

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

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| Present: | E. McClure, Chair | J. Robinson |
| | L. Bittman, Vice Chair | L. Gejda |
| | K. Fetchick, Secretary | D. Raymo |
| | D. Nanavaty | 4 Staff |
| | R. Gaines | 5 Public |
| | W. Hart | 1 Press |

Mrs. McClure called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of October 6, 2009, the field trips for the high school Junior State Club and the Debate Team, the middle school field trip to Canada, the high school marching band trip to compete in the USSBA Northern States Championships in Pennsylvania, the donation of \$200 for the high school Best Buddies Program, and the coaches for high school winter sports. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 2 – Public Participation - None

Item 3 – Reports

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson said that over the summer new control valves for the heating system were installed in Hawley and it was reported that the heat in the school on Monday was regulated and consistent in each of the classrooms.

She reported that regarding the possibility of doing an enrollment projection study she checked with Dr. Chung who did the Planimetrics study of Newtown. She expects his proposal to be about \$15,000.

Dr. Robinson said that she and Mr. Hart attended a CABE workshop on tweeting and texting in the public schools.

Mr. Hart said the lawyers presenting said they encouraged districts to review their policies frequently. They gave examples of how students are misusing email for bullying and sending compromising information. They focused on the legal side and what districts can do to protect themselves and the students. They said we have to teach the students and staff about the risks using the technology.

Dr. Robinson said we also need to change any related policies. It is important that students and staff have prior notification of what is unacceptable.

Dr. Robinson expressed her concern about the furniture situation in the new building as it would not have been her choice. The technology department moved last Friday but

had to deal with having no water in the building. It is possible that we will use Canaan House for storage. Unfortunately 65 cabinets were not accounted for to move. She sent a letter to Joe Borst asking to find storage space for us.

Mrs. McClure said that there might be some space in Town Hall South. She doesn't feel Canaan House is safe.

Mrs. Fetchick said she would follow up with the Board of Selectmen.

Dr. Robinson said with the State talking about cutting the excess cost grant for special education we have been told it will go down to 70%. We budgeted for 18 out-placed students but that has increased to just under 30 students. Most additional students have been placed by DCF. Right now we have \$418,000 unexpected costs which is a combination of the reduction of the percentage of State funding and the placement of the additional students.

Mrs. Fetchick asked to add an item to new business to discuss political campaigning at the schools due to recent events over the last few weeks.

Dr. Robinson said she needs to approve anything that is distributed at the schools. We have related policies regarding distribution of materials. She is reviewing sample policies from CABE and other districts.

Mr. Nanavaty said the problem in Newtown is that our schools are our polling places. The registrars have set a certain distance for candidates to stay away from the polling place. We should look at whether the campaigning is during school hours or during a public function which is not educational.

Dr. Robinson said it is up to the sponsor of the event to determine that. We don't allow people to just come on school grounds for campaigning during school hours.

Mrs. Fetchick said that during school hours it is inappropriate and disruptive. We've had a couple of incidents over the past two years and we should have a policy.

Mrs. Bittman said that during off hours our buildings are owned by the town so we have to understand what the town policies are.

Mr. Hart said we should check the legalities when the buildings are being used during off hours for non-school activities.

Mrs. McClure asked when we will know for sure how much we will get from the state.

Mrs. Raymo said we report information to the state in December so we should know the amount in January. We have to act now so we can free money up in January.

Financial Report and Transfers:

Mrs. Raymo said we have alerted the principals about the large deficit in the out-of-district tuition costs and a memo will be going out regarding the freeze. There will be no

overtime. She would like to meet with the finance committee this week to discuss this issue.

MOTION: Nanavaty moved to approve the financial report dated November 30, 2009. Mrs. Fetchick seconded.

Mrs. Fetchick said the \$580,000 for certified substitutes seems high.

Mrs. Raymo said we should look at other DRG B towns for comparisons. We have to realign what we are doing.

Vote: 6 ayes

Item 5 – New Business

Grade 9 Western Studies Curriculum:

Dr. Gejda introduced Candi Dietter, Social Studies Department Chair, work worked on this curriculum. Dr. Gejda said this has been developed using the concept-based curriculum model.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to approve the Grade 9 Western Studies curriculum. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Grades K-9 Modified Writing Curriculum:

Dr. Gejda introduced Sheila Blachman, our inclusion coordinator, and Meghan Trubiano, one of our classroom teachers, who assisted in writing this curriculum. Dr. Gejda said our teachers have begun to review various curricula to ensure that the implementation is appropriate for students identified as having special needs. This curriculum will help maintain high expectations while delivering a rigorous curriculum for these students.

MOTION: Mrs. Bittman moved to approve the Grades K-9 Modified Writing curriculum. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 4 – Old Business

Newtown High School Expansion Project Update:

Dr. Robinson said the project is on schedule. The graded flooring for the gym is coming in darker so it will be difficult to see the lines on it so we are looking to upgrade it to level 1 for approx. \$15,000. We have not yet resolved the additional means of egress from the team room yet. Joe Costa is dealing with that.

Mrs. McClure asked how the busing was going.

Dr. Robinson said there have been a number of bus complaints such as overcrowding and issues with bus stops.

Mr. Nanavaty said his daughter is one of the first to get on the bus and it is already overcrowded.

Mr. Hart said he heard a number of complaints of long runs and overcrowding.

Dr. Robinson said there is no solution to shortening the runs because we have no more buses.

Item 6 – Public Participation

Audrey Greenwood, 7 Susan Lane, said that regarding campaigning on school grounds she witnessed someone on the Reed School property who was just standing with a sign. She supports doing that in this town. She said to be careful of what you say no to.

Jodie Bialek, 5 Briarwood Lane, said she has a kindergartener who rides MTM and she has had five subs since school started. Three have missed the stop and had to turn around. She is concerned that there has not been continuity.

Item 7 – Executive Session

Mrs. McClure said there was no need for executive session.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to adjourn. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Questions raised at meeting: Substitute teacher comparisons between DRG B towns.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathryn Fetchick
Secretary