

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE January 03, 2013 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education

November 29th, 2012
(rescheduled from Nov 1st due to weather)

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday November 29, 2012 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Linda Hall, Mary-Beth Harrigan, Duane Gates, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Laurie Ann Tomlinson, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, and Jennifer Clark, as well as Senior Student Representatives Alex Belval and Sarah Burzin.

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Joanne D. Beekley
Business Manager Garth Sawyer;
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy
Director of Facilities Bruce Glowac

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Linda Hall called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Superintendent Levy opened the floor for nominations for the position of Board Chair.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Linda Hall to the position of Board Chair for a one year term.

Mrs. Hall opened the floor for nominations for the offices of Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Chris Riley to the position of Board Vice-Chairman for a one year term.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Mary-Beth Harrigan to the position of Board Secretary for a one year term.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to elect Mario Gioco to the position of Board Treasurer for a one year term.

Committee appointments – Mario Gioco will take Chris Riley's place on the Joint BOE Finance Committee. Chris Riley will join the Joint BOE Teacher and Administrator Negotiations Committee.

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 September 06, 2012 and the Accounts Payable report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Fifteen citizens were present.

OTHER ITEMS

John Winthrop students Zane Bouregy and Mitch Conrad updated the Board on recent JWMS student charitable and civic-minded activities including the following: raising money for breast cancer research, holding walk-a-thon to raise money for Shoreline Soup Kitchens, attending and participating in the Veterans Day program, American Education Week, attending talks by Senators Lieberman and Blumenthal, and assisting with a Fill-a-Pod Drive after Hurricane Sandy to collect food and supplies for the Red Cross to distribute on Staten Island. In other JWMS news, student teams participated in a recent Lego robotics competition where the 8th grade team succeeded in moving on to the State level of competition to be held in 2 weeks. A food drive was held by ACT groups for Thanksgiving meals. Also, this was the first year that the Girls Soccer team went undefeated with 13 wins. Linda Hall thanked the students for their presentation and noted that the students at JWMS should be very proud for all they do for JWMS and the community.

Senior student representative Alex Belval discussed many accomplishments in VRHS Fall athletics including Cross Country, Girls Field Hockey, Girls Soccer, and Boys Soccer. He also discussed community service efforts including Buddy Art, a new program in which high school students visit elementary schools each Thursday to work with students.

Senior student representative Sarah Burzin discussed Valley Community Outreach Day scheduled for June 7th, in which students plan to volunteer their services throughout the three towns. The Parents' Council will be supporting this effort. She asked the Board to please share any ideas on possible projects for this outreach day with her or Principal Martineau. The Winter Concert is coming up on Dec. 5th at Valley, for the band and chorus.

Teacher Barbara Nidzgorzki presented VRHS student Rachel Aikens with the Yale Invitational Parliamentary Debate 1st Place Speaker award. On September 27th Valley sent 4 debate teams to an annual international debate tournament held at Yale. Over 1500 students from all over the country and world competed in a variety of debate and public speaking contests. The competition included 5 rounds of grueling competition. Valley placed 6th out of 45 teams and Ms. Aikens was the top speaker of the entire competition.

Superintendent Levy presented students, who represented VRHS and JWMS at a recent Middlesex Chamber of Commerce breakfast, with copies of a picture of the Region No. 4 group standing with the keynote speakers; Senators Joseph Lieberman and Richard Blumenthal. Dr. Levy was happy that the students had been given the opportunity to attend the Chamber breakfast where it was the last public speaking engagement being done by Senator Lieberman before retiring from the Senate. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students to experience and participate in a local and national civics event.

Ethan Petroka spoke for a group of 5 baseball players from Valley. They, along with the Baseball Boosters have been soliciting local businesses for donations to build dugouts at the Valley fields for the baseball and softball teams. Other players spoke about the current need to move benches from other locations for games due to the lack of dugouts. Grace Petroka and Beth Bradbury made a presentation to the Board about the Valley Baseball Boosters desire to donate the construction of dugouts at the VRHS baseball/softball diamond. They met with Dr. Levy and Director of Facilities Bruce Glowac earlier in the year regarding the scope of this project. The Board asked for regular updates. (note: the Region 4 Board Voted to formally accept this donation at the end of the Joint BOE meeting on Dec 6th, 2012)

Business Manager Garth Sawyer and Director of Facilities Bruce Glowac reviewed the status of the John Winthrop Middle School Solar Energy project and asked that the Board vote to accept the project as complete in order to receive final funding from the Bureau of School Facilities. It is anticipated that the local cost (those not covered by grants) will be paid back within 5 years through the energy savings that are being realized; approximately \$30,000 per year. Mr. Glowac reported that the system has worked wonderfully to date. They have even sold power back to CL&P on several occasions. In addition, the clean energy generated by this system has removed the equivalent of 18 cars' worth of exhaust. The original project calculations had anticipated a 12 year payback period, but due to a reduction in final project costs and extra grant money received, it will actually take only 5 years for the project to reach budget neutrality.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept the John Winthrop Middle School (Solar Energy) Project 204-0016 EC as complete.

Mr. Glowac updated the Board on recently completed projects and pending projects in Region No. 4. He discussed ways to try to conserve more energy in the buildings, as electricity is a substantial cost to the district. Several energy audits have been done in the buildings. With recent renovations done on both buildings, they are pretty energy efficient with the exception of one common denominator, the metal halide bulbs in gyms and parking lot lights. Mr. Glowac noted that they are energy hogs, burn hot, and are maintenance prone, so he has been focusing efforts on replacing those. Technology is starting to catch up and advance beyond our current fixtures. He provided a visual demonstration of the metal halide bulbs vs. the preferred LED replacement bulbs that can be retrofitted in the current fixture. They last longer, require little or no maintenance, use much less electricity, and provide a better quality of light, resulting in substantial savings in electricity and maintenance costs per year. He and his team have already replaced almost all of the gym lights at JWMS and are looking into replacement at VRHS utilizing a grant from CL&P.

He also mentioned two solar projects currently in the hopper; one, to expand the JWMS system and two, a system installation at VRHS that would be equal in size to an expanded system at JWMS. He is not currently looking to move forward on those projects, as there is a need to wait because funding is unknown at this point and payback is not as favorable at the moment. But, he will be keeping an eye on those factors and make future recommendations to the Board as needed.

Whelen Engineering Liaison, David Russell presented the Board with an update on the VRHS Manufacturing Program. He demonstrated a vehicle marker light created by the students in class that day. A class survey revealed a desire of students to do even more hands on work during class. That has now been incorporated and it creates a great student experience with instant feedback when they build and test something. He shared a copy of the end of quarter survey with the Board, including comments that students wanted to share with the Board. Fourteen students (2 ladies and 12 gentlemen completed the course). There was an end-of-class presentation at Valley and each student was presented with a Certificate of Achievement. The second quarter course has already begun.

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report and the cafeteria account report. The out-of-district transportation budget is approximately \$6000 over budget. The heating oil budget line shows a surplus due to a much better lock-in rate than was anticipated. There will be a need to increase the subsidy for the cafeteria based on current revenues. Even though there has been an increase in sales volume, the cafeteria account will currently still fall about \$9500 short after the originally budgeted subsidy is applied. The Board will hold more discussion on this topic at their budget workshops starting at the end of January. There was a brief discussion regarding the success of the new Life Skills Special Education program within JWMS. The Board will hear an update on the program by Director of Pupil Services, Tracy Johnston, at their next regular meeting in January.

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

Principals Update

Superintendent Levy presented the principal's report for Valley Regional High School. She congratulated Principal Martineau on her recent recognition as Outstanding First Year Principal by CAS.

She also provided the Board with an update on work being done for the upcoming NEASC accreditation process. Valley finalized the school wide rubrics for expectations for 21st Century learning. Valley is currently piloting a mandated reporting process via comments on report cards to parents.

Dr. Levy asked the Board to accept the generous donation of \$2000 from Robin Chapin through monies raised during the first annual Christopher Belfourt Memorial Run for his Memorial Fund. Per Ms. Chapin, this donation is to be applied towards transportation costs for upcoming VRHS foreign language trips. Christopher was a former VRHS student who had a love of learning through immersion in other cultures.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to accept a donation of \$2000 of funds from Christopher Belfort Memorial Fund to be applied towards transportation costs for upcoming VRHS foreign language trips. The Board expressed their thanks for the generous donation.

Dr. Levy presented the Board with a Profile of the 2012 Graduating Class. She reviewed some of the highlights of the report. Mr. Riley noted the important service provided by supporting AP courses in that it creates monetary savings for parents and provides additional academic experiences for all interested students.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal, William Duffy updated the Board on the 2012-13 school year activities. He reported that the school has purchased a banner to be hung in the gym to recognize the undefeated Girls Soccer team. The student play will be performed soon. Professional Development sessions have been used to increase use of technology for teachers and its integration into the classrooms. Currently, iPads are being used on a daily basis across all disciplines. Students are very enthusiastic and computers are an automatic engagement tool for them; they love to use them. Mr. Duffy noted that JW teachers are extremely positive and caring, and students see and feel that on a daily basis. The teachers are using common assessments which foster teachers working together cooperatively. They are using data to drive instruction and working diligently to incorporate new Common Core Standards and integrate technology.

Committee Reports

The Joint BOE Finance Committee is scheduled to meet again on January 28th, 2013 according to Mr. Sawyer.

The Joint BOE Policy Committee is scheduled to meet again on January 16th – Elaine Fitzgibbons reported that when they last met, the Committee discussed many new and revised policies and continued their review of older policies. They also discussed how to improve the policy approval process and get members more involved in policy.

The Joint BOE Curriculum Committees is scheduled to meet again on January 16th – Mary-Beth Harrigan reported that they last met in October with 8 out of 10 members present. They heard a presentation on summer Math curriculum work and English courses at Valley and the adjustments they are making to meet new Common Core Curriculum Standards. The Committee also discussed professional development. Teachers asked for budget consideration regarding summer funds for curriculum work to continue. Mary-Beth expressed the Committee's opinion that a presentation to Board members detailing what Professional Development days provide for teachers would be helpful. Additionally, the Committee discussed Student Success Plans for Grades 6-12.

Supervision District Committee Update - There was nothing to report since the last meeting. Supervision District Committee will be meeting again next week.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Beekley gave a general update on activities within the district(s) including work being done by curriculum committees. Each committee has come up with a three year plan of focus and collaboration across all grade levels.

Dr. Beekley relayed the success of a recent information night for parents on the Common Core State Standards. Approximately 75 parents attended the presentation portion of the evening.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Levy praised the entire administrative team for their work.

She discussed the use of JWMS as shelter during Storm Sandy. The cafeteria served over 500 meals per day. It was nice to have such a great place to serve the needs of the community. The district will be reimbursed through FEMA for all of the costs. All of the administrators dressed in costume and hosted approximately 800 children for an impromptu Halloween party at the shelter.

Dr. Levy updated the Board on the new website which will be previewed by Director of Technology Pam Murphy at the December 6th Joint BOE meeting. It will be on-line soon.

A first reading of the revised Graduation Requirement Policy #6146 with addition of language regarding the State mandated Capstone Experience was presented. Board members were asked to contact their Joint BOE Policy Committee representatives or Dr. Levy with any comments or questions. A second reading will be held at the end of the December 6th Joint BOE meeting when the Region 4 Board will stay in session for a vote on the revisions to the Region 4 only Policy. There was a discussion regarding the logistics and requirements of the mandated Capstone Experience. The project is tied to the Student Success Plans and is worked on over 4 years. It is to be associated with an area of interest that the student determines. As with every other mandate there will be a cost, still to be determined.

Dr. Levy updated the Board on the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) work. VRHS is a high school pilot of the program. Dr. Levy sits on a State Leadership Team to oversee the group as they go about their work. She commended VRHS Associate Principal Matt Talmadge and the entire high school for taking on this work.

The presentation of the major Budget Drivers for the 2013-14 Region 4 budget was tabled as it is very close to the time that the Board will be given an actual draft budget.

Dr. Levy discussed the District Calendar with regards to the impact that Storm Sandy had due to school cancelations and future calendar issues as well. The Joint BOE Calendar Committee met last night to review this year's and the 2013-14 calendars. Next week the Supervision District will be looking at proposed recommended revisions to the calendar. She reviewed calendar considerations including State Statutes and 7 collective bargaining unit contract requirements. Dr. Levy did meet with representatives from all of the bargaining units. She will be proposing to change Jan 18th, 2013 currently scheduled as a full PD day into a ½ day instead, which would reinstate one emergency make-up day that can be used in June, before impacting April vacations. She discussed all of the ramifications of calendar considerations and changes. She noted that alignment with a Regional LEARN calendar would allow for better Professional Development opportunities, especially for those teachers in isolated curricula such as Art and Music. She reported that only one parent was in attendance in the audience of citizens at the Calendar Committee meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – none present

EXECUTIVE SESSION – none needed

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Next regular Region 4 Board meeting January 03, 2013
- Presentation of Region 4 Draft Budget for 2013-14 (Jan)
- Review of 2011-12 Strategic School Profile (when available)
- BOE & Community input on 2013-14 budget (ongoing)
- Discussion of catastrophic insurance for life-long injuries (TBD-requested by Chris Riley)
- Pinwheels for Peace (TBD)
- SAT scores (TBD)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

_____, Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk