

East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria
August 11, 2009
7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tracey Gionta, Nancy Haslam, Everett Herden, Nick Iacovelli,
Bryan Perry, Kerri Willis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Deb Fiala, Alan Hyla, Mary Beth Mordecai

OTHERS PRESENT: Deb Adams, Joann Collins, Linda Dadona, Debra Denette,
Matt Espinosa, Jennifer Praisner, David Scata, Ellen Solek,
Mark Walter

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 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 welcomed back Board members and expressed enthusiasm in starting a successful school year.

B. Report from the First Selectman

First Selectman Mark Walters reported that money was returned to the town in the amount of \$85,000. He commented that the Middle School Conversion project is moving forward and that the August 4th meeting generated additional helpful information.

IV. ACTION ON MINUTES

MOTION: Willis, Perry; to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on June 9, 2009 as amended by Mr. Perry as follows:

- Page 3, Action on the Minutes, Bryan Perry voted in favor on all motions.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

IV. ACTION ON MINUTES (continued)

MOTION: Gionta, Haslam; to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on June 17, 2009.

FAVOR (4): Gionta, Haslam, Herden, Perry
OPPOSED (0): None
ABSTAINED (1): Willis
ABSENT (3): Fiala, Hyla, Mordecai
MOTION PASSED

MOTION: Herden, Haslam; to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on June 22, 2009

FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED

MOTION: Perry, Gionta; to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting held on June 29, 2009.

FAVOR (4): Gionta, Haslam, Herden, Perry
OPPOSED (0): None
ABSTAINED (1): Willis
ABSENT (3): Fiala, Hyla, Mordecai
MOTION PASSED

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

No report.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Solek expressed her enthusiasm and optimism for commencing a new school year. She advised that Ruth Ziobron will be the new recording secretary for the Board of Education commencing in September. She thanked Mrs. Denette for filling in for this evening's meeting. Dr. Solek introduced Cindy Praisner, working in collaboration with the Board of Education, Youth and Family Services, and the United Way as Early Childhood Council Coordinator.

A. United Way Grant Update

Cindy Praisner made a PowerPoint presentation and then reviewed it in considerable detail. She noted that she is operating under a \$20,000 grant from the United Way. While a majority of the grant will address her salary, the intent of the grant is to promote school readiness with the very young. Mrs. Praisner noted that she is working with a newly created Early Childhood Council

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)A. United Way Grant Update (continued)

composed of area residents, school personnel, library personnel, personnel from local child care professionals, she requested participation from the Board of Education.

The mission of the Early Childhood Council was identified as a group dedicated to connecting caregivers with appropriate resources to ensure that all children within our community from birth to age 5 are provided opportunities that will enhance school readiness.

Mr. Iacovelli noted his enthusiasm for the initiative and stated that providing options is such a huge benefit. Mrs. Haslam also expressed appreciation for the efforts, noting that a community like East Haddam doesn't typically qualify for the funding necessary for such initiatives. She further noted that LEARN would be a very valuable. Mr. Walter inquired if the program was being modeled after anything presently in existence. Mrs. Praisner responded affirmatively.

Mrs. Praisner stated that part of the process will be to identify all of the children in the community that are in the very young group. Dr. Solek stated that with the ALERT NOW system the Town is well equipped to communicate with school age children, she noted, however, that the very young are a most vulnerable group regarding issues such as H1N1, yet it is a group that there is not good lines of communication with.

Mr. Herden requested that Mrs. Praisner visit the Board again in January for an update. Mrs. Praisner thanked the Board for its time, the Board thanked Mrs. Praisner for her presentation and wished her success in her very worthwhile endeavors.

B. Staffing Update

Dr. Solek welcomed Joanne Collins, new principal at the elementary school and Matt Espinosa as new assistant principal at the high school. She noted that there are a few positions remaining unfilled, she was optimistic that they would be filled prior to the commencement of the new school year. Dr. Solek stated that the current economic situation produced tremendous candidate pools and she was very pleased with the new staff that has been hired.

Dr. Solek advised that staff returns on September 1, 2009 and the students return on September 2, 2009.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)C. Differentiated Instruction

Dr. Solek presented a Guide to Differentiated Instruction prepared by the staff. The collection contains examples of differentiated instruction implemented at all levels. She encouraged the Board to review the documentation and requested that the document remain in district. She also stated that she was very pleased with the end product and impressed with the short turnaround in which it was accomplished by the staff. She stated that the next product will be a compilation of documentation used for assessment.

D. Strategic Plan

Dr. Solek distributed a strategic plan review in draft form. Acceptance of the document will be requested at the September meeting. She called particular attention to page 8 and the five focus areas. Mr. Iacovelli commented how having a plan is making the district more and more effective.

E. ARRA/IDEA Funding

Dr. Solek advised that the district has met the August 14, 2009 deadline and has applied for the two-year grant of this federal stimulus funding. She noted that a very productive meeting was held with members of the Board of Finance, Board of Education and Board of Selectmen on how the documentation is handled.

Mr. Iacovelli advised that the bookkeeping requirements are unusual for this funding, and he stated that he wanted the record to reflect that \$500,000 will pass back to the Town in June of 2010 because the funding will come in directly into the Board of Education. The funding is to be used for special education.

Mr. Scata clarified the difference between the ARRA and IDEA funding. The ARRA funding is spread out over two years.

F. New Legislation

Dr. Solek stated that legislation was supposed to delay the start date for in school suspension. This did not occur and is effective for the 2009/10 school year. Dr. Solek advised that the budget approved did not contain funding for this new mandate, which again she stated was supposed to be pushed off until 2010/11. The issues facing all of the districts are for staffing and facilities to accommodate the mandate.

Mr. Walter stated that COST – Council of Small Towns – is a group working together to prevent the one size fits all legislation that makes it very difficult on small towns. He suggested that the Superintendents, likewise, do the same.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)F. New Legislation (continued)

Another mandate is for defibrillation machines to be in the schools with training by 2010/2011. Dr. Solek stated that two machines for each school will be procured, coaches and nursing staff will be targeted for training.

Dr. Solek advised that the bullying legislation has been tightened. Responsive to an inquiry from Mrs. Haslam, Dr. Solek advised that issues of bullying do occur from time to time, typically they will involve middle school aged children.

Dr. Solek advised that professional development will focus on assessment for the next two years.

Dr. Solek advised that State and Federal governments have done a great job with communication. The H1N1 swine flu is still anticipated to be a concern for fall. She stated that the recommendations are that the schools should only close if a significant number of children are out. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Perry, Dr. Solek stated that she anticipated following the advice of the state and federal guidelines. Mr. Iacovelli added, however, that the local board reserves the right to take what action it feels is in the best interest of its district. Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Walter, Dr. Solek stated that she has had communication with Thad King relative to his tracking system.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Local Prevention Council – no report.
- B. Long Range Planning – no report.
- C. Finance – no report.
- D. Policy – no report.
- E. Transportation – no report.
- F. Personnel & Negotiations – Mr. Perry stated that he will request an Executive Session to report at the end of the meeting.
- G. Ray Board Liaison – No report.
- H. LEARN Liaison – Mrs. Gionta reported that LEARN does not meet in the summer months.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

- I. CIA Liaison – Mr. Herden advised that he was very pleased with the differentiated instruction compilation and stated that the hard work and dedication should be recognized. He thanked all those involved for their efforts and looked forward to moving on to assessment.
- J. Open Space – no report.
- K. Middle School Conversion Committee – Mr. Herden distributed a survey from the public hearing. Approximately 75 people were reported to have attended, and feed back was noted to have been relatively positive. Mr. Walter advised that agreements have been reached and probate approval received to maintain the property for municipal or non-profit use. Responsive to inquiry from Mrs. Gionta, Mr. Walter advised that if the town determined it was in the best interest to tear down the building, it would require town approval, but it could be done.

Mr. Perry inquired about a time frame for moving forward. Mr. Walter thought it would be late fall prior to going to referendum. He noted that long term operating costs need to be estimated in addition to the building costs. Mrs. Willis stated that costs associated with the project would be offset by revenues generated once the Town Offices are out of the village area.

VIII. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Deb Adams advised that she was very pleased to be on the Early Childhood Council and encouraged the Board to create educational initiatives PreK-12 and not just K-12. Mr. Iacovelli stated that he appreciated Ms. Adams comments and stated that Pre-K education has not been abandoned by the Superintendent.

X. NEW BUSINESSA. Consent Agenda

- 1) Warrant
 - a. To approve the warrant for 2008-09 in the amount of \$2,730,246.03.
 - b. To approve the warrant for 2009-10 in the amount of \$538,976.58.
- 2) To accept the resignation, with intent to retire, of Mrs. Anne Johnson, Language Arts Consultant at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective June 29, 2009. A copy of Mrs. Johnson's letter is attached.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Agenda (continued)

To accept the resignation of Ms. Carly Emery, Special Education Teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray High School, effective July 20, 2009. A copy of Ms. Emery's letter is attached.

To accept the resignation of Mrs. Elizabeth Ciccone, part-time secretary at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective August 10, 2009. A copy of Mrs. Ciccone's letter is attached.

- 3) To approve, as in previous years, the Board Secretary, the Superintendent, and the Business Manager to be signatories to the National School Lunch Program paperwork.

MOTION: Gionta, Herden; to approve the Consent Agenda items 1 through 3.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

MOTION: Perry, Gionta; to enter into an Executive Session at 8:27 pm for purposes of personnel and negotiations.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

The Board returned to Regular Session at 8:42 p.m.

MOTION: Herden, Willis; to adjourn at 8:43 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

Respectfully submitted,

Everett Herden
Board Secretary