

*Filed Subject to Approval*

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION  
June 7, 2017  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Joel Barlow High School Media Center  
7:30 pm

ATTENDANCE

Board of Education: Coppinger, D'Agostino, Gombos, Hancock, Hocker, Johnston, King  
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Pin  
Others: Approximately 30 members of the public  
Student Representative: Maha Ulhaq

Chairman Hancock called the meeting to order at 7:35pm in the JBHS Learning Commons.

STUDENT COMMENT: Miss Ulhaq updated the Board on student activities.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

**Motion: Move to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2017, ER9 Joint meeting. Gombos, King. Approved as noted, 6-0-1. Johnston Abstains.**

**Motion: Move to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2017, meeting. D'Agostino, Coppinger. Noted with Mr. Coppinger's comment on the addition of a list of IT items and descriptions sold. Approved, 6-0-1, Johnston abstains.**

POLINATOR GARDEN AND SIKORSKY CHALLENGE

Dr. Nuzzo gave an update on the Unified Wellness-Pollinator Garden collaborative project in partnership with the Redding Garden Club. She introduced members of the Club who graciously assisted with the program. The program included hands-on experience and classroom learning. Many community businesses donated needed goods.

Dr. Nuzzo then presented on the Sikorsky Challenge, a year-long process. Students and Sikorsky mentors were included in the presentation. The challenge has been running for 7 years. The rigorous process was engaging for the students and they used classroom calculus during the process. Students over-viewed the engineering and design process, organization and planning, risk mitigation, trade study and solutions. The students thanked the Sikorsky mentors and staff. A Sikorsky staff member presented the students with certificates of accomplishment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Wheatly, Vista Dr., Easton, spoke as a representative of the ERCC. She asked that their issues be added to the agenda of the September 2017 meeting. She requested that BoE members attend their meetings. She thanked Mr. Hancock for his attendance at their last meeting.

Eva Ortiz, spoke about the ERCC and its concern regarding risky teenage behavior. She asked that they be added to the September agenda and that someone from the BOE attend their meetings, so they can have a dialogue. They would also like to have middle school and elementary school presence in the conversation.

Barbie Powell, Sanford Dr., Easton, Ms. Powell reiterated that the ERCC wants to work to form a dialogue with the community, administration and Board of Education.

Nancy Gregoire of Deer Hill Rd., Redding, echoed the sentiments of the other ERCC members.

Amanda Neville, Blackrock Turnpike, Redding, requested a change in policy of how homework is distributed.

Melissa Webdale, Chestnut Woods, Redding, echoes the ERCC sentiment.

Dana Grey, Lamppost Rd., Redding, echoes the ERCC sentiment. She also asked that financial issues be placed at the beginning of the BoE meeting agendas.

Barbie Powell, Sanford Dr., seconded that she would like a review of how homework is distributed.

Joann Simpson, Redding, seconded the ERCC sentiments previously mentioned.

Laura Hoeing, Umpawaug Rd., Redding, reiterated the importance of the ERCC mission, and stated that substance abuse and mental health issues are related. She would like to have the opportunity to have a discourse with the members of the Boards of Education.

Lynn Menapace, Drummer Ln., Redding, asked that communication between the administration and parents improve. She asked that parents be made aware of guest speakers. She shared concerns of students' use of Google Chrome and data mining. Ms. Menapace feels as if students from JRMS are not coming to the JBHS prepared for Honors math.

Tracy Anderson, Meeker Hill Rd., Redding, reiterated Ms. Ortiz's and Ms. Neville's previous comments.

Helene Hawk, Cricklewood Rd., Redding, noted that she is disturbed by the risky teenage behavior that is affecting Redding and Easton children and young adults.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mr. Hancock thanked the ERCC for their work.

Mr. Hocker thanked the ERCC.

Mr. King appreciated the comments made and said it is something the board had to deal with.

Mr. Hancock reported on the Barlow Palooza experience. He shared many of the exciting and innovative student initiatives he saw.

Mr. D'Agostino also commented on how great Barlow Palooza was. He then said he was not sure how the process of adding parent groups to the Board agenda works; they may have to report to the administration and the administration makes suggestions to the Board. He also thought the discussion of the Audit would be continued on tonight's agenda.

**Motion: Made to add agenda item regarding the Budget Audit. D'Agostino, Johnston. Approved. Unanimous.**

Ms. Gombos thanked the public for coming out this evening. She commented on the presentation skills of the students who spoke at tonight's meeting. She thanked the administration for adding the student presentation to the agenda, and also thanked the public for their attendance.

Mr. Coppinger thanked the public for coming out.

Mr. Johnston thanked the public for the comments and is interested in what the data will show.

Dr. McMorran thanked the public. He noted some past experiences that echoed some of the issues the ERCC is mentioning. Dr. McMorran said there is power of community action. He noted that when we identify with grief we should ask what is really wrong, and cautioned assigning blame. We should address the things that aren't working right, and lift up the things that are working well.

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

### *Appreciative Inquiry*

### *Deferred to another meeting*

#### A. Discussion on financial practices and procedures at central office

Mr. King looked into 5-6 areas they normally discuss regarding expenditures that tend to be expensive. He also looked into travel expenses, relating mostly to continuing education. Yesterday, Mr. King contacted the Audit partner, Scott Bassett. Mr. Bassett said that our engagement letter was not sent to the Administration. This will be discussed in the future with the firm. Mr. King met with Dr. McMorran on his memo reviewing the symptoms and problems addressing the district. Together they came to a conclusion that four items were symptoms of the problem. Two years ago the audit committee started a competitive bidding policy; much of the drafting came from the previous CFO. Dr. McMorran found that purchase orders had been contrived in several instances for amounts totaling over 10k, but submitted in two smaller amounts. Some items did not go out for competitive bidding, some items' expenditures were approved against accounts where there were no funds remaining. Mr. King does not see any evidence of fraud. He will discuss with Scott Bassett soon addressing some issues.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Coppinger also does not believe there is evidence of fraud, however the fiduciary responsibility of the Board is to independently investigate. Mr. Hancock asked what it would cost to do independently. Mr. D'Agostino said we owe it to the community to review the practices and

procedures independently from the administration. He presented a standard/boilerplate potential scope of work by the Redding BoF Subcommittee. Mr. Hancock asked to see a scope of work applicable to the Board. Mr. King added that the Auditor said that he had been contacted by the Board of Finance to review, and the auditors felt they were not the right firm to investigate as they are in charge of the Audit. Mr. D'Agostino reiterated that this would be a review not a witch-hunt. Ms. Gombos stated that one main reason for doing this is to set clear any inconsistencies for the new Finance Director's success. Mr. Hocker noted that the practices that need to be looked at are Central Office practices, thus necessitating only one investigation, not one for each district. He also asked where the money would come from to pay for this. Ms. Gombos reiterated that this is a partnership and review, not an investigation. Mr. D'Agostino stated that the BoF has appropriated up to \$50,000 for this review. He said R9 should coordinate with them. Dr. McMorran noted that the administration does not intentionally destroy documents or hide information; it is in their best interest to have their names cleared. Board needs to make a definitive decision with appropriate process.

**Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education coordinate with the Redding Board of Finance to employ the services of an independent firm to perform a review of financial practices and procedure and make recommendations for a fee not to exceed \$50,000 and direct the Chairman of the BoE to open conversations with the Board of Finance. D'Agostino, Coppinger. Discussion ensued. 5-2-0. Approved. King and Hocker against.**

Mr. Hancock noted that this would suspend our policy of having 3 firms bid on the work.

Mr. King asked why the board can't wait to see how the BoF review goes as the results would be the same.

**Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education add public Comment to the agenda as IX. B. Hancock, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

#### PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jeanne Wendschuh, Deer Spring Rd., Redding, noted that any Budget surplus must be assigned to the pension Plan by June 30, 2017.

Lynn Menapace, Drummer Ln., Redding, asked that the Board of Education not force Dr. McMorran to resign over community comments.

Jeff Littleman, Redding Rd., Redding, asked that to be clear, there was no money taken or absconded with regarding the budget issues. He noted that the new CFO would be finding any practices that need to be altered.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board entered into Executive Session, inviting Dr. McMorran at 10:35PM.

Dr. McMorran leaves the Executive Session at 10:45PM.

Board returns to Public Session at 11:07PM

**Motion: Move that as of July 1, 2017, Region 9 School District will change authorized signer of the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Program to Mr. Scott Reiss, Director of Finance & Operations. Gombos, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: Move to approve the contract with Scott Reiss as Director of Finance and Operations as discussed in Executive Session. D'Agostino, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

**Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education adjourn the meeting. King, Hocker. Approved. Unanimous.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Submitted by Catherine Gombos, Region 9 Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Elise Cavanaugh