

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION -
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
March 7, 2023

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on March 7, 2023, in the Haddam-Killingworth High School Auditorium. Board of Education Chair, Suzanne Sack, called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

Board Member Attendance:

| Board Member | Present | Absent | Board Member | Present | Absent |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|---------|--------|
| Prem Aithal | X | | Dr. Nelson Rivera | X | |
| Lisa Connelly | X | | Corey Roberts | | X |
| Dr. Joel D'Angelo | X | | Peter Sonski | X | |
| Jennifer Favalora | X | | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X | |
| Shawna Goldfarb (remote) | X | | Suzanne Sack | X | |
| Hamish MacPhail (remote) | X | | | | |

Also Present: Superintendent of Schools, Jeffrey Wihbey, Assistant Superintendent, Jennifer Miller, Director of Fiscal Operations, David Solin, Board Administrator, Sarah Kaiser, Director of Operations, John Mercier, Curriculum Coordinators Jennifer Beermuender and Heather Rigatti, Principal Eric Larson, Principal Donna Hayward, Assistant Principal Adam Apicella, Teacher Kasha Topa-Finberg

Visitors: approx 40

The Board meetings are videotaped and posted on the RSD17 Website under Board of Education, BOE Meeting Schedules & Minutes for public viewing.

<http://reflect-hktv.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/show/1518?channel=1>

1. Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board of Education Chair, Suzanne Sack, called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Cougar Pride

a. Kindness Club-HKIS

Principal Larson introduced students from the Kindness Club that is led by teacher Jodi Stupakevich. The club has been working to spread kindness through the school and into the community. They have set up free compliment tables, and sent letters and cards to nominated people within the community to make them feel better. They also sent letters, cards and pictures to a community member who turned 100 years old. The students shared free compliments to the Board members and staff.

Students and parents left the meeting at 7:16pm.

3. Report from Student Representatives

Student representative Callen Powers reported that the event Mr. HK will be happening this Thursday March 9th. This year's program will be a fundraiser for the HK TV program who is planning a field trip to the NYC Film Festival. The hockey team is in the state play-offs and their next game is scheduled for Thursday at Trinity College. The HK Music department is holding a spring concert for chorus on March 16th. Senior portfolios are almost complete as the 2023 seniors will begin their meetings in late March. On March 8th on Channel 8, there is a segment called "What's right with schools" featuring several seniors working on their portfolios. Course sign-ups being finalized for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. Callen noted there are a variety of new courses being offered such as "If you love it, teach it", "From Bach to Beatles", "Hispanic culture through film", and a course in physical education that deals with conflict in sports. There are also a variety of internships available.

Student representative Callen Powers left the meeting at 7:20 PM.

4. Superintendent's Report

a. Monthly Summary and Updates

Superintendent Wihbey reported:

- Update on the KES boiler upgrade project. The first new boiler has been installed and is up and running. The second boiler is expected to be installed over the summer.
- The District received a 3 year \$300,000 mental health grant that will help in providing services for Middle school and high school students next year.

- On February 10th, the Governor signed Emergency Certification Bill 6671 which provided an additional \$60 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to allow school districts operating the National School lunch program to offer meals at no cost to students for the remainder of the 2022-23 school year. Starting March 1st, the district went back to serving free meals.
- Superintendent Wihbey wanted to thank a generous anonymous community member who paid the entire amount of the students balances for the months of January and February.
- There are 8 new hire daily teacher substitutes since January.
- The Curriculum office submitted the Reading waiver to the state Department of Education on February 14th.
- The high school was granted a Project Lead the Way grant in the amount of \$10,000 for engineering and computer science programs and equipment.

5. Public Comment

Maura Wallin from Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke on the topic of substance abuse and mental health issues.

Jeff Sturges from Haddam addressed the Board. He spoke on the topic of the budget.

6. New Business

a. HKHS Field Trip-New York Film Festival

Principal Hayward presented along with teacher, Kasha Topa-Finberg, on the request for Board approval of an upcoming field trip to the All American High School Film Festival in October 2023. This is an opportunity for the students to learn from professionals and other colleagues from other schools. Principal Hayward presented the festival flyer providing the dates and costs associated with the trip. The students will submit films prior to the event and they will attend screenings throughout the festival on the big screens. The cost will be paid by student/parent funding along with fundraising efforts.

Dr. Kathy Zandi **MOVED** and Prem Aithal **SECONDED** a motion to approve the All American High School Film Festival field trip for our high school students in October 2023.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 10-0-0

| Member | Vote | Member | Vote |
|-------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Prem Aithal | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Nelson Rivera | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Lisa Connelly | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts | ABSENT |
| Dr. Joel D'Angelo | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Peter Sonski | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | | |

Principal Hayward, Assistant Principal Apicella, and Kasha Topa-Finberg left the meeting at 7:44pm.

b. STA contract and Board Action-revised First Read

Superintendent Wihbey presented a three year extension with STA for transportation services. The Superintendent provided comparable contract renewals from other districts and RSD 17 was the lowest reported. He reported some of the contract highlights such as adding cameras on all of the buses moving forward and the gas/oil tank if we remained with STA over 5 years (next year being the 5th year) the district would take ownership of the tank. Additionally, if the district assists with the hiring of the drivers there would be applicable credits given on an annual basis. Peter Sonski reported that the Finance committee did review the contract and recommended the approval of the contract. Mr. Sonski noted that they have been with the provider for many years and many of the drivers that were employed from the district are still with them now which is important that we have local people involved.

Peter Sonski **MOVED** and Dr. Joel D'Angelo **SECONDED** a motion to approve the 3-year contract with Student Transportation of America.

The Board discussed the points of the contract including the cost increases, age of the buses, language changes, the condition and inspection upkeep of the fleet, re-evaluation of bus routes for efficiency, and the clarification of the number of school days as written.

The Board requested that our attorney review the contract terms before proceeding. The contract will be viewed as a First Read and will be brought before the Board for potential action at the April meeting.

Peter Sonski and Dr. Joel D'Angelo **WITHDREW** the motion.

c. Updated Building Use Form-First Read

Director Mercier presented the updated program to move the system for building request forms to an online platform and review of the fees. Director Mercier noted that there was a review of other districts for pricing comparisons. The change in fees is based upon the increases in staffing costs and energy charges. One noted change was that there would be a proposed change regarding Non-profit organizations. There would be a fee assessed for those events moving forward. The Board discussed the topic of charging non-profit organizations. The Board has requested a list of prior non-profit organizations for review and analysis.

The Board has moved the topic to the Finance/Facilities Subcommittee for further discussion and then be brought back to the Board with recommendations.

d. Eastern CT Health and Medical Cooperative Insurance Plan-First Read

Superintendent Wihbey reported that RSD 17 has been invited to apply for ECHMC Health Insurance Plan. Documentation for the Board's review was the Welcome letter from the Chair of the ECHMC Health Plan, a historical rate change for 5 years for both our current plan vs ECHMC, plan brochures, and the By-laws and articles of the plan. Superintendent Wihbey noted the consideration would be to join a different provider for insurance however the insurance company and coverages would remain the same. The rate would be equivalent to our current plan at about 7.1% with the current plan and 7% with ECHMC. The increase with ECHMC contains a start-up cost of about 2%. If the District does join ECHMC, the Board will be able to appoint 2 Trustees to the ECHMC Board. The Board would like feedback and recommendations from Attorney Dugas and our broker on the plan for the Board's consideration. The Board would also like information on the back office processing of managing and interacting with the insurance company and the employee experience for the next meeting.

7. Board Committee Reports and Future Meetings

a. Facilities-Finance Subcommittee

Peter Sonski reported on the Tecton phase 2 and 3 of the process. Tecton is beginning the process and the stage is under planning and cooperation with Tecton and the anticipation is to have a design for the communities to evaluate and act on at referendum in early 2024.

b. Policy-Curriculum Subcommittee

Nelson Rivera reported that there were 7 policies reviewed for technical changes or to meet statutory requirements that are part of the consent agenda and will look for Board action next month.

Kathleen Zandi reported that there were three topics discussed:

- Update on the Black & Latino course. They are looking at 2 sessions next year.
- Preschool Math Program. There was a request for a new program for two classrooms.
- Reconsideration of instructional materials. In the last meeting it was discussed on whether it was to be a policy or a procedure. In the current meeting it was determined that it should be a procedure but asked for a condition to consider if the material was approved by the Board of Education already. There will be more information to come.

c. Communications-Strategic Planning Subcommittee

Prem Aithal reported that the committee held two meetings within a 16 day timeframe. In the first meeting, the Student Learning & Well Being component was discussed. In the February meeting the Educator & Leadership Development and Capacity component was discussed. The goal is to have the whole strategic plan first read in April and the second read in May.

Shawna Goldfarb reported on the Communications aspect of the meeting. The first topic was the feedback on the first newsletter that went out by email and in HK News. There were about 3,800 hits for the online newsletter. The second newsletter will go out in April. There was also discussion for a communications plan for the budget drivers aligning with the strategic plan.

8. Board Liaison Reports

a. HK Youth and Family Services

Shawna Goldfarb reported on Jennifer Favalora being named the Interim Executive Director at HKYFS. Discussions have begun on hiring a new Prevention Coordinator that will work with the District as well as discussions on putting together budget plans to be discussed with the schools as well as the two towns.

b. LEARN

Jennifer Favalora reported that they discussed the proposal before the State to fund the Magnet Schools. Additionally, discussion was held on bus company contracts that were coming up in many districts. Finally, there was a

presentation called Strategic Coherence and Growth given by Superintendent Wihbey.

c. Haddam Killingworth Recreation Department

No report

d. Haddam Board of Selectmen

Hamish MacPhail reported that he presented information on the last BOE meeting. There were inquiries on the budget and when they would be getting a copy of the budget.

e. Killingworth Board of Selectmen

No report but Dr. Zandi noted the meeting on the topic of PFAS that was on HK TV. They are also going through budget generation.

9. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes from the February 7, 2023 Board of Education Meeting
- b. Approval of Minutes from the February 9, 2023 Board of Education Special Meeting
- c. Approval of Minutes from the February 15, 2023 Board of Education Special Meeting
- d. Approval of the Disposal of obsolete books due to curriculum/course update. Submitted by Jennifer Beermuender, Curriculum Coordinator-Humanities.
- e. Personnel Report
- f. Enrollment Report
- g. First Read of seven (7) Revised Policies
 - a. Policy 2140: Policy Regarding Retention of Electronic Records and Information.
 - b. Policy 4118.1: Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees [Certified Staff].
 - c. Policy 4218.1: Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees [Non-Certified Employees].
 - d. Policy 5113: Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism.
 - e. Policy 5141.25: Policy and Management Plan for Students with Food Allergies, Glycogen Storage Disease and/or Diabetes.
 - f. Policy 5144.2 Physical Activity and Student Discipline. New title—Physical Activity, Undirected Play and Student Discipline.

- g. Policy 5145.10: Policy Regarding Section 504 of the Rehabilitation of 1973 and Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- h. Approval of a generous donation in the amount of \$5,300.00 from the KES PTO. The money will be used to complete the brick installation project at Killingworth Elementary School.

Prem Aithal **MOVED** and Dr. Kathy Zandi **SECONDED** with appreciation a motion for approval of the Consent Agenda as it stands.

Motion unanimously passed from the following voice votes 10-0-0

| Member | Vote | Member | Vote |
|-------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Prem Aithal | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Nelson Rivera | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Lisa Connelly | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Corey Roberts | ABSENT |
| Dr. Joel D'Angelo | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Peter Sonski | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Jennifer Favalora | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Dr. Kathleen Zandi | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Shawna Goldfarb | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | Suzanne Sack | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A |
| Hamish MacPhail | X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> A | | |

10. Board Discussion/News/Suggestions

Peter Sonski wanted to note the improvements in the audio system.

Board Chair Sacki adjourned the meeting at 8:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Kaiser
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education

Approval: _____ Date: _____
Joel D'Angelo, Secretary