

East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria
March 14, 2006
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nick Iacovelli, Tom Miett, Manny Misenti, Mary-Beth Mordecai,
Melissa Ziobron

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tracey Gionta, Pamela Gourlie, Everett Herden, Robert Mather

STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Durham and 9 people including staff were present.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Iacovelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

Mr. Iacovelli informed the Board that Mrs. Gourlie was away and he would chair tonight's meeting. He announced that he would still vote, as he was not the chairman.

A. CABE – Communications Awards Presentation

Mr. Robert Smalley, CABE representative, presented two awards to the Board for its contributions in the field of education. The awards were for the Annual Strategic Planning report and the quarterly newsletter. Mr. Smalley appreciated Dr. Durham's participation in this activity and stated that communication was vital to the success of boards of education.

Mr. Iacovelli accepted the awards and thanked Mr. Smalley on behalf of the Board.

B. Student Council Representative Report

Mr. Iacovelli noted that while no student council representatives were present tonight, Mr. Christopher sent an update via email. Mr. Christopher's email stated that the recent Noise Fest was a complete success, profiting approximately \$1,000 to help pay for the year-end ceremonies. Various awards have been given recently. The prom is scheduled for May 6.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

MOTION: Mordecai, Miett; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of February 14, 2006 as presented.

FAVOR (4): Iacovelli, Miett, Misenti, Mordecai
OPPOSED (0): NONE
ABSTENTIONS (1): Ziobron
ABSENT (4): Gionta, Gourlie, Herden, Mather
MOTION PASSED

MOTION: Misenti, Mordecai; to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 14, 2006 with the following amendments:

- Page 4, paragraph 6: Change the fifth sentence to read “Mrs. Ziobron stated the Building Committee was keeping track of the timeline.”
- Page 5, paragraph 5, last sentence: Change “would” to “should.”

Mrs. Ziobron clarified for the record that she had mis-spoken at the last meeting, as written on page 4 of the Regular Meeting minutes regarding the design/schematic plans.

FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

A. 4-8 Middle School

Mrs. Ziobron distributed a packet of information for the new school project. Included in this packet were the floor plans, an updated timeline, backup information for the budget, and a memorandum from the chairman of the Building Committee.

Mrs. Ziobron stated that Mr. Chuck Grabowski, a cost estimator for Newfield Construction, was present this evening to answer any questions.

Mrs. Ziobron stated the current cost of the school is \$32,447,454. This has been updated from the \$31.7 million presented at the January 18, 2006 meeting. She stated at the recent Building Committee meeting, she was unable to support the numbers for lack of information. She has since talked with Newfield Construction and is now very confident with the costs. She stated they now had a lot of hard data to use.

Mrs. Ziobron stated the building costs were now at \$215.00 per square foot, which she believed were quite remarkable. She stated the bad news was that it would cost \$57.00 per square foot to replace the unsuitable material for backfill.

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES (Cont'd)A. 4-8 Middle School (Cont'd)

At the last Building Committee meeting, Mrs. Ziobron stated the chairman of the Building Committee meeting reviewed why the project has gone over budget. There has been a 10-12% increase in materials; the \$750,000 FFE was underestimated, and was now \$1.8 million; and the unsuitable soil accounted for approximately \$1 million. Mrs. Ziobron stated she did further review and found other areas that had gone over budget. These included the cost of the energy efficient lighting systems; the panel wall system, which had increased significantly; and the temporary heating costs resulting from building the school during the winter months.

Mrs. Ziobron stated she was now very confident with all of the budget numbers and planned to vote in favor of it tonight.

Mrs. Ziobron discussed the expandability of the septic. She recalled Mr. Misenti had inquired about this during the last meeting. She talked with Mr. Dave King at KBA regarding this. He indicated that the DEP dictates a usage rate of 10 gallons per day, per student. He stated if after six months of use, we could prove that we are using less than 10 gallons per day, there would be expandability with the current system. However, they have been assured they could have a pre-treatment system installed. Mr. King believed it would be wise to determine the actual use rates. Mrs. Ziobron stated this was an important issue and she would keep the Board apprised.

Mrs. Ziobron stated the reason it was important to approve the final design and budget tonight was because the Building Committee needed to submit the plans to the State Facilities Unit for review in order to meet the State time lines. She stressed that this budget number was not the number that would go to referendum, as there would still likely be soft cost fluctuations.

MOTION: Ziobron, Mordecai; to approve the final design and budget for the 4-8 middle school as recommended by the School Building Committee

Mr. Misenti asked if there was any idea of the tax impact on the new numbers. Mrs. Ziobron stated Mr. George Giesey, chairman of the Board of Finance, attended the last Building Committee meeting. At that time, she asked him about the tax impact. He responded that he did not have the numbers and until the current budget season was over in May, they would likely not work on the tax impact. Mrs. Ziobron stated she was confident the numbers would be part of the referendum. She added that although there had been no vote yet from the Building Committee, there was a consensus to go out for bids before the referendum. Mrs. Ziobron stated once they have hard numbers, they could proceed. Dr. Durham believed this issue would likely be discussed at the March 22 informational meeting.

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES (Cont'd)A. 4-8 Middle School (Cont'd)

Mrs. Mordecai understood Mr. Giesey's statement that the Board of Finance could not use this year's budget numbers. Mr. Misenti stated the cost of the school was not the operating budget. Mrs. Mordecai believed the Town had put away some money for the school.

Mr. Misenti stated it would be foolish to hold a public hearing without being able to give numbers to the public. Mrs. Mordecai believed the public wants a lot of information right now, not just on the tax impact. She stated there were other questions that could be answered, but the tax impact would be something to press the Board of Finance to review. However, she did not believe the lack of tax impact numbers should preclude the Building Committee from telling the townspeople what we do know.

Mrs. Ziobron stated this budget was only to go to the State to begin the review process. She was sure the numbers would become available later and would be sure to ask the tax impact at subsequent meetings.

Mrs. Ziobron stated the estimate contingency had decreased to 1%. An escalation rate of 0.75% was used, so she believed there was still some room in the budget.

Mr. Misenti stated the way this information was presented to the public would have a big influence on their perception. He stated they still did not know the off-site costs. Mrs. Ziobron agreed. Mr. Misenti stated he would like to be assured that the Building Committee has done the proper testing to make sure the septic is expandable. He stated the Town was investing \$32 million and it was important that the septic system could handle expansion. He believed the school would be close to capacity within the next 10 years. He stressed that it was important to spend this money as wisely as we would spend our own personal money and that it was important to do it right now.

Mrs. Ziobron stated additional septic testing would not only be significantly more expensive, but it would also require additional time for the DEP to install and review monitoring wells. She stated at the next meeting, she would ask the Building Committee if a future pre-treatment area could be put on the plans.

Mr. Misenti stated they cut corners on the high school and then found out there was no ability to do what they thought they could do. Cuts were also made on the elementary school. He stated this mistake should not be made again.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED**

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES (Cont'd)A. 4-8 Middle School (Cont'd)

Mrs. Ziobron introduced Ms. Jennifer Mangiagli. Ms. Mangiagli requested a signature from both the chairman of the Board and the superintendent for the form filed with the State today. Mr. Iacovelli signed the form in Mrs. Gourlie's absence. Dr. Durham signed the form.

Mrs. Ziobron thanked Ms. Mangiagli and Mr. Grabowski for attending tonight's meeting.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

Mr. Carroll reviewed the educational specifications for work that would hopefully be completed this summer. These specifications were on tonight's Consent Agenda for approval.

Mr. Carroll first discussed the specification for the code-compliant fire alarm system at the elementary school. The second specification discussed was the continued asbestos abatement at the middle and elementary schools.

Mrs. Ziobron questioned the amount requested for each project. Mr. Carroll stated the fire alarm was estimated at \$125,000. He stated that \$70,000 had been approved in the current year for the asbestos abatement. He noted that he received estimates today for \$60,000 for the asbestos work.

Mr. Misenti asked if the money being invested at the middle school was reimbursable. Dr. Durham responded that several of the projects were reimbursable and that the reimbursement would be pro-rated based on length of occupancy. Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Misenti, Dr. Durham noted that the State would not ask for money to be returned, but it would deduct money from future grants. Mr. Carroll added that the reimbursement would be pro-rated for 10 years. For example, if they vacate the school after four years, the State would reimburse 40% of the 48.93% rate. Mr. Carroll further commented that the State was fully aware that the Town intends to vacate the old building when it occupies the new school.

Dr. Durham believed that even a couple years reimbursement would be worth taking advantage of the program.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. Responsive Classroom/Academic Choice

Mrs. Mello discussed the responsive classroom, identified in 2001 by the relationships committee to give each child a mentor/mentee relationship. Currently, 100% of the elementary school staff has received two days of training, and 75% have completed Institutes 1 and/or 2.

