

MINUTES OF THE HYBRID REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, November 20, 2023

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=mffbfa7f97430bdb3fccc5d867606c24>

Meeting Number: 2487 341 8560

Meeting Password: VkZzGH3Ft27

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair, called the meeting to order (6:30 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (in-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (in-person); Dr. Jay Dahya (in-person); Mr. Jeff Hughes (in-person); Mr. Steven Lawrence, (in-person), and Erin Williamson (in-person).

STAFF: Vonda Tencza, Superintendent.

GUEST: Floyd Dugas, Board Counsel.

Executive Session

The Board entered Executive Session in accordance with State statute to discuss negotiations with respect to collective bargaining as well as to discuss pending claims and litigation inviting both the Superintendent and the Board attorney to attend.

MOTION #1 – EXECUTIVE SESSION (6:31 PM)

The Board entered Executive Session in accordance with State statute to discuss negotiations with respect to collective bargaining as well as to discuss pending claims and litigation inviting both the Superintendent and the Board attorney to attend.

Dr. Dahya
Second by Mr. Hughes
UNANIMOUS

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (in-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (in-person); Dr. Jay Dayha (in-person); Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary (in person); Mr. Jeff Hughes (in-person); Dr. Michael Strambler (in-person) and Ms. Erin Williamson (in-person).

The Board discussed negotiations with respect to collective bargaining as well as to discuss pending claims and litigation.

MOTION #2 – RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (6:59 PM).

Dr. Madonick
Second by Mr. Lawrence
UNANIMOUS

CALL BACK TO ORDER: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair, called the meeting to order (7:06 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (in-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (in-person); Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary (remote); Dr. Jay Dahya (in-person); Ms. Brooke Hopkins (in-person); Mr. Jeff Hughes (in-person); Mr. Steven Lawrence, (in-person), Dr. Michael Strambler (in-person) and Erin Williamson (in-person).

STAFF: Vonda Tencza, Superintendent; Analisa Sherman, Principal; James Sapia, Assistant Principal; Cheryl Tafel, Assistant Principal; Carrie Borcharding, Special Services Director; Donna Coonan, Director of Business Services/ Operations; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Del Prete acknowledged receipt of several emails from BRS parents regarding Advanced Math, Grade 6 teachers and MAG.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ruth Pamphile – 6th grade parent who expressed concerns regarding recent events with a substitute teacher, alleged student assaults and the lack of communication from administration. Children should be safe in school in school and validated for speaking up and sharing their concerns. Administration needs to do better in addressing situations.

Allison Valsamis – disappointed in the lack of proactive responses regarding the two Grade 6 teachers who resigned. Administration failed to provide a clear plan and there was a lack of transparency in how the situation was handled. The curriculum is not being followed nor is daily monitoring occurring and it is affecting our children's education. Administration needs to provide a comprehensive education plan for Grade 6 students.

Barbara Ahern – is a MAG teacher and noted the invaluable contributions of Jayne Shiner to the MAG program during her 25 year tenure as a MAG Teacher Assistant.

Kris Edwards – 6th grade parent who noted the many challenges associated with the lack of advanced math education for 5th and 6th grade students. She hoped consideration would be given to inviting parents and local veterans to participate in the Veterans Day Ceremony. Students have limited exposure to the military and this is an event we should continue to have in the Town of Woodbridge.

Mohini Ranganathan – 6th grade parent who noted the lack of communication from administration regarding recent staffing changes in Grade 6. These students need support and a clear plan that will prepare them for the Middle School. Administration needs to communicate to parents the expectations / standards of the plan to bridge the gaps.

Chris Conroy – 6th grade parent who is very disappointed in the prolonged absence of a certified teacher and the lack of communication and transparency from administration is frustrating. There are approximately 80 children in Grade 6 that have not received an adequate education since September. Parents deserve to know what is happening in the classroom, specific actions being taken, that there is safety in the classroom and that children are receiving a proper education. Administration needs to do a better job of communicating.

