

Board of Education Minutes

December 14, 2022

DRAFT

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held in a hybrid format on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in the North Stonington Education Center. Present were Mr. Burdick, Mr. Karpinski, Mrs. Mastroianni, Mr. Mendolia, Mr. Stefanowicz, Dr. Towle-Weicksel and Mrs. Wagner. Also present were Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Merrill, and Ms. Madison Wagner, Student Ambassador.

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comments*

None.

4. Administrative

4.a. Approval of Consent Agenda: December 14, 2022

- September 14, 2022 Minutes

On a motion to accept the minutes from September 14. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

- September 28, 2022 Minutes

On a motion to accept the minutes from September 28. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

- October 12, 2022 Minutes

On a motion to accept the minutes from October 12. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried. Mr. Karpinski abstains.

- October 26, 2022 Minutes

On a motion to accept the minutes from October 26. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

- November 16, 2022 Minutes

On a motion to accept the minutes from November 16. This motion, made by Mr. Burdick and seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Carried.

4.b. Personnel

Mr. Hopkins reported that a Teacher is requesting to extend her maternity leave. Motion to approve leave of absence for maternity leave through the end of the school year. This motion, made by Dr. Towle-Weicksel and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

5. Reports

5.a. Chairperson's Report

Mrs. Wagner reported that the Tri-Board meeting on Monday, December 12 went well and solicited feedback from the Board members. Mr. Burdick indicated that he felt it went very well. Certainly, will need to get feedback from the Board of Finance (BOF) to better understand what they need from us. Dr. Towle-Weicksel agreed and is grateful to Mrs. Wagner for advocating for the Board. She would like to continue the dialogue and is concerned that the Board is waiting until June for the next meeting. Mr. Karpinski indicated that he agrees that communication is important. Mrs. Mastroianni indicated that the meeting went great and covered a lot. Based on what the Transparent & Efficient subcommittee for Goal 3 is focusing on, it has been reaffirmed with the Tri-Board meeting. Mr. Stefanowicz indicated that in his opinion the meeting went very well and a number of members of the BOF seem to have a better process regarding the budget. The Finance Committee will meet on January 11, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Wagner indicated that it is almost midyear and the Board needs to evaluate the Superintendent. Mrs. Wagner reviewed the March dates as they conflict with the BOF meetings. The Board will add a Special Meeting on March 1, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. The Board will leave March 8th scheduled as a Regular Meeting with the location to be determined. She also encouraged the Board to attend the BOF meeting on March 8th, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. There is a conflict as well with the already scheduled June meetings and June 7 and 21 will be canceled and will add June 14 as a Special

Meeting at 6:30 pm. The CABE convention was very good and would like to schedule a presentation for the Board. Mrs. Wagner will share the PowerPoint with the Board.

5.b. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Hopkins commented on the Tri-Board meeting and was inspired and optimistic regarding the collaboration with the other boards, BOS and BOF. He appreciated the collaboration with BOS, BOF, and with the town. He complimented his Central Office Team for their hard work in creating new efficiencies while successfully meeting the responsibility of each of their roles. Informed the Board that the Facilities Director has hit the ground running. On his second day, he had to handle a huge leak at Wheeler. On day six he handled a delayed opening due to inclement weather. Wanted to comment that he is really impressed by the BOE and the dedication and commitment they have demonstrated by creating the subcommittees from the district goals. The collaboration with Mrs. Wagner. Wanted to Thank NSEF, they awarded \$8,500 to the elementary media center to support the STEAM program. Mr. Hopkins indicated that there is no need for Executive Session. Mr. Hopkins reported that CIRMA completed the security audit and provided several recommendations as follows: Bollards – protective barriers around the picnic tables at Wheeler; Bankers windows in the vestibules of the schools; and automatic release door magnets. Mr. Hopkins and Mrs. Wagner will meet on Wednesday instead of Friday to allow more time to compose an agenda for distribution.

5.c. Student Ambassadors Report

Ms. Madison Wagner apologized on behalf of Mr. Jon Anderson for not being in attendance, as he is at a basketball game. Ms. Wagner reported that Wheeler has been working on the Season of Giving and the Food Drive in November collected over 250 items for the North Stonington Food Pantry. They did a fundraiser to support the CT Children's Hospital for Childhood Cancer awareness and it was a huge success. They raised \$2,600. She reported that November and December are the deadlines for early access which is why these two months are very important to the college process. Half of the seniors are taking advantage of this process and have applied to take early action.

Mrs. St. Germain and Mrs. Reyes attended the Annual NEASC conference in Boston. The district is pursuing district-wide accreditation and it may be the first district in Connecticut to receive this accreditation. The first visit will be in the Fall of 2024. If Wheeler gains this accreditation the curriculum will shift to align K-12 so the elementary, middle, and high schools will coincide. Ms. Wagner shared posters that are displayed in every classroom, Mission and Core Values, and Rubrics for assessment. Ms. Wagner thanked the Board for the new purchases from the Non-Lapsing account such as the stage curtain, weight for the fitness room, shot clocks for next year, the sound system for the gym, and the gate that will separate the PE hallway from the rest of the building. Ms. Wagner continued her report on the Elementary school and reported that the trimester just ended and report cards will be sent out on December 21st. The elementary school is reassessing its curriculum to align with new ELA, PE, and Health Curriculums. The school improvement team recently looked at ways to celebrate the positives throughout the school with teachers and students. The talent show went well, with thirteen students performing with singing, magic, and stand-up comedy. Ms. Wagner extended her appreciation to the PTO for their continued support with all of the events they organize and implement within the district. Lastly, the elementary school will be placing an order for sweatshirts, anyone who would like to represent and support can email Mr. Cillino to place an order. Mr. Hopkins complimented Ms. Wagner for the presentation of her report.

5.d. Subcommittee Reports:

- Goal 1 – Safe, valued, and sense of belonging
- Goal 2 – Innovative Instruction
- Goal 3 – Transparent and Efficient

Goal 1 – This subcommittee did not meet this month and will reschedule for January.

Goal 2 – This subcommittee did not meet and will reschedule for January.

Goal 3 – Transparent and Efficient subcommittee met on November 30. Mrs.

Mastroianni reported that the subcommittee wants to focus on communication as we move forward into budget season. The current social media page and it's not vastly used. We need to use it regularly. Would like to post agendas. Now we can link when

we're talking so we can refer back to the videos. Additionally, we hope to use it to promote events. Lastly, would like to create short info sheets with topics of interest, to clarify misinformation. The subcommittee identified topics of interest such as – Administration cost & roles; Teacher's contract; Health Care Savings; Tuition for students from Preston & Voluntown; Non-lapsing account; Athletics at Wheeler. Create the opportunity for the public and BOF to understand more about the district and budget building. The Tri-Board meeting was the start of this collaboration, but we need to perhaps create the State of the District report and create informal FB live events.

6. **Old Business**

6.a. Tuition

Mr. Hopkins indicated that at the last meeting he had introduced the idea of increasing tuition for students who attend North Stonington from Preston and Voluntown. He shared the cost of tuition from - Griswold at \$12,689; Groton at \$14,387 and NFA at \$13,643 in comparison with North Stonington at \$11,300. With this amount, we are significantly lower than other districts. Even if we raised to \$12,300 we would be in a competitive market. Mr. Hopkins will do more research. Mr. Stefanowicz would like for the Board to develop a plan regarding tuition increments. Will continue the discussion at January's meeting.

6.b. Scope of Grounds Study

The scope of the study of the grounds initially was to look at the fields for an irrigation system. Mr. Hopkins posed the question of what is it that we want to get from this study. Perhaps develop the opportunity not only for athletics but for educational purposes as well. It was proposed that a revised plan will be developed for the playground. The group would also like for the area to be paved. Mrs. Wagner requested a proposal for the new equipment. Mr. Hopkins indicated that the Scope of the Grounds Study might increase the cost of the study.

6.c. Woodshop

No additional comments on the woodshop. In terms of the building space regarding liability, there should not be any as we are on the same policy as the town.

6.d. 2023-2024 School Calendar Review

Mr. Hopkins presented the revised 2023-2024 School Calendar. Visual changes were suggested. The Board wants to have a clear process of the time frame of when a decision will be made in regards to the three additional weather days for parents to know within two weeks if there will be a school day for February 20, May 24, and 28. Questions were asked and answered. On a motion to approve the 2023-2024 school calendar. This motion, made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

6.e. 2023 Schedule Meeting Conflict Dates

Added March 1 as a Special Meeting at 6:30 p.m. Will need to cancel the Regular Meeting scheduled on March 22nd.

June 14 will also be a Special Meeting at 6:30 p.m. and will cancel June 7 and 21.

7. **New Business**

7.a. Purchasing Policy

On a motion to approve the Purchasing Policy. This motion, made by Mastroianni and seconded by Burdick, Carried.

The motion was withdrawn and will discuss at the January meeting. This motion, made by Mrs. Mastroianni, was Withdrawn.

We will be adopting the Purchasing Policy the same as the Town. It would be regulation. Questions were asked and answered.

7.b. Appointment of Officers for 457 Retirement Plan

On a motion to approve the appointment of Superintendent and Director of Finance to be the Officers for 457 Retirement Plan. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, Carried.

8. Facilities and Finance

8.a. October Financials

Motion to approve the October Financials. This motion, made by Karpinski and seconded by Stefanowicz, Carried.

8.b. November Financials

Mr. Merrill commented on the Scope of Grounds Study, that the BOE should be asking the question of what can we do next with what we already have. In regards to the November financials, we are continuing the same trends. Some line items that are going negative and some positive, when Finance Committee meets in January will have to do some budget transfers. We will be reviewing the Special Education expenditures, especially contracted students' services (Acct 0218-323) is currently over budget. This is for BCBA services for students who are on the autistic spectrum. Most of the overage will be paid for from grants and Excess Cost. The same is also true for Special Education Transportation. The Board requested that perhaps Mrs. Mullane, Director of Student Support Services should present to the Board during the January 11, Special meeting. Mr. Merrill continued his report by sharing an Infinite Vision report of what the budget is going to look like. There were questions regarding Innovative Teaching and a discussion about accountability to ensure that staff is thinking about the needs that are different. The backup information will have details that will represent innovation. Mrs. Wagner noted that the Board hasn't reviewed any new curriculum recently.

8.c. Discussion and Possible Action of Non-Lapsing Review

Mr. Hopkins reviewed the Non-Lapsing account. Questions were asked and answered.

8.d. 2023-2024 Budget Timeline

The Budget Timeline 2023-2024 was shared.

9. Public Comments*

Ms. Pat Lewis shared that the Media Center building used to be have a gym. In terms of the Grounds analysis, perhaps it can be taken into consideration for use other uses for example for lacrosse or volleyball and for other educational use. Mrs. Wagner informed her that there will be a public forum from the BOS to solicit ideas for the use of the space.

10. Proposed for Executive Session

- Personnel
- Security

Out of Executive Session

Executive session was not carried.

11. Adjournment

On a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 8:15 p.m. This motion, made by Mrs. Mastroianni and seconded by Mr. Burdick, Carried.

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