

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE February 29, 2012 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

January 5, 2012

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, November 03, 2011, in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Linda Hall, Mary-Beth Harrigan arrived at 7:05 p.m., Duane Gates, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, Jennifer Clark arrived at 7:10 p.m. – she departed at 8:58 p.m., as well as Senior Student Representatives Karli Bahner and Alison Gates and Junior Student Representatives Alex Belval and Sarah Burzin.

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent, Ian Neviaser
Business Manager Garth Sawyer;
Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau;
John Winthrop Principal David Russell

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Superintendent Levy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Superintendent Levy opened the floor for nominations for the position of Board Chair.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Linda Hall to the position of Board Chair for a one year term.

Mrs. Hall opened the floor for nominations for the offices of Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Duane Gates to the position of Board Vice-Chairman for a one year term.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Mary-Beth Harrigan to the position of Board Secretary for a one year term.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Chris Riley to the position of Board Treasurer for a one year term.

Committee appointments for a term through Nov. 2012 were made as follows: Mario Gioco to Joint BOE Finance Committee and Ann Monaghan as an alternate to the Joint BOE Curriculum Committee

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED (with 2 abstentions) to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the regular meeting of November 03, 2011 and the Accounts Payable report. Ann Monaghan and Mario Gioco abstained as they were not Board members at the time of the Nov 3rd meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

5 citizens were present. ,

OTHER ITEMS

Director of Food Services Thomas Peterlik spoke regarding Jonathan Rapp's *Dinners at the Farms* program (Mr. Peterlik has partnered with Mr. Rapp for this program), and Mr. Rapp's offer for a donation to our food services programs in order to purchase locally grown, healthy items, such as chicken, milk, and vegetables. The total donation among all of our districts is \$5000 (\$1000 to each of our 5 schools in the tri-town area). On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the generous donation of \$2000 from *Dinners at the Farm* to be used by the Region 4 Food Services at JMWS and VRHS.

Assistant Superintendent Ian Neviasser announced that Valley football coach Tim King was just named the New Haven Register Football Coach of the Year. The award pool covers a large area including 2 state championship teams, but Coach King was chosen which is a great honor for both Coach King and the district.

There was a presentation on "One Book/One School" by Cara Rothman, JWMS Librarian. Ms. Rothman explained the program in which every student and all faculty and staff read the same book, *Bystander* by James Preller, which has bullying themes within it, but addresses the aspect of being a bystander. She shared student work done in relation to the project. Activities were connected through the Language Arts program, and ACT lessons. The program culminated with a visit by the author. She thanked everyone at the school and the Board for their support of this program. Superintendent Levy thanked Ms. Rothman for all of her hard work to bring this unique program to JWMS.

Director of Technology Pam Murphy provided the Board with an update on the possibility of one-to-one technology infusion for incoming freshmen. She previously had discussed her hopes for this program, however, after more extensive research, she has realized that the wireless network at Valley is not currently robust enough to handle the roll out of iPads to every freshman. During a recent study period it was determined that with about 100 students able to bring their computers to school, the network becomes too degraded to be feasible for a one-to-one technology offering. She will now instead investigate the best way to build the robustness of the network to prepare for this type of program in the future. She suggested the Board consider adding another ½ time or even possibly full time additional support for the over 600 technology users at some time in the future. In addition, a solid plan for training teachers in the use of these devices and being able to infuse their curriculum with these programs is essential in moving forward to this type of plan.

Ms. Fitzgibbons stated that she feels it is imperative that efforts for these types of programs continue to move forward and not to let technology upgrades fall by the wayside. Dr. Levy noted that there will be conversations at upcoming budget workshops for these types of needs. Mr. Reilly suggested that there are several questions to be researched and solutions determined in order to move forward successfully.

Ms. Murphy also reminded the Board members that they all have Region 4 e-mail addresses which should be used for replying or sending all e-mail so that personal e-mail isn't subject to FOI inquiries. Ms. Hall urged all members to use their Region 4 e-mail accounts.