Mrs. Mello introduced Mrs. Donna Jones and Mrs. Linda Bristol to present. Mrs. Jones thanked the Board for this opportunity to share her experience with responsive classroom. Mrs. Bristol explained with academic choice, students make choices about their learning. The program accommodates a wide range of developmental needs and learning styles.

Mrs. Jones gave examples of ways students could practice spelling. They could choose from word triangles, rainbow writing, chunky graph paper, or pipe cleaner letters. In addition, the entire class participates in word games. This helps children who are auditory learners.

Mrs. Jones stated she believed in academic choice. She likened it to a menu, where children could choose whichever item they wanted.

Mrs. Bristol discussed various ways children could learn within their comfort zone. Mr. Iacovelli asked if the teachers worked toward getting the students out of their comfort zones. Mrs. Jones stated they were working toward that later in the year.

Mrs. Jones explained that meaningful learning goals are outlined before each segment is taught. Mrs. Bristol brought several examples of options students chose to demonstrate their knowledge, including flip charts, summaries, note cards, etc. Responsive to inquiry by Mrs. Ziobron, Mrs. Bristol responded this was for second grade.

Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Bristol discussed how academic choice played a role in math and social studies. Mrs. Jones spoke of the free choice students had during a recent mapping project. Students were asked to draw a map of the best campsite. She brought several of these with her to display.

Mrs. Jones discussed the pond life projects, created this week. She stated that each child chose the animal he/she wanted for this project. She was surprised with the makeup of the project groups, as best friends separated into different groups because they wanted to work on another animal. Mrs. Jones talked about each project on display, and how the students demonstrated their knowledge.

Mrs. Ziobron asked if part of this pond life project was worked on at home. Mrs. Jones responded that everything was done at school.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)A. Responsive Classroom/Academic Choice (Cont'd)

Mrs. Mordecai asked if the children had difficulty deciding how to present their projects. Mrs. Jones stated some of the students had difficulty in the beginning of the year, but not anymore. Mrs. Mordecai commented that this taught great team-building skills. Mrs. Jones stated how the children could work in teams now was one of the most obvious signs of social growth.

Mrs. Jones spoke of the comfort zone, to which Mr. Iacovelli had referred earlier. She stated the children are given choices, but she challenges them to go beyond their comfort level. For example, on the first project, all of the children chose dioramas. For the next project, she removed dioramas from the list of options.

Mr. Iacovelli asked if the children formed groups based on what they wanted to learn or who was in the groups. Mrs. Jones stated she had not seen anything other than students picking groups for the subject areas.

Mrs. Jones stated the third step of this process was the reflection phase. Students are developing keener listening skills, they are assuming responsibility for their own work and teamwork, and they are learning to cooperate with others and to compromise. Mrs. Bristol stated the curriculum content was the foundation for this process. It empowers students to work to their potential while being appropriately challenged.

Mrs. Ziobron stated she had been in the classroom with her son, and was particularly impressed with the morning greeting.

Dr. Durham thanked Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Bristol. He stated this was a perfect example of the different form of school success we are trying to create. He believed this experience would help develop the framework for future years.

B. 457(b) CASBO Plan

Dr. Durham informed the Board that the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) 457(b) plan would give the Board an opportunity to extend an added benefit to the teachers, at no cost. He asked Mr. Carroll to speak about the plan.

Mr. Carroll stated that this plan would give teachers an opportunity to contribute to two funds. He stated this plan would be beneficial to both veteran teachers as well as younger teachers. Participants do not have to be age 59 ½ to withdraw from the 457(b) plan without any penalty.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)B. 457(b) CASBO Plan (Cont'd)

Mr. Carroll explained by signing this agreement, we would be joining the state-wide CASBO program. There would be individual contracts between the teachers and ING Financial. He noted that East Haddam would have no liability, as ING Financial was selected by CASBO. He stated the only costs associated with this service would be to have the payroll clerk type it into the system and stamps to mail out the forms.

Mrs. Ziobron asked the timeline for this program. Mr. Carroll believed it could be done within a couple of weeks. Dr. Durham stated that if approved by the Board, they would have the ING representatives meet with employees, after which there would be a sign up period. He believed this was a ground-floor opportunity. Mr. Carroll commented that 15 districts had fully implemented this program and 10 others were in the process of implementing it.

