

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE NEXT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
CHESTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
March 26, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Chester Board of Education was held on Thursday, March 26, 2015. In attendance Rodney Alston, Crystal Sonn, Charlene Fearon, Arthur Henick, David Fitzgibbons, Robert Bibbiani(Arrival 7:50pm) and Wendy King. Also in attendance were Dr. Ruth Levy, Superintendent, Dr. Joanne Beekley, Assistant Superintendent, Michael Barile, Principal, Mr. Garth Sawyer, Business Manager and Kelley Frazier, Clerk. Absent:

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. King called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

David Fitzgibbons moved to approve the minutes from the January 29, 2015 Regular Meeting, the Budget Workshops held on February 4, 2015 and March 18, 2015 and the Accounts Payable report. Arthur Henick seconded the motion which carried by a unanimous vote.

**STUDENT REPORT**

Mr. Barile introduced Erin Bisson, Campbell Toth, Margaret Gessner, Lindsey Valentino and Lauren Valentino who are fifth grade students who presented their Mission Smiley. Ms. King and the Board thanked the students for coming.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Fearon read a prepared statement regarding his concerns regarding regionalization. These are included as an attachment.

**OTHER ITEMS**

**Principal's Report**

**Jack Brogan Memorial Plaque – Laurence Fearon**

Mr. Fearon was present to present the Jack Brogan Memorial Plaque to commemorate Mr. Brogan's 21 years of service as Principal of Chester schools. Mr. Brogan brought innovations and many new ideas to the school. Mr. Fearon's comments are included as an attachment.

### **Principal's Update**

Mr. Barile noted that the STEAM Fair was a tremendous experience. This was a three day event. Mr. Barile thanked his staff for the help they provided. They are working on school goals and getting ready for spring assessments. Ms. King noted that the STEAM Fair has been developed into a much better program than in previous years.

### **REPORTS:**

#### **Financial Status Report – Mr. Garth Sawyer**

Mr. Sawyer gave a brief update of the financial status for Chester Elementary School. Currently Chester is projecting a small surplus. The Administration will keep the Board informed if the situation changes as we proceed through the year.

#### **Cafeteria Report – Mr. Garth Sawyer**

Mr. Sawyer gave an update on the status of the Cafeteria Budget. Mr. Sawyer also included in his report the average number of meals per day.

#### **Discussion and Possible Vote on Recommended Chester Budget Transfers for 2014-15.**

Mr. Sawyer reviewed the requested budget transfers.

Upon a motion made by Rodney Alston and seconded by Arthur Henick the Board unanimously **VOTED** to approve the 2014-2015 budget transfers as recommended by Mr. Sawyer.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Finance**

The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet March 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Policy**

The meeting was this week and several policies were discussed. These policies are in various degrees of review.

#### **Curriculum**

There was a proposal for an AP Statistics course. There was an update on the Teacher Evaluation and the testing in the district.

#### **Supervision District**

The Transportation budget was reviewed at the last meeting. We entered into contract negotiation with our current bus company supplier and have decided to continue working with them. There is a change for the scheduling of Spring break in the 2016-2017 calendars. We approved our budget with a 2.49% increase.

### **LEARN Committee Update**

LEARN is putting together a more comprehensive Administrator's evaluation plan. Security was discussed. Many of the enhancements are things that we have done already in Chester. The Teacher's Evaluation was discussed and is being reviewed.

### **Regionalization Committee**

The Committee has met 3 times. A plan is being developed with consideration to the four Boards of Education, the school Administrators and the Boards of Selectmen from each town. This will be discussed further in the Joint Board of Education Meeting next week. The draft is not yet ready to be shared because it is still in the development stage. The School Attorney will go through the entire draft plan at the Joint Board of Education meeting and will highlight various areas. The Joint Board will then have discussion about the draft. Ms. King asked Board members to read the plan before the meeting and make notes for discussion.

### **ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – J. Beekley**

#### **General Update**

Dr. Beekley said that CMT and CAPT testing is now complete. SBAC will begin after Spring break.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - R. Levy**

#### **District Update**

Dr. Levy discussed the article written about alternative measures other than testing and the importance of developing a well rounded child. It is an important message that needs to be shared. Children are important and not just a test score.

Dr. Levy noted that we are in the middle of budget season. Our budgets are the most conservative yet meet the needs of our children. She noted that the MBR Legislation has not changed. We are hoping to have the language change in the legislation so that a waiver can be issued.

### **Information and Communication**

No additional update.

### **Discussion Regarding Pending Policies**

Policy #4132 Publication or Creation of Materials

There was a first read at the Joint Board of Education. The Attorney has reviewed.

### **Regionalization Update**

Dr. Levy stated that we need to come together to find a better process. This will be discussed further at the Joint Board of Education Meeting. It is unfortunate that rumors have taken hold. She noted that we have excellent schools but also have pitfalls. The large number of meetings which Administrators are required to attend, do not allow the time with students that the Administration needs. Regionalization is the best thing for our kids.

**Discussion and Possible Vote to Adopt proposed 2015-16 Chester Elementary Budget to be presented to the Town**

Mr. Sawyer discussed changes that have been made and the items which have increased the budget.

On a motion made by Arthur Henick and seconded by David Fitzgibbons the Chester Elementary Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to adopt the Chester Elementary School Budget for school year 2015-16 and send to the Chester Board of Finance in the amount of \$4,224,986(four million, two hundred twenty four thousand, nine hundred eighty six dollars) which is a 1.79 increase from last year to be presented to the Town. The motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No Comment

**EXECUTIVE SESSION-Personnel Matter**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to move into Executive Session at 8:10pm to discuss the Superintendent's Recommendations regarding staff non-renewals. The motion passed. Dr. Levy and Mr. Barile were asked to attend the Executive Session.

The Board Moved out of Executive Session at 8:13pm.

On a motion made by Wendy King and seconded by David Fitzgibbons, the Chester Elementary Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to approve the Non Renewal Notice as presented by Mr. Barile.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 8:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelley Frazier, Board Clerk

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Lol Fearon

Remarks to the Chester BOE: March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015

I had not intended to speak during the “Public Comment” portion of this meeting but I feel compelled to address you on the topic of “regionalization”.

I feel that I am at somewhat of a disadvantage in that there are no specifics yet on the topic so I will concentrate on the generalities of the process that appears to be unfolding.

I am sure that you are aware of the many rumors that are circulating especially about the future of CES. Rumors occur and flourish when there is an absence of information.

I don't see much evidence yet of a transparent, coherent and systematic process to engage the community in the decision-making process. The changes that are under consideration have the potential to impact the fabric of this town.

Changes at CES are the topic of conversations at student pick up; among parents at Park & Recreation programs and even at church coffee hours. People are confused; at times misinformed and feeling left out. Positions are already being staked out.

I would urge you to consider the following questions as you move forward with this matter and begin to engage your constituents in the decision that will be made:

- Why change? – Is it solely about governance? What efficiencies are anticipated? Is it financial and, if so, what are the savings both short- and long-term?
- What will stay the same? What will change? Are these proposed changes focused on improving the educational experiences for Chester's children; for all Region 4 children? What might be the anticipated changes in staffing? Who stays, who goes?
- How will the changes be implemented? Is it a ‘take it or leave it’ plan or will you seek input that might lead to modifications? What mechanisms are built into the plan for rolling it out to the 3 towns?
- What is the long-term future of CES?

In my experience, what causes change like this to fail is not necessarily the merits of the plan but rather the failure to address the emotional ties that people feel will be broken. CES is important to this community, don't minimize that importance.

I have to state clearly that while I can see the merits of regionalization, (this is my third experience here in Chester with it), without specifics I have not yet formed an opinion.

A new plaque hangs near the entrance to the courtyard opposite the gym. This new plaque remembers Jack Brogan who was the first principal of the “new” Chester Elementary that opened in 1960.

The original plaque dedicated to J. Andrews Brogan was given by the Region 4 District Administrators group consisting of Richard Blythe, Principal, Valley Regional High School; Richard Carmelich, Assistant Principal, Valley Regional High School; Bryan Mahoney, Business Manager, Regional District 4; Thomas English, Director of Pupil Services, Regional District 4; Timothy Doyle, Principal, John Winthrop Junior High School; David Russell, Assistant Principal, John Winthrop Junior High School; Edward Weselcouch, Principal, Deep River Elementary School; Thomas “Tim” James, Principal, Essex Elementary School; and Lol Fearon, Principal, Chester Elementary upon Jack’s untimely death. It was meant as a memorial to his long service as Principal of Chester Elementary School. The plaque originally hung in the courtyard where a Dogwood Tree was planted in Jack’s memory.

Jack Brogan was Principal of Chester Elementary from 1959 to 1980. During his tenure he introduced many innovations including the implementation of a behavior program based upon Glasser’s Reality Therapy. This model of behavior focused on personal choice and responsibility. Jack also introduced the open classroom model to the school. Jack was a devotee of Dale Carnegie’s Power of Positive Thinking. He is perhaps most remembered for leading his students in a march up the hill from the Old Chester School located on High Street to the new elementary school on Ridge Road. He is the link between the first unified school in Chester and the current facility. A reference to the march-up-the-hill can be found in Silliman & Clark’s revised: [A Chester Scrapbook](#) published by the Historical Society.

The new plaque replaces the original outdoor one lost over time. It serves to honor the tenure of a dedicated administrator and remind us of the service that he gave to the Chester community.

I would like to personally thank Mr. Barile for his willingness to accommodate my request to replace the original.