

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, October 20, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present were Board Chairperson Linda Bulvanoski, and Board members Scott Baider, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Monica Gati, Carla Juhas, Stephen Paluskas and Stephen Sordi. Also present, Superintendent of Schools Robert Cronin; Director of Fiscal Services Jay Hubelbank; Nonnewaug High School Interim Principal Kimberly Gallo and Guidance Counselors Karen Prince, Tara Rickart, Susan Rossner and Pamela Sordi; Music Director William Geddes and Marc Kroll of the Region 14 Music Foundation; Region 14 Music Teachers Lynne Kearney, Janet Hampton and Michael Gardner; Nonnewaug High School's Treble Choir; reporters and about 6 members of the community.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bulvanoski called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Bulvanoski led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PRESENTATIONS

Following a performance by the NHS Treble Choir, Mr. Geddes called upon Joyce Drakeley and recognized her for her sponsorship of the Opera Education Program at the Metropolitan Opera. Mrs. Drakeley funds the Met subscription and transportation costs for students to attend. On the day following the Board meeting, students would be traveling to NY to see the final dress rehearsal of "Madame Butterfly."

Mr. Geddes and Mr. Kroll then presented several grants on behalf of Region 14 Music Foundation, Inc.: Ms. Kearney accepted a \$300 grant for a vocal coach workshop; Mr. Gardner accepted \$400 for a production of Menotti's "The Telephone" by the WCSU Opera department to be performed for WMS students; and Mr. Geddes accepted on behalf of Ms. Hochsprung a \$1000 grant for two performances by the Cognetta String Quartet to be enjoyed by the third grade.

The second presentation was made by the NHS Guidance Department. Ms. Prince reviewed the End of Year Report for the NHS Class of 2008, which included SAT and CAPT scores, colleges and universities accepting NHS students, and AP scores by school in DRG C.

Ms. Sordi provided a detailed visual explanation of the Naviance web-based service and demonstrated many of the functions it offers, as well as the benefits to students.

IV. REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Juhas made a *motion to approve the minutes of the regular Board of Education Meeting of October 6, 2008*. Mr. Baider seconded the motion and the **motion carried 8-0**.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

VI. REPORT FROM CHAIRPERSON

Ms. Bulvanoski reported having attended the FFA Legislative Open House. She said she came away from it in awe and proud to be an educator. She heard a number of speakers and the same themes resonated in all their comments: the students are goal oriented, show good judgment and leadership, finish what they start, and are very articulate, among other positive comments. She urged the public to become better aware of the agriscience program which is recognized at the state, national, and now international level. She also thanked Dr. Cronin, Ms. Gati, Mr. Cosgriff, Ms. Gallo and Mr. Hubelbank for their attendance at the open house, and Dr. Cronin for his comments that night.

Ms. Bulvanoski also addressed the question of whether moving privilege of the floor earlier on the board meeting agenda requires a change of by-laws. The Board's counsel had advised revision of the by-law and that changing the placement of an agenda item is to be done at the second meeting of the month. The same would be true of committee agendas. She thanked Mr. Sordi for bringing the matter to her attention, and then requested a *motion to move privilege of the floor to fall after the Superintendent's Report on the meeting agenda*. Ms. Corsico made the motion and Mr. Paluskas seconded it. Mr. Sordi asked if there was any problem with reducing the number of privileges of the floor from two to one on the agenda. Dr. Cronin explained to him that this was a policy change on which the Board voted. Hearing nothing further the motion was put to a vote and the **motion carried 8-0**.

VII. REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Cronin updated the Board on the full day kindergarten program. There are seven classes with a paraprofessional in each. The class sizes range from 16-18 students. Teachers had been concerned about beginning the year with a full day; therefore, students had a shortened day for the first month of school. In meetings with teachers and the principal it was told that children were initially fatigued but gradually increased their stamina by the time the program reached the full day. Specials were scheduled for the afternoon, and students were introduced to them and were familiar with them by the time the full day program began. Teachers also reported better opportunity for communication with parents by starting with the shortened day. He intends to gather more parent feedback, as well as to contact other districts in DRG C to see how they run full day kindergarten, to help determine any changes for next year.

VIII. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Susan Scherf, of Bethlehem, is determined to keep pushing and asking questions, because reconfiguration has affected her family and lengthened her day. She reported that BES starts on time now, but dismissal begins too early. She wants costs for added fuel, even if the region does not pay for it; wants to know how many ride the buses and how many are picked up; asked how much curriculum has been written and costs of it for the last 4 years; noted the LA curriculum is not completed; and said Dr. Cronin promised a coordinated curriculum and she wants him to prove that he has accomplished that.

VIII. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (CONT)

Mary Ann Sprague, of Bethlehem, is offended by the printed statement on the agenda regarding privilege of the floor, as well as having to sign in for it. She believes her First Amendment rights are being "whittled down" and she objected to what she perceived as the Board just voting to reduce privilege of the floor from twice to once per meeting. She said that reconfiguration has caused CCD at her church to be held on Sundays and believes the community is being punished for not voting to do the work at Mitchell Elementary School.

Bill Mulready, of Bethlehem, said he continues to wait for responses to letters written to the Board and does not accept the idea that the attorney is still reviewing them. He believes Federal laws are being violated.

Dr. Cronin explained that his last letter cited Title II and Board counsel is not familiar with that aspect of Title II.

Mr. Mulready believes there are 14th Amendment violations, too.

Ken LeClerc, of Bethlehem, discussed problems with the curtains on the NHS stage, which have been deemed hazardous by the fire marshal.

Mr. Hubelbank acknowledged receipt of the fire marshal's report and indicated that Mr. Molzon had communicated with her about the Region's hopes for a building project to go through. Absent of that, the fire marshal accepted the solution of putting money in next year's capital budget for curtain replacement.

Gary Suslavich, of Woodbury, thanked the Board for putting minutes on the website within a week, but reminded them that committee minutes also need to be up in that time frame. He asked when corrected policies would be on the website. Dr. Cronin explained that policies are reviewed by category by the Policy committee. Mr. Suslavich asked how the money for a curriculum coordinator would be spent, to which Dr. Cronin said he would respond in writing. Similarly, he asked about technology coordinator funds, and Dr. Cronin explained the use of "Webmasters" in each building and his desire to integrate their work directly into the classrooms.

Mr. Hubelbank commented on Mr. Suslavich's interpretation of the new regulation on posting minutes. In conversations with the State, Mr. Hubelbank has been told that the state seeks a "good faith" effort and that steps are being taken to comply, including providing committee chairs with a template to follow when recording minutes for publication on the Region's website.

Dr. Cronin requested an opportunity to respond to issues raised at the last meeting, as well as to comments made by residents in letters to editors. As to the monitoring of enrollment, he hoped Mr. Hubelbank's report at the last meeting answered questions about that, and he hoped the Board sees that the administration carefully monitors enrollment. Though he hopes to lessen the trend of students exiting to private school in their 6th and 9th grade years, he noted that this is common in the region. It is estimated that perhaps 20 students exited the school system due to reconfiguration but that 10 of those are from 3 families. Also, there is a decline in the number of students entering the schools vs. those graduating out. Virtually all children born in the region enroll in the school system, he said. Additionally, he said, the region carefully monitors absences and incidences of tardiness among its students.

VIII. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (CONT)

Dr. Cronin also commented on the notion of purchasing curriculum to get things moving more quickly. Though he noted great value in the 2005 Strategic Analysis Report he stated that, had he been here at the time, he would never have recommended purchasing curriculum. In no educational setting he has ever been associated with has purchasing curriculum been considered good practice, and he feels curriculum must be developed and built around the needs of Region 14's students and staff.

He reviewed curricula written since January 2005, including language arts, lab science, intro to physical science, biology levels 2 and 3, forensics, social studies – 20th century and U.S. constitutional history level 2, technology K-5, technology courses – including document prep, three music curricula – vocal, chorus and instrumental. In all, almost 15 curricula have been written and he cautioned again against buying curriculum.

Ms. Corsico agreed it would be disastrous to buy curriculum, hand it to teachers and instruct them to simply implement it.

Dr. Cronin stated there is a limit to what teachers can take on; the LA curriculum is huge, as is the inquiry based science. There needs to be professional development around those.

