

**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH September 8, 2009**

**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; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Valerie Zuercher; Mark Rafanelli, Robert Bollengier, and Mary Walsh. Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson was absent. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; and Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar were present.**

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

**Open Forum (15-minute limit) – None**

**Presentation - None**

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

**Member Bollengier said that he would defer to the Chair as he had**

several clarifying questions regarding Bills, which he had submitted to District Treasurer Kate LaCroix. He has not yet received a response from Ms. LaCroix. Chair DeSack said that Ms. LaCroix could still respond to all members regarding Member Bollengier's questions. After which, if Member Bollengier still has questions, those questions can be put on a future agenda for discussion. Member Bollengier pointed out that once approved; the bills would be paid. He asked if the bills would then be subject to recall. Chair DeSack said that the bills could still be discussed; however, will need to be paid and are not subject to recall. Superintendent Geismar and Director of Administration Robert Ross answered almost all of Member Bollengier's questions regarding Bills. Chair DeSack said that answers to the remaining questions are forthcoming.

The following items were approved:

**A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of August 25, 2009**

**B. Personnel Items**

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

- a. Donna Brodner as 1.0 FTE District-wide ELL teacher – Grades K-12 – (1-year LOA position), Step 11, B + 30, Salary \$76,931; effective retroactive to August 31, 2009**
- b. Joseph Abarr as .57 FTE Sr. High School Social Studies Teacher, Step 1, B, Salary \$20,700.69; effective retroactive to August 31, 2009**
- c. Anne Sullivan as Girls' High School Tennis Coach, Stipend \$1,016.11; effective for the 2009/10 season**

- d. Dean Waterman as Boys' High School Assistant Soccer Coach, Stipend \$947.82; effective for the 2009/10 season; contingent upon receipt of a non-disqualifying Background Check**
- e. Stephen Marmas as Girls' High School Assistant Soccer Coach, Stipend \$947.82; effective for the 2009/10 season; contingent upon receipt of a non-disqualifying Background Check**

**2. Leaves of Absence**

**3. Resignations**

**4. Grievances**

**5. Non-Renewals**

**6. Recalls – (As Recommended by the Superintendent)**

- a. Please see attached TA List**

**7. Sabbaticals**

**C. Bills – In the amount of \$146,448.42; Accruals in the amount of \$2,261.78**

**D. Home School Approvals**

- 1. SCHLOESSER - Amelia**
- 2. RUTHERFORD - Nicholas**
- 3. CAMPOPIANO – Gian, Dante**

**End Consent Agenda**

**Correspondence – (1) Commissioner's Review 2010 Electronic Report; (2) September 3, 2009 Memorandum and RI Department of**

## **Health PowerPoint to School Committee from Superintendent Geismar Regarding H1N1 Update**

**Member Bollengier asked who was responsible for compiling the information for the Commissioner's Review Report. Dr. Geismar said that it was a joint effort. However, Director of Student Affairs Chris Anthony was the point person. Dr. Geismar said that he invited Principal Butler and Mr. Anthony to attend the next regular School Committee meeting to review the report and answer any questions members may have.**

**Budget Projection 2008 – 2009 – Director of Administration Robert Ross gave an overview of the 2008 – 2009 Budget Projection and listed contributing factors that left the district with an unaudited projected operational balance of -\$409,965, a July 1, 2008 general fund balance of \$454,440, and a net projected general fund balance of**

**\$44, 475. A discussion followed relating to the overall budget situation, state aid, and cost savings strategies. Superintendent Geismar told the committee the district is going to hold the line wherever it can and it will look toward building next year's budget.**

**Chair DeSack requested that all employees of the district see this information. In addition, that someone explain the information to employees so that they can see where the district stands. She pointed out that the district's two biggest deficits are wages and benefits. Audience member/West Greenwich Town Council President**

**Robert Butler commented that both towns appreciate, understand, and are onboard with the district's problems and issues. He said that both towns have been told that the fourth quarter excise tax is not**

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**going to be paid. The towns understand what the School Committee is saying and the towns are in the same boat. Mr. Ross and Dr. Geismar said that the new Uniform Chart of Accounts will help to monitor the budget more closely throughout the year. Mr. Ross said that fuel costs for the district have been locked in below budget, which will result in a positive impact. However, if the fuel for buses exceeds \$2.49, [at present it is at \$2.19] it will result in a negative impact. He said that the concessions from teachers will help and must be adhered to. Dr. Geismar said that each week the budget will be reviewed line by line. However, some uncontrollable costs may still arise. Chair DeSack pointed out that the discussion has crossed over to the next item on the agenda, Budget 2009 – 2010. She asked if the committee is finished discussing the 2008 2009 budget projection. The discussion moved to the next item on the agenda.**

**Budget 2009 – 2010 – Dr. Geismar continued and said that it is pushing people to make things work with the resources available. The easiest solution would be to employ more people, but until he is convinced that that is necessary, it will be necessary to push to make it work. Dr. Geismar pointed out that as much as the district needs**

**curriculum support, that position has been put on hold. He said that there is some excitement with the idea of others taking on some of the responsibilities in that area. In response to Member Bollengier's inquiry, Chair DeSack said that the budget summary year ending June 30, 2009 enclosed in members' packets is provided as information. Member Bollengier may e-mail any questions he may have to District Treasurer Kate LaCroix and she can send her response to all members.**

### **Monthly Status Reports – Superintendent**

**Business – In response to Member Bollengier's inquiry, Director of Administration Robert Ross said that the district has not had to hire an actuary to formally report on the post retirement benefit liability before. However, it is noted in the audit as one of the conditions of the 2008/09 audit. This cost factor is not part of the audit and the bid spec is in process.**

### **Special Education**

**Maintenance – A maintenance status report was not submitted for the month of September.**

**Technology – A technology status report was not submitted for the month of September.**

**New Business – ELA Curriculum Explanation – Dr. Geismar explained that he asked to bring the ELA Curriculum back to the agenda for clarification because he was not pleased with the way he spoke at the last meeting. He said that the curriculum brought last time that Nancy Daley worked hard on, started with teacher involvement. However, there was no money available, so he told Ms. Daley to continue to work on her own. Dr.**

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**Geismar said that Ms. Daley did a great job. She did what he asked her to do with the resources the district had and the people the district had to work with. Dr. Geismar said that when the document is brought forward, it will be a living document that will provide a good framework to work with. Chair DeSack interjected and said that it was never a question of if it was a good document or not. It was to say that the district has to stop doing things in bubbles and it needs to go to the right people to work together. Dr. Geismar clarified once more that it was his decision and was not Ms. Daley's decision to work on the ELA Curriculum without help.**

**Audience member/West Greenwich Town Council President Robert Butler intervened and asked the School Committee if it will discuss agenda item, Town Finance Review Committee Report [which was passed over]. It was determined that although this item was inadvertently omitted from members' copy of the Agenda Detail, it**

**was posted appropriately on the advertised AGENDA.**

**Monthly Subcommittee Report(s) – Town Finance Review Committee – Member Rafanelli reported that the Town Finance Review Committee, (TFRC) held two meetings. At the first meeting, the TFRC discussed the way it could affect how the two towns finance the school district. Members went to the community for ideas on how to do this. At the end of the second meeting, the TFRC voted to disband the subcommittee as defined. The TFRC wanted to bring to the School Committee a request to focus more on the charter itself to see if there are ways to address the charter. Clerk Coutcher offered further explanation and said that the TFRC talked about different ideas and then went out into the community. Community members expressed that they like the way the school district is funded now and no one appealed to a change. Even the town of West Greenwich agrees with the way the district is funded now. Clerk Coutcher said that it seemed pointless to continue for a change. Chair DeSack questioned if since the School Committee appointed the TFR subcommittee, can the subcommittee disband or does the School Committee have to authorize that. Member Bollengier said that according to Robert' Rules, it is the School Committee that has to act on the request of the subcommittee.**

**An extensive, comprehensive discussion ensued relating to why the TFRC was formed, the intended charge of the subcommittee, the vote to disband, the district charter, facts about the funding formulas used**

by other regional school districts, public law 3050, and overall details about EWG's funding formula [and its shortfalls]. Chair DeSack said that the School Committee needs to decide if it will convene the subcommittee and change the direction of that subcommittee to review the district charter as well. She expressed that she is disappointed that no further discussion to fund the school district will take place. The School Committee directed the subcommittee to achieve a goal and they came back to say there is no goal to achieve. Member Walsh expressed that she thought the subcommittee was to look at a problem that the school district has and to come up with a solution to fund the schools. There should be a way for the two towns to solve this issue

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without one or the other suffering. Clerk Coutcher said that the subcommittee agrees. However, consensus was that Exeter had that opportunity at it last Town Finance Meeting but voted 98% to 2% not to do that. Member Walsh expressed her opinion that there was not enough time to sell it to community members last budget season. In the end, the committee reached a consensus to refuse to accept the TFR subcommittees' motion and to redirect the TFR subcommittee to review the entire charter as well as finance. In response to Mr. Ross' suggestion, Chair DeSack said it would be good idea to have the subcommittee meet with Attorney Gorham to review all the changes to date to the charter. Attorney Gorham recently prepared a new

**document for the school district.**

**Member Walsh made a motion that the School Committee reject the motion to disband the Town Finance Review Committee. Member Zuercher seconded the motion. Member Bollengier intervened and said that it is not a motion it is just a vote. Chair DeSack clarified that there is a vote on the table to not accept the motion to disband the Town Finance Review Committee. Voted 5 – 0 – 1 in favor. Member Bollengier abstained.**

**Member Walsh made a motion that the Town Finance Review Committee be redirected to be a Town Finance Review and Charter Review Committee. Member Zuercher seconded the motion.**

**Member Zuercher requested copies of the TFRC minutes for School Committee members.**

**Vote 5 – 0 – 1 in favor. Member Bollengier abstained.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Athletic Field Discussion – Superintendent Geismar said that the field looks good, games have been played, and students and fans are enjoying the new field. Director of Administration Robert Ross reported that D & D Irrigation explained the sprinkler system to him, Director of Maintenance Bill Plumley, and the Groundskeeper. Athletic Director Steve McGrane will be informed at a later date.**

**Mr. Ross gave a detailed explanation regarding a plan to address ground water drainage issues to get through this season. Mr. Ross told the committee that a major repair to re-grade the field will be necessary at the conclusion of the season. He said that he brings this to the committees' attention because EWG Sports 4 Kids has no money to make the necessary repair and this matter may come before the School Committee at a future date. In response to Member Walsh's inquiry, Mr. Ross said that he is uncertain how much the repair will cost. Chair DeSack suggested looking for community service volunteers to address the issue.**

**Grant Writer Update – Superintendent Geismar told the committee he received a lot of interest in the Grant Writer position posting.**

**Member Bollengier interjected and requested to revert to the Athletic Field Discussion. He expressed his concern with the condition of the field on the west side, which is very soft. He**

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**expressed his opinion that if football teams come on the field without pads to stand on, their cleats will tear up the sod. The solution would be for the team to stand on the cement and to keep off the grass to protect the field. Historically, as the season progresses, the soccer team usually ends up playing on a dirt field. Next, Member Bollengier offered accolades to Member Rafanelli who was down at the site and**

worked at least one full day or maybe two to cover up holes on the field. There was a lot of work involved and good work was done. Clerk Coutcher added to Member Bollengier's point that he knows that the youth football teams will play four games this Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Member Bollengier said that many teams use what resembles a tarp to stand on. However, they are not cheap and then there is the question of who would be responsible to lay the tarp down each time. He said that many times he has seen Athletic Director McGrane working alone to prepare the field for games. Chair DeSack suggested contacting Boosters and Youth Hoops who have offered to help in the past, to seek help with field preparation and the purchasing of pads.

Chair DeSack returned to agenda item, Grant Writer Update – Dr. Geismar said that he is in the interview stage and had one good interview today. There are two ways to engage a grant writer. One is with a six-month contract for possibly 20-hours per month, which would involve a \$7,200 commitment. Another alternative would be to employ a grant writer as a freelancer. Chair DeSack suggested to offer a percentage of what is brought in. Dr. Geismar said that individuals feel conflicted under those circumstances. He said that he would get back to the committee. He wants to find out from references what the applicant has done. Chair DeSack voiced her opinion that a grant writer should go after funding programs the district already has in place so that no new hires are necessary.

**Capital Project Update – Superintendent Geismar gave members a brief capital project update.**

**Reports/Comments –**

**Important Dates and Meetings – Wednesday, September 9, 2009-Building Committee Meeting; Wednesday, September 16, 2009-Building Committee Meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2009-Metcalf’s Open House: Grades 3 & 4; Thursday, September 17, 2009-Metclaf’s Open House: Grades 5 & 6; Tuesday, September 22, 2009-School Committee Meeting; Wednesday, September 23, 2009-Building Committee Meeting; Wednesday, September 30, 2009-Building Committee Meeting**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – None**

**Adjournment - Member Bollengier made a motion to adjourn. Member Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 6 - 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned 8:35 p.m.**

**ROBIN CERIO  
CLERK**