

A Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, February 7, 2011, at 7:30 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.; Board Chair Stephen Sordi, Board members Scott Baider, George Bauer, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, and Pamela Zmek; also, Director of Finance/Operations Jay Hubelbank

Absent: Board of Education member Linda Bulvanoski

Audience members included: Region 14 faculty members Nancy Ayre, Vinita Chapman, John Dominello, Chris McGrath, Nick Sheikh, Shelly Stone, and Katie Yocis; NHS assistant principal Jose Martinez; two members of the press and approximately fifty members of the community.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Sordi called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Sordi led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Report from Student Representative

Mary Harrison updated the board on recent activities at Nonnewaug High School, including a poetry slam, dressage for kids, upcoming blood drive (2/28) and theatre production of Pride and Prejudice (3/4-5).

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to add to the agenda a presentation by Charles Heaven, to review financial statements*, seconded by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 6-0.**

IV. Presentation

Mr. Heaven reviewed the audit report for the year ending June 30, 2010. He directed the board to pp 3-8 of the report as the summary section; after which, should they need further detail on any area of the audit, it could be found in the report. The opinion is "unqualified," meaning all statements were presented without exception – in other words, a "clean" opinion. He reviewed net assets increased by \$430,000 due to the capital non-recurring account and paying down debt. He noted \$860,000 in stimulus money received, some of which is carried into this year, and about \$300,000 was returned to the towns. He concluded that the audit had gone very well, there were no issues, and the cooperation received was terrific both at central office and in the schools.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the financial statements dated 6/30/10*, seconded by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Hubelbank noted that the audit, now that it has been accepted, will be available at the town offices and on the district's website.

V. Review of the Minutes

The minutes of the November 23, 2010 special meeting continued to be tabled.

The minutes of the January 3, 2011 minutes were tabled due to concern about the "quiet period" prior to referendum.

Mr. Baider entered a *motion to accept the minutes of the January 14, 2011 special meeting*, second by Mr. Bauer. **Motion carried 4-0-2** (Mr. Suslavich and Mr. Cosgriff abstained, not having been in attendance at that meeting).

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(Ms. Zmek arrived at this point. Subsequent motions will reflect 7 members present.)

**VI. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

**VII. Report from Chairman**

Mr. Sordi deferred to Mr. Bauer, facilities chair, for an update on the high school building project.

Mr. Bauer gave a background of prior efforts regarding a high school building project, shelved due to the economy, which will now be restarted. He plans an informal meeting to revisit the project and plans to reorganize the committee. He will keep the board posted on progress and urged interested community members to contact Dr. Cronin about serving on the committee.

**VIII. Report from Superintendent**

Dr. Cronin reported on high school reform, the increased expectations for students, and need for additional staff. With the exit of Commissioner McQuillan and election of Governor Malloy, emphasis now is on early childhood education. However, the CT state university system has adopted all of the new high school reform requirements. Acceptance to state universities will now require that students, as early as this fall, have all the courses that would have been required of high schools by 2018. This is a huge step and one for which much planning will be needed in order for our students, about 30% of whom apply to state universities, to have all the years of subjects they need.

Dr. Cronin also addressed the large number of snow days this year. He requested authorization to seek 2/21-22 and 3/21 as make-up days, in order to graduate the seniors before the end of June. He also reminded the board and audience that graduation date can be set on April 1<sup>st</sup>, and so will be approved at the April 4<sup>th</sup> board meeting. After that date, any school closings would not affect graduation. Mr. Suslavich was not in favor of taking the February days, because citizens he had spoken to had plans that couldn't be changed at this point.

Mr. Cosgriff entered a *motion to accept Dr. Cronin's recommendation to add 2/21-22 and 3/21 as school days to compensate for snow days*, second by Mr. Bauer. **The motion carried 6-1** with Mr. Suslavich voting no.

**IX. Privilege of the Floor**

Mr. Sordi prefaced privilege of the floor by asking citizens to refrain from the topic of reconfiguration due to the upcoming referendum. Atty. Sommaruga had advised him that his interpretation of state statute was correct, and that during the "quiet period" it was not permissible to broach the topic.

**John Lewis**, Woodbury, spoke of fields/facilities needs and the need to act

**Paula Paolino**, Woodbury, was not permitted to speak about reconfiguration, under advice of counsel.

**Jim Uberti**, Woodbury, spoke of fields/facilities needs and asked, "if not now, when?"

**X. Report from Director of Finance and Operations**

Mr. Hubelbank offered his appreciation to Mike Molzon and the custodial crew for their continuous, and above-and-beyond, efforts to keep the facilities cleared of snow this winter. He was also grateful to the bus drivers for the great job they are doing to get the kids safely to school and back home each day.

