

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, June 1, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

L. Bittman, Chair	J. Robinson
K. Fetchick, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
D. Leidlein, Secretary	D. Raymo
D. Nanavaty	11 Staff
R. Gaines (absent)	12 Public
W. Hart	3 Press
C. Lagana	

Mrs. Bittman called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. She spoke about Danielle Jacobsen, the Newtown High School student, who lost her life this past weekend and asked for a moment of silence to remember her and her family during this difficult time.

Item 1 – Retiring Administrator/Retirees

Dr. Robinson said it was always bittersweet to say goodbye to retiring teachers but it was a pleasure for her to honor them on behalf of the students. Dr. Robinson introduced the following retirees: Donna Pagé, principal of Sandy Hook School, and teachers Julie Bastos, Sue Kurkul, Joyce Kuzmick, Carole MacInnes, Betty Roberson, John Ventresca, Gerry Waterbury, Russ Weiss and Carol Wolfson. Linda Giordano and Nelson Poulter were unable to attend. She thanked them for their service to the students of Newtown.

Mrs. Bittman said the Head O'Meadow School report was being removed from the agenda because Mr. Bircher was ill. She also asked to add possible action under the Chartwells presentation in Item 6.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to add possible action to the Chartwells presentation. Mr. Hart seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of May 18, 2010 and the donation of \$5,000 to Newtown Middle School through the "Men in Green" science team winning a national contest through the Lexus Eco-challenge. Mrs. Fetchick seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 3 – Public Participation - None

Item 4 – Reports

No correspondence report.

Chair Report: Mrs. Bittman said last week she met with Dr. Robinson and the PTA presidents on how to move forward in advocating the budget vote. There were site visits for the two principal candidates on Friday.

Mrs. Fetchick brought to the Board's attention Policy 2-103 which gives the procedures on how we evaluate the superintendent.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson said that students and families will be receiving a letter from the high school principal regarding proper behavior at the graduation ceremony. To keep it a respectful ceremony we are trying to set behavior standards. Because we leave debris behind we had to pay extra for cleaning and last year the principal was required to go to a hearing to allow us to use the facility again.

The middle school roof as part of the CIP will probably not be done this summer. To get reimbursement we have to go through the process of each board in town approving the project. The requirement for BSF is that the town approve the full estimate for the roof. First the drawings have to be approved, then the estimations and ed specs and then it goes to the town boards and finally to BSF. The full amount has to be approved even though it won't be the actual cost.

Mr. Nanavaty said the minutes of the Board of Finance meeting recommended that it proceed to the Legislative Council. It should be discussed at their next meeting and then to Hartford. What is the delay?

Dr. Robinson said the Legislative Council is meeting tomorrow night and it is on their agenda. The delay is getting the drawings completed and the architect approved. The PCT has been scheduled.

Mr. Nanavaty asked what Mr. Faiella's opinion was regarding getting the roof repaired. Dr. Robinson said after the BSF approval Mr. Faiella would come and lay out the specifics.

Mr. Nanavaty said we thought it would take a year and a half to two years. His concern is increased costs and if it is going to take longer to complete. It might be worth looking at what we can do now.

Dr. Robinson said we are having the usual problems at the high school with the students getting their schedules for next year and not able to get the classes they want. Latin remains a problem. One teacher has an additional class of Latin but we still have students who want to take it and cannot. AP Psychology has 150 students placed with 70 who were turned away.

Dr. Robinson said a number of years ago we belonged to the Tri State Consortium which included high achieving school districts. We have been invited to join and today that group voted and accepted Newtown. It involves districts from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Lastly, Dr. Robinson stated that we have a crisis team in the district. With the tragedy over the weekend this team knew exactly what to do and is doing an excellent job.

Mrs. Bittman said her high school principal came to her university during her freshman year to ask if they were prepared for college. It might be a good idea to ask college freshmen who graduated from Newtown High School if they were prepared.

Policy Committee: Mrs. Fetchick said there was no meeting due to her illness. They went through the first section of the bylaws and one policy we don't have addresses hearings such as personnel or expulsion and talks about what type of records we should keep as a result of these hearings. She stated that Dr. Robinson suggested having a hearing officer instead of having the Board be present.

Dr. Robinson said they are basically talking about expulsion hearings using an independent person.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if it was a paid position. Dr. Robinson said it was a per diem position usually held by an attorney.

Mr. Nanavaty said his preference was to have Board members sit on expulsions. Sometimes the punishment has to fit the crime. His concern is that the hearing officer doesn't have that personal contact or understanding of an individual and would merely apply the policy.

Mr. Hart said he wouldn't want to do it without some thought but it makes a lot of sense if you can't get enough members.

Mr. Lagana said it would give us some flexibility.

Facilities Committee: Mr. Hart said there was no meeting.

Item 6 – New Business

Dr. Gejda said there were three books for approval. One is a fifth grade social studies book and the two high school books were for US History and AP Psychology.

Candi Dietter, social studies department chair, spoke about the US History and AP psychology books along with the process for choosing the books with feedback from the students.

Mrs. Leidlein questioned the need for 450 books since we will have online textbooks.

Mrs. Dietter said most students want the textbooks.

Mrs. Leidlein said if there was more of a push to use the online text more students may want to use it.

Mrs. Dietter said in time they will but they aren't there yet so we aren't ready to eliminate the book.

Mrs. Bittman said that also many students don't have a portable device and study where they can.

Jonathan Hull, teacher at Reed School, spoke about the 5th grade social studies textbook. The 6th grade curriculum is concept based so we wanted to prepare 5th grade students. It looks at unity and diversity.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education approve the following textbooks:

- Social Studies – Western Hemisphere & Europe by Dr. Sarah Bednarz, Dr. Mark Schug, Dr. Ines Miyares and Dr. Charles White, published by Houghton Mifflin, 2008, for grade 5
- United States History: Modern America by Emma Lapsansky-Werner, Peter Levy, Randy Roberts and Alan Taylor, published by Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2010, for grade 11
- AP Psychology by David Myers, published by Bedford, Freeman & Worth, 2010, for grade 12

Mr. Lagana seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Chartwells Presentation for the 2010-2011 School Year:

Jill Patterson, resident dietitian for the past six years, spoke about the programs and events with the students.

Dan Shields, Director of Dining Services, said they were going to start working with the culinary program at the high school. Next year there will be three lunch waves with 30 Board of Education

minutes to eat. Their concern is having two cafeterias and not making as much revenue. Hawley will be a full service cafeteria next year. He and Jill were awarded the 2009 Chartwells NE Regional and National Account of the Year Award and won the Whole Grains Challenge last year. We are at 2.5% for reduced lunches and 2.6% for free lunches. Our catering is half of what it used to be. Snow days also impact our sales and we are falling short by 2.5%. All costs have increased and our district labor is higher also. With less lunch waves at the high school we will be able to trim labor there and with Hawley opening up some of the Reed positions can also be cut back.

Mrs. Fetchick said our enrollment is dropping off in the elementary schools and hoped they would be planning for that.

Mr. Shields said they are looking at that and there will be adjustments in every school.

Mr. Nanavaty asked if they had any other ways for the middle school to get the lunch numbers back up as the enrollment has increased.

Mr. Shields said this year Chartwells gave a gift of \$50,000 which added two new stations at the middle school. We are going to address labor there also with a savings of about 3.5 hours per day.

Mr. Nanavaty asked about the Hawley kitchen.

Mrs. Raymo said everything will be in the gymnasium.

Mr. Nanavaty said Hawley has peanut free classrooms and if the students aren't going to be eating in the gym they will have to have peanut free tables. Also, the middle school lunch program seems to need improvement.

Mr. Shields said the chef at Reed will work with the staff at the middle school to help drive up what is offered.

Mr. Nanavaty said we are \$60,000 under our target.

Tom O'Donnell, District Manager, said we are down at the middle school even with putting the \$50,000 into the program. We didn't see the return in Newtown but it is like this across the country.

Mr. Nanavaty asked if they were requesting an increase.

Mr. Shields said they were asking for a 25 cent increase for meals and ala carte entrées. We aren't meeting our expenses. Regarding French fries we are suggesting at the middle and high schools to only offer them ala carte. Years ago they tried to get rid of the fries. They would like an increase of 15 cents for the fries.

Mr. Nanavaty asked for a list of the increases. We are looking at a \$60,000 shortfall.

Mrs. Raymo said we have not had a profit yet. Chartwells is going into the third year and still absorbing a loss. We have to give them the ability to start breaking even in this district. We have to look at increasing prices.

Mr. O'Donnell said this year we absorbed the entire loss.

Mrs. Raymo said we have to let them have a program that will break even.

Mrs. Leidlein said she was all for increasing the cost to make the product. If we increase the cost and the number of students buying the product goes down, what is the plan to offset that?

Mr. O'Donnell said usually about 5% don't purchase. The lunch price in Newtown is low for what they get. It is not about making a profit but about breaking even. We give you back the fee each year.

Mr. Hart said we need to get an accurate set of financials.

Mr. Nanavaty said we've been provided with those numbers in the past. The Board should move to the Trumbull prices. He asked to see the proposals regarding the French fries.

Mrs. Fetchick said we should be compared to a district with the services like ours. 10% is a big increase.

Mr. Lagana said an increase should be for all the meals across the board.

Mrs. Raymo said we could get a schedule of where we were when we started and where we are now with an anticipated financial through June and more narrative to implement the plan to break even next year.

Mr. Nanavaty said to look at last year's paperwork from Chartwells. Last year we got a monthly breakdown of costs and profits.

Mrs. Bittman asked if there was a way to limit the more healthy choices.

Mr. Nanavaty said fruit used to be provided with each meal and most was thrown away. Now there are choices.

Mr. Hart said we need a complete set of financials.

Mrs. Raymo said the financial information would be in the Board packets for the next meeting.

Item 5 – Old Business

Newtown High School Expansion Project Update: Dr. Robinson said there is some trouble regarding the date for completion. She attended the owner's meeting. The FF&E is on its way. She invited Board members to contact the principal for a walk through of the addition.

Health Insurance Consultant: Dr. Robinson said the Board of Selectman approved the consultant firm of Lindberg and Ripple. They have worked with school districts in Simsbury, Berlin, Meriden and Suffield.

Mrs. Fetchick said it was a four-year contract and asked if there were any costs not included on Appendix A.

Mrs. Raymo said she spoke with Bob Tait. We may want to draft an RFP for a complete bid on health insurance with dental. It would be \$10,000 from the Board of Education and the Town for a total of \$20,000 to have another bid proposal for next year.

Mr. Nanavaty asked when we would look at moving the dental coverage.

Mrs. Raymo said we would probably look at it as a package for next year. Anthem handles the Town dental. She would combine it into one package.

Mr. Hart said we need to schedule a workshop session with the Town regarding the self insurance. There is a lot of misunderstanding. If we miscalculate and underfund we will have to make it up next year with higher premiums. The commission doesn't exist. We need to get together to understand it.

Mrs. Raymo said only the carrier will set the percentage cost increases. Dealing with an anticipated cost from the industry the risk is what to fund. The stop loss insurance doesn't kick in until you meet their number.

MOTION: Mrs. Fetchick moved that the Board of Education approve Lindberg & Ripple, Inc., 100 Northfield Drive, Windsor, Connecticut as the Health Insurance Consultant for the Newtown Board of Education. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Teacher Education and Mentoring Program:

Dr. Gejda spoke about the TEAM district plan to guide us through the transition from the BEST Program to the TEAM program. It must be submitted to the state for approval.

Mrs. Fetchick was reluctant to approve it because we don't know the costs associated with the new program especially without having a budget.

Dr. Gejda said in terms of professional development it is difficult to put in a bottom line cost. We can't determine this until we know how many new teachers we will have.

Mrs. Fetchick asked about a professional development plan.

Dr. Gejda said we have one in place. For new teacher orientation mentors will be in to meet with their mentees. As the year goes on there will be times when training will be required to meet student needs.

Mr. Nanavaty recommended that we move on this tonight. We are at the point that the TEAM program will also be a part of teacher evaluation. This is a good first step.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education approve the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program. Mr. Lagana seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Early Release Day for Team Meetings:

Dr. Robinson said she would like to have an early release day once a month for professional learning committees to meet. There is no time for these meetings and because we have increased the school day by five minutes next year we would still be 10 hours ahead in instructional time.

Mr. Hart asked how that would affect kindergarten.
Dr. Robinson said we would rotate kindergarten.

Mr. Nanavaty asked how this would affect the bus schedule.
Dr. Robinson said we have an early release schedule and would balance A.M. and P.M. kindergarten.

Mrs. Fetchick asked if there would be an early release in the months we have professional development days.

Dr. Robinson said we would because the early dismissal days would be devoted to teacher collaboration. Professional Learning Communities are about instruction and collaboration.

Mr. Nanavaty thought we should discuss this after the referendum on June 8. A proposal to decrease our budget is to reduce the student school days by three days. Dr. Robinson said she would like them once a week but we can't do that. The middle school can meet once a week but not the others.

Mrs. Fetchick was concerned about enough instructional hours and is worried about taking away teaching time. Why can't we do it after school or some other way? She'd like to table it until after the budget has passed.

Dr. Robinson said we cannot mandate that the teachers meet after school. She feels if we give the teachers two hours of collaboration it is her hope it will continue to meetings after school.

Mr. Nanavaty said he knew it was hard to schedule afternoon meetings because the teachers are busy with afterschool activities. He wasn't against adding time to the school day but we should put it off for two weeks.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to table the vote on this item. Mrs. Leidlein seconded.

Mrs. Bittman said it was good to raise up our level of education and feels it is worth having the students out of class during that time.

Vote: 6 ayes

Budget Update:

Dr. Robinson gave the Board reductions totaling \$1,788,206 which included infrastructure costs, special education excess costs, medical insurance and early retirement salary reductions. We are still looking for \$511,794 to meet the \$2,300,000 cut.

Mrs. Fetchick said at the Legislative Council meeting Dr. Robinson spoke about an 82% number for excess cost.

Dr. Robinson said that is what we are getting for this year.

Mrs. Bittman asked if any Board members were advocating a "no" vote on the budget. There were no Board members advocating a "no" vote.

Mrs. Leidlein said her position hasn't changed and would vote "yes" on the budget. Mrs. Bittman was also advocating a "yes" vote.

Item 7 – Public Participation

Kinga Walsh, 21 Horseshoe Ridge Road, said regarding the early dismissal plan she was concerned about it being disruptive for the students. She publicly apologized to Dr. Robinson for an email she sent to the Legislative Council. She didn't know Dr. Robinson had sent one. She asked the Board to put out a public statement on the budget because of their influence on people in this town. Let the people know they have a united decision.

Marabeth Perreira, 33 Pocono Road, asked if the early release would be for every school in the district.

Dr. Robinson said it would be for all schools. Elementary meetings will be for the entire grade levels from the four schools. Afternoon kindergarten will be affected so there is some concern about meeting the state minimum instruction time.

Robin Fitzgerald, 24 Old Farm Hill Road, wondered why the Board didn't take a poll vote. Why can't the Board make a statement on their vote?

Chuck Hepp, 4 Winter Ridge Road, wanted to see more passion by the Board regarding the vote.

Mr. Nanavaty said he would vote "yes" for the budget and would advocate that everyone else does. He appreciated the Legislative Council adding back \$200,000.

Mr. Hart was also advocating a "yes" vote and encouraged everyone else to do the same.

Mr. Lagana advocated a "yes" vote all along and he was thrilled that money was put back into our budget.

Mrs. Leidlein would not advocate a "no" vote and believes we can find saving so we don't have to make drastic teacher reductions.

Mrs. Fetchick advocated a "yes" vote last time and still feels we don't need the teacher cuts.

Mrs. Bittman advocated a "yes" vote and is grateful for the \$200,000 back from the Legislative Council. Newtown needs to get behind this budget and pass it.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to go into executive session to discuss the position of an administrator and the transportation director status and invited Dr. Robinson. Mr. Hart seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 8 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 10:30 p.m.

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

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 p.m.

Questions raised: List of Chartwells increases
Chartwells financials for 2010-2011

Respectfully submitted:

Debbie Leidlein
Secretary