

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE NEXT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 4
January 6, 2011**

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, January 6, 2011 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance: Richard Strauss, Mary-Beth Harrigan, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Linda Hall, Pamela Christman, Jennifer Clark, Chris Riley, Laurie Ann Tomlinson and Duane Gates as well as Senior Student Representative Eve Lee as well as Junior Student Representatives Karli Bahner and Alison Gates. Patrick Campbell was not able to attend.

Administrators: Dr. Ruth Levy, Superintendent, Mr. Ian Neviasser, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Garth Sawyer, Business Manager, Kristina Martineau, Interim Principal for Valley Regional High School and David Russell, John Winthrop Middle School, Principal.

Board Clerk: Kelley Frazier

Call To Order

Board Chairman Linda Hall called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Consent Agenda

On a motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of the minutes from the Regular Meeting of November 4, 2010, the Special Meeting on November 8, 2010, the Special Meeting on November 17, 2010, the Special Meeting on November 30, 2010 and the Special Meeting on December 16, 2010 as well as the Accounts Payable Report.

Audience Of Citizens

No Comment

Ms. Hall requested a change in order of the agenda to have the Student Reports done first.

Mr. Russell introduced Ms. Nidz and students in her Young Scholars Program. Ms. Nidtz introduced Ethan Petroka, David Bradbury, Patrick Myers, Joe diTomasso, Claire Halloran, Ben Stevens and Elias Mueller who are part of the Lego Robotics Team. The team explained the development of their robot and preformed a brief presentation. Ms. Hall congratulated the team and wished them continued success.

Mr. Russell gave a brief update regarding JWMS. Students will be completing a survey that will be used to gather information for use by the town. Tonight the Winter Sports Club is skiing with many students being involved. The JWMS teachers will be training on Differentiated Instruction during their professional development days. Eight students will be going to Wesleyan to participate in a conference. There is an orientation for incoming 7th graders on the 26th.

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Reports:

The Board welcomed the Junior and Senior Class Representatives. Eve updated the board of activities at the High School. She noted the success of the blood drive. Students are preparing for exams as well as CAPT testing. Seniors will be speaking to sophomores about testing. This will be effective in getting students prepared to take the test. Jr. Representative Ally Gates noted that the fall sports activities have come to an end and the winter sports schedule is beginning. Valley had several student athletes who made All Shoreline for fall sports. Boy's basketball and gymnastics will be strong this winter for Valley. She noted that many student athletes are returning to make the teams very competitive. It was noted that the junior class is planning and fundraising for Prom. Karli gave an update on the arts and creative functions at the school. She noted that the Heritage Music Festival will be attended by several students. Fifteen Chorus students sang at the holidays at the IGA to support the Essex Stuff a Cruiser program. It was very successful. Choral students will be attending a festival in Burlington, Vermont as well as Regionals. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, the school musical, will be conducted by Ryan Driscoll. She also discussed the Anti-Defamation League meeting dealing with Anti Bullying. Sixty students from various social groups have shown interest in this activity. Karli feels with this sort of support we can greatly improve things at Valley.

Other Items:

Mark Gostkiewicz and Ann Rolston from JWMS and Russell Arrigoni from the History Department of VRHS gave a brief presentation on Performance Plus . The data used is to track student's progress and the history of what interventions students have received over the years. Teachers can graph data which makes things much easier. In-house assessments help with teacher's professional goals in helping them drive their instruction. This also helps to analyze CMT scores to prepare for CAPT testing. Dr. Levy feels Performance Plus is so beneficial because it is in real time and it is all encompassing. She thanked the teachers for all of their work on this system. Ms. Fitzgibbons asked if the teachers were receiving what they need to support this system. Ms. Rolston reassured her that the time spent training with colleagues is very beneficial and informative. There was a brief discussion lead by Mr. Strauss regarding how this tool is being used and if all teachers are comfortable using this tool. He raised concerns as to whether teachers were finding it a beneficial tool to effectively impact the student's ability to learn tasks that they are having difficulty with. He wanted to understand what is next and when the Board will see the results of using this program. Dr. Levy knows that teachers look at this information to plan for the needs of their students. This program will be used more intensively and we are hopeful to see more proficient students across content areas as well as better CMT and CAPT testing. This is not a teacher evaluation tool. There is 100% use at the High School, but at various levels. Jennifer Clark thanked the staff for the presentation. Ms. Hall stated that this will be revisited again in the future.

Virtual High School

A presentation on Virtual High School was presented by Kristina Martineau. This provides online courses in a wide range of subjects areas in which students can take .. This allows an expanded program of flexible study for students and global interaction. Dr. Levy will email this presentation to Board members. There is such an interest in this program VRHS needed to purchase 40 additional seats for next year. There is a coordinator at VRHS who monitors the progress the students are making. The Jr. and Sr. student representatives feel that it is very beneficial.

Financial Status Report – Business Manager Garth Sawyer discussed highlights of the current financial status report. Factors impacting the financials are several teachers out on long term leave. He noted changes in reporting the Cafeteria area to get a truer picture of cafeteria expenses. Special education has an increase in outplacements. This essentially brings us to an expected deficit of \$32,000 along with an expected \$20,000 deficit in the cafeteria fund. A Job Funds grant may help to offset this. He does not feel there is an urgency to look at additional appropriation. The cost cutting measures the schools are using are a freeze on discretionary spending accounts. These savings are not factored in to this report. There may be a CL&P rate reduction beginning Jan 1, but it is not clear how this will affect our accounts.

Cafeteria Account Update

The reporting format has changed to allow tracking of revenue and expense to be more accurate. Mr. Sawyer noted that the state reimbursement is three months behind. There are also outstanding catering bills. In the future, the cafeteria will have its own budget. We are looking at approximately a \$20,000 deficit. Mr. Strauss would like to have more reporting on how we compare to other districts. He would also like to know the plan going forward to improve revenues. Ms. Hall would like to schedule this comparison to be added to an upcoming workshop agenda.

Activity Account Update

Mr. Sawyer noted that he is working on creating a process for this account. Audit and finance will review the activity in this account on a Quarterly basis. At the end of the year this account will be moved to the General fund.

Grants Account Update

Mr. Sawyer reviewed activity on various grants as stated on his report.

On a motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the Financial Status Reports.

Committee Reports (BOE Chair)

Mr. Strauss updated the Board on the Finance Committee. This committee is drafting a policy for use of the Student Activity Fund. The Supervision District update was given by Mary Beth Harrigan. She noted that this committee is working on the budget. The Pre K staff gave a presentation asking for additional funding. This will be reviewed at the next meeting.

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Principal's Update

Kristina Martineau, Interim Principal, gave a brief update on the VRHS school year. She noted that March 12th is a SAT administration date. Junior and senior students will be given the opportunity to participate in a SAT boot camp for five days to prepare for the SAT during the CAPT testing period. Also, during this time, Advanced Placement teachers will also offer their own boot camps. There will be an orientation for incoming 9th grade students in February. The Anti Defamation League Committee is a great opportunity for the students participating to impact the climate at Valley for years to come.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Ian Neviaser discussed the TEAM plan. This will be reviewed in February beginning with the new teacher reflection papers. The 2009-10 Strategic School Profiles were not available to be presented. There will be a Professional Development day on the 18th. On the 11th the trainer for the Curriculum Connector for Performance Plus will be training 20 teachers across the district. On the 18th we are offering a lunch for the teachers for a charge.

Superintendent's Report

District Update

Dr. Levy discussed the need for assistant baseball and softball coaches to help with a safety need. Mr. Russell presented the need to have an additional chaperone at a sporting event in the case of an injury to keep our children safe. The cost would be approximately \$3,000.00. Mr. Riley feels it is money well spent.

In a motion duly made Mr. Gates VOTED to approve the addition of extra compensation positions at JWMS for Assistant Baseball and Assistant Softball coaches for the upcoming 2011 Spring Season. Ms. Christman seconded the motion.

The Board had a discussion about possibly having parent volunteer. This would not work due to labor union issues. Mr. Strauss has concern about paying for these positions. Dr. Levy requested permission for administrators to look within their current budget for these dollars. Mr. Riley feels it creates much more safety for the kids and is necessary. Mr. Strauss wanted clarification if the concern is just for an away game or if a chaperone could handle the emergency. He is not in favor of increasing the deficit. Mr. Neviaser felt it is important to have the additional support during games and practice times.

Pam Christman made a motion to end the discussion and bring it to a vote. Duane Gates seconded the motion, the motion did not pass and the discussion resumed.

Ms. Fitzgibbons wants to make sure that the Board acts responsibly if incurring additional debt especially during this time of public scrutiny. Ms. Christman feels that

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this could be a huge liability for our school in the event of an injury. Dr. Levy recommended having a special meeting before or after a board workshop to vote on this issue.

Mr. Gates decided after the discussion to withdraw his motion to approve the additional compensations for these positions until further clarification of funding.

Ann Rolston wrote a letter to Ms. Linda Hall and the Board thanking members for the work done on the contract.

Information and Communication

Update on Regionalization

There has been work done in the area of Finance and Legislation. The committee is working on getting their questions answered.

State of CT – Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco – The Laws Impacting Confidentiality

Dr. Levy talked about cyber bullying. The Middle School and High School are working aggressively to inform parents about this.

Mr. Glowac discussed the change in our CL&P connection and the issue of coming off grid during school hours. The arrangement with CL&P states that they will pay customers to be in standby mode (typically during Jun, July and Aug) to relieve stress on the grid. We entered into the program in 2007 to shed KW the size of our generators. We signed a new contract in May 2010. The program changed now to include winter events. The test period was December 10th. VRHS had to shut down and started to cool down because the air handlers shut down. He feels that this contract is up on May 10th and at that time we should reevaluate our contract to decide if the savings is worth it.

Mr. Glowac has approval for solar panels on JWMS. He has had 16 or 17 requests for plans to various companies can bid on the work. The bids are due on the 19th. By the end of Jan or Feb we will select contractors and construction should start in approximately April.

Dr. Levy talked about and distributed the article in the Hartford Courant featuring our cafeteria purchasing local foods.

The administrators are participating in Instructional Rounds at all schools. Administrators felt it was a remarkable professional development experience and allows them to plan ahead to the direction our schools need to go.

Dr. Levy noted that the selection process for the VRHS Principal for 2011-12 and beyond will be rescheduled due to the short notice.

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Dr. Levy presented a Draft Region 4 Budget for 2011-12.

Dr. Levy stated that this is an initial draft. After reading the Mission Statement, Dr. Levy reminded the Board to focus on the mission statement during the budget process. JWMS enrollment will decrease but VRHS 's enrollment will increase. In this draft there is a 4.34% increase. The items driving this is the salary contractual increase, debt service, health benefits, heating fuel, ARRA Funds and Excess Cost Placements. Mr. Strauss would like the line item to read the Loss of ARRA Funds. Dr. Levy agreed. There will be a decrease of 1 certified teacher and one non certified staff due to retirement. There will be a decrease in supplies and equipment costs. Dr. Levy noted that this will be a difficult budget year. The Administrators have responded to this and are scrutinizing what we really need next year. Mr. Glowac discussed expenditure for Compost Tea Equipment to allow our schools to not treat our fields with pesticides, but to use organic matter. This is a one time payment. There will be a need for an additional Math teacher at VRHS. There is a need for a Special Education Teaching Assistant at JWMS. There would also be an increase for the assistant softball and baseball coaches at JWMS. The first budget workshop is Monday the 24th. Orders will be taken for lunch.

Dr. Levy noted that LEARN has provided a facilitator to help us in the search for a new Principal. Jennifer Lynch, a Human Resource specialist, will also assist. This search will start tomorrow and be open until January 28th. The facilitator will encompass what we heard from the public as well as having a process to have the best possible candidates. There will be Board members part of the interviewing process. Mr. Riley would like the draft to have the Board involved before Tier 6. The posting of the position will take effect tomorrow. Dr. Levy noted that the process is separate from the posting. There was a discussion about having the Board members involved during the search process. Dr. Levy will have the facilitator revamp the process to have the Board members involved earlier. Dr. Levy will make a recommendation to have a special meeting with Doreen Marvin, the facilitator, to talk about the process.

Future agenda items should include a special meeting with Doreen Marvin as well as to vote on the additional Assistant coaching positions before or after the Budgetworkshop. Ms. Hall will schedule this meeting.

Mr. Strauss will send Ms. Hall the link for the Sustainability and Conservation information. This discusses how to be more environmentally conscience.

Mr. Strauss has requested the following added to the agenda:
Superintendent annual report by June 1st on the Teacher Evaluation process.

Mr. Strauss also requested records of the last five years in regards to suspension rates to see what the pattern and trends are.

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Mr. Strauss inquired about the work of the committee developing this year's Superintendent Evaluation tool. This will be scheduled during a Joint Board meeting. Mr. Strauss suggested that this be adopted by the Joint Boards at our February meeting.

Audience of Citizens

No Comment

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to move into Executive Session at 10:07pm to discuss the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board moved out of executive session at 10:48 pm

On a motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:49 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelley Frazier, Clerk

Mary-Beth Harrigan, Secretary

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 8.1 Region 4 BOE 2011-12 Budget Workshop (Jan 24th, 31st, Feb 8th)
- 8.2 Vote to move Region 4 Budget for 2011-12 to Public Hearing (Mar)
- 8.3 Vote on Staff non-renewals (Mar)
- 8.4 Public hearing for Proposed Region 4 Budget for 2011-12 (April 4th at 7:00pm)
- 8.5 Region 4 Annual Meeting (May 2nd at 7:00pm)
- 8.6 Referendum on Region 4 Budget for 2011-12 (May 3rd noon-8:00pm)
- 8.7 Region 4 Regular BOE Meeting (May 5th at 7:00pm)