

Board of Education Minutes
State of the District
February 27, 2019

DRAFT

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the Wheeler Middle School Cafeteria. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Mr. Mathwich, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Dr. Robert, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia (7:02 p.m.). Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, Mr. Chaney, and Mr. Pont. This meeting reviewed the “State of the District.” Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – A student led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Wagner had opening comments.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.

4. Upcoming Opening of New Wheeler High School/Middle School – Mr. Nero had comment. He spoke of some of the people that have been in the new school already and they have been impressed. He had further comment. He commented on the school colors and the color on the front of the building and said the school colors are not changing. He reviewed what to expect for the next few days. He spoke of the expected weather. Thursday and Friday will be early dismissal days for each school to prepare for the move. He said the movers are expected to begin Friday through the following Wednesday including the weekend. Mr. Nero said there will be new furniture in the new school and he elaborated on that regarding the move. He said the elementary school will be getting new furniture as well once that building is complete. He explained the timeline for technology. He spoke of the phone system. He explained that the building is high tech elaborated. Mr. Nero said on the days when the students return at each school, the teachers will come in at their regular time but the students will have a two-hour delay so teachers can meet them at the busses and he explained. Questions were asked and answered.

5. Board of Education Goals – Mrs. Wagner said the Board has been having a lot of meetings, including Saturdays. She explained the signup sheets that are on the table. She said the strategic plan will be developed and implemented immediately once complete. She read some of the goals. She said they are doing what they can to create a positive environment for students and staff. She had further comment. She had further comment on the initiatives.

6. School Healthy Start Times – Mrs. Wagner said one of the initiatives they have been working on is healthy start times and she elaborated. Health, safety and well-being of students is non-negotiable and she had further explanation. She explained the workshop that she and Ms. Wellborn attended. She explained some of the information they got from the conference. She explained the steps they have followed while looking into this. She said they are continuing to look at this. She had further comment. A video on this subject was shown. Mrs.

Wagner had further comment. She had comment on start times. Mrs. Wagner reviewed some of the parent survey results. Ms. Welborn reviewed some of the start and end time options that have been looked at. One bus run had been talked about and she elaborated. She reviewed an option with two bus runs that needed a 45 minute gap. She reviewed another two-bus run option. All of these options incorporate a six and a half hour day for the students. She reviewed another one-bus scenario with the elementary school starting before the secondary level. Mrs. Wagner had comment on the one-bus run thinking it would be a cost savings. One-bus run options would mean more busses on the road and she elaborated. She said their only agenda is a healthier student. She had further comment. She said the fall of 2020 is a more reasonable option for starting this.

7. The District's Strategic Plan Design Team and Steering Committee - Mr. Nero commented on the size of the crowd present. He mentioned the article in *The Day* where we are listed in the top five in our region. He spoke on what a strategic plan is and compared it to a blueprint. He had further comment. He said this district has never had a strategic plan and elaborated. The design team has been meeting since December. He spoke of the makeup of the design team. He said they will be developing a "Vision of the Graduate." He said they are developing a theory of action and he named a few of them. He said this should drive every decision that is made and he elaborated. Mr. Nero said they are looking for people to be in their focus groups and he explained.

8. North Stonington Elementary School Initiatives – Mrs. Wilkison spoke of the testing results and she elaborated. She spoke of planning events before the move and named the events that were held and will be held. She reviewed the move dates. She had further comment. She reviewed how the traffic pattern will work once the students are on this side of the street. In the 2019-2020 school year the elementary school will be Pre-K to 6 and she elaborated. She said they are very excited to have grade six back. Mrs. Wilkison thanked Sue Starr for the wonderful art work to try to change the high school in to a special place for elementary students. She had further comment. She said the parents will be invited in to see the classrooms after everything has settled down.

9. Wheeler High/Middle School Initiatives – Mrs. St. Germain commented on the move and said they are ready to go. She had further comment. They are planning a "second first day of school" for the students on March 18th and she elaborated. With the new building comes a new pride in our school. She spoke of the Pathways for the students. They are excited about the changes. Mr. Chaney gave the background information on the new graduation requirements and the amount of electives. He spoke of the 8 drop 2 schedule for next year and explained the reasoning behind it to allow students to take more classes. He said they are very excited about the change. Mrs. St. Germain said seniors will have a chance to be interns in their senior year and had further explanation. She spoke of the move regarding parking and the safety plan. She had further comment. An accreditation report is due and the next visit is coming up. Mrs. St. Germain spoke about the sixth graders and she elaborated. Mr. Chaney said they have heard some questions regarding the sixth graders and the tunnel. They will be traveling across the street for their electives, lunch, advanced math, and dismissal. He explained about the sixth graders' day. A staff member will be accompanying them across the street the majority of the time. He explained how the staffing of the

transitions will work. He said the sixth graders have already gone through the tunnel and he elaborated. Mr. Chaney said they still belong to them. Mr. Chaney also commented on Sue Starr's art work and he had further comment. Mrs. St. Germain said it has been really nice to see the cooperation between the elementary staff and the middle/high staff.

10. Athletics – Mr. Nero had comment. He has heard the rumor that the Board got rid of middle school sports and said that was not true. He said they have been talking about athletics and improving the program and they came up with a draft proposal. Mr. Nero explained the changes to the bleachers in the gym. A digital sign would like to be added to the gym. He explained training for the referee payroll system. One goal is to provide funding for professional development for athletic coaches. Mr. Nero continued to comment on the items on improving athletics. He had further comment. They are revamping the middle school coaches' job description. He spoke of the sixth graders still participating in sports and said it will have to be decided. He spoke of getting intramurals into the schools and elaborated. He had further comment. He spoke of our athletic fields and the issues we have. Mr. Nero had further comment.

11. Public Comment – Mrs. Wagner explained how public comment would work. Mike Urgo, First Selectman, thanked everyone for all the work they have done. He said this has been a real difficult process for everyone. He thanked the Board of Education and he elaborated. Heidi Mehringer-Macina, parent, asked about the transportation of the food to the high school. Mr. Nero said it is a servery and they went through it today. He explained a van will be purchased to transport the food and explained how it works. Laura Mello, parent, asked about the safety of the sixth graders and public access during their travels between the schools. Mr. Nero said sixth graders have always been going through the tunnel. He said we have cameras in the tunnel and elaborated. Mrs. St. Germain had further explanation. Bryant Meyer, parent, had comment on the healthy start time regarding the elementary school students and the effect on them. Mrs. Wagner had comment and said they will take them into consideration. Deb Karpinski, resident, spoke of the healthy start time for the elementary school students. Mrs. Wagner commented and said they are not discounting those students. Mrs. Karpinski had further comment. Tana Brewer, parent, spoke of the time changes. She commented on what her children thought about riding the bus with all the students together. She suggested a survey for the students as to what would be good about riding together and what would not. Helen Cassata, parent, asked again about the tunnel. Mr. Chaney answered the parent's concern. He again explained the transition of students. Mr. Nero had comment on this as well. Courtney Gumbiner, spoke of the elementary students riding the same bus, sending out the survey again and having before- and after-school care. Mrs. Wagner answered her questions. She said one bus run is the least likely to occur. Mrs. Gumbiner had further comment on the school start time. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Mr. Joe Gross, citizen, said the Board has always looked out for the best interests of the children. He spoke of the tunnel and didn't see a problem with the tunnel. He spoke of the school busses and that there used to be central stops. He spoke of the lost and found in the back of the room.

On a motion by Mr. Mathwich, seconded by Dr. Robert, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education