

**APPROVED
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
November 24, 2015**

PLACE:

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Harman, Chair; Mesdames Hagerty-Ross, Stein, Zuro, Sullivan and McNamara; and Messrs. Dineen, Martens and Burke.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Dan Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susie DaSilva, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services; Mr. Michael Feeney, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources.

VISITORS:

Approximately 25.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harman called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. He said the next Regular BOE meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, December 8, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Meeting Room. Mr. Harman said that the weather report was positive for the Turkey Bowl and he wished everyone a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one who wished to address the Board at this time.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Brenner said that Mr. Christopher Buckley, a Darien High School teacher had the opportunity to do a presentation at the National Association of Social Studies Teachers on the interdisciplinary classroom. Ms. Cory Gillette also gave a recent presentation at the National Council of Teachers of English on word study.

He congratulated the Girls Swim team on winning the State Championship. He also mentioned both the girls and boys field hockey and soccer teams have performed well during the season. Finally, the middle school students are returning from their Nature's Classroom trip.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Town of Darien
Darien Board of Education
Regular Meeting
November 24, 2015

November 10, 2015 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- ** MR. MARTENS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

November 10, 2015 Organizational Meeting

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING.**
- ** MS. SULLIVAN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

November 10, 2015 Regular Meeting

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 REGULAR MEETING.**
- ** MS. ZURO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 REGULAR MEETING PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Harman said that he had attended the OPC meeting and congratulated Mr. Jon Zagrodzky on his election to the chairmanship of the BOF. Mr. Harman explained that the parcel that might have been affordable residential units has been changed. According to Planning and Zoning that site will be self storage.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

A. PRESENTATION OF UPDATED SIX YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

Mr. Lynch came forward and briefly reviewed the rubrics that are used to prioritize the various capital projects as outlined in his memo dated November 15, 2015 and the hard copy of the PowerPoint presentation. (Files # 2430, 2431)

• Darien High School

Mr. Lynch spoke about the capital plans for Darien High School. He noted that if funding is approved, the work on the turf field surface change was actually scheduled to happen in 2017, not 2016.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Regarding the replacement of the turf baseball field in 2018-2019, I wonder if the District could consider the infield with dirt rather than the all turf field. Is there a way to find a way to make the field better since the project is so far out.** (Mr. Lynch

said it could be done. The firm that is being used is the firm that had done all the drainage and turf work on that parcel since the new High School was built. They are the ones who are most familiar with the drainage patterns. Dr. Brenner said that one major consideration would be how the field is currently utilized. Once the stadium is finished, the usage pattern will change.) b) **Why is the track listed as number 2?** (Mr. Lynch explained that the field won't be completed until the summer of 2017. He said that the track cannot be repaired or replaced until the field is done.) c) **Will the replacement turf be the same kind of turf that the DAF oval fields are?** (Mr. Lynch said it had been specified in the bid that it be the same kind of field turf.)

• **Middlesex Middle School**

Mr. Lynch then spoke about the capital plans for Middlesex Middle School.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Why wouldn't the Master Clock replacement be a Number 1 Priority? It is frustrating to have every clock have different times. I would encourage you to make this a Priority 1.** (Mr. Lynch said that the project would be moved up to a Priority 1.) b) **Do you have the flagpole on the schedule?** (Mr. Lynch said that the purchase order had been issued and they were just waiting on the contractor.)

• **Hindley Elementary School**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the various projects listed for Hindley Elementary School, including moving the main offices, and the nurse's office closer to the front entry way.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Have the specs been done for moving the offices?** (Mr. Lynch said that an RFP had been issued for an architect.) b) **How urgent is this move?** (Dr. Brenner said that this was more about security. He gave a brief overview of the current layout of the school and the proposed layout. The best practice model would have the principal's office and the administration near the front entrance.) c) **Have you spoken to the energy people about reimbursements for the windows for security?** (Mr. Lynch said that they don't give rebates on thermal windows.)

