

***THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE  
October 4, 2018 MEETING  
Joint Board of Education Committee  
June 7, 2018***

A regular meeting of the Joint Board of Education Committee was held on Thursday, June 7, 2018 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board Members present:

CHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION: Maria Scherber, John Stack, Ton Englert, Charlene Fearon, David Fitzgibbons, Theresa Myers, Rob Bibbiani

DEEP RIVER BOARD OF EDUCATION: Bob Ferretti, Lenore Gunko, Mary Elizabeth Massey, Nelle Andrews, Tracy Dickson, Miriam Morrissey, Paula Weglarz,

ESSEX BOARD OF EDUCATION: Loretta McCluskey, DG Fitton, Adam Conrad, Judie McCann

REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION: Jennifer Clark, Jane Cavanaugh, Leigh Rankin, Lori Ann Clymas, Rick Daniels, Michelle Grow, Trisha Brookhart, Mario Gioco, Kate Sandmann

Also in attendance: Dr. Ruth Levy, Superintendent; Dr. Kristina Martineau, Assistant Superintendent, Mike Barile, VRHS Principal, Tyson Stoddard, Chester Principal, Christian Strickland, Deep River Principal, Jennifer Tousignant, Essex Principal, Kim Allen, Business Manager, Kelley Frazier, Substitute Board Clerk.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Joint Board of Education Committee Chair Paula Weglarz called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

The Chair of the Region 4, Essex, Deep River and Chester Board of Education called their Boards to order at 7:09 p.m.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Region 4, Essex, Deep River and Chester Boards of Education **VOTED** to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular April 7, 2018 meeting of the Joint Boards of Education. Abstentions: Nelle Andrews, Michelle Grow and Rick Daniels

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lauren McAloon and Jordan Azzinaro, JW students, discussed the article written for the school newspaper. The topic is gun violence in schools. It was not allowed to be published in the JW paper. Mr. Duffy felt it was not appropriate. The students feel it is taking away the rights of the

students to hear their point of view. Students need to be educated. They feel it is not a political article and are asking the Board to consider having it in the newspaper.

Jenny Merrick, a Valley student from Essex is advocating for students to be able to use their own computers. (See attached statement)

Dominique Merrick, Essex resident, discussed her concerns regarding personal computer usage at the High School. (See attached statement)

Teresa McPherson, Ivoryton, has a child at Valley. She voiced concerns regarding the monitoring of the Chromebooks and phones. She feels that this needs to be reviewed.

Jodi Azzinaro, Ivoryton, discussed the computer usage. Old Lyme provides windows based computers for their students. She agrees with the direction of providing technology for everyone. Cell phones should not be in school. It is hard to make change. She suggested grandfathering students who are already using their own technology.

Laura Mizejeski, Deep River, wanted to express her concern over the computer usage policy. (See attached statement)

#### **OTHER ITEMS –**

##### **Report and Final Recommendation by Joint BOE Ad Hoc Cafeteria**

All areas of the cafeteria were reviewed. Meetings were held with staff and students. There are redundancies in the current structure. Without regionalization, there is not much that can be done to save money. As long as this structure remains in place, there will be a deficit. Participation is 43%. Ms. Rankin is happy the committee was formed and she is satisfied that we are doing the best we can with our structure. She requests that this report be made available for all Board members. Mr. Englert asked about the anticipated declining enrollment and the possibility of a decrease in costs. The basic costs will be the same so little savings is expected. Regionalization would introduce efficiencies. Savings would come from full regionalization and would eliminate some of the reporting that is required. Food could not be moved from one school to another. Bulk purchasing could have cost savings. The cafeteria could not be moved to Supervision District because each district is audited separately.

##### **Strategic Focus Presentation**

Dr. Levy discussed the Mission Statement which guides our every move. A three year plan has been developed.

Board members enjoyed a presentation of the last year's achievements. Dr. Martineau discussed the District Priority Strategies. This year was a year of tremendous growth. She passed out the revised rubrics for Grade 6, Grades 7, 8 and Grades 9-12. Members requested this presentation and the report be distributed. Mr. Strickland, Mr. Stoddard and Ms. Tousignant, principals from the elementary schools, presented the K-6 End of Year review. Steps to be implemented for next year were discussed. Mr. Barile discussed the Secondary 7-12 End of Year Review. The next step is to continue the K-12 rubric and to implement and to draft the district wide assessment plan. Dr. Levy would like the Board to focus on what the complete picture of what we are doing

preK-12. This is the ultimate learning experience for our teachers, students and administrators. Dr. Levy thanked all of the Administrators and Central Office staff for the work they have done on this. Ms. Grow asked if they considered a K-5 rubric and then to have a 6-8 rubric. This was part of the discussion, but not done at this time.

## **REPORTS**

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

#### **High Level Financial Status Updates for all Boards**

Ms. Allen noted that more detailed reports of the fiscal year's activity will be at the individual Board meetings.

#### **Information and Communication Items**

No additional report.

### **VOTE on Superintendent's Recommendation to Appoint Shipman and Goodwin as Legal Counsel for the Boards of Education of Chester, Deep River, Essex and Region 4 for 2018-19.**

Upon a motion made by Loretta McCluskey and seconded by Michelle Grow the Region 4 (7 yes, 2 No - Mr. Daniels and Mr. Gioco) = Motion PASSED), Deep River Elementary (unanimously), Essex Elementary (unanimously) and Chester Elementary (unanimously) Boards **VOTED** to appoint Shipman and Goodwin as legal counsel for Supervision District for 2018-2019.

Mr. Daniels noted that this should go out for bid next year. He would also like to have consultation done over the phone rather than traveling to the school. Dr. Levy noted that work is done verbally on the phone or by email when appropriate.

## **OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Supervision District Committee Update**

No additional update.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Policy**

The Tuition Policy needs to be voted on. The other policies are a first read.

### **First Reading and possible VOTE on the Joint BOE Policy Committee's Recommendation to Approve the Recommended to the Following Policies:**

Mr. Conrad asked if a common definition for legal purposes would be beneficial. This is a good point and something to be considered.

The out of district fees were discussed. The per pupil cost is articulated in the policy. These fees are for non-residents.

Upon a motion by DG Fitton and seconded by Loretta McCluskey to accept the Tuition #3240 Tuition Fees policy with the Policy Committee recommendations for discussion.

Mr. Stack discussed that utilizing the 10% above costs rate may make the tuition prohibitive for families with multiple kids. This is giving away money for perception. He calculated this two years ago. He suggested decreasing it by 20%. Consideration for a quantity discount should be done. This should be reviewed every year and can change pricing as your costs change. There are approximately six inquiries every year about tuition, but currently we only have one family who will be paying the charges next year. Discussion ensued. Dr. Levy recommends voting on the policy as written and to revisit the policy in the future to update. This will need to be revisited when the I/B program is implemented. The actual tuition policy has been on the books since 1997. It is recommended that the policy and finance committee work together on this policy.

Mr. Fitton called the motion.

Upon a motion by DG Fitton and seconded by Loretta McCluskey the Chester (unanimously), Deep River (5 Yes, 2 No – Paula Weglarz, Lenore Grunko = motion PASSED), Essex (unanimous), and Region 4 (8 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention – Mario Gioco = motion PASSED) Boards **VOTED** to accept Policy #3240 Tuition Fees policy with the Policy Committee recommendations.

The other policies are a first read. Mr. Daniels asked about addressing the juling, e-cigarette and vaping issue in the school now. This is a public health issue now. Ms. Grow felt that the Administration is addressing this appropriately. Mr. Daniels stated that the Administration needs to be consistent. The individual Boards should discuss and compile information to submit to the Policy Committee.

#### **Finance Committee Report (A. Conrad)**

The last meeting was cancelled. September 25<sup>th</sup> is the next meeting. Mr. Daniels mentioned that a policy was discussed in Supervision District, but the Finance Committee did not make any recommendation for any policy change to any board. He suggested having cancelled meetings rescheduled in a timely manner.

#### **Curriculum Committee (T. Dickson)**

There was a presentation regarding I/B. There will be a visit in the fall for accreditation. Minutes are available on line.

#### **Ad Hoc Committees (As Needed)**

None

#### **Assistant Superintendent's Report**

##### **Update on Professional Development – Update on Curriculum**

No additional report.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Richard Strauss, Chester, made a comment about Policy #3160 and thought it had gone through the Finance Committee, but this did not happen. He suggested that the Finance Committee review and then contact the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance from each of the three towns.

Mr. Daniels noted that he looks forward to next year. We need to make sure the quality of the diplomas earned remain the same.

Mr. Bibbiani noted that two issues for R4 were brought before the board tonight in public comment and he would like to know how this will be addressed. This is an administrative issue for Region 4 to address. Discussion ensued. Mr. Daniels stated that members are the group the taxpayers can come to ask about these things. The Board needs all the information to be able to discuss with the public and to make decisions

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

7.1 Next Regular Joint BOE Meeting, October 4, 2018

7.2 Update on Celebrate Learning Summer Program (Oct)

7.3 First Reading of BOE Meeting Calendar for Upcoming Calendar Year (Oct)

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On Motion duly made and seconded, the Region 4, Chester and Deep River Boards of Education unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 9:00p.m. Essex remained in session.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelley Frazier, Substitute Clerk

Good Evening, I am Dominique Merrick. My daughter Jenny is a 10th grade student at Valley. I am here to discuss with the board the issues regarding the use of personal computers. I have been given a whole host of reasons why personal computers will not be allowed, none of which have any merit and some of which are overreaching and border on personal rights infringements.

I was inexplicably told that allowing students to use their personal computers would give the students who can afford one, an "academic advantage." If this is the board's stance, then is it their position that those that can afford the fees for the UCONN ECE credits, or the immersion trips to Spain, France and Canada, or the additional fees associated with some of the Virtual High School courses are also at an academic advantage? And if so then is it safe to assume the board will now want to take away those valuable educational opportunities as well?

I am dumbfounded as to why the administration and the board members are taking the stance that everybody has to be equal. Even Title VI, one of the most stringent federal laws on the books concerning equality in the schools, states that all students must have equal ACCESS to comparable resources, not the EXACT SAME resources. In this case there is no question that the free computers meet that burden. I worry we have confused equality and equity along the way. The board's own code of conduct states that you are to advocate for EQUITY (not EQUALITY) for all children.

For years, we educators, I am a former teacher, have recognized the importance of various teaching methodologies and learning styles, so why is the school not tailoring our student's educational needs to include what tools suit individuals best? Why are we taking away the very tools that students are motivated to use, comfortable with, using effectively and responsibly, and clearly excelling with? You have kids here who are already starting to shine bright and instead you want to stymie their progress by restricting access to the very educational tools that are currently helping them to do so. I don't get it. The Board is in direct conflict with its own mission statement, "We foster **individual** student achievement."

Does this district realize the one-size-fits-all mentality of No Child Left Behind days are over, and that The EVERY Student Succeeds Act is now the law of the land. It is no wonder there are parents in this district that are paying \$19,000 to send their kids across the river to Old Lyme High School, another PUBLIC school. A school that embraces and encourages personal computers in the classroom, despite providing HPs for every student.

I was told the board has the utmost trust in any decision the administration makes, except the board's job is to make sure decisions are made in the best interest of the children, not to always agree with the administration. I was also told that board would not be making any policy on this as there are already too many policies, except the board's job is "to make policies to ensure the community is fully and accurately informed." So, I respectfully close with this question then, "How *does* this decision benefit the children?"

Good evening. I am Jenny Merrick a sophomore at Valley. Earlier this year, my English teacher remarked that she is impressed on how I advocate for myself in class. So I am here tonight to advocate, not only for myself, but for all the other students who use their own computers. I find the ban on personal computers extremely surprising and disheartening. Over the last two years, using my own computer has motivated me to achieve good grades. Having a bright, big screen on a device I am already comfortable with, promotes my own success in school.

Most of us here can agree that at Valley students really can choose how far they would like to go in their high school career, and we are lucky to have a variety of different opportunities at our disposal. One of these opportunities is Virtual High School, an online program that offers classes in multiple subjects. I took two courses this year; Modern Middle East and World Conflict: An Introduction to the UN. I loved each of these courses and excelled in both while using my own personal computer. A few nights ago my mom and I were looking at the online catalog of courses and jotting down the ones I found interesting. 4 of the 9 courses I was interested in, including AP Human Geography, Earth and Space Systems, Astronomy, and AP Physics, said, and I quote, "Please note: This course requires regular access to a computer with a Windows/[Mac] operating system ... the course **cannot** be completed on a Chromebook." How can we participate in these courses if we are required to use a Chromebook.

One of the excuses against use of personal computers is that they do not have go guardian on them. Go guardian monitors all internet browsing the students do on their computers, even when they are in the privacy of their own home. Go Guardian also let's the teacher monitor in real time if a student is on task. If a student isn't on task, it is only going to affect that student say, when a test rolls around. Why is the school not allowing us to be accountable for our own success or failure through experiencing actions and consequences?

This is high school. You are supposed to be getting us ready for college, however this new rule is doing quite the opposite. Is the administration making this rule strictly so they can monitor students? When in a few years we will be headed to college with nobody there to monitoring us. Are you really going to deny those of us who are successfully using our personal computers, the opportunity to continue to succeed, for the sake of monitoring?

During a Board of Ed meeting in June 2013, Dr. Levy stressed the importance of technology in student achievement. She said the administration strives to strike a balance of accountability in an academic venue and create a learning environment that fosters the love of learning and high achievement of students. Wouldn't this new rule not apply to this philosophy?

Valley is a wonderful school with an immense amount of opportunities available and I am perplexed as to why, we as a school, would want to take a step backwards on this issue.