

East Haddam Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria  
December 13, 2005  
7:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Pamela Gourlie, Tracey Gionta, Everett Herden, Nick Iacovelli,  
Robert Mather, Manny Misenti, Mary-Beth Mordecai  
Tom Mielt (arrived 7:03 p.m.)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Melissa Ziobron

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Justin Christopher

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Dr. Durham and approximately 18 people including staff were present.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mrs. Gourlie.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

A. Update on Lighting Project

Mrs. Gourlie invited the lighting project members to speak at this time. Mr. Roy Parker and Mr. Marty Ryczek addressed the Board. Mr. Ryczek distributed a project update.

Mr. Parker stated the Little Noises lighting project members have worked very hard on this project and they have raised approximately \$70,000. They have many contractors and others who have volunteered their time and services to work on this project. At the last Board of Finance meeting, \$130,000 was approved to complete the project, with the stipulation that the Board of Education agrees to accept the operation and maintenance costs. Mr. Parker indicated the operating costs were approximately \$9.00 per hour, according to the Hubbel light contractor. A soccer game typically lasts approximately 3 hours; therefore, the estimated cost for a soccer game would be \$27.00.

Mr. Parker informed the Board that they plan to put 50% of the gate receipt money aside for the lighting fees. They currently charge \$4.00 for adults, and \$2.00 for students to attend a game. He requested a letter from the Board, accepting the gift of the soccer and softball field lighting. Responsive to inquiry by Mrs. Gourlie, Mr. Parker stated the gift would be given to the Board upon completion of the project.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR (Cont'd)A. Update on Lighting Project (Cont'd)

Mr. Herden asked if there would be any other fees, other than maintenance and operation costs. Mr. Parker explained that this would be the only cost and the lights would come with a lengthy warranty. Mr. Herden questioned if the Board would be responsible for vandalism, etc. Mr. Parker deferred this question to Dr. Durham, who responded this would be covered under the school's liability insurance.

Mrs. Gourlie asked if special equipment would be needed to access the lights. Mr. Parker stated they have been working with a crane operator, who has donated some of his services. He noted that the gate receipt funds could be used for this if necessary.

Mrs. Gourlie asked for what the remaining 50% of the gate receipts money was used. Mr. Ryczek stated this money would be used to pay the costs of running a night game, such as constables, scorekeepers, referees, ticket collectors, officials, etc. Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Mather, he explained that evening games would require an adult scorekeeper, which was a paid position. He estimated they would have approximately \$250 in gate receipts per game. Whatever was not spent on running the games would go into the fund, along with the 50% for maintenance.

Mr. Herden asked if the 50% would go into the student activity fund. Dr. Durham indicated that all of the proceeds would go into the student activity fund and funds would be transferred for maintenance. Dr. Durham stated he was less concerned with the use of the lights for school activities and more concerned with the use of the fields and lights for Town activities.

Mr. Iacovelli believed this was a great project. He asked for a list of the contractors who had volunteered their time. Mr. Parker stated he would forward this list to the Board.

Mr. Misenti asked if the Board had any responsibility for the \$130,000 from the Town. Mr. Parker responded that the \$130,000 was approved for the Little Noises project and that nothing would be needed from the Board until the project was turned over, after completion.

Mr. Misenti suggested a caveat be added that the Board would accept this gift after it is approved by the Building Committee. Dr. Durham stated this could be incorporated into the letter.

**MOTION:** Miatt, Iacovelli; to provide a letter to the Board of Finance stating that the Board of Education will assume the future lights as part of the physical plan of the district.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR (Cont'd)

B. District-wide Calendar

Mrs. Gourlie informed the Board that district-wide calendar of upcoming functions had been included in the packets. She asked if Board members wished to receive this information. The consensus was that the members would like to continue to receive these calendars.

C. Student Council Representative Report

Mr. Justin Christopher reported that they began a fundraiser on Friday and they planned to have a pep rally on Monday, December 19, 2005, to kick off the basketball season.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

**MOTION:** Iacovelli, Herden, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 15, 2005.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

**MOTION:** Herden, Mather; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 29, 2005 at 5:45 p.m.

**FAVOR (6): Gionta, Herden, Iacovelli, Mather, Misenti, Mordecai  
OPPOSED (0)  
ABSENT (1): Ziobron  
ABSTENTIONS (1): Miett  
MOTION PASSED**

**MOTION:** Gionta, Mather; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 29, 2005 at 6:00 p.m.

**FAVOR (6): Gionta, Herden, Iacovelli, Mather, Misenti, Mordecai  
OPPOSED (0)  
ABSENT (1): Ziobron  
ABSTENTIONS (1): Miett  
MOTION PASSED**

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEESA. 4-8 Middle School

Mrs. Ziobron was not present to report. Mrs. Mordecai reported that at the last Building Committee meeting, the costs of the school project came in at \$29 million. The architect and the construction company have been working to see if/where they can reduce costs. They plan to have a meeting tomorrow on this issue and then they will have to discuss the next steps to take and involve the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance.

Mrs. Mordecai stated the traffic study was finished and was ready to go to the engineer. There was some concern about the small bridge, but the engineer will look into this and will also work with Banner Lodge.

Mrs. Mordecai stated there were no new updates on the land acquisition, but they were expecting an update at tomorrow's meeting.

Mr. Iacovelli asked if the Building Committee would coordinate with the Board before any cuts were made. Mrs. Mordecai stated she personally would not approve any educational cuts until they were discussed with the Board; however, she believed the Committee would be looking at other ways to reduce costs. As an example she stated a flat roof might be more cost effective than a slanted roof. Mr. Mather highly recommended against a flat roof, citing maintenance issues.

Mr. Herden shared Mr. Iacovelli's concerns regarding compromises to the educational specifications. He questioned the process and how the Board would hear of changes. Dr. Durham stated it was Mrs. Ziobron's responsibility, as the Board liaison, along with Mrs. Mordecia's and his responsibility to ensure that the educational specifications were not compromised. Dr. Durham did not believe compromising the educational specifications would be an issue. He believed the discussion would be related to other ways to cut costs.

Mrs. Mordecai believed that before compromising the educational specifications of the school, that the Building Committee would ask for more money from the Town. She stated the Building Committee was comprised of talented, knowledgeable people, and that they would build a quality project.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

There was no new information reported.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. CAPSS' Student Recognition Award Recipients

Dr. Durham announced that Justin Christopher and Ashley Wells were the recipients of this year's Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' Student Recognition Awards. He stated this award was presented to these two students and their parents at a recent awards ceremony at the Saybrook Point Inn. He congratulated the students on this award.

B. China 2007 Presentation

Dr. Durham stated that there was some interest at the high school level for a trip to China. Mr. George Tripp and Ms. Dawn Silver were introduced to give a brief presentation to the Board.

Mr. Tripp stated that he and Mr. Ray Flaherty have both had opportunities to teach in China during the summer. Mr. Tripp was very enthusiastic about the possibility of taking some students to China. He explained that this trip would be open to any student, faculty member, parent, or Board member who would like to go. He noted that they held a very preliminary meeting, just to gauge interest, and 36 students attended the meeting. In addition, 12 other students expressed interest in the trip, and 12 parents also expressed interest. Mr. Tripp believed there would be at least 40 people who would go on the trip, but it was not limited to any certain number.

Mr. Tripp indicated they would have a bilingual interpreter, and they would visit many places, including the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, the Beijing area, and possibly other areas. He believed there would be a strong academic element associated with this trip. Students would have to take Chinese language and culture classes before the trip.

Mr. Tripp stated he has taught at a Chinese high school for the past four summers and they have invited our students to visit their school. The cost of the trip would be approximately \$3,200 per person, all-inclusive. Ms. Silver noted that although this trip is expensive, it would be more costly for a trip to Europe. She stated that they planned to offset the cost of the trip with fundraising and they have over a year in which to raise funds.

Mr. Tripp stated they would like to plan the trip during April vacation, but would like to leave the Friday before vacation and return the Monday after vacation. He noted that there was a 13-½ hour flight time from JFK Airport.

Mr. Mather asked what mode of transportation would be used to travel in China. Mr. Tripp noted that the students would fly to some places and use buses for other transportation. Mr. Mather stated he was very uncomfortable with this trip, as China was a communist country. He cited recent articles in the Hartford Courant which discussed riots in many of the villages. Although this trip would likely sound exciting to students, he stated unless there were drastic changes within the next year, he would oppose the trip.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)B. China 2007 Presentation (Cont'd)

Mr. Tripp acknowledged that there were risks involved, but he recalled his experience living there for seven weeks each year over the last four summers. He stated that they were very gracious hosts and were very accepting of Americans. He stated they seemed to be overly secure with Americans, particularly in the hotels.

Ms. Silver stated she went on a two-month tour of China and she felt very safe during her trip. She stated she had initially been nervous, but they made her feel very safe and protected. She noted that as hosts of the future Olympics, they must keep people safe.

Mr. Iacovelli asked if this trip would be connected with any specific tour company. Mr. Tripp stated they began looking into E.F., but because of their poor track record, they switched to Passport, which was a student tour company.

Mr. Iacovelli stated they could not have picked a more vibrant place to visit than China. He believed it would be an exciting opportunity, although somewhat edgy, to experience the culture and history. He liked the fact that they were trying to use the April vacation for the trip. Although it was a lot of money and it was far away, he stated he would like to see it pursued, and right now, it has his support.

Mr. Herden stated he would love to go on this trip. He stated many years ago, the East Haddam and Colchester senior citizens went to Beijing, and he had a videotape of the trip. He stated he would try to find the tape and would forward it to Mr. Tripp.

Mr. Misenti asked if any funding would be requested of the Board. Mr. Tripp stated the only cost to the Board would be the cost of substitutes for any teachers who went on the trip.

Mr. Misenti stated he thought it would be beneficial for students to see how competitive Chinese students were. He stated that Mrs. Gourlie had given him a book entitled *The World Is Flat*, written by Tom Friedman. He suggested students read this book before they attended this trip.

Mr. Misenti stated his only concern was the health issue. He asked if students would be covered by their own health insurance. Ms. Silver stated that insurance would be handled through the tour company. Mr. Tripp stated the insurance would be built into the cost of the trip. He believed if students had to spend any money, it would be reimbursed.

Mr. Herden inquired if students would need any immunizations before traveling to China. Mr. Tripp did not believe they would. He stated he asked his doctor about this before he traveled there and was given none. Mr. Herden suggested Mr. Tripp contact UCONN regarding this. Ms. Silver stated she received the Hepatitis vaccination from this clinic.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)B. China 2007 Presentation (Cont'd)

Mr. Misenti suggested the trip coordinators should plan an alternate trip if the funding should fall short for the trip to China. Mr. Tripp believed this was a good idea.

Mr. Mather asked if they had received any recommendations for Passports, the tour company. Mr. Tripp stated he received this name from Mrs. Barnes, the Spanish teacher. Mr. Mather suggested they contact the company and request references.

Dr. Mielt inquired about cancellation refunds from Passports. Mr. Tripp stated that this company had a graduated refund program.

Mrs. Gourlie noted that at this month's LEARN meeting, Dr. Michael Graner, Ledyard's superintendent, spoke about China. He stated that many schools are now teaching Chinese. Mrs. Gourlie hoped the Board would provide some support for this activity.

Dr. Mielt stated that one of his partners was Chinese and he might be able to provide some insight. Mr. Tripp stated he would be in touch with Dr. Mielt to pursue this.

C. Community Tech. Center

Dr. Durham stated that information on the Tech Center attendance was included in each member's packet for review. He stated that attendance was down on Wednesdays from 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. They have experienced success from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays. Dr. Durham stated they might adjust the hours in the future.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Long Range Planning

Mr. Iacovelli stated that the Long Range Planning subcommittee met on December 1, 2005. A copy of the minutes was included in the Board's packet. He referred to Item 2 of the minutes, regarding the long-range school facilities plan. He asked everyone to review this and contact the Long Range Planning subcommittee with any changes. He stated they would work on a final plan and bring it back to the Board for review.

Mr. Iacovelli stated the Long Range Planning subcommittee would present a draft calendar in January for review.

The next meeting was scheduled for January 5, 2006 at 4:00 p.m.

B. Finance

Mr. Mather stated this committee had not met.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (Cont'd)C. Policy

Dr. Miett stated that the Policy subcommittee met on December 1, 2005. He stated that Policy 5131.62 was being presented as a second reading. He noted that the subcommittee struck one phrase in this policy so that it applies to all students.

Dr. Miett stated they were working on the bylaws for electing officers and were working to make the bylaws compliant with the Connecticut General Statutes.

Dr. Miett stated the subcommittee discussed Policy 6142.101 regarding nutrition and wellness.

Dr. Miett stated that Dr. Durham had crafted a waiver for discarded technology. This waiver would have to be signed by recipients of old computers and equipment.

The next Policy meeting will be held on Thursday, January 5, 2006.

Mr. Misenti stated that he understood that Dr. Miett could not attend the recent expulsion hearing. He stated he received telephone calls regarding another incident and he would like to forward notes to Dr. Miett and to ask the Policy subcommittee to look at violence and assault and how we communicate our policies. Mr. Misenti stated he would like to attend the next meeting. Dr. Miett stated they were looking for additional ways to review policies.

Mr. Iacovelli suggested the Policy subcommittee could review the use of the soccer and softball fields to incorporate the use of the lights.

