

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, February 27, 2023

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=mc22ebbddd162cd4b5385d69d628b2360>

Meeting Number: 2496 665 0554

Meeting Password: 2EPghgAJX34

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair, called the meeting to order (7:08 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dayha; Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Jeff Hughes; Mr. Steven Lawrence (7:10 PM); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair; Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

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

GUESTS: Justin Elicker, Michelle Bonanno, Typhanie Jackson, New Haven Public Schools; Dan Del Prete, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Del Prete acknowledged receipt of two letters regarding Open Choice both of which were available in their entirety in [BoardBook](#).

PUBLIC COMMENT –

Justin Elicker, Mayor of New Haven, expressed concern regarding the Board's decision to pause on the filling of two (2) vacant slots in the 2023/24 school year in response to the reimbursement funding that New Haven provides for students with special needs. The Board was urged to reconsider its decision and to continue the long-standing partnership with New Haven in support of this program to reduce racial and ethnic isolation.

Typhanie Jackson, Executive Director of New Haven Student Services and Special Education, expressed concern for the shift of reducing racial isolation to the billing costs for educating students with disabilities. New Haven is required to pay the difference between reasonable costs to provide special education services and will continue to do so. She indicated the New Haven Superintendent of Schools, Finance Director and Special Education Director were open to having a meeting with Woodbridge representatives to discuss and clarify the billing / cost concerns that have been raised. New Haven is committed to the integration of students regardless of cost.

Michelle Bonanno, Supervisor of New Haven Magnet and Grant Programs, noted that New Haven complies with the requirement that the sending district pays the receiving district an amount equal to the difference between the reasonable costs of providing special education and related services for students with special needs. This has been the practice for over a decade. Open Choice participation is determined by a random lottery administered by Area Cooperative Education Services (ACES) and is not the responsibility of New Haven Public Schools. In addition, as children are generally placed in Kindergarten, it is unknown if they will require special education services during their educational programming. The Board was urged to reconsider its decision on the opening of the two vacant slots for the 2023/24 school year.

Dan Del Prete noted that as a Woodbridge taxpayer the State has reallocated tax dollars to assist New Haven Public Schools which is why New Haven takes many out of district students. The decision Woodbridge made in pausing the program was a business / financial decision. Woodbridge pays its bills as well as its taxes and the expectation is that neighboring districts who want to utilize the partnership will do the same. Unfortunately, New Haven has made the choice to make this a one way street. The Board showed compassion for not ending the program and taking fiscal responsibility for its taxpayers in pausing the program. Woodbridge has not received appropriate reimbursement for many years and the Board is requesting New Haven pay its fair share.

PTO Report – The full PTO report is available in [BoardBook](#) inclusive of various literacy activities and guest speakers.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Ms. Hopkins

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REPORTS

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Tencza highlighted the CSDE funding of the Primary Mental Health Grant which will cover the salary for a full-time social worker in the 2023/24 school year; submission of the Reading Waiver to the CSDE, extension of free lunch through the June by the federal government, the Board Retreat on March 28 and 30 with facilitators Dr. Mary Broderick and Jack Reynolds and recounted the efforts to reconcile the Open Choice reimbursement from New Haven Public Schools. While Woodbridge is committed to participating in Open Choice, it is paramount that Woodbridge monies are spent to support education for its local taxpaying constituents. Resolution of this funding issue is one that should be addressed by the two administrations in both districts. Ideally, the CSDE should be the one to provide clarification and guidance on how the law should be followed so that individual districts are not in positions of debating finances. As other districts are facing the same issue with New Haven, a virtual meeting was held with the CSDE and Open Choice stakeholders on February 14 with CSDE Special Education Director, Brian Klimkiewicz offering to serve as the intermediary in resolving the issue. Woodbridge remains committed to the Open Choice program and resolving this fiscal funding issue.

Board members expressed their continued support for equity and diversity in Woodbridge and the Open Choice program. Woodbridge is a racially, ethnically and economically diverse community and that will continue for the future. With approximately 92% of the tax base predicated on residential taxpayers, the Board has a responsibility to be fiscally responsible to the taxpayers and the decision to pause the program was solely a financial decision to rectify reimbursement that Woodbridge is entitled to receive. Other districts around the state have chosen to cease participation for these very same reasons and Woodbridge made a conscious choice not to do that. As one of the original participating districts in this program, Woodbridge has an opportunity to find a solution that could perhaps serve as a model to other districts in resurrecting the program. This has been an ongoing issue for several years, and contrary to the comments made by New Haven this evening, the Board is being fiscally responsible in rendering this decision.

Community Diversity Update – Ms. Sherman presented an overview of the various activities throughout BRS that promote and support an inclusive environment that embraces awareness and deepens appreciation of diversity and individuality in developing the social-emotional wellness of all students. Projects incorporate holidays, cultures, languages, social issues and differences into lessons and displays throughout the building and within the Woodbridge community at-large. Also noted was the change in the application process to recruit diverse candidates through targeted questions as well as inclusion of this topic in development of the new strategic plan and professional development. In addition, as part of the *Read Across America Empathy Week*, the PTO purchases a book for every classroom around a particular theme.

BRS Update – Ms. Sherman highlighted literacy instruction, intervention strategies, student centered conflict / problem-solving resolution techniques, the successful fire drill, mid-year goal setting meetings with certified staff, various Kindergarten coding activities and the Grade 5 movie project.

Town Building Committee – Mr. Hughes indicated this committee met last week in Executive Session to review and discuss security upgrades. Their next meeting is scheduled for March 10 at 8:30 AM.

Curriculum Committee – Dr. Strambler noted this committee met on February 2 to discuss the reading waiver and receive an overview on specials (Art, Physical Education, World Language, Music, Library/Media) and their associated curricula, scheduling, professional development activities and state / national standards.

Finance Committee – Mr. Lawrence reviewed the February 14 meeting which focused on the monthly financials and presented the proposed budget transfers. It was also noted that the Board should consider setting aside funding for a comprehensive policy review by CAFE.

MOTION #2 – LINE ITEM TRANSFERS

Move that we approve the line item transfers in the 2022/23 operating budget as presented by administration.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Mr. Lawrence
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Policy Committee – Dr. Madonick noted this committee held a working meeting on February 7. Since it has been almost 10 ten years since the last comprehensive policy review was conducted, it is necessary for the Board to begin that process again. The Committee will start the review with the 9000 series and will be looking for guidance from CABE in performing that work. The next meeting of this Committee is April 5.

CABE Liaison Report – Dr. Madonick apprised the Board of CABE Day on the Hill on March 8.

NEW BUSINESS

Ad Hoc Enrollment, Instructional Needs and Space Planning Committee Membership – Chair Piascyk indicated that under Board policy the chair is already an ex-officio member of this committee. Therefore, she is recommending that the membership be modified to include three Board of Education members with the chair serving in the ex-officio capacity.

MOTION #3 – MODIFY AD HOC ENROLLMENT, INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS AND SPACE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Move that we modify the membership of the Ad Hoc Enrollment, Instructional Needs and Space Planning Committee to include 3 BOE members instead of 2.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Mr. Hughes
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Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan – Superintendent Tencza presented the CSDE mandated update on the Plan. Minimal changes have occurred since the plan was presented to the Board in the fall.

MOTION #4 – SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN

Move that we accept the February 27, 2023 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan as presented by administration.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Dr. Madonick
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Upcoming WBOE Committee Meeting Schedule – Facilities, March 2 at 7:30 AM; Finance on March 14 at 4:30 PM; regular WBOE Meeting on March 20 at 7:00 PM; the Board Retreat on March 28 and 30 from 6:00 – 9:00 PM with CABE facilitators Dr. Mary Broderick and Jack Reynolds and the FOI Workshop by Tom Hennick on March 21 from 5:00 – 6:00 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

The Board entered Executive Session to receive an update from Superintendent Tencza and Director of Business Services / Operations, Donna Coonan, on potential litigation claims and identified steps for going forward.

MOTION #5 – EXECUTIVE SESSION (8:56 PM)

Move that we enter Executive Session to receive an update on potential litigation claims and invite the Superintendent and Director of Business Services / Operations to join the Board.

Mr. Hughes
Second by Dr. Strambler
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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dayha; Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins, Mr. Jeff Hughes, Mr. Steven Lawrence, Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair; Dr. Michael Strambler and Ms. Erin Williamson.

The Board received an update from Superintendent Tencza and Director of Business Services / Operations, Donna Coonan on potential litigation claims and identified steps for going forward.

MOTION #6 – RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (9:51 PM).

Ms. Hopkins

Second by Dr. Madonick

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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dayha; Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Steven Lawrence; Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair; Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

STAFF: Vonda Tencza, Superintendent; Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

Chair Piascyk called the Public Session back to order (9:53 PM).

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:54 PM)

Dr. Madonick

Second by Dr. Strambler

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Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board