

(Please note: these minutes are in draft form and not yet approved by the Board of Education)

A Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, August 24, 2010, 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; Director of Finance and Operations Jay Hubelbank

Audience members included: BES Principal Melinda McKenna; WMS Principal Alice Jones and Assistant Principal Eric Bergeron, Technology Administrator Jeff Turner; newly appointed MES Principal Mary Lou Torre and Interim Principal Len Tomasello, three members of the press and approximately 20 members of the community.

Absent: Board member Linda Bulvanoski

I. Call to Order

Mr. Sordi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Sordi led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Review of Minutes (Action Anticipated)

1. Special Meeting of July 6, 2010

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the minutes of 7/6/10 as presented*, second by Mr. Baider. Ms. Zmek asked to delete the word "special" from the designation of the meeting and, with that change, the **motion carried 7-0**.

2. Special Meeting of July 20, 2010

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the minutes of 7/20/10 as presented*, second by Mr. Baider. Ms. Corsico said she is not sure of the process anymore with regard to minutes. The minutes received by the board differed from those Ms. Corsico was sent. She had been asked to review her sections for accuracy, as her comments were not in a written format available to the clerk. Mr. Sordi explained that minutes are now sent to Ms. Zmek in draft form for review. Ms. Zmek added that she edits the minutes for accuracy and typos.

Ms. Corsico said that, previously, the full board saw the minutes in their draft form and any changes were made at next scheduled meeting. Asked for specific concerns, Ms. Corsico cited three. Having heard her objections, Mr. Sordi directed the clerk to revise these items back to the original version:

On page 1, "Mr. Sordi asked if there was a motion on the floor regarding the pending litigation. A *motion to adjourn* was entered by Ms. Corsico and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff" was to be changed back to: "Mr. Sordi asked if there was a motion on the floor regarding the pending litigation. Hearing none, he asked if there was a *motion to adjourn*, which was entered by Ms. Corsico and seconded by Mr. Cosgriff." On page 2, midway down the page, "She feels some of the progress made will be turned back if this board truly wants to bring the community together, it has the chance to do it" was to be changed back to, "Some of the progress made will be turned back, she said, and if this board truly wants to bring the community together, it has the chance to do it." And on page 4, Ms. Corsico's deleted statement, "If they rushed the decision tonight, she said, their actions would be worse than what they have accused the former board of doing" was added back to the minutes. With those changes noted, the **motion carried 6-0-1**. Mr. Baider abstained, not having been present for that meeting.

Ms. Zmek offered an apology to Ms. Corsico if she remembered the meeting differently. She said her intention, when editing minutes, is to make them less inflammatory and more objective.

IV. Correspondence – None.

V. Report from Chairperson

Mr. Sordi requested a motion go into executive session. Mr. Suslavich offered a *motion to enter executive session for an update on legal matters in Pratt/Scherf v Board of Education, and to include Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank*. Mr. Bauer seconded the motion and the **motion carried 7-0**. The board moved to executive session at 7:40 p.m. and returned at 8:05 p.m. Mr. Sordi reported that, during the session, the board authorized him to consult with legal counsel and to draft a timeline to bring to Judge Pickard. He then read a proposal on how to move forward.

He reviewed that, prior to a 10-47(c), the board is required to prepare a report on the proposed amendment, including the question, and make the report available to the public at a district meeting. A date for the vote would then be set and, if the majority vote in each town favors the proposed amendment to the plan, the amendment will take effect. The law outlined in 10-47(c), he said, does not allow for reactionary policy making but, rather, promotes a responsible approach that includes fact gathering, assessment and long term planning. This approach involves the public and gives them the opportunity for input. He said the board's primary objective should focus on gathering hard and measurable data to determine the impact of reconfiguration on our schools and to make that information available to the public. He proposed that the board delegate the responsibility of gathering facts and information to the board committees, and allow public participation at committee meetings. He proposed the following committee assignments:

Finance would identify the financial impact of both configurations on transportation, facility changes and those pertaining to staffing issues.

Planning would supply information on the impact of both configurations on CMT scores, class and instructional time, scheduling of specials, gym, and lunch as well as field trips and enrichment, special education programs, professional development, and the region's ability to comply with new state graduation requirements.

Facilities would look at enrollment, class sizes, staffing, facility modifications and impact on common spaces of each configuration.

Transportation would study impact on bus routes and times, cost differential between two and three tier busing, busing for field trips and sports, busing for special education transport, and number of buses.

