

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Tuesday, January 21, 2020
Stella Library Media Center

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Fleischman, Chair called the meeting to order (7:01 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Steven Fleischman, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Mr. Jeff Hughes, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ross (7:03 PM), Dr. Michael Strambler and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend.

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

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Kim Franklin, Nancy Smerekanicz, Teachers; Pua Ford, Jennifer Gelbrand, James and Kristen Turkosz, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Genovese noted that an email had been received from a WEA member regarding teacher participation and concerns for committee meeting presentations, as well as an email from a parent expressing gratitude and concern for a teacher currently on leave and another email from a parent regarding proposed state legislation pertaining to religious exceptions for vaccines.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kristen Turkosze – spoke about proposed legislation regarding the elimination of religious exemptions to vaccine requirements for school entry. The bill could potentially discriminate against who are entitled to a public education without discrimination because of religion, race, color, ancestry, sex, gender identify or expression, national origin or sexual orientation. People have legitimate religious objections to vaccines required by the state for school attendance. There is a difference between treating illness and the government mandating preventative measures. There is no crisis, emergency or imminent threat of any kind. Should this legislation be successful, it could potentially bar perfectly healthy students as a means of solving a perceived public health problem without justification.

James Turkosze – spoke about proposed legislation regarding the elimination of religious exemptions to vaccine requirements for school entry. There is no concrete evidence that healthy unvaccinated children pose any increased risk to immunocompromised children. The religious exemption in Connecticut has been in place for approximately 60 years and 45 states across the country have religious exemptions. How will the state provide education services to displaced students if this legislation is passed? Religious and medical freedoms should be preserved and protected. Board members were urged to discuss the legislation, if not tonight, then at another meeting in the future. The Board was asked to provide a statement prior to the state public hearing on February 19th.

Ms. Gelbrand did not believe her comments were accurately portrayed in the minutes. It is not frustration but a total lack of oversight on school buses. Woodbridge bus rides are lawless. Surrounding communities, all of which have a lower mill rate, have found solutions. Cameras were not suggested as the solution. It is hoped that alternate cost effective solutions for supervision will be created and a remedy instituted immediately.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Townsend

UNANIMOUS

REPORTS

Ad Hoc Safety Committee – Superintendent Gilbert presented the committee charge, suggested membership, timeline and background information for formation of this committee. It is anticipated outside resources will be utilized to achieve the elevated safety levels given the changing behavior needs that currently exist.

MOTION #2 – AD HOC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Move that we establish an Ad Hoc Safety Committee comprised of the Superintendent, 2 BOE members, 2 administrators, 2 parents, 2 WEA and 2 CSEA representatives with a committee charge that a report will be given to the full Board at their May 19, 2020 meeting regarding the staff and program resources necessary to address the changing and significant student behavioral needs at Beecher Road School.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Strambler

Discussion ensued for amending Board representation to three members. It was noted that the committee, as currently structured, is equal representation from all constituents with two from each group for a total of 10 members. Further, as these meetings are public, any Board member is welcome to attend regardless of being a member of the committee.

MOTION #2A – AD HOC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Move that we amend the Ad Hoc Safety Committee representation to three Board members.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Genovese

IN FAVOR:

Mr. Cowan and Ms. Genovese

AGAINST:

Dr. Fleischman, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Dr. Strambler and Dr. Townsend

MOTION FAILS 2-6-0

MOTION #2 – AD HOC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Move that we establish an Ad Hoc Safety Committee chaired by the Superintendent and comprised of 2 BOE members, 2 administrators, 2 parents, 2 WEA and 2 CSEA representatives with a committee charge that a report will be given to the full Board at their May 19, 2020 meeting regarding the staff and program resources necessary to address the changing and significant student behavioral needs at Beecher Road School.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Strambler

UNANIMOUS

PTO Update – No Report

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Gilbert highlighted the town-wide LED initiative, two certified staff retirements, the principal search, completion of HVAC work over the December break, the February 26 Superintendent Academy/PTO Night on guiding young children on the use of technology and screen time, mid-year staffing adjustments in special education and the 5th grade science assessment score of 83.5% with Beecher ranking 4th in the state.

BRS Update – Ms. Sherman apprised the Board of the swimming program in Grades 3-6, the sharing of 5th grade genius hour projects, the upcoming Boosterthon fund raiser and pep rally and the “star books” library project.

Open Choice – Superintendent Gilbert provided an overview on the Open Choice program whose primary focus is to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation. It was his recommendation that we add one additional slot beginning with the 2020/21 school year to ensure that we maintain the 2% required for higher CSDE reimbursement rate at \$4,000 per student versus \$3,000. We will have three openings beginning in Kindergarten as a result of departing students. Concern was raised for increasing the number of available slots instead of maintaining the 17 slots as summer / fall enrollment remains unknown as well as the cost of educating students at BRS versus their home district. It was noted that while the per pupil expenditure is in the range of \$18,000, there would be minimal financial impact incurred in the addition of one student in any given class.

MOTION #3 – OPEN CHOICE

Move that we increase our Open Choice enrollments to 18 slots for the 2020/21 school year.

Ms. Genovese

Second by Dr. Townsend

IN FAVOR:

Dr. Fleischman, Ms. Genovese, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Dr. Strambler and Dr. Townsend

AGAINST:

Mr. Cowan and Mr. Hughes

MOTION PASSES 6-2-0

Strategic Plan – Superintendent Gilbert reviewed the Strategic Plan noting the student and staff accomplishments in support of the 2019/20 Board Goals. It is anticipated that in the spring we will establish a committee that will develop the next phase of the three-year planning process. Changes/enhancements this year include modification of the TAG process, consistent communication with parents and/or students around mathematics instruction, amended planning time to allow for TA's to meet with grade level teams more often and with more focused professional development, implementation of responsive classroom components at faculty meetings, utilization of a variety of resources for classroom and student interventions and possible modification to the annual survey to include questions related to hopes and dreams, perceived strengths and weaknesses and vacation schedules in the calendar.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – Facilities Committee overview, accountability report (provided it is received from the CSDE in time) and summer program plans, inclusive of schedule dates and times. There was general consensus that each presentation format should be similar to past years.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Hughes reviewed the January 10 meeting which discussed HVAC Phase II work completed during the December break, the QVHD report and final pricing from Van Zelm on the next phase of work.

Finance Committee – Dr. Fleischman reviewed the January 21 meeting which reviewed the monthly financials and noted the numerous pending medical leaves in the spring that may potentially impact the budget as they encompass paid sick leave and the hiring of temporary substitutes.

Curriculum Committee – Ms. Piascyk reviewed the January 16 meeting regarding the math program and noted that a math consultant from the CSDE as well as a representative from Amity will be invited to participate in a future math presentation.

Policy Committee – Ms. Genovese noted this committee met on January 21 to discuss four policies, two of which were placed on tonight's agenda for 30-day review and two are awaiting additional feedback from CABE and will be reviewed at the February 11 meeting.

CABE Liaison – Ms. Genovese indicated the next legislative breakfast will be held on January 29.

Superintendent Gilbert presented two certified staff retirements, Dee Don and Naomi Reizfeld. It was noted both are talented, dedicated teachers who will be missed. The Board extended their sincere appreciation to the retiring teachers.

MOTION #4 – CERTIFIED STAFF RETIREMENTS

Move that we accept the retirements of Dolores (Dee) Don and Naomi Reizfeld effective June 30, 2020 with regret.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENT – A board member inquired where unfinished business would occur and requested discussion of health assessments and immunizations as well as the drafting of a statement as requested by the parents during Public Comment. It was noted that as this was not an agenda item and as the public was not properly noticed it would require a majority vote to proceed.

MOTION #5 – POLICY 5141.3

Move that we discuss Policy 5141.3 regarding health assessment and immunizations as requested by parents during Public Comment and that we draft a response.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Genovese

IN FAVOR:

Mr. Cowan

AGAINST:

Dr. Fleischman, Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Dr. Strambler and
Dr. Townsend

MOTION FAILS 1-7-0

It was agreed that discussion of this topic would be added to the February 24 meeting agenda to ensure proper notification to the public that would allow for equal representation of both sides of the issue.

A suggestion was made to defer the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent until Ms. Shavers is present. It was noted this topic would be discussed in Executive Session.

The Board entered Executive Session to receive a safety and security update and to conduct the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent.

MOTION #6 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Move that we enter Executive Session (8:32 PM).

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Steven Fleischman, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Mr. Jeff Hughes, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ross (7:03 PM), Dr. Michael Strambler and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent

The Board received an update on safety and security.

MOTION #7 – PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (9:54 PM).

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

The Board deferred the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent to the February 24, 2020 meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:54PM)

Dr. Ross

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board