meeting to decide on heating source.

Sustainability

Develop “Green Teams” at each building to identify, address, and support student-driven sustainability initiatives.

- Post-consumer waste composting at Lyme School with local farm.
- LOLHS Green Team/ECOS Club.
 - Weekly ECOS (Environmental Community of Stewards) meetings (15 students).
 - White Sands Beach cleanup planned for October 27 rained-out; to be rescheduled.
 - Waste/recycling station research.
 - Brief student presentation is planned at the next Old Lyme solid waste and recycling committee meeting.
 - Food Drive with LYSB scheduled for November 6-17.
 - Guests from Old Lyme Open Space commission to attend November 1 club meeting to discuss building bat boxes.

Board of Education

Attend professional development opportunities offered through CABE including the CABE/CAPSS Convention and the state-mandated new BOE member workshop.

- CABE/CAPSS Convention at the end of this month.

2. Business Manager’s Report

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of October 31, 2023. Fluctuations of note: Pupil Transportation due to timing of invoices.

Year To Date Revenue Report

	2022-2023 Received	2023-2024 Received YTD
Town of Old Lyme	\$27,521,402	\$8,656,023
Town of Lyme	\$5,918,777	\$1,992,641

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. An expenditure of \$6,533 to install shot clocks in the LOLHS gym which is a new CIAC requirement. Clocks had worked previously but when tested, did not work. Balance stands at \$160,687.

Mrs. McCalla reported that the GPS system was installed in the buses. Communication will be sent out to parents shortly so that they will have the ability to track the buses via a phone application.

Mrs. Shoemaker asked if there are a lot of bussing complaints due to the driver shortage. Mrs. McCalla reported that she believed the parents anticipate some delays and are understanding of the shortage situation. She commended Kelly Nickerson and Roger Snow, employees of M&J Bus Company, for their efforts in the transportation of the students during this difficult period.

Mrs. Dean-Frazier asked about initiatives to recruit new bus drivers. Mrs. McCalla addressed recruitment of drivers that is constantly being done by M&J Transportation. The major issue is that the work force is not there and this was known before COVID, but COVID just exacerbated the situation. She added that the hourly rate is pretty consistent between bus companies, and many bus drivers remain loyal to their employer once employed.

Mr. Staab requested an educational presentation on the special education program and related costs. It was noted that this and a report on the development of the budget is given every other year to the Board of Education and will, most likely, take place at the January Board meeting.

VI. Educational Presentation

There was no presentation scheduled this month.

VII. Chairman & Committee Reports:

- a. *Facilities*. Mr. Staab reported that they met earlier in the evening at LOLHS. A tour of the building showed that it is in good shape. The committee reviewed the five-year facilities plan; they have asked Ron Turner, Director of Facilities and Technology, to add the expected increases in costs in the five year plan.
- b. *Finance*. No report.
- c. *Communications*. This committee will meet on November 8.
- d. *Policy*. This committee will meet on November 8.
- e. *LEARN*. No report.
- f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. No report.
- g. *PreK-8 Building Committee*. Mr. Wilson reported that at their last meeting the group discussed the options of oil vs. propane for the PK-8 Building Project after a presentation on the HVAC life cycle operational systems comparison by the architects, engineers and construction managers. Although they are about the same in cost, they seem to be leaning toward propane as parts for oil may become scarce in the future. Generators could run on diesel or propane but not oil. Ms. Miller noted that maintenance costs and changeover costs should be studied as well and that geothermal options should be considered.

Mr. Wilson addressed an email from Board member Anna James requesting that current public comment practices be reviewed by the Policy Committee. More specifically, Mrs. James requested the following:

- Ensuring civility from public and avoidance of personal attacks (review Policy 1316).
- Keeping comments to the three minute limit.
- Board members not engaging with public during public comment (as has been past practice).

Mrs. James also recommended that *Robert's Rules of Order* and Board policy be followed during public comment.

Mr. Wilson, Dr. Powell St. Louis, Mr. Staab, Mrs. Dean-Frazier and Ms. Miller voiced their similar mindset that they should be encouraging more public comment and that it was important to make people feel comfortable before the Board to express their thoughts and that interactions with the public were important and should be addressed at the time they are brought up. They also did not feel that going over the three minute limit was something to pursue. In response to the avoidance of personal attacks, Mr. Wilson noted that they are elected officials and should be able to shoulder those.

Mrs. Shoemaker offered a suggestion that public comments be put on a future agenda for discussion and/or sent to the Policy Committee for review instead of addressing when comments are made.

VIII. New Business

1. 2024-2025 School Calendar

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the calendar for the 2024-2025 school year which has been reviewed with the administration and teacher and parent leadership members. The schedule is similar to previous year's calendars.

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to approve the 2024-2025 school calendar as presented.

Discussion centered on the inclusion of the February vacation when many area districts have reduced this to two days. Mr. Neviasher reported that the decision to keep a full week vacation in February was predicated after input from the nursing staff. Mr. Neviasher noted that this break has worked well for the district.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

2. LOLHS Field Trip Request

The Board reviewed a field trip request to the 88th Annual New England Interscholastic Cross Country Championship that will take place in Belfast, Maine on November 11, 2023. They are anticipating sending one, possibly two, student athletes to this event should they qualify at the Connecticut State Open on November 3.

MOTION: Mr. Kemp made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. James, to approve the field trip request as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

IX. Old Business

1. Bleacher Project

At the October 4 Board meeting, the Board approved the following motion: to award G. Donovan Construction the contract to install bleacher systems at the synthetic turf field and the middle field located at the Lyme-Old Lyme High School for \$467,000.00.

Mr. Neviasher revisited this bleacher proposal and shared some other ideas that may serve the same purpose in a more economical manner (possibly savings of \$100,000-\$150,000) although seating capacity will be reduced. More information will be discussed at the December Board meeting. Mr. Neviasher recommended that they reject the bid and go out to bid with new specifications.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to reject the previously approved bid for the bleacher project.

Mr. Wilson noted this was a good example of thoughtful reconsideration of a proposal and searching for ways to economize.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

X. Executive Session

Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing negotiations with the Lyme-Old Lyme Administrators' Associations. Mr. Neviasser was invited to attend the executive session. Motion passed unanimously.

XI. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m. upon a motion by Mr. Staab and a second by Mrs. Dean-Frazier.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Thompson, Secretary