He spoke of the budget timeline, and a board workshop planned for 2/26 from 9:00 am- noon, presentation on 3/7, approval by 3/28, posting for 7 days prior to public hearing, final approval of the budget by 4/25, and finally the referendum on 5/3.

XI. Committee Reports

For Finance, Mr. Suslavich reported his committee having met for 1½ hours with Mr. Heaven regarding the audit. Also, transfers and status of the existing budget were reviewed.

XII. Old Business

There was no old business.

XIII. New Business

Mr. Sordi asked for a motion to accept the resignation of Jay Hubelbank, Director of Finance/Operations. Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Hubelbank effective 3/11/11*, second by Mr. Baider. Discussion followed. Ms. Corsico had concerns about the swift posting of this position, prior to accepting the resignation, the brief time period for applicants to apply, and following the policy for filling administrative vacancies. Mr. Sordi assured her that he and Dr. Cronin had made these decisions together. She was concerned that interviews would take place on 2/15, when personnel committee member Linda Bulvanoski would not return to town until the following day; also, how the search committee was chosen and whether the personnel committee had been involved in that, since they had not met; and, that the future superintendent would not have the chance to participate in the hiring of the business manager. Since an interim would be named tonight, she didn't understand the rush. She has not been notified of any of the steps that have already been taken in this process and urged following protocol. Ms. Corsico then read a short statement in which she thanked Mr. Hubelbank for his dedicated service to this district. She said he is not only an excellent business manager but a truly good man who cares about the children he serves and the people who work for R14. She said it saddens her that Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank, 2 men greatly respected by the educational community in CT and who would have retired here, have now decided to leave and said she felt the current board has to take much of the responsibility for that. She hoped that, in the future, we will respect the judgment of our new administrators, stop micromanaging and allow them to do their jobs, and make sure that not only we treat them with respect, but insist that the community do the same. Ms. Zmek questioned Ms. Corsico's emphasis on following policy when past boards waived them. She believed it was important to fill this position ASAP and thought it disingenuous to claim the process was moving too quickly. Mr. Sordi explained that the unusual circumstance of having both superintendent and business manager leaving necessitated quick action and having the business manager in place would leave more time for the superintendent search. A number of qualified applicants had applied and a search committee is in place. It is unfortunate that Ms. Bulvanoski would miss the first meeting but it is important to move forward, he said. He is pleased that, since becoming chair, policies are followed and we are in full compliance with board policy. Ms. Corsico asked when policy, in this case, was waived. Mr. Suslavich called for a point of order, as the motion on the floor was accepting the resignation. Mr. Cosgriff also thanked Mr. Hubelbank and questioned how the hiring process was being done. He has heard in the store that the board already has its candidate in mind to fill the business manager position. He is troubled by this. Mr. Baider thanked Mr. Hubelbank, as well, for his exceptional work, and Mr. Bauer thanked him for his contributions to the region; he felt he had gone above and beyond at times and appreciated hearing his voice on AlertNow. Mr. Sordi praised his work on the high school building project, and Ms. Zmek also wished him well in his new job. **The motion previously made and seconded carried 7-0.**

Mr. Suslavich entered a motion to approve the appointment of Chrissy McDevitt, assistant track coach, NHS, second by Mr. Baider. Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion and possible action on the administrators' contract was tabled.

Ms. Corsico entered a *motion to approve the appointment of Edward Arum, interim business manager*, second by Mr. Suslavich. **Motion carried 7-0.**

**XIV. Announcements**

There were no board announcements

**XV. Privilege of the Floor**

**Jeanne Ross**, Woodbury, spoke of concerns about multiple vacancies, a building project, the budget and pending referendum; urged responding to the support of those in attendance.

**Scott Kozak**, Bethlehem, supports a building project, calls for increased level of expectation regarding building maintenance.

Ms. Corsico disagreed with Mr. Kozak's statements which she interpreted as suggesting a lack of effort on the part of Mr. Molzon, his crew, and Mr. Hubelbank.

Ms. Zmek criticized board members for commenting on comments from the public, feeling if people come out to a meeting and get up to speak, they should be permitted to do so and not then be criticized for what they say.

Ms. Corsico replied that if what the public says is inaccurate, it is incumbent upon the board to correct those inaccurate statements, particularly when they are leveled against district employees.

**XVI. Executive Session**

There was no executive session.

**XVII. Adjournment**

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to adjourn*, second by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 7-0.**  
The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Pamela Zmek, Secretary  
Regional School District #14 Board of Education