

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JANUARY 24, 2006**

A special meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held January 24, 2006, at Haddam-Killingworth High School in the lower Media Center. The meeting, originally scheduled as an Education Subcommittee, became a special meeting as a result of a quorum of Board members present. Education Subcommittee Chair Jo Ferjak called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Members present: Robert Baranoff, Mark Almeida, Jo Ferjak, Michael Trahan, Nancy Gorski, Richard Cabral, Amy Jacques-Purdy, and Diane Stock.

Members absent: Mary Withington, Douglas Stevenson and Daniel Cronin.

Also present: Superintendent of Schools Gary S. Mala and Cheryl Chandler and Ernest Nagler from Youth and Family Services, and Gail Onofrio, the executive director of Tri-Town Youth Services.

Mr. Baranoff **MOVED** and Mr. Almeida **SECONDED** that the Board discuss some building committee expenditures as part of the evening's agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

**Youth and Family Services Presentation**

Youth and Family Services Executive Director Cheryl Chandler discussed the survey Youth and Family Services would again like to give to students in grades 7-12. They originally sent notification of the survey out in September for students in grades 6-12, but decided not to include the sixth graders this time. She said a few calls had been received from parents wanting to review the survey, which they did. She also got a few phone calls from parents who were in support of the survey and some parents who were not. Board members received and reviewed the survey entitled, "*Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*"; an explanation of the *40 Developmental Assets; Insights and Evidence: Tapping the Power of Community*; and *Insights and Evidence: Boosting Student Achievement*. The survey will measure the 40 Developmental Assets and find out what the perception is of the students who take the survey in an effort to help plan programs in the community.

She introduced Gail Onofrio, who has been the executive director, of Tri-Town Youth Services for the last 15 years, who noted that this survey was administered in Regional School District No. 4 in May 2005 to students at John Winthrop Junior High School and Valley Regional High School. Ms. Onofrio is also a member of the United Way Substance Abuse Impact Team. She explained that the asset approach is a very positive approach which shows where the needs are. Data shows where to direct the energy and shape programs where they are most needed.

Ms. Chandler noted that the mailing of passive consent letters to parents would be done by Youth and Family Services. Parents would be informed in advance that the survey will be administered in the event that some parents do not want their child to participate, and meetings

will be held to educate parents about the contents of the survey. There will be opportunities for parents to review the survey in advance. The survey will be discussed with town government and Youth and Family Services staff will be available to answer questions on an individual basis. Parents will be encouraged to visit the Search Institute site for more information. Youth and Family Services would like to do a comparison survey in two-three years.

Cheryl stated that Youth and Family Services is driven by its funders. They received \$11,300 from Middlesex United Way, who is specifically asking for the survey, and is the reason they are applying for the grant and the reason she came to the Board of Education last December. They also receive \$100,000 per year from the Drug Free Communities Grant which requires Youth and Family Services to submit data. This survey will not satisfy all the measures they are looking for, but Youth and Family Services feels the entire community can use the results of this survey. She reviewed some of the programs offered by Youth and Family Services, noting they are able to be done as a result of the funding received by Youth and Family Services.

The survey takes 50 minutes to complete and Youth and Family Services is requesting instructional time to do the survey. Youth and Family Services will train the school staff on how to administer the survey. Cheryl would like to have the survey done in April or May.

Mr. Baranoff asked for specific examples of how schools have addressed issues that have come out as a result of the survey. Ms. Chandler said Old Saybrook has done the survey three times and she can get that information for the Board. Mr. Nagler stated it would benefit some of the decisions the Board will be making in the future as well as the community.

Mr. Almeida asked if the survey is useful for gathering information that the Board can use. Ms. Chandler stated said that the Middle School Principal had told her she needed that information. Mr. Almeida asked how the school district used the data collected in 2002 for the betterment of the students. Ms. Chandler said Ms. Wagner could address those questions because she was involved in the 2002 survey. Mr. Mala stated that he was unaware that Ms. Chandler spoke to Ms. Wagner and the High school Principal, Charles Macunas, to gain their support.

There were additional questions the Board would like to ask and Ms. Chandler suggested that an attachment could be put on the survey. It was noted the survey was copyrighted in 1996. The Board was interested in getting a more contemporary version. Ms. Chandler said the United Way would like a Memorandum of Understanding that the Board would approve the survey.

Mr. Mala said he needs to speak with Ms. Wagner and Mr. Macunas about how and when the survey would be administered because he has to respond to the use of instructional time. He understands the impact from the funding perspective and he agrees that the data could be useful but questions what will be done with the data once the results are received.

Mr. Baranoff voiced his concern that Ms. Chandler does not seem to have a plan of what to do with the data and that she has not found out what the other towns have done with it. He felt that the only part of the community to be involved is the Prevention Council. Ms. Chandler stated that the plan is to bring the results to different sectors of the community, which is represented by the Prevention Council. She said there will be a plan once the data is received.

Mr. Mala asked Ms. Onofrio how Region 4 controlled the perception that a separate agency rather than the school system administered the survey. She explained that she approached the Superintendent, who was very receptive to it. She has a team of people from the community who also supported it. Mr. Mala noted that the administration was supportive of the previous survey, but when parental concerns were heard, it had to be stopped. Ms. Chandler stated that most people who spoke to her said it was because parents had not received their letters in time, had not had a chance to review the survey, or objected to the age appropriateness of some of the questions. Mr. Mala said the building principals organized the mailings.

Mr. Mala will get more information on the instructional time issue, speak to the middle and high school principals and report back at the next Education Subcommittee.

### **Review of 6000 Policy Series**

Mr. Mala asked that Board members contact him by January 21 with any edits they would like to make to the 6000 policy series so he can get them ready for the next Education Subcommittee. He stated that the Board will have to vote the existing policies out and the new policies in. He said the Board might want to approve some policies individually, such as, Religion in Schools, which was edited from four pages to two pages. The Board may wish to vote on other policies as a group.

The Board discussed the Religion in Schools policy and offered a number of editing suggestions. They referred a discussion about religious clubs and events to the Policy Subcommittee. Mr. Almeida stated that the Board must be sure the policies meet State statutes when they make changes to them. The next Policy Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled after edits from Board members have been received.

### **Negotiations Subcommittee**

No discussion.

### **Lighting of Athletic Fields**

Mr. Almeida stated that during a Board meeting in the fall members of the Touchdown Club approached the Board about installing lights on the athletic field. They have met with Mr. Mala, Mr. Shettle, and Mr. Distefano and have raised a significant amount of money for this project. Mr. Almeida said the Facilities and Transportation Subcommittee felt the community would be better served if the track was lit rather than the football field because the track has

more uses and more room available. He also said the garage area that is at the track could be modified to allow for a concession stand, bathrooms and a weight room to support all students. The committee would like to use a small amount of field renovation funds to do a conceptual drawing to see if it is feasible. Mr. Baranoff voiced his concern about the wear and tear on the field. It was noted this would only be used for night games. Mr. Baranoff asked that the wear and tear on the field be taken into consideration when making this decision.

Mr. Almeida **MOVED** and Mrs. Jacques-Purdy **SECONDED** the Board authorize Mr. Mala to expend an amount not to exceed \$5,000 from the field renovation account to produce a conceptual drawing of the track area and related issues. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Building Committee Expenditure**

Mr. Baranoff updated the Board on the cost implications of the delays due to Inland and Wetland and Planning & Zoning, including the legal fees associated with the additional meetings that were held. As a result, the architects and other professional people involved in the building project spent far more hours than assumed in the original contract. Some of the time involved changes made to save money on the project. There are bills totaling \$380,000 that need to be paid, the money for which is covered in the regular budget. In addition, the original charge of the Building Committee allowed the Director of Finance and Operations to approve bills up to \$100,000; however, these expenditures were not pre-approved and, while the billing does not include items over the \$100,000 threshold, several of the individual items should be considered as a single expenditure in Mr. Baranoff's opinion. Mr. Baranoff said that all the bills are legitimate; the problem is with the procedure. He asked the Board for approval of costs due to delays necessitated by Killingworth Inland Wetlands of \$125,157.25 and \$116,347.75 attributable to value engineering changes in design and scope. Mr. Cabral noted that the district was a co-defendant and the town of Killingworth should be charged the legal fees because the suit was against the town of Killingworth and not the district. Mr. Baranoff stated that he would sign all the bills except for the \$22,480 in legal fees, pending an opinion from the Board's counsel. Mr. Cabral suggested the Board request communication logs between the district's counsel and Killingworth's town counsel.

Mr. Almeida **MOVED** and Ms. Jacques-Purdy **SECONDED** that the Board approve the \$125,157.25 for bills related to the extra work due to Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Almeida **MOVED** and Ms. Jacques-Purdy **SECONDED** that the Board approve \$116,347.75 due to value engineering design and scope changes. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board agreed by consensus that Mr. Baranoff can sign all the bills except the legal one for \$22,480, which the Board feels should be submitted to the town.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Cabral **MOVED** and Ms. Jacques-Purdy **SECONDED** the meeting adjourn. Motion passed unanimously at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Lang, Board Clerk

Approval:

---

Amy Jacques-Purdy, Secretary

---

Date

**Approved as presented at the April 11, 2006 Board of Education meeting.**