

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE NEXT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
CHESTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
January 29, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Chester Board of Education was held on Thursday, January 29, 2015. In attendance Rodney Alston(Arrival 7:53pm), Robert Bibbiani(Arrival 7:08pm), Arthur Henick, David Fitzgibbons 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: Crystal Sonn and Charlene Fearon

CALL TO ORDER

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

Due to no quorum at the beginning of the meeting, all voting took place after a quorum was reached at 7:53pm.

CONSENT AGENDA

Arthur Henick moved to approve the minutes from the November 24, 2014 and the Special Meeting of December 18, 2014 meetings and the Accounts Payable report. David Fitzgibbons seconded the motion which carried by a unanimous vote.

STUDENT REPORT

Mr. Barile introduced Michael Benjamin and Raen Corbett who are sixth grade students who gave the student report of the activities in each grade this past month. Ms. King and the Board thanked the students for coming.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comment

OTHER ITEMS

Community and Board Input on 2015-16 Budget

No input at this time.

Principal's Update

There are many things happening across the subject areas in the school. Student data is being reviewed with the newest MAP assessments. He is pleased with the performance of the students. Chester is having their STEAM fair. This will be held on March 24th.

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 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.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance

No Update

Policy

There was a review the policies currently being reviewed. Legal Council will be updating the policy on Nepotism.

Curriculum

There was a presentation on the music curriculum. The reading survey was discussed. There was an update on MAP and SBAC testing. Mr. Fitzgibbons was disappointed that only two members were present for the meeting. Mr. Fitzgibbons is considering writing a statement to be read at the Joint Board of Education meeting asking members to attend their committee meetings.

Supervision District

The next meeting will be on the 26th. There is a public hearing for the budget on Monday evening. We had two budget workshops. The increase is 2.49% which is all benefits and contractual items.

LEARN Committee Update

No Report.

Regionalization Committee

This will be discussed later in the meeting.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – J. Beekley

General Update

Dr. Beekley discussed what the new school profiles will look like. This has been recently revamped. This reporting shows a bigger picture of the district. We do not know when this data will be available.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - R. Levy

District Update

Dr. Levy reported that we are into the budget season. Regionalization has been a focus in the past few weeks. Dr. Levy has also been involved in legislative priorities for special education.

Information and Communication

As we approach declining enrollment it is time for our towns to come together. Dr. Levy stated that there have been a number of misguided rumors. One of the things written in the plan will be that the five schools in our community will remain open. She discussed the reasoning behind Dr. Beekley moving to Chester as Principal. Dr. Beekley has time and expertise in elementary education and will maintain the direction of our district. Due to her retirement, she is only eligible to work full time for two years. She will then assist us in transitioning to a new building principal.

Dr. Levy noted that the Selectmen are in favor of regionalization. The teachers are happy with this proposal and will vote for the endorsement and a letter will be written endorsing regionalization. Dr. Levy stated that the school buildings will still be owned by the towns and that Chester Elementary School will remain an elementary school. This will be written into the regionalization plan. Dr. Levy has researched legislative requirements for our district to regionalize. We do not need any legislative changes nor do we need to bring the plan before the State Board of Education to regionalize. The elementary schools only need to petition the Region 4 Board of Education to develop a plan to include grades Pre K – 6 in the existing Region 4 district. At an upcoming meeting, the Region 4 Board of Education will consider the petition which has been unanimously endorsed by the Chester, Deep River and Essex Boards of Education.

Ms. King noted that in discussions previously held, it had not been clear that all three schools would remain as elementary schools. Dr. Levy noted that this can be written into the plan.

Mr. Meehan, Chester First Selectman asked that a policy decision be made fiscally from a community point of view. It would be a disservice to give up our neighborhood school. He asked what the mechanics are to write this plan? Dr. Levy explained that members from all of the Boards of Education will be involved. Others could also be included.

Dr. Levy noted that the Interim Commissioner of Education is writing a letter supporting this plan on our behalf. The State Board of Education feels that towns should come together to support one another. Mr. Linares and Mr. Miller also support this plan. There will be some financial efficiencies to doing this.

Ms. King is concerned that the elementary Board of Education members have a special knowledge about what is important for the elementary schools. She is nervous about turning the Elementary Board over to the Regional Board. An election will have to take place. Dr. Levy is a proponent of equal representation from each town. This will give members a scope of PreK-12 education. There are nine areas to be focused on in developing the plan. Dr. Levy asked all Board members and educators to dispel the myth that Chester Elementary school closing.

Mr. Fitzgibbons asked that the future of Chester Schools be in the hands of Chester voters. Mr. Meehan noted that Chester Elementary has the most at stake. He believes in

regionalization from a management point of view. Ms. King and Mr. Fitzgibbons noted that they do support regionalization.

Mr. Alston would like to look at this objectively but does support regionalization. He wants to make the right decision for the children of Chester and the community.

Dr. Levy noted that big decisions usually take years of committee work. There have been no major decisions made in this district that have not been well researched and well planned.

Upon a motion made by Arthur Henick seconded by Rob Bibbiani the Chester Elementary School Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to ask the Region 4 Board of Education to begin the statutory process to add PreK thru 6 to the Region 4 schools.

It was noted that Chester will need a member for the Joint Board of Education Technology Committee. Mr. Bibbiani will consider this after finding out when the meeting dates are scheduled.

Discussion Regarding Pending Policies

Upon a motion made by David Fitzgibbons and seconded by Arthur Henick the Chester Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to approve Policy #5145 Notice of Rights under Section 504 Rehabilitation Act Policy and Policy 1112.6 Videotaping of Staff and Students.

The Wellness Policy will be revisited and the policy updated. This will come via email for Board members to review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

An audience member thanked the Board for moving forward in the regionalization concept. He is glad to hear that the Board has some of the same concerns he does. He feels that the timeline may be a little optimistic. He feels that the time has come, as long as it is done right, to regionalize. He would like to move forward cautiously.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Chester Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 8:35pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelley Frazier, Board Clerk