

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP / MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 10, 2010**

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, May 10, 2010, in the Cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street in Bristol, RI. The Chairperson, Paul Silva, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:07 PM.

Present: Paul Silva, Chair, Paul E. Brule, Vice-Chair, William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Denise R. Arsenault, John C. Bento, Diana B. Campbell, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; Melinda L. Thies, Superintendent; Mario J. Andrade, Assistant Superintendent; Pauline A. Silva, Director of Administration and Finance; and Mary N. Almeida, Director of Literacy and Title I

Absent: Marjorie J. McBride

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PUBLIC FORUM

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #S2010-23: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and supported by the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee, award the bid for window replacement at Mt. Hope High School.

Superintendent Thies withdrew this recommendation to be reconsidered at a more appropriate time.

Recommendation #S 2010-24: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, adopt a resolution regarding the municipal sign-off of contracts.

MOTION: Mr. Brule motioned to adopt; Mrs. Arsenault seconded. Mrs. Thies mentioned Attorney Henneous was consulted to assure appropriateness of the language; there was some fuzzy language in the bill regarding regional districts. The motion passed by a vote of 8 to 0.

Recommendation # S2010-25: That the School Committee, upon the

recommendation of the Superintendent, authorize the Bristol Warren Regional School District to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rhode Island Department of Education in regard to the Round Two "Race to the Top" grant application.

MOTION: Mr. Brule motioned to approve; Mrs. Arsenault seconded.

Mr. O'Dell apologized for his inability to support this recommendation saying he has many questions and is concerned and suspicious about what is taking place at RIDE; he feels it is ridiculous to take \$9M out of our pockets then dangle undetermined amounts of money in front of us.

MOTION: Mr. O'Dell motioned to adopt the following: 1) that Joint Finance stop giving the District 1% and give at least the amount of inflation; 2) that in regard to Roger Williams University, legislation be passed bringing non-profit laws up to date and a little more equitable; 3) that the \$9M being taken from us by the funding formula be given back; 4) that all unfunded mandates stop; and 5) that the District be left alone because we are doing fine, we are already there. As Mr. O'Dell expected, there was no second.

Mrs. Arsenault, although respectful of Mr. O'Dell, will support the Race to the Top Application explaining the Federal government is concerned about public education in the nation and is tying funding to educational reform; as a state we will be expected to create a number of different ways to measure student performance and teacher quality and either Rhode Island will receive money to do it or we won't, but either way, the expectation will be there.

Commissioner Gist traveled to Delaware to find out how they got first

round money. With a negative balance in the State coffers Mrs. Arsenault would like state money from the federal government to accomplish the task and she urged the Committee to consider this.

Mrs. Lynch agreed with both Mr. O'Dell and Mrs. Arsenault and is concerned that programs that are started with the RTTT funds will fall on the District to maintain after the four years with even less funding because of the funding formula.

Mr. Silva had spoken to Mrs. Thies about this and feels it is better to have input to the mandates and receive funding for part of that process that creates it than to just be mandated.

Mrs. Campbell stated she understands Mr. O'Dell's point and is bothered by the Commissioner's treatment of people; her bedside manner could be better. The message Mrs. Campbell gets from the Commissioner is either follow along or get lost. She will vote in favor, otherwise be dictated to.

Mrs. Arsenault explained to Mrs. Lynch that the funding is not for programs, but to provide for substitutes and for professional development for teachers; the Board of Regents is developing a common core and the money is to improve education. We must fight the funding formula; this money is not related; the money will follow in future years, or the chastisement.

Mr. O'Dell is convinced these two issues are connected; they first create hunger then control the food and thus take control. He does not want to be part of this and will vote no.

Mrs. Thies explained this is a complex issue and that the federal mandates will be implemented at the national level, then on the state level. A common national core of content standards is the platform for this grant; the second part, the assessment piece, is to develop an understanding of those standards; being able to participate will provide us an opportunity to do that; the third part is the data system where the warehousing of those standards will be addressed; the fourth is the evaluation to assure quality teaching in each classroom. Mrs. Thies said she would rather be part of the process than be dictated to. Bristol Warren would receive \$343,136 over a three year period which will cover the cost of professional development and participation in the initiative; it is confirmed there will be no additional cost to the state. She supports a funding formula but not the one promulgated by RIDE; she will testify at the State House on Thursday; it is important not to lose our voice.

Mr. Bento stated that Mr. O'Dell makes a very valid point, but this body is very budget savvy and is focused on an education that this community can afford; when talking about outside agencies, we cannot control them; he will support the application.

The motion to approved passed by a vote of 7 to 1 with Mr. O'Dell

opposed.

PRESENTATION

Service Learning Project by Mt. Hope High School Students

As their Service Learning Project, Nicholas Salzano, Kayla McConaghy and Sara Holt developed privilege system to help reduce the dropout rate at the high school and designed the following survey.

Student Survey: Privilege System

The School Improvement Team is working in conjunction with a 10th grade Service Learning Team to investigate the implementation of a privilege system for students at Mt. Hope High School. This system would reward students who strive for positive behavior in our school. As part of this process we are collecting data from students in order to ensure their input.

The following list of possible privileges was developed by the Service Learning Team after discussions with students. Please choose four privileges that appeal most to you and rank them below.

„Á Having lunch outside

„Á 2-3 times tardy to school without a detention (less than 10 minutes late)

„Á Time taken off detention

„Á Certificate/ stickers for good deeds or good grades

„Á Recognition for doing well or trying hard

„Á Given time to talk to someone and trust them (adult or peer)

„Á Use the restroom without having to sign a pass or interrupting the class

„Á Pay a discounted price for after school events

„Á First choice in seating at the prom (which table you would like to sit at)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Please list other ideas that you might have in the space provided.

The survey was distributed to all homerooms and almost 1000 students; students were asked to rate the privileges. The results are as follows:

„Á Having outdoor lunch = 990

„Á Use the restroom without having to sign a pass or interrupting the

class = 703

„Á 2-3 times tardy to school without a detention (less than 10 minutes late) = 619

„Á Time taken off detention = 367

„Á Pay a discounted price for after school events = 294

„Á Recognition for doing well or trying hard = 118

„Á Given time to talk to someone and trust them (adult or peer) = 89

„Á Certificate/ stickers for good deeds or grades = 81

The privileges serve to acknowledge trust of the students, provide opportunity to lessen detention time by being responsible, recognize good effort and good grades. Some students who drop out do so because of all the rules; these are incentives to remain in school. Privileges are earned not only by good grades, but by working hard; teachers and deans would monitor the system.

Mrs. Campbell suggested a lounge for „outdoor lunch“ privileges during the winter months. Mr. Saviano felt that allowing two to three tardies would encourage students to use them even if not needed; he agrees that effort should be recognized; he admires and respects the students for designing this system.

Mr. O'Dell commented that five of the eight privileges have to do with regimentation and he asked if the purpose was to improve moral. Sara responded it is basically the structure of the high school they are trying to make more appealing.

Mr. Brule stated the system is attempting to prepare students for the outside world and if students are late for school, they will be late for work; he would have to look a little further at reducing detention, the younger generation tends to take advantage of honor systems; he likes certificates for good deeds or grades and recognizes that not all students get good grades despite great effort; he believes a trusted person should be available for students to talk to and this is the most important deterrent to dropping out; Mr. Brule commended the students for their work.

Mrs. Lynch asked Mr. Rebello if the staff was prepared to take on the monitoring required. Mr. Rebello responded he felt the tardies recommendation was too liberal; high school administration has been exploring the idea of a privilege system and recognizes that punishment goes only so far with students; this is more a school climate proposal and would give students the incentive to behave; the majority of the students are capable and this is not recognized. Before saying much more, Mr. Rebello wished to give these students an opportunity to present to the SIT Team; he said they did a nice job of surveying the students. Mr. Saviano pointed out that this type of approach is what made Adelaide Stevenson High School so successful. Mr. Saviano raised concern for large numbers of students having outdoor lunch; Mr. Rebello is uncertain how that would be handled.

In response to questions from the Committee about the process, the students said they developed a list of privileges after talking with Mr. Crowley and Mr. Murgio and other students, narrowed the list down with the SIT Team, then sent it to students. Mr. Silva supports a privilege system because if you want responsible people, you have to give them responsibility. Kayla commented that responsibility makes students feel important and part of the school, not just another kid. Mr. Bento applauds the students and suggested an exit survey when students want to drop out could help with their research. Mrs. Arsenault is impressed with these students; their compassion and concern for their classmates; parts of this system address some needy kids at the high school.

Mrs. Thies explained that students expressed concerns at the Student Outreach sessions; one issue that came forward was a feeling of constraint by rules and regulations; students were encouraged to utilize their power to express themselves and the process of implementing change; although they may not get everything they want, the journey is a worthy experience. Mrs. Thies recommended the students take the feedback from the SIT Team and develop a ground of common understanding.

RFP for Review of Enabling Legislation

After meeting with the Warren Town Manager and the Bristol Town Administrator, Mrs. Thies was looking for more guidance on the

Committee's motivation and purpose for the review of the enabling legislation. Mr. Silva explained that every community reviews their charter from time to time and there is no such process built into our system; some issues that have come to his attention are frustration with our financial process, the number of Committee members being too large, should homeowners themselves be taxed, should the chair be chosen by majority vote, when going out for a bond why can't the committee go right to the taxpayers since the Committee is elected to represent people in both Bristol and Warren.

Mrs. Arsenault said before regionalization was in place, a separate tax was considered but not well received and everything in the enabling legislation was stated so it would be passed; she would prefer such issues be put to the voters and has concerns for the cost of a study by a separate body; the term RFP assumes a funding source. Mrs. Lynch suggested the School Committee appoint someone to study the legislation. Mrs. Campbell believes the bylaws state the process of review; she does not believe legislation should be opened because one person wants to cut the number of members from nine to five. Mr. Silva said changes and amendments can be made only by the voting public; this review was prompted by issues that have come up along the way and was first brought up by the Bristol Town Council then at the tri-town meeting; it was agreed an independent outside body should do the review.

Mr. O'Dell is in favor of the study but has concerns over who pays

for it. Mr. Saviano recommended administration be asked to look into the motive and origin of this notion, report back to the Committee who could then engage the Policy Subcommittee. Mr. Silva asked the Superintendent to investigate the origin, the Committee to review the legislation, place discussion on a future agenda and determine if a review is necessary; he then asked if there was any objection to this; no objection was voiced.

BUDGET FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Ojeda said the next meeting is May 17 at 151 State Street, 6:30 PM.

POLICY/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. Campbell reported the next meeting to be June 7, 6:30 PM; she will report agenda details at the May 24 School Committee meeting.

Wellness Committee

Mrs. Campbell thanked administration and volunteers, specifically Pauline Silva, Mario Andrade, Melinda Thies, Don Rebello, high school staff and Kristen DiChiappari for their help with the Wellness Fair; although there was not a large attendance this year, next year will be a bigger deal.

PERSONNEL/ CONTRACT NEGOTIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Saviano said there is nothing remarkable going on.

FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE

Mrs. Lynch said no meeting is scheduled at this time; the Town Councils will not support a binding referendum but are willing to put forward a non-binding referendum to the voters; however, this will not provide the District what is needed. The other solutions could not be put in place in time if the population continues to increase. The Task Force is at a standstill right now. Mr. Silva added the Bristol Town Council never voted on the Committee's request. Mrs. Lynch concurred a formal vote on our request was not taken.

Mr. O'Dell commented about the meeting with the Town Councils that after the meeting he felt reprimanded or talked down to; this is bothersome; also, that Councilman Barboza had said at the meeting "I told you people not to close the building." Mr. O'Dell recalled the Committee had voted to close the Reynolds building, then upon discovering the building was not physically turned over to the Town, voted again a few months later to do so and transfer the keys. Mr. O'Dell said that on the day of the meeting that the vote took place he received two emails from Councilman Barboza with the message of --woe unto you to keep two buildings open that are half full, be fiscally responsible. During the vote to close the building this message weighed heavily on him.

Mr. Silva asked if there was any reason for the matter to go before the Warren Town Council the next night as the resolution requires support of both Town Councils. Mr. O'Dell would like it to go forward to have record of Warren's opinion. Mr. Bento agreed and would also like to go before the Bristol Town Council again for their official support or denial as well. Mrs. Arsenault also supports this suggestion because they are bound by Roberts Rules of Order as is this Committee and a vote was not taken on the Committee's recommendation.

Mrs. Lynch remarked that the Task Force was treated like the ugly stepchild in meetings with the Town Councils, and this is discouraging; Committee members are elected officials with a responsibility to the taxpayers and they get treated like they do not know what they are doing. The Committee was told by the Councils that they heard over and over again that after Colt Andrews, the District would not need anything else; Mrs. Lynch wonders who told them that, not this body of nine. Mr. Silva substantiated this and said they were never told we would not need a phase two; he will ask the Councils about this if and when it is stated again. Mr. Saviano felt the Committee should go on record and put the question to the Council and get a definitive answer from them. Mrs. Arsenault does not agree and recommended we "stay on the high road." Mr. O'Dell believes it is a fair question to ask. Mr. Silva stated this issue is not on tonight's agenda and he will attempt to get some answers without

twisting any arms.

ADJOURNMENT 9:10 PM

MOTION: There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Arsenault, seconded by Mr. Saviano, motioned to adjourn at 9:10 PM. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, for
Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary**

/c