

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 2011**

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, August 11, 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 6:50 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 and John P. Saviano; Melinda L. Thies, Superintendent; Mario J. Andrade, Assistant Superintendent; Pauline A. Silva, Director of Administration and Finance; Leslie J. Anderson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Mary N. Almeida, Director of Literacy and Title I; and Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

Absent: Susan Rancourt

OPENING BUSINESS

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

PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC FORUM

None

PRESENTATION – R I Interlocal Trust

Ian Ridlon, General Counsel, and Colleen Bodziony of The Trust, had been asked to present to the School Committee regarding the Joint Finance Committee insurance issue. Attorney Ridlon received a letter from Mr. DeSisto, Warren Town Council's Solicitor, regarding the Joint Finance Committee representatives from Warren and whether insurance coverage for them is through the Town of Warren or through the District. After an analysis of the enabling legislation Attorney Ridlon concluded the Joint Finance Committee is part of the District for insurance purposes; the unique circumstances of a regional district does not change the analysis from an insurance perspective. Mr. Ridlon sent written notification of this conclusion to both Mr. DeSisto and Mr. Michael Ursillo, attorney for the Bristol Town Council. To date, The Trust has treated Joint Finance as a board or commission of the School District; there has been no increase in the premium as a result. However, The Trust requests acknowledgement from the District that the Joint Finance Committee is to be covered under our policy.

Mr. Saviano stated there are no School Committee members on the Joint Finance Committee so they should not come under the

District's umbrella; there is concern about an increase in premiums and that the District ends up paying for the attorneys who will represent the Joint Finance Committee against the District.

Mr. Silva argued that the School Committee is the governing body of the District; the Joint Finance Committee is an appointed body whose main concern is what their decision has on the tax rate so to say they are a board or commission of the District, they are a group that has a direct conflict with us. Mr. Ridlon acknowledged the conflict; from the perspective of the insurance company, they provide insurance for all entities in the District. If Joint Finance qualified as a separate entity and were not covered under the District, they would have a separate policy and the District would have to pay the premium.

Mrs. Arsenault added that Joint Finance was created to oversee a funding source from the two towns and is no different from other funding sources for the District, such as RIDE, and the federal government, and are not an arm of the School District. Attorney Ridlon stated the Committee's disagreement lies not with the conclusion, but with the statutory language; this Joint Finance Committee was created as a result of the creation of the District from the two towns. Mrs. Arsenault said it is written the Joint Finance members would be appointed.

Mr. Silva brought up a similar case from 1992 and further argued that Joint Finance's charge is totally contrary to the District and our

insurance company should not want us to cover them when we have absolutely no control over what they do. Mr. Ridlon reiterated the Joint Finance is a statutorily created entity which would be insured either through the District or separately; The Trust does not insure any public official when not acting solely for the benefit of their municipality and when Joint Finance members act as the Committee, it is for the benefit of the District; absent the District, Joint finance would not exist. In response to Mrs. Campbell Mr. Ridlon said there currently is no written authorization from the District allowing coverage of Joint Finance.

Mr. O'Dell asked if a claim would affect the premium for the District. Ms. Bodziony explained calculations are made on a seven year stretch of claim frequency rather than severity and capped at \$50,000.

Mr. Ridlon added that not all claims are covered. Mr. O'Dell has difficulty with financial liability over something over which he has no control. Mrs. Arsenault felt that since the Joint Finance Committee is appointed by the towns, the towns should cover them. Mr. Ridlon said the Trust has in actuality been insuring the Joint Finance Committee and feels the School Committee needs to decide whether they want to insure them or not. Mr. Saviano asked what would happen if an outside party sued and who would pay legal fees if the district sued the Trust; Mr. Ridlon explained if the District gets sued, it is the District that is sued and not the towns, if Joint Finance is sued, the District is named as the party. Also, there is an arbitration provision under the policy so The Trust would not be sued; The Trust

will err on the side of its members and will do everything they possibly can; the statute will govern the relationship between the District and Joint Finance. Mr. O'Dell asked if the District could choose representation if we are in fact liable. Mr. Ridlon said The Trust has counsel they generally use but will take member wishes into account; he reiterated that under the terms of the statute, Joint Finance exists solely on that statute. Chairman Bento thanked Attorney Ridlon and Ms. Bodziony for coming to the meeting tonight.

Ms. Kara Milner, citizen and out-going chair of the Bristol Warren Education Foundation, spoke to the Committee, saying she was also not pleased with the way the Joint Finance meetings went but there is such important work to be done in terms of tackling the fiscal crisis this district is going to face in the foreseeable future, she begged the Committee to do what they can to move the District forward. Decisions will become more and more difficult; with the crisis our country and state are in, the task will be daunting. Ms. Milner approached the Bristol Town Council and Warren to encourage them to move forward with the formation of a task force to collaborate and develop a long-term plan; she ran into a road block. If we cannot figure things out together, we must do it separately; she urged the Committee to do whatever they can to move this forward. Chairman Bento said the Committee has opened corresponded with both Town Councils and there is a question whether the collaboration is with Joint Finance or with the Town Councils; the School Committee will step up efforts to move this along.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:40 PM

MOTION: In accordance with open meetings law 42-26-5(a)(2), at 7:40 PM Mr. Saviano motioned to go into Executive Session for a discussion on personnel and potential litigation and/or legal advice regarding Joint Finance insurance coverage; Mr. Silva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

RESUMPTION OF MEETING – 8:11 PM

Mr. Bento reported that in Executive Session the School Committee, on our attorney's advice, voted unanimously to respectfully disagree with the Trust and to notify The Trust that Joint Finance is not to be added to the District's insurance.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation #S2011-41 A-H: PERSONNEL

A. APPOINTMENTS: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint the following applicants to the positions of Elementary Co-Principal, Resource/Intervention Specialist (K-12), Elementary Mathematics Intervention Specialist, Secondary Library/Media Specialist, Middle School English/Language Arts Teacher, two Middle School Social

Studies teachers, five Elementary Teachers, three Elementary Special Educators and Child Care Program Manager as listed below:

1. Cynthia G. Sadler Elementary Co-Principal – Hugh Cole

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year

Reason: To fill a new position

Funding: Operational Budget

2. Lisa M. Martin Resource/Intervention Specialist (K-12)

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Retirement – C. Marszalek)

Funding: IDEA Part B

3. Sara Bogdon Elem. Mathematics Intervention Specialist

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year

Reason: To fill a new position

Funding: Title II Grant

4. Laura Cabral Library/Media Specialist – Mt. Hope High

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

pending receipt of certification and

satisfactory completion of pre-

employment requirements

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Retirement – C. Thomas)

Funding: Operational Budget

(6th step/Masters)

5. Emily A. McCaffrey English/Language Arts Teacher - Kickemuit

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

pending receipt of certification and

satisfactory completion of pre-

employment requirements

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Retirement – J. Reynolds)

Funding: Operational Budget

(2nd step/Masters)

6. Jeffrey Grifka Social Studies Teacher - Kickemuit

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

pending receipt of certification and

satisfactory completion of pre-

employment requirements

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Transfer – N. Lavey)

Funding: Operational Budget (5th step)

7. Samantha A. Medeiros Social Studies Teacher – Kickemuit Middle

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

pending receipt of certification and

satisfactory completion of pre-

employment requirements

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Retirement – J. Welch)

Funding: Operational Budget (3rd step)

8. Stacy E. Dunning Grade Three Teacher – Colt Andrews

**Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,
pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Transfer - C. Dutra/S. Bogdon)

Funding: Operational Budget (3rd step)

9. Jessica Rowe Grade Three Teacher - Guiteras

**Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,
pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Retirement – P. Perrotto)

Funding: Operational Budget (4th step)

