

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE NEXT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
ESSEX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION
NOVEMBER 14, 2013**

The regular meeting of the Essex Board of Education was held on Thursday, November 14, 2013. In attendance were Lon Seidman, DG Fitton, Mark Watson, Loretta McCluskey and Carolyn Rotella. Also in attendance were Dr. Ruth Levy, Superintendent, Dr. Joanne Beekley, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Garth Sawyer, Business Manager, Mr. Scott Jeffrey, Principal, Deborah O'Donnell, Assistant Principal and Kelley Frazier, Clerk. Absent: Adam Conrad

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Lon Seidman at 7:00p.m.

STUDENT REPORT

Mr. Seidman asked to move the student presentation up in the agenda to accommodate the attendees. Mr. Jeffrey introduced Ms. Plumley's Fourth Grade class. These students presented some of their social study activities. Mr. Seidman and the Board thanked the students for their presentation.

Judie McCann has moved out of town and submitted her resignation. Mark Watson has been recommended by the Republican Town Committee as a replacement.

A motion was made by DG Fitton and seconded by Loretta McCluskey the Essex Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to confirm the appointment of Mark Watson to fill the Board of Education vacancy. The motion passed.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Dr. Levy opened the floor for the nominations for the office of chairman.

A motion was made by DG Fitton to nominate Lon Seidman Chairman of the Essex Elementary Board of Education. Loretta McCluskey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Seidman opened the floor for the following nominations:

Mr. Seidman moved to nominate DG Fitton as the Vice Chair of the Essex Elementary Board of Education. Carolyn Rotella seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Seidman moved to nominate Loretta McCluskey as the Secretary of the Essex Elementary Board of Education. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Special Committees:

Mr. Seidman verified members for the following Committees:

Supervision District: Lon Seidman, Loretta McCluskey, DG Fitton

Policy: Loretta McCluskey, Lon Seidman

Curriculum: Carolyn Rotella

Negotiations: DG Fitton, Mark Watson

Finance: Adam Conrad, Mark Seidman

CONSENT AGENDA

Loretta McCluskey made a motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of September 12, 2013 and the Accounts Payable report. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tammy Hinckley is the parent of two children in Essex Elementary. She read a prepared statement explaining her concerns that the Kindergarten classes have 20 students. She noted that the other elementary schools in our district and the neighboring town's schools have smaller class sizes. She stated the Board of Education has made a commitment to keep class sizes low. She is asking the Board to take swift action to honor their commitment to smaller class sizes.

Charles Hinckley urged the Board to recognize there is a problem and to take corrective action. He stated that we are the worst in our peer group. He noted that class size is an important metric and correlates to testing results. He asked if this will happen again next year or if the trend continues will next year have 26 children in a class?

Tammy Lafoll has a Kindergarten student and a Third grade student. She is having a great experience in a class of 14 in Third grade. She does not feel that she will have the same experience in a class of 20. She feels it is not fair for the Kindergarten class of this year to be subject to a different ratio than previous classes. She does not want 20 kids per class in First grade.

Cameron Sullivan has twin girls. She agrees that a class of 20 children is too large. They moved from Georgia with larger classes and were pleased that there were smaller class sizes in this community.

Shawn Abderhalden has a Third Grade student and a Kindergarten student. She noted that the Third Grade class is going to the Kindergarten class for reading buddies and instead of one buddy; the Third Grade class has to have two. She said it is very crowded in the classroom.

Mr. Seidman thanked the audience members and their concerns will be considered.

OTHER ITEMS:

Principal's Update - S. Jeffrey

Mr. Jeffrey's thanked Loni Helsel and the Harvest Festival volunteers who made the festival a success. He noted that parent teacher conferences went well and that 95% of all parents attended conferences. We had a Veterans Day celebration for 25 visiting veterans. The school celebrated by singing songs, giving gifts to the veterans and having the veterans visit classrooms to talk about their service. He noted that work is still being done on the new Teacher Evaluation plan. The winter concert will be on December 11th. We are coming to the end of trimester. Report cards will come home on December 12th.

REPORTS:

Financial Status Report – Mr. Garth Sawyer

Essex Elementary is currently projecting a small surplus but we are always cognizant of the possibility of unanticipated special education needs that may arise during the year. The Administration will keep the Board informed if the situation changes as we proceed through the year.

Cafeteria Report – Mr. Sawyer

The report has been updated due to the increase in the subsidy. We will not be paying much overtime this year. We feel we can stay within the projection as it currently stands.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance – L. Seidman

The Finance Committee met. The Procedures Manual is complete. The next meeting is on November 26, 2013. The insurance consultant will be present at the next meeting.

Policy and Curriculum

The Policy and Curriculum meetings were cancelled and will be rescheduled.

Supervision District – L. Seidman

No Update

LEARN

Ms. Rotella was asked to consider attending these meetings. Mr. Seidman will get the schedule information to her.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – J. Beekley

General Update

We have agreed to do the field test in the spring. There were three options as to the timing of the administration of the test. The testing will be taken on the computer. There will be some embedded supports for special needs students. Dr. Beekley noted that the skills checklist is still evolving. She noted that we are moving forward to align our curriculum. She encouraged Board members to go to the Smarter Balanced website to view a typical test. You do not need a log in ID. It will show you what the students need to be able to do academically and from a technology standpoint. It appears that the state is gearing up to support districts. We are getting more information and opportunities to get our questions answered. She stated that 2018 will be the year we will have comparative data. The state is not providing any information regarding the field test. October 14, 2013 was a full Professional Development day. Teachers worked on Bloom Board which is a data management tool for the new Teacher Evaluation. Teachers also worked on their goals.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - R. Levy

District Update

Dr. Levy noted that we have received a grant for the safety and security of our schools. We received a total of \$37,000 for our five schools. We are prioritizing in each of our schools what is needed. One of the EES priorities is to get cameras. Dr. Levy will be attending a two day CABE Conference. She asked Board members to consider attending this conference in the future. Dr. Levy and Mr. Seidman made a presentation to the Republican Town Committee on unfunded mandates in our budgets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Discussion/Review Class

Dr. Levy noted that we did discuss class size guidelines at our last Policy meeting. The last time this policy was reviewed was before full day Kindergarten. We will be discussing this at our next Policy Committee meeting. She would like our Board to bring their thoughts to the Policy meeting. Dr. Beekley discussed that getting accurate numbers is a less than perfect science for the incoming Kindergarten. Many studies have been done on class size. She is a proponent that we do more for children at younger ages. Dr. Beekley does recommend that we keep a range of students as our policy guideline. A new policy will have to be reviewed by the Policy Committee and discussed by the Joint Board of Education. This will not be a complete policy by the time we do our budgets. Dr. Levy noted that we do not make changes once the school year has started because this would become more disruptive to students. It was discussed that in April and May we were projecting 45 students. At the end of July, the numbers climbed rapidly.

Upon a motion made by Loretta McCluskey and seconded by Carolyn Rotella, the Essex Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to add to the agenda a discussion and possible vote to complete a study of the environmental and mechanical system for natural gas installation at the Essex Elementary school.

Discuss Natural Gas Project Status

The gas company had an informational meeting. The school is interested in natural gas. The biggest concern is disruption. The cost savings is significant. We need to have an analysis done of the school.

Upon a motion made by Loretta McCluskey and seconded by DG Fitton, the Essex Elementary School Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to approve an amount not to exceed \$10,000 for a study of the environmental and mechanical system for natural gas installation at the school.

Discuss Afterschool Program

We periodically review our program for concerns. DG Fitton discussed the after school program at school which his children attend. Mr. Fitton was not happy with what is happening after school. He met with the director of the school age program who was very receptive of his concerns. The program has potential. He noted that mornings for some families are difficult for before school care. He was impressed with the response after his meeting with the director.

BOE Member Workshop December 7, 9:00am – 11:30am JWMS Library

Dr. Levy invited all Board members to the workshop. This is for all Board members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Charles Hinkley noted that natural gas is cheaper and burns cleaner. Costs will go down and maintenance will also decrease. He restated his desire for lower class size for Kindergarten.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 8:25p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelley Frazier, Board Clerk

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 10.1 Joint BOE next regular meeting (December 5, 2013) 7:00pm (JWMS)
- 10.2 Essex BOE next regular meeting (January 9, 2014 @ 7:00pm)
- 10.3 BOE and Community Input for 2014-15 budget (on-going)
- 10.4 Presentation of Major Budget Drivers for 2014-15(Jan)
- 10.5 Executive Session – mid-year evaluation of Superintendent (Jan)