

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011**

**The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, May 9, 2011, in the cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street in Bristol, RI. The Chairperson, John C. Bento, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:08 PM.**

**Present: John C. Bento, Chair, Paul Silva, Vice-Chair, William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Karen A. Lynch, Secretary, Denise R. Arsenault, Diana B. Campbell, Marjorie J. McBride, Susan Rancourt and John P. Saviano; Melinda L. Thies, Superintendent; Mario J. Andrade, Assistant Superintendent; Pauline A. Silva, Director of Administration and Finance; Mary N. Almeida, Director of Literacy and Title I; Leslie J. Anderson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; and Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor**

**Absent: none**

**OPENING BUSINESS**

**All present were invited to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC FORUM**

**None**

### **SOLAR PANEL GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

**Mr. O'Dell reported on a discussion held in the Budget Subcommittee meeting just prior to this meeting with Mrs. Diane Williamson, the Bristol Director of Community Development, about an opportunity to enter into a lease agreement to install solar panels on the high school roof. The cost to the District is nothing and we get free energy. After 5 years we own the panels; the unanswered questions are: What is the cost of maintenance after the 5 years, and who is responsible for repairs after the 5 years—the Town signs the lease but the panels are on our roof. An engineering firm is coming this week and will provide answers for the May 16 Budget Subcommittee meeting and the Subcommittee will make a recommendation to the full Committee for their May 23rd business meeting. The Subcommittee's hope is this venture will move forward. Mr. Saviano asked what the concern is when the Town owns our buildings and we just lease them, and if damage should occur from a storm, the Trust would cover it; the Trust also insures the Town. Mr. O'Dell explained the Subcommittee's intent is due diligence. Mr. Saviano asked if Mrs. Silva could research the existence of difficulties insurance companies may have had with damage to solar panels. Mr. O'Dell concurs.**

## **CHAIRMAN'S 18-MONTH VISION**

**Mr. Bento shared his vision for the next 18 months saying he ran for office with two platforms, improve procedures and community effort. To try to keep meetings from lasting past 10:00 PM he may have to curtail discussion; that person can speak with him after the meeting and then again at the next meeting.**

### **Liaisons to the Schools and Town Councils**

**Mr. Bento will hold off with appointments to the Town Councils until he can speak with the Chairs to determine what would be required of the liaison. Mr. Bento announced the following school liaison appointments:**

**Hugh Cole – Susan Rancourt**

**Guiteras – Diana Campbell**

**Colt Andrews – William O'Dell**

**Rockwell – Denise Arsenault**

**Kickemuit – Marjorie McBride**

**Mt. Hope – John Saviano**

**Mr. Bento asked anyone who was dissatisfied with their assignment to speak with him after the meeting. These assignments do not prevent any member from being involved or attending any school's SIT meetings. Liaisons have a simple mission: bring comments back to the Committee in regards to three things they view in the school**

**that should be sustained and three things about which they can recommend improvements. Ideally, the liaison would make contact with the school before the end of the year. Briefings back to the Committee should be limited to five minutes.**

### **Future School Committee Meeting Procedures and Professional Courtesy and Information Sharing**

**After reviewing several resources including the School Committee Handbook and Roberts Rules, Mr. Bento's expressed a number of expectations; each member wishing to speak needs to be formally recognized by the Chair. If an issue goes into debate, each member will have an opportunity to speak and if the debate is healthy, it may continue and then a vote called. Workshops provide the opportunity to debate; business meetings will focus on voting. Any questions on reports or minutes should be brought to the attention of the author before the meeting, then brought up at the meeting; discussion will be held for the workshop. Minutes can be amended.**

**Mr. Bento firmly believes in unity of effort – debate should take place, but once put to a vote, the entire body needs to move forward with the outcome.**

### **Future Role of Future Enrollment and Facilities Task Force**

**For the record, Mr. Bento accepted Mrs. Lynch's resignation as Chair the Task Force; Mr. Bento will assign a replacement in the future. After speaking with many people and personally, Mr. Bento believes**

most of the work that will need to be done will take place in September and beyond, after we know our enrollment numbers. He and Mrs. Lynch will still go to some meetings. Mr. Bento asked for comments from the Committee.

Mrs. Arsenault suggested the entire body of Task Force members be reconvened before any decisions about moving forward are made out of respect for the work they did.

Mr. Saviano felt it is possible there may be a member of the public able to take over the reigns of the Task Force and do a great job. Mr. Bento agreed stating the Task Force should be reconvened before the summer or after and any further comments can be sent to him. The Task Force is not being disbanded just inactivated for the present time.

### **Joint Budget Task Force Participation Guidelines**

Mr. Bento has spoken briefly with the Chair of the Bristol Town Council and will direct the Superintendent to craft correspondence to the Chairs of Joint Finance and the two Town Councils to publicly express our eagerness to participate in the task force they voted to create to promote unity of effort for future budgetary consolidation. Mr. O'Dell felt positioning ourselves to hear from them does not make us equal partners. Mr. Saviano respectfully suggested wording such as "we, as a one-third partnership of the Task Force, are prepared and waiting to be convened." Mr. Bento added the community should

be involved as the “fourth leg of the stool.” Mr. O’Dell said we need to establish ourselves as one of three equal parts of the Task Force, and then determine what the specific charge of that committee is going to be; some things are already being overseen by a committee. In the past a partnership was attempted through invitations to meetings but to no avail and this is why Mr. O’Dell insists on the establishment of ground rules and that we authoritatively maintain our position in moving forward.

Mrs. Campbell believes this approach is accurate; it was the Joint Finance Committee that made the motion and voted to create the body and sending them a letter from the School Committee to nudge them is good. We can ask for an agenda for the first meeting be set and a future agenda to include the election of a chair. Mr. Silva echoed Mrs. Campbell’s comments and agrees with the nudge; we must remember “it is their animal.” Mr. O’Dell would like an idea of what will be created before it actually takes off. Mrs. Campbell said that Bristol will advertise and solicit volunteers when creating new committees. Mr. Bento said the same happens in Warren. Mr. Saviano hopes Chairman Frerichs will be contacted. Mr. Bento will work with the Superintendent to craft the letter, and will put it to the School Committee for review before sending.

Mrs. Linda Rimoshytus, a Hugh Cole grandparent, asked how to properly make a comment on something that comes up during the meeting when Public Comment is posted at the beginning of the

meeting. Mr. Bento sees workshops as more of a collaborative; he will solicit comments during the meeting and schedule discussion at the next meeting depending on the relevance of the issue.

### **School Committee Goals**

Mr. Bento has asked Mr. Saviano to secure a facilitator, perhaps an experienced school committee chairperson, to assist with goals development to be scheduled in August. Mrs. Arsenault pointed out RISSA and RIASC are teaming up to provide a free professional development institute at Bryant University that could inform goals development; information was sent via email.

### **School Committee Meetings at Hugh Cole**

Sensing a disenfranchising on the part of Warren parents, Mr. Bento is proposing the location of School Committee workshops and meetings be changed to Hugh Cole for the months September 2011 to June 2012; this notion is for discussion one and one half months from now. Mrs. McBride suggested using Kickemuit Middle School instead of Hugh Cole because both Bristol and Warren students attend Kickemuit; the use of Hugh Cole may prompt Rockwell or Colt Andrews parents to ask why not at their school. In response to Mr. Saviano, Mrs. Thies said the pre-school program housed at Hugh Cole services children throughout the District.

### **Future Media Campaign**

Mr. Bento was approached by "Patch," a local on-line newspaper, to

**make comments for the publication; both Town Councils were also invited. Mr. Bento would like to have future discussion on where we want to go with the media and how to use it more constructively.**

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**Mr. Bento thanked the Superintendent for presenting in open session; any comments from the Committee should be held for executive session; Mrs. Thies' goals were submitted in October to the Committee and approved.**

**Mrs. Thies thanked the Committee for this opportunity to present in public a review of her action plan for continuous improvement, providing transparency, accountability and an opportunity to deliver compelling evidence this District is moving forward and how that progress aligns to her own personal goals. Mrs. Thies said her vision has an academic focus with the center of all we do being student learning; we need to look at the depth and rigor of our academic instruction; there are many pathways of getting there and many options on getting the kids there.**

**Mrs. Thies believes that at the high school level it is important for ninth and tenth grade students to demonstrate their proficiency in the core subjects—reading, writing and math, which is needed for them to receive a diploma. We need to strengthen our core subjects and add science and social studies on to that; once that proficiency is**

demonstrated, “the world is their oyster.” We must look for other ways to demonstrate this proficiency, not necessary in classrooms but perhaps in internships; she is interested in developing those partnerships. Mrs. Thies feels participation in extracurricular activities should be a requirement to broaden students’ interests. At the middle level, the charge is to develop and reinforce academic rigor; our tendency is to focus on behavior and the social aspect of their learning; we need also to work to transition students well from the middle to the high school level. At the elementary level, Mrs. Thies would like to strengthen differentiation and recommends looking at all children more personally and providing experiences for the student who is “ready to launch”; we worked hard to universalize our programs but we must assure the individual is not lost. We have a strong pre-school program where our focus is early intervention; there is incredible need at that level and we are good at outreach; we now must acquire grant funding to sustain the program.

Mrs. Thies suggests moving forward with best practice, researching and exploring rigor of delivery and content—all with a tight budget, which may mean streamlining and outcome-based budgeting. Working together as a team, the Superintendent has no doubt this District is poised to do great things. For the record Mrs. Thies stated, “We cannot do it all, but what we do do, we should do extremely well.” We need to research such prospects as virtual learning models, lobby for resources, think creatively, broaden and strengthen our community partnerships, all while maintaining the safety of the

**children of our District.**

**In response to a question from Mr. O'Dell Mrs. Thies explained it is important for the educational standards across the District to be aligned for forward movement together; all administrators have developed their own plan for growth, aligned to the strategic plan and each others'.**

**Superintendent Thies presented her goals and objectives:**

**Goal 1: Support and engage all students to reach increasingly higher levels of proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics and science strengthening their pathway to graduation and post secondary goals.**

**Objectives:**

- 1. Analyze student achievement data to determine levels of proficiency in reading, writing mathematics and science to determine gaps in achievement for all students using NECAP, MAP, and district and school-based assessments.**
- 2. Set district target of 10% point increase in reading, writing, mathematics and science as measured by NECAP for 2010-2011 academic year.**
- 3. Decrease gap in student achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science as measured by NECAP assessment for students with IEPs by meeting RIDE Safe Harbor targets.**
- 4. Strengthen the District Response to Intervention process and monitor universal application across all schools.**

**Goal II: Develop and sustain a Professional Learning Community that is efficient and fiscally responsible.**

**Objectives:**

- 1. Streamline organizational structure without impacting quality of instruction and educational program.**
- 2. Develop site-based managed school teams that work efficiently toward continuous improvement in student achievement.**
- 3. Negotiate fiscally responsible systems with the Bristol Warren Education Association and other stakeholders.**
- 4. Actively seek grant sources, State and Fiscal revenues that will enhance the quality of educational program and operating procedures.**
- 5. Supervise and manage organizational systems and resources for a safe, high performing learning environment.**

**Goal III: Effectively communicate the vision, mission and goals of the Bristol Warren Regional School District to create a climate of trust and collaboration within the district and community, to respond to community needs, and to leverage resources to support the needs of the district.**

**Objectives:**

- 1. Communicate the progress of the district to the community on a regular basis**
- 2. Develop and expand partnerships with community stakeholders to provide enhanced educational programs that support all students.**
- 3. Participate and engage professional influence in the local**

**community and the larger educational policy environment.**

**4. Maintain strong communication with the School Committee and collaborate in educational, fiscal and policy decision-making.**

**Mr. O'Dell commented we need to increase proficiency because other countries are doing a very good job with this; other countries are also very proficient at second languages and providing their students a deep understanding of government at an early age; he asked whether we need to address our own students' grasp and what other areas of proficiency the Superintendent would like to increase. Mrs. Thies said it is all built around meeting a standard; in recent years we have scrutinized how our students compare to students around the world; there are areas in the District (math and science) we need to devote resources to and as we improve in these areas the focus will shift. We are not held to the same standard in American government although we have plans in our curriculum development in that area as well; all curriculum is aligned to national standards; Mr. O'Dell's point is well-taken.**

**Mr. Saviano asked about the replacement costs for professional development. Mrs. Thies explained that if professional development is delivered during the instructional year, we would have to pay subs to cover for those teachers; if it is delivered during the summer, teachers are compensated for their participation. Mr. Saviano also questioned whether, with the current groundswell of patriotism, we are covering the structure and workings of our government**

sufficiently to help our students understand the responsibilities of having a republic. Mrs. Thies said government is offered through social studies classes but not with intensified focus. Mr. Saviano complimented the Superintendent on her aggressiveness and focus being extremely well-versed compared to other districts; he is impressed with what she has done.

Mrs. McBride feels Mrs. Thies is doing a wonderful job.

Mrs. Rancourt mentioned the Grade 11 NECAP scores in math going from 32% to 39% proficient; Mrs. Thies said this is an area of concern and although 39% is above the state average, it is not acceptable.

To Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Thies clarified that the goal of a 10% increase is year to year. Mrs. Campbell also commented:

- Senior projects is an excellent way to increase rigor at the high school and provide opportunity to explore interests
- An extra curricular requirement does not necessarily have to be an activity, but could encompass community service; Mrs. Thies said community service is a graduation requirement as is a service learning project.
- Total agreement with moving forward with more depth and rigor
- Would the Chair be interested in publishing accolades to the press
- Human Capital Management System, part of RTTT grant? Mrs. Thies said it is a Commissioner's directive as part of the BEP
- Agrees the website needs work

- **Commends and applauds the Superintendent for getting money from Joint Finance and getting the community involved**

**Mr. Bento thanked Mrs. Thies for being a fantastic steward of education in this District, in particular, during the tough month of March; speaking on behalf of the Committee he said she is extremely professional and the work she has put in is appreciated.**

### **BUDGET / FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Mr. O'Dell reported out earlier in the meeting; the next Subcommittee meeting is next Monday and the agenda will focus on solar panels and Administration's presentation on budget cuts which have not caused controversy and are acceptable to him.**

### **POLICY/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Mrs. Arsenault reported the next Subcommittee meeting is June 6, 5:30 PM at Oliver; scheduled for a first reading on May 23 are the policy on placement of elementary students (alternative to the Rockwell boundaries policy), the new indoor air quality policy, and the new blood borne pathogens exposure policy.**

### **PERSONNEL/ CONTRACT NEGOTIATION SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Mr. Saviano reported negotiations have been underway for nine**

**months and are moving at a reasonable rate; the next session is May 19.**

## **WELLNESS COMMITTEE**

**Mrs. Campbell stated the next meeting, and the last one for this year, is May 18; she encouraged anyone with an interest to join the group next year.**

**Mr. Bento thanked Mrs. Leslie Anderson for hosting him and Mrs. Arsenault in the programs for challenging students; he looks forward to working together in a professional manner.**

**There was no need for an Executive Session.**

## **ADJOURNMENT – 9:05 PM**

**At 9:05 PM Mrs. Campbell, seconded Mrs. McBride, motioned to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Karen A. Lynch, Secretary**

**/c**