

Board of Education Minutes  
January 14, 2009

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, January 14, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. in the Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room. Present were Mr. McCord, Mr. Testa, Mr. Briscoe, Mrs. Ricker, Mrs. Banker, Mr. Keane, and Mr. Secchiaroli. Dr. Robert was absent. Also present were Dr. Pukas, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. Costa, Mr. Susi, Mr. Sandford, and Mrs. Hofstedt. Vice Chairman McCord called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

2a. Choral Presentation - Mrs. Carolyn Bennett, chorus teacher, gave some background on the students and the pieces they would be performing. The Board thanked the chorus and Mrs. Bennett for the presentation.

2b. Public Comment/Request to Comment on Agenda Item – Mr. Milligan read an email that he had sent to Dr. Robert regarding the US History credit.

3. Community Relations – An article was put at the Board’s places regarding the alumni directory and hall of fame.

4. Presentations – a. Choral Presentation – Covered above.

b. European Trip – Dr. Pukas introduced Jeff Joyce and Shannon Saglio. Mrs. Saglio gave background information on the proposed interdisciplinary trip to Ireland. Mr. Joyce elaborated. Questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Saglio and Mr. Joyce had further comment. Mrs. Ricker made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Banker to allow the planning of the trip to Ireland. There were further questions asked and answered. Mr. Briscoe asked for the motion to be amended to include the Board of Education is not taking any responsibility for the terms and conditions of the contract. Mrs. Ricker withdrew her motion and Mrs. Banker withdrew her second. On a motion by Mrs. Ricker, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to allow the planning of the trip to Ireland, to investigate the 11-day trip, and that the Board will not take any responsibility for the terms and conditions of the contract.

On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to move New Business Items a to d to Item 5 and to add Honors Music Program.

5. Administrators Reports – Mrs. Wilkison gave information on happenings at the elementary school including preparing for the CMT’s, Author in Residence, and the elementary students’ art projects at the Artists’ Cooperative Gallery of Westerly. Mr. Susi thanked Mrs. Bennett for bringing in the students to sing. He also thanked Mr. Hassell, Mrs. Saglio, and Mr. Joyce. He elaborated on items these teachers are involved in. Mr. Susi told the Board exams start tomorrow for grades 9-12 with 8<sup>th</sup> graders also taking exams. He spoke of items happening at the high/middle school including Financial Aid Night , and an African storyteller, Dr. Mama, came to

talk to the sixth graders. He introduced Elizabeth Hofstedt, administrative intern. He updated the Board on items being revisited. Mr. Sandford explained a grant he had been working on writing regarding alcohol, tobacco and drug use prevention and was awarded \$2,185. He explained what would be funded by the grant. Mrs. Costa updated the Board on the focus monitoring and said she submitted the report to the State. She elaborated. Mrs. Costa thanked those that have helped in the process.

a. Secondary School Reform Participation - Dr. Pukas explained the background of this and explained that Mr. Susi said he would like to participate in the Capstone Experience Advisory Committee. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. Susi had further comment. Mrs. Banker made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Testa to support this proposal. There was further comment. The motion passed unanimously.

b. PE/Health Discrepancy, US History Graduation Requirement, and Personal Finance Graduation Requirement – The Policy and Curriculum Committees met to discuss this. Mr. Briscoe said the administrators had recently conducted an audit of our courses. He said PE/Health, US History, and Personal Finance were found to have issues. Mr. Briscoe had further explanation. He said the administrators are asking that the Personal Finance requirement be deferred until the class of 2012. He explained the US History dilemma. Mr. Susi had further explanation. Mr. Briscoe said the students meet the State requirement for graduation for history. He explained what the Policy Committee was considering. There were questions asked and answered. There was further comment by Mr. Briscoe. There were further questions asked and answered and further comment made by Board members. Mr. Briscoe made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Keane to grant waivers for US History —some this year and some next year—at the administrators’ discretion.. There was comment by Board members. Mr. Briscoe withdrew his motion. There was further comment and discussion. On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mr. Secchiaroli, the Board voted unanimously to grant waivers for some members of the classes of 2009 and 2010 for US History based on a demonstrated familiarization and the administrators’ discretion. On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mr. Secchiaroli, the Board voted unanimously to postpone the graduation requirement of Personal Finance to the Class of 2012. Mr. Susi explained the graduation requirements for PE and Health. He said at some point health and PE were combined and explained how the PE/Health component was misaligned. There were questions asked and answered. There was further explanation. Mr. Briscoe had comment and explanation. On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mr. Secchiaroli, the Board voted unanimously to provide an exemption to the health and PE credits from 3 to 2 for the class of 2009. There was further comment.

On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mr. Keane, the Board voted unanimously to have items 5 b, c, and d referred to the Curriculum Committee. (PE/Health Discrepancy, US History Graduation Requirement, and Personal Finance Graduation Requirement.)

c. Honors Music Program - Dr. Pukas explained the Curriculum Committee met on this. Mrs. Banker said the committee did look this over and was impressed. Mr. Hassell explained that there were about 10 students

signing up for this and he elaborated. On a motion by Mrs. Banker, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to accept the Honors Music Program as proposed.

6. Administrative - a. Approval of Minutes - December 10, 2008 – Mr. Briscoe made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Ricker to accept the minutes of the December 10, 2008, meeting. Mr. Testa had questions on motion wording. The motion passed with six voting in favor and one opposed. Mr. Testa opposed the motion.

December 22, 2008 Special Meeting – On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted five in favor and two abstentions to accept the minutes of the December 22, 2008, special meeting. Mr. Testa and Mr. Secchiaroli abstained.

b. Correspondence – Dr. Pukas pointed out the letter from the attorney’s office and there was discussion. She gave background information on the letter from Mr. Mullane. She suggested that a presentation be done on the proposed heating project for the economic stimulus project. Mr. Briscoe spoke of “green” projects that are going to be required by the State. He elaborated. There was further comment. Dr. Pukas told the Board Regina Hescocock had been awarded a grant for supplies for the art department. Mr. Secchiaroli suggested that the grants received be noted during budget season.

c. Personnel – None.

7. Reports - a. Superintendent – Dr. Pukas explained the CD that was at their places. She said 119 people have taken the survey as of this morning and a request for a paper copy was made. She told the Board she had arranged for a shuttle bus for the middle/high school for the next couple of days during the frigid weather. Dr. Pukas spoke of the NCLB reports, the freeze on supplies and textbooks was lifted, and that she was participating in a panel discussion. She spoke of regionalization of services. Dr. Pukas told the Board she attended the Ad hoc Building Committee meeting as well as a grant meeting at the Wheeler Library. Mr. Secchiaroli thanked her for being proactive with the shuttle. Mrs. Ricker spoke of the topics at the Legislative Breakfast she and Dr. Pukas had attended.

b. BOE Chairperson – The FOI Workshop will be rescheduled.

c. Committee Chairs – Mr. Keane updated the Board on the Policy Committee meeting of December 10<sup>th</sup>. On a motion by Mr. Testa, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to move Item 10E to Item 7ci. There was comment. Mr. Keane had comment. There were questions asked and answered.

i. Board Policies Approval - On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mr. Keane, the Board voted unanimously to accept policy 5131.6(a) (Students-Use/Possession of Tobacco Products/Drugs/Drug Paraphernalia/Alcohol-Smoking on School Property) as amended. Mr. Testa was absent for the vote. On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to accept policy 1331 (Community

Relations-Smoking on School Property) as amended. Mr. Testa was absent for the vote. On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to accept policy 4118.231 (Personnel-Certified/Non-Certified-Smoking, Drinking and Use of Drugs on School Premises) as amended. Mr. Testa was absent for the vote.

Mr. Briscoe told the Board he went to the Ad hoc Committee meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Keane made comments about the walk through on Saturday by the Ad hoc Committee. The next Ad hoc Committee meeting is the 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Secchiaroli said he and Mr. McCarthy would be attending the Board of Finance meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. McCord said the Athletic Committee met. He told the Board Mrs. Turner said she was confident that funds could be raised for golf and tennis. Mr. McCord said she told the Committee she had items in this budget that could be transferred and she was told she needed to meet with Mr. McCarthy. Mr. McCord said the Athletic Committee wanted to ask the NSEA to make some concessions to the stipends for golf and tennis to reduce them by \$1,600 each. There was further discussion.

d. PSPBC Liaison – Mr. Testa said the committee met. The doors will be installed in April. He said the upgrading energy plan was discussed. He told the Board the Little People building upgrades were complete and they were trying to wrap up the items that are left. He said there was approximately \$20,000 left for remainder of year. Mr. Testa said they were trying to address the flooding on the walkway. He said he had spoken with the tunnel contractor and it can't be completed yet until the weather turns warmer. There were questions asked and answered.

e. Committee Action List

8. Financial – a. December 2008 Financial Statements – On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to accept expenditures of \$765,827.62, grant expenditures of \$34,922.57, for a total of \$800,750.19 for the month of December 2008.

b. Transfer Request – Mr. McCarthy explained the transfer requests. On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mr. Briscoe, the Board voted unanimously to accept the requested budget transfers in a memo dated January 7, 2009, from the Business Manager.

c. Request for Waiver of Quote Requirements – Mr. McCarthy explained the request and gave background information. On a motion by Mr. Secchiaroli, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to waive Board of Education Policy 3323(a) as requested in a memo from the Business Manager dated January 7, 2009.

There were questions asked and answered regarding the hot lunch report.

9. Old Business – None

10. New Business – a. Secondary School Reform Participation – Covered above.
  - b. PE/Health Discrepancy – Covered above.
  - c. US History Graduation Requirement – Covered above.
  - d. Personal Finance Graduation Requirement – Covered above.
  - e. Board Policies Approval – Covered above.
  - f. Budget Development Calendar – Dr. Pukas said this was given to us from the Town. A calendar will be set up for the Board of Education at the next meeting. There was discussion.
  - g. School Heating Assistance – Mr. McCarthy explained the intent of the school heating assistance program. He told the Board he had spoken to the auditor about the best way to handle it and she suggested handling it as a “special” education grant. He explained. Mr. McCarthy told the Board he had queried CASBO members and got about 40-50 responses with the majority saying they have had immediate access to the monies. Mr. McCarthy said his suggestion was to go to the Board of Finance and request it be put in a special grant fund to have access to it. There were questions asked and answered. On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mr. Keane, the Board voted unanimously to draft a letter to the Board of Finance requesting to gain immediate access to the heating assistance funds.
11. Calendar – Policy and Curriculum Committee will meet on February 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. for a joint meeting. Community Relations will meet on February 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
  12. Public Comment – Mr. Shawn Murphy spoke of the energy project. He explained it was submitted as a “shovel ready” project to the Governor. He said they have to make sure that it is up to code. Mr. Murphy said there needs to be a joint meeting of the Selectmen, Board of Education, and PSPBC and suggested it be put on the agenda for the 28<sup>th</sup>. The Board decided to have it as a presentation on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Milligan thanked the Board and administration for their support of the US History issue.

Dr. Pukas explained to the Board that she felt there did not need to be an Executive Session as the issue had been resolved.

13. Proposed for Executive Session – Evaluation of Non-Bargaining Unit Employees – Tabled.

On a motion by Mr. Briscoe, seconded by Mrs. Banker, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 p.m.

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