



**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 21, 2024**

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on May 21, 2024, in the Haddam-Killingworth High School Community Room.

**Board Member Attendance:**

Board Member	Present	Absent	Board Member	Present	Absent
Prem Aithal	X		Dr. Nelson Rivera	X	
Lisa Connelly	X		Corey Roberts	X	
Jennifer Favalora	X		Suzanne Sack	X	
Shawna Goldfarb		X	Jennifer Voegtli	X	
Hamish MacPhail (6:39 pm)	X		Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X	
Heather Pach	X				

**Also Present:** Superintendent Jeffrey Wihbey, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Miller, Director Ben Whittaker, Director Dr. Aaron Puzarne, Board Administrator Sarah Kaiser, Principal Brienne Whidden, Principal Dorothy Ventura, Assistant Principal Heather Persson, Nathan Levenson from New Solutions(remote), and Student Representatives Madison Moriarty and Michael Perry

**Visitors:** 15

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting**

Board Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Nelson Rivera **SECONDED** a motion to move agenda 6.E. to after item 8.

The vote passed unanimously by way of a show of hands and a voice vote.

## **Cougar Pride**

Principal Brienne Whidden introduced the PE/Health Teacher Garrett Lemke and seven of his BES students who performed Cardio Drumming.

Principal Whidden, the students, parents, and teachers left the meeting.

## **Public Comment**

None

## **Superintendent's Report**

The Superintendent recognized the teachers chosen as the Teachers of the Year: Rebecca Aithal from BES, Jennifer Esposito from KES, Michael Czarkowski from HKHS, Kerry Geoghegan from HKMS, and Jessica Spearrin from HKIS. He also announced that Rebecca Aithal will be the RSD17 District Teacher of the Year.

The Superintendent reported to the Board on the following items:

- USI was onboarded as the new commercial insurance brokerage firm and began the marketing process for FY25 renewals.
- From Operations, new vinyl composition tile flooring was installed at KES.
- Work has begun with stakeholders across the district to implement recommendations from the New Solutions program review.
- Supervisors/administrators are preparing to complete end-of-year evaluations.
- HKHS' Josh Hagewood has been named the winner of the 2024 Connecticut Council for the Social Studies John H. Stedman Passion for the Social Studies Teaching Award.
- The Superintendent provided the Board with a follow-up summary document on Class size guidelines.

## **Student Representative Report**

Madison Moriarty thanked the Board for her time on the Board over the last two years. She provided updates on the following events:

- The Senior Outing is scheduled for this Friday
- Street Fest is next Wednesday
- The Senior Prom will be held on May 31st

Michael Perry reported that the AP testing finished last week, and the AAPPL testing is currently happening for students in world languages who want to earn the seal of biliteracy. He also noted that the Annual Award Night will be on May 23rd.

Board Chair Sack presented Michael and Madison with a certificate and thanked them for their hard work and service to the Board this year.

Principal Hayward and the Student Representatives left the meeting.

### **Middle School Plan Presentation**

Principal Ventura presented the Middle School plan update to the Board. She discussed what has been completed so far, future plans for the priorities, and the next steps. She presented the shared vision statement, examples of the whole school structure and individualized support systems, and ways that communication has been implemented with parents and staff. Principal Ventura also discussed the focus on student achievement in math. Then, she discussed the changes that will be occurring in the schedule and provided a comparison of the schedule from the 2023/2024 schedule to the 2024/2025 schedule.

Principal Ventura and Assistant Principal Persson discussed and answered questions from the Board.

Principal Ventura and Assistant Principal Persson left the meeting.

### **SPED Program Review Presentation**

Nathan Levenson from New Solutions presented the findings from the Special Education Program Review to the Board. Nathan emphasized the special education and general education partnership and that this is a system-wide set of recommendations. He reported on a summary of commendations found throughout the process and opportunities for the next steps.

The Board discussed the presentation, and Mr. Levenson and Director Puzarne answered questions.

Mr. Levenson left the meeting.

