

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

May 24, 2016  
MINUTES

**ATTENDANCE:**

Region 9 Board of Education members: Coppinger, D'Agostino, Gombos, Hancock, Hocker, Johnston, King, Lewis

Administration: McMorran, Sullivan, Pin, Pierson Ugol, and additional members of the leadership team

Others: five members of the public, a representative of the Redding Pilot/Easton Courier, and the videographer

Mr. Hancock called the meeting of the Region 9 Board of Education to order at 7:36 pm in the Joel Barlow Media Center.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

The student representative, Sarah Jorgensen, described recent student events and activities, including the 5K Color Run fundraiser, the Prom, Spring Fest, and Spring Show. Ms. Jorgensen thanked the PTSA for providing the photo book at the Prom. She invited all to attend the Barlow Palooza and noted that Awards Night and Graduation were fast approaching. Student Council elections were held recently, and this was Ms. Jorgensen's last meeting with the board. Mr. Hancock thanked her for her participation.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the April 26, 2016 meeting as amended. Gombos, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Amendment: page 2, under Discussion of Graduation Rates, final sentence: delete the beginning of the sentence so it should read: Mrs. Gombos felt that while the information was interesting, she was concerned about how it would be helpful and useful.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gabriel Rossi, Easton: Mr. Rossi expressed his concern that some of the students who applied and were accepted by the Regional Center for Arts High School were not able to attend due to funding issues.

Jeanne Wendschuh, Redding: Mrs. Wendschuh applauded Dr. McMorran for his leadership and courage in addressing and starting the conversation on the declining enrollment.

Lynn Menapace, Redding: Mrs. Menapace expressed her thoughts on the recent action taken by the Board of Education with regard to encouraging each student to have a computer for classes. She cited several studies that do not support the need for students to have a computer in the classroom. She also commented that the voters approved the education budget without knowing the impact of State reductions in revenue, and wondered how that would be dealt with. Mrs. Menapace also commented that school communication with parents this year was not as good as it was in the past. She expressed concern that some of the school policies may have changed without parent notification, citing the previous "no homework during school breaks", noting that her son had a major project to work on over spring break. Finally, she commented that students had unannounced standardized testing that should have been announced in advance.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. D'Agostino commented that the result of the State budget approval, Easton will have a loss of revenue of about \$193,000 and Redding will lose about \$232,000.

Mrs. Gombos commented that the board's decision on the computer issue last month was not a unanimous one, she voted against the motion to approve the decision. She asked for further information and data on the subject be provided. Mrs. Gombos expressed concern that students interested in attending the Regional Center for the Arts were being denied and that the board should consider how to accommodate these students.

#### DISCUSSION OF 2016 COLLEGE AND CAREER UPDATE

Paula Panos, Director of Counseling, reported on the Class of 2016 college plans. She reported on the number of student applications and acceptances to most competitive and highly competitive schools. Mrs. Panos noted that not all of the students have reported their decisions, so the information is not complete. She also reported that a number of students have opted for community college, gap year, work, and work with part time college. Mrs. Panos will provide a more complete report in the fall.

Mrs. Panos added that the school is making application for three Career and Technical Education Innovative Grants. These grants will provide equipment and instructional material that will be especially useful for the Advanced Robotics and engineering courses.

#### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON LONG RANGE PLANNING

Dr. McMorran provided copies of the enrollment projections by Dr. Prowda. The projections for the next ten years show a decline from the current enrollment of 1008 students to 650 in 2025-2026. He also provided the CERC (Connecticut Economic Resource Center) profiles for the towns of Easton and Redding. That information will be important to the discussion of planning for the schools over the next ten years. The concept of a Tri-District steering committee was discussed and approved at the recent Tri-District meeting, and Dr. McMorran is asking the Region 9 Board of Education to appoint two members to that committee.

Mr. Hancock stated that Chris Hocker and Paul Coppinger have volunteered to serve on the committee.

#### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON POLICY REVIEW

The following policies were presented for a second and final reading.

- Policy 5113(a): Students – Attendance and Excuses
- Policy 5113.2: Students - Truancy
- Policy 4115: Evaluation and Support Program
- Policy 4131(a): Personnel – Certified Professional Development

The policies were reviewed and discussed. Board members concluded that they would like to have "clean" final versions of each of the policies before approving them. Dr. McMorran will provide final versions of the policies for approval at the June meeting.

#### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FOR 2015-16 FISCAL YEAR

The refund from the Town of Bethel for taxes paid on the transportation fleet has been received. The legal fees were split evenly between the three districts, and the refund will be split evenly. The Easton and Redding portions were received as town revenue. The Region 9 Board of Education has options available for the use of their share of the refund. The options include contributions to the Capital Fund, Health Insurance Reserve Fund, Pension Fund, or used as a reduction to next year's operating expenses. Discussion followed.

**Motion:** move that the Region 9 Board of Education allocate the Bethel tax refund of \$60,632 with \$50,000 to the Capital Fund and the remaining \$10,632 to the Pension Fund. Coppinger, Johnston. Approved 7-1. Mr. Hocker voted against the motions.