PTO Update – Ms. Kruger noted the Halloween Hoot raised approximately \$26,000, the Thanksgiving Food Drive and Original Artwork fund-raisers are nearing completion and the Book Fair will run November 27 through December 1. The full report is available in BoardBook.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #3 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Mr. Lawrence
Second by Ms. Hopkins
UNANIMOUS

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Tencza noted that our November enrollment is 877. Appreciation was expressed for the sharing of concerns. Administration understands the frustration, however, the district is not able to comment on personnel matters and resolution takes time. Grade 6 families will receive information next week on the next steps, plans for moving forward as well as timeframes, additional supports and dissemination of regular updates going forward. The Apple Distinguished School Ceremony will be held on November 21 and there will be a budget workshop on December 11. It is anticipated the 2024/25 budget will include the restoration of a STEAM teacher. Jayne Shiner was recognized for her 25 years of service as a Teacher Assistant in the MAG program.

Multi-Lingual Learners – This program serves approximately 50 students in 15 different languages and various levels of efficiencies. Accommodations are made for translation in communications, lessons as well as various testing including smarter balanced scores through the use of Lexia English. It was suggested that historical data on LAS, performance of these students in SBAC and transition tracking be compiled to determine if additional resources are required.

2024/25 Calendar – Superintendent Tencza outlined the proposed calendar developed in collaboration with the BOWA districts. Amity has asked that when BOWA districts review the 2024/25 calendar to consider a full vacation week in February for the benefit of Amity student interns. There are limited options for flexibility given the shared transportation system. Bethany and Orange have opted not to include a full week in February and it is anticipated they will adopt the two-day break.

Open Choice – Superintendent Tencza presented the recommendation to return to 18 slots for the 2024/25 school year. This recommendation is predicated on one Grade 6 student leaving and the addition of the two vacant slots to accommodate two siblings of current students attending BRS under Open Choice. While we are not able to control the lottery and placement of students, we have been able to establish a clearer billing pattern, more responsive communications and a better defined reimbursement allocation with the New Haven Public Schools. Questions were raised relative to incoming class sizes in Kindergarten, other districts opting out of participation and finding alternative options to reduce racial economic isolation. Given current participation, we are over represented with the number of white participants and under-represented in black and latino populations. Perhaps there are other programs that could fulfill mandated requirements to improve academic achievement; reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation; and provide a choice of educational programs for public school students.

MOTION #4 – OPEN CHOICE

Move that we continue participation in the Open Choice program and adopt the Superintendent's recommendation to allocate 18 slots for the 2024/25 school year with any vacant slots filled beginning in Kindergarten.

Dr. Dahya

Second by Dr. Madonick

IN FAVOR: Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Madonick, Dr. Dahya, Mr. Lawrence Dr. Strambler and
Ms. Williamson

AGAINST: Ms. Del Prete, Ms. Hopkins and Mr. Hughes

MOTION PASSES 6-3-0

MOTION #5 – OPEN CHOICE ALTERNATIVES

Move that we explore other options for the future to address diversity in this district and create integral relationships with other districts.

Ms. Del Prete

Second by Ms. Hopkins

UNANIMOUS

BRS Update – Ms. Sherman noted the school-wide Halloween Costume walk, the Veteran's Day Ceremony, new teacher evaluation guidelines, Apple Distinguished School Award with technology displays in various classrooms and a robot parade, professional development days in literacy instruction and the Master reading class.

Math Update – Superintendent Tencza and Ms. Sherman highlighted various aspects of the Math program for what is currently in place, what is working, what will be tweaked, Grade 5 and 6 pathways for the building of curriculum foundations, the Grade 6 pathway to Middle and High School Math and creating program extension offerings in EDay or after-school opportunities. The focus of the program is to build foundational skills that develop a deeper understanding of standards versus skipping content, compacting of mathematical / content curriculum standards, defining expectations of each grade level and differentiating learning for all levels. It was noted that for the second year in a row, we ranked number 1 in our DRG in Math are in the top 3 of DRG A. While we did not have enough students who qualified for pre-algebra this year, our test scores validate that we are successful at serving the whole child.

It was noted that pre-algebra eligibility is based on standardized assessment testing and students must score 98 or higher in 5 out of 6 content areas to qualify. It was suggested that a page be created on the web site that defines our pre-algebra qualification criteria as well as the criteria for Middle School acceptance. Perhaps through conversation Amity could be convinced to change their standards and/or criteria. We need to attain a better solution than having students skip an entire grade level of content. Also, given the recent staffing changes in Grade 6, a veteran teacher is now teaching Math. There will be an additional follow-up provided at the January 16 regular meeting as well as the spring.

Town Building Committee Update – Mr. Hughes outlined the Education Specification pertaining to the Roof Replacement project that are required in order to have roof replaced this coming summer. As a referendum vote is required, there is a very rapid and tight timeline to achieve commencement of construction by the beginning of summer.

MOTION #6 – ED SPECS (ROOFING PROJECT)

Move that we approve the Education Specifications pertaining to the Roof Replacement project as presented by Silver Petrucelli for submission to the Town Building Committee and CSDE.

Mr. Hughes

Second by Dr. Madonick

UNANIMOUS

Facility Committee – Mr. Hughes indicated this Committee met on November 2 and again on November 8 at the request of the Town Building Committee to review proposed capital projects. Superintendent Tencza also submitted a letter to the Town Building Committee supporting the projects identified in the 2025-2030 Capital Projects proposal.

Finance Committee – Mr. Lawrence noted that the Finance Committee met on November 14 to review monthly financials and the 2025-2030 Capital Budget proposal.

2025-2030 Capital Budget Proposal – these projects were reviewed and will be voted on at the December 18 regular meeting.

Policy Committee – Dr. Madonick presented the two mandated policies under 30-day review for adoption.

MOTION #7 – POLICY 3542.41 – FOOD SERVICE PERSONNEL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ADOPTION

Move that we adopt 3542.41 – Food Service Personnel Professional Standards as presented.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Ms. Hopkins

UNANIMOUS

MOTION #8 – POLICY 4113.12 – MINIMUM DUTY FREE LUNCH PERIODS FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER CERTIFIED STAFF ADOPTION

Move that we adopt 4113.12 – Minimum Duty Free Lunch Periods for Teachers and Other Certified Staff as presented.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Mr. Lawrence

UNANIMOUS

Upcoming WBOE Committee / Meeting Schedule – Policy Committee on December 4 at 4:30 PM, Curriculum Committee on December 7 at 4:00 PM, Finance Committee on Tuesday, December 12 at 4:30 PM, the Budget Workshop on December 11 at 7:00 PM, the regular WBOE Meeting December 18 at 7:00 PM, the Special WBOE meeting to adopt the budget on January 3 at 7:00 PM and a back-up date on January 4 at 7:00 PM.

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Piascyk noted the attendance of herself, Superintendent Tencza, Dr. Madonick, Ms. Hopkins, Ms. Del Prete and Mr. Lawrence at the CABE Conference on November 17 and presented the Board Leadership Recognition Award.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – December 11 Budget Workshop on the Superintendent's 2024/25 Proposed Budget.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Tencza informed the Board of two certified staff resignations.

MOTION #9 – CERTIFIED STAFF RESIGNATION (HORVATH)

Move that we accept the resignation of Kristin Horvath effective November 10, 2023 with regret.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Madonick

UNANIMOUS

MOTION #10 – CERTIFIED STAFF RESIGNATION (CAMPBELL)

Move that we accept the resignation of Christine Campbell effective November 13, 2023 with regret.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Mr. Lawrence

UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kristen Turkosz – hoped the Board would not be swayed by the bells and whistles painted by administration for the repackaging of Math. The worksheets given are not enrichment, they are busy work. We need to find a quality educator to teach these students. While some students are being taught by a pre-algebra computer program, this cannot be the long-term solution. These students deserve better and hopefully the January presentation will actually reveal what is going to be done.

Betty Miller noted the \$3,000 cost of the summer geometry course offered at Hamden Hall and Fairfield Prep as this course is not offered by Amity. The Board was urged to find a more affordable option to ensure students are properly challenged in math.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (10:40 PM)

Ms. Hopkins

Second by Dr. Strambler

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board