

Approved

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2014

Board members present:

Tracy Casey
Michael DeGrego
John DeRosa
Suzanne DiBiase
Laura Fucci
George Gensure
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin arrived 7:05 p.m.
Susan Glennon, Chair
Anthony Piselli
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Susan Kelleher
Wendy Kopazna
Jim Richetelli

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the Business meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Board of Education room at the Parsons complex. She then led those present in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence for Maren Sanchez and the Sanchez family.

II. STUDENT RECOGNITION

Dr. Feser recognized Will Diamantis, a 6th grader from East Shore Middle School. He entered, and won a writing contest for Connecticut Student Writers magazine. His essay titled, "Hanging Up My Cleats" will be printed in the magazine.

The final recognition was given to two 5th grade students from Meadowside for their placement in the "Office of the Secretary of the State's 2014 PowerPoint Contest." The contest heightens awareness of Connecticut's history, culture and entertainment offerings. Recognized were:

Max Kimmel received an Honorable Mention for his piece on "The Launching of ESPN".

Parhip Nair received 2nd place for his piece on "Noah Webster and Merriam Webster's Dictionary".

Dr. Feser and the Board congratulated all of the recipients.

III. STUDENT REPORTS

Erin Dunn presented for Joseph A. Foran High School. Michelle Novak presented Jonathan Law's report. The reports are on file.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

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Ms. Glennon made a statement before moving into Public Comment. She provided the Board and the public with a background of the work that was done over the past two years relative to the transportation policy. During that time, concerns over walking distances or the criteria for hazards were never raised by the Board members or the public. Administration has been directed to consistently apply our policy across the district. This will result in about 180 students being reclassified as walkers for the next school year. These students live within the same walking distance parameters as some 1500 current walkers who adhere to the provisions of our policy. She further stated a written communication will go to that group notifying them of the elimination of ridership by the first week of June. This will allow enough time for administration and the transportation company to determine the bus runs for the 2014-15 school year. Anyone who wishes to dispute the change would then need to file an appeal to the Board.

She then read the Public Comment statement.

Susan Krushinsky – 60 Crescent Drive – She urged the Board to reconsider transportation of some students stating safety should be the priority when determining transportation needs of the students. She lives in the River Cliff neighborhood.

Andrea Feher – 179 River Cliff Drive – Mrs. Feher urged the Board to reconsider the recommendations of the transportation audit. She has concerns about the children walking in the winter when the sidewalks haven't been cleaned.

John Feher – 348 Housatonic Drive – Mr. Feher asked the Board to reconsider the recent decision to eliminate transportation for some students. He provided weather statistics He also reviewed the statistics for missing children.

Jonathan Feher – 348 Housatonic Drive – Jonathan is a student. He shared some experiences of the times he walked home from school. Some of the experiences included walking in the street because the walking route was not walkable. He asked the Board to restore the funds in the transportation account.

Susan Feher – 348 Housatonic Drive – She is against the elimination of bus runs for selected areas. She then thanked Ms. Fucci for supporting the students. She told the Board students have been transported to and from school in the River Cliff area since 1984. She called upon the Board members in the 3rd district to support their constituents. She asked the Board to consider the reinstatement of the bus transportation. Mrs. Feher provided packets for the Board members to review.

Bill Slusky – 8 Edgemont Road - Mr. Slusky spoke about the recent tragedy at Jonathan Law and his concern for safety at the high schools. He would like metal detectors put in the high schools.

Following Public Comment, Ms. Glennon asked Mr. Richetelli to review the packets as they pertain to transportation. She reminded the Board there could potentially be an appeal hearing before the Board.

V. CHAIRS REPORT

Ms. Glennon announced that it has been a very difficult time for the Milford Public Schools since the recent tragedy. She then offered condolences on behalf of the Board. She applauded the efforts of the

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administration, the faculty and the students at Jonathan Law. The Board will continue to offer support in any way they can.

She then reminded the Board of the Special Education meeting that will be held on May 19th in the Board of Education room at Parsons. The Committee of the Whole meeting will be May 27th, a Tuesday, and the Long Range Planning meeting will be held on June 2nd.

Ms. Glennon called for the liaison reports.

Mr. Whiskeyman reported on the ACEs Board meeting. He offered to share a packet of information with the Board. The packet included ACES strategic plan, rates and other items.

Mrs. Fucci reported on the recent Health Department meeting she attended. The school nurses have been assigned to work for the extended school program, which will be held during the summer.

