

Board of Education Minutes

January 11, 2023

DRAFT

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held in a hybrid format on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, beginning at 6:30 PM in the North Stonington Education Center. Present were Mr. Burdick, Mr. Karpinski, Mrs. Mastroianni, Mr. Stefanowicz, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mrs. Wagner and Mrs. Mazzella via Zoom. Also present were Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Merrill.

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

On a motion to add to the Agenda as 4.e, the topic of adding pronouns to the Board Members' nameplates. Motion made by Mrs. Lisa Mazzella and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel.

3. Public Comment*

Mr. Costanza made a request that the BOE reconsider changing December 22, 2023, to a half day.

4. Reports

4.a. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Hopkins requested the Board to reconsider the 12/22/23 being half a day and would like to add the last five (5) days of school to be half days. In addition, Mr. Hopkins requested, that for this year for the calendar to be consistent, all parent/teacher conferences in the district be changed to April 4 & 5th as half days.

On a motion to add 4.f. as an agenda item to revise the 2022-2023 school calendar.
This motion was made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

Mr. Hopkins would like to propose adding a stipend position for curriculum development. With NEASC coming up, there is a great need to add a curriculum coordinator for the 2023-2024 school year. A job description will be developed for this position. The Give Back Club would like to do a trip to Maine on March 28 and March 29th. This is the same trip that they have done in the past. Mr. Hopkins has been asked to Chair the High School Accreditation Committee in Swansea, MA from March 26 through March 29th, 2023. Mr. Hopkins thanked the group of students who were in attendance. The group of students attended the BOE Meeting for their Civic Class.

4.b. Student Ambassadors Report

Will report on January 25.

4.c. Committee Chairs Reports

Goal 3, Transparent and Efficient subcommittee meetings have been focusing on Transparency and talking a lot about the budget season and talked about strategies to communicate with the public. On February 8th there will be a budget presentation and on February 10th will do a Facebook live to casually talk to the public about the budget. Our goals are to make people aware. Would like to provide information about topics. The strategies that will meet those goals. It will be good to have a solid communication plan. February 22nd @ 5:30 pm is the next scheduled meeting.

Goal 1 and Goal 2 are scheduled for next Wednesday, January 18th @ 5:30 and 6:30 respectively.

4.d. BOE Chairman's Report

Mrs. Wagner indicated that she will work with Jim Russell on the web live.

The new district website is ready - if you see content that is missing, please send the info to Jim. We will need to start discussing the maintenance of buildings.

4. e. - Pronouns on name plates – Statement from Mrs. Mazzella follows. Back in October, at our retreat, I suggested we consider placing our pronouns on our nameplates. I have thought about this a lot and would like to have this discussion.

Through my own life experiences, I have learned the importance of pronouns. I do not know what it's like to be gay, transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming; but I do know how immensely important it is to be affirming. I do know that a seemingly small act can make a huge difference. I have done extensive research in order to better educate myself and to become a better advocate and ally to members of the LGBTQ+ community and their families.

Including our pronouns on our nameplates communicates the following:

- promotes diversity and inclusion
- promotes a safe learning and working environment
- normalizing pronouns will help normalize the fact that not everyone's pronouns correspond with their gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation
- will help to create an inclusive, accepting environment for all students and staff
- shows that we, the Board of Education, embody our district's goals

This small act of including our pronouns on our nameplates can help make a tremendous difference in our families, community, and beyond. While I would love our entire board to be on board with this idea, I have no interest in shaming or judging anyone that does not wish for their pronouns to be included on their nameplate. I am, however, asking that we each have the option to do so. I am asking that this discussion be included on our agenda for our January 11th meeting.

For the record, I have researched, googled, and tried to find another BOE in a district somewhere that does this. I found none. Why not be the first?

Dr. Towle-Weicksel - thank you Lisa for advocating for this and would like to be supportive of the community. I want to show that I am an ally and I would like my pronoun on my name. Mr. Karpinski – is supportive of what has been proposed. Mrs. Mastroianni - I want to thank my very brave and wise friend Lisa and I understood that no one was questioning my pronouns. I am supportive and would like my pronouns added to my nameplate. Mr. Burdick - this is an issue for many of our students. Some are struggling let to them see that they are valued and that adults are inclusive and supportive. Mr. Stefanowicz - we are supporting the entire student body and this is a small way of showing that. These are important issues and their voices are being heard. And no matter what you see in your everyday world, you feel inclusive.

Mrs. Wagner indicated that if someone does not add their pronoun, it does not mean that they are not supportive. I am going to leave my pronouns off because I represent the entire community. Mrs. Mazzella - I would hope that we wouldn't appear divisive.

4.f. - Calendar - this year - simplify the parent/teacher conferences in the Spring and move all conferences to April 4 & 5th and keep half days for students.

Motion to change April 4 & 5th as a full district parent conference and half day for students. This motion, made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

2023-2024 calendar – an adjustment that the last 5 days be made half days and reconsider the day before the holiday break on 12/23 as a half day.

Motion to change the last five days of the 2023-2024 school year to half days. This motion was made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

Motion to change 12/23 to a half day. This motion, made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried. Yea: 6, Nay: 1, Absent: 1.

5. Administrative

5.a. Superintendent's Evaluation Process

Mrs. Wagner will send the process to Mr. Hopkins first then send it to the rest of the Board. Mrs. Wagner and Mr. Karpinski will review it and then bring it to an executive session.

6. Facilities and Finance

6.a. Purchasing Regulation

Motion to accept the Purchasing Policy. This motion, made by Mrs. Mastroianni and seconded by Mr. Karpinski, Carried.

Mr. Hopkins presented the Purchasing Policy. Questions were asked and answered.

6.b. Grounds Study

Motion to approve the Grounds Study. This motion, made by Mrs. Wagner and seconded by Karpinski, Carried.

Questions were asked and answered.

6.c. Tuition Reimbursement Rate

Motion to approve the Proposed Tuition Rates. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, Carried.

Mr. Hopkins shared the proposed tuition rates for Preston and Voluntown. He shared that he has spoken to both superintendents and they are both fine with the \$12,187 rate for the 2023-2024 school year. Questions were asked and answered.

6.d. Accept November Financials

Motion to accept November Financials. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, Carried.

6.e. Presenting December Financials

Mr. Merrill shared the December financials.

7. Public Comment*

None.

8. Proposed for Executive Session

Motion to go into Executive Session. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mrs. Wagner, Carried.

Out of Executive Session

Motion to go out of Executive Session. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mrs. Wagner, Carried.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:27 p.m. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, Carried.

Respectfully submitted by
Irma Wilhelm
Recording Secretary to
The Board of Education