A representative from the district's auditing firm, Carlin, Charron & Rosen (CCR) presented the 2010-11 Region 4 audit report. He reminded the Board that CCR's responsibility is to issue an opinion on the district's financial documents. That opinion this year is "unqualified", in other words a clean audit, or the most desired type of opinion. In addition, the district was found to be in compliance with federal grant administration requirements, with no non-compliance issues.

He reviewed financial highlights of the printed financial statements and the audit report that the Board members received at the beginning of his presentation. Mr. Reilly asked for a comparison of the overall financial condition of 3-4 years ago vs. the most recent. A general recap was made with a summary that the district's general ledger system has moved into a fully operational mode, representing a much improved condition over 4-5 years ago.

He also covered the communication letters included. In general, the student activity account is mostly overseen by high school staff and not through the Central Office. He noted that he understands that work is currently under way to rectify that bring by bringing the financial authority into the Central Office under the purview of the business manager, Garth Sawyer.

Lastly he covered communications to those in charge of governance, namely the Board of Education. And he asked that they read through that for additional information that isn't necessarily gleaned from the financial statements themselves. He reported that the report was submitted to the State by the end-of-the-year deadline as required by law.

The report verified an end-of-year (2010-11) surplus of \$36,843. On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the audit report as presented.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to return to the participating towns of Regional School District 4 the end of year surplus for FY2010-11. The amount of the reimbursement is for \$36,843 to be returned as follows according to FY2010-11 ADM formula:

Town of Chester	\$10,136
Town of Deep River	\$11,034
Town of Essex	<u>\$15,673</u>
	\$36,843

REPORTS

Student Representatives

Senior Student Representative Karli Bahner reported that the annual Valleypalooza will be held tomorrow night. The French exchange trip to France occurred over the break, which she personally attended and felt it was very worthwhile. In a few weeks the 3 day trip to the Quebec winter Carnival and related events will take place. They are currently rallying students to get prepared for CAPT test.

Senior Student Representative Alison Gates reported on the Civics in Action Class, and in particular one community service project – meatless Mondays, which was chosen by a student. In the upcoming month the Valley cafeteria will be participating in this. It is the only school participating in CT and only 1 of 45 schools across the country. Many students are now receiving acceptance letters from colleges.

Junior Student Representative Sarah Burzin introduced herself to the Board and stated that she's looking forward to her time on the Board of Education. Her goal is to achieve further integrating Valley High School in the tri-town community by establishing community partnerships and continuing to develop existing relationships. She reported on the March musical, *Titanic*, which has over 100 students involved in the production.

Junior Student Representative Alex Bevnal introduced himself and said he's looking forward to the leadership experience his time on the Board will provide. His goal is to integrate the school with many different careers through internships coordinated by the school. He gave an update on sports teams and recent awards won by student athletes. He reminded everyone that the athletics schedules are available on the district website.

Principals Update

JWMS – Student Leadership Team members Kate and Gabbie Giandrane reported on student activities at JWMS over the last several weeks, and shared their positive experience with the One-Book-One School program. They also discussed the several extracurricular activities available to the JWMS students. The upcoming musical will be *Seussical, the Musical*.

VRHS –Principal Kristina Martineau presented a video recently produced by students under the leadership of Chris Lequire to communicate all the wonderful opportunities provided at Valley for incoming students. The video was viewed to everyone's enjoyment. Dr. Levy thanked everyone involved for their incredible work to showcase Valley. It will be used for the scheduling presentation. Mr. Reilly asked that they consider providing a CD to every incoming potential student.

JWMS Principal David Russell gave an update on the 2011-12 school year. He thanked everyone for their support and was happy to return to the school after it had been run in their good hands during his recent leave of absence due to health issues. He summarized many upcoming events including informational nights for parents of incoming students, music presentations in the elementary schools, and preparations for the upcoming CMT in March. He talked about his plan to alternate High On Life activities with the one-book-one-school program every other year.

Financial Status Updates – moved to this point in the agenda:

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report and the cafeteria account report. He reviewed highlights of the financial status and noted that the bond issuance cost was substantially less than expected due to a higher level of reimbursement on school building projects than was anticipated. The district is currently on track for a surplus by the end of the year, however he cautioned that with 6 months still left in the year, any unanticipated costs, especially in the area of special education could change that standing quickly.

On motion duly made and seconded the Region 4 Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to receive the financial status report, the student activity account report, the cafeteria account report, and the grant funding report as presented.

Committee Reports

Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee -

The Joint PK-12 Policy Committee will meet again on January 25th – Elaine Fitzgibbons

Bullying Policy #5131.911 recently approved at the December 1, 2011 Joint BOE meeting was available for review and discussion if needed. Neither Dr. Levy nor Ms. Fitzgibbons have received any inquiries regarding this policy. Mr. Reilly pointed out that if our governance structure through either regionalization or cooperative agreement, was more efficient, there would have been time for sufficient review and discussion without an emergency action.

The Joint PK-12 Finance Committee will meet 30th - Mr. Sawyer will talk about the business procedures manual and health insurance piece at that time.

The Joint PK-12 Curriculum Committees is scheduled to meet January 25th – Mary-Beth Harrigan

Dr. Levy reviewed the proposed draft of the Safe School Climate Plans for JWMS and VRHS. They must be approved by all Boards of Education to be posted on the district website within 1 month of approval. Therefore, it is being brought before the individual Boards for possible posting by the end of the month. The Board reviewed and discussed the draft document. Board approval is required by the legislation. Dr. Levy noted that Board approval is required but it will be a living document that will evolve as time goes by.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED (with one abstention, Ann Monaghan) to approve the Safe School Climate Plans for the schools of No. 4 Regional Supervision District (Chester, Deep River, Essex, JWMS and VRHS) as presented with the following revisions: Add the word “Safe” to the title as presented.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to add a First Reading of an amendment to Policy 5131.81 regarding cell phone use at Valley Regional High School only. The administration brought to the Board a suggested amendment to the policy at the end of the Joint Board meeting in December. This is for a trial period to run from February 1, 2012 to June 21, 2012. A review and discussion was held. Mr. Reilly asked that an informal survey of students, teachers and possibly an administrator as to the effectiveness of the amendment be taken so that any beneficial changes may be suggested and considered at a later time. Ms. Harrigan asked how it would be communicated to the students. Mrs. Martineau said that there was almost 100% support of this idea by faculty. Prohibition is harder than integration. Mrs. Fitzgibbons voiced her full support of this and urged the Board to take every opportunity to further technology options and use for our students.

A second reading a vote on this trial policy amendment will occur at a special meeting to be held in conjunction with the Region 4 Budget Workshop scheduled for January 24th (check date).

Supervision District Committee Update

Mrs. Hall updated the Board on the first budget workshop for the 2012-13 Supervision District budget. She touched on a few items they will be researching and considering including an update to phone systems, improved storage for documents that are required by law to be stored for decades, and a possible additional special education teacher.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviaseer reported on the following: CMT preparation at JWMS and CAPT preparation at VRHS. The State will soon be sending out information regarding testing procedures for this year, but the one significant difference already aware of is the removal of a day of supplemental testing occurring all on one day, instead it will be done on-line, over a longer period. On January 17th there is a full day Professional Development day, for all 12 month employees as mandated by law, not just our certified staff. All non-12 months employees bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc..) will view this presentation at a later date as well. Dr. Levy invited anyone to join from 8:00 – 11:30 at the VRHS auditorium.

In 2008 Commissioner McQuillen introduced a proposal for high school reform and the resulting student success plan required for all students grades 6-12 will be required by law as of next year. Mr. Neviaseer is still awaiting further direction from the State as to the specific requirements, however, many aspects are already in place at JWMS and VRHS.

Also discussed was continuing work on the New Connecticut Standards, as well as the math groups K-6 initiative – where math consultants meet with all K-6 math teachers to continue to move our students forward in the area of math.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Levy presented the Region 4 draft budget for 2012-13. She stressed that it is the first of many iterations that will be refined through upcoming Region 4 budget workshops. The budget is an allocation of the resources that support the programs seen this evening in the VRHS video and others. She noted that she hoped the Board was as proud of the students and leadership that have cultivated those accomplishments as well as the community that supports those endeavors, as she is.

Dr. Levy reviewed the mission statement and the general budget process prior to touching on the highlights of the proposed Region 4 budget for 2012-13. There is a projected increase in enrollment at JWMS and a slight decrease at VRHS for the next two years, prior to a sharp increase as students move through JWMS and on to VRHS. The Average Daily Membership (ADM) for next year was reviewed. The proposed budget currently shows an increase in dollars of \$706, 221 or 4.13% increase, subject to revision.

Dr. Levy reviewed the major budget drivers for Region 4 including Supervision District increase, salary contractual increases, MERF (Municipal Employees Retirement Fund) mandatory increase in contributions, utilities, supplies and textbooks, equipment, repairs and maintenance, debt service, unemployment compensation (RIFS), magnet and Vo-Ag Tuition and Special Education costs. For a total of 3.56% increase from operational and contractual increases. The only decrease at this time is in the Note & Bond issuance cost. Some new upgrades and services being considered are the addition of a math teacher, director of student affairs, various asst coach positions and 2 sawstop table saws at VR and a .4 social worker, various music instruments and a scanner for JW. Additionally, a teacher assistant for the in-school suspension room and transition training for both JW and VR. For a total proposed new upgrades or services equaling \$191,647. This together with the contractual increases equals the proposed increase of 4.13%. For a net billings to the towns of \$17,816,053 after revenues of \$241,279 are applied and debt services included.

The Board and community were asked again to give their input on the proposed 2012-13 Region 4 Budget.

Mrs. Harrigan requested a copy of all of the current extracurricular coaching positions and class sizes for math. Mr. Riley expressed his desire to have seen more recommended reductions out of the current budget as opposed to only the debt reduction shown. He asked that the administration share their suggestions for cuts out of the current budget. Dr. Levy stated that the Board will make those decisions and prioritize requests and any reduction requests at future budget workshops. Dr. Levy's said that her responsibility as a Superintendent is to present a budget that brings forward those items determined to be most critical for increasing student endeavors. There has not been any significant reduction in enrollment that would warrant a reduction in programs and people. Almost the entire budget increase is due to contractual obligations in utilities, salaries, etc. Ms. Monaghan echoed Mr. Riley's desire to receive a firm grasp of the dynamics going on in the schools. Mr. Neviaseer assured the Board that they are not in a position to recommend downsizing due to current enrollment in Region 4. There are these types of suggestions being made at the elementary

school level due to enrollment issues. Mr. Riley requested upgrades be placed in a priority order for the first workshop. Mrs. Fitzgibbons asked for numbers regarding Technical Education students and the servicing of them. Mrs. Hall noted that any additional requests should be sent to her or Dr. Levy prior to the workshop.

Mrs. Hall asked that members make sure to talk to their community members concerning budgets prior to the workshop.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

5 citizens present were present. Mr. Decker asked for any idea as to when he would hear back from board regarding concerns brought to Board previously. Ms. Hall stated that they would be back in touch.

Future Agenda Items

- 8.1 Region 4 BOE 2012-13 Budget Workshops (Jan. 24th, Jan 31st, & Feb. 7th, 2011)
- 8.2 Vote to move Region 4 Budget for 2012-13 to Public Hearing (Mar.)
- 8.3 Vote on staff non-renewals (Mar.)
- 8.4 Public Hearing for Proposed Region 4 budget for 2012-12 (April 2nd, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.5 Region 4 Regular BOE meeting (May 3rd, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.6 Region 4 Annual Meeting (May 7th, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.7 Referendum on Region 4 Budget for 2011-12 (May 8th, 2012 noon – 8:00 pm)

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary-Beth Harrigan, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk