

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, March 20, 2017
Stella Library Media Center

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Hamilton, Chair called the Public Session to order at 6:17 PM.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Margaret Hamilton, Chair; Dr. Steve Fleischman, Vice Chair; Ms. Lisa Connor, Secretary; Ms. Karen Kravetz; Mr. Garrett Luciani, Ms. Nancy Maasbach (via teleconference), Ms. Keri Matthews, Ms. Emily Melnick and Ms. Lynn Piascyk.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent.

The Board entered Executive Session to receive a safety and security update.

MOTION #1 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Move that we enter Executive Session (6:17 PM).

Ms. Kravetz
Second by Ms. Matthews
UNANIMOUS

MOTION #2 – PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (7:14 PM).

Ms. Kravetz
Second by Ms. Matthews
UNANIMOUS

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Hamilton, Chair called the Public Session back to order (7:23 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Margaret Hamilton, Chair; Dr. Steve Fleischman, Vice Chair; Ms. Lisa Connor, Secretary; Ms. Karen Kravetz; Mr. Garrett Luciani, Ms. Nancy Maasbach (via telephone), Ms. Keri Matthews, Ms. Emily Melnick and Ms. Lynn Piascyk.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent; Al Pullo, Director of Business Services/Operations; Gina Prisco, Principal; Analisa Sherman, Assistant Principal; Clare Kennedy, Special Services Director and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Ellen Scalettar, First Selectman; Roxanne McKay, CABA; Aimee Meacham, PTO; Maria Kayne, BOS Liaison; Barbara Butler, Deborah Laydon, Shari Foldy, Teresa Nakouzi, Lori Patrick, Laura Sexton Sandy Simowitz and Cathy Zdrowski, BRS Staff; Tony Anastasio, Jessica Artemchuk, Lauren Esposito, Pua Ford, Maeghan Genovese, Joi Prud'homme, Carissa Vega, community.

MOTION #3 – MODIFY ORDER OF AGENDA

Move that we move Items 3.1 and 3.2 as well as the discussion on Open Choice to follow after Item 1.4.

Ms. Matthews
Second by Ms. Connor
UNANIMOUS

Ms. Hamilton announced that anyone wishing to speak during Public Comment regarding the SRO position should be aware that the Board of Education has agreed to maintain the SRO for the 2017/18 school year. The Town has agreed to fund the position through June 30, 2017 and the Board of Education will be supporting that position for the 2017/18 school year.

Ms. Hamilton also noted that Board Member, Nancy Massbach, would be participating for part of the meeting via telephone.

REPORTS

CABE Communication Awards – Ms. McKay presented the CABE Communications Award for the Parent/Student Handbook.

Board Member Appreciation – Ms. Scalettar, First Selectman, presented a proclamation declaring March 20, 2017 as School Board Member Appreciation Day. She noted the countless hours devoted to the various task before boards and commissions as well as the importance of education. Superintendent Gilbert presented each Board member with a book selected in their honor that will be donated to the BRS Library.

Open Choice Discussion – The Board discussed various perspectives regarding increasing Open Choice participation to the maximum 6% to promote greater diversity and celebration of differences. Students should be educated in an economically, ethnically and racially diverse environment. No one disputes the benefits of diversity, however, we are facing tough economic challenges and it may not be fiscally responsible to increase class sizes, which ultimately could impact the budget. BRS currently has a minority population of 27% with a median income comparable to other districts within our DRG and students are exposed to diversity through numerous classroom activities. It is important that decisions rendered maximize student success within the program, balance classroom composition and do not have a negative impact on budget, class size, staff nor children already in BRS. The Board agreed that in the future class sizes could be reviewed in August/September to ascertain if adjustments could be made and additional placement options would be discussed prior to budget development.

Ms. Massbach ended meeting participation (8:43 PM).

CORRESPONDENCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – Ms. Artemchuk apprised the Board that the PTO is very active and more than willing to help, they do not want to lose staff nor lose the SRO.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #4 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Matthews

UNANIMOUS

REPORTS

PTO Update – Ms. Meacham apprised the Board of the recent yogurt parfait taste tasting, the arrival of Beecher Wear that raised over \$6,000, the upcoming Book Fair the week of April 3 and Family Night on April 5.

Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Gilbert highlighted the funding of the School Resource Officer (SRO) for the coming year, the request from the Board of Finance to reduce the 2017/18 budget, attendance at the SCASA Superintendent Award Ceremony honoring Sam Anastasio and Ava Boulton, Kindergarten Orientation/Registration, the BOW elementary parent workshop on Sexual Assault and Abuse, staff visits to Granby and Renzulli, the follow-up visit from Tri-State on the Math program and the upcoming Board discussion on development of the Mission/Vision Statement.

BRS Update – Ms. Prisco acknowledged the Grade 3 Rotary Club dictionary event, registrations for Kindergarten Orientation, differentiated learning activities for staff, the *Read Across America* event and the Kindergarten *Read at the Beach* day.

