

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	12 Staff
L. Bittman	10 Public
R. Gaines	2 Press
K. Alexander	

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Senior Project Presentation

Dr. Robinson spoke about the junior/senior project presentations at the high school this year and invited Palmer Lintz, a junior to the meeting tonight. Palmer gave his presentation on aviation and stated that would like to be a professional pilot.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of June 7, 2011, the donation of oxygen tanks to Kevin’s Community Center and the Ambulance Association, and the donation of \$5,000 to Hawley School from Liz and Todd Bogdanoff. Mr. Buzzi seconded. Mrs. Leidlein asked to change the incorrect calendar year on page 4 of the minutes from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 3 – Public Participation

Fern Pace, 5 Teachers Ridge Road, was in support of the owner operators. The bidding process could save \$500,000. Last year the Board refused to save the district \$183,000. Two years ago the owner/operators gave back close to \$30,000 which was used for bonuses. Failure to negotiate with the owner/operators will bring more legal fees for the taxpayers. She asked the Board to sit down with and talk to them.

Maureen Casetta, 12 Johnny Appleseed Drive, was concerned with the early release days on the school calendar. A Board member suggested taking the September and June in-service days out. She asked if the Board receive information on the amount of time teachers are pulled for PPTs and training. She asked for a sample from each building for a month to see how much they leave the classroom. She would volunteer to get that information. She supports in-service time but wants to protect instructional time.

Karen Kugle, 29 Brookwood Drive, said parents have had to seek tutoring for their first and second grade students. Head O’Meadow has 26 first grade students in extra help program. There are unrealistic expectations put on our first and second grade students. Why there is a full week off in February and why add 10 minutes to the school day? Concerned about the high frequency of subs in the classrooms who are not qualified teachers.

Laura Roche, 41 Cobblers Mill Road, spoke about the Reed School schedule with only 139 full days out of the school year. With 43 shortened days it comes down to 129 full days. Reed lost 18 hours of reading instructional time this year. Teachers are struggling to get through the curriculum. The administration should protect and monitor instructional time and have time limits on assemblies. She asked for a better balance in the school calendar.

Kinga Walsh, 21 Horseshoe Ridge Road, suggested moving the January early release day to another week that month and remove the one in June. She asked to have the Board discuss how many early release days are needed and what the benefits are to the students. She expressed concern about cutting the EAs.

Item 4 – Reports

Mr. Buzzi said the Board received correspondence from Betsy Rickers, two from Chris Gardner, Chris Lyddy, Chuck and Judy Dubois, Dawn Kornhaus, Kristine Feda, two from Fran Maturo, Jane Long, Jill Beaudry, Karen Bobowick, Kathy Meyer, Keith and Barb Baron, three from Kinga Walsh, Laura Main, Laura Roche, Pam Kohn and Robin Fitzgerald.

Chair Report: Mr. Hart spoke about the high school dedication. The special education advisory board met regarding the need to make the process easier for the parents. The owner/operators have made a complaint to the labor board.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson spoke to the number of functions at the end of the year. The high school graduation is June 22 at 6:00 p.m. at Wesconn and the middle school moving up ceremony is June 23 at 6:00 p.m. at Wesconn.

Mr. Buzzi said the policy committee was asked to meet with the Board of Finance before going forward with the transfer policy.

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to approve the financial report for the month ending May 31, 2011. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Financial Report:

Mr. Bienkowski went over the financial report. Schools were instructed to stop all purchases by May 13. The main changes include an increase in salaries of \$53,000 due to encumbrance adjustments and administrative transfers to cover tutoring requirements and custodial vacancies. There was a \$39,000 increase in legal expenses. There was a decrease of \$13,000 for transportation costs because of one less school day. Supplies increased by \$58,000 for the inclusion of final purchase orders and better estimates for natural gas and electric. Today we received information that the excess cost grant is 77.85% which we previously estimated would be 80%.

Mr. Nanavaty's concerned that we should be looking to reduce the budget by more than the \$732,000 because next year we may face the possibly that we have overspent.

Mr. Bienkowski feels we should leave it as it is because we are getting more than the 75% with the excess cost grant for special education.

Vote: 7 ayes

Mr. Bienkowski said that Fred Hurley worked with the CCM to bid out their electricity as their contract expires sooner than ours. They got a favorable price and asked for us to consider this. We had four bidders. Our current cost per kW is \$.08610 and bid cost is \$.07902. We will pay \$66,673 less for electricity with the new company, Direct Energy. We locked in for two years at this price which is lower than the Town's.

Middle Gate School Report:

Chris Geissler, Pam Fagan and Judy Beers spoke about the goals of Middle Gate School. They have a shared leadership approach with an open door policy between teachers, staff and the community and provide professional development for the teachers with each teacher as a member of one active committee that meets monthly.

Mr. Nanavaty feels we are lucky to have Mr. Geissler who was praised by his former Superintendent in Fairfield. He asked about teachers being taken out for in-service time and if he has seen any improvement since the early release days began.

Mr. Geissler said regarding teachers being taken out of class, we do our best to not impact instructional time. Teachers sometimes give up their special time to observe another teacher or PPTs. Through the early release days the teachers talk more about a variety of things and implement information received from the PLCs.

Item 6 – New Business

Chartwells Contract:

Mr. Bienkowski stated that the program goes out to bid every five years. We issue a one year contract with the option for 4 one-year renewals. This will be the third year in the cycle. The base contract doesn't change so there is only an amendment. They are running the program for \$3,799 more this year with a profit of approximately \$40,000.

Mrs. Bittman asked the reasons for the profit this year.

Mr. Shields said we had some price increases and received \$40,000 in USDA funds used for a fresh produce program so we didn't have to use our funds for the purchases. He also adjusted labor in each school for a savings. We experienced an evening out between the facilities and tried to become more innovative and collaborated with the culinary department to create additional offerings which increased student and staff buying full meals.

Mr. Nanavaty noted they did not receive information about prices for next year as we had in the past. He asked about additional sales with the new cafeteria.

Mr. Shields said we are about 1,000 meals more than last year. 14% of the meals are free and reduced. Our revenues increased primarily from the a la carte sales.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year renewal of Chartwells agreement for the period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

Mr. Buzzi seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 5 – Old Business

Middle School Roof Project:

Dr. Robinson referred to the special Board of Finance meeting with the Board of Selectman and Public Building and Site Commission this Thursday regarding the resolution for the middle school roof project. Mr. Nanavaty and Mr. Faiella will be attending also. The plan is that if this was signed off they were ready to start putting up scaffolding the middle school on Friday. With the decision not until Thursday night the resolution has to then go to the Legislative Council. The concern is how much of the alternates are added on. The concern is timing because there is no alternative to house 900 students if the middle school isn't ready.

2011-2012 Budget:

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved that the Board of education approve the adjustments to the 2011-2012 budget as presented. Mr. Nanavaty seconded.

Mrs. Leidlein is not in favor of cutting EAs because of the feedback from principals and parents. She provided a document with her adjustments.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to amend the motion and eliminate the high school assistant principal position. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Dr. Robinson said research does not validate that EAs increase the academic achievement of students. Certified teachers get better results with the students. Our lowest achieving students are working with EAs when the teachers should be working with them. We have a very high number of EAs for our student population.

Mrs. Bittman asked if we have staff to take that over.

Dr. Robinson said we would have to work that out but the best remediation is in the classroom, not being pulled out. These students miss out on the basic instruction when pulled out of their rooms. Special education and kindergarten EA positions will remain. EA seniority is looked at first and then the principal makes the decision of where needs are within the school.

Mr. Nanavaty said he didn't want to put in writing where our reductions would be.

Mr. Alexander said we should make our decision on the information we have currently.

He wanted to clarify the amendment to indicate it was to put the EAs back.

Mr. Hart said we can't afford the high school assistant principal or all of the EAs.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman, nay, Mr. Nanavaty-nay, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein, aye, Mr. Hart-aye. The motion passed 4 to 3.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein amended the motion to cut \$50,000 from electricity. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-nay, Mr. Gaines-nay, Mrs. Bittman-nay, Mr. Nanavaty-nay, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-aye, Mr. Hart-nay The motion failed 6 to 1.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein amended the motion to reduce the budget allocation for oil by \$50,000. Mr. Alexander seconded.

Vote: 7 nays

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to add \$123,323 to the EAs. Mr. Alexander seconded. Mr. Nanavaty said Dr. Robinson said we rely on EAs essentially to our detriment. By eliminating EAs we are not eliminating the learning capability of our students. We are just asking teachers to do their Board of Education responsibility. The EAs we are going to keep are valuable.

Mrs. Leidlein said some EAs are certified.
Mr. Gaines said we are statistically bloated with EAs.

Mr. Nanavaty said to keep in mind our reduction is a dollar amount. Monies will be spread between the schools. The decisions may involve maintaining the current staff in different roles.

Mr. Buzzi said we could move the contingency into that. There are alternatives. We can move the money for the assistant principal into a line item and decide later where to use it.

Mr. Hart said having a contingency would be smart. He researched and said we have 52% more EAs than the average for our DRG.

Mr. Alexander said it would be good to have those numbers. Do the schools that have less EA's have more certified staff?

Mr. Hart said we are cutting \$85,000 which is 40% of the EAs.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines-nay, Mrs. Bittman-nay, Mr. Nanavaty-nay, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-aye, Mr. Hart-nay The motion failed 5 to 2.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to add the high school science teacher for \$57,256. Mr. Buzzi seconded.

Mr. Nanavaty said we are going to have to add teachers to the high school for the high school reform act and should add two teachers per year. We should add the science teacher.

Mr. Alexander agreed. Mrs. Leidlein preferred to the money back for the EAs. Mr. Buzzi would rather see us have the money to deal with it in the future.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman-nay, Mr. Nanavaty-aye, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Mr. Hart-nay The motion failed 4 to 3

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to place \$123,323 in contingency. Mr. Gaines seconded. Mr. Hart was more comfortable changing the percentage for special education. Mrs. Leidlein was concerned because there was no policy on contingency.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-nay, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman-aye, Mr. Nanavaty-nay, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Hart-nay The motion failed 6 to 2.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to put \$123, 323 into special education reimbursement and have the Director of Business make the percentage work. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-nay, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman-aye, Mr. Nanavaty-nay, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Mr. Hart-aye The motion failed 4 to 3.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to put \$50,000 back into the special education cost grant. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman-aye, Mr. Nanavaty-aye, Mr. Buzzi-aye, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Mr. Hart-nay The motion passed 5 to 2

MOTION: Mrs. Bittman moved to add back the high school science teacher for \$57, 256. Mr. Buzzi seconded.
Mrs. Bittman said the social studies teacher was first priority and second was science.

Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines-aye, Mrs. Bittman-aye, Mr. Nanavaty-aye, Mr. Buzzi-nay, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Mr. Hart-nay The motion passed 4 to 3.

Mr. Bienkowski said \$16,067 remained to be cut.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to remove \$16,067 from plant operations and maintenance. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: Mr. Alexander-aye, Mr. Gaines, aye, Mrs. Bittman-aye, Mr. Nanavaty-aye, Mr. Buzzi-aye, Mrs. Leidlein-nay, Mr. Hart-aye The motion passed 6 to 1.

Vote on the main motion for the 2011-2012 budget: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Leidlein)

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education grant permission to the Director of Business to make any minor technical adjustments and/or mathematical corrections necessary to the 2011-2012 adopted budget as a result of these changes. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the 2011-2012 revised school calendar. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Mrs. Leidlein amended the motion as follows: move the early release day from January 6 to January 13 which leads into a long weekend, move the February 3 early release day to February 17 for a long weekend, eliminate the March 2 early release day because of conferences that month, move the May 4 early release day to May 25 for a long weekend, and move the June 1 early release day to June 12 or the second to last day of school and make June 13 a half day.

Mr. Buzzi moved to amend the motion to eliminate the June early release day.

Dr. Robinson stated that it would not educationally impact us to move January 6 to January 13 or February 3 to February 17 and eliminate March 2. It is problematic to move the days in May and June.

Mr. Buzzi moved to amend the motion to eliminate the June early release day. Mrs. Bittman commended Dr. Robinson for moving the early release days to Friday. The Board unanimously agreed on the amendment.

Vote: 7 ayes

Special Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlien moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the special meeting on June 8, 2011. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote 3 ayes
Mr. Buzzi, Mr. Nanavaty, Mrs. Bittman, and Mr. Alexander abstained.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the special meeting on June 9, 2011. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 5 ayes
Mrs. Leidlein and Mrs. Bittman abstained.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to go into executive session regarding the owner/operator labor board complaint and invited Dr. Robinson and Mr. Bienkowski.
Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 7 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 11:50 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to adjourn. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 8 – no votes

Item 9 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrew Buzzi, Jr.
Secretary