Public Relations would compile the data into a concise report to be posted in towns and distributed at public hearings. Much of the information, he said, is readily available and Mr. Hubelbank has much of it at his immediate disposal. He proposed that the committees draw upon the knowledge and insight of staff to answer any unanswered questions they have on any of these issues. His aim is to have the PR committee's report by October 12th and suggested committees update the board on findings during a portion of regular meetings dedicated to this topic. If the October deadline can be met, he suggested tentatively planning for public hearings on October 13th and 14th with a vote on November 16, 2010. The timeline would allow ample planning time for the 2011-2012 school year depending on the outcome of the vote.

He asked for a motion to move forward with this plan, in order for discussion to take place. He added that such a motion would keep the timeline in favor of the district because the result of the lawsuit requires restoring two K-5 schools.

Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion that the board move forward with plans for a 10-47(c) as outlined by the chair, with a desired voting date of 11/16/10 but subject to all information being available by that time*.

Mr. Bauer seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Mr. Baidier stressed having the information that is gathered available to the public.

Ms. Corsico commented that if this is to be a legitimate vote with a legitimate report, Ms. Zmek has already stated she does not believe in a reconfigured school system and Mr. Sordi has questioned Dr. Cronin's findings. She said she is concerned with the way information will be put forward.

Mr. Sordi responded that he and Dr. Cronin would review the data; if they cannot agree, they may bring in someone else to assist them.

Ms. Corsico said this puts Dr. Cronin in a tough position, disagreeing with the chairman of the board. She also cautioned interpretation of data such as CMT scores – are they a result of reconfiguration or not? If they are to offer a real report to the community, it would be better to use an outside source; otherwise, it would be rehashing past pain.

Mr. Sordi agreed, but was confident that this board can do it. He asked Ms. Corsico to keep in mind that, even with an outside source, the board is still held to a 2011-12 timeline to switch the schools back.

Ms. Corsico suggested getting someone neutral to assess the data because this board is not objective.

Mr. Bauer liked the idea of open committee meetings, and also citing sources of information.

Ms. Corsico pointed out that enrollment numbers from 3 years ago are not those of today. A lot can be done with data, she said.

Mr. Baider said they must be conscious that the majority of information will come from Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank; and, it will be challenging to work out what is fact and what is emotional attachment to each configuration. Board members, he said, must limit their own views and articulate the community's views.

Ms. Zmek added that the Prowda report is available, commissioned a few years ago. It is true, she said, that the members have stated their views, but by letting the public decide, we can't lose. There would also be gray area for someone coming in, and she was concerned about the cost of a third party.

Mr. Sordi thought it might make sense to modify the motion that if he and Dr. Cronin decided they needed assistance, the plan could be modified to give them that ability.

Ms. Corsico stressed that Dr. Cronin works for the board and they are putting him in a difficult position. He believes he has saved money, and Mr. Sordi's statements contradict this. She agreed with Ms. Zmek that people are well meaning but it is difficult to be objective.

Mr. Cosgriff agreed that Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank are being put in an awkward position. This was a plan that was endorsed, but which current members oppose. An outside voice would be appropriate.

The motion previously made and seconded carried 5-2. Mr. Bauer, Mr. Baider, Mr. Sordi, Mr. Suslavich, and Ms. Zmek voted yes. Ms. Corsico and Mr. Cosgriff voted no.

VI. Report from Superintendent

Dr. Cronin gave details for the opening of the school year. He extended an invitation to board members to attend any of the events they could. New teacher orientation, for the 4 new teachers, is on Monday, 8/30. Opening convocation is at 9:00 am on 8/31; building based PD will be on 9/1 and the student arrive for their first day on 9/2.

Dr. Cronin reported on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on results of the March 2010 administration of CMT and CAPT. NCLB, a federal law, states that by 2014 all students will be performing at or above proficiency. He stressed that R14 is focused on goal, not proficiency. He listed the subsets recorded in the process and reported R14 results: MES made AYP in math (95.5%) with a target of 82%, and in reading (88.5%) with a target of 79%. In whole school reporting, the school made AYP in all subgroups save students with disabilities. This group is in safe harbor for reading, while meeting AYP in math. At WMS, with 476 students tested, 96.2% were at or above proficiency in math, with a target of 82%; and 94.6% were at or above proficiency in reading, with a goal of 79%. In whole school reporting, the school made AYP in all subgroups save students with disabilities. This group is in safe harbor for math, while meeting AYP in reading. At NHS, 207 students participated in CAPT testing and met AYP.

Dr. Cronin also reported on the beginning of the negotiations process for the administrators' contract. A timeline has been received and the process will begin by 10/6, with mediation slated for 11/25 and, if needed, arbitration on 12/20. Towns have been asked for data and will be invited to attend negotiations.

Ms. Corsico suggested if the towns do not wish to send representation that they notify the region in writing of this.

VII. Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Sordi invited privilege of the floor, asking that the first be considered an open forum and the second be agenda specific.

Pam Gengenbach, Woodbury, applauded the decision to finally bring reconfiguration to a vote. The plan was amended by action, not vote, she said. As to comments on fairness, what is being proposed is fairest and steps that are long overdue.

Lynne Frederick, Woodbury, has heard good things about Dr. Cronin and does not think he will have trouble working with Mr. Sordi. She commented that the older she gets, the less she knows but she knows that Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank can do this.

Maria Duncan, Woodbury, had questions regarding the proposed public hearings. She worried that a huge report will be given to each town to look at and then quickly vote on without time to grasp its contents.

Though she looks forward to reading it and hearing what the people have to say, she reminded the board that at the last public hearing on the subject, reconfiguration was only an idea. She also noted that the chair's proposal did not address full day kindergarten.

Pam Racevicius, Woodbury, applauded Mr. Sordi for his courage and fact gathering. She noted that he could forego the report and just vote, and added that this is different from three years ago when differing opinions were not appreciated.

Suzi Greene, Woodbury, urged when looking at data to include full day kindergarten and to remember that previously the 5th grade was housed at WMS, and to take a clear look at that. She pointed out intangibles, such as K students not riding the bus with 5th graders, and friendships between towns. This, she said, is not data but still important. Also, if the K-5 schools are to be equal, this could involve moving the boundary line and sending Woodbury students to Bethlehem. This line would need to be clear prior to a vote.

Jeanne Ross, Woodbury, feels the board's public relations committee has a tall task. It says it will take its lead from the Superintendent, but will issue a report reflecting public opinion. The report, she urged, must reflect data, public opinion, and educational leadership. She feels the public relations committee needs to lay out a document, but the reporting should come not from the board but a variety of sources.

Mary Ann Sprague, Bethlehem, feels public hearings are unnecessary and everyone knows about reconfiguration. She reminded the board that the public are taxpayers and the school system is supported by taxpayers and cannot silence their votes. The board, she said, is objective when it wants to be and not when it doesn't want to be. She suggested hearings after the vote if necessary. Increasing public participation at meetings and committee meetings is the right path. The public wants an informed vote and wants to know what (the board) is doing. She urged getting over not including the public, which are not little kids. Also, she feels all this executive session stuff is unnecessary.

Cheryl Malloy, Bethlehem, liked the idea that subcommittee meetings will include public input; however, as each committee will need to meet several times, it will be a full time job to attend all meetings. She has scheduling concerns related to the public's planning for this. She respects and believes that the board members are all professionals and can be objective. She favored the amendment to include an outside source if needed, and agreed with Mr. Baider's idea that opinions of the board must be limited. For those who receive the report, she said, and for it to have merit and be perceived as fair, it needs to be the facts with board opinions limited.

Ms. Corsico asked if committee meetings will be televised, and Mr. Sordi said he would look into this.

Silvia Ouellette, Bethlehem, asked from where the report available next to the meeting agendas on the entrance table, entitled "2010 Connecticut Mastery Test: Report Results and Analysis," came and was told by Mr. Sordi that neither he nor Dr. Cronin was responsible for it. She strongly cautioned that the board be careful about what the public receives. Data, she said, can be skewed in any number of ways and many in the community have lost sight of what the facts actually are.

Eileen Budrewicz, Woodbury, expressed serious concern about the mystery report available on the agenda table. She had assumed it was published by the BoE.

VIII. Report from Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Hubelbank reported on project work completed over the summer, notably the sidewalk at BES. Building walk-throughs are in progress and bus routes have been completed. Those with questions can contact him directly. He mentioned the TV system upgrades, and that some equipment is backordered but that broadcast of this meeting should be up soon. The district audit is also in progress, he said.

IX. Old Business

Mr. Sordi requested a motion to accept the list of regular meetings through December 2010 previously provided to board members. Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the regular meeting list as provided*, seconded by Mr. Baider. The **motion carried 7-0**.

