

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH September 26, 2006

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 7:00 p.m. in the Exeter-West Greenwich Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Paul McFadden; Frank Maher; Bill Munroe; and Bill Clay. Susan DeSack, Chairperson was absent. Interim Superintendent James A. DiPrete; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; Director of Curriculum Nancy I. Daley; and Student Member Geoffrey Southworth were present. Director of Special Services Maureen DeCrescenzo arrived at 7:10 p.m.

ORDER – Vice Chair Cicero called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member McFadden read the District Mission Statement.

OPEN FORUM – None

PRESENTATION – Student Member Report – Student Member Geoffrey Southworth reported the senior high is in the midst of spirit week. He gave an overview of the week's activities and said Homecoming is this coming Saturday, September 30, 2006.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA – Interim Superintendent DiPrete gave an overview of the Consent Agenda.

Member McFadden requested consent agenda item, Regular Minutes of September 5, 2006 be pulled from the consent agenda.

Member Clay moved to accept the consent agenda with item, Regular Minutes of September 5, 2006 pulled. Seconded by Member Maher. Voted 6 – 0.

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes – Executive Session Minutes of September 5, 2006

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments – (As Recommended by the Interim Superintendent)

a. Josh Clare as Volunteer Senior High School Assistant Wrestling Coach, effective for the 2006 – 2007 season

b. Jonathan Watterson as Senior High School Assistant Girls' Volleyball Coach, stipend, \$2,402 effective for the 2006 – 2007 season

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2. Leaves of absence – (As Recommended by the Interim Superintendent)

- a. **Steve Greenberg request for parental leave of absence beginning on or about October 11, 2006 for a 4-week period**

3. Resignations – (As Recommended by the Interim Superintendent)

- a. **Letter of Resignation from Josh Clare as High School Assistant Wrestling Coach, with regret, effective August 25, 2006**

4. Grievances

C. Bills – September Invoices in the amount of \$293,528.52, August 2006

Accruals in the amount of \$7,434.32

D. Home School Approvals – (As Recommended by the Interim Superintendent)

1. MARCANTONIO – Gio

2. BUCKLEY – Alexandra, Taylor, Nicholas, Zachary

End Consent Agenda

Interim Superintendent DiPrete reviewed the correspondence.

E. Correspondence – (1) Memo from Robert Ross Regarding

Convening a Sub Committee on Health Care, (2) Memo from Robert Ross Regarding Parents Seeking Alternative Transportation for Student, (3) Summer 2006 FOCUS Newsletter, (4) RI Association of School Committees Seminar Registration Form

Member Clay recommended correspondence (1) and (2) be placed on the next regular meeting agenda for discussion as both are very significant financially.

NEW BUSINESS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS –School Committee Member Munroe's Conduct at Meetings – Director of Special Services Maureen DeCrescenzo arrived at this time (7:10 p.m.).

Member Clay asked Member Munroe to explain why he insulted Superintendent John Pini. Members debated whether this item should be discussed during open session or executive session. Attorney Gorham expressed his opinion that the open meeting laws do not apply when a group wants to discuss a member of its own committee. It is up to the legislative body whether to remain in open session.

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Member McFadden moved to have this matter discussed in Executive Session as per the agenda and the preference of Member Munroe. Seconded by Member Munroe.

Attorney Gorham and members discussed whether there is a distinction from an employee vs. an elected official. Attorney Gorham said he felt there is a distinction because the Open Meeting Laws were written to protect the public from elected officials holding closed meetings. He said the legislature contemplated an employee may need some confidentiality but that elected officials would not.

Vote 2 – 4. Vice Chair Cicero, Clerk Coutcher, and Members Maher and Clay voted no.

Member Clay asked Member Munroe to explain the insult to Superintendent John Pini.

Member Munroe said he would respond to Member Clay's question, but would first make a statement to the public. Member Munroe read the following statement:

“Tonight you will witness an attempt by two West Greenwich committee members,

William Clay and Teri Cicero, to take action against a duly elected official

in good standing from the town of Exeter. It is in and of itself

egregious and purely political in nature. It is important for the public to know why this is happening. It's happening because I spoke out against the School Committees' attempt to illegally sole source the Metcalf fire alarm project. And because I did speak out, their attempt was stopped. Now they're seeking retribution. It is unfortunate that democracy is not functioning within the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee. Their attempt to silence me, a minority member of this committee, is a direct violation of my duly elected rights. If this action prevails here tonight, I will challenge their decision in the courts."

Member Clay asked Member Munroe why he insulted Superintendent John Pini.

Member Munroe's response was that Superintendent Pini was present in the audience at a School Committee meeting and that he (Pini) spoke out as I (Munroe) was trying to say why the district should not sole source the Metcalf fire alarm project. Member Munroe stated that he asked Chair DeSack to control her meeting, but Superintendent Pini continued to act out at him so he (Munroe) asked him (Pini) if he was going to drive the district into the ground like he did Chariho. Member Munroe referenced an April 10, 2002 Face-to-Face document he was holding and stated he said what he said because the document reports Superintendent Pini's schools were low performing for 4-years. Member Munroe said he could make copies (of the report) if anyone would care to read it.

