

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2011**

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, November 14, 2011, in the cafeteria of Kickemuit Middle School, 525 Child Street in Warren, RI. The Chairperson, John C. Bento, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:15 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

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:16 PM

MOTION: In accordance with open meetings law 42-26-5(a)(1), at 7:16 PM Mrs. Arsenault motioned to go into Executive Session for a discussion on personnel; Mr. Saviano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

RESUMPTION OF MEETING – 8:20 PM

Mr. Bento reported that in Executive Session the School Committee discussed a staff member; the staff member had been informed of the discussion.

BUDGET / FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. O'Dell will report during discussion on the Asset Protection Plan recommendation.

POLICY/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. Arsenault said the Committee met on the first Monday in November and discussed the new legislation, passed in July,

changing the age a student can drop out of school from 16 to 18. This requires Districts to provide a plan for students who wish to leave school before they graduate; the ramifications of this change were discussed and discussion continues; it is too early to write a local policy to address this. Upon consulting the Department of Education Mrs. Arsenault was told this is not intended to be an unfunded mandate, we should service these students with programs we have in place. District and school administrators will meet to further discuss this. In the next few months the Committee will look at a policy on staff evaluations, considering the new RIDE mandates. Their next meeting is December 5, 5:30 PM at Oliver, provided more information is received regarding these two policies.

PERSONNEL/ CONTRACT NEGOTIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Saviano reported that on November 29 at 6:00 PM the Negotiation Team will meet for mediation with a mediator and the union; there is great hope reconciliation will happen in mediation.

WELLNESS COMMITTEE

Mrs. Campbell said the next meeting is Wednesday, November 16, 4:30 PM in Rm M108 at Mt. Hope; all are invited to attend.

CHAIRMAN'S INITIATIVES

Joint Finance Committee's Budget Task Force

The JFC meets tomorrow at 7:00 PM in the Bristol Town Hall; Mr. Bento informed Chairman Barboza that he would bring to tomorrow's meeting any new information discussed by the School Committee at tonight's meeting. Mr. Bento is disappointed it has taken so long to get this far; it is hoped that the make-up of the Task Force and its charge will be revealed but he is not expecting specific names. Other School Committee members can attend the meeting, but the Chair will represent the Committee; Committee members of course can speak as public citizens. Mrs. Campbell asked if the legal issues with Joint Finance are at a stalemate; Mr. Bento will ask that.

As a matter of public comment Mrs. Arsenault stated a District parent, Paul Labonte, contacted her, Mrs. Diane Mederos, and members of the Town Council requesting he be included on the task force. It would behoove everyone involved to consider Mr. Labonte, as he is concerned about finding efficiencies. Mrs. Arsenault would hate to see this become a small committee with a limited focus. Mr. Bento will bring Mr. Labonte's name forward to Chairman Marshall, who will make those decisions.

Mr. Silva feels it has taken too long to get this far; hopefully they are going forward with the motion made and approved at Joint Finance; he asked Mr. Bento to express the concern of the School Committee to set the charge of the task force, set a timeline for expectations, a deadline for naming individuals to be appointed and when the initial

meeting is expected.

Mr. O'Dell feels we need to be clear on what the charge of the task force is; we must remember the context of this gesture which was made during a great deal of upset over the process. The charge at that time was to look at the process; we must be sure the charge does not become something we already have staff members doing on a daily basis; he does not want them to be looking at our budget and tell us where we can save money, as his Subcommittee already does that. Administration already has many meetings to attend and do not need more for the same purpose. Mr. O'Dell, personally, is "flat about the whole thing." Mr. Bento agrees our budget staff is exceptional; however, it might be beneficial to streamline common budget lines.

Mr. Saviano made a serious request of the Chair—to not agree with anyone outside of the School Committee that any of our Committee members are restricted against speaking at any public meetings; each member has a fiduciary responsibility to represent their constituents. Mr. Saviano asked Mr. Bento to carry this message. Mr. Bento will; restricting members from speaking is not his intent, however, in the case of time limitations he would agree to have only a representative of the School Committee speak; in the future, if someone on the School Committee has something to say, he would not stop them nor would he expect the future chair of the Joint Finance Committee to do that.

School Liaison Reports Due in January 2012

Chairman Bento announced the School Liaisons will report out at the January 9th Workshop on two things the school should continue to sustain and two things that need improvement or speeding up; the Superintendent should be informed ahead of time what they are so she can address it. Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. McBride will not be ready to report in January; the Chair will address the date change at the next meeting. Mrs. Arsenault has issues with talking about concerns with the school rather than with the Superintendent. Mrs. Campbell does not want to create an atmosphere of fear for the school to speak with her. Mr. Bento explained a liaison of the School Committee is a friend to help make things better or to highlight some of the good things going on; members can talk to him about their concerns outside the meeting.

Mt. Hope Program of Studies

Mrs. Thies informed the Committee that Department Chairs are currently examining the programs and administration would like to present to the Committee on January 9th. This past year a new American Studies course that is a collaboration within humanities between a history teacher and an English teacher was implemented very successfully. Mrs. Lynch, whose daughter has benefited from these collaborative courses, is looking forward to more. Mrs. Thies confirmed for Mr. Silva the presentation will take place before the Program is disseminated to students and parents.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #S2011-48 - Personnel

Mr. Bento pulled item 2.C. from the vote.

Mr. Silva motioned to approve the remainder of the recommendation; Mr. O'Dell seconded. In response to Mrs. Campbell, Dr. Andrade explained the Science Liaisons are new positions to support the science curriculum that we have been developing over the past two years with the Dana Center, along with Portsmouth, Tiverton and Little Compton. These teachers will serve as liaisons to his office and provide professional development and content background to elementary teachers on how to implement the science instruction and assessment; they have been working on the Dana Center writing team for the past four years; this is a District-wide initiative. Teachers are requesting more internet sites and engage in on-line discussions so the liaison's location is not critical; principals will engage the teachers during common planning time. Dr. Andrade further explained the science expectation on the elementary level is two to three times per week for forty minutes; implementation is insured through classroom walk-throughs; to date, all principals have completed twenty walk-throughs; an on-line survey was posted for teachers to report what aspects are effective and which are not. Mrs. Campbell applauds these efforts. Mrs. Thies commended Dr. Andrade for his leadership in moving forward with the science curriculum and partnership with the Dana Center; all principals are

engaged in the leadership team and have been participating in the professional development; a math / science combination is one of the Districts goals. Chairman Bento also commended Dr. Andrade for a job well done and for success in involving principals. The motion to approve passed by a vote of 9 to 0.

Item 2.C.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approve; Mr. O'Dell seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed by a vote of 5 to 4 with Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Arsenault, Mrs. McBride, Mr. Bento and Mr. O'Dell in favor, and Mrs. Lynch, Mrs. Rancourt, Mr. Silva and Mr. Saviano opposed.

Recommendation #S2011-49: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the modification of the Asset Protection Plan as approved by RIDE

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approve; Mrs. Arsenault seconded.

MOTION: Mr. O'Dell motioned to amend the motion and add the words "and supported by the Budget/ Facilities Subcommittee." Mrs. McBride seconded. The motion to amend passed unanimously. The Chair recognized Mr. George Simmons at the podium to answer questions.

In response to Mrs. Lynch, Mrs. Pauline Silva confirmed that only projects on the list can be completed and each project will be voted on separately before going forward; the estimates indicated are conservative and the actual cost could be less, in fact, our architects have said most bids are coming in 40% less than estimated.

Mr. Silva stated:

Mr. Bento noted the email was accurate and if Mr. Silva thought Mr. Bento was an agitator, that was not his intent, he and the attorney did have questions; Mr. Bento appreciates Mr. Silva's intent.

Mr. O'Dell reminded the Committee any project over \$10,000 comes to the Committee for a vote and there is only one item on the Plan under this amount; all due process would have to be in place. Regarding RIDE's requirement for signatures of all nine Committee members, Mr. O'Dell thought it was interesting that nine signatures were required for this amount of expenditure when \$22M worth of debt required only two signatures. Attorney Henneous had consulted RIDE and fewer than nine signatures are acceptable if the Attorney provides a letter stating it was affirmative action of the School Committee.

Mrs. Thies stated the Five-Year Asset Protection Plan underwent incredible scrutiny; our first plan was approved by RIDE and then the General Assembly put a moratorium on spending and only projects

necessary for code compliance would be approved; Mrs. Silva and Mr. Simmons presented to the Board of Regents; the rules have changed and funding sources are limited.

As grant-writer for Mosaico, Mrs. Campbell confirmed it is now very difficult to secure Federal and State grant funding. Mrs. Arsenault commented RIDE wants assurance we will uphold certain guidelines issued by the State and will use their money wisely to construct or renovate facilities in the very best possible way according to new regulations. Mrs. Arsenault thanked Mrs. Thies, Mr. Henneous and the Subcommittee chairs for securing an extension for the signatures.

Mrs. Lynch stated she did not sign the document at first because the Committee did not vote on it in open session, not because she did not support it. Mr. George Simmons proudly said the District always follows rules and regulations on sustainability; he believes RIDE is trying to address those who do not. This plan is a piece of the original plan approved by RIDE. Mr. Bento thanked Mr. Simmons and Mrs. Silva for being on the cutting edge.

The motion to approve passed unanimously.

Recommendation #S2011-50: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the revision to the

2011-2012 School Calendar as presented

MOTION: Mrs. Campbell motioned to approve; Mr. Silva seconded. Mrs. Thies explained that after a conversation with High School teacher Mr. Bob Arsenault about making up the four days lost at the start of school because of tropical storm Irene, she recommended the three remaining professional development days on January 13, March 16 and May 7 become half instructional days with sufficient instructional time to count as a school day for students, with professional development conducted in the afternoons; this would leave a buffer in the calendar for additional days lost due to inclement weather. If the Committee approves, a letter will be sent to all families.

Mr. Silva tonight realized Mrs. This has been Superintendent for two years now; he feels she and her team have worked miracles and have done a great job. Mr. Saviano agreed and he is proud of the Superintendent. Mr. Bento also agreed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 9:35 PM

MOTION: In accordance with open meetings law 42-26-5(a)(1-4), at 9:35 PM Mr. O'Dell motioned to go into Executive Session for a collective bargaining update, Administrative update, matters of security and investigative proceedings and the Superintendent's goals; Mr. Silva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

RESUMPTION OF MEETING – 10:22 PM

Mr. Bento reported that no action was taken in Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT – 10:23 PM

At 10:23 PM Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Campbell, motioned to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Lynch, Secretary

/c