Mrs. Ziobron asked if Mr. Carroll had an official role in CASBO, or if he was just a member. Mr. Carroll responded that he was a member. Mr. Iacovelli asked if Mr. Carroll left the district, if the teachers could still be involved in the program. Dr. Mielt suggested if Mr. Carroll left, a new business manager could become a member of CASBO.

Mr. Misenti asked if employees would sign a waiver absolving the Board from any fiduciary responsibility. Mr. Carroll stated he had not seen the actual ING contract. Mr. Misenti stated he would support this item, but it was important to have something in writing that the Board would not incur any liability. Dr. Durham stated that our only responsibility in this would be for the payroll deductions. He did not believe there would be any liability, as the contract would be between the individual employee and ING. Mr. Iacovelli suggested this resolution could be adopted with this provision. Dr. Durham believed it was already imbedded in the plan.

Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Misenti, Dr. Durham stated that CASBO was the sponsor, ING was selling the product, and East Haddam BOE was just the administrator. If there were any flaws in the contracts, CASBO would have the exposure. The Board's only responsibility would be if it did not transfer the funds into the account.

Mr. Iacovelli stated this item appeared on tonight's Consent Agenda.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Long Range Planning

Mr. Iacovelli stated that the Long Range Planning subcommittee met on March 9, 2006. A copy of the minutes was included in the Board's packet.

Mr. Iacovelli stated that Dr. Durham proposed to develop a 4-8 transition plan. He has been meeting with the elementary school PTO and the middle school MPAC committees. By next year, he should have the transition plan in place.

Mr. Iacovelli commented that the Board does very well with planning.

Dr. Durham stated he would also meet with faculty at both the elementary and middle schools. Mrs. Ziobron asked if it would be appropriate for herself or Mrs. Mordecai to attend these meetings. Dr. Durham stated the next meeting was scheduled for Monday, March 20, 2006, at 2:15 p.m. in Ms. Kathy McIntyre's science class at the middle school. There will also be a meeting with the elementary school staff on April 3, 2006 at 3:30 p.m. in the staff room.

Mr. Iacovelli stated that Dr. Durham and Mr. Carroll were also looking into a long-range maintenance plan for the new school.

B. Finance

Mr. Mather was not present to give a report. Mr. Iacovelli announced that the Board presented the budget to the Board of Finance last evening. He noted how much more pleasant these meetings were than in the past. Mr. Iacovelli believed the proposed increase was moderate for the number of things the Board needed to accomplish.

Mrs. Ziobron questioned the BOF's reaction to the capital improvement plan request. Dr. Durham stated that most of the discussion centered around the alarm system. He noted that the BOF did not question the replacement of the alarm, but they wanted to make sure all of the wiring, specifications, etc. were intact.

Dr. Durham stated there was some discussion on the chimney and some on the middle school roof. Mr. Iacovelli stated it was obvious they had reviewed all of the information submitted. Mrs. Ziobron believed this was key to the process.

C. Policy

Dr. Miett stated that that the Policy subcommittee had not met.

D. Transportation

Mr. Iacovelli reported that this subcommittee has not met.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (Cont'd)E. Personnel and Negotiations

Mr. Misenti stated that this subcommittee has not met, but he did have some information to share with the Board. He asked Mrs. Ziobron to read a letter he wrote to the Board dated March 11, 2006. Mrs. Ziobron read the letter, which stated that arbitration with the non-certified staff would begin on March 29, 2006. If the Board wished to hear additional information regarding this, they could discuss it in Executive Session.

Also in his letter, Mr. Misenti stated the teachers bargaining unit filed for arbitration regarding the last grievance denied by the Board. Dr. Durham stated he asked the attorneys to talk to see if this item could be discussed in negotiations rather than arbitration. He stated that the teachers association had approached him to see if they could have informal discussion with the Board, outside of negotiations. This was what was addressed in Mr. Misenti's letter.

Mrs. Mordecai stated she had not received the last email sent by Mr. Misenti. Mr. Misenti asked Mrs. Mordecai to give him her current email address.

Mr. Misenti referred to tonight's second grade presentation. He stated there were adults who could not write as well as these second grade students. He distributed information to the Board that suggested our children seem to fall behind as a country, as a state, and as a community.

Mrs. Ziobron stated she had been reading about education in China. She did not realize that Chinese schools begin dropping students from the system when they do not perform well. They spend all of their educational money only on the highest achievers. In addition, Chinese students go to school all day, and are schooled year-round. Mr. Iacovelli indicated many European countries separate children at a young age. Mr. Misenti stated that in Europe, educators identify specific abilities and ambitions, and then educate children in those areas.

F. Ray Board Liaison

Mr. Iacovelli stated this committee had not met, but they submitted the high school budget for review.

G. LEARN

Mrs. Gourlie was not present to report.

Mrs. Ziobron stated she had hoped to attend this meeting, as Attorney Richard Blumenthal was scheduled to speak; however, she was unable to attend.

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

Dr. Durham stated he did not attend this meeting, but he stated Attorney Blumenthal came to discuss the No Child Left Behind lawsuit. They have had one hearing and they were filing additional information. Attorney Blumenthal was still asking all Boards of Education to sign on the for lawsuit. Dr. Durham added that Attorney Blumenthal offered to come to local boards of education. The consensus of the Board was that they would like Dr. Durham to arrange this.

Mr. Misenti asked if there were setbacks in the NCLB lawsuit. He believed they had to file an appeal. Dr. Durham stated he had no knowledge of this, only that the judge had asked for more information.

Mr. Misenti commented that the NAACP had been critical of the State's lawsuit and had said it was detrimental to opportunities for minority students.

Mrs. Ziobron inquired about the Project Oceanology fees. Dr. Durham stated the fees were East Haddam's dues. He explained that it is based on our enrollment. Currently, grades 7 and 10 are very involved in Project Oceanology. Responsive to inquiry by Mrs. Ziobron, Dr. Durham stated that all students in grades 7 and 10 visit sometime during the year. He indicated that the Board assumes the transportation costs.

Mrs. Ziobron questioned the salary for the technology teachers. Dr. Durham explained that the Ray Board supports 25% of salaries for positions that fall within the terms of the trust. Vo-ag teachers are funded at 100%. The Ray Board sends a check to the town's General Fund. As teachers remain and as their salaries increase, the contribution by the Ray Board goes more toward the General Fund and less to the programs.

Mrs. Ziobron was glad to see that local businesses were being used for this program. Dr. Durham added that the Ray Board supports one-fifth of the technology replacement as well. He noted that the Ray Board would meet next month to review the requests.

H. Curriculum Council Liaison

Dr. Durham stated this committee met on March 13. Most of the discussion revolved around the fourth generation CMTs. They plan to look at the results of the spring testing and then make adjustments as necessary.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Dr. Durham informed the Board that he had received another letter from a student who was requesting financial assistance to attend the National Junior Leaders Conference. Since the Board discussed this issue last month, he responded to the student already.

IX. OLD BUSINESSA. Strategic Plan

Dr. Durham stated that the Strategic Plan was a motivator for them to look at the Responsive Classroom. He credited the Board for supporting this initiative. He believed the elementary school was on-board and that it is having a positive effect on the students.

Dr. Durham stated that the Strategic Plan's additional two years that the Board recently approved included an evaluation component. This will enable them to evaluate the effects of this program on learning, both for teachers and students.

X. NEW BUSINESSA. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Mr. Misenti asked to have Item 4 removed for discussion.

1) Warrant

a. To approve the warrant for 2005-06 in the amount of \$1,162,358.81.

2) In accordance with Policy #3280, to accept the gift of a Kodak DC3400 Digital Camera with case and 128mg memory card from Mrs. Kathy Nowak to be used in the elementary school, and to direct the Superintendent to send a letter of appreciation.

3) To accept the resignation of Mr. Scott Hicks, 7th grade social studies teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective the end of the 2005-06 school year.

5) To approve the Educational Specifications for the East Haddam Elementary School Fire Alarm System replacement.

To approve the Educational Specifications for the Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School asbestos abatement.

To approve the Educational Specifications for the East Haddam Elementary School asbestos abatement.

MOTION: Ziobron, Mielt; to approve Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the Consent Agenda.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED**

X. NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda (Cont'd)

- 4) To adopt the 457(b) CASBO Plan in accordance with the stated resolution and to attach such resolution to the meeting minutes.

Mr. Misenti stated he would like to ensure a caveat was added to the language stipulating that the East Haddam Board of Education would have no financial responsibility regarding any investments made within this program. Dr. Durham indicated that they could add a clause that East Haddam Board of Education would incur no additional financial responsibility.

MOTION: Misenti, Miett; to approve an amendment to Item 4 of the Consent Agenda.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED**

MOTION: Ziobron, Mordecai; to approve Item 4 of the Consent Agenda, with the above stated amendment.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED**

MOTION: Ziobron, Iacovelli; to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Iacovelli
Secretary