

October 19, 2009

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

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, October 19, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present were Superintendent Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.; Board Chair Monica Gati, Board members Scott Baider, Charles Cosgriff, Carla Juhas, Stephen Paluskas and Stephen Sordi; Director of Finance and Operations Jay Hubelbank; Principals Dawn Hochsprung, Alice Jones and Melinda McKenna; Vice Principal Eric Bergeron; also Anne Uberti, Charles Von Hollen, Joy Geraci, Stacey Calo, John Dominello and Arleigh Duff; one newspaper reporter and approximately 30 members of the community.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Gati led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Presentation

Ms. Hochsprung presented the Mitchell Elementary School Improvement Plan for 2009-2010. She reviewed the basis for instructional decisions made at her school, the focus areas of the previous school year, and data compiled on student performance. She attributed increases in reading scores to the amount of time students spend reading each day. She reviewed writing scores and reported on percentages of students performing at goal. She reviewed numbers of students receiving intervention services and resulting improvements on their DRP scores. She then turned to focus areas for 2009-2010 and stated her school's goals in areas of language arts, math and school culture. She discussed how progress would be measured and concluded with strategies for continuous improvement. She took questions from the Board. Mr. Baider asked how interventions affect overall pacing in classrooms. Ms. Hochsprung explained interventions as "additional hits" which do not slow the pace but which are offered to students as extra reinforcement beyond what the class is doing. Certain IEPs, she said, might involve separate programming, but in general the extra hits are in addition to class content. Mr. Baider asked about students performing above average and how they are accommodated, and was told that these students, too, may receive extra attention and higher level reading and writing materials.

IV. Review of Minutes (action anticipated)

Regular Board Meeting of October 5, 2009

Mr. Sordi made a *motion to approve these minutes*, seconded by Mr. Paluskas.

The **motion carried 6-0.**

V. Correspondence

None.

VI. Report from Chairperson

Ms. Gati informed the Board of her intention to schedule a Board of Education workshop on the proposed building project and asked that they reserve the evening of October 28th beginning at 6:00 pm. Materials will be sent to them beforehand and next steps will be discussed.

She also acknowledged the presence of Mr. Von Hollen, technology teacher at WMS, who has agreed to supervise the student taping of Board meetings beginning, hopefully, with the November 9th meeting.

She reported having attended Rachael's Challenge, sponsored by WMS, and called on Ms. Jones to comment on it. Ms. Jones described the program as geared toward showing students what it means to be kind and compassionate in a community. Rachael, the first of the Columbine students to be murdered, led a brief but profound life and reached out to others, she said. Her parents created the curriculum that is Rachael's Challenge.

Ms. Geraci also thanked the Parents in the Middle group for funding the presentation, as well as ASAP and the student group, SHOC, who themselves raised \$500. She explained components of the program such as "kindness cards" to record acts of kindness and how the students will become involved in tracking the cards as they move from student to student. She added that some of the funds raised will be donated to Operation Smile.

VII. Report from Superintendent

Dr. Cronin reported on Best Instructional Practices. The Administrative Council began work last year in this area and has studied how people learn and which practices have the best effect on learning, all to improve student achievement in Region 14. The focus for 2009-2010 will be on five components of good planning – how to assess and build on prior knowledge, lesson initiation, what good lessons look like, and closure in lesson planning. Specific behaviors that teachers and students are doing during lessons have been identified, and the Administrative Council has participated in walk-thoughts to specifically look for evidence of these five effective pieces of the planning process. Teachers will receive professional development on these practices and it will be tied into the mentoring of new teachers.

VIII. Privilege of the Floor

Maryanne Van Aken, of Woodbury, and chair of ASAP, was delighted to help fund Rachael's Challenge at WMS, as well as the Code at MES, but wanted to discuss the Board's policy on drugs and alcohol. She asked them to consider the use of breathalyzers, which are used in a number of CT public school systems. She suggested their use at dances and other functions as a deterrent to the intoxication that was present at the recent homecoming event for NHS students. She noted a parent forum on the topic for Wednesday evening from 7-9 pm at WMS.

Kevin Violette, Woodbury, spoke in favor of proposed improvements to the athletic fields as part of the proposed building project. He expressed his belief in the positive benefits of sports for kids, for health reasons as well as leadership and camaraderie. He also noted that sports provide a focal point for a town and that entire communities come together to watch sporting events. He acknowledged and appreciated improvements made to the fields, but added that Region 14 falls short in the Berkshire League. He endorsed the building project.

Duncan McDougal, Woodbury, is disappointed that meetings are not televised. He has heard a rumor of a turf field and, since he attended all facilities committee meetings, was surprised about this because he did not think that expensive turf was an option. He thinks we should "put the dollars we have into what bears fruit." He noted that 25-30% of Nonnewaug students aren't even from our towns. He said the foremost function is to educate kids, and urged the Board to "get back to basics." He cited 25% of the kids aren't making the grade and will become the problem of the taxpayers. He gave his opinion that much money is spent on special education students; asked that reading, writing and arithmetic be addressed first, before sports; and felt we should remember why we are here.

Pam Gengenbach, Woodbury, said the talk of sports fields is premature as the Board has not discussed the new numbers. She recalled a figure of \$12,000 for football equipment, and also did not know where the talk of a turf field had come from, having attended all the building committee and facilities meetings.