XI. New Business (Action Anticipated)

Dr. Cronin requested motions to approve the following appointments:

A. Approval of Faculty/Staff Appointments

- a. Leonard Tomasello, Ed.D., Interim Principal, Mitchell Elementary School, effective August 5, 2010 and continuing until a permanent replacement is secured

Motion to approve, Mr. Baider. Second, Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- b. Neill Berggren, 1.0 Spanish Teacher, Woodbury Middle School

Motion to approve, Mr. Baider. Second, Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- c. Christina Lewis, 1.0 Technology/In-School Suspension Instructional Support

Motion to approve, Mr. Cosgriff. Second, Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- d. Michelle L. Perry, 1.0 Mathematics Teacher, Nonnewaug High School

Motion to approve, Mr. Baider. Second, Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0**.

B. Approval of Resignations

- a. Brian Bisson, Special Education Teacher, Nonnewaug High School, effective June 30, 2010

Motion to approve, Ms. Corsico. Second, Mr. Suslavich. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- b. Paige Davenport, Mathematics Teacher, Nonnewaug High School, effective August 1, 2010

Motion to approve, Mr. Cosgriff. Second, Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- c. Kathleen Ghounem, Spanish Teacher, Woodbury Middle School, effective July 27, 2010

Motion to approve, Mr. Bauer. Second, Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- d. Julie Haggard, Special Education Teacher, Woodbury Middle School, effective August 14, 2010

Motion to approve, Mr. Cosgriff. Second, Ms. Corsico. **Motion carried 7-0**.

- e. Daniel Scavone, Dean of Students/Athletic Director, Nonnewaug High School, effective August 13, 2010

Motion to approve, Mr. Cosgriff. Second, Mr. Suslavich. **Motion carried 7-0**.

C. Approval of Appointment to Extra Duty Positions

i. Nonnewaug High School (non-athletic)

Motion to approve as listed on the agenda, Ms. Corsico. Second, Mr. Bauer. Ms. Corsico confirmed that participation and regular meeting schedules for all are monitored. **Motion carried 6-0-1** with Mr. Sordi abstaining.

ii. **Woodbury Middle School (athletic and non-athletic)**

Motion to approve as listed on the agenda, Ms. Corsico. Second, Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

iii. **Mitchell Elementary School**

Motion to approve as listed on the agenda, Ms. Corsico. Second, Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

iv. **Bethlehem Elementary School**

Motion to approve as listed on the agenda, Ms. Corsico. Second, Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

XII. Board Announcements

Mr. Bauer offered his thanks to Ms. Jones for a detailed tour of WMS, as well as to Mr. Hubelbank for long discussions regarding facilities.

XIII. Privilege of the Floor

Mary Ann Sprague, Bethlehem, reported that the healthy teens' bill passed in the state legislature and includes no parent notification or opt out for middle school human sexuality and HIV education. She was not allowed to do an abstinence only presentation and thinks one would be helpful for the drug/alcohol problem, because "sex, drugs and rock and roll all go together." Planned Parenthood intends to return to the legislature to have opt out reinstated. This, she said, is another example of not allowing the public to participate or vote. She is glad the board is extending the invitation for a public vote and she will vote "no" for reconfiguration.

George Hoffman, Bethlehem, noted no after school programming at BES, no intramurals, and is privy to the numbers. A paid employee last year earned \$15,000 for after school programming. Mr. Hubelbank explained that park and rec pays that. Mr. Hoffman knows this, but felt it would be cheaper to offer the programs ourselves and would rather pay one of our own teachers.

Jeanne Ross, Woodbury, asked what to do about the unauthorized CMT report? What was the process? Mr. Sordi said he would do research to see what policy might exist that addresses such a situation.

XIV. Executive Session

Mr. Sordi requested a motion to move to executive session. Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to go into executive session for the purposes of discussion/possible action on the Custodian Contract, and appointment of legal counsel, and to include Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank*. Ms. Zmek seconded the motion. Ms. Corsico asked why appointment of counsel would be a subject for executive session as a list she referenced of topics for executive session does not include that one. Mr. Sordi asked for a *motion to table the appointment of legal counsel*. Mr. Suslavich amended his previous motion to include only the Custodian Contract. Mr. Baider seconded that motion, and the **motion carried 7-0**.

The board entered executive session at 9:30 p.m.

Following the session, Mr. Suslavich entered a *motion to accept the Custodian Contract*, seconded by Mr. Baider. **The motion carried 7-0.**

XV. Adjournment

A *motion to adjourn* was entered at 9:47 p.m., seconded, and the **motion unanimously carried**.

Respectfully Submitted,

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