

# **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Stamford, Connecticut April 22, 2008**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on April 22, 2008 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Mr. Freedman, President, with the following Board members present: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mayor Malloy, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, and Ms. Nabel. Absent: Mr. Rubino and Ms. Wade. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Mr. Dunn, Dr. Hamilton, Ms. Swerdlick, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Thessin, Ms. Arnold, Mr. Murphy, and approximately 100 guests.

Salute to the flag.

## **STUDENT SHOWCASE**

Westhill's Northstar Playmakers performed songs from their spring musical, Les Miserables.

Mayor Malloy arrived at 7:30 p.m.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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

## **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

Mr. Freedman moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti, to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting – March 19, 2008 – pp. 134 – 136.

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

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, to accept the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting – March 25, 2008 – pp. 137 – 149.

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

Mr. King moved, seconded by Ms. McManus,  
to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting –  
March 28, 2008 – pp. 150.

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

## **STUDENT AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS**

Students were honored for awards received in the History Day Competition as well as students from Scofield Magnet Middle School who received awards in the Toshiba/National Science Teachers Association Exploravision Competition, students from Stamford High School for awards in the Scholastic Art Awards and First Annual Photo Show, along with a teacher from AITE who was recognized as the Connecticut CISCO Teacher of the Year.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Starr reported on the following:

- Article in Stamford Advocate that one of our neighboring districts leads the State in Special Education due process hearings by 11 and another district similar to ours up the line had 10 and Stamford had 2. We have figured out ways to avoid litigation and due process in our Special Education area which cuts down on our costs associated with legal fees.
- Weston is starting an effort to try and get shared purchase services throughout the region and he will attend a meeting along with Mr. Dunn and Mr. Murphy in May and a report will be given at the next Fiscal Committee meeting.
- There was a Choral Festival held at Cloonan Middle School for middle and high school students to perform together.
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders attended the Stamford Symphony to partake in the first of a kind event that was headed by a parent who works for the Stamford Symphony. It was a performance that linked the social studies curriculum to the music and students then did lessons. We hope this can become an annual event.
- The Winter Percussion Team continues to do well nationally. They placed 6<sup>th</sup> out of 41 in Nationals in Dayton, Ohio.
- We will be partaking in a program along with 3 other districts (Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Danbury) to start an Urban School Leaders Fellowship Program which is funded by the Fairfield County Community Foundation and is an attempt to address the leadership pipeline issues that exist

- regionally so that as our baby boomer principals retire over the next few years who will be the next ones to take the reign. The Fairfield County Community Foundation has put money behind this and has brought together people from the 4 districts along with the Connecticut Center for School Change UConn to design a program that is both theoretical and practical and reflects the local context that we have here. Dr. Hamilton will be the point person who has been involved with the design and we will formalize some next generation leadership training at no cost to us.
- Dr. Starr introduced Bryan Olkowski who is the brains and muscle behind our Exchange Program with Jiangdu Province in China which was started by an initiative with the Mayor's office. Dr. Starr receives calls from superintendents around the State who want to contact Mr. Olkowski because he has become the person who is known as organizing what is quickly becoming the premier program in the region. He will be presenting at the State Department at the request of superintendents.

Mr. Olkowski noted that all 3 high schools did participate in the trip and three students from Westhill High School spoke about their experience in China. The students distributed a brochure on their adventures in China.

## **BOARD REPORT**

Mr. Freedman reported that on March 28, 2008 the Board held their annual retreat and met for about 7 hours at the Italian Center and had a very productive discussion regarding our internal Board processes and how we can be a more effective Board. We discussed at length our relationship with the Superintendent and how we can make that function better, although it functions quite well as it is, but it can always stand some improvement. We also discussed some possible focuses for our work for the coming year.

The Board of Finance voted on our budget and voted about a 1% cut which is about \$2M and represents about a 5% increase over last year's budget. We have been meeting with the Board of Representatives and will present to the Board of Representatives Fiscal Committee tomorrow evening and the Board of Representatives will vote on our budget next week.

## **TIME FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

Sixteen people spoke to the issues of redistricting, closing of Rogers and moving the school to the Environmental Magnet School, closing of Toquam, Newfield students redistricted to Hart, concerns about putting the middle years IB program at Rippowam, possible closing of KT Murphy, decline in attendance at History Day, Stamford High School Winds Percussion unit went to Dayton, OH to the World Championships and they placed 6<sup>th</sup> and Westhill's group made it through preliminaries into the semi-finals, continuation of Dolan's Performing Arts program, and concerns that the Environmental Magnet School will become a district school rather than a magnet.

## **REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS/RESOLUTIONS**

### **CURRICULUM**

Ms. Lorenti reported that the Committee met on April 21, 2008 and discussed the Health/Physical Education Curriculum, Environmental Magnet, update on IB program by Dr. Starr, and a high school/middle school scheduling presentation by Dr. Hamilton.

Ms. Lorenti indicated that Diane Blackwell, a former physical education teacher and her Committee, which consisted of our elementary, middle, and high school physical education teachers, put together a curriculum. It was a phenomenal presentation for Pre-K to 12. One of the important issues is “how can I live a healthy and balanced life?” and that is the message that she and the team would like to present to our students. The curriculum was based on addressed NASPE standards and the implementation will take 3 years starting this September and is modeled after the Naperville, Illinois program. Professional development will start in August and will be ongoing during the year. This is actually the first time Stamford has developed a curriculum approach that connects the health and physical education with the health and wellness committee through the district. The Committee will be attending PTO meetings and will hold presentations to bring everyone into the curriculum. The approach they are using is Building Healthy Families – 5-2-1-0 – 5 or more fruits & vegetables, 2 means only 2 hours of screen time, 1 means at least one hour of physical education and 0 is no sugar.

Dr. Starr gave an update on IB at which time he discussed the fact that the principal of Rippowam had put together a proposal to have the middle years program at Rippowam with the incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders from Rogers. The Committee asked Dr. Starr and staff to develop more information.

Dr. Hamilton gave a presentation on the middle school and high school scheduling changes. Dr. Hamilton has increased academics and language arts, math, science, and social studies. We are going from 3-3/4 hours to 5 hours per week and she provided a sample of a middle school schedule. At the high school level chemistry labs will be added for all juniors, a CAPT prep portfolio class for juniors, and will be adding more AP classes - 4 more at Westhill and 6 more at Stamford High School.

### **FACILITIES**

In Mr. Rubino's absence, Mr. Freedman gave the report on the Facilities Committee which met on April 21, 2008. There was an update on current projects under construction which are the KT Murphy playground, construction of a new field surface at Westhill's practice soccer field which began today, and a renovation of the baseball field at Rippowam. We were given an update on the Environmental Magnet School noting that the concrete was poured and most of

the steel is up and construction is on scheduled for occupancy in September 2009. There was a brief discussion about access from Cove Road to the Environmental Magnet School and, at this point, until we have a better idea of when the school is going to open this issue was tabled. The AITE electric bill has been a hotly debated item since we are in budget season and our current budget for AITE for the electric consumption was quite high and was based on estimated meter readings from CL&P. We finally received actual meter readings and the actual consumption appears to be about  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of what the estimated readings were which is good news, although still high, and they are continuing to work on resolving control issues with the HVAC system at AITE and hopefully we will see some further reductions in cost. There was discussion on reprising an energy savings audit in a capital investment program that was done 3-4 years ago in conjunction with Noresco. Some of the projects they had looked at, but had not done, could possibly have become economic to do now that energy costs have essentially doubled in the last few years and we are going to look at redoing that audit and looking for possible energy conservation projects in the district. The resolution below was discussed in Committee and approved unanimously.

#### **Resolution 04-22-08:116**

Mr. Freedman moved, seconded by Ms. Nabel:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the Springdale Elementary School technology project as complete - Project #135-0257A-TCH-Springdale Classroom Wiring.

Ms. McManus noted that this project has received the sign-off from the head of the Technology Department as well as the principal at Springdale which is what we always look for.

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

#### **FISCAL**

Ms. McManus reported that the Committee met on April 7, 2008 and reviewed the Capital Budget process for large capital projects as they work their way through the system. We transferred this agenda item to the Facilities Committee and asked staff, most likely on a quarterly basis, to do a more thorough review of any of the large ongoing construction projects. We chose a level of \$350,000 or more for the individual project, which may change. This way we are reviewing the projects as the RFP goes out, as the contracts are assigned, and as the construction continues.

The Committee reviewed Contracts & Grants and there is one resolution this evening for one grant. There were no contracts to be approved this month.

We received and continue to receive updates on our 2007-2008 Operating Budget. We are in a tight fiscal year and have had a large number of new children into the district who are designated to Special Education and some who require out-of-district placement and others that require some intensive treatment within the district. We also have a large number of our own children who are being placed in out-of-district programs and that has been a tremendous increased cost and a strain on the budget. As we see later on with the second resolution we have a number of budget transfers within the Special Education department to cover some of these costs with regards to these IEP's. Staff is keeping a close monthly watch on that budget as well. Also, our utility budgets are much higher than originally forecasted last year and fuel for buses has gone up. The great thing with our buildings is that we can switch between gas and oil and we do use whichever is cheapest, but the transportation fuel is the highest increase. Due to this we have stopped all purchasing at the district level and are keeping a very close eye so that we come in on budget at the end of June.

Ms. McManus informed all that the Board of Representatives Fiscal Committee will meet on Wednesday, April 23, 2008 to review the 2008-2009 budget request. There will be representatives from staff and the Board at that meeting to answer questions in regard to our proposed budget. The Board of Representatives will vote on May 6, 2008. She will propose in Steering a meeting for this Board to schedule a meeting on Monday, May 12, 2008 to then reset the budget as it is passed by the Board of Representatives. If anyone knows people on the Board of Representatives, call them and ask them if they have any questions about anything in the budget and answer their questions so they go into the meeting as knowledgeable as possible.

The last item discussed in Committee were areas of possible audit. The Committee made a list back in October 2007 for possible internal audits that we would do ourselves in the next fiscal year and have shared that list with Mr. Dunn and he is reviewing so the Committee and Mr. Dunn can come to an agreement as to what the priorities are for internal audit. Again, this is to look at efficiencies and making sure we are spending money as wisely as possible and as efficient as possible in many of our departments.

Mr. Dunn noted that they are taking another look at Special Education and as of today it still looks like it is coming in very close to our forecast.

#### **Resolution 04-22-08:117**

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Mr. King:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept The Camulos Foundation's, Middle School Think Tank Project, donation in the amount of \$10,000.

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

**Resolution 04-22-08:118**

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Nabel:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the budget transfers per the document dated April 22, 2008.

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

**LABOR RELATIONS**

Ms. Nabel reported that the Committee met on April 21, 2008. There was a review of staffing development and considerations by Ms. Anderson. She informed us of the results of the Substitute Teacher Orientation that was held earlier in April for the second time and which was very successful and well received. Ms. Anderson also reviewed for the Committee information that will be included in our package regarding the interview process for administrators, specifically principals, at some of schools that will occur this spring. The interview process was described as being careful in a step by step nature and will be inclusive of all groups involved in that kind of decision including teachers, administrators, parents, and leaders of the union as well. Ms. Nabel indicated that the Negotiations Update is basically the approval by the Board of Representatives of the Educational Assistants agreement which we will vote on this evening. There are no further ongoing negotiations at this time and there are no grievances that needed to be reported on.

**Resolution 04-22-08:119**

Ms. Nabel moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the contract between the Educational Assistants of Stamford Association and Stamford Board of Education period of July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010.

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

## **Resolution 04-22-08:120**

Ms. Nabel moved, seconded by Mr. King:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the posting/advertising and filling of Middle School Content Leader effective April 22, 2008.

Mr. Mathews suggested that we clean up the language in the general statement and bring it into agreement that bullet #4 under Performance Responsibilities. Ms. Nabel noted that on the revised version of the job description that the first sentence states "reports directly to the principal and acts as a liaison between the Director of Literacy and Social Studies and the school." The 4<sup>th</sup> bullet under Performance Responsibilities states "acts as a liaison for the Director of Literacy and Social Studies and content teachers."

Mr. Mathews inquired as why we have one statement in the general statement and something else in the bullet portion. Dr. Starr responded that the idea is that Middle School Content Team Leader is a stipend. Middle schools do not have department heads and we need some content leadership as we implement new curriculum and identify professional development needs in the schools. This position is pending the final approval of the Board of Education budget. This person will interact with their content area and the teachers, principal, and administration to make sure that professional development, curriculum, etc. is aligned to the needs of the school. We can change one or the other whether it is the school or the content teacher it is both.

Ms. Nabel thought there were two groups of people who were just not reading this the same way. She asked if you are saying the Middle School Content Team Leader reports directly to the principal and acts as a liaison between the Director of Literacy and Social Students and the school content teachers. Dr. Starr responded it would be content teachers, administration, wherever the need may be. We don't want to limit it to just to the teachers in that content area. The word "for" will be changed to "between."

Mayor Malloy verified that this was a stipend position and the person who would accept this position would have the same teaching load as any other teacher. Dr. Starr confirmed this is correct.

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

## **POLICY**

Ms. McManus reported that the Committee met on April 7, 2008 and reviewed the update of the Policy Manual. Ms. Anderson confirmed that the 3000 Business Section is still out with a couple of staff members. Since it is the Business Section of the Policy Manual, the transportation, facilities, and finance departments need to review. This will come back to the Committee in May for review. The next series reviewed was the 4000-Personnel which had gone through a few changes based on requests that were made. This section was passed by Committee and will go to the full Board for a first vote in May. Policy changes require two votes of the full Board.

Also reviewed was the new Nutrition policy. The Health & Wellness Committee has a sub-committee on nutrition and they brought a policy to the Committee which we requested go to our attorney, Shipman & Goodwin. They did some word smiting and sent it back to us. The Committee passed this revised Nutrition policy unanimously and will be a resolution this evening.

The Committee also reviewed the next 12 months worth of work in finishing the update of our Policy Manual and starting in June we will try and have this completed.

### **Resolution 04-22-08:121**

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, that the Board of Education approve policy 3542: Stamford Public Schools Nutrition Policy, 1<sup>st</sup> Vote.

Ms. McManus noted that this is the first time that the City of Stamford has had a nutrition policy. There are not a lot of cities in the State of Connecticut have one and we all feel this is very important to move strong, positive good nutrition through out schools.

Mayor Malloy indicated that he understands that this was referred to the attorneys for word smiting and would like to know what the cost was.

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

## **REDISTRICTING**

Ms. Nabel reported that the Committee met on April 10, 2008 and reviewed parts of our initial presentation from the January public hearing involving drawing the criteria for our school closing discussion. We proceeded on to a report from Mayor Malloy and Superintendent Starr on their discussions

with the State Department of Education regarding configuring an attendance zone for the Environmental Magnet School and how that could or could not be done for the Stamford Public Schools district. Mayor Malloy and Superintendent Starr described discussions that produced the information that it seems that it is possible in fact to establish an attendance zone within the community that houses the school whether or not that attendance zone is referred to as an attendance zone or as a preferred zone. It has been done in other communities with magnet schools. Also discussed possible reconfigurations of the Environmental School's educational program and that would be possibly removing the Pre-K component from the program and had a shorter discussion on possibly removing the Grade 6-8 component. Dr. Starr and Mayor Malloy also reported that were changes such as those two described made to the school it would be necessary to revisit the partner districts to have their local Boards of Education sign on again to express their desire to participate in the Environmental Magnet School.

Ms. Nabel indicated that the rest of the meeting was basically a discussion of a proposal put forth by the administration on transitioning the International Baccalaureate program from Rogers to the Environmental Magnet School. The Board had a lengthy list of questions which it wishes to have answered in order to further discuss the possible Rogers transition scenario. Those questions will be answered and discussed at a Redistricting Committee meeting on April 24, 2008.

Ms. Nabel also reported that the Committee also revisited its school closing template and basically decided that it would not explore closing Hart Magnet Elementary School, KT Murphy School, or Davenport Ridge Elementary School. We then proceeded to revisit the Toquam resolutions regarding closing Toquam which are on the table and will be revisited and discussed on at the April 24, 2008 meeting.

Ms. Nabel repeated that the Committee will meet on April 24, 2008 to visit the Rogers Transition proposal discussion and the Toquam closing discussion.

### **SPEF/School Readiness Council**

Ms. Lorenti announced that SPEF has received a major grant from the GE Foundation again this year to partner with them for our National Development Futures Conference in July which our math and science teachers and administration attend to work with GE. SPEF is able to provide funding for the high school/middle school choral festival at the Rich Forum. They have also joined with PT Council to underwrite the Lego Exposition that was held on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and we were able to honor the Chairman of Time Warner.

Under School Readiness Council, Ms. Lorenti reminded everyone about the Early Childhood Blueprint Kick-off event on April 29, 2008 at UConn.

## **CES**

No report.

## **STAMFORD ACHIEVES**

No report.

## **STAMFORD PARTNERSHIP**

No report.

## **STEERING**

The Board scheduled their Committee meetings for May 2008 along with the agenda items. Mayor Malloy recommended having a public hearing prior to the final vote on the 2008-2009 Operating Budget to reflect the cuts made by the Board of Finance and Board of Representatives since we have certain requirements under the law and one of the requirements is that the public have reasonable notice of what is being considered and to be voted on and if you don't do that then you are breaking the law. Ms. McManus responded that giving them the information at the same time is fine, but giving it to them 10 days ahead of time and having public comment is what takes time. Ms. McManus noted that this information would be posted on the website as soon as it is given to the Board members and Ms. McManus will poll the Board in between now and then to see if anyone thinks that we should have Time for the Public to be Heard at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Freedman thought that would be fine.

Mr. Mathews moved, seconded by Ms. Nabel to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. with the following members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. McManus, and Ms. Nabel.

Dr. Joshua P. Starr  
Superintendent of Schools  
Executive Office