

Minutes
Special Meeting of the Region 14 Board of Education
Tuesday, August 31, 2021; 7:00 p.m.
Flanders Room
Mitchell Elementary School
Live Stream Available:
<https://vimeo.com/event/353466>

Present:

George Bauer
Jim Crocker
Jonathan Kapstein
Tikva Rose
Christopher Matta
David Butkus
Carol Ann Brown (via phone)
Michael Devine

Absent:

N/a

Also Present:

Wayne McAllister, Acting Superintendent
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations
Wendy Nelson Kauffman, Director of Teaching and Learning

Patricia Paige, Board Recording Clerk

I. Call to Order

Board Chair George Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

III. Introductions

Board members introduced themselves

IV. Approval of the Minutes

A. Regular Meeting dated Monday, August 2, 2021

A motion was made by Michael Devine and seconded by David Butkus to accept/approve the minutes as presented; Carol Ann Brown abstained; none opposed; motion carried.

V. Acting Superintendent's Report

A. E-mail Cyber Attack

The Region 14 Microsoft e-mail server was hacked on Friday, August 27th. The district's IT Director has been in constant contact with the vendor in an effort to get back on-line. Microsoft engineers have been inundated with similar issues. While they work to find

a permanent fix, a workaround has been put into place, which entailed migrating Region 14 e-mail to g-mail. All current e-mail addresses are functional.

VI. Committee Reports

There were no reports

VII. Board Chair's Comments

Mr. Bauer explained the purpose of tonight's special meeting, which was called to address, what he termed as "live" topics, or those needing to be addressed prior to the start of school i.e. approving curricula and a Covid policy.

Actively monitoring and working on policy to address the vaccine mandate handed down by the state.

The hearing to address Dr. Olzacki and the investigation has been delayed due to a medical issue.

The BoE newsletter will resume after being suspended for the summer vacation months.

VIII. Privilege of the Floor

Tracey Blackmam

Parents and students are directly impacted by BoE decisions; need transparent communication; perception equals reality; goals should be in the best interest of the students; asked to hear BoE voices to instill confidence.

Paul Zulpa

Asked the board if they had any thoughts on hiring a firm to oversee the next Superintendent's selection committee; his personal criteria is one of integrity; encouraged the board to do their due diligence.

Kathy Velkey

Offered a number of articles regarding the harmful effects of wearing masks; Critical Race Theory, what is behind it and how to fight it?

Melissa Wesaw

Spoke to transparency and accountability; masks, what are changes to the truancy rule; let parents decide what to do with their students.

Ms. Tikva Rose commented that she would like to make the newsletter a more regular communication; may be included under Public Relations Committee.

IX. Old Business

A. Second Review: Discussion and possible action on approval of new curricula:

1. Animal Assisted Therapy

Second review; no further discussion

A motion was made by Jim Crocker and seconded by Tikva Rose to accept/approve the curriculum as presented; Jonathan Kapstein opposed; motion carried.

2. African American/Black, Puerto Rican/Latino History

Further discussion:

Ms. Wendy Nelson Kauffman, the Director of Teaching and Learning, clarified that the course is not Critical Race Theory (CRT), but rather a Social Studies Course. Though an unfunded, mandated course for the (2021/2022) school year, the state will provide the curriculum, professional learning, and a host of textbooks and other materials, which will be paid for by the state. There are currently 17 students, mostly seniors, registered to take the class.

Mr. Matta was under the impression that the course was mandated for the current school year and asked for clarification from Ms. Nelson Kauffman, who noted that the course, an elective, was actually offered last year, but due to low interest, was ultimately dropped. High schools across the state may pilot the course in 2021/2022, but will be required to offer it during the school year that begins in the fall of 2022. The course, if approved this evening, will be presented as a pilot course for 2021/2022. The advantage of offering the course as a pilot is the ability to share feedback, which can result in changes based on those comments.

Due to a scheduling conflict, representatives from SERC, who wrote the curriculum, were not able to make this evening's meeting. Ms. Nelson Kauffman did note, however, that they will be providing quarterly professional learning and reviewing the curriculum and teaching. In lieu of SERC representation, members of the high school faculty were present including Ms. Taryn Fernandez, High School Assistant Principal; Michael Sturges, a 17-year teacher at NHS, who will be instructing the course; and Marissa Christoff, the Social Studies Department Chair. They were asked to join the meeting to share information they obtained through a weeklong summer workshop with SERC along with 25 out of 50 additional school districts piloting the program.

Ms. Rose asked that Ms. Nelson Kauffman compare and contrast CRT vs. the African American/Black, Puerto Rican/Latino History course. She explained that the course is about history and celebration; not advocating for a position on racism and systems of oppression, which CRT does.

Mr. Kapstein inquired about the demographics of students that were signed up for the course. Currently there are 5-6 students of color with the remaining identifying as white.

Mr. Butkus and Mr. Crocker called for periodic updates to ensure that the board and community members were kept apprised. Mr. Crocker also suggested that a

member of the board attend the SERC meetings and he would also like to hear from students taking the course.

Mr. Devine expressed some concern on how this program was being rolled out; due to the sensitive nature, he felt that there should be community conversations so that concerns could be addressed up front rather than after-the-fact. There are pieces of the program that could go down the wrong track or be misconstrued as such. There were several other board members that were in agreement. Mr. Matta mentioned that he would like the flexibility of having a year, which would provide time to talk to the community.

All curricula presented this evening can be found on the district's webpage.

A motion was made by David Butkus and seconded by Jonathan Kapstein to accept/approve the curriculum as presented; Chris Matta, Michael Devine, and Carol Ann Brown were not in favor of; George Bauer, Jim Crocker, David Butkus, Jonathan Kapstein were in favor of; Tikva Rose, who feels that the course is a welcome endeavor and well done, cannot condone a state mandated course and therefore abstained; (4y)(3n)(1a); motion carried.

3. Medical Emergencies with CPR / First Aid Certification
Second review; no further discussion

A motion was made by Jim Crocker and seconded by Chris Matta to accept/approve the curriculum as presented; Jonathan Kapstein opposed; motion carried.

B. Covid Policy Update

A draft *Operations of Schools while Addressing Covid 19* policy was presented during a recent Policy Committee meeting during which, a number of edits were made in alignment with new information from the state and CDC. The edited policy was brought to the full board for consideration. Mr. Bauer reviewed the policy's suggested comments by Attorney Sommagura and recent updates.

A motion was made by Jim Crocker and seconded by Jonathan Kapstein to accept/approve the amended Covid 19 Policy; Carol Ann Brown abstained; motion carried.

X. New Business

There was no New Business

XI. Other Business

There was no Other Business

XII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Jim Crocker and seconded by Chris Matta to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Paige". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Patricia Paige
Board Clerk*

*Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige, Board Clerk on
September 21, 2021*