

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE May 02, 2013 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

March 7th, 2013

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday March 7th, 2013 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Linda Hall, Mary-Beth Harrigan, Duane Gates, Chris Riley, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, and Jennifer Clark. All Student representatives were excused from attending the evening meeting due to the anticipated snow storm.

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Joanne Beekley
Business Manager Garth Sawyer;
Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau;
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Linda Hall called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Mrs. Hall informed those present that there would be changes made to the agenda in order to shorten the meeting time due to deteriorating weather conditions. All student reports were removed and the proposal for an exchange trip to Spain was moved forward in the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the regular meeting of January 03, 2013, the minutes from the Region 4 Budget Workshop I of January 29th, 2013, minutes from the Region 4 Budget Workshop II of February 05, 2013, minutes from the Region 4 Budget Workshop III of February 27, 2013, and the Accounts Payable report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

4 citizens were present.

OTHER ITEMS

Teacher Megan Sirimongkhoun reviewed the proposal the Board had received regarding an exchange trip to Salamanca, Spain to be taken mostly over Thanksgiving break 2013 (November 22, 2013 – December 1, 2013). The Board asked Ms. Sirimongkhoun to inform them of the insurance coverage that would be available to students taking this trip as there were concerns over liability exposure. There was some discussion regarding the process for pairing students with host families. Overall the Board was very supportive of the opportunity for immersion into the Spanish language and culture for these students. Details regarding insurance coverage will be researched and shared with the Board at the second reading and vote on the trip proposal at the May 2nd Region 4 BOE meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS (moved up to this point in the agenda)

Karli Spinella, of Chester, mother of two children at VRHS, read a prepared statement voicing her and her daughter's displeasure with the content of an Advanced Placement (AP) Biology Course currently underway at Valley. Ms. Spinella stated several concerns over the structure of the class which she feels is not in line with the CollegeBoard's website description of an AP course. She also voiced displeasure at the number of times that a substitute teacher has been in charge of the class. She asked who would be held accountable for correcting this.

Another gentleman present in the audience of citizens, stated that his son is also in the same AP course and has voiced some displeasure with the class as well.

Ms. Hall thanked them for their comments and said the concerns will be addressed by the administration.

Discussion of Region 4 Proposed Budget for 2013-14

The Board moved to consider and discuss the proposed 2013-14 Region 4 budget in the amount of \$17,776,120.

Dr. Levy handed out additional information/clarifications that the administration was asked to supply to better help the Board make decisions about the proposed budget. Specific questions regarding class numbers were addressed. It was noted that the administration had received a follow-up question from a board member regarding student and class data that the administration had previously provided, however, that follow-up question was based on an incorrect assumption that all classes equal 1 credit. Principal Martineau explained that graduation requirements are based on credits, not classes, and some classes may only be worth a ½ credit. Mario Gioco noted that still wanted more detailed numbers and wasn't satisfied with knowing average class sizes. He instead wanted to see all of the raw numbers regarding individual students in individual classes.

Dr. Levy stated that if the Board concurred that such data would be useful, the administration would provide it. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the Board's need for this data. Chris Riley noted that it was important to keep in mind the administrative resources it takes to respond to such requests. He noted that the proposed budget had already gone through numerous budget workshop and hundreds of thousands of dollars of reductions had occurred throughout the intensive process resulting in a budget increase of less than 1½ % over the previous year's budget request. He further noted that the administration had already answered numerous detailed questions throughout this process. He therefore asked Mr. Gioco what he hoped to gain by this request, and how it would be any more informative to the budget decision making process than the class averages that the Board already had in their possession? Mr. Gioco stated that he is a numbers person and doesn't understand the budget without seeing those numbers. Other members also asked Mr. Gioco if he could explain in what way those numbers would benefit the budget process, before they decided whether or not they felt it necessary to ask the administration to do the work to provide them. Mr. Gioco continued to reiterate that he wanted the numbers because that's only way he can understand the proposed budget and the planned utilization of assets. Mr. Riley stated that the end result desired is to put together a reasonable, responsible budget that meets the needs of the students. He further stated that requesting such data will have no impact on the Board's decision regarding the budget and is a waste of time and therefore a waste of money, and the Board must be mindful of that.

Further discussion ensued and Jennifer Clark explained that, while she didn't wish to diminish Mr. Gioco's request, as veteran Board members, she and others present, have witnessed times in the past when irrelevant questions, and demands on administration's time have been made. She further explained that those who have witnessed that type of micromanaging may be quicker to dismiss them when they can't see the practicality of such requests. Duane Gates noted that in his opinion averages provide plenty of information to inform the Board's decisions. He cautioned the Board against micromanaging the administration. He noted that he feels that they have a great administration and a great staff and the Board can't afford to lose a good team due to micromanagement. Mary-Beth Harrigan noted that averages may actually prove more useful, as it was to be expected that some classes may be smaller than anticipated while others may be larger from year to year; and that some inefficiencies in resource utilization is to be expected as the numbers represent students, with ever changing needs throughout the year.

As the discussion wound down Linda Hall surveyed the Board on whether or not they felt the Administration needed to provide the raw numbers in addition to the class size averages already provided in order to inform the Board's decision with regards to the proposed budget. Mary-Beth Harrigan, Ann Monaghan, Chris Riley, Linda Hall, Laurie Tomlinson, Jennifer Clark, and Duane Gates all stated that they didn't feel that the Administration needed to provide that raw data in order for them to make an informed decision on the proposed budget. Mario Gioco stated that he still wanted to have the numbers, and without them he couldn't understand the budget. Ann Monaghan and Laurie Tomlinson noted that although they didn't feel the need to see the information, they also

wanted Mr. Gioco to feel comfortable, and as such, they didn't object to the information being provided. It was the Board's consensus that the administration need not provide an additional breakdown of class size numbers beyond class averages.

Ms. Hall called for any other questions during discussion. In response to a question, Mr. Sawyer clarified that the Board must get approval of the total gross expenditures of the proposed budget, even though the cost billed to the towns will be noticeably less due to expected revenues into the district.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board VOTED (7 yes, 1 no – Mario Gioco) to move the proposed 2013-14 Region 4 budget with gross expenditures in the amount of \$17,776,120 (seventeen million, seven hundred seventy-six thousand, one hundred twenty dollars) to Public Hearing on April 1, 2013

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed highlights of the financial status report and the cafeteria account report. He noted that there were 13 students, 3 more than expected, participating in Vo-Ag and/or Magnet schools this year. The district had only budgeted for 10 students for this school year (2012-13) based on 8 participating in the 2011-12 school year. The current proposed budget plans for 13 in 2013-14.

Mr. Sawyer discussed recommended budget transfers for 2012-13 based on current projections reflected in the March 1, 2013 budget status report.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the following recommended budget transfers for the Region 4 2012-13 budget:

Object 100: Salaries Budget	Budget Increase of	\$49,313
Object 200: Fringe Benefits	Budget Increase of	\$8,621
Object 300: Purchased Services	Budget Increase of	\$21,422
Object 500: Other outside Serv.	Budget Decrease of	(\$58,598)
Object 600 Supplies	Budget Decrease of	(\$33,000)
Object 700 Equipment	Budget Increase of	\$3,441
Object 800: Other Miscellaneous	Budget Decrease of	(\$700)
Object 900: Debt Service & Transfer	Budget Increase of	<u>\$9,501</u>

Net Amount of Increases versus (Decreases) \$0

Next, Mr. Sawyer reviewed the cafeteria report which shows that lunch sales at the high school have been greater than in the past, and sales at the middle school have remained basically the same with a slight increase. He reminded the Board that governmental reimbursements are always a few months behind, so projected revenues may look ambitious, but should be in line with what can be reasonably expected once all government money has been received.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Region 4 Board of Education unanimously VOTED to receive the financial status report and the cafeteria account report.

There was a discussion concerning the option to exercise a 1 year renewal option on current contract with Grant Thornton, LLP (formerly Carlin, Charron, & Rosen, LLP) to re-appoint them as auditors of the Region 4 Financial Statements for a 1 year period to audit the financial records for the 2012-13 school year. Mr. Sawyer said that the vote will have to wait because he is still waiting to receive their proposed fee for the 1 year renewal and he is trying to get a flat fee offer. Next year the Finance Committee will put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) as per best practice. It was recommended that the Committee consider when doing that whether they would get a better price if the proposal requested a 5 year contract vs. a 3 year contract. Mr. Sawyer said that and other considerations will be explored by the Finance Committee when working on the future RFP.

Principals Update

Dr Levy thanked David Russell for temporarily stepping in recently to help cover administrative needs at the High School while Principal Martineau was recovering from an injury. Principal Martineau reported that she was very happy to be back at work full time.

Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau provided the Board with an update on the 2012-13 school year including the following: She was proud to report the first Shoreline victory for VRHS boys basketball since 1984; the musical *Brigadoon* will be performed in 2 weeks, and from all indications it will be phenomenal; CAPT testing is currently being conducted and free SAT workshops are offered for Juniors and Seniors during that time. The workshops have generated great feedback from students. Additionally, all of the efforts that were put into place to assist the 9th and 10th graders with their preparation for CAPT testing seem to have been successful, as the 9th and 10th graders appear to be more relaxed and confident than in past years.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal, William Duffy updated the Board on the 2012-13 school year. He reported that the school is in the middle of CMTs, and it has been a very smooth process so far. Student and staff are also in the midst of play preparation, and he thanked Peter Leffingwell and his crew for the donated stage scenery work. Principal Duffy reported that work on student success plans using the Naviance software, which assists in creating plans with social, academic, and career goals, has been moving along nicely. He also shared that the JWMS Charger boat became the first of four boats to reach the shore in Wales. The landing has grown into a wonderful, far-reaching educational connection with a local Wales middle school, whose students have been interacting with JWMS students. John Winthrop is hoping to form a sister school with them, and everything is progressing just as the program was meant to when it was undertaken. Also of note, Principal Duffy mentioned that the BBC had picked up on the story and recently aired a 10-15 minutes radio news segment interviewing teacher Bobbi Nidzgoriski. An audio file of the program is available through the school.

Committee Reports

Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee - no report

The Joint BOE Finance Committee is scheduled to meet again on March 11th, 2013 to hear health insurance proposals.

The Joint BOE Policy Committee is scheduled to meet again on March 18th

The Joint BOE Curriculum Committees is scheduled to meet again on March 18th

Supervision District Committee Update - nothing new to report since last week's meeting

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Beekley had nothing new to report since last week's Joint BOE meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Levy had only one new item to report on since last week's Joint BOE meeting. She presented the Board with a recommendation to approve a generous donation of \$2000 to JWMS from the Bauman Family Foundation to be used at the administration's discretion .

Chris Riley asked Principal Duffy if he had any thoughts about the use of the donation. Principal Duffy said that he would like to use the funds to purchase iPads for group use in classes. Mr. Riley stated that it would be nice if the donation could be noted in some way in order to recognize that the iPads were purchased through the generosity of the Foundation. Mr. Duffy said he would look into a way to do that.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the donation of \$2000 to JWMS from the Bauman Family Foundation, Inc. to be used at the administration's discretion.

Dr Levy handed out a report that had been requested by a Board member asking for a comparison of administrative costs between our district and other comparable districts. She noted that the information crosses over with Supervision District due to the structure of our districts. Mr. Sawyer reviewed the handout, noting that he had verified all of the figures directly with the business managers in the other districts. He further noted that he was unable to perform this comparison on any non-regional school districts because in those instances, some administrative costs are part of the town budget and don't show up in the school budgets. The handout compared the administrative structure of our five schools (covered under the Supervision District) with that of Region 13 and Region 17, since both of those regional districts are comparable in size based on total student counts. Mr. Sawyer reported that the comparison shows that even though Region 13 and Region 17 only have to do one set of things for their region, and due to the unique structure of our 4 school districts and the Supervision District our administrative office must do all things 5 times, i.e. audits, payrolls, state reports, etc... the number of administrators and support staff in our Central Office are right in line with Regions 13 and 17.

Ann Monaghan asked for more discussion on this topic in the future.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – no comments were made

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to move into executive session at 8:14 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent's recommendation regarding staff non-renewals and also to discuss a student matter. Kristina Martineau, William Duffy, Garth Sawyer and Joanne Beekley were invited to attend the executive session.

The Board moved out of executive session at 8:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

On motion duly made and seconded the Board VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation regarding staff non-renewals as presented.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Review of 2011-12 Strategic School Profile (when available)
Region 4 Public Hearing on 2013-14 Region 4 Proposed Budget (April 1, 2013 @ 7:00 p.m.)
Regular BOE meeting May 2nd, 2013 @ 7:00 p.m.
BOE self-evaluation (May)
Region 4 Annual Meeting (May 6th, 2013 @ 7:00 p.m.)
Referendum on Region 4 Budget for 2013-14 (May 7th, 2013 noon – 8:00 pm)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary-Beth, Harrigan, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk