

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Nov. 13, 2017 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, Sept. 07, 2017 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Chris Riley, Leigh Rankin, Jane Cavanaugh, Jim Olson, Mario Gioco, Jennifer Clark, Susan Hollister, Elaine Fitzgibbons (arrived 7:05 p.m.), and Lori Ann Clymas (arrived 7:32 p.m.), as well as Senior Student Representatives Max Klin and Sydney Suedmeier

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent, Kristina Martineau
Business Manager Kim Allen;
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Riley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 04, 2017, the special meeting of August 02, 2017, and the Accounts Payable Report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Approximately 25 citizens were present.

Lori Guerette spoke as a Deep River resident. She said she was very concerned over the continued increase in education expenses even though there is an overall decrease in enrollment. She asked the Board to please look for a way to hold costs steady, if not reduce them. She said she was concerned that the Governor's proposed cuts may go through, and if so, she wondered what will the boards do to help decrease the budget burden.

Richard Balducci of Deep River acknowledged this is a very tough board to serve on because they need to make sure students are well educated and well cared for but must also recognize that the State of Connecticut is in dire straits. He said the the biggest cost for towns is education at 70-75% of all town budget. And even though there has been diminishing enrollment, costs keep going up in education across the State and the Country. He asks that the Board really dig in to make helpful decisions on upcoming budgets.

Tracy LeMay, as President of the Valley Crew Booster Club, read a statement to be entered into the record

regarding her concern over budget clarity as it pertains to the Crew Club. (see attached)

Angus McDonald, Deep River First Selectman said he believes the three towns and the Region 4 Board are allies in the current State budget dilemma and fiscal situation, which is uncertain at best. He discussed the Governor's Executive Order cuts, the vast majority of which are related to education spending. He said he knows that we all hope a more reasonable State budget will pass, but everyone will have to plan for current budgets and future budgets to respond and move forward with less money. He said that the Town of Deep River is already running on a bare bones budget and there is no more room to cut the town budget without reducing services. He feels they can't cut more town services to increase school budgets. He said that everyone needs to work together to provide both education and quality of life. He said he was asking for a reduction in Region 4 spending.

Duane Gates from Deep River said that he feels that the Region 4 budget comes on the backs of reductions to town and elementary budgets, so he asked the Board to consider whatever ways they can to dig deeper on the Region 4 budget as any help would be appreciated by everyone. All groups need to work as a team.

Dave Olivera of Deep River asked if Region 4 bought a piece of property adjacent to high school. Chairman Riley responded that they had and that Dr. Levy will discuss that during her update.

A Deep River resident (name was inaudible) said that she feels Deep River shoulders more of a burden because Region 4 schools are located in Deep River and therefore the land that the schools are on has been removed from the tax rolls.

A Deep River resident who did not give their name said that they strongly opposed the purchase of the land if it hasn't happened yet.

Rick Daniels, Deep River resident said that he was upset over the land purchase because it took that piece of property off of the tax rolls and he didn't feel like it was well advertised. Chairman Riley noted that it had been listed on multiple Board agendas and discussed at public meetings.

OTHER ITEMS

Region 4 Student Representatives Report

JWMS Middle School 8th grade students Jack Riley and Abigail Amara reported on the start of school including soccer tryouts and cross country. Flag football and field hockey has started up and a meeting of the Ski Club is coming soon too, as well as lots of other afterschool clubs including Lego Robotics and the Winthrop Journal. The seventh graders are transitioning well.

Senior Student Representative Max Klin talked about the new schedule implemented this year at Valley. He said although he's still getting into the swing of things, he has personally been enjoying it. It is a faster paced day and will help to keep student's minds sharp since class subjects will last all year. Overall, it provides a more balanced schedule. He has heard lots of students say they are liking it. He especially enjoys the flex block in the middle of the day.

Senior Student Representative Sydney Suedmeier discussed the 30 minute flex block which provides

personal learning time. She has really enjoyed using this time to meet with teachers, clubs etc.. Also, she was happy to report that the cafeteria now has more menu options and really good choices available this year Max Klin said he agreed about the reported lunch improvements. Ms. Suedmeier said it was nice to see the students being listened to and the resulting positive changes. She also reported that sports and clubs are in full swing.

Principal Updates

As Principal Barile was unable to attend this evening, Dr. Levy introduced the new teachers hired at Valley Regional High School for the 2017-18 school year. The Board welcomed them.

Principal Duffy reported on the opening of school and introduced the new teachers hired at John Winthrop Middle School for the 2017-18 school year. The Board welcomed them.

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Kim Allen reviewed the financial status report, as well as highlights of the cafeteria account report. She also shared the unaudited year-end financial status update.

Committee Reports

The Joint BOE Policy Committee and the Joint BOE Curriculum Committee will meet again on Sept. 18th. The Joint BOE Finance Committee is scheduled to meet again on Sept. 26th.

LEARN - Nothing new to report.

Supervision District Committee Update - Nothing new to report.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Levy updated the Board on the opening day across all of the schools. She said they all were fantastic, and the new schedule at the high school has rolled out smoothly.

Dr. Levy also gave a brief review of what she learned during her exit interviews with Valley Seniors at the end of the last school year (2016-17). Students are overall really pleased with the education they receive. She was pleased with what the students had to say about the cafeteria. Many students also indicated that they want to know more information about scholarships. That will be addressed through the guidance office this year where they are looking to improve the availability of scholarship information and other opportunities, such as apprenticeships, for students.

Dr. Levy reported that Strategic Plan implementation will be going on throughout the year. Administration worked throughout the summer on the roll out of the strategic plan. Their main focus has been critical and

creative problem solving. Two things to already come out of those discussions was the development of a new Social and Emotional Wellness Committee made up of Administrators, Educators and other stakeholders. The charge of the committee is to help coordinate and provide a number of programs and resources for students, faculty, parents, and the entire community regarding some very important issues. An Attendance Review Board has also been formed. It is made up of Administrators, Educators and other stakeholders who will work on helping students who may currently be having difficulty attending school. They will work to find resources that will help those students have successful experiences in school.

Dr. Levy reported that the purchase of the Mislick property, adjacent to the high school, closed last Thursday. The funds came entirely from Region 4 sinking funds; no additional funds were procured which would have required repayment to any outside entity. There are no development plans at this point, but all were in agreement that it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to obtain the property immediately adjacent to the high school for possible future use as needed.

Dr. Levy addressed what has been happening at the State and Federal level with regards to education funding. She noted that many of the budget cuts were coming on the backs of local budgets from towns the State considers to be more affluent. She read a prepared statement (attached at end of minutes)

Dr. Levy also reviewed recent changes in legislation that will affect the schools and/or Board policies for 2017-18. She noted that there were not too many this year that will have a large economic effect, although none of the existing, costly mandates have gone away either.

Dr. Levy thanked Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, and Susan Hollister for their service to the Board, at this, their last Region 4 Board meeting before the end of their terms. Each spoke briefly about their time on the Board and their enjoyment of working with everyone.

Dr. Levy reported that in response to Board members' requests for more PR to help inform the public about things going on at the schools, she will be working with a student or student(s) who are interested in doing a marketing project as part of their Capstone requirement.

Dr. Levy mentioned that the Chester Board of Education will be holding a workshop regarding strategic plan implementation with Jonathan Costa next week. It is her hope that each of the Boards will be able to work with him at some point in the near future as well.

Dr. Levy also mentioned that the Joint BOE Ad Hoc Cafeteria Committee will hold their first meet next week on September 13th.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Ms. Martineau gave a general update on activities within the districts including the following: an update on the two week learning camp held at Valley this summer for students who were visiting from China. Some of the host families spoke about their experiences and all highly recommended it as something very worthwhile and rewarding to do if given the chance.

Sarah Smalley, Director of Pupil Services gave an update on the new therapeutic program in Region 4 that the Board approved last year. It has been a "no cost" program and in fact has saved money by allowing students to stay in district or even return to district who might otherwise not have been able to succeed here.

It provides a program for our more fragile students who are struggling emotionally, and struggling to succeed or to just even attend school. She anticipates this might help to bring more students back into district and could provide additional monetary savings on top of the emotional and academic benefits and successes for students and their families. Board Member Jane Cavanaugh requested that the Board be given periodic updates on the program.

Ms. Martineau reported that the official rollout of the Next Generation Science Standards for grades 7-12 begins this year. Teachers worked very hard on curriculum this summer.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - Rick Daniels of Deep River asked administration to look into Region 4 participating in the State Invention Convention, as the elementary schools currently do. He saw high school students competing at the state level this year be given certificates for a free AP course.

Elaine Fitzgibbons recommended a book to all of the Board members called *21 Trends for the 21st Century*, as she thinks it will be critical reading for board members as they go forward in their work for the students.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Next Joint BOE meeting is October 05, 2017

Next Region 4 BOE meeting is Nov. 13, 2017 (moved from Nov. 2nd)

Election of Board officers (Nov. or after seating of new members)

BOE and Community input for 2018-19 budget (on-going)

Profile of 2017 Graduation Class (Nov.)

Presentation of Major Budget Drivers for 2018-19 (TBD)

BOE Self-evaluation (TBD)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Clark BOE Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk



VRHS Crew Booster Club

9-7-17

Region 4 Board Of Education

I would like to bring to the attention of the Board some concerns that I have with regards to budgeting clarity.

As the president of the Crew Booster Club – I am frequently told that the Booster Clubs are expected to pick up the slack over and above what the school can afford to pay for. I have made at least 3 written requests over the last year for the detail that makes up the numbers listed in the main budget document under athletics so that I can understand what is being allocated where. No documentation has been provided to date.

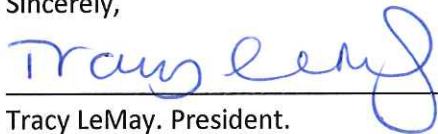
How can the Booster Club look to fill in the holes in the budget when we cannot see the budget? How can the school tell us that they cannot cover items because it is not in the budget, when they cannot actually tell us what the details are behind that budget.

This past season the Booster Club made available for the school team – \$120K worth of equipment, coordinated the practice venue –paid for the truck rental and gas to get the boats to the regattas. Parents and children are still working together to make sure that the debt will be satisfied.

For the same season the school paid for the buses and competition fees – plus one equipment purchase for the team - \$250.00 for life preservers.

I am sure you can understand mine and many other parents concerns with regards to lack of budget clarity.

Sincerely,


Tracy LeMay, President.

VRHSboostercrew@gmail.com
Springcrew.com
P.O. Box 1003
Deep River, CT 06417

Prepared Statement Read by Dr. Levy at Region 4 BOE meeting 09/07/17

We are all very aware and fearful of the potential budget cuts that may befall us. That is exactly why it is even more important at this time to work together, collaborate with one another, and listen to each other as we navigate this difficult time. There is no firm budget yet, only the budget that was approved voted upon by the three towns and region. This is why at this point in the budget and contractual process, we cannot make staffing changes. It will cost us much more than any savings we could find. It is important not to make hasty decisions that we may be sorry for at a later date.

We are invested in these three towns and the children we serve, and will work together to provide an appropriate education for the children we serve.

Respect and honesty are the cornerstones of all relationships in good times and challenging time. I know this is a challenging time for us all, and we are all feeling the pressures from our personal finances, to the town's finances, to our school budgets. It is our hope that collaborating in a positive way, we can weather this and make decisions for the betterment of us all.