

July 7, 2008

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, June 16, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present were Board Members Scott Baider, Linda Bulvanoski, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Monica Gati, Stephen Paluskas and Stephen Sordi. Also present, Superintendent of Schools Robert Cronin; Woodbury Middle School Principal Alice Jones, reporters and about 15 members of the community.

I. Call to Order

Dr. Cronin called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. Election of Board Chairman

Dr. Cronin requested nomination for the position of Board Chair.

Mr. Cosgriff nominated Linda Bulvanoski. Mr. Paluskas seconded the nomination.

Mr. Baider nominated Stephen Sordi.

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Gati made a *motion to close nominations*, which was seconded by Mr. Paluskas. **The motion carried 7-0.**

Board members voted by paper ballot and Ms. Bulvanoski was named Chairman by a vote of 5-2. She immediately assumed the Chair and requested nominations for the remaining Board offices.

III. Election of Board Officers

i. Nominations and Election of Board Vice Chairman

Mr. Cosgriff nominated Monica Gati. Mr. Paluskas seconded the nomination.

Mr. Baider nominated Stephen Sordi.

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Corsico made a *motion to close nominations*, which was seconded by Mr. Paluskas.

Board members voted by paper ballot, and Ms. Gati was named Board Vice Chairman by a vote of 5-2.

ii. Nominations and Election of Board Secretary

Mr. Cosgriff nominated Carla Juhas. Mr. Baider seconded the nomination.

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Corsico made a *motion to close nominations*, which was seconded by Mr. Paluskas.

Board members voted by paper ballot; Ms. Juhas was named Board Secretary by a vote of 7-0.

iii. Nominations and Election of Board Treasurer

Mr. Paluskas nominated Charles Cosgriff. Ms. Gati seconded the nomination.

Mr. Sordi nominated Scott Baider.

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Corsico made a *motion to close nominations*, which was seconded by Mr. Paluskas.

Board members voted by paper ballot, and Mr. Cosgriff was named Board Treasurer by a vote of 5-2.

iv. Nominations and Election of Board Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Mr. Sordi nominated Scott Baider.

Mr. Cosgriff nominated Deborah Corsico. Mr. Paluskas seconded the motion.

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to close nominations*, which was seconded by Ms. Gati.

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Board members voted by paper ballot, and Ms. Corsico was named Assistant Secretary/Treasurer by a vote of 5-2.

IV. Board Appointments

Ms. Bulvanoski requested motions to approve the following appointments:

i. Board Clerk- Debra Carlton

Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve this appointment*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff.

The motion carried 7-0.

ii. School Physicians

Andrea Needleman, M.D., Health Director

Mitchell Elementary School

Woodbury Middle School

Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the above appointment*, seconded by Mr. Baider.

The motion carried 7-0.

Charles McNair, M.D., Nonnewaug High School

Andrew Wells, M.D., Bethlehem Elementary School

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to approve both of the appointments above*, seconded by

Mr. Paluskas. **The motion carried 7-0.**

iii. School Dentist

James Bauer, D.M.D., District wide

Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve this appointment*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. **The motion carried 7-0.**

iv. School Attorney

Sullivan, Schoen, Campana & Connon, LLC

Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve this appointment*, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff.

Mr. Baider asked how long this firm has represented the Region. Dr. Cronin did not know, and agreed to find out. He knew it had been a number of years; Ms. Gati felt at least 15 years, to her knowledge. **The motion previously made and seconded carried 7-0.**

v. Bank Designee

Bank of America

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to approve this appointment*, seconded by Ms. Gati. **The motion carried 7-0.**

V. Review of the Minutes

i. Minutes of the District Meeting of June 16, 2008

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to approve these minutes*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. **The motion carried 5-0-2.** Mr. Baider and Mr. Sordi abstained, not having been in attendance.

ii. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 16, 2008

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to approve these minutes*, seconded by Ms. Gati. **The motion carried 5-0-2.** Mr. Baider and Mr. Sordi abstained, not having been in attendance.

iii. Minutes of the Special Meeting of June 27, 2008

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to approve these minutes*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. **The motion carried 7-0.**

VI. Report from Superintendent

i. Summer School

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Dr. Cronin reported that summer school is being conducted at three sites: at NHS, for make-up credits, 9 am-noon daily; Special Education at WMS, same hours; and a smaller component is taking place at BES daily, as well, he said.

Mr. Baider asked the summer school attendance, and was told approximately 50 students.

ii. Connecticut Mastery Test/No Child Left Behind

Dr. Cronin provided information on CMTs as relates to NCLB. Test results are expected in August. Under NCLB, schools are identified if not making adequate yearly progress as determined by the Department of Education. He showed percentages of students performing at or above "proficient." He said he believes Region 14 should be talking about "goal" as opposed to proficient, and said this may be the last time he is heard speaking of proficient. He also noted that 5th and 8th grade students will get a science score this year.

