

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, September 15, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

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| Present: | E. McClure, Chair | J. Robinson |
| | L. Bittman, Vice Chair | L. Gejda |
| | K. Fetchick, Secretary | 2 Staff |
| | D. Nanavaty | 7 Public |
| | A. Wiedemann | 1 Press |
| | R. Gaines | |
| | W. Hart | |

Mrs. McClure called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Fetchick moved to approve the minutes of September 1, 2009.
Mrs. Wiedemann seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstained (Mr. Nanavaty)

MOTION: Mrs. Fetchick moved to approve the high school field trip to Canada and the gift of \$320 from district retirees to Newtown Middle School in memory of Annette Kerchief, a former teacher there, to purchase library books in her honor.
Mrs. Wiedemann seconded and asked that the high school do a comparison of field trip costs to see if they could get a better rate because she believed they could find something less expensive. Mrs. Bittman agreed. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 2 – Public Participation - none

Item 3 – Reports

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson said that three Hawley staff members have been appointed to leadership positions for the Northwest Council for the Connecticut Reading Association. They are Lea Attanasio, president, Lynn Holcomb, vice president and Brandi Oatis, secretary.

Two professors from Shandong University of Finance are visiting Newtown schools and one professor, Wang Haimei, will spend time at Middle Gate School and the other, Zhang Zhen, will be at the high school. Their visit is from September 27 to October 10.

Questions are being raised about the reimbursement for the high school project.
Mr. Nanavaty said he received an email from Chris Lyddy who said that the vote on the bill is scheduled for next week.

Dr. Robinson said that regarding our move to the new offices there is not enough storage space. Only temporary storage has been offered in one of the other buildings so we are requesting additional space. We are still scheduled to move October 30.

Last year we received a grant for community conversations around bullying. This year we received an additional grant for \$2,000 on underage drinking which was submitted by Judy Blanchard.

Dr. Robinson asked if any Board member was interested in attending the teaching and learning workshop in Waterbury on September 25. There is also the CAFE/CAPSS conference in November.

Also, the owner of Mona Lisa is offering \$4,000 in scholarships from their golf tournament.

Mrs. Bittman said she would go to the workshop in Waterbury on September 25.

Dr. Robinson said there was a discussion about some of our current furniture not being used at the new building. Also, none of the BOE furniture is reimbursable from the state.

Mrs. Bittman asked if the privacy issues have been addressed in the new building. Dr. Robinson said there is a much better degree of privacy for human resources. Mrs. Fetchick asked where the buses would park.

Dr. Robinsons said she wasn't sure and that we would have to talk to the current owner of the property.

Summer School Report:

Dr. Gejda said that our program was impacted by the budget but there was some funding for academic programs. The enrichment programs were self-supporting. We also saw some increased enrollment at the high school.

Mrs. Wiedemann asked why there was a dramatic decrease in enrollment.

Mrs. Gellis said the decision to have the program was delayed so parents and teachers made different arrangements but we were able to accommodate those who wanted to be in the program.

Mrs. Fetchick asked how the parents felt about moving the elementary program to the Reed School.

Mrs. Gellis said a number of parents didn't want to go to Reed because they had to drive farther and liked their children to be in their home school. The teachers liked being able to interact with the other teachers they normally wouldn't see.

Mr. Nanavaty commended Mrs. Gellis. He hoped that the summer musical theater workshop would be part of the program next year.

CAPT/AP/ACT/SAT Report:

Mr. Dumais presented the Newtown High School testing report which included CAPT, AP, ACT, and SAT results. Regarding the SAT, the participation by the senior

graduating class dropped to 72% this past year. In many cases the student choices for schools had been made earlier so it was not necessary for them to take the test.

Regarding AP testing, we stopped requiring students to take the test because the fee is \$85. The school is responsible to pay the fee if the student cannot.

For the CAPT, the last three years are different generation tests. We are holding steady in math in our DRG but our scores went down in science. This year we will identify 10% of the freshman class who are highly likely to not succeed in courses and put in remediation for them. In reading we are coming close to the DRG. Writing performance increased but not in special education.

Mrs. Bittman asked what was being done to get the students better invested in taking the CAPT.

Mr. Dumais said students have to pass sections of CAPT to graduate. He spoke to each homeroom to stress the importance of the test. Class size makes a difference.

Dr. Gejda said the high school departments are working on reading and writing in their classes.

Mr. Dumais said that everyone is responsible for reading, writing and special education.

Mr. Nanavaty said it is more important to look at their CMT's for the 8th grade and see how they performed on the CAPT in 10th grade. The students don't take these tests seriously.

Item 4 – Old Business

Newtown High School Expansion Project Update:

Mr. Dumais said the project slowed down due to organic material in the ground behind the wrestling gym which had to be removed before the foundation could be put in. The foundation is complete but flooring hasn't been poured yet. The old kitchen will remain on propane until the project is finished. The state did some abatement of asbestos and we are roughly a week behind. Steel work will start on schedule. The testing company has been on site the last 30 days. April 1 the gym closes along with anything that side of the lobby until fall. The new building is scheduled to be finished September 2010. The main wing of the school will be redone and we will have to relocate the nurse for the first semester. The project should be completed January 2011. After the lottery for senior parking we were left with five extra spots. There is an issue with students leaving the school in the middle of the day and we are working on stopping this behavior.

Mrs. Fetchick asked if there was a financial impact to finding that soil and having to remove it.

Mr. Dumais said that Earthmovers can sell the soil and they will remove it. It just cost us some time. The greenhouse was scheduled to be dismantled and moved. They will allow for rebuilding next year.

Item 5 – New Business

Use of Tobacco Products Policy 7-502:

Dr. Robinson said we altered this policy to fit the law.

Mr. Nanavaty said this policy is not just limited to students.

Dr. Robinson said this is only in the student section.

Mr. Nanavaty said the statute limits it to students under 18 years of age. If a teacher smokes on school grounds or carries cigarettes they can be affected by this policy.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to accept Use of Tobacco Products Policy 7-502 as modified. Mrs. Wiedemann seconded. Vote 7 ayes.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the financial reports ending July 31, 2009 and August 31, 2009. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Mr. Hart mentioned that our encumbrance numbers increased.

Mrs. Raymo said that in August we need to encumber what is obligated. We have not credited the employee contributions yet. We still have things we are working on. We also don't know what we will get from the excess cost grant. We will create a separate category for stimulus money.

Mrs. Wiedemann asked if the Nurtury program started yet and if we had any cost comparisons.

Dr. Robinson said the program has started and the fee increased and would go up again next year.

Mrs. Raymo said she has been analyzing our accounting system and will be changing to a requisition system which will eliminate the hand process of entering purchase orders. We also want to develop the budget within the accounting system.

Vote: 7 ayes

Mrs. Raymo addressed Mrs. Wiedemann's request for revenue information. She said last year we took in money that went to pay for custodial overtime when schools were being used. We took in \$25,377 and spent \$25,169. The other bit of money was \$9,784.50 for the rental of rooms. We use that money for the maintenance of the buildings.

Mrs. Fetchick said she made a presentation at the Board of Finance meeting where they spoke about the property on Church Hill Road. The town is still negotiating a price with the owner.

Item 5 – New Business (continued)

Non-residency Procedures:

Dr. Robinson said we follow up when we get a report of a possible non-resident situation. Information is verified at the school level and in the transportation office. A letter is sent from central office telling them to remove their child from school with a copy going to the superintendent in that town. We have also hired a private investigator on occasion. There is one issue currently that we have followed up on and taken the appropriate legal action. Parents have to show proof of residency when they register. It is more difficult for us if something happens to a family and they move out of Newtown but keep their children here. We have had several instances that they are moving in with grandparents so there won't be utility bills in their name to verify the Newtown address. We would then provide an affidavit which has to be signed and notarized.

Mr. Nanavaty asked if we take the name and address of the person reporting the non-resident student.

Dr. Robinson said we do if they give that information but we do not give credibility to a lot of the anonymous reports.

Mr. Nanavaty said what is clear from our policy is that the burden is on the parent, not on the Board. If the Superintendent defines that they are not a resident we would send them a bill or the Board would start legal action. There was a situation where we were approached by the parents of a senior at the high school who asked if the tuition could be waived, which is something we can do in certain situations.

Mr. Hart said that last year there was some concern that there would be an influx of students from private schools.

Dr. Robinson said Sandy Hook had an increase in first grade but she had no figures on the other schools.

Item 6 – Public Participation

Audrey Greenwood, 7 Susan Lane, said that regarding the tobacco policy, people attending events at the schools should be reminded that they cannot smoke when they go outside.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to go into executive session to discuss a personnel issue and invited Dr. Robinson. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 7 – Executive Session

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

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathryn Fetchick
Secretary