Mr. Mather stated he did not think the Board would ever need such a policy, but after the way Mrs. Gourlie was attacked last month, he believed there should be a policy to address proper treatment of other Board members. Mrs. Gourlie asked the Policy subcommittee to address this issue. Dr. Miett stated that there was a Code of Ethics in the by-laws, but that Policy would review this issue.

D. Transportation

Mr. Mather reported that this subcommittee has not met.

E. Personnel and Negotiations

Mr. Misenti stated that this subcommittee had a mediation hearing. He stated if anyone wished to discuss this, they could enter Executive Session at the end of tonight's meeting.

F. Ray Board Liaison

Mr. Iacovelli stated there was nothing new to report.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (Cont'd)G. LEARN

Mrs. Gourlie reported that at the last LEARN meeting, they discussed district budgets and the State fiscal agency. Also during this meeting, Dr. Michael Graner reviewed his recent trip to China. He commented that Chinese students spend 12 hours per day in school and it was all extremely structured. He found it very interesting that Chinese students did not understand how American students could be so creative.

H. Curriculum Council Liaison

Dr. Durham stated that this group met on December 12, 2005. They gave an update on the various subject areas, but the bulk of the meeting revolved around changes to Frameworks, professional development, and how it supports our initiatives.

Dr. Durham stated there would be no January meeting and the next Curriculum Council meeting would be held in February 2006.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None

IX. OLD BUSINESSA. Strategic Plan

Dr. Durham stated he would give a presentation in February on the Strategic Plan and would ask for approval to extend the Strategic Plan for a couple of years.

Dr. Durham noted that again this year, email addresses had been established for all high school students so they could communicate with their teachers.

B. Strategic School Profile Report 2004-05

Dr. Durham stated he had distributed a profile report last month. One thing that came up at the last meeting was a question on the drop out rate and how the numbers were calculated. He stated there was information in each member's packet on the drop out rates.

Mr. Misenti questioned the drop out rate for 2004. Dr. Durham explained that there was one drop out in 2004. One student moved, but there were no records to show enrollment in another school. He explained that if we cannot verify enrollment in another school, we must count it as a drop out.

IX. OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)B. Strategic School Profile Report 2004-05 (Cont'd)

Mr. Misenti questioned the same information for 2003. Dr. Durham again explained that two students moved and there was no transfer data available. He stated that sometimes students are provided with a copy of their transcripts to take to a new school. If this happens, the new school would have no need to contact the old school; thus, no transferred enrollment data is received.

Mr. Misenti asked if a student attends adult education, if it is considered a drop out. Dr. Durham responded that it is not considered a drop out, because there is a graduation from adult education.

Mrs. Mordecai asked how a student would drop out of school. Dr. Durham explained that before a student drops out, he/she is counseled, and they try to persuade the student to remain in school or consider alternatives. He noted that there are usually compelling reasons for a student to drop out of school.

Mrs. Gionta questioned the difference between adult education and a G.E.D. Dr. Durham stated the G.E.D. was one course that prepared a student for a test and that the State does not see this as a graduation. Mrs. Dadona added that the State considers actual seat time to issue credits for purposes of graduation.

Mr. Herden believed that some dropouts were inevitable, for a number of reasons. He believed the Board should not concentrate on the numbers, but rather understand the protocol that students must go through before they drop out, and that the administration did their best to keep the students in school. He suggested the Board look further into this during the next year.

Mr. Misenti suggested that students who dropped out of school might not have been successful in their junior and senior years, and they might leave out of frustration with the program. Dr. Durham stated that they made every attempt to provide a successful experience for all students, but he acknowledged there was a real possibility that if students were frustrated because they were not doing well, this could contribute to the drop out rate.

X. NEW BUSINESSA. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

## 1) Warrant

- a. To approve the warrant for 2004-05 in the amount of \$2,549,382.88.
- b. To approve the warrant for 2005-06 in the amount of \$1,660,558.17.

X. NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda (Cont'd)

- 2) To approve Policy 5131.62 (Performance-Enhancing Drugs) as a second reading as presented by the Policy Subcommittee.
- 3) To approve Bylaw 9120 (Officers) as a first reading as presented by the Policy Subcommittee.
- 4) To accept the resignation of Mrs. Lauren Mancini, guidance counselor at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective January 13, 2006.

**MOTION:** Herden, Iacovelli; to approve Items 1 through 4 of the Consent Agenda.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION CARRIED**

Mrs. Gourlie wished everyone a happy holiday.

**MOTION:** Mielt, Mordecai; to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Iacovelli  
Secretary