

Board of Education
Special Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes
November 28, 2012

A special meeting and public hearing of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, November 28, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. in the North Stonington Elementary School Multipurpose Room. Present were Mr. Testa, Mr. McCord, Mr. Karpinski, Mr. Hundt, Dr. Robert, Mrs. Dame and Mr. Mendolia (6:45 p.m.). Absent was Mr. Mathwich. Also present was Mr. Nero, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mr. Sandford, and Mr. Apicelli. Chairman Testa called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Karpinski led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Proposed for Executive Session – Discussion of Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Communication – On a motion by Dr. Robert, seconded by Mr. Hundt, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 6:38 p.m. for the Purpose of Attorney-Client Privileged Communication.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 6:55 p.m.

4. Personnel – Mr. Nero told the Board that he had received a letter of resignation from Chuck McCarthy effective June 30, 2013 and he read the letter. Mr. Hundt made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Karpinski to accept the resignation. Board members thanked Mr. McCarthy for his service. Mrs. Dame asked that it be accepted with regrets. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Nero thanked Mr. McCarthy for his help during the transition.

5. Approval of Replacement Equipment Purchase – Mr. Nero explained there is a problem with the lighting in the gym. He had further comment. Mr. Sandford explained the lighting is not repairable. He had further explanation. On a motion by Mr. Mendolia, seconded by Mr. Hundt, the motion to allow the replacement equipment purchase passed unanimously.

6. Approval of New/Revised Policies 3301-Mileage and Travel Reimbursement, 3326.3-Board of Education Credit Card, 3542.31-Free or Reduced Price Lunches, and 3281-School Fund Raisers – Mr. Hundt made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Dame to approve the new policy, accept the revised policies and delete the old policies. Questions were asked and answered. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Nero had comment.

7. Approval of Class Dues Proposal – Mr. Mendolia made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Hundt to accept the class dues proposal. There was discussion on the dollar amount. The motion and second was rescinded. On a motion by Dr. Robert, seconded by Mr. Mendolia the Board voted unanimously to accept the class dues proposal with the amended dollar amount of twenty dollars.

8. Public Hearing Held Pursuant to Section 10-238 to Consider Petition to Close Wheeler High School – The hearing began at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Testa appointed Mr. Nero as moderator. He read an opening statement which

included the parameters in which a hearing must be held. The moderator read the ground rules. Mr. McCord made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Karpinski to accept the ground rules. Chairman Testa suggested amending the ground rules to have the hearing go to 8:30 p.m. and at that point make a determination if more time is needed. The motion and second was rescinded. On a motion by Mr. Mendolia, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to accept the amended ground rules.

Mr. Testa called those that signed up to speak, starting with the petitioner.

Mrs. Donna Feldman, petitioner, read a statement supporting closing the high school.

Atalaya Murphy and Faith Nee, students, spoke of the lack of opportunities at Wheeler compared to other schools.

Andrew Carlson and Ella Secchiaroli, students, spoke on behalf of the Class of 2017 that they were hoping to attend Wheeler for their entire high school career.

Mr. Bing Bartick spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Vilma Gregoropoulos spoke and asked the Board to reaffirm their commitment to Wheeler High School and spoke of being budget wise.

Christine Wagner spoke on behalf of the Economic Development Commission in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Robert Melinosky spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open. He elaborated.

Mary Jane Anderson spoke in favor of Wheeler High School and elaborated.

Asa Palmer, student, spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Ken Banks spoke of Wheeler High School and suggested it wasn't cost effective to keep it open.

Pat Ostrout and Sarah Desrocher, Co-Presidents of North Stonington Education Association, spoke of erroneous items in the petition and were in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Joe Gross spoke of the facilities that are in need and had further comment.

Stephen Sadowski spoke of and how the petition was presented as something different to signers and that he was in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Joe Zassata spoke in favor of the school system and in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Susan Pianka spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open and elaborated.

Ann Aiken spoke in favor of closing Wheeler High School and elaborated.

Mike Urgo spoke of the people in attendance that support the school. He had further comment and spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Wendy Arruda spoke about moving to North Stonington for the schools and was in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open.

Bill Ricker spoke in favor of keeping Wheeler High School open and elaborated.

Mr. Testa thanked everyone for attending and said the Board cares about what everyone had to say. He elaborated. He spoke of the vote taken on March 14th and the commitment the Board made. Board members had comment.

9. Possible Action to Consider Closing Wheeler High School as Requested on the Petition – Dr. Robert made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Hundt as follows:

Whereas, the North Stonington Board of Education has previously addressed the facilities issues as well as the possible closing of Wheeler High School, and

Whereas, only last March the Board of Education addressed this issue publicly regarding those said issues and again, today, November 28, 2012, and

Whereas, there have been facilities concerns relative to the educational needs by Wheeler High School and Middle School students, their parents, teachers and the administration and most importantly the high school's accrediting body, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and

Whereas, NEASC has placed the high school on "Warning" since their last decennial report regarding improvements needed to the present facility to address the educational needs of the students, and

Whereas, Wheeler High School is presently in their self-study in preparation for their next NEASC decennial visit in September, 2014, and

Whereas, there have been a number of building committees in the past, most prominently the "Ad Hoc Building Committee" which have studied and discussed improvements and renovations including recommendations by architects to address the educational needs of the students at Wheeler High School, Wheeler Middle School as well as the North Stonington Elementary School, and

Whereas, there has been a significant amount of speculation, misinformation and false statements made on building projects in the Town, including the most recent petition which is totally erroneous and not based on any facts.

Be it RESOLVED that the North Stonington Board of Education direct its Chairperson and Superintendent of Schools and the Chair of the former Ad Hoc Building Committee and its members to begin meeting in January, 2013, to bring to fruition and to a vote by the Town of North Stonington a facilities plan for renovations and improvements to the District's present facilities,

Be it further RESOLVED that the plan, FIRST AND FOREMOST ADDRESS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS of the students in grades Pre-K through 12 and be AFFORDABLE to the residents of the Town of North Stonington for a referendum vote in early 2014, and

Be it further RESOLVED that during the pendency of time prior to the Town vote that consultation and input is accepted from, but not limited to, the students at the three grade levels, members of the North Stonington Parent Teacher Organization, the North Stonington Teachers Association and the North Stonington Administrators. It should also include consultation and input from the North Stonington Town residents, The North Stonington Education Foundation, to include Senior Citizens, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Testa thanked everyone for coming.

On a motion by Dr. Robert, seconded by Mrs. Dame, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education