

**APPROVED
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
December 8, 2015**

PLACE:

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Martens.

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 7:43 p.m. He said there would be a Special Meeting of the Board of Education on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Meeting Room. The next Regular BOE meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Harman thanked everyone for coming to the last BOE meeting of the calendar year. He said that he had presented the Annual State of the Town Report to the RTM the previous day. He said that Milone and MacBroom had been expected to present their findings regarding the school facilities utilization plan and a proposed plan of action. However, that meeting has been postponed to January. It is expected that their recommendations may include a capital expenditure or major facility project. On behalf of the Board of Education, Mr. Harman wished all those present happy holidays.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Brenner said that he had also attended the State of the Town meeting. He wished Mr. Burke a Happy Birthday, along with Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Stein. He also wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 24, 2015 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- ** MS. SULLIVAN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 24, 2015 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- ** MS. STEIN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 24, 2015 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

November 24, 2015 Regular Meeting

- ** MR. DINEEN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 24, 2015 REGULAR MEETING.**
- ** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 24, 2015 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget Committee – Ms. Hagerty-Ross stated that the Budget Committee met on Dec. 3rd and reviewed the budget transfers that will be presented later in the meeting for approval.

Ms. Hagerty-Ross reported that she and Ms. Stein attended the State of Town meeting. She congratulated Mr. Harman on presenting his first report and thanked him for an excellent presentation.

Mr. Harman said that he attended a Fairfield County Superintendents Association meeting on December 4th with Dr. Brenner. There was a discussion with various legislators about having the SAT as an alternative to the SBAC. He said that the financial state of Hartford was also discussed and there were various issues that will have an impact on Darien.

PRESENTATIONS/ DISCUSSIONS

A. ANNUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

Ms. Klein then introduced herself, Dr. Scott McCarthy, SESS Program Director; and Ms. Laura Straiton, the Early Childhood Program Director.

Ms. Straiton then narrated a PowerPoint program (File #2440)

Board comments and questions and Administration's responses: a) **To clarify about the Districtwide Professional Development Training, does that include the individuals who would be involved in the Tier 2**

and 3 SRBI, or just focus on the Special Education staff? (Dr. DaSilva said the staff is involved with the district wide SRBI training, with a focus on the elementary schools this year. She gave examples of which staff members were involved in the SRBI specialist training from the various schools. The interventionists are also being given the same kind of training as the Special Educators are receiving so they understand the SRBI intervention practices that are being used so they can provide support as needed.) b) **Is there anything beyond Orton-Gillingham Training that you found helpful?** (Dr. DaSilva said that they were going to start training in math intervention for SRBI. She outlined how this would be handled.) c) **Going back to the beginning, co-taught classes, when this was originally presented, we gave up 10 Special Education aides for 5 Special Education teachers. Each one of the elementary schools was intended to have co-taught classes in each one of the schools. Has there been a philosophical change in some point in time or is it IEP driven?** (Ms. Klein said that currently it was IEP driven. She said she did not know about the other changes. Dr. Brenner said that he would review this and report back to the Board.) d) **I am trying to understand all of the acronyms. So a student could be in DLC in Ox Ridge and then go to Middlesex and into ALC. Then that student would go on into EXCEL in the high school? (Yes.)** e) **In the ELP program, do we see the students that will go to DLC or do we get a lot of newcomers? And how do we deal with that? And at end, are the students staying in EXCEL until they are 21?** (Ms. Klein said she would answer the last part of the question first and then defer the other questions to Ms. Straiton. Ms. Klein explained that depending on the students, some students could stay through 21, but the staff has been looking at transitional planning. She listed some of the various opportunities for the students beyond high school. Ms. Straiton said that ELP is not a direct link to DLC. It is an option. DLC does offer a select few students a more intensive program. There are some students who need a more intensive program and the students are chosen through the IPP and team processes.) f) **Are there students in DLC who were not in ELP?** (Ms. Straiton said that there were always surprises and new people do move into the district. Dr. Brenner said that the program has been in place for a number of years and the tracking will help with understanding how the students progress.) g) **Have we heard about any Universal Pre-K and State or Federal mandates?** (Dr. Brenner said that he did not expect that this would happen in the near future because of the State Budget and did not think the Federal government would push this.) h) **With the concept of best practices, you came up with a number of comments about mentoring. What should be the expectation about the relationship between the mentor and the students?** (Dr. Brenner said that the administration hopes the idea of setting up multiple opportunity for the students to have a relationship with a mentor would be a positive thing. High school students are not normally anxious to sit down and have a relationship with adults, so it has to be an adult who takes the time to sit down and relate to these students in a specific way. Some adults are better at that than others, so there will be varying degrees of success. One thing the administration wants to insure is that there are no surprises at home. In the past, there was a lack of communication in this area. He repeated that not everyone has the same skill set and that there had not been a great deal of training on how to do that.) i) **I would like to see how this works out as we move forward into next year because it is an important piece. If the student is having these conversations with their mentors in the hallway or cafeteria and building a relationship, maybe the parent conversations won't happen as much. I think we need to focus on this aspect because we need to insure the mentor reaches out to our students.** (Dr. Brenner said that it was a work in progress. The administrators are managing the relationship between the case manager and the mentor. The system has improved, but it isn't perfect yet.) j) **You acknowledged that the teachers are signing off they read the IEP and understand the goals. What happens when the goals of the IEP are not delivered? What is being done at the administrative levels at the schools? What is the protocol and follow up?** (Ms. Klein said that the team will go back to the PPT and IEP. Having the PPT regularly helps when something is missed, it can be responded to.) k) **I know we are reviewing the co-taught classes. I want to make sure that we are aware of the mix in the classroom. It will be important to have a good mix. We need to review the upcoming second semester so that the teachers are not overwhelmed with too many students in a class. I want to make sure that everyone is getting the right services.** (Ms. Klein said that they were mindful of this.) l) **I know there are elementary**

classes purposefully put together where there are no IEP students. What are your thoughts on that? (Dr. Brenner said that won't happen.) m) **I would like to know how the Special Education testing is handled in elementary, middle and high school. I want to understand how the students are experiencing their tests, not only the SBAC or the achievement tests. I don't know how many Special Education students are tested.** (Dr. Brenner said that the Special Education students do take the same tests as the regular students with modifications. They also have tri-annual testing. He added that the administration was investigating different ways to ease the burden of taking the exams with modifications. There have been discussions about how to make it less disruptive for the students.) n) **I would like to understand the tri-annual testing.** (Ms. Klein then listed a number of tests used for evaluation and eligibilities. All the students participate in the SBACs except the students who are not able to take the tests because of significant disabilities.) o) **What about the students in DLC taking as a standardized test? Is it the SBAC, or a tri-annual test? What kinds of measurements are being used from the beginning of the year to the end?** (Dr. Brenner said that the DLC students do take the SBAC.) p) **On the universal assessments, will we get an update on that in January?** (Dr. DaSilva said that in terms of student performance, there were different points to consider. Because of the training, the District will be giving the Universal testing three times a year. This year it will be given twice because of the training involved. This particular screener will be changing platforms next year. It is important to have a universal screener, but there will be changes. Next year and the year after, the tracking data will be more accurate and we will understand more where our strengths and weaknesses are.)

B. APPROVAL OF UPDATED SIX YEAR CAPITAL PLAN (FILE #2441)

Dr. Brenner said that they had expected to have the Milone and MacBroom study, but the study has been delayed. He added that if the Board wished, the Plan could be updated after the Milone and MacBroom presentation.

- ** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE UPDATED SIX YEAR CAPITAL PLAN AS PRESENTED.**
- ** MS. SULLIVAN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. REPORT ON 2015-2016 DISTRICT BUDGET AND ACTION ON BUDGET TRANSFERS

Mr. Feeney then gave a broad overview of the items discussed at the Budget Committee meeting. (Files #2442, 2443, 2444) Mr. Harman explained that the Board had discussed the budget and the proposed transfers at the Committee meeting.

