

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH August 26, 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 Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Frank Maher; Mary Walsh; William Munroe; and Robert Bollengier. Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson arrived at 7:28 p.m. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; and Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar were present. Director of Curriculum Nancy I. Daley was absent.

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

OPEN FORUM – None

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

Member Munroe requested to pull consent agenda item, Regular Minutes of August 12, 2008 for correction.

Superintendent Geismar answered Member Bollengier's clarifying question regarding FTE's.

Member Bollengier moved to accept the consent agenda (with Regular Minutes of August 12, 2008 pulled). Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes – PULLED

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments – (As Recommended by the Superintendent) – (No change to FTE's)

a. Amy Biagioni as 1.0 FTE Science Teacher at the Senior High School, Step 5, M, Salary \$47,952; effective June 25, 2008 (8/12/08 carryover)

b. Amy Hubertus as 1.0 FTE French Teacher at the Junior High School, Step 1, B, Salary \$35,601; effective June 25, 2008 – (ENCLOSED)

c. Wilson Knerr, III as .8 FTE Physical Education/Health/ Technology Teacher at the Junior High School, Step 4, B, Salary \$35,523; effective June 25, 2008 – (ENCLOSED)

d. Piera Caruso as .4FTE Elementary Music Teacher at Wawaloam School, Step 1, B, Salary \$14,383; effective August 26, 2008 – (ENCLOSED)

e. Janine Passaretti as .5 FTE Grade-4 Teacher at Metcalf School,

Step 2, B, Salary \$19,724; effective August 25, 2008 – (ENCLOSED)

f. Christina McKiernan as 1.0 FTE Senior High Math Teacher, Step 4, BA, Salary \$44,404; effective August 27, 2008, contingent upon receipt of a non-disqualifying Criminal Background Check

2. Leaves of Absence

3. Resignations

a. Letter of Resignation from Jessica Wolke from her .5 FTE School Social Worker position, effective August 25, 2008

4. Grievances

5. Recalls

6. Non-Renewals

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – 2008/09 Bills the amount of \$140,315.60 and 2007/08 Accruals in the amount of \$552,213.27

D. Home School Approvals

1. NEGRI – Olivia

End Consent Agenda

Correspondence – (1) July 16, 2008 Letter from Roy Seitsinger to Denise Boulé

Monthly Budget Projection – This item was not discussed.

Monthly Subcommittee Report(s) – Transportation Subcommittee Report – Member Maher reported that he met with Member Bollengier and Superintendent Geismar to discuss the group stop issue. After a lengthy discussion they concluded there are many districts

throughout the country facing fiscal impact due to the increase in fuel costs. Member Maher said that he researched other school districts similar to EWG. He found that several of the districts not only implemented group stops but also eliminated some routes all together. However, the changes affect older students only and not elementary students. He advised members that there are professional contractors available for hire that will conduct a study to ascertain whether or not it is worth the district's time to pursue implementing group stops. Chair DeSack asked Member Maher to research vendors and bring back their proposals to a future meeting. Member Maher requested that this item carryover to the next regular meeting agenda and said that he will bring back the results at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS – Kindergarten Enrollment Appeal – Chair DeSack clarified that this agenda item is not an appeal. It is a kindergarten start date discussion. She advised that since this item was brought to the agenda by a community member, the committee will hear the community member's statement and then the Superintendent will speak to the issue. She cautioned that the start date is the law and asked that the discussion is kept specific to the issue and not to a particular student. She said that names should not be mentioned.

Commander Joe Muhitch, Exeter, introduced himself to the committee and thanked them for allowing him to present. Commander Muhitch read a statement which disclosed his purpose

for coming before the School Committee. He said that he is requesting that his child be enrolled in Kindergarten this academic year. Commander Muhitch apprised members to what has transpired concerning this matter prior to this meeting. He gave an overview of meeting dates, telephone conversations, and email correspondence he had with Superintendent Geismar, Principal Marino, and Chair DeSack. He referenced two email communications from Principal Marino, which he distributed to members, and paraphrased the contents. He called attention to Principal Marino's email disclosure that there are available spaces available in the afternoon kindergarten session this year. Commander Muhitch said that he wishes to discuss RIGL 16-2-27 and EWG Policy 8303 which states, "Every child who has attained or will have attain 5-years of age on or before September 1, is eligible to attend kindergarten". He said that what this law does not say is a child born after September 1, shall not be eligible to attend kindergarten. Therefore, Commander Muhitch offered that EWGSD does not have a written policy regarding children born after September 1. Additionally, Commander Muhitch offered that other school districts have policies for children born after September 1. He said that he is aware of students entering kindergarten this year who have not reached the age of 5 by September 1 attending school in Coventry and South Kingston. He asked the committee why EWG does not have written policy and why we are not affording the community this educational opportunity. Finally, he said that he and his wife strongly value education. Up until the entrance to kindergarten, parents are primary educators of their

children. Parents are in the best position to evaluate if their child is ready for school. Commander Muhitch summarized that 1) There is no written policy. 2) There is no screening process in place for children who obtain age-5 by 9/1 or for children whose birth date falls after 9/1. 3) Space is available in the kindergarten class of 08/09. He once again requested enrollment for my child into 08/09 academic year and he also recommended that a written policy be establish.

In response to Commander Muhitch's inquiry as to why the district does not have a policy in place, Chair DeSack referenced RIGL 16-2-27, read it out loud, and said the law clearly states a 9/1 birth date deadline. The law does not give the school district any discretion. The law is in place whether or not the committee wishes to allow leeway for a start time. She asked if should leeway be given, at what expense should it be given? Should the district hire new teachers? If a birth date is not set, what is the flexibility? A lengthy discussion ensued surrounding this matter. Members exchanged concerns, opinions, thoughts, and ideas.

