

Board of Education Minutes
Special Meeting
July 15, 2020

DRAFT

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, July 15, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. via ZOOM meeting platform meeting ID 83206809298. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia (6:57 p.m.). Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, and Mr. Boucher. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.
4. Presentations – None.
5. Administrators’ Reports – None.
6. Administrative – a. Minutes – June 4, 2020, Special Meeting – There was comment. The June 4th minutes were previously approved at the June 10, 2020, meeting.

June 10, 2020 – On a motion by Ms. Welborn, seconded by Mr. Karpinski, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the June 10, 2020, meeting.

June 24, 2020 – There was discussion. These minutes will be approved at a later meeting. The exact dollar amount for the Chromebooks will be added.

- b. Correspondence – None.
- c. Personnel – Mr. Nero said we had a paraprofessional in the budget and explained she was hired before the shutdown. The new Grade 6 teacher is Leah Costa Turck and he gave her background. Alexa Lawson is the special education teacher at the elementary school and her background was given. Mr. Nero said we had another special education position that was cut in the budget. He spoke with Mrs. Wagner. He said with the savings from the new-hires we have the funding for that position now. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. Nero said we are able to add a special education teacher that was cut from budget due to the turnover of salary. Questions were asked about the pool of special education teacher candidates.

7. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero said Adam Burrows came in from Voluntown; their Board approved the contract. He has been in contact with Roy Seitsinger of Preston. Their Board approved our contract the other night. Preston is really excited about this. August 10th is their virtual Board of Education meeting and they want to do something ceremonial. Mr. Nero said a variety of committees are preparing for school reopening.

One plan is for full opening which the governor is mandating. The next scenario is some out and some in and the third is totally virtual. He said Connecticut is doing really well but Rhode Island is having a spike. The logistics committee met on Friday. He has met with Mr. Boucher and the custodial staff. Mr. Nero said he is meeting with the teachers' union next week. They will have to have another memorandum of understanding. The moving of the elementary school is complete. There may be a few odds and ends left. Tack boards and bulletin boards will be taken down. The guys got it all done in three weeks. Mr. Nero spoke with George Brennan and they came to an agreement regarding the certificate of occupancy. He thanked Mr. Boucher and his custodial staff because they worked very hard. He was very grateful to them for making it happen. He met with Mr. Urgo yesterday and we went through the procedures for the building. Mr. Boucher is providing keys and access codes to the building. Two days a week the registrars of voters will be working. He said the meeting went well. Mr. Nero said the Board made a motion to pay for the wall pads. The Board voted for approximately \$12,000. The cost came in closer to \$18,000. Carson (architect) said they can do it for closer to \$13,300. Mr. Nero had further comment. The plumbing matter is all straightened out and he explained. Questions were asked about who would clean the space. Mr. Nero explained. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Mr. Nero spoke of the playground. They met with Beth Greenleaf and reviewed the report. Cherenzia Construction is going to remove all the old equipment. Mr. Nero spoke of insurance coverage passing to the school district once the playground is in place. Any ongoing work will be the Board's responsibility. Mr. Nero said he was in the high school building this afternoon and they are down to the final coat on the gym floor. Mr. Nero spoke of the training with Infinite Visions. He said the training was extensive on this. This first payroll went off without a hitch. Mr. Nero spoke of the absence requests. Mrs. Martin thanked Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Michaud for their diligence. She also said the training was extensive. She explained about the absence requests and said there will be a few tweaks but in time they will get used to it. Mr. Nero had further comment on the program. Mr. Nero said we have changed to Anthem and he elaborated. It was a seamless transition. We are continuing with our negotiations with AFSCME. They will also be negotiating with administration this year.

b. BOE Chairperson – Mrs. Wagner said our entire focus is the reopening of school in the fall. That's the most important thing. Sub committees met last week. Administrators have been working on their plans. She is meeting with Mr. Nero and the administrators. There will be a meeting of the task force next week. The plan has to go to the state on Friday. Once we feel comfortable with the plan, we have to get the word out. They have to feel comfortable about it and understand it. She explained further what will be worked on once the plan is in place. It is a work in progress. We are diligently working on this. She elaborated. Mr. Nero wanted to make sure that everyone knows we are being mandated to return. Mrs. Wagner said the survey will be asking the parents what they feel comfortable with. She spoke of getting cameras in the classroom and explained. We want to continue to look at this as an option. Mr. Karpinski said districts in other states are doing surveys. Mrs. Wagner explained some of the makeup of the committees and said we have a good makeup. Mr. Karpinski asked about a report on lessons learned from this spring. Mrs. Wagner offered him the surveys because the administrators are busy trying

to get this plan in place. Ms. Welborn said she didn't have anything to add at this point. She wanted to see the administrators' plans. Mrs. Wagner said they are in negotiations with the paras/custodians.

c. Committee Chairperson – None.

d. LEARN Board of Directors' Liaison – Mr. Mendolia said he attended last month but they didn't report anything we don't already know.

e. School Modernization Building Committee – Dr. Potemri said Mr. Nero covered everything. She said they are not in a position to vote on closing the plan yet and she explained. She said this can be taken off the agenda now. Mr. Karpinski would like a tour before they vote on it. Mr. Nero said to just let him know when. Mrs. Wagner spoke of doing something so parents can see the new school. There was discussion of Board members touring the school.

f. School Re-Opening Task Force – Mrs. Mastroianni said Mrs. Wagner covered it in her report. Mrs. Wagner said they are going through the process to make sure it's done right. Dr. Potemri asked who was appointed as the communications liaison with the community. Mr. Nero felt it would be him. He said right now the plans are still being worked on. He said Ledge Light is not going to be approving any plans and he explained. Mrs. Wagner said the plan from the high/middle school is that there is a communications' plan. Mr. Nero said the day-to-day things the administrators have their fingers on the pulse of this. He has trust in them that they do the day-to-day stuff and if it goes beyond the principal, it would go to him. He said it would work well doing that. Mrs. Wagner had further comment. Questions were asked about the state approving our programs and the answer was the state is not approving any plans. Questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Wagner said one of the questions was about using the busses. Mr. Nero said our bus coordinator was on the logistics committee. Ms. Welborn spoke of some of the transportation discussion of the logistics committee. Mrs. Wagner said there is more to come on that.

8. Finance - Mr. McCord made a motion that was seconded by Ms. Welborn to approve the additional funds for the pads. There was discussion. The motion was amended to add the additional \$1,300 will come out of the non-lapsing account. There were further questions asked and answered about the difference in padding costs. Mrs. Wagner said there is no safety issue with going with the reduced cost. Ms. Welborn said she wanted to make sure we were doing right by the students. The motion passed with six voting in favor and one abstention. Dr. Potemri abstained.

9. Old Business – a. 2020-2021 School Calendar – Mr. Nero said there is still a lot of discussion between superintendents. They all came to the table with the same agreement about starting school. They are going with the first three, four, or five days of school with staff only. We are opening an elementary school that staff hasn't been in for over a year and a half. He explained what some districts are doing. Mr. Nero explained the proposed revisions to the calendar. Mrs. Wilkison had comment. Mr. Nero said some tweaks can be made. He said the

governor waived the 180 days. Mr. Nero said if we go to 180 days we can take the regional professional development days out and make October 13th a staff day for a reset date. That would still put us in line with our last day being June 11th. He had further comment. There was discussion. Ms. Wagner felt we should move ahead with the calendar so parents had something. She wanted to see a highlight of the PD. There was discussion of keeping student days at 182. On a motion by Mr. McCord, seconded by Mr. Mendolia, the Board voted unanimously to approve the calendar with the removal of the built-in snow days for a total of 182 instructional days.

b. Elementary School Playground – Beth Kimmse of the playground committee said they are very excited about getting something built for the first day of school. She said even if we are not in school, it would be great for the kids to have a place to play. The one structure they are excited about is the Cog Hill structure. They started looking at four different suppliers. They wanted something to excite all grade levels. They wanted to stay in their budget. They have been able to raise about \$40,000. She said GameTime said they have ramped up their discount this year and started it early. They have been focusing on reputable companies. The piece shown to the Board would be for the Pre-K and Kindergarten playground. Mrs. Kimmse said because of this discount, which is time sensitive, it is almost 50% off. She explained the discount they had to apply for and she elaborated. The company gave them a 42% discount on this piece which is the top of their discount. She explained further. Questions were asked and answered. Cherenzia Construction will be donating removal and will be working with Perkins to haul it out. Some grading will be done. She said there is a strong possibility the town would help with the footings. They are looking at a supervised community build and she said the supplier will send a supervisor. She explained. Ms. Kimmse explained what is involved in the installation of the playground. The installation cost is about 30% of the total cost. She said they don't want to go in that direction and she elaborated. Mr. Nero said the representative from CIRMA will meet with them. Ms. Kimmse said they will need to add in the wood chips. They would love to do rubber surfacing but the upfront cost would be about \$100,000. She had further comment. She said at this time, they will go for the wood chips. In future years, they could pour the rubber around the structures. Mr. McCord had comment and said he there are a lot of purchasing agreements out there and it sounds like they are getting a good price that would match the other prices. He asked about wood chips being approved for the surface. Ms. Kimmse said they have moved to playground certified wood chips and she explained. She said Thompson Lumber Mill has them and the best price around. She had further comment. There was further comment. Ms. Kimmse commended the team she is working with. There was further comment. Mrs. Mastroianni said this is a daunting task. She is impressed with this group and they have done an incredible job. Mrs. Wagner asked for an approximate amount from the budget. Mrs. Martin said it is a moving target but it looks like \$110,000. Mrs. Mastroianni made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Karpinski to approve that piece of equipment for the playground for \$9,793. There was discussion. Questions were asked and answered. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Jamie Towle wanted to bring to their attention that due to COVID the equipment may not be able to be used. She said they are looking into getting the basketball court paved and she explained. Mrs. Wagner had comment.

10. Policy First Reads - Ms. Welborn explained that these policies were either due to suggested or mandated changes due to statute. She explained the non-lapsing account policy and the face mask policy. On a motion by Mr. McCord, seconded by Ms. Welborn the Board voted unanimously to approve new policy 3171.1, Non-Lapsing Education Fund without the appendix. The policy on masks will be acted on at a later date.

11. Calendar – There will be a policy meeting mid-August. The next meeting is July 22nd.

12. Public Comment – None.

13. Proposed for Executive Session – None.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education