Dr. Cronin explained that CMT results are reported by sub groups containing 40 or more students, those being: whole school, ELL, students with disabilities (special education), African American students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged (as determined by qualification for free/reduced lunch). He explained that if any sub group scores below proficient, the school is listed as not making adequate yearly progress. In the case of Woodbury Middle School, it was the special education group that scored below proficient. In math, a score of 74% was needed, and a score of 70% was earned; in reading, 68% was needed, and 56% was earned.

VII. Committee Reports

- i. **Building** – Mr. Sordi reported that Mr. Catalano recommended suspending meetings for the summer, and allowing the Board to decide the future direction of this committee.
- ii. **Community Relations**-not met
- iii. **Facilities** – not met
- iv. **Finance**-not met
- v. **Personnel**-not met
- vi. **Planning**-not met

VIII. Old Business

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to add budget discussion to the agenda, under Old Business*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. Mr. Baider asked why this would require a motion, and it was explained that a motion is required in order for the Board to discuss. **The motion previously made and seconded carried 7-0.**

She asked of Mr. Baider and Mr. Sordi what further information they would need to allow them to vote one way or another for the budget.

Mr. Baider wanted year end spending numbers; what was spent vs. what was budgeted; and is concerned that there are not many discretionary lines in the budget. If curriculum goals are to be aggressive, money needs to be budgeted in those areas. He wants spending to be in areas that drive educational goals.

Mr. Sordi is concerned about some of the staff cuts, as well as capital vs. educational money. He feels principals should give input on whether they can do without positions.

Ms. Bulvanoski understood that administration had been consulted as to what they could spare.

Dr. Cronin added that Dawn Hochsprung and Melinda McKenna have planned specials around the reduced art and music positions, and Walter Culup had also been consulted on scheduling.

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Mr. Baider feels curriculum is key, and does not understand fully where the Region stands on curriculum development. He also expressed confusion about his and Mr. Sordi's abstentions, since the vote passed 6-0-2.

Ms. Corsico reminded him that budgets are estimates, but that a budget is needed, and it would be helpful if the full Board was behind it.

Mr. Baider said he is not looking for a lower budget, but wants to show the public the deliverables.

Mr. Cosgriff pointed out that the Board and Dr. Cronin have been taking recommendations on the budget since March. He asked Dr. Cronin if he is comfortable with the 1.89% increase.

Dr. Cronin responded that he was "comfortable" with the 3.79% increase and considered it responsible. As to the question of asking administrators what they can live without, he felt that was unfair; they have to live with what must be cut. Fifteen positions have been cut, he said, and that will have impact. Every department has been affected, teachers are traveling between buildings, and all this is less than ideal.

Ms. Bulvanoski asked what the textbook cycle is and was told it is a 5 year cycle.

Mr. Baider commented that, prior to coming on to the Board, he and Mr. Sordi have not been "privy" to all the information the Board has. Ms. Corsico disagreed, saying they have been privy to everything the Board has had access to. She asked Dr. Cronin to request an opinion from counsel regarding the circumstances under which a Board member may abstain from voting.

IX. New Business

i. Personnel

Dr. Cronin requested motions to approve appointments to teaching positions, about which Board members had previously seen candidate information:

A. Jill Browne, 1.0 Math Teacher, NHS

Motion by Ms. Corsico, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. Mr. Baider asked if this was a replacement following a resignation, and was told it is. **Motion carried 7-0.**

B. Sarah LaRose, 1.0 Agriscience Teacher, NHS

Motion by Mr. Paluskas, seconded by Ms. Corsico. Mr. Baider asked if this was a new position. Dr. Cronin reviewed that it was needed due to a compliance review, over 10 years ago, and that there is both a science and Agriscience component to it. **Motion carried 7-0.**

C. Amy Schmitt, 1.0 Family/Consumer Science Teacher, NHS

Motion by Mr. Paluskas, seconded by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 7-0.**

D. Liberty Swift Fitzpatrick, 1.0 Math Teacher, WMS

Motion by Mr. Paluskas, seconded by Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0.**

ii. Board of Education August 2008 Meeting Date

Dr. Cronin noted the early August date for the next Board meeting, and felt it would be preferable to hold that meeting later in the month, as many details are resolved close to the start of the school year. Mr. Paluskas made the *motion to move the August Board of Education meeting date to August 25, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.*, seconded by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 7-0.**

iii. Teachers' Negotiations

Dr. Cronin noted that the Region enters into teacher negotiations this year, and Board members will be needed to serve on a Negotiations Committee; those interested, he said, should let Ms. Bulvanoski know.

X. Board Announcements

Ms. Bulvanoski offered congratulations to members elected to offices. She asked for patience as she relearns Robert's Rules and said it was an honor to be elected as Board Chair. As an educator, she said, she is passionate about the education of the Region's children, and she will work to make Region 14 the school system it should be.

XI. Privilege of the Floor

Pam Racevicius criticized the Board for not recognizing its new members at this, their first meeting. It was explained that Mr. Sordi and Mr. Baider were welcomed at a special Board meeting previously held. She felt the elections to offices was predetermined and asked repeatedly if the Board had met ahead of time to discuss who they would vote for. Mr. Paluskas answered that they had not. She also questioned Ms. Bulvanoski's suitability, and motives, to participate in teacher negotiations, as she is part of the (Region 15) teachers' union. Ms. Corsico called a point of order. It was explained to Ms. Racevicius that what Dr. Cronin said was that those interested in serving on Negotiations should notify Ms. Bulvanoski, because she is the Chair.

Duncan McDougal said he thought it would have been "nice to let the new guys have one of the positions (as Board officers)." He asked who pays for special education summer school, and don't we teach them enough during the school year. Dr. Cronin explained that summer school is included in the budget, and that it is a requirement under the Individuals with Disabilities Act to offer additional programs during the summer. Mr. McDougal questioned the new Agriscience position as having been "mandated." Dr. Cronin corrected him, reminding him that what he had said was that the position was a result of the program being non-compliant. Mr. McDougal suggested reducing the number of students entering the program, instead, or giving out vouchers to parents wanting to use private schools. The budget has failed, he said, because of failure in delivery of services.

Tom Arras asked what goes on at MES during the summer, and was told Park and Rec programs. He asked the topic of Executive Session, and was told there is no Executive Session tonight. He talked about vo-ag schools costing 21% more. He said Mr. Hubelbank tracks benefits per staff person but has not sent that information to him.

Susan Scherf has been involved in BOE meeting for 2 years; feels the Board is not offering the best educational model; has given 5 reasons that don't support the plan as it exists; said the Board is killing the penguins and polar bears; spoke of added costs of buses and fuel; wants to know diesel consumption for 2007-08; and contended that buses 3 and 5 are consistently late. Dr. Cronin disagreed with her last claim, and has data to support it, to which Ms. Scherf shouted, "You're dead wrong!" at which point Ms. Corsico called a point of order. Ms. Scherf also said that the WMS science labs have not been utilized by the 5th grade.

Pam Gengenbach questioned Dr. Cronin's CMT numbers, noting they were higher than scores previously shown. Dr. Cronin reminded her that he had begun by saying that these were "proficient and above" scores, unlike what he had shown before, and that he did not intend to speak of "proficient" for any other reason than as a foundation to illustrate NCLB criteria for schools not making adequate yearly progress. She asked if we are exploring what other districts, with higher scores, do or is it competitive. Dr. Cronin assured her that superintendent's meet regularly to

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share information. Ms. Corsico reminded her that the strategic analysis recommendations involved study of what other school districts are doing. Ms. Gengenbach asked if there are plans to review reconfiguration. Dr. Cronin told her that review pertaining to indicators set would be shared with the Board at year's end. She asked, if the students could fit in their "own" buildings, would he consider reverting back to the previous configuration. Dr. Cronin replied that this would not be his recommendation.

Terri Lassauze commended the Board for its efforts, feeling they do not deserve the disrespect they receive. She stressed that NCLB is Federal and intended to be funded by the Federal government and state; however, the costs have filtered down to the towns. As a member of the R14 Music Foundation, she has seen positive changes in all 4 schools. She reminded the audience that the children are at stake, need their support and their funding. The loss of 15 teachers is alarming, she said, and voting budgets down because of reconfiguration is not in the best interest of the children. Respect for the Board is imperative, she said, and Woodbury and Bethlehem are a region and should behave that way.

Mr. Arras asked for clarification of number of staff cut, and was told 14.7, which includes 1 support staff and 1 secretary.

Mr. McDougal claimed that no one wants to take away from the kids; the towns, he said, voted for grammar schools in each town (in 1968) and he wants the Board to give them back what they voted for. He said people who have lived here awhile know this.

Ms. Lassauze noted that she moved here 3 years after the towns regionalized, and that the bitterness between the 2 towns dates back to that time.

Anthony Lassauze agreed, saying the time has come to bury the hatchet; it is pitiful to keep the fight going on; it's time to move on.

Maryanne VanAken thanked the Board for the fine education her daughters received here. She was upset that at this, the first meeting of the year, there was such rude and upsetting behavior. The aim is to deliver great educations to the students, and the disrespect needs to stop, she said, and directed her comment to Ms. Racevicius, at which time Ms. Corsico called a point of order. Ms. VanAken hoped for forward progress this year.

XII. Executive Session

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Ms. Bulvanoski requested a motion to adjourn, made by Ms. Corsico, seconded by Ms. Gati, and the motion carried 7-0. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Corsico, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
Region 14 Board of Education