**Motion:** move that the Region 9 Board of Education schedule a Public Hearing on Wednesday, June 8, 2016 to discuss the Regional School District No. 9, composed of the Towns of Easton and Redding, making a supplemental appropriation for the 2015-16 fiscal year and authorizing an expenditure of the supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$60,632.00 with \$50,000 to the Capital Fund and the remainder, \$10,632, to the Pension Fund. Such appropriation and expenditure shall be made prior to June 30, 2016 and be funded with the amount of \$60,632 received and held by the District related to the refund of taxes paid by the Town of Bethel to the District. Hocker, D'Agostino. Approved. Unanimous.

#### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR JUNE 30, 2016

**Motion:** move that the Region 9 Board of Education appoint McGladrey, LLP for the June 30, 2016 audit. King, Lewis. Approved. Unanimous.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools: Dr. McMorran addressed the issue of the Regional Center for Arts program. Currently there are four current Barlow students who will be returning the RCA. The budget includes tuition for those four plus one additional, for a total of five. Seven new students applied for admission and were accepted; one was admitted through the RCA lottery system. The tuition is \$2,500/student. Currently students are bused to RCA on a bus for special education students. If more than the five students needed transportation, other arrangements and costs would be incurred. The obligation regarding transportation needs to be reviewed. Dr. McMorran suggested that additional information is needed before a decision is made, including the full cost of the additional students and transportation issues. This will be considered at the next meeting.

Regarding the comments made by the public on computers in the classroom, Dr. McMorran stressed that the program is providing a financial opportunity for parents/students to purchase computers/laptops at the same discount the school receives.

Assistant Superintendent and Head of School: Mrs. Pin described the Community Assets Network (CAN) website that will put students in contact with community members who have offered support for career exploration. Parents will receive communication about the data base and will give permission for their students to access the network.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Pierson Ugol reported on the curriculum revisions and related professional learning over the past three years. The PDEC (Professional Development Evaluation Committee) has been meeting to discuss possible evaluation plan revisions to include differentiated options for tenured teachers in good standing.

Director of Finance: Mrs. Sullivan reported on the status of the 2001 building project. She has been notified that the 1-year window, between board acceptance of the project and final submission of material, has expired, but they offered three options. The options are: accept the project as complete again, request that the Superintendent to write a letter to the Commissioner of Education for a special waiver, or accept a 10% penalty. Discussion followed. Mrs. Gombos felt strongly that a letter should be sent to the Commissioner of Education explaining the situation, with documentation of the repeated communications with their office. Some of the board members were in agreement, but felt that the second acceptance of the project would expedite the completion of the process.

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the 2001 Building Project as complete. Hocker, King. Approved 6-2. Mrs. Gombos and Mr. D'Agostino cast dissenting votes.**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education authorize the Superintendent and Director of Finance to send a letter to the Commissioner of Education outlining the difficulties of the situation and include documentation of correspondence, with letter to be sent by June 30, 2016. Gombos, Coppinger. Approved 7-1. Mr. Hancock voted against the motion.**

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Health Insurance Committee: Mrs. Gombos reported the Tri-district Health Insurance Committee has recommended changing the Stop-Loss from \$150,000 to \$175,000/individual. There will be a premium savings with the change.

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the recommendation of the Tri-district Health Insurance Committee to increase the Stop Loss from \$150,000 to \$175,000. Gombos, D'Agostino. Approved. Unanimous.**

Curriculum Committee: Mr. Lewis reported the Committee has recommended approval of two new textbooks and one curriculum.

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the textbook, Speak Up! Debating in the Public Forum Style, for the course Debate and Strategic Argumentation. Lewis, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the textbook, Environmental Science for AP, for the AP Environmental Science course. Lewis, Coppinger.**

Mr. Hocker found that while the text was good, he felt the last section of the text dealing with economics was not good. He has offered to provide supplemental material for the instruction.

**Vote on motion: Approved 7-0-1. Mr. Hocker abstained.**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the curriculum for the AP Computer Science Principles. Lewis, Coppinger. Approved. Unanimous.**

Audit Committee: Mr. King reported the primary work on the audit will be done over the summer months. He asked board members to forward their thoughts on areas of focus or concerns to him as soon as possible. The Committee is also beginning a study of similar school costs for comparison purposes.

Financial Advisory Committee: Mr. Coppinger reported the committee discussed the committee charge and purpose, and came to the conclusion that the Board of Education should be the body to create the charge and direction for the committee. They discussed several ideas to help the budget process, and suggested a 5-year budget.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hancock suggested the board plan an executive session for the next meeting to review the superintendent evaluation.

Mr. Coppinger asked Mrs. Pin to prepare a response to the questions/concerns about school communication raised by a parent.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education meeting be adjourned. D'Agostino, Gombos.  
Approved. Unanimous.**

The meetings were adjourned at 9:53 pm.

Submitted by Catherine Gombos, Region 9 Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday