

**Please Note: these minutes are pending Board approval.**  
**Board of Education**  
**Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on May 1, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers at 3 Primrose Street.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
R. Harriman-Stites, Vice Chair	J. Evans Davila
D. Cruson, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Leidlein	5 Staff
J. Vouros	14 Public
A. Clure	2 Press
D. Delia	
T. Hankin	
R. Edwards (absent)	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to discuss the possible carry-over of the Superintendent's vacation days and invited Dr. Rodrigue and Suzanne D'Eramo. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session ended at 7:11 p.m.

Public session began at 7:32 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Possible Vote on Executive Session Item

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to carry over five days of vacation into the 2018-19 contract year on a one-time basis, based on unique circumstances that prevented the Superintendent from using her allotted vacation days during the 2017-18 contract year. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Celebration of Excellence

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about two Newtown High School students who helped a jogger who had fallen and broke his elbow and arm in a Trumbull park. Tim White and Tom Jensen came to Gregg Basbagill's rescue and stayed with him until the EMS arrived. Mr. Basbagill was also at the meeting and thanked the students for their help.

Dr. Rodrigue introduced Newtown High School teacher Sue McConnell and community member Reena Sahani who visited India with seven students. Students at the meeting were Marc Carlson, Claire Dubois, Danielle Johnson and Jackie Matthew. Those who could not attend were Olivia Shull, Madison Wittmer and Sophie Wolfman.

Mrs. McConnell thanked the Board for their support in allowing them to take the trip. Students had full input into the program and full cultural immersion. It was a wonderful experience for them all.

Item 5 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of April 10, 2018, the resignation of Suzanne von OY, the resignation for retirement of Martha Parvis, and the correspondence report. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – Public ParticipationItem 7 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku was pleased that the budget passed which included the Board budget priorities. The Middle Gate roof project was also approved. She attended the CABE Board of Directors meeting which set their membership dues with no increase. She will attend the CABE legislative wrap-up on May 15. The CABE workshop for Board members is this Saturday.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue attended a conference with Abi Marks, our teacher of the year, which included workshops on social emotional learning which Mark Brackett presented. She will look into bringing him to Newtown in the future. Saturday, April 28, the Town focused on a livable community. She was part of the social inclusion and respect group. The high school interviewed three finalists for the principal position and she will be planning a site visit. She thanked Suzanne D'Eramo for arranging the interviews. Some of the high school students were featured on Channel 8 News speaking about the Sandy Hook tragedy and its effect on them. A number of our students received scholarships from the Weller Foundation. Our student Board representative, Talia Hankin received the \$14,000 Weller Award.

Committee Reports: Mr. Vouros reported that he, Mrs. Ku and Nadia Papalia the literacy coordinator and Abi Marks, English Department Chair, met regarding the ELS self-study committee and identified four focus areas. Mrs. Evans Davila helped to get this off the ground. Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the policy committee has been working through the 5000 series as well as some that are out of sequence because they needed to be updated sooner.

Student Representative Reports:

Talia Hankin reported that today was National College Decision Day and students must make the deposit to their college by the end of the day. This Friday is the senior prom at the Waterview. AP exams will be held next week. May is Mental Health Month and facts and tips will be sent out each week. Our athletic teams' standards of excellence are being upheld.

Item 8 – Old BusinessUpdate on Athletic Program Self-study Committee:

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about the work Mr. Memoli has done with the committee soliciting help from staff, parents and coaches. This will make the athletic program more consistent.

Mr. Memoli thanked the committee members that included Deb Modzelewski, Nathalie de Brantes, Aaron Blank, Andrew Tammero, and Becky Osborne who is a coach. The parent members are Laura Roche and Dennis Brestovansky, and student representatives are Jackie Matthews and Todd Petersen. The committee has met three times and broke into sub committees last week. One group is looking at the athletic accomplishments in the history of Newtown High School and students who moved on to continue in athletics. The second group is geared to looking at pay to participate in every town in our DRG so we have data that shows what they are charging. The third group is looking at the spending involved per sport as well as fundraising to see what we can do differently. We will meet every Tuesday morning from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. and will come to the Board with recommendations in June. Our boys placed third in the O'Grady's Relay in Danbury and the boy's volleyball team is third in Connecticut after only four years.

Mr. Vouros wanted Mr. Memoli to give himself more credit because of what he has brought to this position and the respect he has from coaches, students and parents.

Mr. Memoli feels this is a group effort and we are in a good place right now.

**Auditorium Facility Rental:**

Dr. Rodrigue had asked not to rent the high school auditorium this summer based on the need to paint the floors and train students on the new equipment. She thanked Ms. Gabriel and Ms. Hiscavich for the training that has begun. The floor is fine and will not be painted. We were approached by community members and New Arts who are producing the play *Newsies*. It was going to be held at WesConn but it fell through so they asked if they could use our auditorium. She met with Michael Unger, Michelle Hiscavich and Janice Gabriel to share our expectations under the new rental policy and fees. They will practice in another location and only need the auditorium for three weeks. She wants to move forward to allow them to rent. We are confident with our students using the equipment and someone from our staff will always oversee the equipment use. There will be days security will also need to be there. This is a good faith effort on our part.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the policy is mostly around fees and forms. The Board doesn't have to approve them to use the facility. She assumes that Ms. Gabriel and Mr. Faiella will look at what they need to be approved. She wants to be sure they follow the proper procedure and that everyone agrees it is an appropriate usage of the space and also wants to be sure we are protecting the space.

Dr. Rodrigue feels we need to be stringent. The last time they went into areas they should not have. If something doesn't work out we would think twice the following year.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we can ask for a security deposit because the auditorium is brand new.

Dr. Rodrigue said he was made aware of needing the deposit.

Mr. Vouros feels it would be wise to have a walk through first so that the equipment is in good condition and when finished have another walk through to be sure that the equipment is okay. A contract is also needed.

Ms. Gabriel said someone will be there the entire time they are there each day. There would be an auditorium crew staff of four who will run the equipment. New Arts will not be operating the equipment.

Mr. Clure asked if the students would be paid.

Ms. Gabriel said they would be paid by the group.

Mr. Vouros asked the rental fee.

Ms. Gabriel said it was \$1,000 per day and \$250 per hour on top of the first four hours. They requested eight hours a day the first few days. Badges and IDs will be needed as well as signing in and out.

Mr. Bienkowski said the money will go into the custodial account and will be segregated for the auditorium fund.

**Plans for Transportation and Start Time at Reed:**

Dr. Rodrigue provided information on the transportation proposal. We surveyed a few districts on how they handled arrivals. Some allow students to go right into their classrooms. We wanted to land in a positive space to have a plan for next year. All elementary schools will drop off first and then go to Reed. She met with John and Rich Dufour regarding the proposal. It allows for five minutes to be restored for all five schools. Elementary students arrive at 8:38 but are allowed to enter when they arrive.

We would like to utilize existing and new paras for next year. They will begin between 8:30 and 8:40 to get students off the bus. During first week of school they will go directly into their

classrooms. We want children to be safe, have tables and chairs to sit down with coloring books or read so it is structured with light play and socialization. An additional shuttle per school is recommended. The approximate cost for paras is \$94,900. Additional benefits would cost as much as \$164,560. We would look at the paras with the lower number of hours. A survey was sent to them to see if there was any interest. It would provide more hours for paras, restores time to Reed, and allows teachers to focus on professional undertakings of the day prior to their contact time with students. We would look to areas to save to help with this funding. No certified staff will be monitoring students in the morning. We want to be sure we have enough paras to ensure safety.

Chris Moretti said they tried to implement this with student safety at the forefront finding appropriate locations and staff. We looked at how students will walk to various locations, if we need nurses in the building, and custodial responsibilities if tables and chairs need to be set up. The gym is the area we have to use but it has to be broken down in time for classes. The second wave of students may go to class but we learned that we need to find a place for all students.

Mrs. Ku stressed that this is just an update so we don't have to approve it. We will only have to approve budgetary items.

Dr. Rodrigue said we also looked at other options such as teachers having time somewhere else or being pulled out of lunch and recess duties to be covered by paras. We also looked at grants.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites thanked Dr. Rodrigue for this information. The issue is all about the 10 minutes of prep time in the morning not having time later in the day.

Mr. Moretti said that if you extend the elementary day by 10 minutes you are extending the teacher day also. Before school no one is with students so they can meet with colleagues. They could not do that during the day when the students are in classes.

Mr. Delia asked how this was stated in the contract.

Mr. Moretti said teachers have to be in 30 minutes prior to home room and wrap around time in morning or afternoon that doesn't include students. We could adjust the work schedule by shifting their schedule.

Mr. Vouros was concerned about not being able to hire the number of paras needed.

Mr. Moretti said that Dr. Rodrigue listed that as one of the challenges. It might be difficult to hire paras for 15 minutes.

Dr. Rodrigue said if we move this forward we will know how many current paras are committed. For the majority of them it would be three quarters of an hour. We will talk to each one and see if they require benefits.

Mr. Vouros is not comfortable with this and is concerned about the students being controlled.

Dr. Rodrigue said this is the proposal we wanted but we wanted to find something safe for the children. We looked at what we could do. We need a safe plan for next year.

Mr. Moretti said it will be what the Board is comfortable with regarding the number of paras and the number of students they watch.

Mr. Clure asked if this was the only option and could the time for teachers be in the afternoon instead. The start times could be moved up around the bus schedule so they are on time when they get to school and have the help at the end of the day

Dr. Rodrigue said we have help at the end of the day now. We looked at every scenario and talked about the safest possible alternative and that is watching students in the morning. This is a viable option.

Mr. Clure said that regarding the time and effort to bring this to us, he didn't know there would only be one option which is disappointing. There might be another bus option.

Dr. Rodrigue said that with the proposal that failed we wanted to come up with a plan knowing that other schools have done this. This is not out of the ordinary. This was our way of moving forward.

Mrs. Leidlein thanked Dr. Rodrigue for finding a solution despite the Board not passing the task force recommendation.

Mr. Moretti said the actual problem is that when the vote was made to not change the start times the core of the problem is with the students arriving earlier at the elementary schools. The issue is what to do with 300 students for 15 minutes. This year' teachers stepped up and said they didn't want the students in another location as it was not right for them. Now they don't want this. There were numerous proposals voted down. This is all that is left.

Mr. Delia agreed with Mrs. Leidlein and thanked them also.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the positive in this plan is giving students more time for socialization which is a good side benefit. She is disappointed if the elementary schools don't have the students outside for free play. This is something many districts do and they work through it. Sometimes what is best for children costs something and she feels this is appropriate.

Mr. Cruson said that cost neutral was not giving us what a lot of people wanted. He prefers the cost going to staff versus buses. With the buses unloading at 8:40 the students won't have to sit on them longer.

Dr. Rodrigue said they are now arriving at 8:38. The only waves are at Hawley because they don't all fit. They would still go to classrooms at 8:55. They would use tables and some chairs.

Mr. Delia asked if parents would drop off early.

Dr. Rodrigue didn't want to make a decision tonight but it might be at 8:50. There could be less traffic.

Mr. Clure asked if this was implemented could we ask the bus company to not get the middle and high school students so soon and start a half hour or so later at the high school.

Dr. Rodrigue said part of that are the waves. We will look at all the routes for next year.

Mr. Clure asked if we will have any funds left over for an outside person to come in and look at routing before the end of the year.

Mrs. Ku said we need to know when this needs to be decided and where the money will come from.

Dr. Rodrigue thanked Mr. Moretti for being the chairperson and spokesman for the task force. All of the administrators worked on this as well as Mrs. Vadas in getting the needed figures.

#### Item 9 – New Business

MOTION: Mrs. Harriman-Stites moved that the Board of Education award the contract for the Middle Gate roof and wall restoration project to Garland/DBS with "Elite Roofing and Restoration, LLC" as the low bid roofing installer for \$840,628, which includes a contingency of ten percent. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Leidlein said this passed in the referendum so we can vote to move this forward as we did with the Hawley School project.

Mr. Bienkowski spoke about the roof project. The price was determined three years ago. This will be a restoration instead of a replacement. We can start this summer so both Hawley and Middle Gate will be done.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 – Public Participation

Janice Gabriel, teacher at Newtown High School, invited the Board to the Unified Arts show which was written and produced by the students. It will be held May 19 at 6:00 p.m. and May 20 at 2:00 p.m. This is their four-year anniversary.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 11 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.  
Secretary

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<http://www.newtown.k12.ct.us/DistrictInformation/BoardofEducation/BOEAgendasMinutes2017-2018/tabid/108131/Default.aspx>