

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Education

**FROM:** Ad-Hoc Football Study Committee

**SUBJECT:** Recommended changes to strengthen the Nonnewaug High School football program.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Chairman Stephen Sordi
- BOE member Chuck Cosgriff
- BOE member Deb Corsico
- Administration-Business Manager Jay Hubelbank
- Administration-Superintendent Robert Cronin
- Nonnewaug Football-Coach John Oko
- Grid Iron-Member Tim Drakely
- Pop Warner-President Jim Uberdi
- Pop Warner Football-Member John Dominello
- Pop Warner Football/Community Donna Munson

### Background

In September of 2009, the Region 14 Board of Education Chairman, Monica Gati appointed an ad-hoc committee to study the football program at Nonnewaug High School. The purpose of the committee was to determine the current condition of the football program and identify what steps, if any, could be taken to strengthen the program.

As part of the work, the committee was to discuss (9) specific topics pertaining to the program. It was determined the committee would need to meet approximately 2-3 times and while together, would gather pertinent information from the individuals deemed specialists in their field IE: coaches, athletic directors, experienced football associates.

The topics identified were as follows:

- Determine the level of play (varsity, junior varsity, freshman)
  - 2010-2011
  - Future years-Goals
- Determine the number of student athletes necessary to maintain the various levels of play.
- Identify the projected number of student athletes who may be interested in participating in football for the 2010-2011 season and beyond.
- Determine what resources the district would have to commit in order to assure a viable program. Including facilities, staffing, transportation and equipment.
- Determine what fiscal resources the district would have to commit in order to assure a viable program.

- Identify what community and Booster Club resources are currently available and what funds have been committed for future years.
- Determine what role the community should play in formally supporting the team.
- What relationship should the coaches have with Pop Warner and how should it be maintained?
- Determine at what point should the district consider forming a football co-op?
  - Identify potential schools to partner with.
  - Identify CIAC commitments and regulations.
  - Identify a plan for forming a co-op.
  - Identify fiscal responsibilities.

The Ad-Hoc Committee met on two occasions to discuss the assigned committee charge. Minutes of the meeting were taken at each gathering and will be attached to this report as Attachment #1 & Attachment #2

Attachment #1-Meeting held on Thursday, January 21, 2010 included in minutes, all documents presented at meeting.

Attachment #2-Meeting held on Wednesday, February 24, 2010 include in minutes, all document presented at meeting.

The following responses to the Ad-Hoc questions were drafted, after compiling information from the committee;

1. *Determine the level of play (Varsity, junior varsity, freshman) 2010-2011 year & Future years-Goals.* Coach John Oko stated he recommends Nonnewaug Football remain at the junior varsity level for at least (1) more year. Discussion by the committee on this issue followed, and there was consensus with Coach Oko's recommendation based on the premise-Moving back to a varsity level, prior to allowing the newly created weight conditioning program to mature, may cause the team harm. Also, time was needed, to allow 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Pop Warner players' to enter high school and build up the team numbers. In addition, the committee determined, after next year, the placement (varsity, junior varsity) of the program should be re-evaluated. Ultimately, the program needs to transition to a varsity level or face demise.
  
- 2/3. *Determine the number of student athletes necessary to maintain the various levels of play and identify the projected number of student athletes who may be interested in participating in football for the 2010-2011 season and beyond.* Coach, John Oko stated he would need approximately 35-40 players to staff a junior varsity team. In addition, approximately 50-60 players would be necessary for both a junior varsity and varsity team. The coach stated he currently has 27 names of current high school students interested in playing. He is hoping to get 10-15 incoming freshman to play. Coach Oko added; he is optimistic he can recruit some incoming out of district Ag-students. The committee discussed

Coach Oko's participation assessment and asked if he felt 35-40 is an adequate number, taking into consideration injuries. Coach Oko felt confident with the numbers he stated. Jim Uberti determined approximately 11 Pop Warner players will be moving on to Nonnewaug football next year.

*4/5. Determine what resources the district would have to commit in order to assure a viable program.* This issue was discussed in length, both short term and long term. Dan Scavone prepared an expenditure schedule for the committee to review. The summary included costs presently being paid for through the BOE budget and by the Grid Iron Club. The football operating cost to the region for the 2010-2011 season is \$37,685.00 The BOE would be responsible for \$15,890.00 and the Grid Iron organization would be responsible for the approximate \$21,000.00 balance. There was also discussion on exercise equipment to upgrade the weight room. This equipment totaled approximately \$32,700.00. See attached. There was conversation regarding the size of the current weight room and if all the equipment on the list was purchased, would it fit? There was also conversation if all the equipment is necessary to have the football program move forward. Coach Oko felt the answer was no, we would need to spend approximately \$5000.00 this year for the necessary weights required for his training program. Coach Oko stated we have plenty of blocking dummies, sleds and field equipment to move forward. Long term, Dan Scavone in his memo, felt the football program would require a sports referendum to pay for "adequate facilities" for football to survive. See attached summary of "Estimated Costs for Football".

*6/7. Identify what community and booster club resources are currently available and what funds have been committed for future years?* Tim Drakely, representing the Grid Iron club, stated the club has committed to continue supporting football at Nonnewaug. They have agreed to a second five year commitment. There was also conversation about "pay for play" with mixed feelings from the members, regarding if this was an acceptable solution for raising funds to support athletics. Dr. Cronin questioned if there would be an expectation from parents; that their child would play if they paid. John Oko stated he believes Naugatuck High School is currently in the middle of a 3 million dollar renovation project, in which they received 2.5 million from a grant. Dr. Cronin stated he would telephone Naugatuck and find out what grant they had applied for. Deb Corsico stated the community could help rally voters when it comes time to support a referendum.

*8. What relationship should the coaches have with Pop Warner and how should it be maintained?* Coach John Oko stated the interaction is minimal at this time and has vowed to reach out to the Pop Warner folks in the future. John Dominello stated John Oko is the first coach willing to reach out to the coaching staff at the Pop Warner level. It appeared evident, the Nonnewaug High football coaches and Nonnewaug Pop Warner football folks were operating their programs independently rather than supporting each other's team. There was consensus this type of collaborative communication would be beneficial to both programs

and both programs have the "right" personnel in place at this time for this interaction to occur.

9. *Determine at what point the district should consider forming a football co-op.*

Although Dan Scavone did not attend the meeting, I shared with the committee a portion of the conversation I had with Dan, earlier in the day. I informed the committee; Dan believed at this time, a co-op was not feasible, due to there not being a team willing to co-op with Nonnewaug. Dan related to me; when looking to co-op with as school, it is much more advantageous, to co-op with a school that can provide facilities, not otherwise available to the soliciting party.

**Moving Forward:**

It is the belief of the majority of the committee members, at this time, unlike in the past, all the correct pieces are in place, for the football program to move forward and be successful. There are valid concerns raised by various members of the committee regarding budgetary and facility issues. The majority of the committee feels these issues, at this time, should not be detrimental to the program. The financial and facility issues discussed within this report could be located in attached reports submitted by Dan Scavone and Jay Hubelbank.

At this time, no further meetings are scheduled.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen Sordi, Chairman

Date: March 15, 2010