

(APPROVED AS CORRECTED ON JANUARY 26, 2010)
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
JANUARY 12, 2010

PLACE:

Board of Education
Meeting Room
7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mrs. Westcott, Chair; Mesdames Sartori, Hagerty-Ross, Peticone, Bell, Shea; Messrs. Plutte, Reilly, Whittier.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Mr. Fital, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Pandolfo, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education; Dr. Falcone, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education; Mr. Huot, Director of Finance.

VISITORS:

Approximately 40.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Mrs. Westcott, who announced that there would be a special meeting tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. She noted that additional meetings regarding the 2010 -2011 proposed budget are listed in the Budget calendar. She also stated that the next regular meeting would be held on January 26th at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Meeting Room.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mrs. Westcott wished everyone a Happy New Year. She noted that last week, Mr. Fital announced his retirement and the Board respects his decision. There have been many accolades for Mr. Fital for his work in Darien. He gives 100% to everything he puts his mind to and he will continue this level of commitment as he completes his work here.

Mrs. Westcott explained that it is the Board of Education's task to begin the process of hiring the next superintendent. Over the next several weeks, the Board will interview search firms. It will be an open process, and they will report back from time to time.

Mrs. Westcott said they would be starting the budget process tonight. Mr. Fital will present his budget and the Board will ask questions, followed by the RTM Finance and Budget and Education Committees and then the public. There will be a public hearing on

February 2nd which will give the community an opportunity to express its thoughts on the budget. She noted that there will be difficult issues to discuss and she reviewed the protocol for discussion.

Mrs. Westcott commented on “Race to the Top”, a Federal initiative, funded through the ARRA funds. Connecticut is putting together an application. Mrs. Westcott has been in touch with other Board Chairs regarding this. The reporting requirements are very substantial and Darien already has underway a number of the initiatives supported by the program. Since Darien stands to get nothing out of this, they have decided not to submit a Memorandum of Understanding.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Mr. Fiftal thanked Mrs. Westcott for her kind words regarding his retirement.

Mr. Fiftal congratulated Richie Takasumi, a kindergartner at Holmes School, who entered a national Chess championship in Dallas, Texas for students from kindergarten through 12th grade and placed second in the nation. This child was taught by his father and he participates in a before-school Chess club sponsored by DAEG. Mr. Fiftal said this accomplishment reminds him of the unlimited potential of children.

Mr. Fiftal said that “Wreaths across America” stopped in Darien and were hosted by the VFW for supper and then came to Darien High School the next morning and parked around the high school circle for a brief ceremony. An e-mail from Charlie Gilley, a member of the Patriot Guard from Brooklyn, N.Y. said he was impressed with the behavior and level of participation and character of everyone involved at Darien High School. The dignity and respect shown by Darien High School made the visit a truly memorable experience for him, especially at a time when patriotic gestures are not always prominent. Mr. Fiftal commended the staff, including Donna Russo, Mike Sullivan, Pam Zago, Chris Andrade and Carolyn Whinnem and students who organized this effort.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DECEMBER 8, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING & EXECUTIVE SESSION

- ** MR. REILLY MOVED APPROVAL.
- ** MR. PLUTTE SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (WHITTIER).

DECEMBER 8, 2009 REGULAR MEETING

The following corrections were made: On page 2, 7th paragraph, 1st sentence, it was suggested that “Mr. Margolus” be added after “Mr. Forshaw”. On page 5, 4th paragraph, the fifth sentence was deleted. On page 7, 2nd motion, the spelling of Mr. Reilly’s name was corrected.

- ** MRS. PERTICONE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.
- ** MRS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (WHITTIER).

DECEMBER 14, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING

- ** MRS. PERTICONE MOVED APPROVAL.
- ** MRS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS (REILLY, WHITTIER).

DECEMBER 21, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING & EXECUTIVE SESSION (8:05 A.M.)

- ** MRS. SHEA MOVED APPROVAL.
- ** MRS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR ABSTENTIONS (BELL, PLUTTE, REILLY, WHITTIER).

DECEMBER 21, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING & EXECUTIVE SESSION (7:01 P.M.)

- ** MRS. SHEA MOVED APPROVAL.
- ** MRS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

CES

Mrs. Sartori said that she had attended this meeting last Thursday. They have many new representatives from area towns and they look forward to a lot of involvement.

DARIEN ENERGY TASK FORCE

Mrs. Hagerty-Ross said that this group met on December 16th. They are looking for additional volunteers. She notified this group that Mr. Plutte would be taking her place as the Board's representative.

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Mrs. Shea said that this committee met on January 8th and reviewed the budget as presented. Mr. Huot also gave a presentation on the budget format at the CDSP meeting on Thursday morning and at an evening Budget Committee meeting on Thursday.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF STADIUM LIGHTS REPORT

Mr. Fiftal reviewed his memo (File #1316).

Board members' questions and comments and responses from Administration: a) **Would we consider asking P&Z to allow us to test height differences so the neighbors and Board could see the impact of a light greater than 20 feet? We can see if that eliminates some of these concerns.** (Mr. Fiftal said that could be done. He would start by speaking with the neighbors to see what they think. There would have to be an assurance that this was not a "lights creep" situation, but one intended to try to achieve optimal conditions.) b) **I would prefer that to come from the neighbors. Mr. Fiftal has made excellent progress in working collaboratively with the neighbors.** c) **You cannot tell if height is better unless you raise the lights to see what that does.** (Mr. Fiftal said the light towers can go up to approximately 30 feet. This test is logistically possible, but it might have a psychological impact on the relationship with the neighbors.) d) **We talked about having a preliminary test night for the lights next year and perhaps that might be a time for adjusting the lights.** e) **The P&Z permit indicates we can do this for two additional years. Would this experiment jeopardize that permit?** (Mr. Fiftal said P&Z would have the say and could deny the request or they could entertain the idea. He added that it would be unlikely unless both parties agreed to the test and conditions were spelled out.)

f) **Regarding the Hygenix report, on page 5, could we have those lights lined up as they were?** (Mr. Fiftal said that could be done.) g) **On page 2 of the footnote in the Hygenix report, number two should be included. (There are two number ones.)**

Mrs. Westcott said this will be voted on at the next regular meeting so that there will be ample time for comment. With the Board's approval, Mr. Fiftal will put all of the attachments to this report on the Darien Public Schools' website prior to the Board's final vote. This will make the full report available to all so they can provide feedback. In addition, preparations will be made to arrange a time for the report to be delivered to P&Z.

Mrs. Westcott thanked Mr. Fiftal for the report and for his proactive approach in "crossing the fence" with the neighbors, and she thanked the neighbors for the time they spent coming out to the Board meetings to give their feedback during the busy holiday season.

Mr. Fiftal noted that the screening plan would come into the budget process.

INTERIM REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH-BASED INTERVENTION K-12 (DISTRICT OBJECTIVE 2.1)

Dr. Pandolfo reviewed her memo (File #1317).

Board members' comments and questions and responses from Administration: a) **I was surprised by including the behavior as part of SRBI. I thought this was about**

instruction. Isn't it difficult to evaluate, based on a quantitative model, how a person's behavior has changed? How will you track progress, other than anecdotally? (Dr. Pandolfo said behavior took a back seat for Darien because we don't have a lot of children for whom this is a problem, but there are some cases where behavior interferes with instruction. Special Education staff is a resource and they work with students. They have models they use to examine behavior; they provide interventions, reinforcement, assessment, etc.) b) **Special Education staff time is being used even though these are not special education students?** (Dr. Pandolfo said they use everything that is available to them. Dr. Falcone said they are used more for consulting.) c) **It is sensible that people work collaboratively, but I would not want to see a drain on this resource that we have to work with children with serious disabilities.** (Dr. Pandolfo noted that special education teachers work with teachers in mainstream classrooms.) d) **Are these children who might be referred to special education and this intervention might head that off?** (Dr. Pandolfo said that might be the case in some instances.) e) **Is this behavior alone or behavior that might affect their academic ability?** (Dr. Pandolfo responded affirmatively. It would be behavior that interferes with learning. The child may not be performing.)

f) **The evaluative tools are within the district? We are not buying new programs.** (Dr. Pandolfo agreed. She described a Functional Behavior Assessment and said it is available in the district. Dr. Falcone said SRBI expects that teachers not only strategize, but also record data. There have been interventions to keep children on task for example, but now it must be systematized and recorded.) g) **Can you review where we are with mandates? Is SRBI mandated? Are we ahead of the curve?** (Dr. Pandolfo said it is mandated. Dr. Falcone said it is mandated that they have a plan, and that is where they are.) h) **I do not think we need to be ahead of everyone.** (Dr. Falcone said that at the secondary level teachers need to formalize the process. It is a challenge to find a way for the teachers to use the data reporting methods and the documents.) i) **It looks as though the high school students have already been identified.** (Dr. Falcone said they have. The structure at the middle school provides for a natural oversight of the child. At the high school finding a time for a group of the child's teachers to meet to provide a plan for oversight is more of a challenge.) j) **Mr. Badway identified areas at the high school for improvement. Does it make sense to put this additional layer in given that some of the things that we have are not serving the students as well as we would like them to?** (Dr. Falcone said it is something to look at. The first step in RtI is the regular classroom teacher, not a referral to a program and they should first look at doing this within the regular education program.) k) **I am having trouble understanding how these students are identified at the high school.** (Dr. Falcone said CMT and CAPT tests are two ways they can be identified. They dig deep into sub tests This is done through teacher or guidance counselor concerns and the SST process. Issues often revolve about organizational and study skills.) l) **Does it relate back to the middle school?** (Dr. Falcone said it is all related. There should be continuity of skills developed in elementary school and refined in secondary school. Dr. Pandolfo said that when children are identified as not making progress, the school can make adjustments through school personnel who have the capability of looking at the child through different perspectives.

They are not starting from scratch. They are creating a more systematic, documented process to keep track of the effect of interventions.)

Mrs. Westcott thanked the administration for the update and said the Board would look forward to a more extensive one in the spring.

PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2010-2011

Mrs. Westcott reminded everyone of the protocol for questions during the budget process. She noted that the Public Hearing is scheduled for February 2, 2010 at Town Hall.

Mr. Fiftal made a PowerPoint presentation (File #1318).

PRESENTATION OF 2009-2010 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Huot reviewed his budget narrative (File #1319).

Board members' comments and questions and responses from Administration: a) **Despite the level of available budget, there is not a lot of money here to close that gap without substantially changing the delivery of service. It is not our intention to do that. We will likely look to reserves or ARRA funds to close the gap.** b) **We are budgeting very carefully. The Budget Subcommittee is watching this very closely and is now meeting monthly.**

ACTION ITEMS

APPROVAL OF BOARD MASTER AGENDA – FEBRUARY-AUGUST 2010

Mr. Fiftal reviewed the document (File #1320).

Further discussion took place, and it was decided that the Special Education Report would remain on the agenda on April 27th.

Board members' comments and questions and responses from Administration: a) **I would start with adding discussion of SRBI now that behavior is included.** b) **I agree. It seems to come up in the community. There is frustration when behavior issues take over in a classroom and the learning does not happen.** c) **It is hard to document behavior and now you are trying to do that. We should discuss what is behavior versus special needs and Special Education is.** d) **We need to flesh this out a little. Maybe this should come up for discussion outside of SRBI.** (Mr. Fiftal said he would come back to the Board. Dr. Falcone said that behavior is not a dominant issue with SRBI. Dr. Pandolfo said it is part of the SRBI process; it is not a problem.)

**** MRS. PERTICONE MOVED TO APPROVE THE BOARD MASTER AGENDA – FEBRUARY-AUGUST 2010.**

- ** MRS. BELL SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADOPTION OF REVISED K-5 GENERAL MUSIC CURRICULUM (DISTRICT OBJECTIVE 2.9)

- ** MR. PLUTTE MOVED TO ADOPT THE REVISED K-5 GENERAL MUSIC CURRICULUM. (File #1302)
- ** MRS. PERTICONE SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADOPTION OF MUSIC TECH II CURRICULUM (DISTRICT OBJECTIVE 2.5)

- ** MRS. BELL MOVED TO ADOPT THE MUSIC TECH II CURRICULUM. (File #1303)
- ** MRS. SARTORI SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADOPTION OF MANDARIN CHINESE III CURRICULUM (DISTRICT OBJECTIVE 2.3)

- ** MR. WHITTIER MOVED TO ADOPT THE MANDARIN CHINESE III CURRICULUM. (File #1304)
- ** MRS. PERTICONE SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

TEACHING APPOINTMENTS FOR 2009-10 (FILE #1321).

- ** MRS. PERTICONE MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF KRISTEN LEDENKO, GRADE 1, HOLMES SCHOOL.
- ** MRS. SARTORI SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS (CONT'D)

DISCUSSION OF PERSONNEL, OPERATING AND EQUIPMENT 2010-2011 PROPOSED BUDGETS OF: MUSIC (RC13), PHYSICAL EDUCATION (RC11), DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL (RC01)

Members of the Board of Education and Administration reviewed and discussed the 2010 -2011 Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

DISCUSSION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO DESIGNATE THE FULL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERSHIP AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO ACT AS THE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE

Mrs. Westcott said that the Board would soon begin the search process for a new superintendent. Search firms will be identified and interviewed. The Board may wish to discuss whether or not it wishes to designate the full board as a search committee this evening or discuss tonight and make the decision at a later time.

**** MR. WHITTIER MOVED TO DESIGNATE THE FULL DARIEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERSHIP AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO ACT AS THE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE.**

**** MRS. HAGERTY - ROSS SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. WHITTIER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MRS. PERTICONE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clara C. Sartori

Secretary

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