

Board of Education Minutes

February 22, 2023

DRAFT

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held in a hybrid format on February 22, 2023, beginning at 6:30 PM in the North Stonington Education Center. Present were Bryan Burdick, Alex Karpinski, Lisa Mazzella, Chet Stefanowicz, Jamie Towle-Weicksel, and Christine Wagner. Via Zoom was Stephanie Mastroianni. Also present were, Troy Hopkins and William Merrill.

1. Call to Order -

Mrs. Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion to add a section as New Business to consider Policy 6140. This motion, made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

Motion to add 5.c. as a second read of Policies 5145.53 and 5144.4. This motion, made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First*

None.

4. **Reports**

4.a. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Hopkins reported that there was a flashing roof repair at the Middle/High School roof today. Also, since the students are not here to brag about the success of the High School, you may know that Sports have been quite successful. This season girls and boys basketball are both in the ECC quarter finals and both have qualified for State tournament. Cheerleaders were in the ECC Cheerleading Championship and won the Sousa Spirit Award. We have also had success with individuals in wrestling and swimming. Lots to celebrate with athletics at Wheeler. Mr. Hopkins indicated that he

is looking forward to budget discussions tonight. We took a look at the PE schedules at the High School and they do not currently have any time to pick up sessions at the elementary school. He encouraged everyone to think about the need for Mental Health monitoring and support in our student body.

4.b. Committee Reports

Mr. Karpinski reported that the Finance Committee met on February 21st and discussed three topics, one being the 2023-2024 annual budget. Mr. Karpinski reported that Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Merrill did a great job providing the details on to the questions that came through. They were a couple action items that Mr. Merrill will respond to. Second item on the Finance Committee was the January 2023 financial report, it was decided to have the board have some time to go over that and can address at the next meeting in March and the last item was Non-Lapsing Account. Dr. Towle-Weicksel reported that Goal 2-Innovative Instruction subcommittee did not meet but wanted to follow up that they sent the Series 6000 policies to update wording on Innovative Instruction. The other policies that are ready to go are the Special Education and the Grouping, but will work on updating some language moving forward. Will move forward for a first read during the April meeting. Mr. Stefanowicz reported that for Goal 1–Safe, valued, and sense of belonging – Policy 0523 - DEI was updated and is posted on the website. Mrs. Mastroianni reported that Goal 3-Transparent and Efficient subcommittee was supposed to have a meeting tonight but was unable to meet. There is nothing to report.

4.c. BOE Chairman's Report

Mrs. Wagner reported that the Board is putting an ad in the yearbook and everyone owes \$30 and you can make out your check to the Wheeler Activity Fund and send to Central Office. Continued to report that Mr. Karpinski and her met with Mr. Hopkins regarding the mid-year Superintendent Evaluation and will add an Executive Session for the March 1 meeting to debrief everyone in on that discussion. Mrs. Wagner reported that they are in the process of Paraprofessional contract. Met today and will be meeting again in a couple of weeks.

4.1 New Business

Policy 6140 – discussion followed. Mr. Hopkins is already working on this one.
Motion to approve the updated CAFE policy 6140 and adopt it into our manual. This motion, made by Stefanowicz and seconded by Burdick, Carried.

5. Old Business

5.a. Discussion of Policy 5118 - Resident/Nonresident Attendance

Motion to approve the new language in Policy 5118. This motion, made by Stefanowicz and seconded by Mazzella, Carried.

Mrs. Wagner cleaned up the language on Policy 5118 so that it indicates that any certified staff who was hired prior to June 30, 2019 is allowed to bring their children in without tuition regardless of whether they had someone in the school currently enrolled. Questions were asked and answered.

5.b. Budget 2023-2024 Discussion

Mr. Karpinski reported that there has been good feedback on the responses to the questions. We are looking at adding six additional staffing and are requesting clarification on additional positions, the Central Office staffing request and the stipend for curriculum support. Mr. Karpinski feels that with the zero-based budgeting philosophy looks pretty good. Questions were asked and answered.

Dr. Towle-Weicksel indicated that she is one hundred percent in support of having Dean of Students at the elementary school – but asked if it would be possible to have a less structured PE time and more like a free style recess. Mr. Hopkins clarified that based on the Physical Fitness scores that they will need to be a little more structured and the schedule will need to be adjusted. Mr. Karpinski, requested to have a technology presentation to see how the woodshop fits into the rest of technology.

Mrs. Wagner requested to go over the Coaching Stipends to see what we don't have. Inevitably it is a solid budget - if we have to make some cuts where is it going to be and be prepared for that. Mrs. Wagner pointed out that the tuition will bring three hundred thousand dollars and it's one third of our ask. The Board should spend a little bit of time on the Non-lapsing account. We should look at, if there are some things that

maybe we can help with using this account. Mr. Stefanowicz mentioned that we should put a focus on the alternative program as it can be a money-making piece. He also asked about the math program, the one that we are implementing. This is budgeted under the software and licensing account.

Mrs. Mastroianni commented that 6.7% budget increase it's about two million for the taxpayer. Need to think really hard about how to market it as the increase in services not only dollars especially with the new positions being recommended. She also indicated that she agrees with Mrs. Wagner regarding developing a list of items that could be prioritize, especially the positions. Also, have to start thinking about the non-lapsing account.

Mr. Hopkins reminded the Board that the status quo is already 4.8% without adding any of the new additions that we are asking for. Questions were asked and answered.

5.c. Policy second read

Policy second read for 5144.4 20 minutes of recess time taken or never should be used to withhold recess for disciplinary issues. Do we want to allow that 20 minutes or not? Questions were asked and answered. The second policy is 5145.53 - Gender Non-Conforming Youth Policy. The only alternate language is using the FERPA requires that - legality not fully decided. Make a motion to approve 5145.53. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick. Carried. Two abstentions.

6. Public Comment*

None.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the Board of Education Regular Meeting at 8:02 p.m. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Mr. Karpinski, Carried.

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