

Board of Education Minutes
February 10, 2021

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 10, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM meeting platform meeting ID 874 7675 3967. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia (6:06 p.m.). Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Boucher, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. St. Germain, Mrs. Reyes, and Mr. Cillino. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.
4. Administrative – a. Minutes – On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Dr. Potemri, the Board voted unanimously via consensus agenda to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2021, January 9, 2021, January 20, 2021, January 27, 2021, and February 3, 2021, meetings.
 - b. Correspondence – None.
 - c. Personnel – Mr. Nero told the Board the two custodian positions were filled.
5. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero said the PTO meeting was Monday night. He spoke of the Power Point presentation on their Board. There was a question and answer session for Mr. Cillino. Mr. Nero elaborated. The NSEF (North Stonington Education Foundation) meeting is tomorrow. The trivia contest was held last week and he explained. Mr. Nero explained that if we have any more snow days on Monday and Tuesday they will be virtual and he explained the reasoning; that group has lost quite a few instructional days. He said if it's on a Thursday or Friday, they will be an actual snow day. He elaborated. We have lost more Mondays and Tuesdays. He had further comment and said we are trying to do the best we can.
 - b. BOE Chairperson – Mrs. Wagner said she received an email from Mr. Urgo about forming another committee for the education center. He is looking for a member from each town committee and she elaborated. Mr. Nero spoke about having to leave the building and what the cost would be. Mrs. Wagner asked Mr. Spring (Board of Finance Chairperson) that we delay our presentation but she hasn't heard anything else from them. The Board of Education could meet on the 18th possibly to re-cap the budget. There was discussion. A question was asked about the payback to the state if the Board of Education had to leave the building and Mr. Nero said the town would be responsible for that.
 - c. Committee Chairperson – Mrs. Mastroianni commented on the web page and thanked Mr. Pont and Mr. Bryant for their work. She commented on the Face Book page and being able to sign up for agenda and minutes through the town.

d. LEARN Board of Directors' Liaison – Nothing to report.

6. Old Business – a. School Re-Opening Plan – Mrs. Wagner spoke of the plan to bring the students back. She said there was a walk-through of the buildings yesterday with the union representatives and she commented. She said we are hearing more about ventilation and is so thankful for the new buildings. She spoke further of the walk-through. She mentioned that a Service Master representative went on the walk-through as well and she elaborated. She met with Mr. Boucher to go over cleaning protocols and it is well under control. She spoke of cleaning between lunch waves. She gave kudos to the teachers for coming up with alternate ways to teach students and she had further comment. She spoke of the vaccine clinic on Friday and spoke of numbers in the state and in North Stonington. She reviewed the case numbers; we are staying pretty flat-lined. She had further comment. Mrs. St. Germain had comment. She spoke of the stragglers with the survey. She had further comment and thought 75% will be coming back. She spoke of students remaining in the hybrid program. She spoke of looking at the student count in some of the classrooms and they are looking at those classrooms. Board members had questions that were answered about students opting to come back. Mr. Cillino said they are missing about 50 or so students to know where they are at. Just fewer than 20 are staying hybrid and full distance. He spoke of meetings he has had with the staff. More desks have been put in the classrooms. He said they are getting there. They are almost at 90%. Board members commented on the surveys not being returned. Mr. Cillino and Mr. Nero had comment. Mrs. Reyes said they have 48 total distance which is less than they were. She had further comment and said they are waiting on 10 more surveys. She said they are very excited. They have done a lot of work with the lunches and she elaborated. They will absolutely maintain the 6 feet at lunch and she explained.

b. Proposed 2021-2022 Education Budget – Mrs. Wagner said we received the latest budget today. Mrs. Martin said the budget today is based on some of the cuts discussed at the last meeting. She explained where to find the listing of cuts. Mr. Nero said he is not recommending any cuts but if they have to, this is where they would cut. Mrs. Martin answered questions. She reviewed the list. Questions were asked and answered. Questions were asked about the grant funding. Ranking the tech equipment was talked about. There was discussion. Mr. Nero had comment on the administration meeting today. He spoke of seeing where our funding is in May. Mrs. Wagner spoke of the budget being currently at 2.6%. She asked if we could get it down \$100,000 more. Mr. Nero said that is what we are hoping for and he elaborated. He said the closer we get to the referendum, we have a better idea of where are numbers are. He had further comment and said he would have gone with the 4.3% budget and elaborated. Mrs. Wagner had further comment. Mr. Nero wants the ability to prioritize what has been taken out and he had further comment. Mr. Mendolia asked about leaving it at the 2.6%. Mrs. Mastroianni asked questions that Mrs. Wagner answered. Grant money was discussed. There was clarification on equipment. Mr. Nero commented on programs needed when the students come back. He said they will need a lot of the ESSER II funding for ramped up help for the students. He said this grant funding has to last into 2023. He spoke of an extended day program to get kids caught up. Questions were asked and answered regarding the ESSER II funds. Mr. Nero said they have not received the funding application information yet. Mrs. Wagner had further comment

on that. Mrs. Martin had comment on when the funds are drawn down and the detail they want. Mr. Nero had further comment. He spoke of staying away from summer school and explained. He spoke further of an extended day program. Further questions were asked and answered. Mr. Nero had further comment. Board members had further questions on the ESSER II grant. Questions were asked and answered. There was discussion. Questions were asked and answered on the non-lapsing account. Mr. Nero had comment on technology. There were further questions. Mr. Nero had further comment on the last time we did a major purchase in technology which was around 2014. Mrs. Martin asked if we should start to pull out and start order. Mrs. Wagner had comment on what was discussed at the last meeting. Board members had comment. Mr. Nero had comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment on what to bring to the Board of Finance. Mrs. Martin had comment on how the budget was built. She spoke of items administrators put in the budget; they are all needed. She had further comment. Mr. Nero commented on the zero-based budget and he elaborated. Board members had comment. Ms. Welborn commented on going with the 4.3% budget, the need to leave quite a bit in the ESSER grant, and leaving \$50,000 in the non-lapsing. Mrs. Wagner had further comment. We have a 4.3% budget need but we can maybe fund it differently. She had further comment and explanation. She asked if technology numbers can be looked at again. Mr. Karpinski said we should save a good portion of the ESSER for catch-up for the kids. Mr. Nero had further comment. Dr. Potemri commented on when we started the process; the administration has a Board that supports their need. It goes back to the original conversation we had about where our revenue sources are and where these line items fall into them as we re-allocate. She had further comment. She spoke of the pre-buys; in effect, we are re-allocating our funds and we have to present it like that. Dr. Potemri thanked Mrs. Martin for her hard work. She had further comment. She didn't want to cut line items and she explained. She had further comment. Dr. Potemri spoke of having to trust what the administrators give us. Mr. Nero had comment. He said there are not a whole lot of pots of money out there. He spoke of re-allocation. He said whatever the budget figure is-if you trust us-given time we can get to that number. We don't know where we stand with our surplus. He had further comment. There was further discussion. Ms. Welborn spoke of the difference between what the board of finance wants and the 4.3%. There was discussion. She said the administrators need the 4.3%. She doesn't think we have enough funding to re-allocate. Mrs. Martin commented on the number the board of finance gave us was actually 1.3% and had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Mrs. Mastroianni spoke about it has to be all about the perfect presentation. She had comment. Her concern was that if we can reallocate things, they will take the non-lapsing account. She had further comment. She said this account may be a barrier moving forward. She had further comment. Mrs. Mastroianni spoke about asking them for guidance and they voted on the guidance. She had further comment. There was discussion. Mrs. Mastroianni had further comment. She spoke of holding money in ESSER funds and the non-lapsing account. She didn't want to start a battle. Dr. Potemri had comment and spoke of needing to show what our need is and had further comment. We need to have a complete understanding of what our need is along with possible income sources. She had further comment. Ms. Welborn asked if it was being suggested that we step away from the 4% and go with the kinds of numbers we have now. There was further comment. Dr. Potemri didn't want to get into the conversation about individual line items. There was further

discussion and comment. Mr. Nero had comment. We have always gotten down to where the board of finance wants us to get and he explained. There was comment. Mr. Nero talked about the process. Board members had comment. Mrs. Wagner said we need to take a look at the lists and clean them up. Mr. Nero had comment. He spoke of the non-lapsing and keeping a percentage of that. There was further discussion. Mrs. Wagner spoke of taking another look at the reallocation piece. Mr Nero had comment. There was further discussion. Mrs. Wagner spoke of looking at the non-lapsing account to reallocate. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner will reach out to the board of finance again; we are just not ready to present. Mrs. Wagner said she doesn't want the administrators to cut. Dr. Potemri said we have to be prepared in case we get that feedback. There was further comment.

7. Public Comment – None.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Dr. Potemri, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education