MEETING MINUTES REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7

Newbury Library Media Center
Board of Education Regular Meeting
November 11, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
DRAFT

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice Chair Mr. Rob Jerram (NH), Ms. Terri Kenneson (C), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Deb Bell (N), Ms. Lisa Fragale (C), Director of Finance & Operations Mr. James Gaskins, High School Principal Mr. Gary Franklin, Middle School Principal Mr. Ryan Cornelius, Student Representatives Mia Doyle and Landon Nadeau, and Superintendent Steven K. LePage.

ABSENT: Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Mimi Duran (B)

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order. At 6:03

2.0 PUBLIC PORTION

There was no public comment.

3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION made by Rob Jerram, seconded by Kim Crone, to **APPROVE** the minutes of the October 14th meeting. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

4.0 REPORTS

4.1 Student Representative Reports (Landon Nadeau & Mia Doyle)

- **Fall Athletics & State Tournaments:**
  - Fall sports are wrapping up with state tournaments underway.
  - The volleyball team defeated Lakeview and advanced to the state quarterfinals, with a game scheduled against Suffield.
  - The boys soccer team defeated Windsor Locks and advanced to the quarterfinals against Valley Regional High School to be held at Torrington High School.

    - Girls soccer, field hockey, and cross-country seasons have concluded.
    - RSD#7 celebrated three Berkshire League championships: Boys Soccer, Volleyball, and Golf.
- **Student Activities:**
    - Student pride and attendance at athletic events are high; a new dedicated student section has been organized for volleyball games.
    - Student Council successfully ran the Hobgoblin Fair and is actively working on assembling holiday turkey baskets and food drive collections.
    - The Library Board organized sticky-note positive affirmations on student lockers for World Kindness Day.
    - Upcoming events include the high school theater production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Nov 20–22) and the band's upcoming concert.
- **Technology & Classroom Updates:**
    - Cell phone management by teachers has been effective and well-received.
    - The introduction of *GoGuardian* monitoring software and an AI-free default browser in high school classes has improved on-task focus and classroom engagement.

4.2 Principals' Reports (Ryan Cornelius & Gary Franklin)

- **Middle School Report (Ryan Cornelius):**
    - Reviewed SBAC cohort data for ELA and math, noting historical trends where 8th-grade scores dip slightly from 7th-grade gains, potentially exacerbated by testing fatigue and multiple concurrent assessments. The middle school team is actively using data from these assessments to develop interventions to bridge gaps in achievement, and is considering testing options that would help reduce testing fatigue.
    - Highlighted the outstanding success of the **MTSS Reading and Math programs**:
        - 7th-grade MTSS students demonstrated massive growth (equivalent to nearly 3 grade levels in one year), jumping from 8% to 46% on grade level.
        - 8th-grade NGSS Science performance saw a dramatic 30% increase in passing rates (from 46% to 76%).
- **High School Report (Gary Franklin):**
    - **NGSS Science:** Reached an all-time high with 73% of students meeting or exceeding the goal.
    - **Advanced Placement (AP):** 108 students completed a record 190 AP tests across 15 offerings, with 85% scoring a 3 or higher. (Highest test rates we have had in many years with continually high passing rates.

- **PSAT/SAT Data:** Reviewed cohort growth trends, highlighting strong baseline scores for incoming freshmen and rising sophomores.
- **Berkshire League Updates:** Discussed ongoing league discussions regarding athletic conference dynamics, scheduling, and other schools exploring potential conference changes. Administrators emphasized that RSD#7 remains in a strong, stable position and will not make reactive moves.

4.3 Superintendent's Report (Steve LePage)

- **Veterans Day Commemoration:**
  - Superintendent LePage commended the students, staff, and community for a highly successful Veterans Day celebration—noting it as the best yet with over 130 local veterans and family members attending.
  - Highlighted the middle school assembly coordinated with Charlotte D'Aleo, which featured student readings on the history of *Taps* and Armistice Day, a school-wide moment of silence, and trumpet players performing *Taps* throughout the building while veterans were still on campus.
  - Thanked the middle school band (directed by Dan Porri), the chorus (directed by Dylan Pedersen), Student Council hosts, the culinary classes (Mrs. Blazys' students who prepared brownies), the Tech Ed program (which crafted wooden charcuterie boards), and middle school students who wrote personal thank-you cards for the attending veterans. Recognized the keynote speaker, Colonel Mitchell (husband of school nurse Dorothy Mitchell).
  - Noted student interest in potentially organizing a high school Veterans Day assembly in the future, pending logistics and potential venue.
- **Proposed Graduation Date Logistics:**
  - Reviewed scheduling variables for the Class of 2027 graduation, including Warner Theater availability, sharing riser costs with Lewis Mills (locked in for June 9th), and coordinating with Granby Memorial High School so both schools can utilize the Granby YMCA for their after-grad parties.
  - Recommended placing a hold on **Thursday, June 10, 2027**, contingent on Granby finalizing June 11th and subject to adjustment if an excessive number of snow days occur. Locking in June 10th at the Warner Theater saves approximately $6,000–$7,000 in shared riser expenses.

- **Upcoming Community Service Project:**
    - Announced that the upcoming student and staff community service project has been moved from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday. Volunteers (including students, Mr. Boyle, Supervisor of Facilities, Superintendent LePage, and Board member Deb Bell) will assist with leaf cleanup and gutter clearing at the VFW and for local residents in need, followed by lunch provided for participants.
- **Winter Weather & Roadway Preparedness:**
    - Reported on his annual winter readiness breakfast meeting with public works directors from the sending towns.
    - Barkhamsted, Colebrook, and New Hartford are fully staffed with adequate salt supplies and equipment.
    - Noted a potential early-winter equipment challenge in Norfolk, which currently has only two of its six plow trucks operational while awaiting delivery and upfitting of two newly ordered trucks (expected in December or January). Superintendent LePage emphasized to Norfolk's road crew that contingency plans (such as renting or borrowing trucks) must be in place so school transportation is not disrupted by early-season storms.
- **CABE/CAPSS Convention & Policy Updates:**
    - Highlighted the upcoming Wind Ensemble performance at the CABE/CAPSS Convention in Groton, noting he successfully negotiated an increase in the transportation stipend from $150 to $500 to help offset bus and equipment U-Haul costs.
    - Noted that the 6000 Series policies on tonight's agenda represent the final batch of the comprehensive policy manual overhaul prior to entering the budget season.

4.4 DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS REPORT (James Gaskins)

- **Budget Status:** All three budgets (past, present, future) are in sound financial standing.
- **Bonding & Capital Projects:**
    - Bond counsel provided a tight draft timeline; administration is working to align statutory bonding milestones with the upcoming budget timeline to streamline meetings.
    - **Feasibility Study & Financial Advisor Bids:** Out to bid with a mandatory bidders meeting held (10 vendors attended); bid opening scheduled for November 23rd.

- **Solar Agreement Negotiations:**
    - Engaging an energy attorney through Pullman & Comley to negotiate exiting the current underperforming solar power purchase agreement and reduce potential $900,000 termination penalties before roof replacement.
- **Agri-Science Program Enhancement Grant:**
    - Collaborating with the state agricultural education consultant (Rebecca Rose) to structure facility improvements—such as retaining wall work, a 25-year-old greenhouse upgrade, and aquaponics restructuring—as an enhancement project to qualify for an 80% reimbursement rate.

5.0 OLD BUSINESS

- **5.1 Updates**

  Mr. LePage and Ms. Sexton Read provided an update from the district-wide curriculum discussion. They shared that the group's consensus was that there was no need for the Ed Advance curriculum review contract. The focus has shifted toward enhancing the existing Curriculum Council, with support from more informed Boards of Education, to improve understanding of ongoing work and provide support and resources as needed. Mr. Cornelius (as one of the NWR7 members of the UEC K-8 Curriculum Council) will work with two newly formed council subcommittees to review the social studies and science curriculum.

  Ms. Kenneson shared an update about contract negotiations at Shared Services

  Ms. Bell shared an update from Ed Advance focused on fee increases for lunch services provided to schools by Ed Advance.

  5.2 BOE Goals

  No additional reports

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

- **6.1 Review/Discussion and Possible Action on the NWR7 2027–2028 School Calendar:**
    - Three calendar options were presented and evaluated. The option featuring a September 1st start date for students was recommended to accommodate elementary school end-of-year scheduling.

- The calendar maintains a standard April vacation (aligned with the second week of April) and factors in the newly negotiated teacher-parent conference half-days for the high school and middle school.

MOTION made by Rob Jerram, seconded by Terri Kenneson, to **APPROVE** the calendar for the 2027-2028 school year as presented. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

- **6.2 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Reservation of the RSD#7 Graduation Date:**
  - Reviewed and discussed reserving the graduation date.

Motion to Approve: June 10th adopted as the graduation date for the Class of **MOTION** made by Kim Crone, seconded by Lisa Fragale, to **set** the graduation date as June 10th, 2027. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

- **6.3 First Reading of the 6000 Series of Policies:**
  - The Board conducted a first reading of the final set of policies (Series 6000), completing the comprehensive policy manual update cycle before the upcoming budget season.
  - Policies reviewed include:
    - **a.** School Calendar 6111
    - **b.** Emergency and Disaster Preparedness 6114
    - **c.** Introduction-Curriculum Design/Development 6141
    - **d.** Internet Responsible Use: Filtering Access to Electronic Networks 6141.323
    - **e.** Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Protocol for the Use of Technology in the Schools 6141.328 *(Board members discussed device/network enforcement and monitoring practices)*
    - **f.** Controversial Issues 6144
    - **g.** Homework/Make-up Homework 6154 *Board members have been asked to review and consider two options regarding homework policy language)*
    - **h.** Surveys of Students 6162.51
    - **i.** Special Education 6171
    - **j.** Title I Parent Involvement 6172.4
    - **k.** Evaluation of Special Education – RESCIND 6181

        - **l.** Adult Continuing Education 6200

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

- **7.1 Request from Miranda Garcia (Art Teacher):**
    - Discussion regarding a request for a child-rearing leave of absence from February 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028, per the NTA Contract.

MOTION made by Rob Jerram, seconded by Lisa Fragale, to **APPROVE** Miranda Garcia's request for maternity leave from February 2027 through June 2028. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

MOTION made by Kim Crone, seconded by Terri Kenneson, to **CANCEL** the November 25th Board meeting. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

8.0 OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS

- No public comments were made.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

MOTION made by Terri Kenneson, seconded by Lisa Fragale, to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 7:51 PM. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Fragale, Ms. Bell. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**