Dr. Cronin also responded to comments regarding lack of involvement of parents. He cited transition committees, community presentations, newsletters, news from our schools sent out monthly, parents on interview committees, web pages, Alert Now, and meetings with Selectmen and Boards of Finance as ways by which he has sought to include the needs of parents. He also noted the relatively large number of parents who are actually employed by the Region.

Ms. Juhas commented that, at some point, she would like to see what is involved in developing and implementing curriculum.

Mr. Baider acknowledged there is much curriculum work to do and said it would be helpful to know what is done and what is left to do. He would like to know where gaps exist. As for parent involvement, he is interested in exploring what parents perceive differently, and noted less accessibility due to the schedule.

IX. REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF FISCAL SERVICES

Mr. Hubelbank reported on improved performance by the buses in hitting the desired time limits and arrival times. Problems with Bus 1 and Bus 11 have been corrected. Some students from Bus 1, to MES, have been reassigned to Bus 18 resulting in both those buses delivering children in less than 45 minutes. The driver of Bus 11 misunderstood her responsibility in recording run times, and was recording the time she arrived back at the bus lot instead of when she delivered her last student. This put her times well below the 45 minute limit.

He also discussed aspects of the budget process for next year. The first budget vote is May 5th; the Board will be asked for budget priorities in December; he and Dr. Cronin are working with administrators to establish priorities; and he is looking at past presentations to determine any changes to be made.

He also noted the new projection screen in the NHS LMC, financed through a technology grant for which all schools are eligible. Funds from that grant were also used for the replacement of copper wiring in the WMS computer lab and upgrades to the NHS guidance capabilities.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Sordi, reporting for the **Building Committee**, said his committee had met on October 15th. They finished the major work on the components of the building project and, on October 27th, will view the Oxford high school auditorium. After that, they intend to package up the project and present it to the BOE. The committee discussed how to proceed in the current economy, decided it had met its charge, and will offer the plan to the BOE for review.

Mr. Cosgriff, reporting for the **Finance Committee**, said the committee had met tonight to discuss bids for work on the WMS tennis courts, and decided to solicit further bids.

Mr. Hubelbank added that bids on security projects at MES and BES were also reviewed. The lowest bid, from Cohen in the amount of \$25,000, was accepted and work to install "buzz-in" security at those schools will begin in the next few weeks. Parents will be notified.

Ms. Gati, reporting for the **Personnel Committee**, noted that the committee had met to review the chorus program at the elementary level, discussed coaching for winter sports, and addressed a student support issue.

Ms. Bulvanoski reported for the **Planning Committee**. They heard from Mr. Geddes regarding continued exposure to a strings program for the third grade. Mr. Geddes will inform parents that and after school strings program is being offered. The Music Foundation will seek a grant and will have a better chance with backing from the BOE. Dr. Cronin had suggested to him that he include this in a budget proposal.

Also, Ms. Gallo reported to the Planning Committee on a letter received regarding a resource officer at NHS, and was asked to summarize to the Board.

Ms. Gallo indicated that Sgt. Robert Desmarais had met with Mr. Bergeron and her and he seeks a closer, more trusting alliance with the school. As often as possible, Officer Lent will be scheduled to be at NHS to allow for "community policing" opportunities.

Dr. Cronin said this idea would be discussed with the Selectmen, as a next step would be to involve them in the effort.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel

a. Appointment to Teaching Position

Dr. Cronin requested a *motion to approve the one year Grade 6 teaching appointment of Sarah Bates, currently serving as a long term substitute for Eric Bergeron*. Ms. Gati made the motion, seconded by Mr. Cosgriff. The **motion carried 8-0**.

b. Extra Duty Appointments

Dr. Cronin requested a motion regarding the extra duty position recommendations listed in Board members' packets. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the appointments as listed*. Mr. Cosgriff seconded the motion, and the **motion carried 8-0**.

XII. NEW BUSINESS (CONT) PERSONNEL (CONT)

c. Approval of Resignation

Dr. Cronin requested a *motion to accept the resignation of Martha Bless, English teacher, Nonnewaug High School, and K-12 Literacy Specialist, effective November 17, 2008.*

Mr. Paluskas made the motion, seconded by Ms. Corsico. The **motion carried 8-0.**

XIII. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Corsico made a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. The **motion carried 8-0.**
The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carla Juhas, Secretary
Regional School District #14 Board of Education