Member Clay said to Member Munroe, “You opposed the sole-sourcing of Metcalf’s fire alarm project, yet on June 23, 2006 Member McFadden moved to sole source the project and you seconded the motion and voted affirmatively. When the minutes were read, you said the minutes were untrue.” Member Munroe responded that he had seconded the

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motion just to bring the discussion to the floor. He went on to say that he had “asked for a year and one-half to go to bid for the project but it fell on deaf ears.” Member Munroe expressed his opinion that the committee created the emergency.

Member Clay asked Member Munroe why he told a member of the committee to “Go to hell” in front of a Boy Scout during the Sunday, July 23, 2006 Special School Committee meeting? Member Munroe said he lost control and told Clerk Coutcher to “Go to hell” because Clerk Coutcher was standing over the table with his finger waving in his (Munroe) face yelling at him (Munroe) for John Pini’s resignation saying we lost a good Superintendent because of you.

Clerk Coutcher responded in disagreement and explained his recollection of the incident. He said, “The discussion was about Metcalf’s fire alarm project and Member Munroe’s implication that the

School Committee created the emergency. At that meeting Mr. Ross had created a timeline document which explained to date everything the School Committee and Administration had done and I told you if you had taken the time to read the document Mr. Ross had provided you would have realized the School Committee was actually doing something about it. That is when you got upset and told me to “Go to hell”. I never stated to you we lost a good Superintendent because of you.”

Member Munroe disagreed with Clerk Coutcher’s recollection.

Member Clay asked Member Munroe to explain his comments regarding the new textbook adoption (Street Law) at the August 3, 2005 School Committee meeting when he said, “I’ll see you in court.” Member Munroe responded, “I think that kind of material does not belong in our schools. Gay marriage is against the law in Rhode Island. Why are we teaching kids only one side? One-sided education is taught here. I am against it. I do intend to bring suit against the school system for the type of education we are teaching here on gay marriage.”

Member McFadden asked Member Clay if he had a list of questions and said he wanted to see the list. An audience member spoke out saying he represents Mr. Munroe and this discussion should be about Mr. Munroe’s job performance, not his personality.

Clerk Coutcher said all suits brought against the district cost the district money. He asked Member Munroe if his job performance is to control costs, how he intends to do this if he is going to bring suit against the district regarding gay marriage. Clerk Coutcher expressed his opinion that Member Munroe is wasting taxpayers' money.

Member Munroe's response was that the people who voted for him are against gay marriage and he is protecting the students against what's going on in public education systems here and throughout the country.

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Member Clay referenced newspaper clippings he had from citizens expressing that they are embarrassed by Member Munroe's behavior. Member Munroe responded, "Would that be Sharon Pelsler of Exeter or happen to be members of "Exeter First"? They are not the people who put the majority seat in office and in control in Exeter."

Members Munroe and McFadden then accused Member Clay of putting articles in mailboxes claiming he is a resident of Exeter. Vice Chair Cicero reminded members the discussion at hand is about Member Munroe's conduct at meetings.

Member Munroe voiced his opinion that some members are not happy with him because he is a dissenting voice. Vice Chair Cicero said the committee is unhappy with the way he treats members of the committee and his choice of words. Member Munroe expressed his opinion that “Go to hell” is not a swear word and that there were much worse expressions being used in the classroom.

Member Munroe spoke about a senior high English department lesson about “shit on the bathroom walls”. Vice Chair Cicero asked Member Munroe, “Why are you using those words?” Member Munroe responded, “The English department chair used that word in the classroom. What did the School Committee do about it?” Vice Chair Cicero reminded Member Munroe the English assignment is not an agenda item. Member McFadden voiced his opinion that Member Munroe has not been given the opportunity to explain his position without being constantly interrupted by Vice Chair Cicero, Clerk Coutcher, and Member Clay. Member Munroe said he recalled that the English assignment was to give five synonyms for the word shit. Vice Chair Cicero asked Member Munroe why he speaks the way he does at meetings and why he slams his fist on tables and yells and screams? Member Munroe responded, “Why? Where is your outrage? Do you think what that teacher said is correct? Why - because it falls on deaf ears. Exeter is sick of West Greenwich raising taxes on Exeter residents. As long as I sit in this seat I will speak out and I am very proud of the way I present myself on this committee. I’m fighting a hard fight against you people.”

Vice Chair Cicero read the following statement:

“Today’s agenda does not reflect the intent of the motion I was planning on making; therefore, I will table my motion until the next meeting, at which point the agenda will accurately reflect the intent of the motion. I do not want to risk an Open Meetings Law violation and complaint being filed with the Attorney General’s office which would therefore result in additional unnecessary legal expenses for the district.”

Member McFadden voiced his opinion that there is a double-standard here as a member of this committee in executive session has cussed at him. Vice Chair Cicero reminded Member McFadden this topic was not on the agenda and would not be discussed. Member Munroe said that this is why he speaks out. Vice Chair Cicero reminded

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members if they wish to place an item on the agenda they would need to follow proper procedure.

Member Munroe’s Open Meeting Law Complaint to the RI Attorney General – Member Munroe explained this is a case in process and he will not discuss it.

Member Clay asked Member Munroe if he (Munroe) attended the

meeting himself and it was posted with the secretary of state but inadvertently not published in the Providence Journal, why he would file a complaint. Member Munroe responded, “No comment.”

Vice Chair Cicero expressed this is one more complaint that will incur legal fees that taxpayers’ will pay for.

SAT Program Update/Results Report – Member McFadden referenced the District SAT Scores 2006 Report and requested clarity at the next School Committee meeting as he found a discrepancy between the District’s scores and the scores reported by the Providence Journal.

Interim Superintendent DiPrete left the meeting at this time (7:45 p.m.).

Member McFadden reviewed the scores reported. Member McFadden expressed that he hoped the SAT program will continue and that scores will continue to improve. He also expressed his opinion that the district should be scoring higher.

Interim Superintendent DiPrete returned to the meeting at this time (7:51 p.m.).

Member Munroe asked Director of Curriculum Nancy Daley for her opinion regarding instituting school labs in order for students to meet one-on-one with teachers for extra help in math, English, etc. He suggested that the district pays teachers for a six-hour day, but with

block scheduling they are only in the classroom for four hours so the district could have teachers in a lab for at least one-hour of the day to assist those students requiring extra help.

Student Member Geoffrey Southworth expressed his point of view, as a student attending the high school, that all teachers continually make all students aware of their availability for after school help should they need it.

Member Munroe responded to Student Member Southworth that it was good of those teachers; however, he has heard complaints from other students that teachers sat in the classroom doing their work and did not help students.

Vice Chair Cicero reminded members this subject matter does not pertain to the SAT scores and should not be discussed. She said this matter should be brought to a future agenda if members so wish. Member Munroe voiced his opinion of disagreement and said, “This is why I raise my voice. You’re a perfect example of why my voice raises.”

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Metcalf Fire Alarm – Update – Director of Administration Robert Ross gave an overview of today’s meeting with the State Fire Board Appeal

and Review. He reported that the Board granted the district a variance on the egress issue which is to be completed by summer 2007 and also granted the district 30-days to obtain approval of a bid-spec, to advertise, and to award the fire alarm project. It will begin immediately upon the awarding the bid-spec. Mr. Ross estimated the cost to complete the egress issue at \$250,000.00 to be funded as a capital request in the 2007 – 2008 budget and voted on at the 2007 District Financial Meeting.

Superintendent Search – Interim Superintendent DiPrete reminded members of the upcoming special meeting on October 3, 2006 in which members will meet to review applications for the vacancy. Members briefly discussed how this meeting would be conducted.

Teacher Assistants' Qualifications – Fragile Children – Director of Administration Robert Ross referenced an enclosed draft job description and explained this is a “work in progress”. A copy has been forwarded to all nurse teachers for their review, and he has discussed this matter with Director of Special Services Maureen DeCrescenzo.

Ms. DeCrescenzo said the current Teacher Assistant job description needs to be updated as it does not reflect the No Child Left Behind act and is five years behind the times. Once the Teacher Assistant job description is updated, the paraprofessional – Teacher Aide – Special Education (Student with Medical Needs) job description can

be completed (in order to prepare for probable future needs).

Community Newsletter – Vice Chair Cicero explained the Community Newsletter is a communication from the School Committee to the community which may include subjects such as, the budget, the status of the Metcalf fire alarm project, etc. The committee presently has a policy allowing the newsletter; however, it is in need of someone to execute it. Vice Chair Cicero said she believes the newsletter will be published quarterly. Member Maher indicated he may be interested in the task. This item will continue at the next meeting.

REPORTS/COMMENTS – Member McFadden requested consent agenda item, Regular Minutes of September 5, 2006, be pulled and referenced page 5 – Ms. Cicero’s motion which was withdrawn. He suggested, since the motion was withdrawn, it should be removed from the minutes. Vice Chair Cicero reminded Member McFadden it is still part of the minutes because she read it at the meeting and said she will not remove it from the minutes.

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Member Clay moved to accept pulled consent agenda item(s),

**Regular Minutes of September 5, 2006. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher.
Voted 4 – 2. Members Munroe and McFadden voted no.**

**IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS – October 10, 2006 – School
Committee Meeting; October 24, 2006 – School Committee Meeting**

**Vice Chair Cicero reminded members of the special meeting
scheduled for October 3, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. in the Jr. – Sr. High School
library.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

**ADJOURNMENT – Member Clay moved to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.
Seconded by Member Maher. Voted 6 – 0.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

**ROBIN CERIO
CLERK**