

East Haddam Board of Education  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria  
April 8, 2008  
7:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Nick Iacovelli, Tracey Gionta, Bryan Perry, Mary-Beth Mordecai, Deborah Fiala, Alan Hyla, Tom Mielt and Robert Mather.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Everett Herden

**STUDENT COUNCIL REP. PRESENT:** Kevin Staehly (departed at 7:22 p.m.)

**STUDENT COUNCIL REP. ABSENT:** Joseph Weaver

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Ellen Solek, Bob Carroll, Linda Dadona, Cindy Mello, Mary Beth Havens, Jason Peacock, Bonnie Butsch, Ruth Ziobron and approximately 7 other staff, students and citizens.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Nick Iacovelli.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

A. Communications

Mr. Iacovelli informed the Board when members of the audience participated during the Communications and Audience of Citizens portion of the agenda that Dr. Solek initiated communications. Copies of the communications are available at the Board of Education office.

B. Superintendent's Evaluation

The Board selected May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the high school media center to conduct the Superintendent's annual evaluation.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR (continued)

C. Report from Student Council Representatives

Mr. Staehly reported on the following:

- Shoreline Student council met March 27<sup>th</sup> at Cromwell High School for a Power of One Conference.

Mr. Staehly, Erica Conover, Anna Marie Sachs and Alicia Carlson reviewed the workshops attended at the Power of One Conference.

Mr. Perry questioned the number of students involved in the Student Council. Mr. Staehly replied a total of 20 students although there were about 10 which were active. Mr. Staehly stated the majority of the students were from the sophomore class.

Ms. Mordecai questioned the percentage of the entire student body involved in extra-curricular activities. Mrs. Dadona replied approximately 60%, many of which were involved in more than one activity at a time. Mrs. Dadona stated because most students were involved in more than one activity, there were often conflicts in their schedule for attending the activities.

Mr. Iacovelli spoke favorably about extra-curricular activities.

Mr. Mather stated there would be a political educational forum run for the youth of East Haddam.

Mr. Perry questioned if East Haddam was a part of the National Association of Student Councils. Mr. Staehly replied affirmatively. Not all schools are involved. Mr. Perry questioned if they attended the yearly national event to which the response was no.

D. Report from the First Selectman

First Selectman Walter was unavailable to report.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

**MOTION:** Mather, Gionta; to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 11, 2008 with the following amendment:

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES (continued)

- Under Communications and Audience of Citizens, correct spelling of Giovanni Watters.

**FAVOR (6): Mordecai, Gionta, Perry, Fiala, Hyla, Mather**  
**OPPOSED (0): None**  
**ABSTENTIONS (1): Miett**  
**ABSENT (1): Herden**  
**MOTION PASSED**

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

A. 4-8 Middle School

Ms. Mordecai reported smart boards and projectors had been ordered.

Ms. Mordecai stated change orders currently amounted to approximately \$289,000 which was less than 1% of the total project costs. Ms. Mordecai stated the original contingency allocated for the project was approximately \$1,112,000,000 and that of that to date 30% had been used.

Ms. Mordecai informed the Board that the SBC had approved the FF&E budget as presented. Ms. Mordecai stated it had been decided to wait until later in the process before ordering new computers in case any unanticipated expenses were to occur.

Ms. Mordecai will arrange a tour of the site for Board members.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

Mr. Mather had nothing new to report. .

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Graduation Date

Dr. Solek informed the Board that statute allowed the Board to establish a date for graduation after April 1<sup>st</sup>. There were two snow days this winter. Graduation was established for June 18<sup>th</sup>. Inclement weather could change the last day of school, but not the graduation date.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)B. Middle School Transition Task Force Plan

Dr. Solek presented a PowerPoint presentation discussing the accomplishments of the Middle School Transition Task Force and reviewed the initial draft of the Middle School Transition Plan.

Mr. Mather questioned why there were different bus arrival times at the middle school. Dr. Solek replied there was an extension of the middle school day so that travel from the elementary school to the middle school to cover 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes at the end of the day could occur. Dr. Solek explained the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade schedules will be aligned with the elementary school schedule.

Mr. Perry questioned if there was a difference in the elementary arrival time from this year. Dr. Solek replied yes, that it would be 10 minutes later than this year because of the additional 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade drop off.

Mr. Iacovelli, referencing research regarding new start times for high school students, commented the change in the schedule could be an opportunity to change the start time accordingly. Mr. Iacovelli encouraged Dr. Solek to consider different start up times at the high school.

Dr. Mielt spoke favorably about having the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders on the same bus as elementary school students.

Mr. Perry requested discussion about the change in the starting time be included on a future meeting's agenda.

C. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Initiative

Dr. Solek informed the Board of a notice received from Mark McQuillan (Education State Commissioner) of the draft initial plan for NAEP. This will be a standardized test administered to all high school seniors. Currently, there are several states in the United States which utilize this particular test. It is an end of the year assessment for seniors. Dr. Solek stated there was a significant chance that the district would be chosen to participate in the initiative in 2009.

Dr. Solek informed the Board that communication had occurred with the Teacher's Association regarding the health savings account which was initially proposed during teacher negotiations. Dr. Solek stated there was a draft health savings account which appeared to be agreed to.

Mr. Carroll informed the Board the health savings account had been negotiated. Mr. Carroll stated there was a stipulated agreement understanding that a high deductible health plan coupled with a health savings account would be researched.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)C. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Initiative (continued)

This information was compiled. Employees which use the plan will save the Board about 15% in health insurance costs. Mr. Carroll stated the plan had been presented to the Personnel & Negotiations Committee. The revised final draft was sent to the Personnel & Negotiations Committee on April 8<sup>th</sup>. The high deductible health plan has a \$1,500 deductible for single and a \$3,000 deductible for a two person family. The Board is offering to fund 55% of the deductible into the health savings account and the employee will have a reduced co-pay of only 10% versus 15.5%. Mr. Carroll stated the election to choose the health savings account needed to be made during the open enrollment period which was June. The Union has informed employees there will be a meeting in May to discuss the plan and elections would be in June.

Although the selection would be made in June, it would not become effective until January 1, 2009.

Responsive to a question by Mr. Hyla, Mr. Carroll replied the funding of 55% of the deductible into the health savings account was chosen because it was the state average. Mr. Hyla questioned if projected savings had been determined. Mr. Carroll replied no. Mr. Carroll stated the plan was optional to employees.

Ms. Mordecai questioned if the BOE put the 55% into a bank account. Mr. Carroll replied yes. The employee will be responsible for establishing a special bank account and the BOE will agree to fund half in January and the other half in September. Mr. Carroll stated the law was that once the funds were deposited into the account, it is the employee's money, regardless if it is used. Mr. Hyla questioned if it was an interest account. Mr. Carroll replied it would be a non-interest bearing checking account but that once the balance was up to \$3,000, then the employee would have the option to invest in mutual funds. Mr. Hyla questioned the name of the financial institution. Mr. Carroll replied Anthem Insurance was connected with Mellon funds. Mr. Iacovelli questioned if there was 100% coverage after the high deductible to which Mr. Carroll replied affirmatively, unless the employee was seeking medical attention out of the network. Out-of-network coverage requires twice the deductible. Mr. Iacovelli questioned if there would be fees for the employee's banking account. Mr. Carroll replied affirmatively and that the fees would be passed on to the employee.

Ms. Mordecai questioned if the proposed plan was similar to a PPO plan. Mr. Carroll replied the coverage was identical to a PPO plan.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)C. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Initiative (continued)

Mr. Carroll informed the Board that the rates were only known for the next twelve months. Mr. Carroll stated there was a potential that the PPO could go up 5% and the Health Savings Plan could go up 25%. Mr. Carroll stated the agreement was for 2009 and 2010 at which time the new prices could be evaluated. Mr. Carroll stated this coincided with the negotiations of the new contract.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Gionta, Mr. Carroll replied the teacher's contract ran from September 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Gionta questioned why the health plan ran from January to December. Mr. Carroll replied they already had the health plan established (for retirees) and because IRS incentives to the individuals made it advantageous to start in January. Funds put into the savings account will be tax deductible.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Long Range Planning

Long Range Planning met April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. Solek briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Long Range Planning Subcommittee meeting minutes. The next meeting is scheduled for May 1<sup>st</sup>.

B. Finance

Finance had not met. Mr. Mather informed the Board that the BOE budget was being reviewed this evening by the Board of Finance. Mr. Mather informed the Board there would be a town public meeting of the budget on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

C. Policy

Policy met April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. Mielt briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Policy subcommittee meeting minutes.

D. Transportation

Mr. Mather reported Transportation had not met and he had nothing to report.

E. Personnel and Negotiations

Personnel and Negotiations had not met. Dr. Mielt had nothing new to report.

F. Ray Board Liaison

Ray Board had not met. Mrs. Fiala had nothing to report.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)G. LEARN

LEARN met March 13<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Gionta reported the Marine Science Magnet High School was trying to designate the building as non-critical so it won't be used as a shelter. Mrs. Gionta stated Michael McCee reviewed a slide presentation on a trip to China about their school systems. Mrs. Gionta stated there was a Professional Learning presentation. Mrs. Gionta stated the next meeting would be April 10<sup>th</sup> and that East Haddam would be giving a school safety presentation.

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if the town took advantage of LEARN opportunities to which Dr. Solek replied affirmatively. Dr. Solek reviewed a proposal for reversed auctioning which would allow for any school district in the State to bid on line for FF & E and technology type items. The proposed plan could result in substantial cost savings.

H. Curriculum Council Liaison

Mr. Herden was unavailable to report. The next meeting is scheduled for April 14<sup>th</sup>.

I. Open Space Committee Liaison

Mr. Perry attended the Open Space Committee. Mr. Perry reported a pamphlet would be developed highlighting Open Space parcels.

J. Local Prevention Council

Local Prevention Council met March 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hyla briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Local Prevention Council meeting minutes.

Dr. Mielt questioned if there had been a concrete plan to bring drug sniffing dogs into the school. Mr. Hyla replied yes. Mrs. Dadona stated the State Police were delaying the implementation of drug sniffing dogs in the school. Mrs. Dadona stated the reservation for the drug sniffing dogs had been made but a date was not given. Dr. Mielt stressed the importance of complying with the written policy.

Mr. Mather questioned if there was a serious problem with younger students drinking alcohol in town. Mr. Hyla replied troopers reported there had been no arrests although they were aware of it happening.

Responsive to comments by Ms. Mordecai, Mr. Hyla replied there had been discussion about establishing SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) chapter at the high school which could invite speakers to discuss drug and alcohol topics.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

J. Local Prevention Council (continued)

Mrs. Dadona reviewed the State Police presentation on drug use on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Solek reported there was a Safety and Security Committee meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

There was none.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

1) Warrant

a. To approve the warrant for 2007-08 in the amount of \$1,552,709.87.

2) To accept the resignation of Mrs. Karen DiMascola, 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective March 10, 2008.

To accept the resignation of Mr. William Vanderrest, 6<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

To accept the resignation of Ms. Melinda Blaschik, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at East Haddam Elementary School, effective the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

To accept the resignation of Mr. Frank Gazdzicki, custodian at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective April 4, 2008.

3) To approve Regulation #4114 (Transfer/Reassignment) as a second reading.

4) To approve Policy #5111 (Admission/Placement) as a first reading.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

- 5) To approve Policy #6147 (Adoption of New Programs – Non-Academic) as a first reading.
- 6) In accordance with CGS 10-16, to establish Wednesday, June 18, 2008 as graduation day for the Class of 2008.

**MOTION:** Mielt, Hyla; to approve the Consent Agenda items 1-6.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

**MOTION:** Gionta, Hyla; to enter into Executive Session at 8:43 p.m. for purposes of discussing personnel.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

The Board returned to Regular Session at 9:00 p.m.

**MOTION:** Perry, Mordecai; to adjourn at 9:01 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

Respectfully submitted,

Everett Herden  
Secretary