

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE January 05 , 2011 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

November 03, 2011

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, Duane Gates, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, Pamela Christman, Jennifer Clark, and Chris Riley arrived 7:10 p.m. as well as Senior Student Representatives Karli Bahner and Alison Gates

Also in attendance:

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

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Linda Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the annual meeting of September 27, 2011; the special meeting of October 18, 2011; and the Accounts Payable report.

A few items were moved up in the agenda:

The student winners of the Superintendent's Award were recognized. The award is based on community service and service to others; academic prowess; and leadership service to the school community. Jonah Fidel & Ashley Paholski were the recipients this year.

JWMS students 8th graders Tucker Aglio and Emma Peterson updated the Board on recent events at the Middle School including the numerous activities and classes they enjoy at John Winthrop, the Student of the Month Award, and monthly ACT topics. In addition they discussed student leadership day and this year's multimedia presentation about how to handle stress and other life skills they find valuable. They both noted that these events are part of what makes them proud to go to John Winthrop. Additionally, they reported that \$12,375 was raised during the annual school walkathon to go towards fieldtrips and an additional \$1089 was raised for the Shoreline Soup kitchen.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Approximately 20 citizens were present. Several named below made comments:

Ed Cook - Essex – Mr. Cook voiced comments and his concerns about the handling of a recent party attended by students where alcohol was present and some were ticketed by police. He feels it was targeted and unfair treatment to certain students. He asked that there be different procedures for dealing with similar issues in the future. He said

some National Honor Society students were disciplined and others were not. He didn't feel that the disciplinary action against participation in extracurricular activities followed the tenant of innocent until proven guilty.

Peter Decker - Essex – Mr. Decker read a portion of a written statement which was submitted for the record and will be attached to these minutes. He stated that he represented a group of parents who feel that the administration has failed to follow procedures. He outlined his concerns in the statement and in summary asked for more consistency in what he thought was an unfair process.

Maria Decker – Essex – Mrs. Decker completed reading the written statement into the record that Peter Decker started but was unable to finish due to time limitations.

Wendy Arnold – Ivoryton – Mrs. Arnold stated that her son requested that one of his parents be present while being questioned by the administration, but that request was denied. She stated that a letter of appeal was written and submitted but no response had been received to date. She stated her belief that students are being taught that they can't trust what they are being told by school officials and she feels that distrust and fear is being fostered rather than open communication.

Valerie Bannister – Chester - Ms. Bannister stated that she believes that everyone is trying to do the right thing, but she is not yet sure what even happened during and after the party. She said she didn't know why not all kids were given tickets and she wondered how best to make the punishment fit the crime? She stated her preference this be turned into learning experience or a positive situation perhaps through community service.

Chet Arnold – Ivoryton – Mr. Arnold said that he believed that some students received tickets, others did not; some students who were known to have been there were interviewed by administration, others were not; some students were denied the ability to have their parents present; some kids told to write accounts, some students were told to write an appeal letter, some were not. He feels there was an attempt to broaden the investigation which he feels shows the motives of the administration. He said he thinks the administration reversed decisions by the Athletic Director and coaches regarding what ineligibility really means. He said that he feels administration is trying to have it both ways. He thinks information was not clearly spelled out and was not made clear for parents. He doesn't think that the goal of the TriTown Youth Services's initiative to deter underage drinking goal was to send the wrong kids the wrong message, but that's what he believes is happening. He stated that he doesn't feel the actions were well thought through and that it was bungled at all levels.

Peter Dixon – resident of Old Lyme and a taxpayer in Essex – Mr. Dixon stated that his son is captain of the soccer team. He noted that he too was captain of his soccer team 40 years ago, and that having been the captain of winning soccer team, he knows how much work it takes to lead a winning team to victory. He went on to state that this past weekend there was a party where a girl got sick and passed out and his son stayed to help. He stated that his son was responsible and is now therefore in trouble while other students who immediately ran out of the party are out playing sports, participating in the honor society, or whatever. He noted that the upcoming games from which his son was suspended is the semi finals and possibly the finals, so it's a big deal. He stated that he thinks that kids are learning that they should just run at the first sign of trouble. He asked that the honorable kids get something for being honorable. He wants to know how the administration found out about the party and the students who were charged and he asked that the Board hold the administration and itself to the same standard that it's holding the kids.

Superintendent Levy spoke briefly noting that it was an unfortunate situation. The Board cannot engage in conversation regarding the public comments, but she thanked everyone for their comments and dialogue. She noted that the board and the administration will take the comments to heart, but she also stated that she is confident that the administration followed board policy and took appropriate action. She stated that she had already received some parental requests for private meetings regarding the issue, and she remains happy to schedule those. She asked anyone interested in meeting with her to please make an appointment and she gave her office number. She said she is happy to speak with anyone regarding their own child.

OTHER ITEMS

Regarding agenda item - *Request to purchase parcel of Region 4 land* – the citizen making the request was not present.

Regarding agenda item - *Presentation on "OneBook/One School"* – this item was postponed due to illness of the teacher scheduled to make the presentation.

Dr. Levy gave an update on the proposed building projects and possible formation of an exploratory committee – She reported that a meeting was held the previous evening to discuss operational procedures, future meeting dates, and a list of potential items for future meetings. The next meeting was scheduled for Wed. Nov 16th, 2011. She asked for a motion to appoint the members to the Region 4 Facilities Study committee

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to appoint the following people as members of the Region 4 Facilities Study Committee:

Alan Graham: Chairman

Mark Malcarne: Vice-Chairman

Members: Chris Riley, Jim Olson, Rick Stebbins, Bruce Glowac, Ruth Levy

Ad Hoc Members: Dave Russell, Kristina Martineau, Garth Sawyer

REPORTS

Student Representatives

Senior Student Representative Karli Bahner reported on spirit week at the high school last week. She also discussed the French exchange which runs from November 18-28th and reported that she is looking forward to participating. Auditions for the musical start in 2 weeks.

Senior Student Representative Alison Gates reported that all of the sports teams are doing very well. A blood drive was held by the National Honor Society and a coat drive was held by the senior class who will also be having a bake sell later this month. Representatives of Valley athletics attended a leadership conference earlier in the year and were presented with the Michaels Cup for sportsmanship.

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report and the cafeteria account report. He reported that the Board is currently looking at a year-end surplus of \$44,000 if everything stayed exactly the same, but as we are still not even half way through the year that is likely to change to some degree. He will keep them posted throughout the year.

He discussed the cafeteria report. He reported some savings as one position resigned and was not filled.

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 as presented.

Principals Update

VRHS –Principal Kristina Martineau gave an update on the 2011-12 school year and reviewed the profile of the 2011 graduating class. She discussed a few key areas. There was a slight increase in those who are attending a 4 yr school and a slight increase in those who sought employment straight out of high school, which was discussed last year is believed to be due to the current economic climate. She reported that SAT results continued a trend of improvement. They are starting to have Grades 11 & 12 teachers give targeted focus to material on the test. Teachers in Grades 9 & 10 teachers have been focusing on CAPT and scores have been improving. She noted that she would like to work at increasing the numbers of students taking the PSAT as data shows that those students who take the PSAT prior to the SAT score, on average, 100 points higher than students who do not take the PSAT first. She also reported that the total number of AP tests taken has increased and Valley students are earning more college credit before graduating than ever before.

She also reported that they are working on a new transition piece for incoming 9th graders with a January event. They will be enlisting the Valley TV program to create an interactive promotional video for VRHS – showing all the great opportunities in store for the upcoming students. She also reported that Valley held a great spirit week with more than 96% of each class participating fully.

JWMS – Principal David Russell gave an update on the 2011-12 school year. He thanked the Parents Council and Lisa Urso for organizing the recent walk-a-thon, which was very successful. They are in the process of having schools in for presentations, VoAg, VRHS and Vinal Tech are coming in soon. Musical tryouts start soon for Seussical the Musical.

They have expanded on their ACT program and have had 4 schools come visit to observe John Winthrop's program which has gained statewide recognition and is considered one of the best social development programs in the State.

He will be attending the National Middle School Principals convention in Louisville soon, at no cost to the Board.

Committee Reports

Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee -

The Joint PK-12 Policy Committee will meet again on November 15th – Elaine Fitzgibbons would like to see even more policies reviewed. She has been working on clarifying the Board's mission statement

The Joint PK-12 Finance Committee will meet November 29th.

The Joint PK-12 Curriculum Committees is scheduled to meet November 15th – Mary-Beth Harrigan

Supervision District Committee Update

Linda Hall reported on a special Supervision District Committee meeting held last week to approve a .5 special education teacher for the preschool program due to additional students and greater needs than when budget created. But no additional cost will be incurred to the Supervision budget due to savings realized in other line items.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviasser reported on TEAM replaced BEST as the state required training for new teachers. Our TEAM coordinators (1 rep. from each school) recently re-trained on portions of the program. Additionally a new module has been added which includes training for teachers on issues surrounding new legislation; Facebook, teacher's private lives vs. professional, bullying prevention, etc...

Mr. Neviasser also reported on the CT benchmark assessment system and the new CBAS formative assessment system which students will be doing as a first step in moving towards an on-line assessment system that will replace the CMT and CAPT.

He has met with all of the K-12 curriculum committees and discussed transitioning to the new Connecticut State Standards. There has been a promotion of literacy across all disciplines with a greater focus than ever before on interpreting and creating non-fiction texts. For example, in the art curriculum, students are not just writing critiques, but also creating manuals for certain techniques.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Levy reported that unfortunately she had to cancel the homecoming dance on Saturday the 29th due to the snow storm, but the district has been very lucky to have power and no closures this week. Administration has been busy working on strategic planning for district. They held a community forum last Monday with a total of 11 participants who showed up to discuss their hopes and dreams for the next 5 year plan. The steering committee continues to solicit information from stakeholders in the system.

She reported that she has been talking with high school administration about transitions and providing for internships and experiences for students to help in choosing their careers.

Superintendent Levy read a press release regarding Region 4 being placed on the second annual AP district honor roll for simultaneously achieving significant gains in AP course access and performance (for increasing percentage of students achieving a score of 3 or higher). Valley Regional was 1 of 367 school districts across the entire nation honored. She congratulated Kristina Martineau, Matt Talmadge, Ian Neviasser and David Russell for maintaining that high level of expectation, as well as the work of teachers and support of parents in the endeavor.

Dr. Levy reminded Board members that the Region 4 budget workshops begin in January. Enrollment at JWMS is projected to increase in enrollment through 2013-14, then will begin to see the decrease in enrollment that elementary schools are currently experiencing. Enrollment at VRHS is projected to increase until 2014-15 and after that a decline is predicted. She will update and flesh out the numbers after she receives Dr. Pete Prowda's enrollment projection report.

She discussed the major Region 4 budget drivers for 2012-13 including salary, contractual increases with step movements, as well as small salary increases across other union positions. A 12% placeholder (industry standard) has been placed in the budget for health care costs. That percentage will fluctuate many times through budget season.

The fuel consortium has not locked in a heating oil price yet, but they are anticipating an increase in price per gallon for heating costs.

With regards to Supervision District budgetary needs the two years of Educational Jobs Funds through Supervision Dist that funded .2 social worker has come to an end and they will now look to move that position into the Region 4 budget. Additionally, Supervision District will be looking to add Full Day Kindergarten, a K-12 mathematics coordinator, and bringing back FLES teachers at the elementary schools.

As always, unanticipated special education costs remains a major issue that heavily impacts budget every year with no planning to address this significant need. In addition, unanticipated magnet school tuition remains another cost with no current method for funding for unanticipated costs.

She also reviewed particular needs to be considered for JWMS and VRHS.

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

Dr. Levy was asked if there was any way to address the unexpected costs of magnet school tuition at the legislative level. For example, is there any way to ask for earlier notification, while budgets are still being planned, as opposed to finding out long after budgets have been adopted? Dr. Levy said she will be discussing the issue and the burden it places on smaller districts at her legislative committee meetings.

There was a short discussion regarding the qualifications necessary for the in school suspension monitor, a position mandated by the State. The position will require a degree, so it has been placed at the budgetary level of a teacher's assistant as opposed to a paraeducator.

The proposed combined position of Athletic Director and Dean of Students will be discussed in detail at budget workshops. The administration is currently developing a job description for that proposed position.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Approx. 6 remained

Peter Dixon – Old Lyme citizen, Essex taxpayer – Mr. Dixon state that as someone interested in education and the beneficiary of a very good education, he is disappointed that people think that increasing tests taken, such as the PSAT, will increase test scores. Additionally, he asked what he can tell his son when he returns homes tonight with regards to the Board's response to parent comments earlier this evening?

Ms. Hall stated that the Board takes all comments and concerns very seriously. The Board will thoroughly review the related policies. Anyone wishing to discuss the procedures regarding the set policies should contact Dr. Levy to make an appointment.

Mr. Dixon also wanted to know how he can find out information regarding magnet schools. He was told that he can contact the school's guidance department to learn more about the application process for magnet schools.

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to move into executive session at 8:27 p.m. to discuss a confidential student matter. They invited Dr. Levy, Mr. Neviaser, Ms. Martineau and Mr. Talmadge to join them.

Future Agenda Items

- 8.1 Election of BOE Officers (Jan.)
- 8.2 Update on possibility of one-to-one technology infusion for incoming freshmen (Jan.)
- 8.3 Presentation of Draft Region 4 Budget for 2012-13 (Jan.) – *R. Levy*
- 8.4 Region 4 BOE 2012-13 Budget Workshops (Jan. 24th, Jan 31st, & Feb. 7th, 2011)
- 8.5 Vote to move Region 4 Budget for 2012-13 to Public Hearing (Mar.)
- 8.6 Vote on staff non-renewals (Mar.)
- 8.7 Public Hearing for Proposed Region 4 budget for 2012-12 (April 2nd, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.8 Region 4 Regular BOE meeting (May 3rd, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.9 Region 4 Annual Meeting (May 7th, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.10 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 _____ p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Christman, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk