

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Nov 03, 2011 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

September 27, 2011

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, September 27, 2011, in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Linda Hall, Mary-Beth Harrigan, Duane Gates, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, and Pamela Christman, as well as Senior Student Representatives Karli Bahner and Alison Gates.

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent, Ian Neviasher
Business Manager Garth Sawyer;
Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau;
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 May 02, 2011; the regular meeting of May 12, 2011; the special meeting of May 24, 2011; the special meeting of June 16th, 2011; and the Accounts Payable report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

10 citizens were present. No comments were made.

OTHER ITEMS

Principal Russell and Principal Martineau introduced new hires for both John Winthrop Middle School and Valley Regional High School.

Members of the Region 4 Solar Building Committee were recognized. While not all members were able to attend, Bruce Glowac, Duane Gates and Garth Sawyer were present.

There was a brief discussion regarding the recent bankruptcy of Solyndra, the solar panel company whose product was recently installed on the roof of John Winthrop. In response to questions, Director of Facilities Bruce Glowac explained that as of right now the net effect is nothing to district. The system is in place, complete and expected to perform as promised. The most important thing is that the solar infrastructure is in place. The unknown piece is in regards to losing the warranty backing. But the system's current energy generation has exceeded expectations so far with a lower project cost than anticipated.

Mr. Pederson, a citizen with a request for the Board, was unable to attend and will instead make his presentation at the November Region 4 BOE meeting.

Consideration of the field trip was moved forward in the agenda. Mrs. Martineau gave a brief overview of the Quebec field trip and teacher Kate Wheaton elaborated on the specifics. There are currently 24 students interested in

participating. This is a trip she has done in the past with the same company. In order to expedite the approval process for students needing to apply for passports, the Board agreed to take a vote this evening without waiting for a second meeting.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Quebec student field trip as presented.

Director of Technology Pam Murphy talked to the Board about her proposal for an infusion of iPads or some other similar one-to-one technology into the high school. Next year's incoming 9th graders and teachers would need a total of 177 students plus 15 core teachers and 18 for other teachers. Students would use their devices throughout their 4 years of high school. She explained a little bit about the program. The devices would have textbooks, trade books, calculators, note taking capabilities, and Google Apps access. In addition to daily school work use, CT State testing will be moving on-line in the near future, and this would be a very proactive way of preparing for that eventuality. Some concerns still to be addressed are availability of WiFi coverage at high school and WiFi coverage at home, in addition to content restriction while away from school. Brookfield and Greenwich schools have recently rolled out similar initiatives.

Dr. Levy, noted that this idea is still in the investigation stage, but it is very forward thinking and helps in the goal of moving students towards 21st century skills. However, she noted that with all things good and exciting, there are some challenges that would need to be addressed. Including budgeting and policy issues. This is just the initial informative stage and Administration will need to come back with budgetary implications, infrastructure needs, policy changes, etc...

There will be an update on one-to-one technology at the regular November Region 4 BOE meeting.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES – The Board discussed an article on cyberbullying that Dr. Levy shared with them. This portion of the agenda is a new item she has been doing at each individual Board meeting whereby they hold a mini discussion about important issues impacting students and schools. There was a discussion about the article and Dr. Levy discussed newly approved legislation regarding new bullying policies and the school's newly mandated increased role in disciplining students, even for acts committed outside of school and school hours. Dr. Levy will be using her role on the Legislative Committee to work towards a better balanced law that doesn't ignore the responsibility of parents in this issue. She was proud to report that all of our schools have been ahead of the curve on curbing this type of behavior, through education for parents, students and teachers.

REPORTS

Student Representatives

Senior Student Representative Karli Bahner reported that there are more structured classes being offered for Freshman core classes in order to help students adapt and cope as they move through high school. The capstone project is continuing and she and other students will be presenting to the Board some time in the future on the possibility of adding this as a graduation requirement.

Senior Student Representative Alison Gates reported on her goal to bridge the gap between student body and administration. She and Ms. Bahner visited all Freshmen classes to introduce themselves and offer themselves as a go-between for any questions, concerns or issues. They will be visiting Sophomore classes next to offer the same help, and then talking with Juniors, who they will ask to become conscious leaders and role models in order to set a good example for the lower classmen. In addition they will be explaining the duties of a BOE student representative and asking for students who may be interested in becoming one of the two Junior class BOE representatives.

Additionally, it was reported that *Titanic the Musical* will be performed later this year.

Junior Student Representative TBD

Junior Student Representative TBD

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report (both end-of-year for 2010-11 as well as current year), the student activity account report, the cafeteria account report, and the grant funding report.

At this time, there is approximately \$28,000 in anticipated Region 4 budget surplus from 2010-11 which will be returned to the towns after the audit. This surplus is a result of great cooperation by administrators who adhered to a budget freeze instituted due to unanticipated special education costs.

Mr. Sawyer presented recommended budget transfers between line items within the Region 4 budget. On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to approve the following recommended transfers between line items:

Object 100 Salaries	budget increase of	\$33,127
Object 200 Fringe Benefits	budget increase of	\$34,101
Object 300 Purchased Services	budget increase of	\$5,882
Object 400 Rentals & Repairs	budget decrease of	(\$38,403)
Object 500 Other Outside Serv.	budget decrease of	(\$17,102)
Object 600 Supplies	budget decrease of	(\$17,283)
Object 700 Equipment	budget decrease of	(\$7,431)
Object 800 Other Misc.	budget decrease of	(\$9,663)
Object 900 Debt Serv. & Trsfr	budget increase of	<u>\$16,772</u>

<u>Net Amount of Increases vs. Decreases</u>	<u>\$0</u>
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The Board requested that they only receive grant funding updates if there are any material changes, otherwise, beginning and end-of-year reports are sufficient. In addition the student activity accounts may be reviewed by the Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee and if anything is newsworthy, it will then be reported to the Board at a regular meeting.

There was a discussion regarding magnet school tuition. Dr. Levy reminded the Board of the need for considering this issue during budget deliberations.

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

There was as discussion regarding a request for the use of capital sinking funds for a variety of needs.

On motion duly made and seconded the Region 4 Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to approve the purchase of a 10 year extension warranty agreement, at a cost of \$9450, for the Valley Regional Field lights utilizing the Region 4 Field Light Capital Sinking Fund.

On motion duly made and seconded the Region 4 Board of Education unanimously **VOTED** to approve the split of budgeted Region 4 2011-12 \$15,000 contribution to the Capital Sinking Fund as follows: \$5000 Vehicle Replacement, \$365 Field Lights, \$9,635 Field Repair.

The Superintendent's information and communication item regarding building projects was moved up in the agenda. She spoke to the fact that research shows that Grade 6 has no place at the elementary schools, it really does belong at the middle school. In addition, there are needs that should be addressed at the high school.

The distinct building need is two fold. 1) Expansion at JWMS to allow for the housing of 6th grade. Footing is already in place for a 6th grade wing to be built at JWMS 2) Year after year, the Board has heard talk about numerous issues at high school, safety issues regarding the detached tech lab and other upgrades that are needed. Dr. Levy noted that as

the districts begin to make their 5 and 10 year strategic plans, they really need to begin the thought process about long term building needs.

Director of Facilities, Bruce Glowac noted that the thought process on these requests really began at the end of the last building project, as is always the way when working to maintain and move a school district forward. This is a call to start moving forward so that momentum can be gained since these projects do not happen overnight. During the last building project at JWMS, consideration for the upcoming need for a middle school that accommodates 6th grade was made and current facilities were renovated to easily allow for these future needs. The high school project came out great, but as is always the case, once you start living with the project, you begin to see the areas still lacking, such as the isolated tech education building which is a safety and comfort concern. Ideally a building committee would be formed soon to investigate these issues and needs.

Chairman Hall asked any Board members interested in serving on an exploratory building committee to let Dr. Levy know as soon as possible so they can begin their work in a timely manner. Although the current fiscal climate may not be conducive to this, a project like this would not take place for several more years, but can't be left without a plan. The Board will hear an update on building needs at their next meeting and may form an exploratory building committee at that time.

There was a discussion regarding concerns over considering a building project, no matter how valid, during the current financial climate. However the consensus was that as it takes years to plan for something like this, the district cannot put off the legwork required to explore the feasibility of such projects to be done at a future time when the financial climate has improved.

Principals Update

VRHS –Principal Kristina Martineau reported on the opening of the 2011-12 school year. She discussed the 9th grade advisory program which will dovetail with the capstone project. She is hoping for 100% participation in an intern program of some kind for the current freshman class by the time they graduate.

Reviews of the block schedule have popped up periodically. They will re-visit that initiative again as part of the school improvement plan, in order to investigate the pros and cons of block scheduling, and also to look at what other schools in Valley's DRG do in order to help determine what works best for Valley and the tri-town communities.

One hundred percent of teachers are now participating in the use of Performance Plus and common assessments to guide their instruction.

JWMS – Principal David Russell reported on the opening of the 2011-12 school year. Mr. Russell shared with the Board the goodwill created by the work of Ruth Levy, Bruce Glowac and Thomas Peterlik due to their efforts at the JWMS storm shelter after Hurricane Irene battered the state.

He also reported on the success of the recent Community back-to-school night at which approximately 400 meals were served to students and their families who attended. The solar project is up and running with the energy output display available for viewing and incorporation into the curriculum. He discussed their upcoming "One Book/One School" project; the chosen book is on the subject of bullying. It is being tied into a number of curricular areas.

The Rocky Neck State Park field trip is coming up soon, it incorporates all aspects of science (biology, geology, oceanography, etc.). The JWMS their yearly walk-a-thon, the major fundraiser for JWMS field trips, is coming up soon.

Committee Reports

Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee -

Nothing new to report – items discussed at their last meeting were covered by Mr. Sawyer earlier in the evening.

The Joint PK-12 Finance Committee – nothing new to report.

The Joint PK-12 Curriculum Committee - nothing new to report.

Supervision District Committee Update – nothing new to report

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviasser reported on Region 4 2010-11 CMT/CAPT and AYP information for John Winthrop Middle School and Valley Regional High School as applicable.

He discussed vertical growth scores and was able to include comparative data culled from the Performance Plus program. Principal Russell discussed how JWMS has begun to address the disappointing reading and math scores and focus on what needs to be done to show the desired vertical growth in scores. He gave several examples of specific interventions they have already begun to institute on a school-wide basis, as well as individualized assistance for those in need. He (and all administrators) will be reporting to Dr. Levy and Mr. Neviasser on a monthly basis regarding their strategies for score improvement. In addition, internal school-wide discussions are taking place on a regular basis with staff members.

Principal Martineau reviewed Valley's plan of action to increase CAPT scores. Several of these plan pieces are currently completed as well as ongoing. Even with favorable scores, the school cannot rest on its laurels, so they continue to build on past successes and work towards the next levels of achievement.

Mr. Neviasser also discussed upcoming changes for the "new CMT" testing which this year's kindergartner's will be taking. It will be done completely on-line and will be based on the common core assessments as opposed to CT state standards.

Mr. Reilly spoke to his pride in the students, their behavior, and the schools in general. He cautioned against allowing a snapshot of just one aspect of our students academic lives to be allowed, in any way, to take away from all of their wonderful academic and social accomplishments or to cause anyone to lose sight of other measures of success that exist alongside standardized testing.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Levy thanked Mr. Reilly for his kind words, as well as the entire Board and administrative staff for their unwavering support.

She also spoke regarding her pride in the recent actions of many of the Region 4 students, staff, and community members who volunteered at the JWMS storm shelter and cheerfully served our communities. She was struck by the number of community members who had never seen our schools and how impressed they were by the facilities.

Dr. Levy read several thank you notes from grateful community members who used the shelter's services.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the donations of \$50 each from Carol and Coe Hawkins from Chester, and Mary Colburn made to Region 4 Food Services.

Schools did open quite well, although late due to Hurricane Irene. One of the planned Professional Development day was canceled, but all schools opened very smoothly.

Dr. Levy discussed the upcoming Strategic Planning Process which has already begun with a meeting of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee on September 19th. The last Strategic planning process was initiated 7 years ago and the resulting plan is now in its 6th year. It is time to look at the mission and goal statements and action plans. The Steering Committee is currently trying to find community members, not already associated with education, to join them in this process. The process will include immersing the entire community in the project, through surveys, meetings, community forums, etc... There will be a presentation to the Joint Boards in April.

Dr. Levy reiterated the need to budget appropriately, to the best of the Board's ability, for anticipated magnet school tuition funding as mandated. The toughest part is that final numbers are not known until a month or two before the school year starts, obviously much too late for precision in the budget process. In that aspect it is similar to the difficulties surrounding the need to budget for unanticipated special education costs.

Dr. Levy briefly discussed the proposed BOE meeting calendar which will be up for vote at next week's Joint BOE meeting.

The Region 4 custodians have ratified their contract and it now needs a Board vote. Mr. Sawyer presented major changes in the areas of salaries and benefits for the 4 year contract. It will be retroactive to the July 1st of this year.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to ratify the Region 4 Custodians contract titled: *Working Agreement between Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education (Deep River) and Local 1303-086 of Council #4 American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (Custodians) July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2015.*

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS 2 citizens present, no comments made.

Future Agenda Items

- 8.1 Next Region 4 Regular BOE meeting (November 03, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.)
- 8.2 Election of BOE Officers (Jan.)
- 8.3 Superintendent presents major budget drivers for 2012-13 (Nov.)
- 8.4 BOE & Community input on 2012-13 budget (Nov.)
- 8.5 Profile of 2011 graduating class (Nov.)
- 8.6 Update on possibility of one-to-one technology infusion for incoming freshmen (Nov.)
- 8.7 Update on proposed building projects and possible formation of exploratory committee (Nov.)

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary-Beth Harrigan, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk