

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

Present:	E. McClure, Chair	J. Robinson
	L. Bittman, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
	K. Fetchick, Secretary	D. Raymo
	D. Nanavaty	6 Staff
	R. Gaines	8 Public
	W. Hart	2 Press

Mrs. McClure called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

On behalf of the Board and the entire district Dr. Robinson thanked Mrs. McClure for her years of service to the school system and presented a gift to recognize her dedication.

Dr. Evan Pitkoff, former Superintendent, spoke about his five years in Newtown working with Mrs. McClure and the Board. He complimented Mrs. McClure for her work on the Board and thanked her for what she has done for the students of Newtown.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Fetchick moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of November 4, 2009 and the resignation for retirement of Albert Washicko, teacher at Head O'Meadow School, effective February 1, 2010. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 2 – Public Participation – none

Item 3 – Reports

Newtown High School Expansion Project Update:

Mr. Dumais gave a brief update on the progress of the high school project which is running on schedule. The concrete for the A-wing has been poured and the electricians are on the site. The steel work is mostly completed and the first layer of asphalt has been put on the tennis courts.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson said that a committee is in the process of developing a policy regarding NTV Channel 17 being used to tape and air the various meetings from the municipal office building.

She invited the Board members to a legislative breakfast being hosted by the Southern Fairfield Country Superintendent's Association at CES in Trumbull on December 4, 2009. It gives us a chance to interact with the legislators and discuss items that affect education.

Dr. Robinson attended a national superintendent's roundtable in Philadelphia. She

visited the Philadelphia School of the Future and two academies where classes were observed.

Right now we are only tracking absences due to flu, flu-like symptoms and fevers. The absences are trending down. Dances and long field trips were cancelled to help stop the spread.

Veteran's Day was wonderful in the schools. The breakfast at Sandy Hook School was well attended with a Navy pilot in uniform who spoke to the students. At the high school a number of our faculty are veterans, there were veteran guests and an assembly was held with music by the 102nd National Guard band. Some of our students played with them and sang.

Mrs. Bittman spoke about the AIS magnet school meeting today. Dr. Epple also attended to tour the school with other principals in the region. Because the state is not funding the magnet schools as much as originally thought, the biggest issue is the need to replace that money. The Danbury superintendent suggested a one-time charge of \$263 per pupil which is an additional \$10,520 for next year. We need to decide if we can continue to support the school. This should be put on the December agenda for a decision. She said that Dr. Robinson suggested wanting to know how the students are testing before they get to 5th grade. She also suggested having a two way conversation between the schools regarding curriculum.

2008-2009 Strategic School Profiles:

Dr. Gejda said that by law every district has to report to the Commissioner of Education with a profile of their schools. The profiles focus on student needs and school resources which include items that are purchased, staffing, class size, technology, and building maintenance. A big area is performance by students in testing and physical education. The primary purpose of the Strategic School Profile is for accountability. She noted that in the SSP for the middle school there were two omissions for required hours for elective subjects. There should have been 61 hours for music and 91 hours for world languages. In the middle school the students select Spanish, French or language arts which are electives.

Mrs. Bittman questioned the gap in instructional hours between us and the DRG. Dr. Robinson said that was because we have a shorter day.

Mrs. Bittman asked for examples of instructional hours from other districts. She also asked about the huge disparity in the physical education scores between the schools in Newtown.

Dr. Robinson said they would need to discuss that with the physical education teachers. Mr. Hart said he was interested in knowing how the other districts compared.

Mrs. Bittman suggested talking to all of the gym teachers. The profiles should be on the December agenda.

Outline Budget Process/Restructure Monthly Financial Report:

Mrs. Raymo spoke about the new format for the financial report. Two columns added to the report are Anticipated Obligations and Projected Balance. Anticipated obligations provides a method to forecast expense category fund balances that have not been approved but are anticipated to be expended or remain with an account balance to maintain the budget funding level.

The AARA Stabilization Grant is an employment grant for \$600,000 which we have for two years. We report to the state the employees being paid by this grant.

The Excess Cost Grant from the State of Connecticut is said to support local school districts for special education costs. The state may be reducing it to 70% which we didn't find out until after our budget was developed. We will get the amount of reimbursement in February or March.

The Magnet Transportation Grant provides reimbursement of \$1,300 for local students attending approved Magnet School programs.

Mr. Hart suggested moving energy costs out of supplies and keeping it as a separate category.

Mrs. Raymo spoke about the budget manual which is framed around our goals.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to approve the financial report and transfers dated October 31, 2009. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Mrs. Raymo said that Phoenix is our online accounting system. The budget will also be through this system and we are planning to train schools prior to the first of the year.

Item 4 – Old Business

Dr. Robinson said the Legislative Council added the teachers' contract to their November 4 agenda at the meeting. They were verbally in support but could not vote because it was added to the agenda that night. Mr. Rodgers stated that he was going to send a letter in support of the negotiated settlement. If there is no action, the contract is automatically approved.

MOTION: Mrs. Bittman moved that the Board of Education approve the Connecticut State Department of Education School Improvement Plan for Newtown Middle School to address Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 5 – New Business

2010 Schedule of Board Meetings:

Dr. Robinson said that we will start having our meetings in the Municipal Office Building in January. Equipment is being installed to tape meetings.

Mrs. Fetchick said that only having the four budget meetings was a concern because it doesn't allow enough time to review the material.

Mrs. Raymo said we can discuss items like enrollment prior to the budget meetings and also look at special education and plant maintenance separately.

Dr. Robinson said that some of those people will be ready earlier like Pupil Services and Buildings and Grounds.

Mr. Nanavaty said he feels we are going to be looking at a lean budget and will have to dwell on enrollment and staffing. There won't be anything new this year. It is more important for the administration to do the breakdown of what it will cost us to move forward as is with projected special education expenses and any add-ons. We could get that information the second meeting in December.

Mrs. Fetchick said the groups that took the voluntary reductions will have salary increases next year.

Dr. Robinson said that was correct. We are very frugal in spending money on supplies. We may have to look at multi-grade groupings.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to approve the 2010 Schedule of Board meetings.
Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 6 – Public Participation – none

Mrs. McClure recognized Debbie Leidlein and Chris Lagana as newly elected Board members.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to adjourn. Mrs. Fetchick seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 7 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Questions raised:

- Instructional hours from other districts
- Disparity in physical education scores between our schools
- Comparison of physical education scores from other districts
- Breakdown of what it will cost to move forward due to projected special education expenses and any add-ons

Respectfully submitted:

Kathryn Fetchick
Secretary