

Board of Education Minutes
Special Meeting
May 14, 2020

DRAFT

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Thursday, May 14, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting platform meeting ID 341429436. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Mrs. Mastroianni, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Pont, Mr. Boucher, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, and Mrs. Reyes. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Public Comment with Students Speaking First – None.
4. Presentations – None.
5. Administrators’ Reports – Mrs. St. Germain commended her teachers on getting the students engaged. They are making headway for students that are struggling and are working tremendously hard. There is a lot of one-to-one instruction. She said teachers and paras are an amazing support team. Mrs. Wagner commented on the Google Meets and how wonderful it was to hear those. Mrs. Wilkison said she is also impressed with her teachers. They had to learn all of this. The teachers are working on the social emotional aspect. They are doing Google Meets and Zoom meetings for socialization. Mr. Nero commented on information Mr. Karpinski brought forward regarding the social aspect. He said the administration has talked about this as well. Mr. Nero asked Mrs. St Germain if they were also keeping an eye on this and he was told they were. Mrs. Wagner commented and said they are doing an amazing job.
6. Administrative – a. Minutes – Mrs. Wagner asked that these be done as a consent agenda item. Mr. Mendolia made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Karpinski to accept the minutes of the April 8, 2020, Special Meeting, the April 21, 2020, Special Meeting, the April 27, 2020, Special Meeting, and the May 4, 2020, Special Meeting. Ms. Welborn commented on the budget aspect of the minutes where members spoke of not being able to support a certain percentage budget. Mrs. Wagner explained. She said at the end of the day, it is a Board of Finance budget whether it is our budget or a budget the Board of Finance has reduced further. Approving and moving forward below a 2.5% budget would be hard. Mr. Nero commented that it can be said that they (Board of Education) don’t endorse the budget. The motion passed unanimously.
 - b. Correspondence – Mrs. Wagner said they have received the Voluntown contract from our attorney. Mr. Nero said he didn’t have any correspondence other than to Preston asking to let them to let us know about school-of-choice.
 - c. Personnel – None.

7. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero said the teachers are doing very well. Last week, Mrs. St. Germain and Mrs. Reyes spoke of grading at the middle and high school and that Mrs. Wilkison will be bringing something forward. Mrs. St. Germain and Mrs. Reyes will be bringing something forward on graduation. He has an 11:00 conference call with the Commissioner and other superintendents tomorrow. Mr. Nero said Chris Zyrlis, one of our teachers, is serving on a re-open committee and he explained. With the grading, what we do here is what works well for our climate and culture. We'll work on what is best for our school when school reopens. He spoke of items that have been brought up for discussion when school reopens. Mr. Nero said that the building where the elementary school now resides has not been leased out so we do have the space to spread out if needed. We will be putting together a committee to look at school opening. Mr. Baran, our emergency management director, was able to get us a thermal thermometer and he explained. A Zoom meeting was held and Mr. Urgo has a company that we can get masks from. Mr. Nero said Mrs. Martin spoke about the number of masks we would go through and Mr. Boucher had a source for masks as well. He is suggesting we put together a NoSto committee for our schools for a plan to re-open.

b. BOE Chairperson – Mrs. Wagner was on a meeting with other Board of Ed chairs. She said they are talking about summer school and re-opening in the fall. She elaborated. She said we should take a bus survey and see how many parents would put their students on a bus. She commented on parents returning to work five days a week. We should include parents on the committee. Mr. Nero said we are already getting push-back from parents about re-opening; some wanted distance learning and others wanted in-person schooling five days a week. Mrs. Wagner had comment and said we are small. We will have a good solid plan and everybody should be comfortable with that. She said they attended the Preston meeting on Monday. They elected to move forward to look at what contracts would look like with us and Griswold. We are just waiting to hear back from the Board of Finance. Mrs. Wagner said Connecticut isn't in as bad a shape as other states are. She commented on a Moody's study that came out that said Connecticut is in a pretty good spot. Mr. Nero said Connecticut has a hefty rainy day fund. Mrs. Wagner said we should wrap our brains around "We Can Do It" and we will figure this out together. Every time there is a new challenge we rise to the occasion.

c. Committee Chairs – Mrs. Martin suggested having a Finance Committee meeting before the next meeting. They will meet at 6:00 p.m. before the next meeting. Mrs. Wagner asked about getting a tour of the elementary school when the order is lifted. Mr. Nero said we need a TCO (temporary certificate of occupancy). He explained about the cafeteria equipment. The exterior doors have been shipped after a delay. The doors for the front will be sent to the school and they will be beginning to install them. Mr. Nero said if anyone wants a tour of the building and he will arrange it. We'll social distance ourselves.

d. LEARN Board of Directors' Liaison – None.

e. School Modernization Building Committee – Mrs. Wagner said Dr. Potemri reported out in detail to the Board of Selectmen and she elaborated. She said those meetings are recorded and suggested they listen to the meeting.

8. Finance – a. 2020-2021 Proposed Education Budget – Mrs. Wagner said Mrs. Martin sent out a revised budget at 2.5%. She said we will have to look at technology to see how we can leverage that. She wanted to ask him how quickly we can get our equipment. Mr. McCord said we got \$37,000 from the State. He thought we should just order it now. Mrs. Wagner said she didn't just want to order a bunch of computers if we are going to just replace our laptops or Chromebooks. Mrs. Wagner said the budget hasn't changed from before. She said it is weird not talking about it but until we hear from the Board of Finance we can't do much.

9. New Business – a. Elementary School Grading – Mrs. Wilkison said information went out to the Board. She said they are really concerned about the students with their distance learning and how much support they get. She said they are finding in the lower grades and that the children are getting 100's in everything and how much is that showing? She said this is what she and the teachers have talked about. She explained the rubric for the upper grades. The primary teachers would basically do just a narrative and explained the levels. She said report cards are so important but it is so hard now to measure the success until we get them back. Mrs. Wagner said it looked like it covered all the bases and looked good. Mr. Karpinski said he hadn't had a chance to look at it and asked how you stay on top of the kids to make sure they are getting everything they need. Mrs. Wilkison had comment and explained their issues. There are so many situations around this. She said we really won't know this until we get them back. We had to cut back on what we teach because we were overwhelming the families and the students. There were so many situations to consider. She said this would be the fairest way. Mr. Nero said the concern will be when the students are tested again and suggested testing so we can see where they are at. Mrs. Wagner concurred. Mrs. Wilkison explained the forms of testing they use to see how the kids are doing. She had further comment. We are just going to have to be prepared to meet their needs. Mr. Karpinski asked about a number of families she may be concerned with. Mrs. Wilkison said even at the middle/high school they are checking with the families. She has even asked Mr. Pont about giving more computers to families with multiple students. Mrs. Wagner said there is nobody that is deliberately falling through the cracks. They are keeping up with reaching out to the students and parents. It is the nature of parents not being equipped to be a teacher. Mrs. St. Germain said it changes daily. They have probably less than 10% of the kids they are reaching out to each day. Mr. Karpinski said that is what he wanted to hear and he elaborated. Mr. Mendolia asked if there would be any grant money because the kids are going to need help when they come back. Mrs. Wagner explained and said it will trickle down from the state. Mrs. Wilkison said Mrs. Costa has the paraprofessionals helping the students through Zoom everyday and she expanded on that. Mr. Mendolia asked Mrs. Wilkison if we can opt to not have summer school. Mr. Nero said they will be getting some guidance on that hopefully tomorrow. He said let us see what the guidance will be. Mrs. Wagner said the call they were on today said if you can do summer school they were encouraged to do that. She said our population would be workable. The support will be critical.

Mrs. Wilkison said she had one parent said if it were distance learning-yes, and another said if it were in-person-yes. There was further discussion. She thanked Mrs. Wilkison for the information.

b. Graduation – Mrs. St. Germain said they were waiting to hear tomorrow about graduation. She said she would love to have our ceremony. They have started to look into a professional ceremony to do our seniors justice. One idea is that they would like to do the graduates-on-parade. They would have the students staggered out front and have the town drive through. They would like to air whatever virtual program they have prepared ahead of time. Starting last Friday, they are celebrating seniors. Every Friday through graduation night they will be getting something unique from the teachers that adopted them. *The Day* will be doing a special on us. She explained. She said people have been asking about prom. She spoke of other ideas they have been working on. They had a meeting with the ECC and she said that fall sports will be different. All sporting events may be closed to the public. They have a handle on what they want to do (graduation) but they are waiting to hear from the Governor. Mrs. Mastroianni wondered if they were doing anything to recognize the 8th graders moving to grade 9 and sixth graders moving to grade 7. Mrs. St. Germain said they have been talking about that but they don't want to take away anything from the seniors. She said they are just waiting to hear from the Governor. Mrs. Wagner spoke as a parent of an 8th grader and said they are okay with it. Mr. Nero said the other superintendents spoke of that as well and the focus was to be on the seniors. Mrs. Mastroianni spoke of the parent groups associated with these other grades. Mrs. Wilkison said there will at least be some things for them.

With Mr. Pont joining the meeting, Mrs. Wagner spoke and asked Mr. Pont is he had a feel for purchases now and if we paid for them now if we can get them. Mr. Pont said he has spoken to his rep and immediate availability is nil. Mr. Pont said at sometime soon we will be moving a school and to throw in a couple of hundred Chromebooks would be tricky. Mrs. Wagner said to go out and purchase laptops doesn't make sense. We have been talking about the one-to-one program for quite some time. Ms. Welborn thought we were going to talk about this as the year wraps up. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Ms. Welborn said we should make a decision at the next meeting whether laptops or Chromebooks. Mrs. Wagner had further comment and said we need to make a solid commitment. She asked if we paid for them now could we get them. Mr. Pont said an autumn delivery would be okay but immediately wouldn't be doable. She asked Mr. Pont to ask the rep about availability. A list from everyone will be brought forward at the next meeting. Board members asked if they would be able to look at the list in-depth at the next meeting and they were told yes. Mr. McCord thought we had pretty much agreed on this. Mr. Pont brought forward a few concerns about the Chromebooks and going forward. He spoke of the wireless issue at the new elementary school. Mrs. Wagner said we were looking at a couple of options – the one-to-one program or replacing the laptops with the Chromebooks; a combination of both Chromebooks and laptops. Mr. McCord said we need to get the wireless situated at the elementary school. Mr. Pont said without wireless system in place a Chromebook is dead in the water. Mrs. Wagner said this was the first she has heard about the wireless issue. Mr. Pont said there were a lot of things assumed that were part of the project but it wasn't. It was recently brought to light. Mrs. Martin gave the figures as to what was cut from technology. Ms. Welborn asked if

this was never in the budget. Mr. Pont said there were a number of technology needs in the project but they were cut out. Mrs. Wagner said she will get some information out to Mrs. Martin and Mr. Pont. She spoke of the grant money coming next year. She said we can't not fund technology. Ms. Welborn said she was concerned about the technology and testing. Mr. Pont answered. Mrs. St. Germain said if we come to the fall and we are out again, it could be a real problem. Mrs. Wilkison brought up the point about equity. If we don't get this one-to-one technology we will be in trouble and she elaborated. Mrs. Wagner said that will be the focus of the next meeting. We just have to wait for the Board of Finance. Mr. Nero said during this meeting he has heard two things during the meeting one of which was there is an ed. foundation meeting and he had just received an email from the state regarding graduation. He will forward the graduation information to the Board and administration.

10. Policy First Reads – None.

11. Calendar – The next meeting will be on May 27th. It's scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Mr. Mendolia asked if any students from other towns wanted to come to our school was there some way they can see the school. Mrs. St. Germain said students from Voluntown came to tour. They are doing a lot of virtual things. Mr. Mendolia just didn't want to lose anyone now that this is coming together.

12. Public Comment – None.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education