

East Haddam Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria  
April 11, 2006  
7:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Pamela Gourlie, Tracey Gionta, Everett Herden, Nick Iacovelli,  
Robert Mather, Tom Mielt, Manny Misenti, Mary-Beth Mordecai

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Melissa Ziobron

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Anne Durfee

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ABSENT:** Justin Christopher

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Dr. Durham and 16 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

Mrs. Gourlie announced that the academic awards banquet would be held at the University of Connecticut on May 25, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. She invited Board members to attend this annual event.

Mrs. Gourlie stated she received a request to enter Executive Session this evening to discuss issues pertaining to student confidentiality. She added this to tonight's agenda as Item XI.

Mrs. Gourlie invited Miss Durfee to report at this time. Miss Durfee informed the Board that Mr. Christopher was not here tonight, as he was visiting Clemson College.

Miss Durfee announced that the junior and senior prom would be held on May 6. They have just begun the third quarter of the year and exams have been scheduled for the first week of May. Yearbooks are now on sale for \$50 each. Miss Durfee stated there will be an assembly on drunk driving soon. In addition, the Drama Club performance of *Our Town* went well last weekend.

Mrs. Gourlie informed the Board that a listing of year-end events was distributed at the beginning of tonight's meeting. She encouraged Board members to attend these events.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

**MOTION:** Misenti, Iacovelli; to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 14, 2006 as presented.

**FAVOR (4): Iacovelli, Mielt, Misenti, Mordecai**  
**OPPOSED: (0)**  
**ABSTENTIONS (3): Gionta, Herden, Mather**  
**ABSENT (1): Ziobron**  
**MOTION PASSED**

**MOTION:** Iacovelli, Herden; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 15, 2006 as presented.

**FAVOR (3): Iacovelli, Misenti, Mordecai**  
**OPPOSED (0)**  
**ABSTENTIONS (4): Gionta, Herden, Mather, Mielt**  
**ABSENT (1): Ziobron**  
**MOTION PASSED**

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

A. 4-8 Middle School

Mrs. Gourlie announced that Mrs. Ziobron was unable to be present this evening as she was attending the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting for the new school project. She asked Mrs. Mordecai to report.

Mrs. Mordecai stated that the Building Committee held an informational meeting on March 22, at which time Mr. Todd Moss gave a short PowerPoint presentation before opening the meeting for public input. She stated there were several questions from neighbors regarding the safety and traffic impacts of the new school, coupled with the Banner Lodge development. Mrs. Mordecai stated there were some questions about the cost overruns of the school, but this was not the focus of the meeting.

Mrs. Mordecai believed many townspeople would like additional information on the \$7 Million shortfall. However, most of the people who spoke at the meeting were concerned with the traffic aspect of the project. She indicated that Dr. Durham had spoken with First Selectman Parker about arranging a meeting with interested citizens.

Mr. Iacovelli attended this meeting and his impression was not negative. He stated that people were concerned about the cost and the traffic and where we need to go from here.

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

Mrs. Mordecai stated there were some questions about the Building Committee's responsibility regarding the traffic issues. She stated this has not been discussed at the Building Committee meetings, but her personal reflection was that the traffic was not the Building Committee's responsibility to handle.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

Mrs. Gourlie stated this committee had been inactive since Mr. Quinn left; however, the Board recently appointed Mr. Mather to this committee.

Mr. Mather reported that during the summer of 2005, asbestos floor tiles had been replaced in the Hale building of the middle school. He stated this work had been accepted as complete by the subcommittee and was on tonight's Consent Agenda for approval by the Board.

Mr. Mather stated that additional asbestos abatement work, estimated at \$60,000, would be done at the middle school this summer. The subcommittee approved the engineering and work to the elementary school alarm system at a cost of \$125,000.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. Field Trip Requests

Dr. Durham stated there were two field trip requests on the agenda this evening. One trip was to China and the other was for the World Language Department to take students to Costa Rica. Both trips would occur during April 2007. These items appeared on tonight's Consent Agenda for approval.

Mrs. Dadona introduced Mr. Tripp and Mrs. Barnes and stated they would be happy to answer any questions the Board might have regarding the trips.

