

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Stamford, Connecticut December 4, 2007

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on December 4, 2007 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:16 p.m. by Mr. Freedman, President with the following Board members present: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mayor Malloy, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, Ms. Swerdlick, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Murphy, and approximately 65 guests.

Salute to the flag.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ms. Nabel presented the mission statement of the Board of Education.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Starr noted that there would be a presentation by the Health & Wellness Committee which was established 8 months ago in response to the multiple demands around nutrition, physical health & wellness, emotional health and wellness, community involvement, etc. Diane Blackwell, a former physical education in the Stamford Public Schools, is chairing this committee.

Ms. Blackwell reported that the committee has five sub-committees which are:

Nutrition – Chaired by Hugh Murphy
Curriculum Education & Philosophy – Chaired by Michael Gosset
Physical Activity Promotion – Chaired by Bryan Olkowski
Mental & Behavioral Health Assessment & Intervention – Chaired by Joseph O'Callaghan
Community Outreach & Linkage – Chaired by Dr. Madur Mathur

There are 30 active members involved in the Committee. The chairperson of the sub-committees are charged with the following responsibilities:

- Develop a clarifying statement of the scope for the group;
- Develop an overall work plan and time line for completion along with defined deliverables;

- Gather data, research already performed by the district or associated groups;
- Research additional best practices readily available research materials;
- Develop a baseline that clearly defines the district's current state as it relates to the sub-committee's focus.

Ms. Blackwell gave an overview in Mike Gosset's absence on Curriculum Education & Philosophy; Dr. Madur Mathur gave an update on Community Outreach & Linkage; Bryan Olkowski reported on Physical Activity Promotion; Ms. Blackwell spoke on behalf of Hugh Murphy and gave an update on the Nutrition Sub-Committee; and Ms. Blackwell spoke for Joseph O'Callaghan on the Mental & Behavioral Health Assessment & Intervention. Mr. Murphy arrived and gave further information on the Nutrition Sub-Committee.

Ms. Blackwell noted that this is the first time we are a nation of people who will have children and students that possibly might not outlive us. The nation is involved with an epidemic of inactivity and poor nutrition. One of the functions and one of the outcomes is childhood obesity, early onset of diabetes, and heart related illnesses that are one of the number one killers in the nation right now. The Health & Wellness Committee, the Stamford Public Schools, and the curriculum materials that will be coming into all of the schools within the next year, hope to address all of those issues. We look for your support as parents and we look obviously for the support on budgets from the Board of Education.

A list of the full committee will be distributed to the Board members.

Mayor Malloy left the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

STUDENT SHOWCASE

The Chamber Singers from K.T. Murphy Elementary School performed several songs. The group is comprised of approximately 18 5th graders, who performed under the direction of Frank Sinaguglia and Dorene Falcetta.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti, to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting – November 27, 2007 – pp. 69.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Ms. Nabel moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti, to accept the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting – November 27, 2007 – pp. 70 - 85.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

BOARD REPORT

Mr. Freedman stated that there was no report.

TIME FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There was a total of 10 speakers that addressed the Board on the following items: nurse coverage at parochial schools, closing of an elementary school, redistricting, scheduling of half days for staff development on the school calendar, Math Counts and Muscle Math, consider calendar for future meetings so it does not fall on the first night of Hanukah, and appreciation for bringing back Veteran's Day.

REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS/RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Freedman stated that the Board met a week ago and there have been no committee meetings since and that this portion of the agenda will be exclusively for scheduling and steering.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Lorenti scheduled a meeting for Monday, January 14, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. and reviewed the agenda items.

FACILITIES

Mr. Freedman reviewed the agenda items and noted that there would not be a Facilities Committee meeting in January 2008.

FISCAL

Ms. McManus indicated that there are two resolutions this evening. The subject matters are covered in the agenda, but the resolutions are not.

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino to amend the agenda for Resolution 12-04-07:70 regarding the HUSKY Outreach Grant acceptance.

The motion was accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Resolution 12-04-07:70

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the Department of Social Services HUSKY Outreach Grant in the amount of \$20,000.00.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to amend the agenda for Resolution 12-04-07:71 regarding purchases over \$100,000.

The motion was accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Resolution 12-04-07:71

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Nabel:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the above purchase of over \$100,000.

Ms. McManus noted that material was included in the Board package this past week-end and most everyone's questions were answered. She would like to have one stipulation. While she agrees we are covered for this purchase order to Executive Car Service, she would like to recommend that in the spring or early summer that an RFP is sent out.

Ms. McManus asked Mr. Dunn to obtain the form from the City for when we don't use an RFP which would then be attached to any future resolutions like this.

Ms. Nabel inquired about the procedure and what kind of timeframe the school system is working with in fulfilling the terms of an IEP. If transportation is dictated, and if that amount is for the rest of the school year, pushes the total amount of services over the amount originally budgeted and contracted for. Dr. Starr said this is a constant scenario with all special education related costs in that students can come in tomorrow. Dr. Starr believes it is 20 days from the time the IEP is signed off that service has to be provided. He will check on this. He further noted that this is what makes special education budgeting somewhat elusive in some ways because it is not hard and fast. Ms. Nabel noted that this

conceivably makes it difficult to follow the dictates of an RFP and the purchasing ordinance as well.

Ms. McManus thought the RFP would be broad and not specifically for a certain number of students, but would be for a cost associated and not specifically for 8 or 10 students. Dr. Starr noted that they are looking at what other districts are doing and need to figure out what the service is that we are contracted for and how we can make sure as students fluctuate we can keep costs as contained as possible by working with the service provider.

Mr. Freedman pointed out that the universe of possible destinations is now within some reasonable certainty. Dr. Starr responded that this is not necessarily correct. Mr. Freedman asked if it would be at 80%-90% accuracy and Dr. Starr said that would be right. Mr. Freedman thought it would be a reasonable approach, if you look at the Laidlaw contract, they have a price list for sport teams, etc. and suggested this approach to the extent it can be done.

Mr. Mathews referred to the City form and asked when an RFP is not in place if Mr. Dunn would be responsible for signing off on that form. Ms. McManus noted that from what she understands it has various sign-offs. Mr. Mathews asked if Mr. Dunn would sign off for the Board of Education and Ms. McManus responded that she would have to look at the form to see if it would be Dr. Starr or Mr. Dunn or both.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Ms. McManus scheduled a regular fiscal agenda items to be added to the agenda for the Budget Fiscal Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 15, 2008. Ms. McManus reviewed the agenda items for fiscal.

LABOR RELATIONS

Mr. Freedman reported that there would not be a need for a Labor Relations Committee meeting in January 2008 and reviewed the agenda items.

POLICY

Ms. Laurie noted that there is a resolution for policy and that we are ahead of schedule this year in terms of voting on the calendar for the 2008-2009 school year.

Resolution 12-04-07:69

Ms. Laurie moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the proposed 2008-2009 school year calendar.

Ms. McManus noted that she absolutely hates the short days, but does not see anyway around it. She would love for staff to continue to work to see if we can eliminate any of these. There is nothing saying that in June we can't reverse and make 2-3 of these short days into full days. She also agreed with one of the speakers this evening that nothing gets done at high school because classes are so short. She would like to see if there is a way to schedule so they could rotate the schedule so it is not the same classes being cut every time we are short by 90 minutes or 2 hours.

Dr. Starr noted that under Dr. Hamilton the middle schools and high schools are undergoing some deep work around changes to the schedules as a result of some of the programs that we want to initiate such as science labs and certainly Dr. Hamilton will take this to the principals to see if we can do something within the contract to provide a different configuration for those early release days.

Ms. Nabel endorsed what Ms. McManus said and repeated what she always says about early release days which is "whether or not those days that are given to professional development, which she understands the teachers need and that it enhances the quality and resourcefulness of their teaching, but it is still classroom time that is taken away our students and we continually respect the end of August and the end of June as start and end times and at some point we need to look at ways to expand the school calendar so that the needs for professional development for teachers and the classroom needs for students are met equally."

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak noted that some of the early release days fall in weeks that are 5 day weeks and some fall in 4 day weeks since they are scheduled for every third Wednesday. She was wondering if there is a difference in educational content delivered on the day that is already a shortened week and then there is another early release day in the middle of the week that does make the whole week feel wasted?

Dr. Starr stated that as everyone knows there are constantly things going on during the school week. The teachers, principals, and assistant principals are very good at looking ahead and trying to structure the time during those weeks that may be short.

Mr. Rubino noted that he will vote on this calendar, but for the next calendar we need to get some public input and consider the very painful decision of eliminating either the February or April vacation to take a little pressure off the beginning of school (start after Labor Day like it should be) and get out a little earlier in June and, maybe have a little more time for professional development and another holiday if you want one somewhere else.

Ms. Laurie stated that discussions have been had in the past regarding a two year calendar so there would be plenty of time to bring up these suggestions and get public and staff input, but she thinks we have made great progress in terms of delivering a calendar to the public in time for them to make their plans and time for all of the other schools and after school activities to prepare. She noted that we always look to improve.

Mr. Freedman noted that there was discussion in Committee on the efficacy and the trade off of the half days and some of those comments have been repeated this evening. Mr. Freedman echoed Ms. McManus which is that at some point perhaps in the next couple of months that perhaps we can revisit at least in a modest way perhaps for next year and, if not, for the following year.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Ms. Laurie reviewed the agenda items and scheduled a meeting for Monday, January 14, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.

REDISTRICTING

Ms. Nabel reported that the Committee met on Tuesday, November 27, 2007 and is scheduled to have what has been noticed as a Committee meeting for Thursday, December 6, 2007. Letters have been sent to elementary school PTO presidents, PT Council members, and various members of elected and community organizations for the meeting this Thursday. It is posted as a Committee meeting and Board members are encouraged to attend. The format of that meeting will be less formal than our typical Committee meetings. The Committee will make a presentation to the attendees which will be very similar to what we presented before the Public Hearing on October 30, 2007. We anticipate at least half, if not more, of the attendees on Thursday will be members of the public who have not been to any of our redistricting meetings and we want them to be informed of where we have been and what we have discussed since last February. We will also bring them up to speed in terms of what was discussed at the last redistricting meeting, what is still on the table to be decided, and the directions we think we will go in.

There is a Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday, December 11, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room and a Public Hearing scheduled for Tuesday, January 8, 2008 at Cloonan Middle School. We anticipate that we will leave the Committee meeting schedule for December 11th with additional scenarios to be discussed and reacted to at the Public Hearing. Ms. Nabel asked to schedule another Redistricting Committee meeting after the Public Hearing, but before the next Regular Board meeting on January 22, 2008. Ms. Nabel stated that after reaction from the Community Partners meeting and the Public Hearing has been received and digested the Committee can come forward with hopefully recommendations for the full Board on January 22, 2008 or at least an initial set of recommendations. A meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 16, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board room.

SPEF/School Readiness Council

No report.

CES

Ms. Laurie reported that the last meeting was held at the new Performing Arts school that just opened. This is a wonderful building that competes with our AITE except that it is for performing arts. It is located in Trumbull with the other CES programs. This school is available to Stamford students along with other programs on the CES campus.

Ms. Nabel inquired about Committee assignments and Mr. Freedman noted that he will be notifying everyone tomorrow.

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Laurie, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Dr. Joshua P. Starr
Superintendent of Schools
Executive Office