VI. SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT

Dr. Feser reflected on the tragedy that occurred at Jonathan Law High School on April 25th. She thanked the administration, the Police Department, Bridges, Health and Family services, the Mayor, the clergy and the community at large for their support efforts during this time of devastation. She told the Board she was humbled by the staff and students at Jonathan Law. The extraordinary care of the community to support Law and the Sanchez family, has made us stronger. She asked for continued support and prayers.

Teacher Proclamation

Dr. Feser stated Teacher Appreciation Week occurs annually in the first week in May. Ms. Glennon then read the Teacher Proclamation on behalf of the Board. The proclamation is on file.

Update on Teacher Evaluation Plan Progress

Mr. Cummings reported the district has completed its first year of implementation of the teacher evaluation plan. A committee is currently assessing the work that has been done. The State however, has made some modifications to its requirements. He informed the Board that the changes being made to the plan would require Board approval at a subsequent meeting. He then turned the meeting over to Mrs. Krois to go over those changes.

Mrs. Krois gave a brief history of the three years leading up to date. The goal of the teacher evaluation plan is to improve student growth by strengthening teacher practices using four main categories of the plan; student performance and growth, whole school student learning, parent feedback performance targets and teacher performance and practice.

Mr. DeRosa asked how the goals are set. Mrs. Krois explained the goal setting begins with looking at the Board's goals, then the district goals and finally the school goals.

Mr. DeRosa asked how the administrators and the teachers are held accountable to keep the goals.

Mr. Cummings explained the data is reported at the September Board meeting. The goals and accountability is part of the teacher and administrator evaluation plan.

Dr. Feser told the Board the School Improvement Plans have very specific goals and can be found on the district's website.

Mrs. Krois explained the changes that will be made to the plan. The assessments that teachers will use within their goals to measure student growth will change. The assessments that were originally aligned with the CMTs no longer do so and the SBAC assessments cannot be used at this time. As the district begins to differentiate observation expectations for teachers based on their current observations and summative ratings, the number of observations will change. The revised plan, with those changes, will be presented to the Board for approval in June.

Mrs. Fucci asked if NWEA will be used for goals. Mrs. Krois told her NWEA could be used for some but not all goals.

Mr. DeRosa asked Mrs. Krois to share the process in which new teachers are mentored.

Mrs. Krois explained the district using the TEAM program, which is a two year program that all new teachers have to complete upon being hired in Milford. All new teachers have a mentor thorough out the two years.

Mr. DeRosa asked that the Board be provided with the number of mentors in the district.

Capital Improvement Plan 2014-2019

Mr. Richetelli gave a brief history of the approval process of the Capital Improvement Plan. He emphasized the plan is used as a tool that identifies the capital need for the school system, over a five year period. The plan is forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Board and onto the Aldermen for final approval. Many projects have been on the plan as a lower priority and have moved to a higher priority need. He further said, with work of the Long Range Plan could cause the priorities to shift. Some of the larger priorities are roof replacements at 10 schools and the additions/renovations to West Shore.

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of the dollar amounts relative to West Shore Middle School. She asked if they were placeholders. Mr. Richetelli it was based on what we know the school needs now – roof, windows and, to keep parity within the schools, an Art/Music wing.

Ms. Glennon reiterated the monies are just estimates. The Board will not approve money, only the projects. The plan will become part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Dr. Gold-Dworkin questioned the timing of the abatement projects. She suggested that it would be prudent to do the projects sooner than later. She recalled the situation with the Orange school system and how they had to quickly relocate an entire school. Mr. Richetelli told her the schools are constantly monitored. The costs would be exorbitant to do the projects at one time. He added that people could not be in the building during the abatement.

Mr. Gensure asked for clarity on the reimbursement rate. Mr. Richetelli responded the rate is based on the state's financial health and the will of the legislature and can fluctuate.

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Mr. Whiskeyman asked if air quality checks done regularly. Mr. Richetelli said they are.

Mr. DeRosa asked what projects that would not be reimbursable. Mr. Richetelli explained that athletic facilities, exterior playing fields, playgrounds and replacement of boilers are examples of what is not reimbursable.

Mr. DeRosa requested the Board be provided with the age of the boiler systems in the district.

Ms. Glennon reminded the Board the long range planning consultant did an intensive assessment of the buildings.

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification on the space needed at Eels Hill. Mr. Richetelli explained the space is desired for a central warehouse allowing the district to buy in bulk and then store items. This would allow for better pricing and inventory control purposes.

Dr. Gold-Dworkin asked the administration if there is a plan to install metal detectors. Mr. Richetelli told the Board the Safety Committee meets monthly to discuss and monitor the safety needs of the district.

Following the discussion, Ms. Glennon called for a motion.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion that the Board of Education approve the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Plan and forward the plan to the Mayor for consideration and funding. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval to add funds to the Non-Lapsing Education Fund

Mr. Richetelli reminded the Board it was reported at the April Board meeting that the budget will have a unexpended funds at the closing of the fiscal year. General State Statute 10-248a allows Boards to have a non-lapsing fund, not to exceed one percent of the total budget. He then reminded the Board of the \$450,000 designated two years ago to the non-lapsing account to be used for the new turf fields at the high schools. He then made the recommendation of the administration that \$300,000 be placed in a non-lapsing account to help offset the costs of the upcoming school reconfiguration. Mr. Richetelli stated these funds were coming from unexpended money in the utilities account and re-allocating the freeze account.

A Board discussion ensued.

Mr. DeRosa stated that \$300,000 is a lot of money. When did they know that there would be savings?

Mrs. Casey reminded the Board the money cannot be rolled over. The \$300,000 equates to three one thousandths (.003) of the total budget.

Dr. Feser stated it would not have been appropriate, during the budget time in January, to bring forth a plan with dollars to be used in the reconfiguration when the long range plan had not been recommended. Mr. Richetelli brought this to the attention of administration following the recommendation.

Mr. DeRosa feels strongly that for three years the administration has found savings. He cautioned the administration when planning for future budgets.

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Mrs. Casey stated that there were years when the building projects did not get done because of the lack of funds at the end of the year.

Ms. Glennon commented how difficult it can be to budget some contingencies, such as snow removal. She then reminded the Board that eliminating the transportation of the 180 students is not a budget issue, but rather a policy issue.

Mr. Whiskeyman raised a concern for holding back monies meant for supplies, but was told the principals are in agreement of the changes.

Mrs. Fucci asked if monies from the instructional account could be used for a special needs student who was to move the district. She was told yes, but a transfer would need to be done.

Following the discussion, Ms. Glennon called for a motion.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion that the Board of Education request that the City Board of Finance approve the deposit of \$300,000 of unexpended funds from the 2013-2014 fiscal year into the established City reserve account for Non-Lapsing Education Funds in accordance with CGS Sec. 10-248a for the purpose of using these funds to off-set the cost associated with future grade reconfiguration or other extraordinary or emergency expenditures which may be necessary yet otherwise not budgeted for pursuant to Board Policy P-3171. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed 9-1 No (DeRosa).

Human Resources Report

Mrs. Kopazna reviewed the Human Resources Report as well as stipend positions.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 1-2.

1. Disbursement Report
2. Consideration of Minutes
 - a. April 21, 2014 Business Meeting
 - b. May 5, 2014 Committee of the Whole Meeting

Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

None.

X. BOARD COMMENT

Approved

Mr. DeGrego told the Board he attended the Little Shop of Horrors show at Law. The performance was dedicated to Maren Sanchez. The show was excellent. He will attend the Boys and Girls Club Grand Opening next week.

Mrs. Fucci requested that the Board revisit the transportation policy as soon as possible to review the walking distances and have further discussion regarding factors that determine safety issues and hazards as well as the impact that increasing the number of walkers will have on the traffic and congestion at the schools. These factors need to be considered when planning the reconfiguration of the elementary schools. She also requested that the Administration report back to the Board on the actual impact that the increased numbers of walkers have on the traffic and congestion at the schools following the elimination of bus ridership. The reports should be given twice; one in November/December and again in March/April.

Mrs. Glennon asked if any members objected to the request. There were no objections.

Mrs. Fucci continued by asking that once the Administration begins implementing the new procedure for parents to have the opportunity to apply for their child to be placed on the bus if there is room, that the process is explained clearly and access to the application form, deadline and other information is easy to obtain. She finished by stating there is an appeals process for those affected by the elimination of transportation.

Mrs. Casey commented on the tragedy that occurred at Law. She commended the administration and Mr. Thompson, principal of Jonathan Law for their work and support.

Mrs. Casey then announced she will resign at the end of the school year due to her work schedule. She then read a prepared statement (on file).

Mrs. Glennon thanked Mrs. Casey for her dedication and experience.

Mr. Gensure thanked Mrs. Casey for serving and her guidance.

Mr. DeGrego thanked Mrs. Casey for her leadership.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Fucci a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeRosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

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Ms. Laura Fucci
Corresponding Secretary