• **Holmes Elementary School**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for Holmes, including the replacement of the sidewalk along Hoyt Street and the replacement of the sealed windows on the second floor with windows that open.

• **Ox Ridge Elementary School**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for Ox Ridge.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Is the gym floor a priority 2 because it is still usable?** (Mr. Lynch said that it was still usable. It is damaged but is not getting worse and not unsafe. Dr. Brenner said that when the Milone and MacBroom study is done, the Board may want to revisit the project.)

• **Royle Elementary School**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for Royle, which included larger radiators and replacing the library windows.

• **Tokeneke Elementary School**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for Tokeneke.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Could you elaborate on putting light controls in the hallway? Do other schools have that?** (Mr. Lynch explained that the school has window walls on the north side of the building, along with the library and cafeteria. During the day, the lights could be dimmed so the sunshine would light the areas. It would save energy.)

• **Central Office**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for Central Office, including insulation and the skylight.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Why was the slate chosen for the roof?** (Mr. Lynch explained the district would have to get a special permit or variance to change the roof to asphalt shingles because it changes the appearance of the building. Otherwise, the District would just need a building permit to replace the slate.) b) **Do we have a break out of what the basement windows would be? We don't have control of the basement. We have to delineate the costs separately because that is a Town cost.** (Okay.)

• **District Wide Capital Projects**

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed capital plan for the District Wide projects.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **On the priority 2 at Holmes with the windows, is there a way to get cooler air into elementary schools and Middlesex?** (Mr. Lynch said that the electricity in the elementary schools have very small electrical services, with the exception of Holmes and Tokeneke. He gave a quick overview of the details. There is a student who requires an air conditioner in a room, so the staff moves the window air conditioner from room to room. But in order to do this, they have to disconnect the electric outlet in the previous location so that no one else will use it. There is just not enough electricity in the building. Middlesex has air conditioning on the third floor, in the library and in the offices. Dr. Brenner reminded everyone that the buildings were never built to run as many computers as the District has or having air conditioning.) b) **What kind of cost are we talking about?** (Dr. Brenner said that at his former district it cost 8 million to do three elementary schools and one high school for the second floor and common spaces on the first floor. Mr. Lynch pointed out that each building would require a transformer and wiring up all the spaces is labor intensive. It is also an on-going cost because of the monthly demand costs.) c) **When the M&M study is presented, the Board might decide to make some larger changes in the schools. Then this might be part of the process.** (Mr. Harman pointed out that this was the initial proposal and the discussion should be held after the December 8th meeting.)

B. PRESENTATION ON TECHNOLOGY IN THE DARIEN SCHOOLS

Dr. Brenner then narrated a PowerPoint presentation. (File #2432) Dr. Brenner reminded everyone that a roll out time line had been created and that the goal was to have the computers in the students' hands that they are using. The goal is to make sure that the District makes the best use of their assets.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Will there be filters and limits on the amount of work for the students?** (Dr. Brenner said that it was about working smarter, not working longer. These will give them more flexibility and efficiency. I would not support something that would give them more stress.) b) **I like the idea that all the students will have a level of technology to all the students and they will be using the same type of computer and the same operating level. I also hope it will erode some of the barriers where a student says "I did this at home, but can't print it out here."** (Dr. Brenner said that there was a level of accountability that will come with the computers. There will definitely be equality. He added that he had not arrived in the District with a positive feeling about the Chromebooks, but his opinion has changed recently.) c) **More information on the pilot that will start in January for the teachers. As for the one to ones for the fourth graders in April, will they be taking them home?** (Dr. Brenner said that the students would be taking them home. It is the administration's understanding that it will be easier to manage a small group and is a learning experience for the staff and administration. There is a learning curve for us.) d) **Do we need to buy more? Is it in the budget? Is this existing stock?** (Dr. Brenner said that this was in the budget. It is not in existing stock. The Professional Development will be done internally, in Central Office with teachers who volunteer.) e) **Will the existing programs continue?** (Dr. Brenner said that the current programs will continue. With the Chromebooks, the PD will move fairly fast.) f) **We've seen the power of this equipment in school and out of school. How does this align with Special Education? Is it part of Special Education? How do we bring this personally to the students with disabilities? I've seen what an iPad can do for someone with disabilities.** (Dr. Brenner said that there has been technology purchased for the Special Education students already. The pilot classes have been chosen and there are Special Education students in those classes. There are some Special Education students that might do better with an iPad with specific apps that might be more appropriate for some Special Education students rather than a Chromebook, but the goal is to have the technology for all the students regardless of whether they have special needs or not. The assumption is that this will serve them in a major way.) g) **I was going to ask how much this was going to cost but Google has a full suite of educational learning on site, which is all free. It's a massive site.** (Dr. Brenner said that there may be occasions when the administration brings in people to teach the staff, but the emphasis would be to improve the skills. The administration will also be using the Google suite. The goal is to acquire knowledge through the professional learning groups.) h) **In this type of PD would it make sense to do it through online testing and online courses?** (Dr. Brenner said that the online testing will work for those who are interested, but the resisters will need more hand holding. Successful PD is determined by those participants who are most resistant but overcome their fears. We don't want the students sitting in the classes and not using the computers. It's not that the teachers don't want to do the right thing, but that they are afraid.) i) **What are you going to do about the parents who say, "My child has their own device?"** (Dr. Brenner pointed out that the District would not own the device and therefore could not support it. The District will be able to control their devices and support them, but not the ones that are privately owned. It will be important not to create an unsafe environment for the students, particularly the younger ones. As they grow older, we will give them more freedom, but for the youngest students, we will have to lock those down.) j) **Having gone through the technology plan, the problem is that there is so much that can be done with spacing out and scheduling. It needs to be rolled out carefully.** (Dr. Brenner said that this did not appear to be an aggressive schedule. The administration has every intention of holding to it.)

C. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF PRELIMINARY MAJOR BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2016-2017

- World Languages Update.

Dr. DaSilva then gave an overview of the World Language Program as outlines in the PowerPoint presentation. (File #2433)

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **What becomes the base of your sixth grade curriculum for Spanish versus French?** (Dr. DaSilva explained that there had not been a discussion about adding a second language at the elementary level. Once we study this and understand the impacts it would have on the middle school. Dr. Brenner said that the choice of the language predates the current administration. But when different languages are used, it requires tracking and pulling students out into groups. However, you are correct in that we need to discuss offering different languages in middle school.) b) **Secondly, once you get into 7th and 8th grade, the students start to develop different aptitude in foreign language. If a student showed aptitude in a language, is that something you are going to be investigating as the program moves forward? Would there be different levels in the same classroom?** (Dr. DaSilva said that the teachers work hard at differentiation in all the classes and that would be true for World Languages. There are many opportunities to do that. Dr. Brenner said that once the students reach high school, then there are more opportunities for acceleration. In middle school, the question is how many students are accelerating. However, writing skills and oral skills become very different, so there is room for challenging work. Dr. DaSilva said that the increase in time will allow the students to have more opportunities to explore.) c) **Does the proposal also include five days of French for sixth grade?** (Yes.) d) **When you start looking into the Elementary curriculum more, what is the value that is there when a student changes from Spanish to French in the sixth grade? Is there a correlation or would the student's time be better spent learning something else?** (Dr. DaSilva said that having one language makes transferring the second language easier to acquire.) e) **You've spoken a lot about elementary, however there are also major concerns about high school and how high school languages are being taught. Right now, 6th and 7th grade have Spanish 1. Are we going to look at how the curriculum will be accelerated and what changes will be made in the curriculum for Grades 6, 7, 8 and 9? And to the previous question, will accelerated studies be offered?** (Dr. DaSilva said that it was part of the work that was underway. There will be different levels, but it is hard to determine what the impact has been from the elementary levels, which is only in its fourth year. The first full group of students has not yet transitioned. The teachers were also in the early stages of writing the curriculum and had to work backwards. And in the interest of transparency, it's important to look at the frequency for K-2 with one 45 minute session. It will be important to analyze whether having two sessions that are shorter would be better because of the attention span. These classes don't have the written component, so the receptive skills and expressive skills grow. Dr. Brenner pointed out that this was not about pushing students into AP classes, but about giving the students opportunities if they chose to go in that direction. The administration needs to make sure there is a bridge between 5th grade and 6th grade and 8th grade to 9th grade, so the students don't get lost in the curriculum. This means there will be a check point at those times that will later allow the students to choose if they want to take AP French or Spanish or whatever they chose.) f) **It will be interesting to see what the solution is as far as what the scheduling will eliminate with the increased world language time.** (Dr. Brenner said that it would be less than everyone thinks.)

- Copier Solution

The discussion then moved to a presentation of copier issues. (File #2434) Dr. Brenner then reviewed the various costs associated with making copies on the various types of copiers/printers. He gave an overview of the tentative plan to replace the desktop copiers and printer with a centralized, high quality printer in a central location.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **It will be interesting to see how much time will be saved by going paperless in the District and how much money is saved by not delivering paper copies to the Board members. Second, as you put copy limits on the teachers and monitoring it, I hope that students' homes won't be turned into copy centers.** (Dr. Brenner said that when his former district gave iPads to students, there were concerns about people making copies at home. However, it turned out that the need to print out was significantly less.)

D. REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON FIVE YEAR BUDGET PROJECTIONS

Mr. Feeney said that the District maintains a five year budget projection based on a number of assumptions. He reviewed the information contained in the memo dated November 19, 2015 and the associated PowerPoint presentation. (Files # 2435, 2436)

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Within the fixed costs, the 2017-2018 increase is 9%. Why?** (Mr. Feeney said that this was due to the projected health care costs. He reviewed the figures. All the outlying year increases will be health insurance and it is a national concern.) Mr. Feeney then presented the projected reviews including the ELP program, Summer School, rentals and cost sharing with the Board members. OPEB is an unknown factor since the State has not released their figures to the District at this time.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **The Special Education is the Excess Cost Reimbursement that is driven down by the eligibility percentages?** (Yes.) b) **The Board is required to approve this and forward the approved project to the Board of Finance.** (Mr. Feeney added that this was where the projected enrollment report comes into play. He said the enrollment was expected to remain stable but there would be some variations in the numbers of sections required for the students.)

**** MS. SULLIVAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED FIVE YEAR BUDGET PROJECTIONS AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. ADOPTION OF PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE 2016-2017 BUDGET

Mr. Harman said that there had been a change in the budget meeting schedule. There would be a meeting on Saturday, January 9th to review all the RCs and this will be followed by the regular meetings on the 12th and 26th. (File #2437)

**** MR. MARTENS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE 2016-2017 BUDGET.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

F. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON CHANGES TO THE SCHEDULE OF REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS FOR THE 2016 CALENDAR YEAR

Dr. Brenner pointed out that there were conflicts with some dates. (File #2438)

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Regarding the primary election date, couldn't the Board meet at one of the schools?** (Dr. Brenner said that the videotaping would not be available.) b) **Would it be possible to video tape at Town Hall?** (Dr. Brenner said that having the meeting at the high school auditorium might be a possibility.) c) **It would be a good opportunity to have a meeting in one of the schools.** (Dr. Brenner said that in the past, he was accustomed to having Board meetings in each one of his school buildings for the same reason, but his former District did not videotape the meetings. That would have to be researched in terms of whether it was feasible.)

ACTION ITEMS

PERSONNEL ITEMS (File #2439)

i. Teacher/Administrator Appointment

ii. Resignations

**** MS. STEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATION AS PRESENTED IN THE MEMO OF NOVEMBER 16, 2015.**

**** MR. MARTENS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jack Davis of Greenwood Avenue, came forward to address the Board. He said that the technology plan was very good. He hoped that eventually there would be a technology program that would allow the home bound students to participate in classes. In law school, the professors only see the test identification numbers rather than a student's name. Therefore the professor is grading the paper, not the student. With the students having Chromebooks, would this be possible in the future? Finally, while there are many filtering controls, how does the District plan to insure that the work that is being done at home is actually the student's work rather than the parent's?

On the language side, he said he appreciated that the schedule is still being adjusted and may reduce the free time; adding two periods of instructions will require taking away two period of something else. They may not be an off set of FTEs for what is being removed. He said he knew it was a budget matter and was just putting it out for consideration. Mr. Davis said that he was ecstatic regarding the reconfiguration of the copier policy.

He requested the Board to reconsider the one day workshop resolution on the 9th because it would be virtually impossible for either of the two RTM committees to come back on the 12th with valuable comments. While Mr. Davis said he could only speak as the F&B Committee Chair, in the past the Committee would have come back with their comments on the 26th. If this was changed, F&B would be fine because it's the Board of Finance that would determine the direction, whereas F&B gets into the nuts and bolts. He requested that this be adjusted at the next Board meeting. If it was adjusted, Mr. Davis said that he would be happy. Changing the meeting to the Monday before Thanksgiving might be a problem since that is the RTM Organizational Meeting. This would be a critical meeting for the RTM members.

Ms. Lois Schneider of Maywood Road, came forward and said that as vice chair of the RTM Education Committee she also objects to the fact that the Committee did not know this was going to be on the agenda. She said that the Committee objects to having to speak on the various budget items only two days after having initially hearing it.

Ms. Schneider said that she had been around the Board of Education for a considerable amount of time and seeing the Board pass something without considering the impact it may have on other people because they can't make comments until the Public Comment portion, which happened after the Board passed the item was very offensive. She said that she needed to say that to the Board. There are times when the Education Committee may have information that the Board had not considered. She said that she felt it was very difficult that the RTM members could not say anything until after the item was approved. Ms. Schneider requested that the Board consider this.

Mr. Seth Morton of Denhurst Place, from RTM District 3, said that he had spent time in BOE budget meetings and had been the Chairman of F&B in the past. One of the key elements has been the dialogs between the Board and the RTM Committees during the process. That is where all the questions are asked and where the Board receives valuable input from elected officials. Mr. Morton was concerned about the action taken tonight which would cut down on the dialog. This could end up with the RTM Committee members making recommendations that the Board may feel were arriving unreasonable. Because there will be very little dialog, the Committee members may arrive at different conclusions.

Ms. Wendy Ward of Stanley Road, came forward to speak regarding Google docs and the Chrome technology program, which was awesome. Her child's fourth grade teacher sent home a Google document that informed her students that there was valuable information and other information that was not valuable. The document encouraged the students to ask for help when they encountered questionable information. She said that she had a photo of the document and suggested the administration consider adopting it for the technology program. She then spoke about how her child's class was able to organize a surprise party for their teacher by using Google docs. It was an excellent exercise in team work.

Ms. Theresa Vogt of Circle Road, came forward and said that she liked the copier proposal. Her child's science binder may have been half of the cost of the copier costs. In the middle school, she said that it looked like the teachers were not using the hard bound science text or social science, but hand outs in a binder. Will this affect future text book purchases?

Ms. Jill McCammon of Old Kings Highway South, came forward and said that while she was excited that technology was being used, she expressed concerns about handwriting, particularly at the elementary level. Handwriting is involved in working memory. She said that she would like to understand more about this.

She then asked how it would be handled when a student did need to print out an assignment or for those students who had dysgraphia. Dr. Brenner said that the student would be able to print it out at the Copy Center. He said that accommodations would be made for students who need it. There would be a developmental phase for the use of the copiers as the transition moves forward.

Ms. Stacey Tie of Clocks Lane, said that she had previously commented that there were discrepancies in the ELP sections on March 25th. The information had not been updated in the enrollment project earlier in the evening. Dr. Brenner made a note of it.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro
Secretary