REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING MINUTES
December 17, 2024

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

Board Member Attendance:

Board Member	Present	Absent	Board Member	Present	Absent
Joseph Centofanti	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		X	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X	
Heather Pach	X				

Also Present- Superintendent Jeffrey Wihbey, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Miller, Director of Finance and Operations Alison Pierce, Board Administrator Sarah Kaiser, Principal Dorothy Ventura, Principal Dennis Reed, Principal Brienne Whidden, Michael Ayles from Antinozzi Associates, Fran DiFiore from CSG, Assistant Principal Adam Apicella

Visitors: 45

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board Chair Suzanne Sack called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Cougar Pride

Principal Whidden introduced her third-grade students who read to the Board what they had learned about the sea during their Wit &Wisdom unit.

HKHS Boys & Girls Cross Country Champions

Superintendent Wihbey discussed the accomplishments of the Boys and Girls Cross Country Championship teams. Board chair Sack then presented the team members with a recognition certificate for their achievements.

Schools of Distinction-BES & KES

Superintendent Wihbey announced that both Elementary Schools have again been named Schools of Distinction by the Connecticut Department of Education based on their academic excellence. This is the third year for Burr Elementary. The Superintendent and the Board recognized the hard work and achievements of the Principals, Teachers, Staff, and Students. Board members and Assistant Superintendent Miller presented banners to the Principals and school representatives in recognition of the honor.

Principals Reed and Whidden, parents, and students left the meeting at 6:53 pm.

Student Representative Report

Student representative Michael Perry reported to the Board on the following items:

- 16 HKHS students were accepted to the Southern Regional Music Festival. Most will audition for the All-State festival.
- Voting has concluded in the 2024 Gingerbread House competition. The winners were Jeffrey Thebeau and Alejandra Hubbard, who will be featured on WTNH Good Morning CT.
- December 20th will be the 36th Annual Telethon from 8a-11a.
- Alumni Day will be held on January 8th. At this event, seniors will have the opportunity to talk with recent graduates about their experiences after high school.

The student representatives left the meeting at 6:57 pm.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent also reported to the Board on the following items:

- Initial budget meetings have been completed with administrators across the district. The next step is working on the budget build.
- The new BES security cameras and wiring have been installed.
- Principals from HKIS, BES, KES, and the Director of Student Services participated in a panel that discussed cell phone and social media use among young students.
- All RSD17 schools passed the Area Health District's annual health & safety inspections.
- Human Resources is preparing for the changes to the CT Paid Sick Leave law that will take effect in January 2025.
- HKHS was notified that the $18,730 Perkins 2025 grant had been approved.
- HKMS's drone club will have its first competition at Woodstock Academy on February 1st and will host the second competition on February 8th.

Public Comment

None

Jennifer Voegtli **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** a motion to move item 6.A. in front of 5.A.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote. 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

HKMS Washington DC Field Trip May 2025

Principal Ventura presented to the Board a request for approval regarding the proposed 8th-grade trip to Washington, D.C., scheduled for May 2025.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to approve the middle school field trip to Washington, D.C.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote. 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

HKHS Feasibility Study Team Update

Superintendent Wihbey advised the Board that Dr.Rivera and Corey Roberts were chosen by the Study Team to be the co-spokespeople to provide an update and report to the Board following the Team meetings.

Dr. Rivera provided an overview of the second meeting of the Study Team. They explained their roles and the expectations as liaisons to the Board moving forward. The Team reviewed the draft of the Educational Specifications report draft, and he provided some of the team's feedback. There was a review of the existing HKHS space utilization. The team reviewed the results from the community workshops, which will be informative in the development of options. They discussed the existing allocation and utilization of space in the current high school. The team also reviewed the conceptual design strategy showing new construction of an academic building and saving the field house, pool, and auditorium. The team discussed connection/proximity of the field house to new academic building; boiler room utilization, future space if enrollment increases, freshman/senior academies, ensuring the building is right-sized, and location of non-academic programs, including the Central Office.

Mike Ayles and Fran DiFiore presented the Board with the first draft of the Educational Specifications draft for the High School project and the process perspective. The Board discussed the presented information and provided feedback.

There will be feedback needed from the Board members on the Ed specs draft in order to create the next revision. Board members discussed their initial questions and comments.

Michael Ayles and Fran DiFiore left the meeting at 8:26 pm.

Second Read of Policies for Review

The Board discussed the policies presented for the second read. The Board requested Policy 3110 be discussed at the Policy Committee's next meeting for additional review.

- 1101-Policy and Administrative Regulations Regarding Non-Discrimination (Community)
- 3110-Board Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers
- 4112.5/4212.5-Employment and Student Teacher Background Checks
- 4118.12/4218.12-Policy Regarding Employees and Sections 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- 4152.6/4252.6-Family and Medical Leave
- 5113-Student Attendance, Truancy, and Chronic Absenteeism

- 5115 Admission to Public Schools at or Before Age Five
- 5141.21-Administration of Student Medications in the School

Second Read of Items of Information:

- 1101 R -Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination Complaints (Community Members)
- 4118.12 R/4218.12 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Employees and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- 5113 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Attendance, Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism
- 5115 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Early Admission to Kindergarten at or Before Age Five

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Dr. Nelson Rivera **SECONDED** a motion on 6.B. for approval for second read of policies for review.

The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. 9-1-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	☐ YES X NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Curriculum Textbooks-Second Read

Dr. Zandi reviewed with Board members the proposed textbooks for the Forensics, Mathematics, and Social Studies 4 and 5 courses, which were presented as first read at the November meeting.

Corey Roberts **MOVED** and Lisa Connelly **SECONDED** a motion to approve the curriculum textbooks as presented.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote. 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**

Joseph Centofanti	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

Consent Agenda

a. Enrollment Report

b. Personnel Report

c. Curriculum Textbooks for First Read

d. High School Opportunities Book First Read

e. First Read of Policies for Review

• 5118.1-Homeless Children and Youth

• 5131-Student Discipline

• 5131.911-Bullying

• 5145.10-Policy Regarding Students and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

• 5145.5-Suicide Prevention and Intervention

• 5152-Policy and Administrative Regulations Regarding Non-Discrimination (Students)

• 5163-Policy and Administrative Regulations to Improve Completion Rates of the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Items of Information:

• 5118.1 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Homeless Children and Youth

• 5131 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Alternative Educational Opportunities For Expelled Students

• 5145.10 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Students and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

• 5141.5 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Suicide Prevention and Intervention

• 5152 R-Administrative Regulations Regarding Discrimination Complaints (Students)

• 5163 R-Administrative Regulations Addressing Improving the Completion Rates of FAFSA

Heather Pach requested that the Personnel report be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion.

Jennifer Voegtli **MOVED** and Corey Roberts **SECONDED** a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented less item letter B.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote. 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

The Board inquired about the turnover in one school on the report, and Superintendent Wihbey provided further details.

Policy Subcommittee

Jennifer Voegtli reported that the committee continued discussing the code of ethics document. They also reviewed the policies offered to the Board for the first read.

Finance & Facilities Subcommittee

Corey Roberts provided a report of the minutes from the committee meeting on December 10th. The committee discussed the HKHS Study update and that the process was moving forward. Director Pierce provided the committee with an OSHA report update and an update on the audit process. The committee reviewed the monthly financial reports and there was

discussion on the closure of the bank account for the self-insured bank account as the account was at $0. The committee began a review regarding the upcoming busing contract.

Communications Subcommittee

Lisa Connelly reported that the committee met just prior to the Board meeting. The committee reviewed the Board's self-evaluation survey, which will be further discussed at the Board's January workshop. The committee received an update from Heather Pach regarding CABE and noted that Board members have been attending conferences and workshops. Mike Ayles from Antinozzi was present and provided information on the high school project communications. The committee talked about future accessibility to communication or the public and outreach plans. Mr. Ayles also provided a preliminary FAQ sheet to be reviewed.

Curriculum Subcommittee

Dr. Kathy Zandi discussed that the committee reviewed the high school Opportunities book that was presented for the first read. Dr. Zandi provided a highlighted summary of the course changes. Assistant Principal Apicella provided additional clarifying information to the Board. Dr. Zandi reported that the committee received information on the proposal for an additional textbook request presented for the first read and the legislative update related to the curriculum.

Adam Apicella left the meeting at 9:02 pm.

Personnel & Evaluation Subcommittee

Corey Roberts reported that the committee discussed the 2024-25 C.O. staffing plan. Director Pierce and Assistant Superintendent Miller presented the plan to the committee, stating that the comptroller position approved in the budget will be filled in 2025. A request was made for additional financial staffing information to be brought back to the committee.

LEARN

Jennifer Favalora reported the LEARN board approved increased rates for program tuitions. LEARN is also hiring a new Mental Health Navigator, which will be a position that will help families who struggle to understand and access resources for their children.

HK Youth and Family Services

Heather Pach reported on the following events:

- The Holiday Giving Program is wrapping up, and 106 children will receive gifts through the program.
- December 20th is the HKHS Telethon, and HKYFS is the beneficiary this year.
- January 8th, Girls with a Purpose
- January 8th, Creative Connections
- January 6th-20th Screenagers: The Next Chapter
- January 30th, Online Community conversation regarding Screenagers

Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department

Jennifer Voegtli reported that the Rec department inquired regarding their utilization of space. There was a discussion that the department space would be determined in the planning phase. The Rec department is also registering for its winter activities.

Haddam Board of Selectmen

Heather Pach reported that the bridge project's ribbon cutting took place. The Haddam meeting to vote on the next Board member is scheduled for January 21st.

Killingworth Board of Selectmen

No report.

Announcements

Suzanne Sack announced that there will be a planning meeting this week regarding the January workshop.

Director Pierce, Assistant Superintendent Miller, and Board Administrator Kaiser left the meeting at 9:11 pm.

Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals

Lisa Connelly **MOVED** and Jennifer Favalora **SECONDED** a motion to go into an executive session, including the Superintendent, for a personnel matter related to the Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote. 9-0-0

Member	**Vote**	**Member**	**Vote**
Joseph Centofanti	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Nelson Rivera	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Lisa Connelly	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Corey Roberts	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Shawna Goldfarb	ABSENT	Suzanne Sack	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Hamish MacPhail	ABSENT	Jennifer Voegtli	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Heather Pach	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A	Dr. Kathleen Zandi	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A
Jennifer Favalora	X YES ☐ NO ☐ A		

The Board entered an executive session at 9:16 pm.

The Board discussed the Superintendent's goals.

The Board exited the executive session at 10:41 pm.

Board Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 10:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: _____Date:_____
Dr. Kathleen Zandi, Board Secretary