

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, December 17, 2018

Stella Library Media Center

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Margaret Hamilton, Chair; Dr. Steve Fleischman, Vice Chair (7:15 PM); Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Ms. Claire Coleman, Mr. Todd Jokl, Ms. Lynn Piascyk, and Ms. Joyce Shavers.

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

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Doreen Merrill, WEA; Teresa Nakouzi, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; and Pua Ford, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

REPORTS

Board Member Orientation – Ms. Piascyk noted that in Policy 9005, reviewed by the Board earlier in the evening as part of the Board member orientation work session conducted by CABE, required revision. Specifically, bullet #3 on the first page, and the second to last bullet on the last page are the same.

Dr. Fleischman arrived (7:15 PM)

Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee Charge and Timeline – Ms. Hamilton indicated this committee would be established with representation similar to other Board Ad Hoc Committees. Committee meetings will commence in January and it is anticipated the committee findings will be reported to the Board at their May 21 regular meeting. Ms. Coleman noted sustainability is a town initiative. The committee will focus and explore options for recycling/waste reduction at BRS, becoming a green leaf school and development a sustainability matrix. Parent and staff volunteers will be solicited via the Principal's January newsletter.

MOTION #2 – AD HOC SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Move that we establish the Ad Hoc Class Sustainability Committee with a membership inclusive of Superintendent, (1) Administrator, (2) Board Members, (1-2) BRS staff reps, (1) Ad Hoc Town Sustainability Committee member; (2) Parent representatives; Jane Roddy and Vito Esparo and with a Committee Charge - *that they recommend sustainability projects to the WBOE at the May 2019 regular meeting for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 school years. Initial focus will be on evaluating the feasibility and benefits of Beecher establishing composting in the Cafeteria to reduce food waste and becoming part of the Green Leaf School Program, and improving recycling effort within the school. Working with the Town Ad Hoc sustainability Committee, this group will identify funding options for sustainability initiatives, including use of grants and PTO. Identification of possible grants available is part of the charge to the committee.*

Dr. Fleischman

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

Board representatives will be Ms. Coleman and Mr. Jokl with Ms. Coleman serving as Chair. Ms. Coleman indicated that Ms. Hillary Drumm, who assisted in coordinating the composting waste pilot at BRS, expressed interest in being one of the two parent volunteers. It was agreed if more than one parent was interested in participating on the committee, a lottery process, similar to previous Ad Hoc Committee selections, would be held.

Ad Hoc Enrichment Committee Findings – Dr. Fleischman reviewed the findings of the committee. The Committee made the following recommendations for all students:

- Continue to support the School-Wide Enrichment Model as approved in the district Strategic Development Plan inclusive of Curriculum Compacting Clusters, PBL/Genius Hour and Capstone projects.
- Expand Curriculum Compacting work, resources and coaching to all grade levels.
- Enhance professional development and supporting resources.
- Develop a communication strategy (PLC teams) to assist parents in understanding what upcoming units include and to understand the purposes of homework.
- Provide a Math Workshop Evening for parents/students.
- Administration to explore options to enhance TAG programming and enhance and improve consistency.

It was noted that assessment of progress should continue to occur over the six months to a year. What metrics are available to determine if differentiation has happened, is working and how will that be evaluated. It was suggested that objective data be used instead of anecdotal. It was noted that the Strategic Plan provides updates/reviews of programming status as well as future direction.

PTO Update – No report

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Gilbert highlighted the reopening of the pool, breakout sessions and the keynote speaker at the November CABE/CAPSS Conference, CABE Communication Awards for the Parent/Student Handbook and BRS Calendar, eagle scout projects by Thomas Livesay and Andrew Bolton, the recent donation of \$1,000 to the physical education program by Master Kim, the addition of teacher assistant positions for this school to meet student needs in special education, presentation of the 2019/20 Capital Budget to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance and the January 8 Superintendent/Parent Academy that will focus on presentations by the ADL in response to the recent anti-semitic issues at Amity. It was suggested that the Board receive a full update on what is being done currently in comparison to other districts. It was agreed this presentation would occur at the February regular meeting.

BRS Report – Ms. Prisco noted the very successful Book fair, conclusion of the PTO Socials for Kindergarten and Grades 1-3, the winter band/choral concert performance, the Veterans Day ceremony and highlighted the curriculum connection component in her bi-monthly newsletter.

Staff/Student Survey Update – Ms. Prisco, Ms. Sherman and Ms. Mammen presented an update in response to concerns identified by staff (*how much feedback do you receive on your teaching/work*) and students (*how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning*) in the spring survey. To address the student concern, Professional Development activities have focused on teacher language consistency in addressing student behaviors, PMT training for certified and non-certified staff in de-escalation strategies/techniques, creation of a social/emotional classroom for disruptive students and the retraining of certified and non-certified staff in responsive classroom. Approximately 10 students in Grades 2-4 are served in the social/emotional classroom with one teacher and several teacher assistants. It was noted that there could be numerous reasons for the responses given and it may not be possible to actually know if these adjustments will have an impact or if progress is being made. Concern was expressed for how questions are phrased and whether students actually understand what is being asked. Panorama is endorsed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, conducts similar surveys nationally and the questions are normed for specific age groups. Based on prior year responses, student answers appear to be similar in context. Also, for comparison purposes there is value in asking the same questions year-to-year.

In addressing the staff concern regarding the amount of feedback received, administration developed a tracking sheet for classroom visitations to ensure consistency outside of the mandated informal/formal observation process. Conversations have occurred through PLC's (professional learning communities), grade level team meetings, faculty meetings as well as individual conference sessions. In addition, open forums were conducted by the Superintendent for both certified and non-certified staff. There are also numerous committees involving shared decision-making, communication and opportunities for open dialogue and sharing of information.

Efforts have been to ensure that staff at all levels is fully aware of the work being done. It was noted that while there appears to be a high survey participation rate by staff, the approval ratings are low. It was suggested that the Board hear directly from teachers for what could be improved upon and/or requires change. It was noted that the Board is responsible for hiring, evaluating and directing the superintendent to report back to the Board. It is not the Board's role to manage the day-to-day operations of the district. The survey is anonymous so there is an assurance that honest feedback is being received. An assumption should not be made that there are issues/concerns. Administration is fully engaged on a daily basis, highly visible, accessible and has constant interaction with staff. If concerns do exist they are addressed immediately. It is important to note that in addition to 73 staff members being reviewed by only three administrators, there are 850 little people in the building as well that have an entirely different set of needs on a daily basis. While the plan in place may not be perfect, staff understands their concern has been heard and acknowledged.

Strategic Plan Update – Superintendent Gilbert presented the detailed action as well as the high level summary for where we are. This plan was put in place two years ago and identifies areas of strength/weaknesses, details where we are as well as our next steps, curriculum status/updates on new programs, where are we meeting/exceeding expectations, what areas are being developed and areas have been completed/sustained. Suggestions were made for development of a matrix depicting qualitative and measurable data to determine if we are differentiating effectively, if what is being taught should be and how effective our programming/curriculum is and could we be doing better.

2019/20 Budget – Superintendent Gilbert apprised the Board on the specifics of the 5.77% increase in the 2019/20 budget proposal. Staffing increases include the addition of a Grade 1 teacher, 1.5 Special Education teachers, a 0.5 school psychologist and a Teacher Assistant. It was noted that while nearly every grade level was at the maximum of the class size guidelines, there is minimal space available to add additional classes. Student enrollment has been on the rise since 2011. Our special education population is currently 11% of our overall population and has not only increased but the severity of issues is also significant. In addition to staffing, this budget also addresses all contractual obligations. Suggestions were made for highlighting cost savings, efficiencies and depicting regular education as a per student capita breakdown.

MOTION #3 – 2019/20 BUDGET

Move that we approve the 2019/20 Budget Proposal as presented by administration for submission to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance.

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Hamilton
UNANIMOUS

Ms. Hamilton called a brief five minute recess (9:50 PM). Called back to order (9:55 PM).

2019/20 Calendar – Superintendent Gilbert outlined the nuances in the 2019/20 calendar, specifically three minimum professional development days on October 8, February 14 and May 22 in conjunction with the Amity district and the start of school on a Wednesday instead of Monday. As has been done in the past, the calendar was developed in collaboration with the BOWA districts.

MOTION #4 – CALENDAR 2019/20

Move that we approve the 2019/20 calendar as presented.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Dr. Fleischman
UNANIMOUS

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – It was agreed TAG would be moved to March as the new identification process will commence in late January early February and feedback on the new process will be readily available.

Accountability Report should follow past formats.

School Capacity Report should include a map of the school with current room markers as well as subject area and notations for how that classroom is currently utilized, i.e., occupied by classroom teacher 100% of time vs. a teacher who spends 90% of their time in someone else's classroom. Regardless of student population, there are no more available

classrooms and discussion on what we are going to do has to occur, i.e., moving Grade 6 to Middle School, room consolidation/usage etc.

Mid-Year Evaluation of Superintendent it was noted that the process that will be followed is outlined in the current superintendent contract. The evaluation is generally verbal and based on annual goals with indicators and supporting documentation to address those goals. Suggestions were made to adhere to the CAFE Evaluation format. It was noted that the process should not be changed for this year, as it was previously agreed to. Discussion could occur in June at the final evaluation for changing the process for next year.

Facilities Committee – Ms. Coleman noted this committee met in November. There will be a joint meeting with the Town Ad Hoc Building Committee on Wednesday, December 19 at 8:30 AM to review the Van Zelm report that addresses humidity and pool issues. The finalized Van Zelm report will identify what upgrades/changes will be required as well as improved processes.

Finance Committee – Dr. Fleischman reviewed the December 10 Finance Committee meeting. The committee reviewed the 2019/20 Budget as well as a discussion on Extended Day budgeting. The Extended Day program will remain a self-sustaining program, covering all student costs including those with special needs, without funding subsidies from the Board operating budget. The Extended Day program will be solely responsible for budgeting and planning for students with one-to-one needs.

Policy Committee – Policy 9132 establishing the Curriculum Committee as a standing committee was presented for adoption.

MOTION #5 – POLICY 9132 ADOPTION

Move that we adopt Policy 9132 – Standing Committees as revised.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Genovese
UNANIMOUS

Curriculum Committee – Ms. Piascyk noted the December meeting was cancelled and the STEAM/Science presentation moved to the January meeting. Also noted were the November meeting minutes and the committee overview report with potential areas identified for future discussion. Questions were raised regarding changes to the Health curriculum. The health curriculum now includes units on CPR and Heimlich training and coordination with the Technology team on health, safety and security resources.

CAFE Liaison – No Report. Ms. Genovese extended an invitation to the Legislative Area Breakfast on January 16.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Gilbert presented the permanent single agreement for the Connecticut State Department of Education's Child Nutrition Program participation certification for adoption by the Board.

MOTION #6 – ED099-CSDE CHILD NUTRITION

Move that we accept the Permanent Single Agreement for the Connecticut State Department of Education's Child Nutrition Programs and authorize the Board of Education Secretary, Maegan Genovese, to certify the action of the Board of Education that authorizes Robert F Gilbert, Superintendent of Schools and Alfred Pullo, Jr Director of Business Services and Operations as signers of the CSDE reimbursement claims submitted on behalf of the Woodbridge School District.

Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Coleman
UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (10:31 PM)
Dr. Fleischman
Second by Ms. Piascyk
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board