Mr. Iacovelli inquired about travel insurance. Mr. Tripp explained that the travel insurance through the travel agency was a graduated policy. In effect, if the trip was canceled within six months of the departure date, there could be some loss.

Mrs. Gourlie commented that in the past the Board has always reserved the right to cancel any trip if it thought circumstances within the world might put students in danger. She believed students should be aware of this and that there could be some monetary loss if this should happen. Mr. Tripp noted there is a caveat within the policy which declared if there was a state of emergency, the money would be refunded. Mrs. Barnes stated there was no such stipulation with her trip to Costa Rica.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)A. Field Trip Requests (Cont'd)

Mr. Iacovelli suggested the Policy subcommittee review field trips and possibly add a caveat for safety concerns and trip cancellations. Mrs. Gourlie asked Dr. Mielt to add this to the next Policy agenda.

Mr. Herden inquired if there was language in the contract stipulating that if the Board believed it was in the students' best interest to cancel the trip, that the money would be refunded. He stated he would want to see this be incorporated into the language. Dr. Durham believed the Board would be hard-pressed to find any travel agency that would agree to that.

Mrs. Mordecai asked about the trip to Costa Rica. Mrs. Barnes explained that if the trip was cancelled, students would be given a refund, which would be partly cash, partly travel vouchers for future travel. She stated there would be an individual option for this.

Mr. Mather spoke of the trip to China. He asked if the Board decided to cancel this trip at the last minute, if there could be a stipulation that the Board could not be sued. Dr. Durham did not believe this would be possible. He stated that everyone was subject to lawsuits; however, the Board has liability insurance. He added that this was the reason travel companies offer insurance.

Mr. Mather stated he would want to make it clear to all students that the Board would retain the right to cancel the trip at the last minute, if it believed cancellation was necessary. Mr. Tripp stated he would make sure students and parents were aware of this and that he would look into the insurance further.

Mr. Misenti thanked Mr. Tripp and Mrs. Barnes for working these trips into the school vacations. He believed this was an admirable effort and he appreciated it.

Dr. Mielt asked if there was a minimum number of participants in order to go on the trip. Mr. Tripp explained that while there was no minimum number, they would need approximately 30 participants to secure the price. Mr. Iacovelli asked how many students were planning to attend. Mr. Tripp responded that he had approximately 36 students who had expressed interest, as well as 12 adults. Dr. Mielt stated that he and his wife would be interested in attending, so there would be Board representation. He added that his wife is a physician should the need arise. Mr. Herden expressed interest in the trip as well.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)B. Middle School Interdisciplinary Instructional Model

Dr. Durham introduced Mrs. Judy DeLeeuw to give a brief PowerPoint presentation. Mrs. DeLeeuw stated she appreciated the opportunity to present the middle school interdisciplinary instruction model. She hoped she would be invited back in the future to present other exciting aspects of the middle school curriculum.

Mrs. DeLeeuw distributed packets to the Board. She stated this information listed some benchmark information and research study analysis. The result of some of these research studies was the interdisciplinary teams. She explained that interdisciplinary instruction demonstrated learning needs, relevance, in-depth study, motivation of students, and higher order thinking skills. She stated one middle school student would give a presentation this evening. She introduced Mr. David Telep.

Mr. Telep explained that Mrs. Parady, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, talked to him regarding her learning unit on energy. She expressed her wish for a way to culminate this learning experience. They created a research project where students pretended to be a group of home developers who wanted to use alternative energy. Students were charged with finding the costs to power a home, typical kilowatt hours, etc.

Mr. Telep found the way students reacted to this project to be very interesting. He introduced Mr. Zack Fanslau to present his research project.

Mr. Zack Fanslau addressed the Board. He gave a brief presentation on the world's declining oil production and his solution to alternative energy through the use of wind power. He reviewed each step of his project and discussed cost comparisons, etc.

Mrs. Mordecai asked in what size groups the students worked. Mr. Telep replied that each student prepared his/her own presentation.

Dr. Durham stated the connection with this project was technology and science, but the interdisciplinary approach could be any subject. Mr. Telep stated they consulted with other team teachers, but this project was applied math.

Mr. Iacovelli asked if Internet sites were helpful in gathering information. Mr. Telep stated he checked the sites and provided the sites in a Word document prior to the students beginning their research.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Cont'd)C. Graduation Date

Dr. Durham informed the Board that after April 1, it was customary for the Board to establish the graduation date. He recommended June 23 as graduation date. This item appears under tonight's Consent Agenda for approval.

Dr. Durham commented that he attended the production of *Our Town* this past weekend. Mrs. Mordecai suggested it might be helpful if this type of information was noted in the weekly elementary school newsletter. She stated parents tend to only know of events taking place in the school in which their children attend.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Long Range Planning

Mr. Iacovelli stated that the Long Range Planning subcommittee met on April 6, 2006. A copy of the minutes was included in the Board's packet.

Mr. Iacovelli indicated that the main topic of discussion of this meeting was the transition plan for the new 4-8 school. The administration has gathered information and they plan to analyze the data over the summer and to develop plans in the fall.

B. Finance

Mr. Mather stated this subcommittee had not met. Mrs. Gourlie asked the dates for the budget meetings. Dr. Durham reported that the annual budget public hearing was scheduled for May 1 at 8:00 p.m. at the old Town Hall, and the annual town budget meeting was scheduled for May 17 at 8:00 p.m. at the old Town Hall.

C. Policy

Dr. Mielt stated that that the Policy subcommittee met on April 6, 2006.

Dr. Mielt announced that they discussed a proposal from the elementary school to change the policy regarding reporting to parents. The change supports the Responsive Classroom model. They plan to present this policy as a first reading at next month's meeting.

Dr. Mielt stated the subcommittee reviewed Policy 6142.101 (Student Nutrition/Wellness). He stated Mr. Scata and the committee had done well with the draft thus far and will continue to work on it.

Dr. Mielt indicated the subcommittee reviewed the lighting policy and was presented tonight as a second reading under the Consent Agenda.

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

Dr. Miatt stated there was a small language change to the pesticide application policy (3524.1) and this would be presented to the Board next month as a first reading.

Dr. Miatt explained the subcommittee was preparing a new policy for previously home-schooled children who decide to attend public school. They are developing criteria for determining grade level equivalents for these students.

D. Transportation

Mr. Mather reported that this subcommittee has not met.

E. Personnel and Negotiations

Mr. Misenti stated that this subcommittee had the first arbitration meeting, at which time the ground rules were discussed. He stated that Dr. Durham was working with the Board of Finance to have a representative present the town's ability to pay for the items being requested.

F. Ray Board Liaison

Mr. Iacovelli stated this committee was scheduled to meet on April 27. Dr. Durham indicated he had an email from the committee yesterday and this date had been changed to May 9.

Mrs. Gourlie asked if there would be another Ray Board dinner this year. Mr. Iacovelli indicated this would likely be discussed at the May 9 meeting.

G. LEARN

Mrs. Gourlie reported that this committee had not met. She informed everyone that Attorney General Richard Blumenthal would attend the June meeting to discuss the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

H. Curriculum Council Liaison

Mr. Herden stated that this committee met yesterday. They planned to begin looking at revisions made over the past year. They discussed math and whether additional algebra was needed.

Mr. Herden indicated the committee discussed the fourth generation of CMTs. They are considering the implications these results would have on the curriculum.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (Cont'd)H. Curriculum Council Liaison (Cont'd)

Mr. Herden stated the committee planned to look into the possibility of adding new courses at the high school. The administration felt that more electives should be offered in order to fulfill the 28-credit graduation requirement.

Mr. Herden stated the committee also planned to discuss summer school. As there are really no alternatives, they hope to help students within the confines of the regular school day. He believed this issue would be carried over into the fall.

Mrs. Gourlie asked how the virtual high school worked into the elective offerings. Mr. Herden believed it fit nicely into the offerings for students who were self-motivated. However, there is a large bulk of students who are not self-disciplined enough for these courses.

Mr. Misenti inquired about the distance learning program. Dr. Durham believed only one course was being offered now. Mrs. Dadona confirmed that one course was currently being offered and it was housed at the high school.

Responsive to Mrs. Gourlie's inquiry, Miss Durfee stated she was taking an A.P. Stats course as well as a course on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century China. She stated it was difficult and self-motivation was a must.

There was a brief discussion regarding distance learning and virtual high school. Dr. Durham stated the distance learning occupied staff for only a few students. He stated the virtual high school was more cost-effective. Mrs. Dadona indicated the distance learning courses had been problematic with their block schedule.

Mr. Misenti asked if part of the problem was due to control of the students or because of the bargaining unit. Dr. Durham responded that it was not due to the bargaining unit but rather a matter of tying up the teacher's time for a class with few students. Mr. Tripp stated they had 15 students currently in the distance-learning classroom. Dr. Durham noted this was more than in the past.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Strategic Plan

Dr. Durham recommended the Board schedule a Special Meeting on May 30 at 6:00 p.m. for the Strategic Plan presentation.

Mrs. Gourlie suggested the Board could then adjourn to executive session to conduct the annual superintendent's evaluation.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Mr. Misenti asked to have Item 3 removed for discussion.

- 1) Warrant
  - a. To approve the warrant for 2005-06 in the amount of \$1,608,963.17.
- 2) To approve Policy 1330 (Use of School Facilities) as a second reading as presented by the Policy Subcommittee.
- 4) In accordance with CGS §10-161, to establish Friday, June 23, 2006 as graduation day for the Class of 2006.
- 5) To accept the Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School Asbestos Abatement school construction project as complete (041-0039CV).

**MOTION:** Herden, Iacovelli; to approve Items 1, 2, 4, and 5 of the Consent Agenda.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

- 3) To approve the request from the High School World Language Department for a field trip to Costa Rica from April 12, 2007 to April 19, 2007.

To approve the request from the High School Social Studies Department for a field trip to China from April 13, 2007 to April 24, 2007.

Mr. Mather stated he still had the same concerns he had voiced previously. He stated in today's world, anything could happen. He stated that China is a communist country and he feared our students could be trapped inside the borders. He stated China's transportation was very crowded and he felt it was impossible to vote in favor of this trip.

X. NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Mrs. Gourlie noted there were two field trips before the Board this evening. Mr. Mather stated he was only concerned with the trip to China. He believed the trip to Costa Rica would be a great trip. Mrs. Gourlie asked if Mr. Mather would like to have the two field trips separated, to which Mr. Mather responded affirmatively. Mrs. Gourlie asked Mr. Mather to make a motion.

Mr. Herden stated there were ways to assess if a specific trip would be dangerous or not. He suggested larger tour groups might have additional information. He offered to personally call Glen Circle Agency. Another source of information might be the Travel section of the Hartford Courant. He noted that last Sunday's paper included an article that discussed various regions of the world.

Dr. Miett stated he went over this itinerary with his partner, who was originally from Beijing. He stated tourism is a very large business in China and there would be thousands of tourists, not just 50 from East Haddam. In addition, tens of thousands of tourists would descend upon China for the 2008 Olympics.

**MOTION:** Misenti, Herden; to approve the request from the High School World Language Department for a field trip to Costa Rica from April 12, 2007 to April 19, 2007.

Mr. Iacovelli believed the same issues that pertain to China would also pertain to Costa Rica. He stated that Costa Rica could have rebel movements while students are there. He stated the reality was that since 9/11, the world is an uncertain place and we must all weigh the benefits against the risks.

Mr. Herden stated that Costa Rica was a neutral nation, similar to Switzerland, with no army. He stated that like 9/11, there are planes traveling everywhere and nothing was certain.

Mr. Misenti stated he was confident that this Board would continue to look at this trip and world circumstances with due diligence up until the time this group leaves.

Mrs. Gourlie indicated that Miss Durfee would like to comment on this issue. The Board was amenable to this. Miss Durfee stated from a student's perspective, students could sit in a classroom and learn, but to actually travel was one of the most rewarding experiences possible. She believed traveling as a group of students and learning together would be very beneficial.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

X. NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

**MOTION:** Mielt, Mordecai; to approve the request from the High School Social Studies Department for a field trip to China from April 13, 2007 to April 24, 2007.

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

**MOTION:** Herden, Iacovelli; to enter Executive Session at 8:15 p.m. for the purpose of discussing student confidentiality.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

The Board returned to Regular Session at 8:45 p.m.

**MOTION:** Gionta, Iacovelli; to adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Iacovelli  
Secretary