

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, December 15, 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, Carla Juhas, Stephen Paluskas and Stephen Sordi. Also present, Superintendent of Schools Robert Cronin; Director of Fiscal Services Jay Hubelbank; Principals Dawn Hochsprung, Alice Jones, Melinda McKenna and Interim Principal Kimberly Gallo; K-8 Math Coach Anne Uberti; NHS Girls Soccer Coach Nickolas Sheikh and members of the soccer team; NHS Cross Country Track Coach Arleigh Duff, Jr. and track team standout Jackie Nicholas; NHS student representative Rachel McNally; reporters and about 6 members of the community.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bulvanoski called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

III. REPORT FROM STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Ms. McNally updated the Board on recent activities and upcoming events at Nonnewaug High School. She reminded the audience of the Winter Concert to be held on Thursday at 7:00 pm. She said the auditorium is ready, having been cleaned after the fire, and that new curtains are the only thing still needed. Dancing with the Teachers will be on March 17th; exams will be taken on January 20th-23rd; the Drama Club's production of "Harvey" will be performed on January 29th and 30th; the Senior Café has replaced the teachers' lounge, for which the students are grateful; and the student council has completed a draft of an Honor Code about which they are receiving input from the students.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Bulvanoski called on first year Girls Soccer Team Coach Mr. Sheikh and members of his team which finished second in the state this year. Coach Sheikh told of the team's 14-2 league record, and 17-3 overall record. He noted that the team outscored opponents 75-7 in league play, and 78-10 overall. His was the first NHS team to ever go to the Class M state finals. He commended the team for their talent, heart and sportsmanship and predicted more success in the future. He thanked the fans for their dedicated support of the team, and willingness to travel great distances to support them.

Dr. Cronin recalled the newspaper coverage of the final game and told the team members present that he was proud not only of their athletic performance but also the sportsmanship they displayed in defeat. He thanked them for the way they represented their school.

Ms. Bulvanoski added her praise and recognition of what a feat it is to reach the state finals. She assured them that it would be a lasting memory for them.

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Coach Duff told of the considerable accomplishments of Ms. Nicholas, at the league, state and New England regional level. Her record of achievement, he said, is notable and unusual for such a young athlete, and he also predicted continued success for the sophomore runner.

Ms. McKenna presented the Improvement Plan for Bethlehem Elementary School. She explained the goals, beliefs and plans which ground the work being done at BES, shared the goals for her school for 2008-09, and specifically outlined plans in the areas of reading, writing and math for her students. She outlined methods for measuring progress and identified objectives for continuous improvement. She took questions from the Board.

When asked who sets reading standards, she replied that the district sets standards based upon state benchmarks. Asked to describe guided reading, she explained that groups of 4-5 students of similar level are assembled for sessions of about 15 minutes in length for work of reading skills.

When questioned about running records, she told that this method of assessing reading involves recording details of a student's oral reading, use of visual cues, recognition of what makes sense and level of comprehension. She was also asked to explain the benefits of the Growing with Math program. Ms. McKenna said that it allows students to think at a higher level instead of focusing only on rote computations. She was asked about pacing and was told that Ms. Uberti, in her role as math coach, works with grade level teams to be sure they are on track to cover all that the state recommends. She was asked about literacy instruction and told that at least a solid block of 90 minutes is accomplished daily.

There was also discussion of the math curriculum, district wide, and it was agreed that a goal will be to incorporate more rote computation to the analytical curriculum currently being used.

It was asked where parents can find district benchmarks and grade level standards which are derived from state standards. At BES, Ms. Rita Cole was named as one who could provide them, as well as classroom teachers.

V. REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Juhas made *a motion to approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of December 1, 2008*. Mr. Paluskas seconded the motion, and **the motion carried 6-0-1**. Ms. Juhas abstained, not having been present for the meeting.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Bulvanoski noted both an email and letter regarding a personnel issue which she had forwarded to Dr. Cronin.

VII. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Ms. Bulvanoski welcomed Ms. Juhas back and was happy to report that her husband, Phil, is recovering well. She also noted that the Agriscience Department had gifted each Board member with a poinsettia to take home this evening.

VIII. REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Cronin explained all that is involved in determining whether the region will close, dismiss early or delay opening because of winter weather. He spoke of the meteorologist who advises him, the time frames for making weather related decisions, and methods of notifying families. He concluded by urging parents to use their own good judgment regarding safety when deciding whether to keep their children home or picking them up early if they are concerned about the weather.

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IX. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Pam Gengenbach feels that the 3 tier bus schedule impedes early dismissal and was not thought through when the schools were reconfigured. She fails to see a good reason for longer trips to school when overcrowding is not an issue and a K-5 schools in each town is possible.

Dr. Cronin responded to a number on contentions made during privilege of the floor at the last meeting. Even if certain people do not agree with the configuration of the elementary schools, he said, he feels it is important that factual information is known.

To Ms. DiLorenzo's claims, Dr. Cronin said that, having spoken with the superintendent of the Naugatuck school system, he learned that they are not, in fact, re-evaluating the reconfiguration of their schools and that the newspaper article stating that they are was inaccurate. He refuted the drop in mastery tests scores as having to do with the added transitions due to reconfiguration. Mastery tests are now taken in the spring, allowing 7 months for students to transition to their new school environment. Variances in scores cannot be attributed to transitions after that amount of time.

To Ms. Scherf's list of items lost due to reconfiguration, Dr. Cronin addressed a number of them. Whether the right of citizens to vote was lost, he said, is for the courts to decide. As for pumpkin day and kindergarten camp out, Dr. Cronin has spoken with teachers and they felt that the joining together of the region's children lent itself to beginning new traditions, which they have initiated. He sees the loss of library space at BES as the gaining of a media center, as he saw wasted space in that facility before. At BES, the stage was previously used only for the 4th-5th grade concert, and other performances tended to be done at floor level. The greenhouse was primarily used as storage; bus drivers are not Region 14 employees and, therefore, not hired nor fired by the schools; none of the departing principals left due to reconfiguration and, in fact, both Dr. Solek and Mr. Vecchitto were in favor of it. There has been no documented decrease in numbers for after school programs.

X. REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF FISCAL SERVICES

Mr. Hubelbank referred to the December enrollment report in Board packets, noting that it included the number of in-district vo-ag students as requested.

Mr. Hubelbank explained IRS requirements for 403(b) plans, and that 3rd party administrators must be identified. He recommends ING for this role, and distributed copies of a resolution stating this.

Hearing no discussion, Mr. Paluskas made *a motion to approve the resolution as recommended*.

Mr. Cosgriff seconded the motion, and **the motion carried 7-0**.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reporting for the Finance Committee, Ms. Cosgriff said the committee had met, reviewed the 403(b) requirements, and heard that special education funding could be cut as much as 90%, or \$80-90,000. The committee also discussed 2009-10 budget priorities.

For the Planning Committee, Ms. Bulvanoski summarized their discussions, including music programming at NHS, early dismissal on 12/23, and an overnight trip for the vo-ag students.

Ms. Corsico offered *a motion to approve early dismissal on December 23, 2008*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paluskas and **the motion carried 7-0**.

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XII. OLD BUSINESS

Board members were reminded to consider budget priorities for 2009-10 and to make them a part of their committee work.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Corsico made *a motion to move to Executive Session to consider the NTA contract*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paluskas and **the motion carried 7-0**.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Cosgriff made *the motion to approve the contract with the Nonnewaug Teachers' Association*. Mr. Paluskas seconded the motion. As the motion did not unanimously carry, Board members were polled: In favor were Mr. Baider, Ms. Bulvanoski, Ms. Corsico, Mr. Cosgriff, Ms. Juhas, and Mr. Paluskas. None opposed. Mr. Sordi abstained. **The motion carried 6-0-1**.

XV. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Corsico made *a motion to adjourn*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas. **The motion carried 7-0**. The meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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