

Board of Education Minutes
Special Meeting
April 2, 2020

DRAFT

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Thursday, April 2, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom video conference platform, meeting ID 124-111-626. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Dr. Robert, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, and Mrs. Reyes. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.

Mrs. Wagner said this meeting will be uploaded to Face Book and she elaborated. She explained how the meeting would work.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – Mr. Urgo asked about sharing them meeting. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner could not get the meeting to share online. Mr. Nero said we were talking about this (COVID-19) even before the state started talking about this. He explained when we started with distance learning and where we are now. He elaborated. He said he had spoken to a number of parents. We have tried to accommodate parents as much as we can. Mr. Nero gave accolades to Mr. Pont and Mr. Bryant. We are providing breakfast and lunch to students and he elaborated. We are serving 60-65 each day and he explained. Mrs. Wagner thanked everyone for their hard work during this time.

4. Old Business – a. 2020-2021 Proposed Education Budget – Mrs. Wagner had comment. She said they attended the Board of Finance meeting last night and she elaborated. She said cut us \$377,000. They want to cut some of that money out and use some of the money from the unexpended fund and she explained. They want us to take anything out that is a one-time purchase. She elaborated and said they want us to come back for appropriations if needed and she is not comfortable with that. She elaborated. She said the cuts we can make have in this budget have already been made. She spoke of any savings this year using to fund some of next year. She had further comment. She asked Mrs. Martin to look at a couple of things. Mrs. Wagner spoke of the utilities line. She thinks we are pretty accurate on that. The Board of Finance also spoke of transportation. She said she spoke with Mr. Pont today. We have about 60 laptops out right now and she explained. Depending on how they come back, we may need to replace a cart. If we went to Chrome Books district wide it could save quite a bit of money. Mr. Pont will have something for them next week. Mr. Nero said what he heard last night was very confusing. He would like to see in writing where they would like us to be. He had further comment. He said we had lowered the budget 3% before it even came to the Board of Finance. He explained the phone conference with the state superintendents. He said we are paying our employees and he elaborated. Mr. Nero said we are still working out the details on transportation. He said we have had some legal costs because we have three different bargaining units involved.

Mrs. Wagner said if we had any money remaining to make those one-time purchases with that. Board members had comment on items including the replacement equipment line, clarification on the RISSA account, district families' use of laptops, end-of-year funds being returned to the town and the town's use of that, and school of choice being affected by a budget cut. Mrs. Wagner and Mr. Nero had comment on these items. Regarding school-of-choice, Mrs. Wagner said it seemed as if the Board of Finance did not believe it would be called off with a budget reduction. Mr. Nero spoke of the incoming tuition projections. Board members also commented on having to re-look at how we shop our program. Mrs. Wagner asked the Board members to look at those items the Board of Finance suggested and had further comment on asking for additional appropriations. Board members had further comment on purchasing with our strategic plan in mind, reconsidering technology, the town's undesignated fund, communication between boards, having the Permanent School Planning and Building Committee activated, the town taking care of our grounds, and returning funds to the town. Mrs. Martin commented on the CARES Act. Mr. Nero spoke of the special education students getting supplemental services. Board members had further comment. Mrs. St. Germain commented on schools calling us about being a school of choice. Mr. Nero had comment. He said we have the right to negotiate with our bus vendor and he elaborated. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. McCord asked about salary continuation through Dr. Robert. Dr. Robert asked about insurance. Mr. Nero said we are going to have to wait for the dust to settle and he elaborated. He said we are trying to keep everyone employed. He said we would give the bus company the salary and health care costs and then go from there. The bus company is the last one to work out. Board members had questions regarding paraprofessionals and custodians and their pay. Mr. Nero said yes and explained the memorandum of agreement. Questions were asked about the stimulus money. Mrs. Martin clarified that the calculation will be based on their Title I funding and come in as AARA funds so it would not go back to the town. She had a conference call this afternoon and she and Mr. Nero hadn't had a chance to discuss that yet. Mrs. Wagner said she will continue to forward information to the Board. There was further discussion on the stimulus money.

b. 2019-2020 Current School Calendar – Mr. Nero asked for this to be put on the agenda. He has had conversations with the administrators. He explained what some other districts are doing. He said teachers and administrators are in need of an April vacation. Mrs. Wagner agreed. She had further comment and said everyone needs a break. Mr. Nero said the parents as well. The calendar will stay as is. Mrs. Wagner had further comment.

c. School of Choice – Mrs. Wagner told the Board there is not much to say at this point. She said the districts are watching what we are doing in North Stonington. Mr. Nero said he spoke to an area superintendent that we presented to and said he was concerned that their high school was not doing any type of distance learning. Mrs. St. Germain had comment on her conversation with this superintendent. She elaborated.

5. Finances and Facilities – a. February 2020 Financial Statements – Mrs. Wagner asked for any questions and we would approve these next week. Mr. Mendolia asked about delaying payments and he was answered.

b. 2019-2020 Education Budget – covered above. More projections will be available next week.

6. Board Communications – Mrs. Wagner said she is trying to communicate with the members the best she can. She elaborated. She still wants a state of the district meeting at some point. Mr. Karpinski commented on the number of participants at the virtual meeting. Mrs. McCarthy spoke of the conversation she had with the gentleman from the state regarding what North Stonington was doing for distance learning. Mr. Nero had further comment on that.

7. Public Comment – None.

On a motion by Dr. Robert, seconded by Mr. Karpinski, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the virtual meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education