

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	1 Staff
L. Bittman	2 Public
R. Gaines	3 Press
K. Alexander	

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of January 25 and 31 and February 3, 7 and 8, 2011, the donation of \$284.96 to the Sandy Hook School special education program, the extension of the child-rearing leave of absence for Brandi Oatis, teacher at Hawley School, the extension of the child-rearing leave of absence for Jacquelyn Kaplan, teacher at Newtown High School, and the resignation of Kristen Donovan Richmond, teacher at Newtown High School, as of June 30, 2011. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 2 – Approve Minutes of February 9, 2011

Motion: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the minutes of February 9, 2011. Mr. Buzzi seconded. Mrs. Bittman and Mr. Gaines abstained because they did not attend that meeting. Vote: 5 ayes

Item 3 – Public Participation - none

Item 4 – Reports

There was no correspondence to report.

Chair Report:

Mr. Hart stated that he and Mrs. Llodra would have a joint budget presentation to the Board of Finance this Thursday, February 17. On February 24 the Board of Education will present to the Board of Finance and a more detailed report on March 3. He had also inspected the snow on the school roofs with Mr. Faiella and the structural engineer.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson spoke about the visit of the Chinese delegation from Liaocheng that included principals of the high school and middle school along with students from both levels. Our community has embraced this initiative. In April we will have students and teachers go to China.

We applied for a grant through the Asia society to send two people from the high school to Japan this summer for intensive Japanese study.

The Newtown Middle School literary magazine, *Opus Optima*, has been selected to receive the rank of Superior in the 2010 National Council of Teachers of English

Program literary magazine award which recognizes excellence in student literary magazines.

Karen King, fifth grade teacher at Head O'Meadow School has been named a semi-finalist in AFT's Everyday Hero Program with voting taking place on line. Karen has been involved in many volunteer activities from helping homeless people in her town to refugees in Africa. She got her entire school involved in supporting a school in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. Now she is working to start an eye clinic in Liberia and working with Rotary clubs to help raise \$81,000 for this cause.

Finally, we have received validation that 100% of our teachers are certified which means we are in full compliance with the statutes of certification.

Our Board meeting on March 1 will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a Freedom of Information session with Tom Hennick.

Mr. Hart said he would like some professional development for the Board and bring someone in from FERPA which is the Family Education Rights Protection Act, and also someone to speak about personnel law.

Facilities Committee:

Mrs. Leidlein said the Facilities Ad Hoc Committee met and discussed the layout of the schools, the use of the rooms, and which could be modified. Mr. Hart prepared a chart regarding the enrollment and possibilities for future use of the schools such as closing schools or combining school facilities.

June 30, 2010 Year-end Financial Report with Inclusion of Year-end Transfers:

Mr. Bienkowski said this report includes transfers to cover the three shortage areas appearing in the major objects summary. Those are Professional Services, Other Purchased Services and Property.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education approve the June 30, 2011 year-end financial report with the inclusion of year-end transfers. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Financial Report for Month Ending January 31, 2011:

Mr. Bienkowski highlighted areas of the financial report. There are transfers recommended that cross object codes. There is a large transfer to cover various special education professional service accounts to get us through the rest of the year. Some may be mitigated when we get the Project Succeed tuition from New Fairfield. Other issues since January include a broken underground heating line in two classrooms in Middle Gate School and there was also a need there to replace the oil spill containers at the boilers for a total of \$22,000 in emergency repairs. The other big one is the snow removal costs. Firm numbers are not in yet but it looks close to \$260,000. He put in a claim to our insurance company. Some costs for the middle school will be covered if we exceed our \$25,000 deductible. If the Town had any issues we can combine and pay one deductible and have one claim. This was all outside contractors. We also have \$2,300 in overtime hours. His concern is when we will get information on the excess cost grant.

Mr. Hart asked about the \$600,000 surplus.

Mr. Bienkowski said it is a projected tentative balance. The snow removal costs will affect that. By May we should have a good idea of what will be available. The tuition account will not be all covered by the excess cost grant.

Mr. Nanavaty said he sees our projected balance as a negative \$900,000 until we get the excess cost grant.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report for the month ending January 31, 2011 with the inclusion of the indicated transfers in that report. Mr. Buzzi seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Mr. Hart asked the policy committee to finalize the transfer policy for the March 15 meeting.

Mr. Bienkowski addressed the interscholastic sports in the middle school at a previous budget meeting. He spoke to Mrs. Sherlock and apparently the extracurricular activities were taken out and then the Board put them back in. This information was never given to our accountant to put the \$10,000 back into the budget. They are running the activities so there are expenses.

Item 5 – Old Business

High School Expansion Update:

Dr. Robinson said the internal work has begun and there will be an open house when they are completed. Due to the snow we had five pipe leaks in the portables.

Mr. Nanavaty asked about the greenhouse.

Dr. Robinson said that was next and she expects to meet with Joe Costa next week.

Report on District's Professional Learning:

Dr. Gejda went over the status of professional learning which should increase teachers' knowledge, change instructional practice in ways that support student learning and impact student achievement. High quality professional learning is dynamic, goal-oriented, individual as well as collaborative and dependent on the needs of the educator as well as the student.

Traditional professional learning consists of workshops by outside providers. There is also professional learning to address legislative requirements for maintaining certification and mentoring new teachers. We had 37 teachers this year that needed a mentor. Response to Intervention/SRBI is a state program that requires training. Eight staff members from Reed, the middle school and the high school train for eight days throughout the school year. Also, each year, the state requires districts to provide 18 hours of professional development training. For teachers to maintain their professional certification they need to attend 90 hours of continuous education units (CEUs) over five years.

Mr. Buzzi said he didn't realize teachers were leaving class for reasons besides being sick.

Dr. Gejda said we provide 18 hours of professional development at no cost to the teacher to attend. Teachers are personally responsible to meet their CEU requirements

for five years. We offer at least 18 hours but they can go elsewhere. We offer them when students are not in such as Election Day. On those days the principals offer professional development for their staff. We don't offer CEUs for anything less than two hours.

Mrs. Bittman asked what we would do for an experienced teacher who may not be performing where we would like them to be.

Dr Gejda said the building administrator would begin to work with the teacher using the district teacher evaluation plan.

Dr. Robinson said we would design a plan for the teacher who will receive some additional training to improve.

Mrs. Bittman asked if another teacher would work with that teacher to which Dr. Robinson stated we have done that in the past.

Mr. Nanavaty said the teacher evaluation process is different from the existing plan in each school dependent upon the principal. This fall the Board will get the proposed teacher evaluation criteria.

Dr. Robinson said professional development for administrators has been about calibrating what we see in the classroom. We want a common definition about what good instruction looks like.

Item 6 – New Business

Mrs. Bittman mentioned that at the beginning of our school year Larry Saladin took over the tech team and created a film club. We now have content on NTV that is student produced. She wanted to thank him for giving the students a voice.

Item 7 – Public Participation – none

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to adjourn. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrew Buzzi Jr.
Secretary