

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE March 05, 2015 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

Jan. 08, 2015

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, Jan. 08, 2015 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Leigh Rankin, Lauri Wichtowski, Jane Cavanaugh, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Jim Olson, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, Jennifer Clark as well as Senior Student Representative Jenna Taylor

Also in attendance:

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

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Riley called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of Nov. 6, 2014 and the accounts payable report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

no comments were made

The Student reports were moved up to this point in the agenda.

Senior Student Representative Jenna Taylor reported on the following: Valley is in the process of wrapping up the fall semester; the recent Veterans Day assembly was a very moving experience for all in attendance; the musical rehearsals are in full swing with rehearsals every day; the math team has competitions coming up; the newly formed robotics team kicked off January 3rd; there have been many student fine arts achievements, including participation in debate and oratory competitions; the football team won State; and many student athletes were recognized, as well as Coach King. She also shared the contents of a letter from a referee praising Valley students and their exemplary behavior. Additionally, she reported that finals will be starting soon, and the National Honor Society recently inducted many new members.

Senior Student Representative Elias Mueller was unable to attend this evening due to rehearsals for the musical.

Junior Student Representative TBD

OTHER ITEMS

Board and Community Input on 2015-16 Region 4 budget - no comments were made.

Principals Update

Valley senior, Patrick Myers, gave a presentation to the Board on his Capstone Project progress to date. He shared his experience interning at Yale University over the summer in biomedical engineering, specifically Optogenetics. He also discussed his independent study project in which he was able to create a 3D printed prosthetic hand for a small boy in need of one.

Representatives from Mahoney Sabol & Company presented the Region 4 audit report on the 2013-14 financial records and answered questions from Board members. They reported an operating surplus for the year of \$119,000. They also reported that everything was filed with the State by the 12/31/14 deadline with no extension needed.

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the audit report as presented.

Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Principal Martineau's update on NEASC activities at the high school was postponed until the next meeting.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal, William Duffy, updated the Board on the 2014-15 school year. His student representative was ill as well, so there was no student report. Principal Duffy reported on the following: JWMS is approaching the end of the first semester or 2nd quarter on Jan. 22nd; students are in the midst of MAP testing with winter benchmark testing currently in progress; they are finishing the 2nd phase of solar panel installation on JW's roof; and last night the first of several orientations for parents of 6th graders was held.

Principal Duffy also reported that they have nearly completed the development of the JWMS 21st century learning document that connects to the VRHS capstone rubric. This document delineates academic, social, and citizenship expectations for JWMS students to meet by the end of 8th grade, at which point Valley's capstone rubric picks up.

Principal Duffy also discussed the wonderful showing by JWMS students at the recent CMEA Southern Regional Music Festival where 32 out of 38 students were selected for the region - the best showing yet by JWMS students, including having the two top scorers in the region. Principal Duffy also gave an update on the Charger boat which has made it back to Guyana, South America and should be re-launched soon. The boat has been on a 3 year journey so far, and has provided cultural and curriculum enrichment to JW students during that time.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Levy updated the Board on the following District activities: the manufacturing program at the Middle School kicked off today with nineteen students enrolled. The high school program will kick off at the start of the next quarter.

Folks from NEASC will be at Valley all day on Feb. 3rd for a pre-visit – and officially here for the full visit in November 2016. Dr. Levy also shared that to date she has received only positive feedback from staff and community members with regards to the recent administrative reassignments involving Central Office, Valley Regional High School, and Chester Elementary School.

Dr. Levy noted that budget season has arrived and it always becomes apparent during budgeting just how much the governance structure needs to be changed. She reported that on Monday, January 12th she will be meeting with Senator Linares and Representative Phil Miller regarding assistance with legislative requirements for the addition of grades PK-6 to Region 4.

She briefly discussed special education costs, and how it is a common problem among many of the local districts. She also discussed the impact of the cost for magnet schools on local districts. She reported that CAPSS would like to approach the legislature about a more meaningful and more equitable system for funding magnet schools that does not impose so much financially on local districts. She also discussed what she has been, and will continue to be testifying about in front of the legislature, including the realm of special education and associated cost, as well as MBR formula modifications.

Dr. Levy invited and encouraged all Board members to attend, if possible, the January 16th CABE Legislative breakfast to be held at 8:00 a.m. in the JWMS cafeteria.

The Region 4 proposed Budget will be presented in full at the first budget workshop scheduled for January 28th.

There was a discussion regarding the following pending policies: #4112.8/4212.8, #4117.4, #4118.23, #4121, #4131 and #6142.101 all of which are recommended for approval by the Joint BOE Policy Committee and up for a second reading and vote at the February 26th Joint BOE meeting.

Questions were raised regarding the definitions of a relationship in the policy, as well as employment by Board members in Policy #4112.8/4212.8 Nepotism. Dr. Levy will seek advice from counsel regarding the question of relationships that need to be covered, but with regards to Board member employment, it was determined that is covered by state statute.

Questions were raised as to the change of date from April 1st to May 1st in #4117.4 Non-renewal/Suspension, as well as the status of a subcommittee of the board if needed. The date is based on adherence to updated legislative language. The subcommittee would be an ad hoc committee (only formed as needed).

Questions were raised regarding the term “appropriately dressed” and “inappropriate conduct” in #4118.23/4218.23 Conduct, as those terms can be subjective. Dr. Levy noted that more specific guidelines are found in the student/teacher handbook.

Questions were raised regarding #4121 Substitute teachers, and whether they undergo any background checks. Dr. Levy responded that all go through fingerprinting and background checks per state law. Also questioned was the substitute daily pay rate, which many felt was low. Dr. Levy agreed and said she would encourage raising the substitute rate, but that would be a discussion and determination to be made by all of the boards at a Joint BOE meeting. There was a point brought up regarding upcoming Affordable Care Act provisions that may require the careful tracking of substitute hours due to the possibility that reaching a certain threshold of hours would entitle substitutes to certain benefits. Dr. Levy and/or Mr. Sawyer will discuss that issue with Joe Spurgeon, the insurance consultant for the districts.

Questions were raised regarding #6412.101 Wellness Policy, with regards to the use of the Food Pyramid as opposed to My Plate, and food sold on school premises. It was noted that the language regarding the sale of food could easily be modified to read “during the school day”, in order to delineate between what is allowed to be sold outside of schools hours (i.e. after school activities or fundraisers) through the state approved waiver process. Dr. Levy noted that with regards to the “pyramid” language and possibly other issues, there are proposed legislative revisions awaiting final approval, which means that this policy will continue to be closely reviewed by the Joint BOE Policy Committee. It will likely come back to the boards for further revisions in the near future, but at this time it’s important to revise certain parts to bring into alignment with current legislation, and also to create one unified policy for all of the schools.

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report, as well as the cafeteria account report. He discussed the current deficit due to unanticipated Special Education costs. The tuition line item is approximately \$500,000 in deficit, transportation has a \$17,000 surplus and the district will receive approximately \$206,000 from the State in excess costs reimbursement to help mitigate the deficit. The District will continue to try to find more savings. The possibility of other granting options was discussed. Mr. Sawyer stated that he had researched that possibility, but anything that might be available would be very minimal.

Committee Reports

Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee - No report

Mr. Sawyer reported that the Joint BOE Finance Committee is scheduled to meet again on January 26th to continue their review of the proposed business procedures manual and address other business.

Dr. Levy reported that the Joint BOE Policy Committee will meet again on January 20th as scheduled.

Dr. Beekley reported that the Joint BOE Curriculum Committees will meet again on January 20th as scheduled,

Elaine Fitzgibbons, Region 4 Representative to the LEARN board gave an update on their activities. She reported that many people are unaware of the growth of magnet schools and the detrimental impact that growth has had on local districts. She also mentioned that she would like the Board to pursue later start times for high school students based on well known research and recommendations for student health and achievement. Additionally she stated her hope that the Board support Guilford, who is currently leading the way on this issue.

Supervision District Committee Update -

Chairman Riley reported that the Supervision District budget workshops are going well. The next one is scheduled for Tues. Jan 13th.

He asked if anyone was interested in serving as the Region 4 BOE rep on the Technology committee. Mr. Gioco volunteered.

Dr. Levy spoke briefly regarding full regionalization. She reiterated that it does not equal closing a school, it is instead about bringing communities together. Closing a school would be a town decision and it has nothing to do with the current issue of adding PK-6 to Region 4 and improving the governance structure. Simply adding PK-6 to Region 4 is the goal.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Beekley presented a general update on activities within the districts including a draft of the new District Profile and Performance Reports, which will be replacing the old SSP Strategic School profiles. The new format will still have narratives, but all reporting, including the narratives, will be at the district level (no longer school based).

Dr. Beekley also reported that everyone has worked very hard collaborating on parent survey questions and using what the State has provided. At the next Joint BOE meeting she will share the parent survey questions that have been determined.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None present

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Region 4 Regular Meeting (March 05, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m.)
2. BOE and Community Input for 2015-16 budget (on-going)
3. Region 4 Budget Workshops for 2015-16 budget Jan. 28th, Feb. 05th, Feb. 25th at CO at 6:00 p.m.
4. BOE Self-evaluation (TBD)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Clark, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk