

Board of Education Minutes  
Special Meeting  
May 25, 2021

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM meeting platform meeting ID 818 5406 4432. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mrs. Mastroianni, and Dr. Potemri. Also present was Mr. Nero. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.
4. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero thanked the Wheeler administration and our two nurses, Astrid Williams and Jess Kessler, and Mrs. McCarthy for their help with the vaccine clinic. He elaborated and had further comment. The ESSER II grant was submitted. Mr. Nero explained we are assigned an overseer. Mr. Nero met with the new social worker today and he elaborated. He will be sending out his last weekly update this week because there is not a lot to report—we have been doing well. The end-of-year activities are being planned. The school re-opening committee will meet at the beginning of August.  
  
b. BOE Chairperson – Mrs. Wagner said we are having the policy workshop on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Public comment will be on the agenda. She said a lot of policies were sent out. She asked the Board to review the 5131 series, especially the .9 section. The recruitment and hiring policy will be looked at. Attorney Anne Littlefield will also be attending the policy meeting and she explained. Mrs. Wagner explained we'll have that workshop, look at what we have on the books, and then bring the policies back to the next Board meeting for a vote to allow time for the public to review them. She spoke to Rob Rader at CABE to see what the fall may look like and she elaborated. They need to meet on the superintendent goals. They are working with the stipends' committee and their next meeting is June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Job descriptions will be reviewed and she elaborated. The hiring policy will be on the June 9<sup>th</sup> agenda instead of the June 5<sup>th</sup> agenda.
5. Student Success – Ms. Welborn asked if we could talk about the strategic plan before we break for the summer. That will be discussed at the meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.
6. Community Relations – Mrs. Mastroianni said she has been posting the agenda. She explained how the page works; they don't allow comments. She thought maybe they should utilize it more regarding the budget.
7. Facilities and Finance – a. April 2021 Financial Statements – April financial statements will be voted on at the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. May's financials will also be looked at. A Facilities and Finance Committee meeting will be held prior to the regular meeting.

b. 2021-2022 Proposed Education Budget – Mrs. Wagner thought voter turnout is what worked against us. Ms. Welborn asked if we knew why it failed. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner spoke of the numbers that turned out to vote. Mr. Karpinski thought we did a good job rationalizing the funds available. Mrs. Wagner wondered if we should have recorded our presentation on the budget and if there was a place people could quickly go to watch it if that would be helpful. There was discussion. Mrs. Mastroianni had comment and said we need to get more parents to vote. The loss by 12 votes doesn't speak very well. There was further comment. Mr. Nero had comment. Ms. Welborn asked if we could come back with the same budget. Mrs. Wagner said this was brought up at the finance meeting. Mr. Nero was directed to bring the budget to 1.3% if that is what we are requested to do. Mrs. Wagner commented on the attendance at the meetings. If we continue to cut into our current budget, we are zeroing out a lot of line items and how do we get that back without a huge increase. She had further comment. We are funding items this year because of savings. Dr. Potemri had comment. She wondered what other avenues we can use to publicize that we need people to get out and vote. She doesn't believe people understand the significant contractual obligations that consume our budget. She had further comment on contractual obligations. If we come back with the same rate we need to make it clear what our contractual obligations are next year and the year after that. It is impacting our teaching and our kids; we have a pretty significant obligation coming forward. Ms. Welborn asked if there was any way we can estimate our increase next year due to obligations. She was told yes. Mrs. Wagner will ask Mrs. Martin to do that. There was further comment. Dr. Potemri talked about estimating some items such as special education tuition. Mr. Nero had comment. There was discussion on contractual obligations. Mr. Karpinski said we tell the board of finance every year and they still want zero. Board members had comment. Dr. Potemri said the one thing we don't say enough is that the impact is staff and that is where we have to go to next. There was discussion. Mrs. Mastroianni thought it may be a good idea to put together a Community Relations Committee meeting soon and come up with a marketing plan per say so we can start moving forward and have a plan on how to attack this. Mrs. Wagner said we'll see what happens at the meeting tomorrow and schedule it from there. Ms. Welborn commented that when we lose staff, it is the people with the least amount of experience with a lower salary. She doesn't know if people understand that. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner commented on going forward to the Board of Finance and relaying we want to keep what we have. She elaborated. She said we are asking Mr. Nero to bring it to the 1.3% in the event that is the way it goes. Board members had further comment.

8. Calendar – The policy workshop is on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Wagner asked the Board to please look at all the policies. The regular Board meeting is June 9<sup>th</sup>. Graduation is June 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

9. Public Comment – Mike Costanza, teacher, asked if the Board will continue to mandate masks and vaccines. He said everyone that has the chance to get the vaccine has done so. He was disappointed we are still continuing to have our children wear masks. He had further comment and read a statement regarding wearing masks. He had further comment and said he would like to see the school board lead on this issue and stand up to the state. He had further comment. He spoke of the committee put together by the first selectman to get the word

out about the vaccine. He had further comment. Mrs. Wagner is hoping to have more discussion on that soon. Joe Gross, citizen, commended the Board on the structure of their meetings. He supported the Board's budget as presented. He reviews the budget and meets with Mr. Nero and the business manager. He spoke of the votes. He said you will not change the minds of people with the information you put out. He can't see the Board changing anything in their budget. He had further comment. He said he will continue to support education and elaborated. He asked the Board not to take anything away. He commented on low voter turnout. He said you have his support and thanked the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Dr. Potemri, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to  
The Board of Education