Accountability Report – Ms. Prisco and Ms. Sherman presented an overview of the State Accountability Plan. While SBAC is a different form of standardized test, this generation of testing is completed on-line and provides a more holistic approach with a broad set of 12 indicators that incorporates student growth over time. Of the 12 indicators, five are applicable to BRS – (1) academic achievement measured by state assessments; (2) academic growth; (3) assessment participation rate; (4) chronic absenteeism; and (5) physical fitness. Each district attains an “accountability index” score as well as a “performance index” score (subject specific English/Language Arts, Math and Science). Schools are then ranked into five classification categories: (1) top quartile; (2) two middle quartiles; (3) bottom quartile (except 4 and 5); (4) new

turn around/focus; and (5) existing turn around/focus. All districts are required to have a 95% student participation rate in testing. Overall, the academic achievement performance index indicated student growth in all academic areas, reduction of the achievement gap and increased Index Scores for math and science. While our participation rate did have a slight increase, not meeting the state requirement dropped BRS to a Category 2 school where we ranked previously as a Category 1.

Class Size Guidelines – The Board reviewed the guidelines that have been in place since 1997. The original guidelines were developed after extensive research during a year-long process with a group comprised of administration, staff, community-at-large and Board members. The current guidelines are:

Grades K-3: 17-19 per Class

Grades 4-6: 19-21 per Class

The Board has a responsibility to ensure that class size guidelines were aligned with current practice. Further, since the Board chose to increase Open Choice slots, it is prudent that the Board review and assess whether additional changes are necessary. As the current guidelines are relatively low in comparison to other districts, a proposal was made to modify them accordingly:

Grades K-2: 17-19

Grades 3/4: 19-21

Grades 5/6: 19-23

The proposed changes would have minimal impact and primarily affect the intermediate grades. Since classes in the Middle School are typically larger, children should be prepared as part of their development process. Discussion ensued for whether adjustments were actually necessary. It was noted that, classes in the upper grades generally exceed the guideline without adding additional staff. Since there is a tendency to exceed the guidelines, if the guidelines are increased as proposed, it is possible classes could be significantly larger which could directly impact teaching, student learning as well as budget. It was agreed the current guidelines would be referred to the Policy Committee to engage in more thoughtful discussion and development of a recommendation for how to proceed prior to commencement of the 2018/19 budget process.

Facilities Committee – No Report. Ms. Kravetz noted this committee did not meet. The next meeting will be April 24.

Finance Committee –The Committee met on March 13 to review the monthly financials and reductions to the 2017/18 as requested by the Town Board of Finance. Ms. Hamilton noted that the Town Board of Finance requested each department to identify reductions but did not specify an amount for reduction. Recommendations provided by administration for reductions to the 2017/18 include: delaying the funding of \$100,000 in technology purchases, elimination of a .5 FTE part-time evening custodial position (\$26,410) and elimination of a full-time teacher assistant position (\$35,519). The total recommended reduction is \$161,929. These reductions have minimal impact on children, overall programming and will have the least impact on any one specific program.

MOTION #5 – REDUCTIONS 2017/18 BUDGET

Move that we approve reductions in the 2017/18 budget as presented by administration.

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Matthews

UNANIMOUS

CABE Liaison – No Report. Ms. Connor informed the Board of the upcoming CABE/CAS/CAPSS joint workshop on Friday, March 31 regarding anxiety.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations

Vision/Mission Statement – Board members were asked to provide input directly to the Superintendent relative to structure, specific wording or aspects they wish included on formulation/development of the new Vision/Mission Statement.

Faculty Support – The Board would like to know what is needed and/or what has been provided in terms of professional development, staff training and other needs related to current event issues.

NEW BUSINESS

Healthy Food Certification – State-wide approximately 74% of school districts participate in this program which reimburses 10 cents per lunch. Participation excludes after-school activities, weekend and special events. It was noted that

Extended Day is under the auspice of this program and utilizes the same approved snacks as those sold in the Cafeteria ala carte offerings.

MOTION #6 – HEALTHY FOOD CERTIFICATION

Move that we approve participation in the Healthy Food Certification program in the 2017/18 school year, for submission to the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Matthews

UNANIMOUS

Board Communications/Emails – Board members were reminded that discussions among email constitute a meeting and should be avoided. Should a Board member wish to have information shared with other members, the information should be forwarded to the Board Clerk who will disseminate the information to the full Board. Board members were reminded not to respond to the email since initiating a discussion or responding could constitute a meeting.

April Regular Meeting Date – Due to the scheduling of the Preliminary Budget Hearing on April 17, the regular Board of Education meeting will be held on April 24.

PUBLIC COMMENT –

Ms. Zdrowski cautioned against increasing class size in light of the challenges that students with high needs experience when they are dispersed into large classes.

Ms. Simowitz stressed the importance of class composition as a key element in the class size discussion. The numbers presented from the High School and Advance Comp Groups do not necessarily include students with high needs. While Amity has already included funding for the SRO in their proposed budget, where is the funding to maintain the SRO at BRS coming from, since it was not included in the 2017/18 budget adopted by the Board of Education.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:34 PM)

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Matthews

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board