

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Stamford, Connecticut January 13, 2009

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on January 13, 2009 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Ms. Nabel, President, with the following Board members present: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mayor Malloy (arrived at 8:55 pm), Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Dunn, Dr. Nicholson, Ms. Swerdlick, Ms. Gagne, Ms. Karwan, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Barbarotta, Mr. DiBlasio, Mr. Casolo, Mr. Tramontozzi, representatives from the Advocate and Stamford Times, and approximately 45 guests.

Salute to the flag.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Polo presented the mission statement of the Board of Education.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. King, to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting – December 16, 2008 – pp. 141 - 142.

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

STUDENT AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

Custodian Gerard Sangermano and School Nurse Thomasena Smikle were honored for their life saving efforts of 10 year old Isaiah Walden-Butler. Representatives from the American Heart Association also honored Ms. Sangermano and Ms. Smikle.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Starr commented about the Student & Staff presentation to Mr. Sangermano and Ms. Smikle and how they are furthering the work of the district. John Perrotta, Al Barbarotta, and Bill Dunn have done a lot of work over the past few years with respect to emergency drill. The heroic action of people always makes the critical difference, and the things we put in place to make sure people are ready and prepared is what enables things to happen well. He thanked Linda Darling and Maryann Mara for their quick thinking and action and also thanked Olga Brown for her supervision of the nurses.

Dr. Starr reported that 6 middle school and 13 high school students will be attending the inauguration through the Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference next week. One middle school student from Cloonan will be writing an article for the Advocate.

BOARD REPORT

Ms. Nabel reported on a few organizational items. The Board will be having two meetings per month this year – on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month -- in order to be more accessible and visible to the public. We would like to structure our agenda items so that each Committee's business is divided into "Discussion Items" and "Action Items."

Ms. Nabel noted that on January 23 and 24 the Board will be holding its annual retreat. These meetings will be held off-site, but the agendas will be posted and the meetings will be public. The Retreat allows Board members to get to know each other, be a little bit more comfortable in the skin of being a Board member, get to be more comfortable with issues of collective Board responsibilities versus individual Board member principles, Board/Superintendent relationships, and other types of considerations.

Ms. Nabel alerted Board members to a CCJEF annual meeting concerning ECS action, taking place on January 30 in Hartford. Ms. Lorenti, Mr. King, and Ms. Heftman volunteered to attend.

TIME FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Three people spoke regarding school success metrics, allowing students to watch the inauguration, and at an EMS orientation in Darien 125 parents attended.

REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS/RESOLUTIONS

Ms. Nabel asked for a motion to move the Facilities agenda out of order.

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Ms. Wade to move the Facilities agenda out of order.

The motion was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

FACILITIES

Mr. Mathews asked for an update on Current Projects and Mr. Dunn responded that there was not an Engineering Department meeting in December, but there is one scheduled for tomorrow morning.

Mr. Casolo reported that the EMS project is on schedule and should be contractually complete in May.

Mr. Casolo also reported on the access to the EMS School and at the last meeting he had presented another concept idea which was to take advantage of a possible State right away which is parallel to I-95 and is no longer utilized. He worked with the State and they are receptive to this, but it would have to go to some other people at DOT and it would take around 60 days.

Mr. Dunn went back to current projects and reported that in a month or so he will start distributing a graph showing electrical usage in the schools.

Mr. Barbarotta reported under Current Projects that fees from the Facilities Use program have funded repairs and maintenance to BOE properties such as the new backstop at Rippowam, restoring the baseball field at Rippowam, at Stamford High School the girls softball field as well as the boys baseball field has new fencing, Dolan has two new backstops and new fencing around Dolan, and at Westhill we replaced the girls softball field right field fence and centerfield fence. These projects were done with \$200,000 from the Facilities Use account.

With respect to rooftop greening for school buildings, Mr. Casolo reported that we are having success with rooftop greening at EMS primarily because it is a new building so it could be well thought and engineering through the beginning. This would be a difficult thing to do on existing buildings.

Mr. Dunn indicated that the Facilities Audit, which was approved by the Board of Finance, will give us an up-to-date assessment of our capital needs. This now has to be approved by the Board of Representatives.

Under Capital Projects Audit, Mr. Dunn reported that the Board of Finance audited four Board of Education capital projects. Relative to one project, athletic field renovation, the Board of Finance asked to make an adjustment of \$12,000 from capital to repair/maintenance. Most of that tended to be supplies and purchase of small equipment. We will now record \$12,000 to repair/maintenance. There were some charges to the Indoor Quality project that will be moved to the District-Wide Boiler and Burner Replacement (\$26,000), and the electrical upgrade capital project was \$2,400. It will remain capital, but will be reclassified to a different capital project. The other two projects, Rogers School renovations and asbestos abatement had no adjustments. Mr. Barbarotta noted that the Board of Finance did not find any abuse or misuse of funds, but found some questionable items. Mr. Mathews asked for a copy of this report which is dated November 12, 2008.

Mr. Mathews moved on to "Status of School Boilers" which is a new item. Mr. Dunn reported that we are tracking overtime by major categories. This year we have spent a significantly greater amount of custodial overtime on repair of our boilers and HVAC systems. To date we have spent \$77,000 of our overtime budget on those types of projects.

Mr. Dunn reported that the Facilities Audit was approved by the Board of Finance and will go to the Board of Representatives Education Committee next Wednesday and if approved will go to the full Board of Representatives for a vote. It was reviewed favorably and part of the favorable review was the fact that we can now use this as a tool if there is money available.

Mr. Dunn reported that there were no significant change orders.

Mr. Casolo reported that Engineering is in the middle of a design for two projects one of which is the masonry improvements to the stadium. We received an historical grant through the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism Historic Preservation & Museum Division. The other project is the turf and track. We budgeted for the turf and track in 2009-2010 for about \$1.2M. We started the project design on Election Day and as we progress through the project design we started looking at alternatives. Engineering Dept. recommendation is Option 4 – the field is 180' wide. Men's lacrosse needs about a foot more so we are making a recommendation to widen the field. The track has no track drains and we are making a recommendation to have track drains installed. So the field project and track project, although we wanted them to be separate so we could spread out the costs, they are kind of tied together which drove up the cost from \$1.2M to \$1.7M in addition to the drainage by not being able to utilize the existing stone on the field. We could not go forward with the project knowing that we would have problems with the base material not draining. The schedule is an issue. Mr. Barbarotta spoke to Robin Stein and asked him what the process would be at this point because the Planning Board has already voted and put their budget together. Mr. Stein said that they could make a recommendation to the Board of Finance to include the extra money if so directed by the Board of Education and the Superintendent. A resolution will be put on the January 27, 2009 agenda.

Ms. Nabel asked for a summary of Mr. Casolo's report for the back up to the resolution.

Mr. Rubino stated that he is particularly interested in the energy report for AITE and would the Board be receiving that report soon. Mr. Barbarotta responded that it would be coming soon as he met with Ms. Domiziano today and they were missing some information and he will be helping her in obtaining the missing information.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Lorenti noted the two discussion items are the Inter-District Magnet and the School Improvement Plans and two resolutions. Dr. Starr reported that there were 125 people at the Darien orientation and nine districts have sent letters of support. The only thing we are waiting for is the official approval from the State. Because the plan was a revision from an original plan that been accepted and approved and the funding was available, the Commissioner is going back to determine who has the authority regarding the funding for "new or revised" plan. Since the State budget won't be done until July 1, 2009 and we will see on February 2, 2009 the proposal of the Governor, but in that might be a magnet school funding formula change.

With respect to the School Improvement Plans, Dr. Starr stated that they will be brought to the Board in February for acceptance. Ms. Thessin will present the process that we have used and we have changed the process significantly this year and the plans are more streamlined. He will be sending out acceptance/rejection letters this week to the schools.

It was decided not to schedule a Curriculum Committee meeting for the School Improvement Plans; however, the District Improvement Plan will be different and the Board will have more of a role.

Resolution 01-13-09:63

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the School Trip Request to Ghana and Egypt in Africa from July 6, 2009 to July 18, 2009 by the Rites of Passage students.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino to table Resolution 01-13-09:63.

The motion failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman and Mr. Rubino. Opposed. Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Abstained: Ms. Heftman

Resolution 01-13-09:64

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. King:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the School Trip Request to Spain July 2, 2009-July 18, 2009, by students from Stamford High School.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino to table Resolution 01-13-09:64.

The motion failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman and Mr. Rubino. Opposed. Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Abstained: Ms. Heftman

FISCAL

Ms. Heftman asked Mr. Dunn and Mr. Murphy to review the Contracts & Grants which included two contracts. Mr. Murphy indicated the contracts are for the Yerwood Center ALTA program for \$36,000 and the other is for \$40,000 for Phi Delta Kappa International for the literacy program which is funded by the GE Grant.

Mr. Dunn reported on the 2008-2009 Operating Budget. The forecasts were run two weeks based on the November actual results and are projecting a small surplus of about \$100,000. The two major shifts have been an increase of the Out of District Special Education tuition forecast by \$600,000 and that was primarily due to the internal auditor working with special education. The other \$300,000 is that we are anticipating that the State is going to only reimburse us 90% of our excess costs vs. last year of \$100,000. That is approximately \$270,000. We have bumped up our forecasts anticipating that revenue shortfall. The bad news is that there will be about a \$600,000 increase for out of district tuition for special education. We did receive a check from the State for around \$175,000 for energy relief. We had not forecasted that amount so that is \$200,000 to the good. The rest of the difference has come from the freeze on our different accounts that we have put into place. If everything comes in as projected we should be on budget or have a slight surplus.

Mr. Dunn mentioned that McGladry & Pullen did their annual review of our excess costs over \$2M and the adjustment was about \$5,000. This basically

reinforces that a lot of the work that we have done as far as tracking special education costs, categorizing them, capturing, and then recovering the money from the State.

Ms. Heftman inquired about the 3% the City has asked to give back. Dr. Starr responded that City departments were asked, but since we are not a City department we were not directed to do this. We have asked all departments/programs/schools to cut back on non-personnel costs by 3% in response to the current fiscal climate. Mr. Dunn noted that the reason we can offset some of the special education out of districts costs is because we were up front in freezing money as quickly as we did.

Mr. Dunn indicated that he did not have any budget transfers for this evening, but will be putting in the Board package a copy of all the recommended budget transfers to incorporate the 3% and capture it and put it in one basic account that we can control and monitor. Mr. Dunn also stated that in some of the special education accounts that had surpluses or unexpended funds and have frozen those funds and will be moving the funds into the special education accounts that have the deficits.

Mayor Malloy arrived at 8:55 pm.

Under the 2009-2010 Operating Budget Dr. Starr noted that this would be discussed at the Fiscal Committee scheduled for Thursday, January 20, 2009 in length. Mr. Murphy indicated the 2009-2010 Operating Budget will be up on the website tomorrow. Dr. Starr indicated that only 2 questions have been received on the FAQ on the website (spsbudget@ci.stamford.ct.us).

Mr. Mathews noted that the review of the proposed operating budget is a tedious process and recommended to the members of the Fiscal Committee that if you look at the way the review is organized on each days that is listed on our calendar that you review the line items in each of those areas so you are prepared to come in and raise those points for discussion. This will help to move the process along. Ms. Heftman suggested to the Board members that after they review the agendas for these meetings if they have specific items that want to have added to the agenda please direct your request to me, Mr. Dunn, and the Superintendent. The meetings are scheduled for January 15, January 20, January 22, January 29, and February 3 in the Board Room starting at 7:00 pm. The Public Hearing will be held on February 5, 2009 at Cloonan Middle School at 7:00 pm, and the Board will be voting on February 12, 2009.

Under New/Revised Contract Review Mr. Dunn indicated there was nothing to report.

Resolution 01-13-09:65

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

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

Ms. Heftman and Mr. Rubino asked for more information on the intern program.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Ms. Wade to table Resolution 01-13-09:65 to the January 27, 2009 Regular Board meeting.

The motion passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Abstained: Mr. King.

LABOR RELATIONS

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak asked Ms. Gagne to report on the agenda items. Ms. Gagne noted that she did not have anything to report under Staffing. Under Negotiations Ms. Gagne reported that we are attempting to negotiate with one bargaining unit which is the security workers. Several months ago we did attempt to begin that negotiation with a bump and a run and at that meeting we were notified that the security workers had petitioned that State Labor Board for a change in representation. We have since been notified from the State Labor Board that an election has been received and is scheduled to take place tomorrow here between 3:00 and 5:00 pm in the HCD Conference Room. We will hopefully then who will be representing the bargaining unit and be able to go forward with negotiations after that.

Under Grievance/Arbitration Ms. Gagne indicated that she had received requests for two Level III hearings one of which has been received with a request for an expedited hearing for this week because of the relationship to the timing of the request for time off. The hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 3:00 pm. The other Level III grievance will need to be scheduled.

Ms. Gagne reported that the SAU contract has gone forward to the union and was partially ratified by the union with a 100% in favor vote of the attendees. The contract before you is a 2 year contract with 3% increases in each year. The information that we have received from our attorney and with looking at similar agreements the 3% that we are recommending is a solid and appropriate percentage for this type of work because the average in Fairfield County and in Connecticut over the last 2 years and going forward for the next 2 years is 3.62% and 3.4%.

Ms. Nabel indicated that the Board would need to go into Executive Session to discuss Resolution 01-13-09:66 and made the following motion.

Ms. Nabel moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews to go into Executive Session at 9:15 pm to discuss Resolution 01-13-09:66.

The motion passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. King to go out of Executive Session at 9:27 pm.

The motion passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Resolution 01-13-09:66

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak 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 Stamford Administrative Unit and the Stamford Board of Education period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011.

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

Resolution 01-13-09:67

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved, seconded by Ms. Wade:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the filling of 1 Special Education Assistant at Dolan effective January 14, 2009.

Ms. Gagne indicated that this position is required due to a new IEP student who requires full time assistant in accordance with the law.

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

Resolution 01-13-09:68

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve an extended childcare leave for the 2008-2009 school year for the following teacher: Megan Malay.

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

POLICY

Ms. Nabel that Policy meets as a committee of the whole.

The Board reviewed the proposed 2009-2010 school calendar. Ms. Heftman questioned the schedule for religious holidays in September and suggested a correction. Ms. Heftman asked about the month of December which is very crowded with half days and holidays. She asked if it has been practice been for a long time to do elementary school report card conferences over 3 days rather than 2 days. Ms. Arnold responded that for the last few years it has been 3 days. Ms. Heftman asked if the staff development half day on December 16 could be moved to December 9. Dr. Starr stated that you can't do a professional development day the same day you have an early release day. Dr. Starr noted that one of the things that has been determined with the staff development days is that consistency works and having it the third Wednesday of the month works well.

Ms. Heftman asked what the total numbers of hours of instruction in the schools. Dr. Starr responded that this is in the Strategic School Profile and we exceed the State average. The requirement is 900 hours and we are around 1,100 hours.

Ms. Nabel noted that October 13th is listed as staff development and that is not the 3rd Wednesday. It should be October 21st and this change will be made.

Mr. Rubino commented that the Board should think about doing away with the either the April or February vacation. He has heard comments on both sides and, if he had to guess, most people would rather do away with one of the vacations and have a kinder and gentler beginning and end of the year and more flexibility for a day or two during the year.

Ms. Heftman asked to see different scenarios in the calendar. One would be using Mr. Rubino's suggestion about starting later and then go out to PT Council, feedback from the unions, and buildings. Ms. Arnold stated that the camps have indicated that they plan on starting the week of June 28th. Ms.

Nabel asked if Ms. Arnold, using the basic staff development and holiday template, to think about doing the calendar two years out. The calendar for 2 years out will be discussed at the January 27, 2009 Regular Board meeting.

Ms. Nabel indicated there was no information yet under Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act. However, we may need to consider introducing a policy on protecting children in the 21st century which is basically internet security. Dr. Starr stated that this is an Acceptable Use Policy which is required for districts to be eligible for e-rate funding. The changes will be limited to the policy already in effect.

AD HOC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Ms. Wade reported that she met with Ms. Nabel, Dr. Starr, Ms. Swerdlick, and Ms. Arnold in December and laid out a Vision and Mission and the vision as by the Board of Education By-Law 9271 is to work unremittingly to help the community to understand the importance of proper support for public education. Using this as the framework then the mission would be through expanded public relations efforts the Committee will educate the public to challenges as well as successes and accomplishments of the Stamford Public Schools. We will also support the professional relationships between the Superintendent and his constituents. So in fact it is not just presenting challenges, but also taking about the great successes and then working closely with Dr. Starr and his staff to make sure that in fact we are personally aligned with his objectives. We talked about who the designated staff members are and that will be the Office of Family & Community Engagement and the Office of Public Affairs. We would be considering an addition to Dr. Starr to have our customers use those two offices and the constituents would be the Board and the Superintendent, the educators, the media, and the funders. There are several vehicles that were discussed that could be used including the huge amount of work that Dr. Starr's has been doing in public engagement with meetings with the public and with different agencies and groups, but the way he utilizes the website and e-mail, but also we have a key communicators list that we could use to facilitate additional conversations along with increase of flyers and press releases, the website could be used differently. There is public access television and also direct link with parent organizations. The Public Affairs office and Dr. Starr are already meeting with various real estate companies. There are blogs, the library, and fun things like Facebook. There is a lot being done, could we utilize things differently, more cohesively, and how can we support those efforts.

We discussed some action items which included technology in the Board Room and Ms. Arnold has been doing some research. We talked about another item this evening which would be to televise our meetings and we will continue to do research to see what our options are. We talked about a Master Calendar for all school events, Middle School Reform and how the Committee can support this effort, and the Stone Soup Fair which is an opportunity for the entire City to engage in.

Ms. Nabel indicated that for the rest of the items on the agenda we are going to wait until the end of the month. Ms. Wade invited Board Members to join Stamford Partnership on January 15, 2009 from 6:00-8:00 pm at UConn Art Gallery.

Mr. Mathews moved, seconded by Ms. Heftman to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 p.m. with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Dr. Joshua P. Starr
Superintendent of Schools
Executive Office