### **FY25 Debt Service Funding Recommendations**

Director Whittaker discussed the district's debt service obligation in FY25 attributable to the HKHS Improvement General obligation bond issuance totaling \$930,000 in principal and interest. In an effort to mitigate the general budget increase for FY25, final State grant reimbursements related to the project that were received in FY24 (totaling \$495,999) were deposited into the Fund 35 account with the intention of paying debt service from the fund in FY25. This enabled the FY25 general budget to carry a debt service budget of \$430,001, which represents the estimated portion of the FY25 total debt service payment of \$930K that will not be paid by Fund 35. The total will vary slightly as interest is currently accruing in the account, and the final payment out of the fund will be made in an amount that will liquidate the fund, closing the account.

Director Whittaker requested that the payment be partially paid out of the Fund 35 account, liquidating and closing the account. The balance of any remaining debt service obligation will be paid through the FY25 General Budget. Director Whittaker noted that this was discussed with and deemed acceptable by bond counsel, the BOE's independent auditing firm, and the BOE's primary legal counsel.

Prem Aithal **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to partially fund the FY25 debt service obligation through Fund 35 to fully liquidate and close the fund, with the balance of any remaining debt service obligation to be paid through the FY25 General Budget.

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		

### Financial Operations Services-Contract

Director Whittaker provided the Board with a summary of information and a request to extend the contract for LEARN to conduct the district's financial operations services in FY25. He also gave the Board the RFP policy 3323 exception reasons for consideration. LEARN has successfully provided services in the past year and is currently performing the operations in the finance department with no district staff personnel.

The Superintendent noted some of the accomplishments that LEARN has achieved during the past year.

Prem Aithal **MOVED** and Nelson Rivera **SECONDED** a motion to award a contract to LEARN to provide Financial Operation Services for FY25 and for the Superintendent to execute the contract on behalf of the Board of Education.

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A

Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		
--------------	--	--	--

**Second Read of (6) Policies and (4) Items of Information**

- 3323 Purchasing
- 4118.5 Policy Regarding Employee Use of the District’s Computer Systems and Electronic Communications (Certified)
- 4218.5 Policy Regarding Employee Use of the District’s Computer Systems and Electronic Communications (Non-Certified)
- 5131 Student Discipline
- 5158 Meal Charging
- 6146 High School Graduation Requirements

Items of Information

- 4118.5 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Employee Use of the District’s Computer Systems and Electronic Communications (Certified)
- 4218.5 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Employee Use of the District’s Computer Systems and Electronic Communications (Non-Certified)
- 5115 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Admission to the Public Schools at or Before Age Five
- 5131 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Student Discipline

Hamish MacPhail **MOVED** and Jennifer Voegtli **SECONDED** a motion to approve and set the policies as presented on the agenda.

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A

Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		

**Consent Agenda**

- a. Enrollment Report
- b. Personnel Report
- c. Approval of Minutes from the April 16, 2024, Board of Education Meeting
- d. Approval of Minutes from the May 6, 2024, Board of Education Annual Meeting
- e. Approval to accept the donation for two Anton HCx batteries valued at \$400.00 received from ESPN. They are specialty batteries for the steadicam equipment. They will be used as a learning tool for our HKTV class. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- f. Approval to accept the donation for one Anton Quad charger valued at \$600.00 received from ESPN. This is a specialty charger for the batteries for the steadicam equipment. They will be used as a learning tool for our HKTV class. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- g. Approval to accept the donation for two Anton Hytron batteries valued at \$600.00 received from ESPN. They are specialty batteries for the steadicam equipment. They will be used as a learning tool for our HKTV class.
- h. Approval to accept a check donation in the amount of \$500.00 received from Lee Co. to support the Robotics Club and Robotics Competitions. The funds will be deposited into the Project Lead the Way account. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- i. Approval of the inventory/asset disposal request for two donated vehicles. Submitted by Donna Hayward, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth High School.
- j. Approval to accept a check in the amount of \$104.90 received from Box Tops for Education. These funds will be deposited directly into the Student Activity Fund. Submitted by Brienne Whideden, Principal of Burr Elementary School.
- k. Approval to accept a donation in the amount of \$1,000.00 in the form of a grant. This grant was received from the Connecticut Association of Schools and will be deposited into the Student Activity Account to

support the Unified Sports Program. Submitted by Dorothy Ventura, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Middle School.

I. First (2) Policies and (3) Items of Information

- 5141.21 Administration of Student Medications in the Schools
- 5141.5 Policy Regarding Suicide Prevention and Intervention

Items of Information

- 5141.21 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Administration of Naloxone (Narcan)
- 5141.5 R Administrative Regulations Regarding Suicide Prevention and Intervention
- 6149 R Class Size Guidelines Administrative Regulation

Heather Pach requested to have policy 5141.5 removed from the consent agenda for discussion.

Jennifer Voegtli **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** an amended motion to approve the consent agenda with the elimination of L, second bullet point, policy 5141.5.

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		

The Board discussed changing the verbiage in policy 4151.5, which is a first-read policy. Heather Pach requested changing the language from “who will, in turn, notify the Director of Student Services” to “who will, in turn, notify appropriate Student Services Staff.”

Heather Pach **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to modify the first read of policy 5141.5 changing the language from “who will, in turn, notify the Director of Student Services” to “who will, in turn, notify appropriate Student Services Staff.”

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		

### Personnel & Evaluation Subcommittee

Corey Roberts reported that the committee met on May 13th and discussed the PDEC teacher evaluation update, which will be presented to the Board in June. They also discussed the HR Central Office structure, the controller position, the Finance and Operations position, and an update on the Nurses’ negotiations. The committee also discussed the Superintendent’s evaluation process.

### Curriculum Subcommittee

Kathy Zandi reported that the committee met, and Principal Ventura presented the Middle School Plan to the committee, as was presented at tonight’s meeting.

### Finance & Facilities Subcommittee

Prem Aithal reported that the committee reviewed the monthly financial reports and any material change updates since the last forecast. He noted that the health insurance line was examined, which resulted in a favorable outcome of more than \$500K vs. the budget. Mr. Aithal also advised that the ECHMC rate will increase by 8% for FY25 versus the budgeted 7% percentage and that the amount should be able to be absorbed from the savings expected FY24 health insurance review. Mr. Aithal reported that the end-of-year budget is projected to be unofficially under budget, with the capital being funded at the full 2% with this notification of the health insurance line item.

Director Whittaker provided an update on the HKHS condenser replacement project. Construction is hopeful for September.

### Policy Subcommittee

Hamish MacPhail reported that the committee addressed the first reading of the policies discussed at this evening’s meeting. The committee also initially discussed a code of conduct/code of ethics.



### Communications Subcommittee

Lisa Connelly reported that the committee met with Mr. Caruso from CAFE, who presented the benefits of CAFE membership.

### LEARN

Jennifer Favalora spoke on the programs “I Choose Success” which is VR training and “Just In Time Tutoring” which is AI tutoring. LEARN is also building a new location in Waterford.

### HK Youth and Family Services

Heather Pach reported that in March, April, and May, they listed 25 programs. The drug takeback day was very successful, and the mentor program has continued to flourish.

She also provided an update on the following events:

- Summer Solstice Family Fest
- TeenTrailblazers
- Girls on the Run
- Teen Nights at the Firehouse

### Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department

Jennifer Voegtli reported that the summer program is gearing up. There are scholarships available for families in need.

### Haddam Board of Selectmen

Heather Pach reported that construction was discussed, and a request for a budget event to be held in Haddam Neck next year.

### Killingworth Board of Selectmen

Lisa Connelly reported that the Town budget passed.

### Personnel Matter-Superintendent Contract, YE Review\*

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to go into an executive session to discuss the personnel matter of the Superintendent’s contract and his year-end review, inviting the Superintendent.

The vote passed unanimously by voice vote. 10-0-0

Member	Vote	Member	Vote
Prem Aithal	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A

Lisa Connelly	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Corey Roberts	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Suzanne Sack	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Hamish MacPhail	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A
Heather Pach	X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A		

Assistant Superintendent Miller, Director Whittaker, Director Puzarne, and Board Administrator Kaiser left the meeting.

The Board entered the Executive session at 9:06 pm.

The Superintendent left the meeting at 9:22 pm.

The Board exited the Executive session at 9:39 pm and Board Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 9:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser  
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Board Secretary