10. Noelle M. Mello Grade Three Teacher – Rockwell

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

**pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a new position

**Funding: Operational Budget
(3rd step/Masters)**

11. Kendra L. Cabral Grade Five Teacher – Colt Andrews

**Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,
pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Promotion – B. Hayes)

Funding: Operational Budget (3rd step)

12. Jennifer R. Mello Grade Five Teacher – Colt Andrews

**Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,
pending receipt of certification and satisfactory completion of
pre-employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Transfer – S. Abilheira)

Funding: Operational Budget (2nd step)

13. Susan D. Beck Grade Five Teacher – Hugh Cole

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year, pending receipt of

certification and satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements

Reason: To fill a new position

Funding: Operational Budget (3rd step)

14. Katelyn McCanna Special Educator – Hugh Cole

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

**pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Transfer – D. Coury)

Funding: Operational Budget

(5th step/Masters)

15. Stephanie Breitmaier Special Educator - Rockwell

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year,

**pending receipt of certification and
satisfactory completion of pre-
employment requirements**

Reason: To fill a vacancy

(Transfer – H. Grieve-McDermott)

Funding: Operational Budget

(3rd step/Masters)

16. Patricia J. Brissette Child Care Program Coordinator

Effective: Immediately

Funding: Child Care Self-Funded

B. APPOINTMENTS: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint the following applicants to the positions of three High School Department Chairs, Secondary/Middle School Special Services Department Head and three Middle School Curriculum Coordinators as listed below:

1. Robert Arsenault Arts and Applied Arts Department Chair –

Mt. Hope High

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

2. Patrick Jackson Humanities Department Chair –

Mt. Hope High

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

**3. Thomas J. DeSanto Physical Education and Health Department
Chair – Mt. Hope High**

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

4. Lisa M. Martin Special Services Department Head –

Mt. Hope High/Kickemuit Middle

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

5. Deborah Kearns Curriculum Coordinator (English/Language Arts and Social Studies) – Kickemuit Middle

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

6. Michelle Way DaSilva Curriculum Coordinator (Mathematics) - Kickemuit Middle

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

7. Susan Cardente Curriculum Coordinator (Science) - Kickemuit Middle

Effective: For the 2011-12 school year

Reason: To fill a vacancy

Funding: Operational Budget

C. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint the following applicants to the extracurricular positions listed below for the 2011-12 school year only (pending certification, funding and sufficient sign-ups to warrant running these programs):

INTERSCHOLASTIC COACHES – KICKEMUIT MIDDLE

Sport Position Coach

- 1. Cross Country Coach Brian Beausoleil**
- 2. Soccer (Boys) Coach Anthony Cambrola**
- 3. Soccer (Girls) Coach Kenneth Viera ***

*** Pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements**

D. CERTIFIED SUBSTITUTES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to place on file in the office of the Superintendent the following application for a certified substitute pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements:

CERTIFIED

Name Area/Level

- 1. Paula M. Rodrigues Elementary**

E. CLASSIFIED SUBSTITUTES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to place on file in the office of the Superintendent the following application for a classified substitute pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements:

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

1. Diane P. Soares

F. LEAVES OF ABSENCE: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to grant leaves of absence for a Reading Specialist/Consultant and an Elementary Special Educator as follows:

1. Shelly Goudreau Reading Specialist/Consultant - Guiteras

Effective: August 30, 2011 through

December 23, 2011

Reason: Parental leave in accordance with

Article 21, Section L2 of the Master

Agreement

2. Rebecca Peluso Special Educator – Hugh Cole

Effective: For the 2011-12 School Year

Reason: Parental leave in accordance with

Article 21, Section L2 of the Master

Agreement

G. RESIGNATION: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to accept the resignation of Margaret A. Perrotto from the position of Elementary Teacher with a revised effective date as follows:

1. Margaret A. Perrotto Grade Three Teacher – Guiteras

Effective: August 26, 2011

Reason: Retirement

H. SUSPENSION, NONRENEWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to rescind the vote(s) of February 14, 2011 as to the following listed teachers and appoint the listed teachers to the positions indicated:

Name Anticipated Assignment

1. Christine Bean Secondary Science (Part Time to Full Time)

2. Caitlin Booth Secondary Mathematics

MOTION: Mr. Silva motioned to approve Recommendation #S2011-41 A – H minus A.I. Mr. Saviano seconded.

Mrs. Campbell asked about the process used to select the

recommended teacher candidates. Mrs. Thies asked Mrs. Sonya Whipp, Chair of the Elementary Interview Team, to review the process. Mrs. Whipp explained the process is similar to that used in other districts. Of 471 applications (32 Bristol were residents and 12 were Warren residents), the four elementary principals on the team selected 20 (6%) to interview (14 of which were Bristol or Warren residents). Screening criteria included current certification, other teaching certificates, teaching experience as it relates to the position, experience within Bristol Warren schools (subbing, student teaching) and in other districts, quality of the application in terms of communication skills and literacy skills. Eight to twelve questions were developed covering a range of topics and were refined up to the day of the interviews; candidates were given the questions just before their interview and each candidate was asked the same questions. Elementary principals and teachers comprised the interview team and all signed a confidentiality agreement; each team member takes his or her own notes and scores the responses on a 1 to 4 scale; each team member reported their scores to the team chair who incorporated them into a grid which provided easy determination of the top candidates; a perspective of the interview itself was also a consideration; it was very much a team process. The recommended candidates were referred to the Superintendent for a final interview.

Mr. O'Dell asked about the anonymity of the scoring and inability to make changes to the scoring; Mrs. Whipp assured that scores were reported to her and that material is shredded after the appointment is

made.

Mr. Silva commented that a few months ago we celebrated the retirement of many educators and the District is hiring a new group of employees. Despite the general public's belief, the School Committee hires only the Superintendent and our attorney, the Superintendent hires everyone else and the Committee relies on her. The Committee is an elected body that serves the public. Mr. Silva has received phone calls of complaint over the last several days and there have been comments in "Speakout", comments such as why were some subs not granted an interview, the District gives priority to relatives and friends, and why was someone involved in the screening and interviewing of applicants when a relative was an applicant. The Committee's role is to assure the public we are providing a quality education for our children and referred to Mrs. Thies for a response to some of the concerns.

Mrs. Thies stated the strongest and most convincing statement she can make regarding the candidates moving forward is she has every confidence they will be the vanguards of the system that she is very proud of; she had interviewed each candidate herself; she has confidence in her administrators. We are moving to a performance-based evaluation so it is incumbent on administrators to assure they have the highest quality teachers in their classrooms. In the last two years students at the Joint Finance meetings have expressed how important is to them to return to the District to teach

and give back to the community; this is a deep-rooted community with much family connectedness; if there is some perception that there is connection with individuals it is very true, a reflection of the culture of both towns. This is the same process used for administrators. In her personal interview with the candidates Mrs. Thies saw the passion for education. She has confidence in the process but if there is a community perception of it being flawed, we need to review it and make changes if necessary. The quality of the candidate pool is deep and the candidates moving forward have risen to the top.

Mr. Silva expressed faith in the Superintendent's abilities and trust in her assurance that perception issues will be addressed. Despite perception, Mr. Silva supports the Superintendent's recommendations.

Mrs. Lynch had an issue with the process and made the following statement:

"I feel I have no choice but hold suspect the screening and interview process that led up to these recommendations. I have to wonder how fair the process was to the other applicants who applied. I have a seriously problem with members of the interview team not recusing themselves when relatives or close friends interview for positions in this district especially if they are members of our administration. As a member of the Policy and Community Affairs Sub Committee, I am asking that this policy be put on our next agenda for review.

