

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Tuesday, January 17, 2017
Stella Library Media Center

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Hamilton, Chair called the Public Session to order at 7:00 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, 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: Aimee Meacham, PTO; Maria Kayne, BOS Liaison; Beej Ahern, Barbara Butler, Rich Burness, Megan Cofrancesco, Christina Domschine, Shari Foldy, Kris Hart-Rooney, Lola Johnson, Doreen Merrill, Teresa Nakouzi, Jane Roddy, BRS Staff; Marie Altieri, Gillian Fattal, Pua Ford, Adam and Tracy Forstrom, Meagan Genovese, McKenzie Granata, Monika Kaczmarczyk, Rebecca Merkle, Tahera Parvez, Sharon Roche, Michael Shanbrom, Carissa Vega, community; Students Aiden, Noah, Tyler, Jacob, Tyler and Caden and parents.

CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Connor indicated that an email had been received from a parent regarding a bus issue that was referred to administration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carissa Vega expressed her concerns regarding implicit bias and the treatment of children. Implicit bias is not racism. It is the subconscious response to an individual person or group based on characteristics of race, sex, gender, socio-economic status, physical appearance, religion etc. She urged professional development and specific training for staff to create a school environment that is equitable and inclusive and ensures that all children are treated equitably. If children are to be prepared to live in a global community, we need to be better at respecting, embracing and celebrating differences.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – 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 successful PTO Info Night on January 11. The PTO received numerous responses for additional parent volunteers.

Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Gilbert highlighted his Parent Forum following the PTO meeting, the school-wide CARES assembly held on January 12, mandated staff training, the BOWA parent nights for Family Math and Opioid Awareness, the BOWA Boards of Education annual dinner and play, the CABE legislative breakfast and announced that Sandy Simowitz will serve as the Summer Enrichment Director.

MAG Boat Project – Mr. Burness outlined the typical MAG student day. During a portion of the school day, MAG students have a daily student workshop where children design and carry out their own activities and projects. Emphasis during this workshop is on individual accountability and taking responsibility for studying topics of personal interest. Over the past year, during their workshop time, six students designed and built a boat under the supervision of Mr. Richard Burness, MAG teacher. This learning opportunity included designing, measuring, building and working together and started on paper. Each student outlined various parts of the project and explained their contributions and the selections and choices of each component. The boat was successfully launched in the pool on December 13.

Ms. Hamilton called a brief recess (7:31 PM) to allow students and parents to depart. Ms. Hamilton called the meeting back to order (7:34 PM).

BRS Update – Ms. Prisco acknowledged the CARES Assembly that focused on assertion and various grade level activities supporting Martin Luther King Day. Ms. Sherman provided a brief update on the BOWA Family Math Night with Greg Tang, renowned author and educator. Ms. Kennedy apprised the Board that the PreK program recently received continuation of the accreditation through NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). NAEYC Academy sets and monitors standards for high-quality early childhood education programs and accredits programs that meet these standards.

Superintendent Entry Plan – Superintendent Gilbert outlined the proposed new Strategic Plan for 2017-2020. This multi-year plan will continue to move the district forward in new directions through gradual transitions as well as allow the opportunity for annual assessment. A revised mission was presented as well as five goals for continued improvement. Priorities include curriculum revisions in the areas of Social Studies, Science and Math, establishment of a school-wide enrichment model with a culminating Grade 6 Capstone project, broadening professional development for all staff levels and restructuring and refining special education services, inclusive of TAG, to maximize service for all children. Concerns were expressed for changing the current Mission Statement, revamping the PLC model/student data collection as well as the impact on informing instruction, communication to the community for how specifics will emerge and become known and whether the current allocation of resources and funding was sufficient. It was suggested that specific timelines be developed for each goal that clearly articulate who, what and when.

Facilities Committee – Ms. Kravetz noted this committee met just prior to the WBOE meeting and received updates on the building upgrade, tools for schools and the implementation of new Science curriculum standards pertaining to sustainability.

Finance Committee – No further report. The Committee met on January 9 to review the monthly financials and the 2015/16 town audit.

Policy Committee – Ms. Connor presented Policy 5141.21 Administration of Mediation for adoption. This policy was reviewed and revised by the Policy Committee at their meeting on September 28.

Ms. Connors
Second by Ms. Matthews
UNANIMOUS

CABE Liaison – Ms. Connor noted the importance of communicating with the state legislators as was recently done at the CABE Legislative Breakfast. An invitation was extended to attend the March 8th CABE Day on the Hill.

Upcoming Meeting Presentation: School Performance Index – Superintendent Gilbert noted that it is currently unknown when these reports will be disseminated by the CSDE to all school districts.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Gilbert presented his recommendation for increasing the number of Open Choice slots for the 2017/18 school year. As part of efforts to gradually broaden and enhance the diversity within the school/district, while preserving developmentally appropriate class sizes, two additional slots were being recommending for the 2017/18 school year. It is anticipated these slots will be in Grade 1 rather than Kindergarten given projected enrollment numbers. The recommended total allocation is 14 slots for the 2017/18 school year. Several board members encouraged a broader approach to increasing ethnic and racial diversity by adding additional slots in each class across grade levels. It was noted that increasing class sizes could have a direct effect on staffing as well as the budget.

MOTION #3 – 2017/18 OPEN CHOICE

Move that we authorize one vacancy in Kindergarten and two additional slots in Grade 1 for a total of 14 slots in the Open Choice program for the 2017/18 school year.

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Hamilton
UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENT

McKenzie Granata spoke regarding Goal 2 in the Superintendent's Entry Plan. She hoped that caution would be used regarding proposed replacement of the TAG program with school-wide enrichment. While there is agreement that all children should benefit with the current approach to TAG, we should use the opportunity to enrich the TAG program instead of offering something different. These children are being marginalized. They need to be challenged, deserve a qualified instructor and opportunities to grow. Concern was also expressed regarding the Out-of-District Tuition/ Transportation line item in the 2017/18 Budget presentation to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance. This line item continues to escalate and if Woodbridge does not have the appropriate staffing or the facilities to address these students' needs, they need to create it. These students are not going away. By creating it at BRS, they may have the potential to generate revenue, and other districts may choose to send their students here as well. It is important that students and resources be kept local and that we save money for the future.

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

MOTION #4 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Move that we enter Executive Session (9:15 PM).

Ms. Matthews
Second by Ms. Kravetz
UNANIMOUS

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Hamilton, Chair called the Executive Session to order (9:15 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, Ms. Keri Matthews, Ms. Emily Melnick and Ms. Lynn Piascyk.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent.

MOTION #4 – RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (9:29 PM).

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Hamilton
UNANIMOUS

MOTION #5 – MOU WITH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Move that we authorize the Superintendent to ratify the agreement with the Woodbridge Police Department, as modified and subject to ongoing revisions, effective at a date to be determined and through June 30, 2020.

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Hamilton
UNANIMOUS

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:29 PM)

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Hamilton
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board