Vice Chair Cicero arrived at this time, (7:28 p.m.).

Member Munroe expressed his opinion that if the committee wishes to allow flexibility, it should be granted if there is room. Member Bollengier expressed his opinion that the school committee has no discretion to even act along the lines of setting exceptions. The committee has to read and interpret the statute as it is written. The

only group who can change statute is the legislature. This statute does not give the School Committee the authority to place students in open slots. The date is very specific. It is September 1 not September 2.

Additional lengthy discussion ensued. Member Maher suggested the district ought to be able to evaluate children (because the district does not have a gifted program) and if a child is ready to enroll and there is room, the committee should allow it. Member Walsh expressed her opinion that children at the age of 4.5 are not emotionally and socially ready for kindergarten. A screening process would need to include those pieces as well as academics. In response to community member Kelley Delacruz's testimony that her child was allowed to attend kindergarten two years ago at EWG although he had not yet had his 5th birthday, Chair DeSack explained that when the law changed 3 years ago, because of the dramatic change, some exceptions were given by the state to allow leeway to school districts. Chair DeSack advised that since this new administration, there have been no exceptions to the September 1 deadline.

Member Bollengier moved that "the committee adhere to involve the guidelines of 16-2-27 – Eligibility for attendance - Kindergarten as written by the General Assembly presented to us in our packets until such time as our legal counsel advises us in writing that we have the power as a School Committee to deviate from the provision of

16-2-27". Seconded by Member Munroe.

Further discussion ensued. Member Maher asked for clarification if Member Bollengier's motion is to be interpreted as it is still possible that once the committee receives legal counsel's written opinion, the parent here tonight can still involve their child in late enrollment into kindergarten this year. In response to Member Maher's inquiry if any other families have requested early enrollment this year, Superintendent Geismar responded that 4 to 5 families have and have been told no. Chair DeSack asked Member Bollengier if his motion is for 08/09 school year.

Member Bollengier amended his motion so that it will only apply and be applicable effective for the school year commencing for birth dates commencing 9/1/ 09. It would not be effective for this current school year. Member Munroe withdrew his second. Member Walsh seconded.

Chair DeSack and Member Maher debated the district's ability to expedite the timeline necessary to obtain a ruling on the age guidelines for the 08/09 school year.

The motion and modification to the motion on the table was reread.

Vote 6 – 1 in favor. Member Maher voted no.

Chair DeSack polled members to see who would be interested to serve on a subcommittee to investigate first and foremost if the committee has any legal right to deviate from the 9/1 deadline and if so, what are those guidelines. Next, if the committee chooses to allow flexibility, how will it be done? Clerk Coutcher and Members Munroe, Maher, and Walsh volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Consensus of the School Committee is that the subcommittee will include Clerk Coutcher, Members Munroe, Walsh, and Maher, the Curriculum Developer, a kindergarten teacher, and a psychology or evaluation readiness representative. Chair DeSack advised that the meetings will need to be posted. In response to Member Munroe's concern that no votes/decisions are taken at a subcommittee meeting, Chair DeSack asked the subcommittee not to meet until she receives counsel's ruling regarding voting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Capital Project Update – Director of Administration Robert Ross updated member on the roof, window installations, and floor abatement Capital Projects. Mr. Ross answered Member Munroe's and Clerk Coutcher's clarifying questions. In response to Member Munroe's inquiry, he said he will bring the Metcalf gymnasium floor repair guarantee to the next regular meeting. Chair DeSack gave details explaining what caused the gymnasium floor to buckle. Mr. Ross reported the floor project should be completed by the end of September or the beginning of October.

Approve 1.0 FTE Clerical Position – Superintendent Geismar advised that this item/request is withdrawn and shall be removed from the agenda.

REPORTS/COMMENTS – Chair DeSack reverted to the pulled minutes of August 12, 2008. Member Munroe requested to modify the minutes of August 12, 2008 to reflect his vote of No for Policy # 8607. The August 12, 2008 meeting minutes will carry over to the next meeting agenda.

Vice Chair Cicero apologized to the committee for being late to the meeting. She said she had been attending an important School Improvement Team Collaborative meeting. The SIT Collaborative reached out to parents regarding state regulations and had a great turn out. Chair DeSack advised this item will be added to the next regular meeting agenda so Vice Chair Cicero can update members regarding this matter.

IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS –Wednesday, August 27, 2008 – First Day of School Students; Wednesday, August 27, 2008-Capital Bond Building Committee Meeting; Tuesday, September 9, 2008-Primary Day; WEDNESDAY, September 10, 2008-School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, September 23, 2008-School Committee Meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 AND RIGL 42-46-5 – Vice Chair

Cicero moved to go into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m. in accordance with 42 -46-5 (a)(2) – CBA/Contract Ratification and 42-46-5 (a)(2) – CBA/Negotiation Discussion. Seconded Clerk Coutcher. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Commander Muhitch requested to address the committee. He said that the committee did not answer his question regarding his child attending kindergarten this school year. Chair DeSack restated that if a child is born after the September 1 deadline, that child cannot attend kindergarten.

Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 8:13 p.m.

Vice Chair Cicero moved to reconvene to Open Session. Seconded by Member Bollengier. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 9:40 p.m.

A 6 – 1 vote was taken during Executive Session to ratify the 2007/08 and 2008/11 collective bargaining agreements as presented in draft form, conditioned upon further review and approval by the Superintendent, Director of Administration, the Committee's negotiating team, and legal counsel, to insure that these labor contracts accurately incorporate all of the tentative agreements which were reached at the bargaining table. Member Munroe voting against.

**ADJOURNMENT – Vice Chair Cicero moved to adjourn at 9:41 p.m.
Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting
adjourned 9:41 p.m.**

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK