

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Tuesday, October 14, 2014, 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 7:05 PM.

Present: Paul Silva, Chair; John Bento, Vice Chairman; Karen Lynch, Secretary; Susan Rancourt, Treasurer; Marjorie McBride, William O'Dell; Mario J. Andrade, Superintendent; Diane Sanna, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Almeida, Director of Literacy & Title 1; Leslie Anderson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; and Pauline Silva, Director of Administration and Finance

Absent: Diana Campbell, John Saviano and Lynn Wainwright

OPENING BUSINESS

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

Chairman Silva stated, for the record, that the Public Comment portion of the meeting will be held after the Bristol Warren Family Resource Presentation.

BRISTOL WARREN FAMILY RESOURCE PRESENTATION

Dr. Andrade commended the Bristol Warren Family Resource group for transforming the after school program into one that engages and inspires children.

Ms. Patricia Brissette thanked Dr. Andrade and the School Committee for their support.

She shared her own work background. Ms. Brissette spoke about the structure of the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center and introduced the staff members.

Ms. Brissette began the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center's PowerPoint presentation. Members of Bristol Warren Family Resource Center and students shared information about the following areas:

- Parents as teachers**
- Before & After School Program**
- Full Days & Vacation Weeks**
- Summer Camp**
- KMS AfterZone**

Parents and students shared testimonials about the benefits of the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center.

Ms. Brissette closed the presentation by stating how proud she is of the program and the staff of the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center. Ms. Brissette publicly thanked Ginny, a Bristol Warren Family Resource Center staff member, for her work in putting the evening's program together.

School Committee members praised the work of the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center offering further support for the program's endeavors.

Dr. Andrade stated that the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center is a self-funded program.

Dr. Andrade closed by thanking Ms. Brissette for her leadership of the Bristol Warren Family Resource Center.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tracey McGee began her comments by stating that she is once again respectfully requesting that the Boy's Tennis Program be returned to a varsity sport. She stated that this request was made initially 15 months ago by supporters of Boys' Tennis. Over that time period, a series of conversations took place inside and outside of meetings with School Committee members and administrators that she believes did not produce a satisfactory answer for why Boys' Tennis was made a club sport. Ms. McGee believes that supporters of Boys'

Tennis have produced documentation to prove there is enough interest to fill a docket to satisfy the requirements for returning Boys' tennis to a varsity sport.

Judy Squires asked the School Committee to reinstate Boys' Tennis as an interscholastic team to be effective this spring. Ms. Squires stated that after meeting with the high school principal and Athletic Director, she does not believe Boys' Tennis supporters have received a satisfactory answer addressing why the District would be in violation of Title 9 if Boys' Tennis would have remained an interscholastic team.

Mark Hedden shared that he is a 1974 MHHS graduate and gave a testimonial of what tennis has meant to his life. He currently teaches tennis in the Town of Bristol where he said he has two dozen families involved in the program. He would not want these families, who have an interest in tennis, to be discouraged knowing that the town's high school does not offer Boys' tennis as an interscholastic league. Mr. Hedden asked the School Committee to reconsider making Boys' Tennis an interscholastic sport.

Sue Contente commented that the individuals who are championing for the return of Boys' Tennis to an interscholastic sport are doing so because of a connection to their children and to the high school experience. Ms. Contente stated that she is hoping to count on the School Committee to make decisions going forward that will benefit

students and have a positive impact on their high school experience.

Michael Contente stated that he is extremely disappointed that the Boys' Tennis Team is no longer at the interscholastic level. He stated that he believes there are currently 16 students who would have wanted to play this spring at the interscholastic level.

Rhonda Lee Fortin stated that in 2013 she came to the School Committee with questions regarding the discontinuation of Boys' Tennis as an interscholastic sport. Ms. Fortin stated that to date she is still looking for clarification and proof for why Boys' Tennis was removed as an interscholastic sport. She requested accountability and information to explain why Boys' Tennis is no longer an interscholastic sport.

RECOMMENDATION #S2014-70 – Home School Requests

That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the request of (9) Bristol families and (3) Warren families to home school their children for the 2014-2015 school year, adhering to all requirements as set forth by the Bristol Warren Regional School District.

MOTION: Mr. O'Dell made a motion to approve the requests to home school as read; seconded by Mrs. McBride. The motion passed unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION #S2014-71

Chairman Silva stated, for the record, that the Guiteras Baseball Field bid award is being withdrawn from the agenda. No action will be taken on this item.

RECOMMENDATION #S2014-72

That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and supported by the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee, approve the appointment of a Commissioning Agent Owners Project Manager for Kickemuit Middle School.

During the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee meeting a correction was made to the title for the appointment as set forth in the recommendation. The correct title is Owners Project Manager.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride made a motion to approve the appointment of SBS as the Owners Project Manager for Kickemuit Middle School; seconded by Mrs. Rancourt.

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Silva stated that with the new regulation required by RIDE, in order to get reimbursement from the Department of Education, any project over \$1 million must have a project manager.

The motion passed unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION #S2014-73

That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and supported by the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee, approve the application for two grants submitted by Walter Burke, Bristol Parks and Recreation, re: watershed/water quality.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride made a motion to approve the application for two grants submitted by Walter Burke, Bristol Parks and Recreation, re: watershed/water quality; seconded by Mr. O'Dell.

DISCUSSION: Chairman Silva stated that Walter Burke's research has yielded two additional grants to help supplement the MHHS field work, specifically the watershed/water quality issues. Chairman Silva stated that the effort of Walter Burke exemplifies the collaboration that is part of our community. Chairman Silva stated that the two grants being proposed to address water quality/ watershed issues at the MHHS fields total \$400,000 which would be in addition to the current \$800,000 in grants currently earmarked for the MHHS field project.

The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIRPERSON'S INITIATIVES

Council 94 Negotiations

Chairman Silva stated, for the record, that he will be recusing himself

from the C94 negotiations process. Chairman Silva stated that Mrs. Lynch will assume the role of Chairperson of the Negotiations Team Subcommittee. Mr. Bento will take over Chairman Silva's seat on the Negotiations Team Subcommittee.

Mrs. Lynch requested that all School Committee members submit their comments and feedback concerning the C94 contract as soon as possible. An initial meeting of the internal negotiations team will be scheduled soon.

Mr. O'Dell requested that a meeting be held with the Superintendent to discuss the C94 contract. Mrs. Lynch will speak with the District's attorney during an Executive Session concerning this matter.

Boys' Tennis Update

Chairman Silva shared the following prepared statement:

"The issue of "Boy's Interscholastic Tennis" has been discussed by this School Committee on numerous occasions. We have heard from our administrative team as well as many interested parents, students and others. We have done this on both the sub-committee level as well as at full School Committee meetings. We have inquired about what has happened to the program and what affect changing it from an interscholastic program to a "club" will have, as well as the prospect of bringing it back in the future.

We have engaged in debate not only among each other but also with

parents and students over the number of students that participated in the program over the last four years as well as the number of students interested in the program going forward.

This School Committee and this District has spent a substantial amount of man hours, energy and tax payer money addressing and dealing with this issue. We have been yelled at, accused of not being transparent, responded to multiple APRA (Public Document) requests, defended frivolous Open Meetings Act complaints filed against us and we have even been threatened with potential litigation.

One of the most important things to note is that we are here to serve the public and to do what we believe is in the best interest of the students of this community as well as the tax payers. That means that sometimes we make decisions that are unpopular with certain groups of students or parents. Sometimes we decide to support the decisions made by our superintendent and the administrative team and other times we choose to overrule them and ask that they go back to the drawing board and find a different way of handling the situation.

In this particular case, we received notification; through our Superintendent, that the Athletic Director recommended that we cease to carry an interscholastic boy's tennis program. This decision was not received well by the few students that had been participating

in the program nor their parents and friends. A group of these interested individuals came to one of our meetings and expressed their dismay with the decision being made.

In response to this, we inquired about the rationale used for arriving at this decision. The responses given seemed to make logical sense to the majority of this body even though those same responses were disputed by those interested parties. In the end there was not one member of this School Committee requesting that we overrule the decision and reinstate the program. The only requests made by members of this body involved leaving the door open for the sport to return as an interscholastic program and additionally that we encourage its return by agreeing to fund this sport as a club program until the number of students interested in it increased enough to warrant its return.

What transpired from there is that this issue has managed to take on a life of its own. The disputing of the amount of interest in the program began, the accusations of us making back room decisions arose and the credibility of our administrative team was being questioned. This School Committee again listened to the complaints of these interested parties and again attempted to address them. Meetings were set up (with parents and groups), telephone calls and emails were exchanged and contact was made with various other bodies, groups and organizations (Bristol Recreation Department, RI Interscholastic League, etc.).

This statement is an attempt to clarify what has transpired up to now

as well as to make people aware of what needs to take place going forward. There have been no back room deals nor decisions made regarding this issue, there has been nothing hidden from the plain view of the public. This decision was one made by the District Administrative team, supported by the Superintendent and once brought to our attention, also supported by this School Committee. Does that mean that none of us like tennis....absolutely not! What it means is that we have some faith in the people that we have hired to run these programs and the decisions that they make when doing so. I say that because we, as a group, did not look to overturn the decision. Additionally, we also showed some sympathy toward those interested in boy's tennis by agreeing to fund a club program. Our administrator handling this (our Athletic Director) has gone even further. She has made inquiries to see if we could get involved in a co-op program with another school district so that our students could compete interscholastically. She has inquired of the Interscholastic League to see if our students could compete individually. She has looked to see if there was sufficient interest in running an intramural program at KMS. She has also reached out to see if programs could be instituted by the local recreation departments to attract younger boys to this sport.

That brings us to the current and future status of Boy's Tennis; Going forward, boy's tennis will be operated as a JV or Club program at Mt. Hope High School, our AD will attempt to ascertain if any of our boys can participate in conjunction with another school or individually. But

this is not enough, there needs to be some steps taken by the members of the public that want to support and promote boy's tennis.

The onus is on you, the public, the parents and students expressing interest in interscholastic tennis, to initiate something that attracts student interest and promotes boys tennis. Contact your local youth sports groups, form a youth tennis program help to create something that would generate an increased number of students at the high school level that would want to play tennis. We can assure you that our facilities will be made available for your use. We have seen this done before. Most notably, our own Susan Rancourt initiated a lacrosse program for middle school aged students. She managed to bring a group of interested people together with a common interest (lacrosse) and get things going so that she created a very viable middle school lacrosse program. Something similar is needed for boy's tennis if it is truly your desire to have it come back. That burden rest with you, the public, to get those programs up and running, to make them sustainable and have that interest carry forward to the high school level. If at any point in the future the level of interest increases to where the numbers justify the return of boy's tennis I am quite sure that our Athletic Director and our Superintendent will review reinstating it as an interscholastic sport. Until then things are going to stay the way they are currently, with boy's tennis operating as a Club program, there has been no change of circumstances sufficient to revisit this issue."

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mrs. McBride requested an overview of all current COZ programs. Chairman Silva directed Mrs. McBride to speak with the Superintendent to share more about the details of her request.

Mr. O'Dell requested a Title 9 presentation. Chairman Silva responded that there is a plan in place to reach out to surrounding school districts to schedule an informational forum regarding Title 9. A professor located in Boston, who is well versed in Title 9, has been contacted to give a presentation at the forum. A date will be forthcoming.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:27 PM

MOTION: At 8:27 PM Mrs. McBride motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Bento.

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Lynch, Secretary

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