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2015-2016 DISTRICT BUDGET REPORT AND BUDGET TRANSFERS AS PRESENTED.**
- ** MS. ZURO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

Dr. Brenner reviewed the changes in the calendar (File #2445) with the Board.

- ** MS. ZURO MOVED TO APPROVE THE CHANGES TO THE SCHEDULE OF REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS FOR THE 2016 CALENDAR YEAR.**

- ** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. UPDATE MASTER AGENDA

Dr. Brenner reviewed the details of the Master Agenda with the Board. Mr. Harman noted that the major changes were the rescheduling of one meeting on the 9th and the Milone and MacBroom presentation. (File # 2446)

Board comments and questions and Administration's responses: a) **Why is the Safe School Climate Plan listed as "to be rescheduled"?** (Dr. Brenner said that the Administration was unclear as to whether this was a yearly requirement. He noted that it had been presented to the Board last year. While there have been updates to the plan, Dr. Brenner said that the Administration was focused on the Milone and MacBroom study rather than the Safe School Plan. However, he would be happy to present the Board with an update. Dr. DaSilva said that each school has a Safe School Climate team with meetings scheduled. The plan procedures have been implemented. In New York, Dr. Brenner said while they do inform the Board that the plan has been updated, but they do not release the plan to the general public, as per the legislation. Mr. Harman said that the updates that are presented are summaries of the actions that have taken place.) b) **I would like to have an update to understand and to insure that the meetings are taking place and that people are aware of where they should go in case of an event.** (Dr. Brenner said that he would prepare a summary update for the Board. There have been discussions about drills for the emergency teams.)

F. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dr. Brenner said that there has been a strong emphasis on getting procedures in place and providing professional development. In Darien, Special Education is a big job. The Administration needs more support in the office and the staff is recommending the creation of a new position. There will be no additional costs because the funds will be shifted from positions that will not be filled. The PPTs are being done but one more staff member is needed. He requested that the Board approve the creation of the position at no additional cost.

Board comments and questions and Administration's responses: a) **How will this role be different from the elementary SESS facilitators?** (Dr. Brenner said that this position was separate and distinct from the SESS facilitators. There is no plan to remove the elementary SESS facilitators. This is a staff member who will be helping to build the program for K-12.)

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CREATION OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR.**
- ** MS. MCNAMARA SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ACTION ITEMS

A. PERSONNEL ITEMS

i. Teacher/Administrator Appointments

Ms. Cion informed the Board that the only appointment that was being presented for approval was for Wynter Williams at this time. (File #2447)

**** MS. SULLIVAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF WYNTER WILLIAMS.
** MS. MCNAMARA SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ii. Resignations.

There were no resignations to consider at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Courtney Darby, Old Parish Road, came forward to address the Board regarding the programs at the middle school. She urged the Board to take a close look at ALC programs because it appears that they are classes, not full programs. There are many times that the students do not move from ALC to DLC. It is important to stay focused on the point of special education, which is individual students getting what they need. The students shouldn't be grouped in programs because the students are all different. Take a close look at the co-taught classes because the middle school classes currently don't have typical peers. This is where the separation begins. She added she thought it would be helpful for parents to clarify the roles of the two program directors and how they are different from the facilitators.

Ms. Jill McCammon, Old Kings Highway South, came forward to ask how the District will know that the Special Education program was successful. How are their outcomes being measured through the academic year? It would be important to know they are prepared for their next steps. Ms. McCammon said that Dr. Brenner had spoken about graduation rates for college. She wanted to know how Dr. Brenner could verify that students were prepared for college.

Ms. Tara Ochman, Mansfield Avenue, said that what we are hearing from the teachers and administrators at Ox Ridge is that the gym floor is significantly warped and the teachers are teaching around the floors. She asked the Board and Administration to consider changing the capital project priority ranking on the floor.

Ms. Catherine Piorkowski, Old Kings Highway North, said that there was a significant amount of changes about goals and training. It sounds like the goals and objectives will look different in the future. If so, the parents need to be told about this and what the differences are.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MS. ZURO SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro
Secretary

Town of Darien
Darien Board of Education
Regular Meeting
December 8, 2015