

Board of Education Minutes
May 9, 2012

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wheeler Gymnasium Band Room. Present were Dr. Robert, Mr. McCord, Mr. Testa (7:50 p.m.), Mr. Hundt (7:14 p.m.), Mr. Mathwich, Mrs. Dame, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Dr. Pukas, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mr. Sandford, and Mr. Apicelli. Chairman Robert called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

Dr. Robert told the audience the meeting was being recorded. (audio)

2. Community Relations – Nothing other than what was in the packet.

3. Presentations - a. CAFE Student Leadership Awards – Dr. Robert read the letters from CAFE for Aidan Wiggins and Kylie Garcia regarding the CAFE Student Leadership Awards. Mr. Sandford explained how the students were chosen and he elaborated. The Board congratulated the students.

4. Administrators Reports – Mr. Sandford and Mr. Apicelli handed out items to the Board. Mr. Sandford spoke of Rebecca Schilke being a presenter at a conference in Chicago and elaborated. He spoke of items in the handout including the media center information and parents and students accessing PowerSchool. Mr. Apicelli spoke of the art project Sue Starr did with her students. Mrs. Costa spoke of the preschool lottery with 28 students enrolling and that each family that showed interest got in. She spoke of the parent education class that was held. Mrs. Wilkison gave a rundown of events happening at the elementary school. She spoke of the concerts, summer activities for students, the Invention Convention with five students going to the State competition, the book fair, the “Artist in Residence” program with the plays to be held May 15th, Student Author Day, Jump Rope for Heart, National Teacher Appreciation Week, Nurses’ Appreciation Day, and a choral group from Africa will be presenting to students on May 31st. Mrs. Wilkison also handed out a sheet to the Board.

5. Administrative - a. Approval of Minutes - April 9, 2012 Special Meeting – Tabled until Mr. Testa arrives.

April 18, 2012 – On a motion by Mr. Mathwich, seconded by Mrs. Dame, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the April 18, 2012 meeting.

April 25, 2012 Special Meeting – On a motion by Mr. Mathwich, seconded by Mrs. Dame, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the April 25, 2012 Special Meeting.

b. Correspondence – Nothing other than what was in the packet. Dr. Pukas spoke of Mr. McCarthy’s participation in a CIRMA panel and she congratulated him on that.

- c. Personnel – Dr. Pukas read a letter from Cathy DeNoia retiring from her position as science teacher at the end of the current school year. On a motion by Mr. Hundt, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to accept Mrs. DeNoia’s resignation with thanks for her many years of service to the children.
6. Reports - a. Superintendent – Dr. Pukas spoke of the Scholar Athlete Awards received by Trevor Stefanski and Ashley Iorio.
- b. BOE Chairperson – None.
- c. Committee Chairs – Mrs. Dame explained that the Student Success Committee met and action will be taken later in the agenda.
- d. PSPBC Liaison – None.
7. Financial - a. April 2012 Financial Statements – On a motion by Mr. McCord, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted six in favor and one abstention to accept the April 30th financial statements of accounts payable of \$351,220.17, payroll of \$549,798.80, grant expenditures of \$28,218.27 for a total of \$929,238.24. Mr. Hundt abstained and Mr. Testa was not yet present for the vote.
- b. Transfer Request – Mr. Mathwich made a motion that was seconded by Mr. McCord to transfer \$1,524 from elementary school replacement equipment 0730 to elementary school new equipment 1230 and \$115 from high school media center instructional supplies 0240 to out-of-district workshops 0250. It was explained the second part of the motion was in response to the e-readers received from the NSEF. Mr. Hundt had questions. The motion passed unanimously.
8. Old Business – a. 2012-2013 Proposed Education Budget – Dr. Robert explained the Board of Finance increased our budget by .65% for an elementary math intervention teacher and a lead teacher at the elementary school. On a motion by Mr. Hundt, seconded by Mrs. Dame, the Board voted unanimously to accept a budget with a 3.65% increase.
- b. Superintendent Search Update – Mr. Mathwich identified Peter Nero as a finalist for the superintendent position and he elaborated. He explained there would be a site visit, the Search Committee presents the candidate to the Board of Education for a vote, and then they extend the offer of a position to the candidate and then negotiate a contract. There was discussion.
- c. Forensic Audit Update – Mr. Testa said there was nothing to report.
9. New Business – a. Policy Revisions – On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 0521a.
On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 7230.2.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mendolia the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 9321.

On a motion by Mr. Mathwich, seconded by Dr. Robert, the Board voted unanimously to adopt new policy 1114.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to adopt new policy 9012.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 3542.32.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to adopt new policy 3516.5.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to table policy 3520.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to adopt new policy 3520.12.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to adopt new policy 3524.2.

Mrs. Dame made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Mathwich to amend policy 6114.1. Questions were asked and answered. The motion passed unanimously.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 6121.1.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 6141.322.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 6142.

On a motion by Mrs. Dame, seconded by Mr. Mathwich, the Board voted unanimously to amend policy 6200. New policies that were tabled to a later date were 6141.326, 6141.5 6142.11, 6142.52, 6142.4, 6144.4, and 6172.8.

The Board went back to item 5a approval of the April 9th minutes but waited for all Board members to be present. There was discussion of committee meetings.

b. Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee – Dr. Robert explained the email he received. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. Hundt suggested two people participate in case one person couldn't attend all the meetings. Mr. Sandford had comment about the company that came in and interviewed students. There was further comment.

The Board went back to Item 5, Administrative, a. Minutes. Dr. Robert explained to Mr. Testa approval of these was delayed until he arrived at the meeting. There was discussion. On a motion by Mr. Mathwich, seconded by Mr. Hundt, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2012 Special Meeting.

10. Calendar – a. The Town Hearing is on Monday the 14th, May 16th at 6:30 p.m. for the Facilities and Finance Committee, 6:45 p.m. for the Student Success Committee, and May 23rd for the NSEA workshop at 7:00 p.m. There was discussion of the chain-of-command. Mr. Tardiff had comment. Board members had comment. There was further comment and discussion. Comment was made by the administrators on the chain-of-command and issues relating to the Board of Education. Mrs. Wilkison had comment and explained the scenarios where they would have no problem with the teachers talking directly to the Board. There was further discussion.

b. Committee Action List - Mrs. Dame will get the policy of the chain-of-command from Dr. Pukas.

11. Public Comment - Mr. McCord apologized for his actions. Donna Feldman, citizen, had comment. Mr. Damien Robert clarified the committee meeting times. Connor Yakaitis, student, read a statement regarding the Plan of Conservation and Development's survey and spoke of the conditions of the schools. He commented on the mission statement of the school, the Board's actions, and the need to come together to create a strong and supportive atmosphere. Jill Skidgell, teacher, commented on the actions of the Board and elaborated on the atmosphere. She had further comment. Tim Yakaitis, parent, had comment on the Board's actions and elaborated. A parent spoke about Mrs. Feldman's petition and her right to be heard and elaborated. Connor Yakaitis said there are a lot of other students that are not here that feel the same way. He elaborated.

The Board took a short recess at 8:40 p.m. The Board came back into session at 8:52 p.m.

Connor Yakaitis asked that his statement part of the minutes.

On a motion by Mr. Testa, seconded by Mr. Hundt, the Board voted seven in favor and one opposed to adding Board Operations to Executive Session. Mr. McCord opposed the motion.

12. Executive Session – On a motion by Mr. Hundt, seconded by Mr. Testa, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:53 p.m. for the Purpose of Board Operations.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:45 p.m. On a motion by Mr. Testa, seconded by Mr. Hundt, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education

Addendum to Minutes of May 9, 2012

Good evening,

My name is Connor Yakaitis and I am an honors student, a member of The National Honor Society, and the vice president of the Class of 2012. Several weeks ago, I was invited to take part in a focus group as part of the town's Plan of Conservation and Development that is currently being drafted. During this meeting, we discussed the current state of our town as well as where we would like to see it go in the next ten years. I found the focus group meeting to be very insightful, especially when we talked about our school system.

It is no big secret that the state of our schools has been deteriorating to the point where many people have advocated the closing of the high school. As a long time student of Wheeler, I would like to begin by saying that the physical condition of our school is an absolute disgrace and the fact that no attempts have been made to fix it is nothing short of an outrage. Take the ceilings, for example. For as long as I can remember, the ceilings in our school leak whenever it rains. As if the leaking is not enough, I discovered that several of the trash bins used to collect the leaking water were leaking as well. The school is freezing in the winter and boiling in the summer and water stains are rampant throughout. This is basic building maintenance that has been neglected for years.

In the Board of Education's Mission Statement, the Statement of Purpose reads the following: "*We must create an environment that strives to foster and value diversity and ethical behavior, preserve dignity, and recognize the importance of a strong and supportive home atmosphere.*" As a student of the school system, I firmly believe that no such atmosphere exists. The Board of Education has done little to improve the atmosphere of the schools. Instead this board has concerned itself with petty partisan bickering and finger pointing that has embarrassed our school and town in the local media. The current Board is one of the most divided in the state and is a textbook example of the stubbornness, disagreement and failure that exists in today's government. It has proven time and again to be inadequate at taking the basic steps towards providing a better learning environment for the student body. There are very few students who would say they are still proud of our school and you have done nothing to help fix that. There are people here, however, who have hope and would like to see a change. They rely on you to make that change possible. Instead, you continue to argue and let the school decay, both in terms of its physical integrity and morale. You cannot possibly expect to have a supportive home atmosphere when our leaders spend their time arguing about closing the building, plagiarism, and misuse of school funds, meanwhile the students wade through dirty rain water to get from class to class.

It is time for a change. We must come together to restore the glory that was once Wheeler High School. A time when people took pride in our school. A time when students did not leave our school for surrounding ones due to the lack of educational and athletic opportunities.

We students have done our part. We study hard and many of us push ourselves academically by taking AP courses. This year's graduating class has students attending colleges such as The Naval Academy, Boston University, and Emerson College, among many other fine institutions. It is time for the Board of Education to adhere to your own Mission Statement and truly create a strong and supportive home atmosphere.

Thank you.