

East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Media Center
December 8, 2009
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tracey Gionta, Bryan Perry, Mary Beth Mordecai, Deborah Fiala, Nancy Haslam, Everett Herden, Susan Taylor, Brian Pear and Amalia Apostoleris

STUDENT COUNCIL REPS. PRESENT: Kevin Staehly, Rachel Johnson, Skylar Vumback

STUDENT COUNCIL REPS. ABSENT: Jonathan Comer

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Ellen Solek, Bob Carroll, Matt Espinosa, Jason Peacock, Roy Parker, Joann Collins, Mary Beth Havens, David Scata, First Selectman Mark Walter, Sue Link, Ruth Ziobron and approximately seven other faculty, students and citizens

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Nancy Haslam.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

A. Communications – Review of Subcommittee Attendance

Mrs. Haslam had included an email in board member's packets regarding subcommittee attendance by board members. Ms. Mordecai voiced concern, stating the email implied distrust in board members if there should be a quorum during a subcommittee meeting. Ms. Mordecai stated some members were interested in attending all of the subcommittee meetings and she was unaware of a subcommittee ever coming to a vote during their meeting. Ms. Mordecai stated a subcommittee's purpose was to bring their findings and work to the full board for consideration as indicated in the board's bylaws. Ms. Mordecai asked Dr. Solek to review other towns' Board of Education protocol. Ms. Mordecai stated attending additional subcommittee meetings provided better understanding, details and background. Ms. Mordecai requested more detailed subcommittee reports, noting it would not be the same as attending the actual meeting and listening to the discussions. Mr. Perry suggested more detail reporting during Subcommittee Reports.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON (continued)

A. Communications – Review of Subcommittee Attendance (continued)

Mrs. Haslam stated the board's attorney concurred with her email letter. Members not on a subcommittee should avoid attending meetings of any subcommittee where their attendance could be viewed as constituting a quorum. There are nine board members; five board members is considered a quorum. Mrs. Haslam noted once there was a quorum, the board could conduct business, as if they were sitting at a full Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Haslam stated she agreed with more elaboration of subcommittee reports during regularly scheduled Board of Education meetings. Mrs. Haslam has not been appointed on a subcommittee to help eliminate a quorum situation. Mr. Herden stated he agreed with the board's attorney's recommendations.

Mrs. Fiala agreed with Ms. Mordecai, that attending subcommittee meetings facilitated a better understanding and stated she would present a more detailed subcommittee report.

Mrs. Gionta asked if policy could be changed to include additional members at subcommittee meetings. Mrs. Haslam replied no. Ms. Mordecai suggested the Board of Education post these meetings as Special Meetings. Mrs. Haslam stated it would not meet the criteria of a Special Meeting; to change a date, place or bring up a matter that can not normally be brought up at a regularly scheduled meeting.

Mrs. Taylor disagreed with Mrs. Fiala stating she would prefer to put all her efforts/focus into the subcommittee which she was appointed and hear the reports of the others during meetings.

Mr. Perry proposed two board meetings per month.

B. Report from High School Student Council Representatives

The High School Council Representatives reported the following:

- Civic students were in attendance of this evening's meeting;
- Pep Rally and Spirit Week will be next week;
- Straight from the Heart cooked several meals for local families in town for Thanksgiving and will be baking cookies for Christmas;
- Fencing Club will have their first scrimmage of the season on Saturday;
- ICE started today;
- The Choir Concert will be December 17th;
- The Gong Show will be presented December 15th;
- The student/faculty basketball game has been postponed;
- Progress Reports will be sent home this Thursday;
- The NHS has put out several boxes for a toy drive.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON (continued)**C. Report from Middle School Student Council Representatives**

The Middle School Council Representatives reported the following:

- Zack Blain has been hired as the school's new music teacher;
- There will be a boys' and girls' basketball game this Friday;
- The Mock Trial team won their first competition;
- Forty students in Select Chorus and Hand Chime Choir went to the Senior Center and Chesthelm to perform last week;
- An Architecture show is being displayed at the East Haddam Public Library. On display are 8th grade models of East Haddam historical homes and 6th grade nutcracker projects;
- Teens in Action is holding a coat drive, currently there have been 200 coats collected;
- The Lego League won in competition this past weekend;
- The Future Problem Solvers had its 3rd competition;
- Teens in Action successfully ran a food drive for the food bank for Thanksgiving;
- Twenty students won competition during the Eastern Regional Music Festival, this is a new school record;
- The 6th grade ROPE classes are sponsoring a dance December 18th;
- There is a Peace Poster contest being held;
- There will be tryouts for the cheerleading squad by Coach Tina Brockett next week.

Council Representatives were excused.

D. Report from the First Selectman

First Selectman Walter attended the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. The key speaker had noted that the recession was over. First Selectman Walter stated he would be attending meetings tomorrow at the Legislative Office Building with town Selectmen and Mayors to develop plans for a State's Economic Budget model and that proposed cuts would be made against State's budgets, encompassing the Board of Education and Municipal budgets. First Selectman Walter noted the large State debt and that the Governor was proposing over \$4,000,000 direct cuts to towns. First Selectman Walter noted budget cuts on the State level for the next 3-4 years.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

MOTION: Fiala, Gionta; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 17, 2009.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

V. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. Senior Class Trip Request

Mr. Staehly presented the senior class trip itinerary to Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland. The agenda was included in board member's packets.

B. 2008-09 Audit Report

The 2008-09 audit report completed by BlumShapiro was included in board member's packets. Mr. Carroll was available for questions. There were none.

C. Review of District and High School Strategic School Profiles

Dr. Solek reviewed a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the District and High School Strategic School Profiles.

Responsive to a question by Ms. Mordecai, Dr. Solek replied discrepancies in terms of hours offered for instruction to the three schools had to do with the three school building schedules. Dr. Solek briefly reviewed each school's daily schedule. Ms. Mordecai questioned the change in school enrollment. Dr. Solek replied the current kindergarten class of 86 students may have contributed to the difference in enrollment and she would provide the answer at the next meeting.

Mrs. Gionta questioned why only 51% of gifted and talented were provided with services. Mr. Scata replied gifted and talented were not provided special services at the high school because AP and accelerated classes were offered. Gifted and talented students are identified in 4th grade. Services are provided in grades 4-8.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Apostoleris, Mr. Scata replied federal law required the identification of gifted and talented students. The state does not mandate or provide funding for services. Currently there is a 4-8 school wide enrichment model. Services are provided in each classroom. There is a gifted and talented teacher (Tina Bernard) which provides enrichment activities in the classroom and then through those enrichment activities, students identified or which have an interest are pulled out for interest groups (i.e. Mock Trial, Problem Solvers, Lego Club, etc). Mr. Scata suggested that this could be a topic for discussion at a future meeting.

Mrs. Fiala voiced concern with figures indicating the physical fitness of students at 21%, noting this was below state standards. Students are tested in grades 4-8. Mrs. Gionta questioned the physical education curriculum and if more options could be offered. It was decided to review the physical fitness curriculum with teachers at a future meeting.

V. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)C. Review of District and High School Strategic School Profiles (continued)

Responsive to a comment by Mrs. Haslam, Dr. Solek replied the district's definition of instructional hours verses the state's instructional hours differed. For example, offerings for pure academic instructional time verses special instructional at the elementary school looked differently than that offered at the middle or high school. The basic scheduling for all three schools is very different based on student need. Dr. Solek reviewed all three school's schedules.

Mrs. Haslam noted there were 1 ½ nurses at the elementary school and 1 nurse at the middle and high school and questioned the discrepancy. Dr. Solek replied the report was prior to the 4-8 configurations at the middle school. Dr. Solek noted the elementary school traditionally had the greatest level of need. Dr. Solek agreed there was a need for more support at the middle school. Mrs. Haslam requested the board receive the school nurse monthly reports for review and to consider reallocating the ½ support at the middle school. Mrs. Haslam noted the middle school's teacher attendance was at 13.9 days due to illness or personal time and questioned if there had been an extended absence of someone with a long term illness to which Mr. Peacock replied there were several people last year and again this year.

Ms. Mordecai questioned the average class size for 1st grade to which Mrs. Havens replied there were 107 students in 1st grade and an average class size of 21 students. Mrs. Havens stated last year's projection for kindergarten was 127 students, yet there were only 86 currently enrolled. Mrs. Havens stated 2010 projections were 130 and increasing by 3-5 students each year. Mrs. Havens stated based on the current enrollment discrepancies, she questioned the accuracy of projected enrollment. Due to SRBI, currently kindergarten aids are also working in the 1st grade when the kindergarten students are not in the classroom. Mrs. Haslam requested monthly enrollment totals, discipline reports, and calendar to be distributed to the board.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Apostoleris, Dr. Solek replied the curriculum of programs related to exposing students to ethnicities and cultures was mainly based on the Connecticut frameworks requirements and student interest. Responsive to a question by Mrs. Apostoleris, Dr. Solek reviewed the district's expenses related to tuition for students to attend out of district schools such as magnet schools.

Mrs. Haslam questioned who the tutors were which were referenced in the report. Dr. Solek replied the tutors were teachers located at the middle school. This program was cut from the budget this year. Mrs. Haslam voiced concern with the large amount of library subscriptions and books at the high school library. Dr. Solek will get further information and report back.

V. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)D. Update on Elementary School SRBI Implementation

Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Havens provided a PowerPoint presentation detailing information on the progress of SRBI implementation including professional development for teachers, Aimsweb, the formation of data teams, and data gathering strategies.

Mr. Herden questioned how our district had been chosen for SRBI implementation. Mr. Scata replied he was a participant in the development of the SRBI guidelines and helped to develop the documents. Mr. Scata explained we represented a rural district chosen to participate in the program. Mr. Herden questioned if it had been shared with parents to which Mr. Scata replied affirmatively.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Gionta, Mrs. Collins replied there was currently more intervention in reading and writing than math. Mrs. Gionta questioned if State guidelines were shown to students to which Mrs. Collins replied yes, they were implementing a consistent approach throughout the school.

Mrs. Haslam stated she was impressed with the implementation of Specials teachers to cover classes while teachers can review SRBI criteria, noting in the past substitutes had been hired for this purpose.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Apostoleris, Mrs. Collins replied there was an opportunity for teachers and administrators to network with other districts. Mr. Scata explained SRBI guidelines were newly developed (about one year ago) and would be mandated in July.

Ms. Mordecai questioned who implemented the Read Naturally Program and reading interventions. Mr. Scata replied the Read Naturally Program at the middle school was currently being implemented by a school paraprofessional which is overseen by a reading consultant. The Read Naturally Program started three weeks ago at the elementary school. Mrs. Collins reviewed positive results. Mr. Scata noted the Read Naturally Program was self monitoring. Responsive to a question by Ms. Mordecai, Mrs. Havens replied grade level data teams met every other week, with intent to start meeting weekly in January. Ms. Mordecai questioned if teachers were sharing SRBI information. Mrs. Collins replied affirmatively. Responsive to a question by Ms. Mordecai, Mrs. Havens replied the responsive classroom approach (morning meetings, expectations, and academic choice) fitted well with the SRBI program. Mrs. Havens stated she would provide the comparison data. Mrs. Mordecai questioned if SRBI would affect student creativity. Mrs. Collins replied they were working to balance SRBI with creativity. Dr. Solek explained proper implementation of scientific data collection (SRBI) actually allowed for more time for creativity. Dr. Solek thanked teachers for their work in implementing the SRBI program.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Policy

Policy met on December 7th. Mrs. Gionta reported policy/regulation #5131.911 (Hazing) was being presented as a second reading. The Family Medical Leave Act was reviewed but not included in board member's packets. Mrs. Gionta informed the board of the necessity to resubmit membership to CABE or a similar type of service. LEARN will be contacted to review options.

B. Finance

Finance met December 3rd. Mrs. Fiala reported they had tentatively agreed to meet three Wednesdays in January. Dr. Solek had reviewed the budget process. Administrators are in the process of presenting their building budgets to Dr. Solek prior to winter break; at which time a budget summary will be drafted for Finance subcommittee review.

C. Long Range Planning

Long Range Planning had not met.

D. Personnel and Negotiations

Mr. Perry reported Personnel and Negotiations met December 7th. Mr. Perry informed the board the non-certified staff contract negotiations would start in January and the teacher's contract negotiations would start in April. Discussions with the board would be held in executive session during regularly scheduled meetings.

E. Transportation

Transportation had not met.

F. LEARN Liaison

LEARN had not met.

G. Ray Board Liaison

Ray Board met December 3rd. Mrs. Fiala reported there was a presentation by Leslie Corey and Wendy Gavin regarding changing the work study program. The Ray Board approved 2010-2011 school year funding; the operating budget increased to \$300,000 (was \$290,000 for 2009-2010) and the capital reserve funding reduced from \$20,000 to \$10,000. The Ray property has been transferred to the town. The probate court approved a change in the wording of the Trust reflecting their mission to "support vocational programs". Dr. Solek will be writing an article in the town magazine

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)G. Ray Board Liaison (continued)

explaining Ray Board funding. Mrs. Dadona is writing an informational Ray Board pamphlet. Mrs. Fiala questioned where the link at the Board of Education website for the Ray Board had been located. Dr. Solek will report back.

H. 4-8 Middle School Liaison

4-8 Middle School had not met.

I. CIA Liaison

Mrs. Apostoleris reported CIA had met November 30th. Committee reports for health education were presented. There will be a need for a review of the K-4 and 9-12 health education curriculum. It was determined there was a need to review the pacing guides. The curriculum development plan was reviewed. The next CIA meeting is scheduled for December 14th. Mrs. Haslam reviewed UDD curriculum development.

Mrs. Gionta questioned the progress of the pacing guides. Dr. Solek replied the first draft was 80% complete. The first draft should be complete at the end of this school year.

Mrs. Haslam requested CIA discussions of formative assessments throughout the school year. Mrs. Haslam suggested the new grade administer the last grade's summative for the same assessment to determine the start up point with the student.

J. Middle School Conversion Liaison

The Middle School Conversion Committee had not met.

K. Local Prevention Council Liaison

The Local Prevention Council had not met.

Mr. Herden questioned if there should be an Open Space Liaison. Mrs. Haslam stated Mrs. Budzik had recommended not attending these meetings. It will need to be determined if a board member should attend these meetings.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

There was none.

VIII. Old Business

There was none.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

- 1) Warrant
 - a. To approve the warrant for 2008-2009 in the amount of \$2,730,246.03.
 - b. To approve the warrant for 2009-2010 in the amount of \$1,555,073.20.
- 2) To approve policy/regulation #1531.911 (Hazing) as a second reading.
- 3) To approve the senior class trip to Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland from June 4, 2010 through June 7, 2010.

Responsive to a question by Mrs. Gionta, Dr. Solek replied item 1a were expenditures encumbered last year.

MOTION: Mordecai, Fiala; to approve the Consent Agenda items 1) through 3).

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

MOTION: Gionta, Fiala; to adjourn at 9:55 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Perry
Board Secretary