

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7
DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING- MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2024
Followed by a BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
Robert H. Ohotnicky Little Theater 7:00 p.m.
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
APPROVED 5.8.24

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Mary Duran (B), Ms. Lisa Fragale(C), Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Superintendent Steven K. LePage, Director of Finance & Operations Mr. James Gaskins, Middle School Principal Mr. Fran Amara, High School Principal Mr. Gary Franklin, Student Representatives Owen Langer.

Absent: Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Student Representatives Fiona Leon.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Sexton Read called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **APPROVE** the April 3, 2024, Board of Education Third Informal Budget Presentation- New Hartford Meeting Minutes, as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Duran. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Kenneson. **MOTION PASSED.**

MOTION by Ms. Crone, seconded by Ms. Bell, to **APPROVE** the April 4, 2024 Board of Education Fourth Informal Budget Presentation- Barkhamsted Meeting Minutes, as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Kenneson. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** Ms. Fragale. **MOTION PASSED.**

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **APPROVE** the April 4, 2024 Board of Education Meeting Minutes following the Barkhamsted Presentation Meeting, as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Kenneson. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** Ms. Fragale. **MOTION PASSED.**

REPORTS

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT OWEN LANGER

Mr. Langer expressed that Spring sports are reaching the middle of the season. baseball has a record of 5 – 1, softball is in the midst of playing four games this week. Despite not having a track meet, the track team is already in the middle of the spring season. Mary Poppins will be presented by the RSD#7 Theater students and staff Friday April 26, Saturday April 27, and Sunday, April 28. The Junior Prom is on May 4 and the Senior Prom is on May 24, 2024. Model UN is having a conference on April 26 in Woodstock. On May 10, this will be the first Model UN Conference hosted by RSD#7 and inviting Lewis Mills to participate. National Foreign Language Honor Society held the Top of the Hill Chef Cook off. The winners' dishes were polish apple pie and spring rolls. Seniors are finalizing their commitments to colleges with a decision day of May 1. Ms. Leon sent her report to Mr. Langer to read. Ms. Leon expressed that spring sports are in full swing with baseball, tennis, softball and track. Seniors are in the final stretch of the school year and looking forward to the exciting activities and plans in May.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AMARA

Principal Amara communicated that the school year is winding down and the students are counting the days until the end of school. The Middle School will complete Smarter Balance Testing with ELA, two days of Math testing, then one day of 8th grade NGSS. Students and staff have been engaged in extra “prep” work for all this testing, focusing on the specific areas and key concepts. Mr. Amara thanked Chris Fray, Laura McBaine, Mary Fairchild and Mr. Amara’s Administrative assistant, Darcie Tokarz, for all the technology and planning that occur to make this testing ready to go.

Transition Activities: Incoming 7th grade parents’ night is April 30, a bit earlier than the last few years. Incoming 7th graders are visiting during the school day in a few days in May.

Middle School Sports: Baseball, softball and track. A big shout out to Mr. Mike Stapleton for stepping up last minute to coach the Middle School Baseball team.

Boulder Ridge Camp: May 17, 2024 both 7th and 8th grade attend Boulder Ridge Camp for the day. It is a wonderful team building event.

Middle School Class Night: May 23rd is the 8th Grade Class Night at Crystal Peak in Winsted, CT.

8th Grade Promotion: June 11, 2024.

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL FRANKLIN

Principal Franklin communicated that after April break, the rest of the school year is very busy. He expressed that the Mary Poppins Theater Production happening on April 26, 27 and 28 is going to be amazing and there are a lot of neat elements to this production.

AP testing is coming beginning May 6 to May 17. The prom season is approaching with Junior and Senior Prom. Principal Franklin expressed that the high school is always looking for ways to stress to the students how to make good choices during the prom season. This year, Dr. Dan Carroll, and Officer Lada are working with the State Police to bring in driving simulators. Principal Franklin stressed that these simulators are for educational use to recognize the importance of safe driving.

Awards Banquet/Activities Preview: The Scholar Athlete Banquet at the Aqua Turf, The High School Awards Night, The Ag Ed Awards Night, and also the High School and Middle School Choir Concert. There is the High School Band Concert and lastly, graduation on June 12, 2024.

Food Truck Celebration: Principal Franklin expressed that RSD#7 is collaborating with the feeder elementary schools and having the food truck celebration on Saturday August 24, 2024. More news to follow.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Budget Freeze: Superintendent LePage updated the BOE that the budget freeze is in effect at RSD#7. Communication was sent out to staff before the April break.

Newsletter Highlights: Superintendent LePage emailed the newsletter before April break. Some highlights include the Penguin Plunge, the Unified Team, Graduation day, the last day of school along with general overview of the budget process and the challenges, and a spotlight on the Unified Sound Program.

Board Clerk: Diane Barrett is stepping down as the board minutes’ recorder as of 6/30/24. The posting will be posted over the next few weeks.

Follow-up Regarding Consideration of Certified Staff Members' Children as Reduced -Tuition Students: Superintendent LePage expressed that two staff members may be interested in sending their children to RSD#7 next year. He reviewed a template MOU draft with the Board and explained he has been working closely with Mark Sommaruga, RSD#7 BOE Attorney, for guidance. Brief discussion followed with questions regarding disciplinary measures, special education expenses, and language of the MOU, as presented by Superintendent LePage.

Policy Updates: Superintendent LePage explained that there are many policies that need to be updated. He suggested that a policy committee be created. Superintendent LePage said the policy updates will be his focus of concern over the summer of 2024. Ms. Fragale and the BOE had a brief discussion regarding school climate surveys.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Budget Freeze at RSD#7: Mr. Gaskins briefed the BOE that Superintendent LePage emailed a detailed letter to the staff in regards to the budget freeze. The staff was appreciative for the transparency and communication.

Retaining Wall Update: Mr. Gaskins had scheduled a surveyor to complete measurements on the retaining wall. He did come and complete the measurements yet the results have not been communicated with the appropriate parties at RSD#7. Brief discussion followed.

Grants: Mr. Gaskins communicated that the Federal Security Grant application opened last week. Mr. Gaskins expressed he sent in an FOI request for information on how the grant was reviewed and awarded in past applications, so he can modify this application moving forward.

OLD BUSINESS

Board Discussion on 2024-2025 Working Budget: Ms. Sexton Read communicated that she is comfortable recommending bringing the 2024-2025 RSD#7 Budget to the referendum.

Updates: Ms. Sexton Read discussed the FOIA request and the response to this request. Brief discussion followed.

BOE Goals: None

NEW BUSINESS

Adoption of the RSD#7 2024-2025 Budget to take to Annual District Budget Meeting- May 6, 2024

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Crone, to **ADOPT** that the RSD#7 Board of Education agrees to proceed with the proposed budget of \$24,270,092, an increase of 3.47%, for the 2024-2025 school year to take to the Annual District Budget Meeting on May 6, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the RSD#7 Little Theater. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Adoption of Call of Annual District Budget Meeting with Referendum

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **ADOPT** the Call of the District Meeting of Regional School District No. 7 will be held on Monday, May 6, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., at the school building in Winsted, Connecticut, for the following business:

- 1) To authorize the Regional Board of Education to apply for, accept, and expend, in addition to the regular school budget, any state, federal, or private grant money which may be available for special purposes during the fiscal year 2024-2025.
- 2) To accept the annual budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024. Copies of the budget are on hand in the offices of the Town Clerks of each of the member towns.

The Board of Education for Regional School District No. 7 has designated that the vote on the motion to adopt the budget shall be by a “yes” or “no” vote on the optical scan machines in each of the member towns on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, with hours to be set by individual towns as established by state statutes.

Dated this 22nd day of April, 2024, at Winsted, Connecticut, and signed by Molly Sexton Read, Chair, Board of Education, Regional School District No. 7.

AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Authorization of Explanatory Text for the 2024-2025 Budget

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Fragale, to **AUTHORIZE** the Secretary of the Board of Education to prepare and cause to be printed and disseminated a concise explanatory text with respect to the 2024-2025 budget referendum question that will be submitted to the District’s voters, subject to any necessary further legal review and approval by District legal counsel, and which shall otherwise be prepared, printed, and disseminated in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 9-369b and the Secretary’s discretion, and to be amended as necessary. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Appointment of Auditors

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Duran, to **APPOINT** King, King and Associates, Certified Public Accountants, as auditors for the 2023-2024 school year. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Approval of Early Release on June 14, 2024- Last Day of School

MOTION by Ms. Crone, seconded by Ms. Bell, to **APPROVE** June 14, 2024, the last day of school, as an early release, as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

CORRESPONDENCE

Kelsey Leach – Letter of Resignation

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Ms. Crone, to **ACCEPT** Ms. Leach’s letter of resignation with regret and appreciation, as presented. The RSD#7 BOE greatly appreciates Ms. Leach’s 12 years of service to the RSD#7 students, staff and the community with sincere gratitude and wishes her all the best. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ms. Leach stopped in at the Board Meeting to thank the BOE for allowing her to take a leave of absence to stay home with her daughter.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION to amend the **BOE AGENDA** to **ADD** an **EXECUTIVE SESSION** to the **AGENDA**.

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Mr. Jerram. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Bell, to **ENTER** into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** including Superintendent LePage to discuss an Expulsion Stipulated Agreement at 8:29 p.m., as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Executive Session ended at 9:05 p.m.

MOTION by Ms. Crone, seconded by Ms. Kenneson, to **ACCEPT** the Expulsion Stipulated Agreement, as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran. **NAY:** Ms. Fragale. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Ms. Crone, to **ADJOURN** at 9:07 p.m. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

The next meeting will be on May 6, 2024~ the District Budget Meeting in the RSD#7 Little Theater at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Barrett
Board Clerk