

Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut

April 27, 2016

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, April 27, 2016, in the School Administration Building.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Mr. Keune, Chairperson.

Present were: Messrs. Keune, McNamar, Purcaro, Young and Blanchette; Mesdames Kiff-Judson, Hayes and Socha; Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services; Dr. Erin McGurk, Director of Educational Services; and Daniel Joy, Student Representative. Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Picard-Wambolt were absent.

Also in attendance were Mr. Neil Rinaldi, Principal, Ellington High School; Mr. David Pearson, Principal, Ellington Middle School; Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology; Mr. Robert Butler, Director of Facilities; Ms. Jen Reynolds, Literacy Specialist, Ellington Middle School; and Mr. William Prenetta, English/Language Arts Teacher, Ellington High School.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM

No one addressed the Board.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Keune asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the consent agenda. As there were no objections, Consent Agenda items one through twelve were adopted.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the March 23, 2016 Regular Board Meeting.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the April 20, 2016 Brainstorming Session.
3. Acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$1,000 from the Connecticut Street Rod Association for the Ellington High School Technology Education classes.
4. Acceptance of the resignation of Joanne Smith, preschool teacher, Center School, effective March 30, 2016.
5. Acceptance of the resignation of Michele Glassner, Secretary II, Administration Building, effective May 27, 2016.

6. Acceptance of the employment of Jason Lee as a long-term grade 3 substitute teacher at Center School, effective April 27, 2016.
7. Approval of the employment of Tonya Magnuson as a preschool teacher at Center School, effective August 29, 2016.
8. Approval of the employment of Diana Stoianov as a school psychologist at Crystal Lake School/Ellington Middle School, effective August 29, 2016.
9. Approval of the employment of Kristine O'Donnell as a special education teacher at Windermere School, effective August 29, 2016.
10. Approval of the employment of Brianne Malone as a literacy specialist at Crystal Lake School, effective August 29, 2016.
11. Approval of the employment of Melissa Scarbrough as a French teacher at Ellington High School, effective August 29, 2016.
12. Approval of the employment of Anne Vernier as a preschool teacher at Center School, effective August 29, 2016.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Special Reports

Presentation of Ellington Friend of Education Award

Mr. Keune presented the Ellington Friend of Education Award to two important individuals. They were honored for their contributions to the school district. First, Mr. Pearson introduced Mr. Bruce Warkentin, who received the Ellington Friends of Education Award for his leadership in support of Veterans' Day activities, the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest, and the town Memorial Day ceremony. Second, Mr. Rinaldi and Mr. Prenetta introduced Mr. Robert Williams, who received the Ellington Friends of Education Award for his years of tireless volunteer work in support of the drama programs at Ellington High School. Mr. Keune offered congratulations to both individuals on behalf of the entire Board and thanked them for their valuable contributions to Ellington Public Schools.

Recognition of CAS Principal of the Year – Mr. Pearson

Dr. Nicol recognized Mr. David Person for being named the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Middle School Principal of the Year. Dr. Nicol praised Mr. Pearson as an individual who embodies a professional and continual learning process that he

shares with his teachers, staff, and students with innovation and leadership in the district.

Regular Board Committee Reports

Communications Committee

Mrs. Kiff-Judson stated that the Communications Committee met on April 5, 2016. They discussed Board of Education social media accounts that have been set up on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. They also discussed designs for the new school district logo. Regarding the budget, Ms. Kiff-Judson reported on the budget timeline, speakers for public forums, communication with the public, and information sessions.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee held two meetings, one on March 29, 2016 and one on April 6, 2016. At the March 29 meeting, Ms. Kaminsky, from Brown & Brown Insurance (broker), provided an overview of ConnectiCare's (carrier) final health insurance rates to the committee. She explained the process taken to get to the rates, which included the Board of Education's and the school administration's persistent negotiating efforts. The process also included the recent negotiation efforts with collective bargaining units. These efforts have resulted in achieving an overall -1.56% health insurance rate decrease as compared to the current fiscal year.

Dr. Nicol and the committee discussed the most prudent manner in which to proceed taking into consideration the school district's tradition of and desire to propose fiscally conservative budget increases for the 2016-2017 school year and beyond.

Discussions centered on the Board's maintenance of effort (MOE) teaching positions that were funded through the Board's budget during the 2015-2016 school year, yet were to be funded through Hartford Choice grant monies for the 2016-2017 school year. It is the contention of Dr. Nicol that the current health insurance savings could not have been anticipated and that if it was those positions would have remained in the Board's budget for the 2016-2017 school year.

At the second meeting on April 6, the committee discussed the progression of the Board of Education's budget in conjunction with the Town's budget process. Dr. Nicol informed the committee that he has communicated to Mr. Bob Clements, Chair of the Board of Finance, all Board of Education budget developments. The committee continued to emphasize the importance of transparency with the Board of Finance and directed Dr. Nicol to continue to maintain open lines of communication.

The committee agreed, until further notice, to postpone their recommendations to the Board of Education as discussed at the March 29 Finance Committee meeting.

Operations Committee

The Operations Committee met on April 14, 2016. The topic was the Emergency Management Communications Proposal for Ellington High School and Ellington Middle School. The Community Emergency Response Team of Ellington submitted a request for authorization to install emergency communications equipment on both Ellington High School and Ellington Middle School. The high school is the primary town emergency shelter and the middle school is the back up. The communication equipment to be installed is two antennas for use with emergency radios. The radios are primarily to be used by emergency personnel. There is no cost to the school district. Mr. Butler, Mr. Palombizio and Mr. Streiber provided details of the project. A motion was made to recommend to the Board of Education the installation of emergency communications equipment for both Ellington High School and Ellington Middle School for approval.

Administrative Reports

Superintendent's Report(s)

Superintendent's Plan Update

Dr. Nicol stated that he had attended a variety of events in connection with the Superintendent's Network, which works with the Center for School Change; this aligns with his third goal, which is "out of district networking to enhance the ability of the Superintendent to help the school district."

Next, Dr. Nicol discussed the Superintendent Office Hours, in which he is at a school for one hour each month; this is in alignment with his second goal, "to develop a clear understanding of the school district's culture, strengths and needs in order to promote continued school improvement." Dr. Nicol remarked that teachers provided a great deal of feedback in various areas. Some of the feedback focused on the importance of the administration acknowledging and monitoring employee work fatigue.

Lastly, Dr. Nicol touched on his first goal, "fostering respectful relationships and productive partnerships with stakeholders within the public schools and within the town of Ellington." He stated that thus far, the Board has had three 30-30-30 tours in Ellington schools. He complimented principals for their assistance and received positive feedback from Board members on their experiences with the tours. Dr. Nicol stated that eventually, the tours would also be opened up to members of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

Monthly Building Projects Update

Dr. Nicol stated that work is progressing at Crystal Lake School. There was a meeting with the Permanent Building Committee in the music room regarding lighting, and the project was approved and completed. At the next Permanent Building Committee meeting, they will discuss a consultant coming in and assessing the issues with the gym flooring.

Monthly Instructional Report – March 2016

Dr. Nicol stated that the March report was included in the Board packet. The report contains the Status of Initiatives for Kindergarten Inventory and Dolch Sight Word assessments for grades one and two.

Crystal Lake School reported on the work of its data teams, Read Across America Day, a visit from the Ellington Historical Society, a faculty book study, and a Riverside Reptiles assembly.

Center School reported on parent conferences, spring field trips, a Purple People Day and Pep Rally, recognizing National Volunteer Week, Read Across America, and the success of the Young Inventor's Club.

Windermere School reported on student led conferences, learning walks, Career Day, SBAC testing, and being recognized as a 2015-16 Banner and Model School for the State of Connecticut.

Ellington Middle School reported on SBAC testing, Science CMT testing, student led conferences, attendance at the League of Innovative Schools Annual Conference, musical performances, and the "Music All Night" charity event.

Ellington High School reported that the Library Advisory Committee is creating a promotional video for the Connecticut State Library Research IT CT Databases. They also reported on a Vocale Ensemble performance, the Mr. EHS event, learning walks, the "Good Music Good Cause Concert" to benefit the Crystal Lake Food Pantry, and the success of the Opening Knight Players at the Connecticut Drama Festival.

Special Services reported on a Transition Evening for parents of students with special needs, attendance at the Choice Dine and Discuss evening, and a celebration of the Unified Basketball season with a pancake lunch award ceremony.

Dr. Nicol stated that the Instructional Report also included a significant number of staff and student recognitions.

2016-2017 Budget Update

Dr. Nicol stated that there was a handout in the Board packets outlining the four motions that were approved by the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance had to determine cuts to the Town budget, and in turn, cut \$100,000 from the 2016-2017 Proposed Ellington Board of Education budget. Dr. Nicol clarified that the 5/6 Transition and the Full Day Kindergarten initiatives will not be affected by these cuts. The proposed budget will go out to the May 10 Annual Town Hall Budget Meeting and the anticipated May 17 referendum.

Dr. Nicol also stated that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) made a decision at a previous BOS meeting to change the process by which the town made a decision to go to referendum or not. The Board of Selectmen voted to automatically have the budget go to referendum on May 17. Thus, the main focus at the Annual Town Hall Budget Meeting will be what the budget is going to be set at to go to the referendum.

Director of Finance and Operations Search Process Update

Dr. Nicol stated that there were approximately twenty-two applicants for the position. Dr. Nicol interviewed/screened candidates and brought seven to the search committee; four candidates have been interviewed thus far, and three more will be interviewed next week. Dr. Nicol hopes to present a candidate to the Board at the May 25 Board of Education meeting.

Directors' Reports

2015-2016 Technology Achievements

Mr. Collins reported on updates to network infrastructure, updates to current initiatives, and technology competencies continuum. He touched on the success and progress of digital portfolios, student led conferences, and Tech Champions (Google certified educators in our district). He also discussed new initiatives, which include the website redesign, social media guidelines, Makerspace for elementary schools, and a technology refresh plan.

Full Day Kindergarten/K-6 Transition Update

Dr. McGurk stated that the posting and hiring processes for the current open positions and anticipated open positions related to the budget is moving along well with internal applicants.

Dr. McGurk also stated that the YMCA has approached the Board of Education with an offer to expand before and after school programming at Crystal Lake School and Windermere School. It is currently only provided at Center School. If Board members are in agreement with this proposal from the YMCA, Dr. McGurk will move forward with the planning process. Board members expressed general support for the idea.

Questions were asked about whether there is a planned curriculum for the program and it was recommended that Ellington administrators be part of the hiring process for the program.

Next Generation Accountability Report

Dr. McGurk provided an overview of the Next Generation Accountability System. She stated that there have been a series of accountability systems in place in Connecticut, largely stemming from accountability requirements under No Child Left Behind. Accountability systems have important purposes, such as tracking performance, particularly of subgroups, and helping schools and districts make improvements. She discussed changes made to the accountability system, the main change being that the new accountability system is no longer based solely on standardized test scores. She discussed the twelve indicators that are a part of the current plan.

Dr. McGurk shared Ellington Public Schools 2014-2015 report, which included a chart outlining accountability index, participation rate, achievement gap, and graduation rate gap. Dr. McGurk stated that Center School was named a School of Distinction; it was named for high achievement with the high needs subgroup. Ellington High School was named a Focus School in Language Arts for low performance of the high needs subgroup. Dr. McGurk will be working with Mr. Rinaldi to create an updated school improvement plan for Ellington High School to specifically identify strategies to address the performance of students in the high needs subgroup.

Board Liaison Reports

CABE

Mr. Purcaro reported that the Legislative Wrap-Up is scheduled for May 10. He reminded Board members of the CABE/CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) convention scheduled November 18-19. He also stated that the Student Leadership Awards from CABE have been announced.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Joy reported on preparations for graduation, the success of the baseball team, a community service event by the Opening Knight Players, musical performances at the elementary schools, and upcoming AP testing.

ACTION ITEMS

A motion was made to add as Action Item #5, the acceptance of the personnel retirement request of Troy Petersen.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. M. Purcaro

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

A motion was made to add as Action Item #6, the personnel employment of Lindsay Regier as a language arts teacher at Ellington Middle School, effective August 29, 2016.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. A. Hayes

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1. A motion was made that upon the recommendation of the Policy Committee, the Board hold a second and final vote to adopt the Ellington Public Schools: Policy – 6142.10 – Wellness, as presented.

1st. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

2. A motion was made to approve the Superintendent of Schools attendance at the Superintendent's Network Cohort Harvard Retreat, May 18-20, 2016.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. A. Hayes

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

3. A motion was made that the Board of Education request permission from the Board of Selectmen to dispose of three (3) Board of Education Vans in a manner deemed appropriate by the Board of Selectmen.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. A. Hayes

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

4. A motion was made to approve the Emergency Management Communications Proposal for Ellington High School and Ellington Middle School as recommended by the Operations Committee.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. A. Hayes

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

5. A motion was made that the Board of Education accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Troy Petersen, custodian at Ellington Middle School, effective December 30, 2016.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

6. A motion was made to approve the personnel employment of Lindsay Regier as a language arts teacher at Ellington Middle School, effective August 29, 2016.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. A. Hayes

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:35 p.m.

1st. M. Young

2nd. M. Purcaro

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Hayes

AMH/amd