

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Sept 03<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 MEETING  
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

**May 06, 2010**

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday May 06, 2010, in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Linda Hall, Richard Strauss, Mary-Beth Harrigan, Duane Gates, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, Pamela Christman as well as Senior Student Representatives Erin Thomas and Paige Gregory & Junior Student Representative Patrick Campbell.

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy, Assistant,  
Business Manager Garth Sawyer; Valley Regional Principal Ian Neviase; John Winthrop Middle School  
Principal Dave Russell, VRHS teacher, Tom Tabor, JWMS teacher, Phil Unghire

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Linda Hall called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of the minutes from the regular meeting of March 4, 2010, minutes from the Public Hearing of April 8, 2010, minutes from the special meeting of April 13, 2010, and the Accounts Payable Report.

**OTHER ITEMS**

Director of Food Services, Mary Jane House reviewed the Healthy Foods Certification Choice that each Board of Education must make and submit to the State. She explained changes from last year's program details. If the Board decides to endorse the certification, then the school would receive 10 cents in return for every meal sold. If food is given away and no fee is charged to the student, then the healthy food restrictions would not apply, e.g. culinary classes or other class special events. She reminded everyone that this just concerns food sold to students, in other words school lunches for which the cafeterias are already following all of the healthy food guidelines. The State will allow exemption language for after-school- day sales (food sold at events, such as sporting events, etc.). Fundraisers are allowed as long as parents pick up the product after school hours. Ms. House stated her view that since the cafeterias are already following the healthy foods standards for school lunches, why not take advantage of the financial incentive that is available? She also mentioned that currently 106 school districts in Connecticut do participate in this program.

Concerns were raised by Board member Chris Riley regarding his feeling that exempting sporting events and other events is hypocritical and he also feels that implementing and enforcing this would not be the best use of administrative and teacher time. He also stated his view that the schools and the Boards have more important things to concern themselves with. He asked if there were any costs associated with endorsing the certification. Ms. House said there are no extra costs because the cafeterias are already following these guidelines for school lunches.

The student representatives asked for a clarification regarding fundraisers. Ms. House clarified that students can sell pies as long as parents pick them up after hours, or students may take them home if from an after-school event which would be an exemption. It was then asked if bake sales would still be okay. And Ms. House state they would, but only if held in connection with a school event, as they would then fall under the exemption language.

The matter will be voted on by all Boards at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Board meeting.

## **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Six citizens were present.

## **REPORTS**

### **Student Representatives**

Senior Student Representative Paige Gregory updated the Board on a couple of topics as an overview for the past year. Regarding technology – the school now has a committee of teachers dedicated to school technology. There are also training hours that are being offered to members of that committee from the Smart Board Company in order to train them for a “Train the Trainers” program. Also, AP testing started this week and a blood drive was held last Monday bringing the total to 150 pints for this year (placing VRHS in the top 5% of schools in the state this year).

Senior Student Representative Erin Thomas reported on student body involvement. She reported that the representatives have done many surveys this year to gather everyone’s opinions (e.g. roundtable discussion with student activity leaders) and she feels they have been very successful. The NHS inductee ceremony will be held on Wednesday May 12<sup>th</sup> and all BOE members are invited. Senior awards night will be June 8<sup>th</sup> and the Senior class trip on June 11<sup>th</sup>. The television program film crew at Valley has been filming school events, which has been very enjoyable and increases school unity.

Ms. Hall thanked the senior representatives for their great work over the past two years.

Junior Student Representative Patrick Campbell reported that the Jr. Prom will be held on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Jr. Awards night and Valley Fest are coming up in June. The JETS team won their regional division and now the scores are sent to the national level. Last year the team was 3<sup>rd</sup> in nation out of 54 schools, this year the team’s ranking out of 174 schools was 6<sup>th</sup>, so they did even better than last year. He was also happy to report that both the boys and girls outdoor track teams won tonight. He concluded by announcing that he had recently applied to be a student representative for the State Board of Education and was selected to interview for a position on the Board for the next school year. He will do that interview soon and hopes to secure a position. He noted that this experience with the Region 4 Board had inspired him to apply for the State Board.

Junior Student Representative Shin-Yi Lee was not in attendance due to the need to study for an AP test.

### **Principals Update**

VRHS – Principal Neviasser thanked Erin and Paige for their service to the Board as well. He also congratulated Patrick Campbell on being named a Governor’s scholar recently.

He reported that he is currently hiring for open positions, having already filled the soon to be open art and social studies positions as well as currently interviewing for the math position. He gave all members a copy of a DVD created by students in the television program that will air on Channel 18. He read a letter from the President of the Board of Directors for the Shorelines Arts Alliance praising the presentation.

JWMS – John Winthrop students Micheala Lavy and Jake Luster, who are this year’s scholar leaders for CAS and JWMS gave the student report for JWMS.

Micheala reported that art students will be traveling to the University of Hartford to work with professional artists in different media. Students are also looking forward to the upcoming trip to Cave Hill and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance.

Jake Luster talked about recent trip to Museum of Natural History to see a Silk Road exhibit following a week of learning about it at school. He also reported on the status of the baseball and softball teams.

Principal Russell discussed the number of field trips and also events and presentations coming into the school. The school musical, Oklahoma was held recently with a phenomenal performance. He also just recently completed the hiring process for several openings. He has hired a new librarian and two new math teachers. The Debate contest was held last night with over 40 schools in attendance. Four teams from JWMS will be moving on to next level and one JWMS student was named best speaker at the contest.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Financial Status Update including Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee**

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report making note of new items added to the report after the completion of recent budget transfers that were approved at the March meeting.

He is currently projecting a small surplus for Region 4, barring any unanticipated special education costs.

A brief discussion was held regarding electricity costs for this year and next.

Mr. Sawyer then reported that the cafeteria is currently showing a projected deficit of an additional \$20,000 beyond what was previously expected, by the end of the year due to lower than projected revenues. He is currently reconciling the cafeteria records for the past year to find the root cause and any contributing factors. A special meeting will need to be held to authorize any final end-of-the-year fund transfers that may be needed.

He also discussed grant funding and the student activity accounts.

On motion duly made and seconded the Region 4 Board of Education unanimously VOTED to receive the financial status report as presented.

#### **Region 4 Audit and Finance Committee** - No reports

The Joint PK-12 Policy and Curriculum Committees are scheduled to meet later in May. There is no May meeting for the Joint PK-12 Finance Committee

#### **Region 4 Photovoltaic Solar Building Committee**

Dr. Levy updated the Board on recent communications from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. She very recently received an e-mail from CCEF asking if the district was still interested in receiving funds, to which she replied that the district was indeed still interested. Have learned that there are funds available the Solar Building Project Committee was reactivated and they held a Committee meeting recently. Duane Gates, Board member and a Committee member, will now report on the project status.

Mr. Gates reported that the system that was originally planned is no longer made, but there is now a more efficient, less expensive system available on which they recently viewed a presentation.

Brian Buckley noted that the new potential company could act as the district's representative to the CT Clean Energy Fund and follow the district's application through the entire process. Things are moving quickly and they are looking at the possibility of receiving the entire funding through one funding source, i.e. the CT Clean Energy Fund. He noted that this is informational only. But he will keep the Board updated on progress as it becomes known. He reiterated that the Committee is mindful that this project per the public vote any project must be budget neutral.

There was some discussion and Board member Richard Strauss requested information comparing the previously planned system with the one that is now anticipated to be used.

Mr. Strauss voiced his desire to have the Board be more involved in the process.

Dr. Levy recommended the Committee prepare an informational sheet for BOE members on project history. She will confer with legal counsel to ensure that they are fulfilling requirements to public from public vote. The committee will

get information together regarding the application process and then she will schedule a special Region 4 Board meeting prior to May 31<sup>st</sup> to discuss the information and take any action that may be required by the Board in order to submit the application and any necessary paperwork for the project.

### **Supervision District Committee Update**

Linda Hall reported that the Committee has formed Sub-Committees and workshops will be scheduled before the end of the month to hold mixed boards conversations regarding the unification of PK-6 with Region 4. Reports will be given at the June 03<sup>rd</sup> BOE meetings. Then sub-committees will meet during the month of June and return to a special meeting of the Supervision District Committee with recommendations for moving the process forward. The sub-committees will be moving into the community in the late summer, early fall, with a possible referendum by early winter, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> if all pieces fall into place.

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

Dr. Levy introduced Tom Tabor and Phil Unghire who gave a presentation on STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) in the middle school and high school.

Mr. Unghire discussed 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade projects and classes in STEM including 2D & 3D computer designing, exploring electronic circuits, research projects and simple machines. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade program is one that every student participates in. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum is an elective.

Mr. Tabor discussed the high school programs available. He discussed how the elective drafting and engineering programs tie into the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. The classes expand on those concepts explored in middle school. In addition, he noted that some courses are articulated with Middlesex Community College so that students may receive college credit. He presented examples of 2 projects (a mousetrap car and a rocket powered car) that students work on to create, and then analyze their entire creative process and how it may be improved.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Levy congratulated everyone on a job well done with the recent approval by referendum of the 2010-11 Region 4 budget.

Mr. Neviaser encouraged the Board to view DVDs he passed out earlier containing work from the VRHS television class's biographical work on this year's Shoreline Arts winners, as time constraints precluded sharing it during the meeting.

At Board request Dr. Levy reviewed the current bullying policy noting that prevention is the key to this issue. She discussed the increasing difficulty of the schools to know what's going on through computers and other media sources outside of school. Principal Russell discussed the middle school's efforts to educate the students on this issue. In fact JWMS recently presented on this issue at the Governor's conference, being recognized as one of the premier programs in the State. Consistent discussions and education on the topic is vital. He echoed concerns with social media such as Facebook and cell phone usage which creates problems outside of school that then enter the school. When problems do arise, counselors and parents are contacted, and discipline, when warranted, is swift.

Principal Neviaser discussed almost the exact same approach taken by the high school. He also said the high school is extremely lucky and benefits from all the work done at the elementary schools and the middle school.

Dr. Levy reported that the Resource Officer program is being scrutinized at the state level in light of budget difficulties. This information was just received and she doesn't know any further details right now, but will keep the Boards updated.

She updated the Boards on the next stage of Race To the Top funds. She again concurs with the Middlesex county and southeastern superintendents to recommend declining MOU as very little information has been received with a very short turnaround time.

She briefly reviewed the materials the Board received, regarding a request to approve the VRHS French students' class trip to Paris over winter recess in February 2011.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the French students' trip to Paris over winter recess in February 2011 as presented.

#### **Audience of Citizens**

No comments were made

#### **Executive Session –**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to move into executive session at 9:55 p.m. to discuss a confidential personnel matter and conduct their self evaluation.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously VOTED to move out of executive session at 10:50 p.m.

#### **Future Agenda Items**

1. VOTE on Region 4 Building Committee's recommendation to accept that the Central Office Project Number 204-0015) is complete and that the Board of Education disband/dissolve the Building Committee (TBD)

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Pamela Christman, Secretary  
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk