**M I N U T E S**
**Special Meeting**
Agriscience Funding Committee
Tuesday, January 13, 2026; 4:00 p.m.
Library Media Center
Nonnewaug High School

**Committee Members Present:**
Chris Matta, Presiding Member
Carol Ann Brown (Zoom)

**Absent:**
Jim Crocker
Alice Jones

Brian Murphy, Superintendent
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations
Mykal Kuslis, Principal
Lee Whalen, Director of Agriscience
Barbara Perkinson, Resident
Steve Sordi, Resident (Zoom)
Jamie Mclaughlin, Former State Representative/Senator (Zoom)
Ray Butkus, First Selectman, Bethlehem
Leonard Assard, Chair, Board of Finance, Bethlehem
Paul Zulpa, First Selectman, Woodbury
Karen Reddington-Hughes, Connecticut State Representative

APPROVED

**I.** **<u>Call to order</u>**
Chris Matta called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

**II.** **Update on Strategies to Increase State Agriscience Funding**

- Jamie McLaughlin indicated that there are resources available that can be added to the process
- He met with former state rep Brian Flaherty of Watertown, who suggested that the committee organize the case statement and prepare the ground for legislative work, but realistically, take aim at the 2027 session, which is known as the long session. In the meantime, with the case statement at hand, apprise our local constituents of the facts, history of some of the facts, and amplify the issue as a matter of Agriscience statewide for all stakeholders, all hosting districts, or others who might have an interest.

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- He had a conference call on Friday with Lisa Hammersley. To recap his conversation:

    - The General Assembly addressed the ECS formula in 2017 with salutary effects largely simplifying the funding calculus and “leveling the playing field” for local public school districts across the state
    - This formula, which takes into account the number and needs of students, is now fully funded and the General Assembly has begun to extend this formula to other public school students such as magnet, agriscience, and charter school students
    - The General Assembly is expected to pick up this issue again in the 2026 session
    - For agriscience allocations, hosting districts are currently reimbursed by sending towns however under the bill the state will pay the full estimated cost to educate the student based on the needs of the resident community
    - Further, the formula will be annually adjusted for inflation moving forward
    - The General Assembly is generally sympathetic to the agriscience programs and students

**Funding strategy options and tradeoffs**

- Dr. Kuslis suggested the simplest approach: have ECS funding follow the student to whatever school they attend, which would be revenue neutral at the state level and incrementally improve Region 14's position
- Ms. Reddington-Hughes raised concerns about different legislative approaches and their implications
- Chris noted that increasing sending district costs could face political resistance since there are far more sending districts than receiving districts
- Lee and Myke observed that sending districts are already aware of costs and may be less encouraging about sending students to avoid higher expenses
- Ray commented that the committee should focus on making the case for the injustice of current funding and let legislative strategy experts like Lisa guide the approach
- Jamie emphasized the proposal would not increase state funding, just redistribute existing ECS funds more equitably with an inflation adjustment mechanism
- Committee agreed to invite Lisa Hammersley and Joe DeLong from CCM to next meeting in February and develop a case statement documenting the funding inequity facing Region 14

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- Brian Flaherty offered to support a public relations campaign for the case statement and attend future committee meetings

**III. The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Paige
Board Clerk

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige, Board Clerk

*Minutes created with assistance of Circleback AI"*

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