Mr. Hubelbank suggested that perhaps she had not attended all the meetings, as turf was discussed as an option for one field during the last several meetings.

Mr. Sordi added that turf was considered and then dismissed early on; however, when looking at different configurations of fields, an option of one turf field was being considered.

Ms. Gengenbach noted reports of lead issues with turf and hoped these were being considered. She commended the principals for their plans. She said that it will be difficult in this economy to pass a building project. She would like the athletes to have the best, too, but felt all options should be considered and that maybe we cannot have what other school districts have. A balance needs to be struck, she said, and hopes we will concentrate on the academic piece.

Joy Geraci, school social worker at WMS, reiterated Ms. Van Aken's remarks about breathalyzers and felt policy could include using them as a useful tool during the school day, too, if student's are suspected to be intoxicated.

Jeff Coleman, Woodbury, also spoke in favor of improvements to the athletic fields and asked what needs to be done to get it out to the public.

Dr. Cronin explained that the Board must first look at new numbers and reach agreement on next steps. Ms. Gati added that work on the project was begun over 2 years ago; and that priorities must be established which address both academics and athletics. She recognizes the culture of community that athletic programs bring. Mr. Baider commented that it was great to see support for the fields, but noted other important aspects of the project such as windows and improved traffic flow at NHS and said we need to look for creative solutions.

Mr. Hubelbank emphasized that the Board is the only entity authorized to put forward a building project.

Jeanne Hawley, Woodbury, added her support for the use of breathalyzers as a useful tool to keep kids safe. She suggested that some of the students who were intoxicated at the homecoming dance, though perhaps not obviously so, also had car keys used to get back home. The breathalyzer could be an easy fix and could dial these kids out of the equation, she said.

Vic Losure, Bethlehem, added support for the field work as an investment in the kids. The idea is to produce well rounded students, and colleges look at, in addition to academics, sports and outside activities which promote positive leadership skills. Success in life, he said, must be prepared for and we need to move forward and make this investment in the fields.

IX. Report from Director of Finance and Operations

- i. Facilities – Mr. Hubelbank reported that the Region's participates as a member of an electrical consortium and the contract ends in 12/09. He will report back on bids and rates
- ii. Finances – Mr. Hubelbank requested a motion regarding the pension fund trustee.

Mr. Baider made a *motion to authorize Webster Bank to serve as Region 14's pension fund trustee*. Second by Mr. Paluskas. **Motion carried 6-0.**

X. Committee Reports

For Community Relations, Mr. Cosgriff reported that meetings/coffee with Dr. Cronin continue at the schools, most recently on 10/16 with parents of 6th grade students.

For Facilities, Mr. Hubelbank reported that this week begins the tracking of student pick up times as well as numbers riding in the mornings. Arrival times for buses are tracked daily. He also noted a water issue: Region 14 is a "water district" as it has wells at both NHS and BES. Water quality is tested quarterly and trace amounts of cholofom were detected at NHS. This is believed to be due to the drastically reduced amount of water used at that school during the summer months. Wells are cleaned routinely and retesting will be done.

Mr. Sordi also reported on the meeting of the Facilities Committee, which toured BES and found the school to be looking great. He commended Mike Molzon and his crew for the great job they do there. He noted concerns about an area of sidewalk at BES. If a building project does not go forward, that issue will need to be addressed.

For Finance, Mr. Baider reported on efforts to recover excess cost shortfalls from the state. He appreciates Mrs. Hubelbank's efforts to provide year-to-date expenditures which his committee reviewed. Premium health care costs were also reviewed and trending could lead to higher costs there. As for refinancing existing bonds, rates have spiked and, at present, there would be no benefit to refinancing.

XI. Old Business

Ms. Gati requested motions to approve revised Board of Education Policies.

a. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the Board policy on Bullying*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff.

Motion carried 6-0.

b. The policy on discipline was put on hold.

c. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the Board policy on Management of Life Threatening Food Allergies*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

d. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the Board policy on Educational Records – Access, Confidentiality, and Amendment*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff. Mr. Baider confirmed that this policy is statutory. **Motion carried 6-0.**

e. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the Board policy on Pesticide Application*. Second by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 6-0.**

f. Mr. Paluskas made a *motion to approve the Board policy on Transportation – Non-Instructional*. Second by Mr. Cosgriff. Mr. Sordi confirmed that while the statute is 1 hour, we will maintain a time limit of 45 minutes. **Motion carried 6-0.**

g. The policy on drugs, alcohol and tobacco was put on hold.

XII. New Business

Personnel - Approval of Extra Duty Appointments

Dr. Cronin requested a *motion to approve the appointments of Maude Chasse, Krista Forte, Joanna Gaffney and George Slowikowski as Homework Club Advisors, Woodbury Middle School*. Mr. Paluskas made the motion, seconded by Mr. Baider. The **motion carried 6-0.**

XIII. Adjournment

Ms. Gati requested a *motion to adjourn*, offered by Mr. Paluskas, seconded by Mr. Baider, and the **motion carried 6-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Bulvanoski, Secretary
Regional School District #14 Board of Education