

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Jan 08, 2015 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

Nov. 06, 2014

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, Sept, 04, 2014 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Jane Cavanaugh, Chris Riley, Jim Olson, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, Jennifer Clark, Leigh Rankin (arrived 7:05 p.m.) as well as Senior Student Representatives Elias Mueller and Jenna Taylor

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

Superintendent Levy called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

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

Jennifer Clark nominated Chris Riley and Jane Cavanaugh seconded the nomination. Mario Gioco nominated Ann Monaghan for Chair, there was no second.

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

Mr. Riley opened the floor for nominations for the offices of Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Mario Gioco nominated Ann Monaghan for the position of Vice Chair. Jennifer Clark seconded the nomination.

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

Jane Cavanaugh nominated Jennifer Clark for the position of Board Secretary. Ann Monaghan seconded the nomination.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Jennifer Clark to the position of Board Secretary for a one year term.

Ann Monaghan nominated Mario Gioco for the position of Board Treasurer. Jennifer Clark seconded the nomination.

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

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to make the following changes to the agenda: Move the public comment period ahead of the Consent Agenda and to move the Financial Status Report to the end of the regular agenda.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Approx. 20 citizens were present.

Mike Leffingwell, a sophomore at Valley spoke regarding his concern that block scheduling may be removed. If that were to happen he said that he may not be able to double up on math and science classes, which may adversely affect him as well as other students.

Charlotte Boland, a sophomore at Valley also spoke regarding her concerns over the possibility of moving away from block scheduling. She feels it would create a situation of having too many midterms to study for all at once, and interfere with students' studying patterns. She was also concerned about the adverse effect it may have on a student's ability to reach the level of taking AP language courses. In addition she stated that she had already worked out her entire high school class schedule and this would alter that plan. She said that she knows that many other students have similar concerns and she asked that the Board keep that in mind when making any decision regarding block scheduling.

Liz Beckman, a freshman at Valley stated that she appreciates the current block schedule and has noticed a difference in what they are able to accomplish within the longer class lengths vs. those at the middle school. She also stated that she feels it allows students to participate in more extracurricular activities and feels that a different type of schedule would create more homework which may impede on the time to do those activities.

Phil Beckman, father of Liz Beckman, said that Valley has done a great job so far with transitions. And he asked that going forward they please make the research and decision process transparent to the kids, no matter what the decision may be.

Michelle Tackett, who's son is a freshman at Valley stated that she agrees it has been a successful transition for her son from middle school to high school. She feels that if block scheduling is removed and kids take a greater number of classes, it would make things harder for students and would divide their attention too greatly. She says that the kids she's talked with aren't excited about this possibility at all, and that as parents and educators we want them to be excited and positive.

Mr. Riley thanked everyone for their input and said that it will be taken under serious consideration.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ann Monaghan stated that she believed there were additional things that were supposed to be added as future agenda items that weren't part of the minutes. She said that she didn't have her notes with her so she couldn't say specifics for sure, but she believed Best Practices and insurance coverage were two of the issues.

There was a brief discussion regarding possibly adding best practices and insurance coverage as topics for discussion. The Board agreed that the Best Practices issue, previously discussed at the October Joint BOE meeting, was determined to be best handled in a workshop format possibly facilitated by Dr. Levy. The insurance coverage issue was determined to be irrelevant due to the coverage already having been increased from the 10 million to a 12 million dollar umbrella policy as previously suggested. There were no changes recommended to the minutes at this time.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board VOTED (5 Yes, 2 abstained, Chris Riley & Jane Cavanaugh – motion passed) to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of Sept 04, 2014 and the accounts payable report.

OTHER ITEMS

National Merit Awards Presentation

Principal Martineau introduced National Merit Award winners from Valley. The following students were recognized: Alexandra Dilger, Amanda Mitchell, Elias Mueller, Patrick Miner, and William Osborne as commended scholars, and Kaitlin Sandman, who is a semi-finalist for a National Merit Award. Chris Riley presented the students with plaques of recognition.

JWMS Student Updates

JWMS students, Sean Cole and Ricky Russo updated the Board on sports and academics at John Winthrop Middle School. They reported that students have started using the Naviance system to enter their personal academic and social goals, such as their desired GPA, or increasing interactions with students outside their core social circle, e.g. They also reported that the first dance had more than 150 kids in attendance. The annual walk-a-thon to raise money for field trips was a success, as were other fund raising activities by students including some for breast cancer awareness.

Senior Student Representative Elias Mueller reported that auditions for the musical “Band Geeks” have started, and many kids are excited about that. He also reported that spirit week was held recently with great participation by all students.

Senior Student Representative Jenna Taylor reported that the music programs are preparing for their winter concert on December 3rd alongside the art show. The music programs will then start preparing for their competition in Annapolis. She also reported that all of the fall sports teams have made it to the state level of playoffs.

Principals Update

Valley student DJ Berardis gave a presentation to the Board on his Capstone Project progress to date. He talked about his internship experience over the past summer in the office of the Speaker of the House, Brendan J. Sharkey, at the State Capitol in Hartford. He chose to pursue this type of internship because he plans on applying to the Naval Academy, which requires a nomination from a U.S. Senator.

He feels he was able to represent Region 4 and Valley Regional High School well during his time at the Capitol Building. He shared some of the highlights from his internship, which included being able to meet Richard Blumenthal. Upon completion of his internship, applying for a nomination, and completing the interview process, he did receive one of Senator Blumenthal’s ten possible nominations (out of over 150 applicants vying to be nominated).

Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau provided the Board with an update on the 2014-15 school year. She reported on research into student, parent, and staff perception about the possibility of changing the high school’s schedule. A simple survey was used in order to gather initial impressions, which were mixed. She said that it shows they need to do more research and work towards finding a consensus on what will be best for students. In order to do that, the administration is looking into including more stakeholders in more active ways, in order to gather more pertinent, specific information about the issue.

Principal Martineau reviewed the profile of the graduating class for 2014. Mr. Riley told Board members that if they had any questions or clarification they should let Dr. Levy or him know. Ms. Monaghan stated that there was more information she wanted to have provided by Principal Martineau.

Principal Martineau provided the Board with an update on NEASC activities at the high school. She reported that they have been informed that their NEASC visitation dates have been set for November 14-16, 2016. The school is currently in the self-study process. That process requires that numerous detailed surveys be sent out in the near future.

Principal Martineau and Dr. Beekley provided the Board with a North West Evaluation Association (NWEA) update on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing completed recently for VRHS and JWMS. This testing provides personalized assessments for each student by adapting to their individual learning level during testing. So far they have only received positive feedback from parents; and teachers like it was well. It will be helping teachers work towards more individualized learning.

Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Levy updated the Board on the following District activities:

The Middlesex Foundation recently sponsored an Anti-Bullying Rally attended by 5th – 12th grade students and staff from our schools as well as Dr. Levy. She reported that it was a great experience for everyone who attended. The students were transported to Middlesex Community College on a bus donated by First Student.

Dr. Levy reported that she and town officials have been meeting with local citizens who approached the schools regarding the installation of a turf sports field. Although everyone is supportive of the idea, they have concluded that

it's not feasible to be funded by the Board or town funds. The idea is currently in a holding pattern while citizens look to find outside sources of monetary support.

There was a discussion regarding the following pending policies: #4112.4/4212.4 , #5145, and #1112.6 all of which are recommended for approval by the Joint BOE Policy Committee and up for a second reading and vote at the December 04th Joint BOE meeting. Policy Committee Chair Jennifer Clark said that she had received comments from Ms. Monaghan regarding the policies, and the Policy Committee will review them at their next Committee meeting.

Dr. Levy shared a web article entitled "Best School Districts for your Buck" in which Region No. 4 was listed in the top 10 for Connecticut. She noted that it was "...a credit to our students, our teachers, our staff, and our communities who support all of it".

Dr. Levy reported that on December 11th she will be presenting to the LEARN BOE Committee on Valley's manufacturing program.

Dr. Levy presented major budget drivers under consideration for Region No. 4 for 2015-16 including: salaries, benefits, and other contractual obligations as well as special education costs. She gave a very high level overview of the anticipated budget proposal for 2015-16. There was a brief discussion regarding enrollment projections, which are currently following anticipated trends. There is an expected approx. 20% decrease over the next 6 years in Region 4.

Mr. Riley stated that he feels it important that when the Board begins their budget deliberations they begin looking into what areas can be cut back, given the future enrollment outlook.

Ms. Monaghan stated that there will also need to be a development of strategy for dealing with the upcoming implementation of the so called "Cadillac" tax on health insurance.

Also discussed briefly was the State mandated Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR).

Dr. Levy presented the Board with information on a possible donation of microphone leads valued at \$1400. She read a letter of offered donation from Scott MacDonald. There was a brief discussion.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the generous donation from Scott MacDonald of microphone leads valued at \$1400 for use by Region No. 4 Theater and Music programs or by others at the discretion of the Superintendent.

REPORTS

Committee Reports

Garth Sawyer reported that the Joint BOE Finance Committee will meet again on November 18th to continue their review of the proposed business procedures manual and other business including a presentation by the insurance consultant. They voted to move their meeting from the original date due to its proximity to Thanksgiving.

Dr. Levy reported that the Joint BOE Policy Committee will meet again on November 18th as scheduled.

Dr. Beekley reported that the Joint BOE Curriculum Committees will meet again on November 18th as scheduled, but at John Winthrop Middle School in order to accommodate the other two Joint BOE Committees meeting in Central Office that same evening.

Dr. Levy reported that she continues to meet with First Selectmen prior to reconvening the Declining Enrollment Task Force in full.

Supervision District Committee Update - The Committee recently met on October 2nd .

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Beekley gave a general update on activities within the districts including the first early release day for staff Professional Development scheduled for tomorrow.

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report, as well as the cafeteria account report. He reported that due to higher than anticipated magnet school tuition costs and substantial unanticipated special education costs there is a projected \$450,000 deficit before unanticipated revenues from the excess cost grant are received.

He also reported that the sale of cafeteria meals are up from last year, due in part to the addition of a breakfast program at the high school. The increased revenue will help to offset, at least partially, any subsidy by the Board to the cafeteria program.

Ms. Monaghan stated her desire that more pointed questions, such as “Do you think your child is getting a good education?”, be placed on surveys sent out to parents. The Board agreed to place the issue of determining what questions should be on a parent survey on the January agenda which will allow time for any agreed upon questions to be placed on the parent survey in the spring.

Leigh Rankin asked that Mr. Sawyer provide a breakout of revenues from breakfast vs. lunch on his future cafeteria account reports.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - None present

The Board moved into Executive Session at 8:57 p.m. to discuss strategy regarding pending litigation.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Region 4 Regular Meeting (Jan. 07, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m.)
2. Discussion regarding questions to be added to parent survey (Jan.)
3. BOE and Community Input for 2015-16 budget (on-going)
4. BOE Self-evaluation (TBD)

The Board moved out of Executive Session at 9:28 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Clark, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk