

Board of Education Minutes  
February 25, 2009

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 25, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. in the Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room. Present were Dr. Robert, Mr. Testa, Mr. Briscoe, Mrs. Ricker, Mrs. Banker (8:04 p.m.), Mr. Keane, and Mr. Secchiaroli. Mr. McCord was absent. Also present were Dr. Pukas, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Costa, Mr. Susi, Mr. Sandford, Mr. Devine, and Mr. Boucher. Chairman Robert called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

2. Public Comment/Request to Comment on Agenda Item – None.
3. Community Relations – None.
4. Presentations – None.
5. Administrators Reports – None.
6. Administrative - a. Approval of Minutes - February 11, 2009 Workshop – On a motion by Mrs Ricker, seconded by Mr. Keane, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the February 11, 2009, Workshop.

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February 18, 2009 Workshop – On a motion by Mrs. Ricker, seconded by Mr. Keane, the Board voted six in favor and one abstention to accept the minutes of the February 18, 2009, Workshop. Mr. Secchiaroli abstained.

- b. Correspondence – Nothing other than what was in the packet.
  - c. Personnel – On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mrs. Ricker, the Board voted unanimously to accept the athletic appointments as outlined in the memo of February 5, 2009, to the Superintendent provided they have the necessary coaching paperwork and CPR/First Aid courses.
7. Reports - a. Superintendent – Dr. Pukas passed around the program from the middle school cheerleading competition. She highlighted other items. She told the Board she had been invited by the College Board to learn more about how the College Board can help Wheeler High School. She elaborated.
  - b. BOE Chairperson – Dr. Robert commented on an email received from Selectman Ricker. He read items from the letter and commented on some of them. He had further comment on other items.
  - c. Committee Chairs – Mrs. Ricker said the Community Relations Committee met and they are working on newspaper articles that will be going out. She elaborated. There was comment from other Board members.

d. PSPBC Liaison – Mr. Testa gave an update. He talked about the area behind the shop being paved and trying to tie it to the sidewalk drainage project. He had further comment. He brought up the flashing on the Gymnasium to get the Board’s position on it. He said the committee was working on getting as much information as possible on it. It was decided by the Board to put this as an agenda item for March 11<sup>th</sup>.

e. Committee Action List – Community Relations will be continuing their work and giving a public summary.

8. Financial – a. Transfer Request – On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to accept the transfer request from the Business Manager in a memo dated February 25<sup>th</sup> to transfer \$10,000 from heating oil to legal and \$150 from administrative salaries to legal.

9. Old Business – a. 2009-2010 Proposed Education Budget - Mr. Susi explained the rationale for a middle school reading teacher. There were questions asked and answered. Mr. Susi had further explanation. There were further questions and comments from Board members. Dr. Pukas had comment. Board members had comment. There was discussion of cuts district wide with long term savings. There was discussion of long term reductions being programs and those should be made with a fine line to impacts. There were comparisons made to other districts. There was discussion of the Town government joining in the process and contributing their resources. There was discussion of the Board of Finance giving us a number if there are further reductions. There was discussion that there are no more long term reductions. There was discussion of being advocates if we add a position. There was comment that the Board needed to be strong and unified. There was comment that it goes to the heart of programs to make further long term reductions. There was further comment. Mr. McCarthy had comment on the grant stimulus money and explained how it is supposed to be spent and what the misconception is. There was comment from Board members. There was comment of being in this situation for three years, not just because of the economy, because of the way the Town is. There were questions asked and answered. There was further comment. The need to consolidate services and an assessment of classes was brought up. Mr. Susi spoke of class sizes and consequences of switches to larger classes. He gave the example of the English offerings and spoke of the consequences of reducing a teacher. He said it is a matter of offerings. He elaborated. There was further comment and questions from Board members. Dr. Pukas had comment. She explained that the administrators were asked to do the types of things being discussed and they were looking at all the ramifications. She elaborated. She said they have been preparing along the way. She had further comment. There was further comment from the Board. Mrs. Ricker pointed out the survey results and felt there was support out there. She elaborated and had further comment. Board members had further comment. There was comment about knowing of the contracts in place before the land purchase and the fire truck purchase. There was comment that the Town needs to acknowledge that education is as important as a fire truck or a piece of land. There was discussion. There was comment as to what is in the best interest of the children. Mr. Keane asked about making a motion for the 2.98% budget. There was comment. Dr. Pukas reiterated the question she posed as to where they go from here. Dr. Robert said it wasn’t a directive to cut anything but to justify everything. He gave class sizes at the elementary

school as an example as well as course offerings, the need for paraprofessionals, the need for a reading teacher, and athletics. There was comment about looking at what is essential in the athletic program and what is not. There was comment from Board members. There was comment about cuts forced to make and choosing to make. There was comment about when you cut personnel you cut services. Dr. Pukas had further comment. She commented on why the bargaining units had not been approached yet. She elaborated. There was further comment.

On a motion by Mr. Keane, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to add Bus Contract to New Business.

10. New Business – a. Bus Contract – Mr. McCarthy explained the process of the RFP and bidding. He said the committee recommended M&J. He explained he was not part of the decision-making process and explained why. He summarized the meeting with the two companies. He spoke of the differences in their costs. Mr. Sandford spoke as a member of the review committee about the meetings with the two companies. There were questions from the Board. On a motion by Mr. Keane, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted six in favor and one abstention to award the contract to M&J for bus service. Mr. Testa abstained.

11. Calendar – Dr. Robert reminded the Board that on March 4<sup>th</sup> the non-certified staff benefits and Superintendent would be discussed. The secretaries' negotiations are at 3:50 p.m. March 4<sup>th</sup>. Also on March 4<sup>th</sup> will be a workshop at 7:00 p.m. and at 7:30 p.m. a special meeting will be held.

12. Public Comment – Karen Veit, parent, asked about the survey results being put on the web site. She also talked about staff reductions leading to course reductions and choices, summer jobs, and writing labs for students during study halls or after schools. Robert Miner, parent, said he met with Dr. Pukas and reviewed the budget with her. He had comment and suggestions as to where the budget could be reduced. Regina Hescocock had comment as a taxpayer, not a teacher, and said she would hate to see what happened last year happen again this year. She spoke of the morale of the teachers being bad last year as was the kids'. She agreed that it is the job of the Board to advocate the budget and not allow the negativity to get in front of it. She commented on the new administrators; she said she felt the staff trusted them. She had further comment. Maureen Macinko, media specialist, spoke of the media center aide being cut. She said she understood these are tough times—she understands the cut but doesn't agree with it. She elaborated on some of her duties. She said she will do what she can to keep her level of services. She spoke of the middle school book club. There was further comment.

13. Proposed for Executive Session – None.

On a motion by Mr. Keane, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to The Board of Education