

Please note: These minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on March 18, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Leidlein, Chair
L. Roche, Vice Chair
K. Hamilton, Secretary
K. Alexander
J. Vouros (absent)
D. Freedman (absent)
M. Ku

J. Reed
L. Gejda
R. Bienkowski
7 Staff
2 Public
1 Press

Mrs. Leidlein called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Roche moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the Newtown High School field trips. The donation of \$1,500 to Sandy Hook School from the Pacific Life Foundation, the donation of \$132 to Middle Gate School from Matthew Fiorillo and Wells Fargo, the donation of \$30 to Middle Gate School from Urgent Care of Connecticut, the donation of \$12,564 from the Committee for Children in support of the Second Stet Program at Reed Intermediate School, the donation of \$5,000 from healing Sandy Hook Through the Arts for financial assistance to Sandy Hook School students to attend the Newtown SMART camp, the resignation for retirement of Tom Swetts, teacher at Newtown High School, resignation of John Gearty, teacher at Newtown High School, extension of the child rearing leave of absence for Valerie LeBlanc, and Bob Gendreau as NHS assistant boys track coach. Ms. Hamilton seconded. Motion passes unanimously

Item 3 – Public Participation (none)

Item 4 – Reports

NICE Presentation:

Dr. Gejda introduced students, faculty and parents attending the meeting.

Caroline Barron presented an overview of the Newtown International Center for Education Program which is an international education program. Tim DeJulio spoke about the history of the program which began in 2008. In 2012 we partnered with a school in France and this year with Spain. Lisa Berger president of PCO spoke about the accomplishments of the program which is a model for aspiring districts in the State of Connecticut. The Asian Society also helps support our program. She read a letter from Luke Sherin a former student who is attending NYU who feels fortunate to have been in this program.

Paula Greenfield, World Language Department Chair, spoke about the importance of global education. Over 200 Newtown families have been involved in this program. She would like to see it extend to the other schools and have an administrator oversee the program. Katherine Matz said they are a self-funded program but are lacking in manpower. It would be helpful to have one person oversee the program.

Dr. Reed praised the program and felt it was important to continue. He suggested getting suggestions from the world language department on how to further integrate NICE and the sister schools in France, Spain and China into the core world languages curriculum.

Mr. DeJulio said it is part of the community resources as opportunities for students.

Correspondence Report: Ms. Hamilton read the attached report.

Chair Report: Mrs. Leidlein stated that regarding Mr. Fitzgerald's request, it is not Board business and will not be added to the agenda for discussion.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Reed spoke about the principal searches. For the Hawley principal position they are in the process of working with committees on questions. Screening interviews began this past Saturday. The first round of committee interviews are March 31 and April 2. The second round of superintendent interviews will possibly be the week of April 7, 14 or 21.

The high school search is in progress with a focus group for parents, students and staff on March 24. Applications are going directly to CAFE. There was a strong pool of candidates for Hawley with close to 40 who applied. A smaller number is expected for the high school principalship.

Mrs. Leidlein stated the focus group for the Board will be on April 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Reed spoke about the CAPSS position paper on the Affordable Care Act. The first concern is the high cost plan excise tax because of the significant number of retirees on the plan, the higher than average age of employees and because the northeast has the highest health care costs in the nation. The second concern is pay to play provisions which is for those who work 30 or more hours a week and it has a provision that no more than 9.5% of an employee's wages can be spent on health insurance. CAPSS is looking to raise the full time status to 40 hours per week.

Mr. Bienkowski said the 30 hours considered as full time can cause issues. There are tracking requirements to make that determination. This affects those who work in two part time positions in the district. The tracking needs to begin in April or May. Our consultant has been discussing this with us. The emphasis is that this should be delayed as it will be a hardship for districts.

Dr. Reed thanked the Board of Finance for the professional way they reviewed the budget and interacted with those who appeared before them.

Dr. Reed spoke briefly about Dr. Gejda's letter to parents last Monday. He commented on an accident which occurred last Saturday morning at the winter guard rehearsal. He also spoke to Gregg Simon and asked him to remind the public that the high school position on fan buses is that it doesn't sponsor them. In fact, they discourage them based on some past experiences with many students on a bus with only one adult.

Dr. Reed met with Parks and Rec about security/safety procedures when the facilities are in use. We want to work toward a digital calendar. There will be more communication regarding the basketball leagues and having all spectators remaining in the gym. In too many cases, children are leaving the gyms to play in other areas of the school,

Ms. Hamilton asked who was participating in the principal searches.

Mrs. Leidlein said Mrs. Ku would be on the Hawley committee and Mrs. Roche and Mr. Vourous on the high school committee.

Dr. Reed stated that these are administrative procedures initiated by the superintendent. The Board is the hiring agent. He prefers to keep the committees to 10 people.

Assistant Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Gejda spoke about flexibilities in the teacher evaluation plan being offered to districts. The state looked at some ways to ease some of the burden of evaluation at the building level. There are two possible flexibilities in this school year. One is the number of student outcome goals that each teacher will be evaluated on in 2013-14 and the second is the number of times that each tenured teacher is formally observed by June 2014. The state is asking the district teacher evaluation committee to meet and vote and also to have the Board of Education vote on the flexibilities. The committee voted to make no change to the number of student outcome goals that Newtown teachers are working on. They also opted to make a slight change in our practice and voted that only tenured teachers who receive and maintain an annual summative performance evaluation designation of proficient or exemplary during the 2013-2014 or any subsequent school year shall be evaluated with a minimum of one formal in-class observation no less frequently than once every three years, and three informal conducted in all subsequent years.

Dr. Reed said this review and recommended changes have occurred because the original regulations didn't take into account any standards for how many individuals one principal can reasonably supervise.

Committee Reports:

Ms. Hamilton said the policy committee met this week and was joined by Dr. Gejda, Mr. Jaslow and Mrs. Ostar regarding the graduation requirements policy.

Mrs. Roche for the communications committee thanked Mr. Alexander for the budget newsletter. Mrs. Ku attended the Education Connection meeting on March 5 where the proposed regional calendar was discussed.

Item 5 – Old Business**Standing Committees:**

MOTION: Ms. Hamilton moved that the Board of Education approve the list of standing committees as presented. Mrs. Roche seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – Old Business**Financial Report:**

Mr. Bienkowski presented the financial report. The first installment of the excess cost and agency placement grants have been received and credited to the appropriate accounts. \$1,281,725 went to the salary, professional services and other purchased services accounts. We reduced the tuition account by \$789,058 in agency placement and excess cost grants. We also removed \$135,100 from tuition which has been applied to the DOJ grant.

He has been in touch with Monroe regarding oil and asked Mr. Faiella to switch the Reed School and high school back to oil temporarily. This was done to use our fuel oil inventory to allow for delivery of our total contracted gallons.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the financial report for the month ending February 28, 2014. Ms. Hamilton seconded.

Mrs. Roche asked how the cash donations were used.

Mr. Bienkowski said they used money for security and miscellaneous expenses for the Newtown schools.

Ms. Hamilton questioned the homebound and tutor salaries and why it keeps increasing. Dr. Reed said this is related to social and emotional challenges of students primarily at high school age.

Motion passes unanimously.

Policy 6146 Requirements for Graduation:

MOTION: Ms. Hamilton moved that the Board of Education approve the revisions to Policy 6146 Requirements for Graduation. Mrs. Roche seconded.

Ms. Hamilton spoke about the meeting with Dr. Gejda, Mr. Jaslow and Mrs. Ostar regarding this policy. There was a question whether taking a language in the middle school would count toward high school credit so they wanted to check with the state department. The other concern was about taking a language through a non-profit organization. They feel there is a need to remove that type of language. Mrs. Ostar said taking specific online courses needs more time to vet.

Mrs. Fetchick proposed making the changes as presented but eliminating paragraphs two and three because the middle school needs to pass this information to the eighth grade students.

MOTION: Ms. Hamilton moved to amend the motion to accept it as written minus paragraphs two and three. Mrs. Roche seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Vote on original motion: passes unanimously

Charter Revision Considerations:

Mrs. Ku presented her suggested revisions regarding section 2-30(c), section 2-70(a), section 6-13(b), section 6-14(a) and section 6-13(b).

Ms. Hamilton felt they should review the vacancies in elected offices section and the language of advisory questions in section 6-14(a).

Mrs. Roche asked for a review of bifurcation. She prefers one budget amount.

Mrs. Leidlein suggested a list be put together by Ms. Hamilton and Mrs. Ku for a vote at the next meeting.

Teacher Evaluation Plan Flexibilities:

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved that the Board of Education approve the Newtown Professional Growth Committee's recommendation for flexibility in teacher observations for the 2013-2014 school year. Mrs. Roche seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Minutes of March 4 and March 10, 2014:

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of March 4, 2014 and March 10, 2014. Ms. Hamilton seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Public Participation (none)

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education enter into executive session to discuss the security plan and invited Dr. Reed. Mrs. Ku seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 8 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 10:30 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to adjourned. Mrs. Roche seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathy Hamilton
Secretary

Correspondence Report
March 18, 2014

From	Date	Subject
Suzanne Kerler	03/4/2014	When is NHS graduation?
Kevin Fitzgerald	03/04/2014, 03/07/2014	Submitted his public participation letter
Mark Peterson	03/05/2014	Solicitation for improving our website
Courage to Speak	03/05/2014, 03/17/2014	Promoting event for March 18 – Empowering Youth to be drug-free
Newtown Culinary	03/05/2014	Invitation for an event on March 27 with CT Food Bank
Debra Sourby	03/06/2014	Last Day of School
Tim Napolitano	03/11/2014	Invitation to participate in SHS One School One Read
Marlene Bucci	03/11/2014	Para-educator of the Year Award
Kinga Walsh	03/12/2014	Budget Questions
Stephen Patterson	03/13/2014	Song for SHS
Janis Gabriel, NHS Drama	03/16/2014	Peter Pan at Newtown High School