

**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH February 12, 2008**

**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 Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Frank Maher; Mary Walsh; and Robert Bollengier. Member William Munroe arrived at 7:10 p.m. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; Director of Curriculum Nancy I. Daley; Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar; Student Member Katherine Matook; and RI Department of Education Commissioner Peter McWalters were present.**

**ORDER – Chair DeSack called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Vice Chair Cicero read the District Mission Statement.**

**OPEN FORUM – None**

**PRESENTATION – Student Member Report – Student Member Matook gave an overview of current events at the senior high school. She reported that the gymnastics team took first place recently against its opponent Coventry High School, DECA students placed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd at last week's competition, and Varsity Athletes Against**

**Substance Abuse, (VAASA) students have been successfully presenting the anti-drug/alcohol/ tobacco message to EWG Junior High School students.**

**HS Diploma System Presentation – Superintendent Geismar invited Commissioner of Education Peter McWalters to join the committee at the table and explained to the committee why he invited the commissioner to tonight’s meeting. The Superintendent briefly spoke to the committee regarding EWG’s High School Diploma System preliminary approval withheld status and said that the district is confident it is on the right track to obtain full approval by the state target date of 2010.**

**Member Munroe arrived at this time, (7:10 p.m.).**

**Commissioner McWalters said that he is here tonight to reassure the district and to answer any questions members may have regarding the high school diploma system process. He spoke about gaps between exit performance and landing performance in students out of high school and gave probable reasons for the gaps. Commissioner McWalters said that EWG is a good running system and that the committee has much to be proud of at its district. He answered members’ clarifying questions and discussed difficulties/concerns with the way that education is funded in the state of Rhode Island; the need to review course content level so that every student receives the same content delivery; and state’s available resources related to**

curriculum. Commissioner McWalters said that all districts are expected to have an approved diploma system by 2010 and that Regents Diplomas will be issued to students by 2012. Other topics that were talked about were out-of-district transportation; the retirement system; and health care costs.

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**ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA – Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda.**

**Member Bollengier made a request to add Bayada Nurses from consent agenda item, BILLS to the next regular meeting agenda of February 26, 2008 for discussion. He said that one month ago, Director of Special Education Carmella Farrar responded to his e-mail inquiring about the Bayada Nurses. Chair DeSack requested that the e-mail correspondence be provided to all members in their February 26, 2008 School Committee packets.**

**Member Bollengier requested to pull consent agenda item, V., B., 2. for discussion.**

**Vice Chair Cicero requested to pull consent agenda item, V., A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Minutes of January 22, 2008 for discussion.**

**Member Walsh requested to amend the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008 to reflect that Attorney Vincent Ragosta was present at the meeting.**

**Member Bollengier moved to accept the consent agenda with items, V., B., 2. and V., A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Minutes of January 22, 2008, pulled and with the recommended modifications to the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008 to reflect that Attorney Vincent Ragosta was present at the meeting. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.**

**Vice Chair Cicero moved to seal the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008, with modifications to reflect that Attorney Vincent Ragosta was present at the meeting. Seconded by Member Walsh.**

**In response to Member Bollengier's inquiry as to why Vice Chair Cicero is moving to seal the minutes, Chair DeSack explained that historically the committee has sealed executive session minutes concerning confidential personnel issues pertaining to an individual or confidential matters concerning a student. Members discussed tabling the motion until clarity is obtained from legal counsel regarding sealing minutes. Vice Chair Cicero recommended sealing the minutes in the interim to be safe while obtaining a clarifying answer from legal counsel.**

**Member Bollengier once again expressed his confusion as to why the minutes should be sealed. Chair DeSack directed Clerk Coutcher to amend the minutes of January 29, 2008 to reflect in Open Session that a vote was taken in Executive Session. It was noted that the Budget Workshop of January 29th and the Executive Session Meeting of January 29th were advertised as two separate meetings. Clerk Coutcher said that he will make the necessary corrections to the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008.**

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**Vice Chair Cicero restated her motion. Vice Chair Cicero moved to temporarily seal the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008; with modifications, until they are accurately recorded and a legal opinion is obtained. Member Walsh seconded.**

**Voted 7 – 0.**

**The following items were approved:**

**A. Approval of Minutes – Executive Session Minutes of January 22, 2008; Budget Workshop Minutes of January 29, 2008; Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2008, (with modifications and temporarily sealed)**

**B. Personnel Items**

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

**a. Gail Bender, Rockie Bromell, and Josh Bednarczyk as After School**

**Intramurals Co-Advisors at the Jr. High School, Stipend 1/3rd each of \$1,201; effective for the 2007 – 2008 school year**

**2. Leaves of Absence –**

**a. Pulled**

**3. Resignations – (As Recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)**

**a. Letter of Resignation from Melanie Lawhead and Patricia Federico from their position(s) as Co-Softball Coach at the Jr. High School, effective January 4, 2008**

**4. Grievances**

**5. Non-Renewals – (As Recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)**

**a. See Attached List**

**6. Recalls**

**7. Sabbaticals**

**C. Bills – In the amount of \$399,320.41**

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

**1. BUONO – Francesco**

**2. WEST – Ila, Lane, and Percy**

**3. McLAUGHLIN – Thomas**

**End Consent Agenda**

**The Correspondence was reviewed.**

**Correspondence – (1) 2008 – H 7285 State of RI Legislation; (2)**

## **SORICO January 21, 2008 Action Plans and Current Updates**

**Monthly Budget Projection 2007 – 2008 – Director of Administration Robert Ross confirmed that the 07/08 Budget is in the black.**

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**Budget 2008 – 2009 – Director of Administration Robert Ross referenced the budget summary page enclosed in members' packets. He said that changes in State Housing Aid and Medicaid will lower the district's revenue and must be taken into account during the budget workshop sessions. Mr. Ross said that he will have new group home numbers to report. Chair DeSack asked members to review the new budget workshop dates that were provided to members this evening – handout - Important Dates and Meetings.**

**Student Member Matook left the meeting at this time, (8:15 p.m.).**

**MONTHLY STATUS REPORTS – Superintendent – Members did not express any questions or concerns regarding the monthly status reports.**

**Business –**

**Curriculum –**

**Special Education –**

**Maintenance –**

## **Technology –**

**NEW BUSINESS – Health Care Follow-up – Superintendent Geismar said that he and Director of Administration Robert Ross have an appointment tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. with a representative from United Health to discuss health care. Superintendent Geismar and Mr. Ross will report back to the committee regarding the outcome of tomorrow’s meeting during the next budget workshop. Chair DeSack said that this item may need to be brought back to a future School Committee agenda.**

**Wawaloam Fire Alarm – Director of Administration Robert Ross referenced the comprehensive documentation he enclosed in members’ packets concerning the Wawaloam School fire code inspection and subsequent variance which dates back to March 2005.**

**The District needs to have an egress plan and a bid document designed that is compliant with state fire code regulations. Mr. Ross said that he has been in contact with Fire Marshal St. Jean and Architect Luis Torrado regarding this matter. Mr. Torrado is prepared to include this project with the bond. The District will pursue a variance at its assigned hearing date of March 4, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. with the Fire Safety Board of Appeal & Review. Member Bollengier questioned if this issue was part of Torrado’s report to the district. Mr. Ross said that the district filed a variance prior to Torrado’s hiring. This issue was not part of Torrado’s report. Mr. Torrado will include the cost of the egress issue in the bond. He questions not**

getting the variance approved. He will research code and be present at the hearing. Mr. St. Jean is in Florida until April and will not be at the hearing. If the bond does not go, Mr. Ross said that he has spoken to the state and the district does still have \$200,000 left in the Capital Fund to pursue this work. Member Bollengier expressed that he still has concerns because he operated under the assumption that Torrado did his study and was aware of the egress issue. Mr. Ross responded that the district is prepared to respond and that the egress issue is not as comprehensive as, and should not be as high a dollar issue as those were at the High School and Metcalf

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School. Member Munroe said that he does not recall Fire Marshal St. Jean saying there was an egress issue at Wawaloam. Mr. Ross responded that on July 13, 2005 correspondence to the committee and the state regarding this matter was enclosed in School Committee packets. Additionally, there was a fire alarm update regarding this specific issue on July 29, 2005.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Policies – Review and Adoption - #4150 – AIDS Virus-HIV/Hepatitis – 2ndr Reading – Superintendent Geismar requested to table Policy #4150 to a future meeting because the policy subcommittee was unable to meet to discuss the policy prior to tonight’s meeting. Chair DeSack advised that this policy shall be brought back to the agenda when it is ready for adoption.**

**2008 – 2009 School Calendar – Superintendent Geismar asked for the committees’ direction as he prepares the 2008 – 2009 school calendar. He said that he has reviewed the staff and parent calendar survey results and that he does not see a mandate to change the calendar format. The Superintendent said that the majority of the surveys indicate a desire to keep the calendar as it is. He gave examples of comments that were made and invited members to review the staff/parent calendar surveys. Chair DeSack advised that the Superintendent should continue to work on the calendar and then bring it back to the School Committee.**

**Bond Discussion – Superintendent Geismar called members’ attention to Mr. Ross’ enclosed capital project bond activity timeline and reported that on Thursday he and**

**Mr. Ross will meet on site with School Construction Coordinator Mr. daSilva. This meeting will provide guidance to obtain Phase I and II approval. The district is making good progress to be set for the District Financial Meeting on April 7, 2008. The Superintendent said that he contacted Attorney Brad Gorham to see if the towns need to vote or approve on the bond issue. The Superintendent read Attorney Gorham’s February 8, 2008 response:**

**This is a summary of the procedures and responsibilities for a bond issue for the school district.**

**1. The School Committee develops a capital improvement plan and estimates the costs.**

**2. The School Committee reviews and approves legislation for introduction in the General Assembly to authorize a bond issue to finance the capital improvements needed. One of the items considered and included in the legislation is the method of approval of the bond issue by the voters, whether by a vote at a Financial District Meeting;, either the annual meeting or a special meeting called by the School Committee, or by a referendum item at the general election or at a special election on the question.**

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**3. After deciding on the bond issue legislation the School Committee has the Act transmitted to the Senator and Representatives that represent the district for introduction. The General Assembly requires that a letter from Bond Counsel accompany the act certifying that it is in proper form.**

**All of this has been done.**

**It should be noted that the School District is a separate legal entity. The Town Councils of Exeter and West Greenwich do not approve or vote on the bond issue. The voters do, either at a Financial District Meeting or in a referendum vote.**

Vice Chair Cicero advised members that she is hearing that community members are not in favor of the bond. She said that the committee needs to educate community members about the bond process or it need to have an alternate plan in place. Member Bollengier said that he also has been told this and that the perception of the community is that taxes are going up when they hear that the district is going to bond, but this is not necessarily so. Senator Breene expressed his opinion to Member Bollengier that the community may not support the bond because the committee is not properly marketing it. Member Bollengier said that he agrees the district needs to market, and perhaps mail a flyer to taxpayers. Chair DeSack agreed that a flyer should be created and mailed to community members. She also suggested airing a fireside chat regarding the bond process. Members discussed the timeline for bulk mailing a flyer to community members prior to the April 7th District Financial Meeting. Member Munroe expressed his disagreement that the bond is within the tax cap. He expressed his opinion that the committee is assuming that the state of RI will reimburse the district, but the state is bankrupt and will not come back with reimbursement. Clerk Coutcher reminded Member Munroe that the district and the town councils decided at its meeting that if the state does not, the bond number will be cut in half.

Mr. Ross answered members' clarifying questions and there was a lengthy discussion regarding the Metcalf School gymnasium floor

**and the High School roof projects.**

**Member Walsh moved to accept the fees for the High School - roof design through construction administration - \$69,000 and Metcalf School - gym floor replacement, schematic design through construction administration - \$9,000; and to include testing of the floor moisture migration issue, not to exceed \$5,000, taken from the Capital Fund. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero.**

**In response to Clerk Coutcher's inquiry, Mr. Ross confirmed that the \$69,000 roof design cost out of the Capital Fund will not jeopardize the Metcalf gymnasium floor project if the bond fails.**

**Vote 7 – 0 in favor.**

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**IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS – February 15, 2008 – Notice to Canvassers; Monday, February 18th and Tuesday, February 19th-Budget Workshop Dates; Wednesday, March 5, 2007-TC/SC Joint Meeting Date; Tuesday, March 11, 2008-School Committee Meeting-(Budget Adoption); Thursday, March 20, 2008-Deadline for motions to change the budget by more than \$10,000; Monday, March 24, 2007-Public Hearing; Tuesday, March 25, 2008-School Committee Meeting**

**REPORTS/COMMENTS – Chair DeSack reverted back to items pulled from the consent agenda for discussion.**

**Vice Chair Cicero requested to pull consent agenda item, Regular Minutes of January 22, 2008. She referenced page 4 – WB Community Health Contract Extension Approval and said that the committee had extensive discussion regarding whether or not to withdraw from WB and about what fees would be incurred. She suggested that the minutes should be modified to indicate the discussion and the ramifications of not extending the WB Community Health. She suggested bringing the modified minutes back to the next regular meeting for approval.**

**Member Bollengier requested to pull consent agenda item, V. B. 2. Leaves of Absence – a. Request from Christine Petrarca to continue her leave of absence from her Grade 3 teaching position, in order to complete her experience at RIDE as a Teacher Quality Fellow, for the 2008 – 2009 school year for discussion. He questioned if, since the district is currently in negotiations with the teachers' contract, approving this request for a Leave of Absence sets precedence. Chair DeSack agreed that since the committee has denied other requests that have exceeded 2-years and if to remain consistent, the leave should be denied. Superintendent Geismar gave a brief overview of the circumstances of Mrs. Petrarca's RIDE fellowship leave and the benefits of it to the district and to RIDE. He said that he felt the leave was in everyone's best interest. Superintendent Geismar confirmed**

**that Mrs. Petrarca's salary and benefits are reimbursed to the district and that after hiring a replacement teacher it ends up as a cost savings to the district. Member Bollengier said that he is willing to, if the committee wants, put forth a motion to table Mrs. Petrarca's request for one School Committee meeting to allow time to obtain an opinion from Attorney Ragosta. Chair DeSack advised that this item will be carried over to the next regular School Committee meeting along with the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2008.**

**Vice Chair Cicero moved to amend the January 22, 2008 Regular Meeting Minutes and to carry them over to next regular School Committee meeting for approval, and to carry over to the next regular School Committee meeting the leave of absence request from Christine Petrarca and to obtain a legal opinion regarding the request. Seconded by Member Bollengier. Voted 7 – 0.**

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**ADJOURNMENT – Member Walsh moved to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero.**

**Member Bollengier questioned why the committee was not going into Executive Session at this time. He said he was told this afternoon there would be an Executive Session this evening. Chair DeSack said**

that upon advisement from the Superintendent that there is no immediate need for an Executive Session this evening and in view of the inclement weather this evening Executive Session could be excluded; however, Chair DeSack said that the committee will adjourn into Executive Session at this time.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 AND RIGL 42-46-5 – Vice Chair Cicero moved to go into Executive Session at 9:10 p.m. in accordance with 42-46-5 (a)(2) – Collective Bargaining Agreement/Negotiation Discussion . Seconded by Member Munroe. Voted 7 - 0 in favor.**

**Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 9:15 p.m.**

**Clerk Coutcher moved to reconvene to Open Session. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero.  
Voted 7 - 0 in favor.**

**Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 9:45 p.m.**

**There were no votes taken during Executive Session.**

**ADJOURNMENT – Vice Chair Cicero moved to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned 9:45 p.m.**

**ROBIN CERIO**

**CLERK**