At the end of the day, we do not have any input on personnel recommendations put forward by the administration, but in the public's eyes we are held responsible in the court of public perception. So even though I am confident that each of these candidates will serve our district well, the public perception that several of these candidates have connections to the district is troubling to me as a School Committee Member, a parent and a taxpayer. One of the greatest parts of my job as a School Committee member is being able to welcome new teachers into our district. I take this responsibility very seriously and even though as School Committee members we don't hire anyone in the district except for the Superintendent, in the public's eyes, the buck stops with us. I believe in this district and know that so much of our success is due to the quality of the teachers that stand in front of our children every day. I have no doubt in my mind that the candidates put forward tonight are highly qualified for the positions they are being recommended for since I know that our Superintendent personally interviewed each candidate. I trust that our Superintendent would only recommend highly qualified teachers to sit in front of your children as well as mine. So I will support these recommendations based solely on the interviews each candidate had with our Superintendent.”

Mrs. Arsenault, as Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, said the new Human Capital Management Policy, having to do with recruiting, hiring and retaining personnel, has recently been instituted and she

is confident the policy was followed and any discrepancies that occurred have been taken care of. In the one case where an administrator was related to a candidate, that administrator's points were excluded and the candidate remained the highest. Mrs. Arsenault recommended to the Superintendent that those discrepancies be addressed with future interview committees; she will vote in favor of the entire slate with the exception of B.I. from which she will recuse herself because she is related to the person.

MOTION: Mrs. Campbell amended the motion to remove also B.I. Mr. Silva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Lynch asked Mrs. Arsenault to include a review of the interview process as a future agenda item for the Policy Subcommittee.

The motion to approved Recommendation S2011-41, A.2. to H.2. excluding B.I. passed by a vote of 8 to 0.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approved S2011-41, B.1.; Mr. O'Dell seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 7 to 0 with Mrs. Arsenault recused.

MOTION: Mr. Silva motioned to approve S2011-41, A.I.; Mr. Saviano seconded. Mrs. McBride stated she will not vote for Cynthia Sadler tonight for a position in this District; memories die hard; letters and emails, one in particular, have not been forgotten.

Mr. O'Dell said he asked for this position to be pulled for a separate vote, not because of an issue with the candidate, but because of the creation of a new administrative position. There is a need to be met, however, the economy such as it is, Mr. O'Dell asked the Committee to consider a more creative way to meet those needs; could we accomplish the task with half the money; he pleaded with the Committee to "be stingy with our dollars." He is against the creation of this position because of the dollars.

Mr. Saviano had the pleasure of working with Mrs. Sadler and has been impressed with her performance; he is very happy to have her back.

Mrs. Lynch is also very pleased that Mrs. Sadler is returning to the District; as a parent, Mrs. Lynch felt Mrs. Sadler worked personally with every child she came in contact with at the Middle School and Hugh Cole is a lucky community to have her.

The motion to approve passed by a vote of 6 to 2 with Mrs. McBride and Mr. O'Dell opposed.

Mrs. Thies individually introduced each new teacher to the District and gave some educational and experiential background on each. Mrs. Thies said this is a new wave of educators moving forward in a very different world and there is a great deal of expectation for their

performance and she has faith in each one to rise to that standard. Mrs. Thies introduced Cynthia Sadler, Laura Cabral, Emily McCaffrey, Jeffrey Grifka, Samantha Medeiros, Stacy Dunning, Jessica Rowe, Noelle Mello, Kendra Cabral, Jennifer Mello and Susan Beck. Katelyn McCanna and Stephanie Breitmaier were out of the state and could not be present.

Mr. Bento commented that it is obvious the School Committee is charged with gaging community concerns and they do not leave any stone unturned; at times they become “cranky and upset” but each of them takes their job seriously. He thanked the new employees and looks forward to seeing them in our classrooms.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:06 PM

MOTION: There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. McBride, seconded by Mrs. Campbell, motioned to adjourn at 9:06 PM. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Lynch, Secretary

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