

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH February 23, 2010

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; Mary Walsh; Valerie Zuercher; Mark Rafanelli, and Robert Bollengier. Teri Maia-Cicero, Vice Chairperson arrived at 7:01 p.m. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar and Student Member Raymond Moore were present. Director of Administration Robert V. Ross arrived at 7:10 p.m. Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar was absent.

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

Vice Chair Cicero arrived at this time, (7:01 p.m.).

Open Forum – None

Presentation – Student Member Report – Student Member Moore

reported that Winter Ball will take place this Saturday in the high school gymnasium, and Student Council's fundraiser for Haiti earthquake victims continues. Raymond referenced tonight's Student Council presentation regarding the proposed new grading system and offered his endorsement for the change.

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

Member Bollengier made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Member Walsh seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion passed.

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of February 9, 2010; Executive Session Minutes of February 9, 2010; Budget Workshop Minutes of January 13, 2010; Budget Workshop Minutes of January 19, 2010; Budget Workshop Minutes of February 2, 2010; Joint Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2010

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

3. Resignations

4. Grievances

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5. Non-Renewals – (As Recommended by the Superintendent)

a. Please see Attached February 23, 2010 Supplemental List

6. Recalls

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$136,969.78

D. Home School Approvals

End Consent Agenda

Chair DeSack brought members' attention to supplemental packet enclosures that offers additional information pertaining to tonight's agenda item – Discuss Bullying and Threats made Electronically and the Schools Committee's Legal Rights and Responsibilities.

Correspondence – (1) March 2, 2010 Joint Meeting Invitation; (2) Facebook gripes protected by free speech, ruling says – February 16, 2010 CNN Tech – Article by Rich Phillips; (3) Schools struggle with ill effects of Internet – Los Angeles Times Article by Victoria Kim; (4) February 15, 2010 Letter to Dr. Geismar from Commissioner Gist regarding 2010 Commissioner's Review

Budget Update 2010 – 2011 – Dr. Geismar reported the 2010 – 2011 Budget is an ongoing process. There is a Budget Workshop next Thursday, February 25 at 6:00 p.m. in the high school library.

Monthly Subcommittee Report(s) – Town Finance/Charter Review Subcommittee – Member Rafanelli reminded members of the five recommendations brought by the Town Finance/Charter Review subcommittee for consideration and recommended the Committee move on them tonight if possible. Chair DeSack directed Member Rafanelli to put forth the motions he wishes the School Committee to vote on.

Member Rafanelli made a motion that the number of sitting members on the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee be adjusted based on census taken every ten (10) years, starting with the 2010 Census population for change in the 2012 elections for School Committee. The Committee is to remain at seven sitting members, with the Town having the higher population determined by census having four sitting members on the seven member committee. Member Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Member Rafanelli made a motion that the budget workbooks be available for review by the public at all budget workshops and that copies of all budgetary data be provided to any member of the voting public from the Towns of Exeter and West Greenwich requesting same. All documents are to be clearly marked as DRAFT copy. All draft documents shall be freely circulated unless the document is designated by the School Committee as for use in contract negotiations. Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion.

Some members expressed concern that the language in this motion sounds like copies of budgetary data will be available to take away. Member Rafanelli said that was his concern also; however, the language says budget workbooks be available for review at all budget workshops.

Robert Ross arrived at this time, (7:10 p.m.).

Member Rafanelli said the intent is not to produce but to make available. He suggested perhaps including additional clarifying language such as, to provide budget workbooks at public venues such as Town Halls and Libraries to be reviewed on site.

Chair DeSack expressed she is adamantly against providing draft budget documents for circulation. The School Committee already provides draft documents at its meetings for audience members to follow. She stressed her concern with distributing working documents to the public. She also expressed concern regarding copying costs. Member Bollengier said the intent of the recommendation is to make draft copies available for review to afford the public a better understanding. The School Committee could impose a copy cost to individuals requesting copies. He expressed his opinion that if a community member comes to a budget workshop

to listen, they can just as easily communicate inaccuracies. Chair DeSack questioned why this needs to be incorporated into the Charter. Member Rafanelli said the point was how to maintain open policy. He suggested the School Committee might wish to reject this recommendation as a Charter change and address it through the policy subcommittee instead.

Chair DeSack called for a vote on the motion made by Member Rafanelli and seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 2 – 5. Chair DeSack, Vice Chair Cicero, Members Walsh, Rafanelli and Zuercher voted no. Motion failed.

Member Rafanelli made a motion to have the policy subcommittee take this as action for a policy. Member Bollengier seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Cicero explained that she voted against the previous motion only because it would involve a change to the Charter. She said that she feels the public should be able to follow along with the budget.

Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Member Rafanelli made a motion to amend the language of Section XI to allow for amendment to the Charter pertaining to non-budgetary issues to be presented and voted upon on in a full-day referendum for

**adoption of the budget with approval obtained by majority vote taken.
Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion.**

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Chair DeSack said she is of the opinion that both Towns and the legislature will have to approve this kind of change. If both Towns vote to approve, the School Committee will then need to submit for legislation change. Members discussed cost of an all-day referendum vs. the current method. Member Zuercher recommended tailoring the present DFM setup because she has heard taxpayers feel the DFM is too lengthy. Clerk Coutcher said the intent of this recommendation is to allow more opportunity to vote on the school budget. Chair DeSack expressed concern that the Committee will lose the ability to clarify the budget to taxpayers. The DFM has been tailored over the last three to four years to make for a more efficient process. Member Rafanelli pointed out that last year's Public Hearing was very effective and it is a good opportunity to inform taxpayers about the budget. Clerk Coutcher explained that the biggest issue regarding the DFM format is that in many cases only one parent can attend due to childcare issues, whereas an all-day referendum affords opportunity for both parents to vote. The proposed format will draw more school-friendly community members. Members discussed whether it is necessary to know the cost association of an all-day

referendum vs. the current method prior to voting tonight. Chair DeSack asked members to consider if an all-day referendum is in the best interest of the taxpayers/voters. Vice Chair Cicero and Clerk Coutcher said the District could still educate the public through its technology resources. Chair DeSack asked members to consider that this recommendation is a permanent Charter change. The present School Committee is extremely active in educating voters; however, today's members may not be here 5-years from now. Clerk Coutcher suggested the Committee could vote tonight and continue to work to obtain the cost of an all-day referendum. If it is found to be too costly, the Committee can revisit this item once more.

Member Bollengier called the School Committee to vote to approve the motion submitted by Member Rafanelli for an all-day referendum.

Voted 5 – 2 in favor. Chair DeSack and Member Zuercher voted no. Motion carried.

Member Rafanelli made a motion to amend the language of Section XI to allow for amendment to the Charter pertaining to non-budgetary issues to be presented and voted upon in a full-day referendum for adoption of the budget with approval obtained by majority vote taken.

Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 4 – 1 – 2 in favor. Chair DeSack voted no. Members Zuercher and Walsh abstained. Motion carried.

Member Rafanelli made a motion to establish a Building Committee, following this language:

[Member Bollengier read the following language to the Committee.]

At such time as necessary repairs or construction are needed in/for the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District, for repairs requiring bonding and/or otherwise in the discretion of the School Committee, the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee shall call upon the respective towns of Exeter and West Greenwich for the appointment of an EWG Building Committee. The town councils shall make appointments to the EWG

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Building Committee within six (6) weeks of the EWGRSD School Committee's call for the EWG Building Committee formation.

The Chair of the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee shall call for the first meeting of the EWG Building Committee within four (4) weeks of the appointments made by the member towns. The Chairperson of the School Committee will act as temporary Chair of the EWG Building Committee until the committee has completed its organization. The selection of officers will include, at the least, the following: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary. The Secretary may be selected from outside of the EWG Building Committee membership.

The Building Committee to be formed shall consist of eight voting members, four from the Towns of Exeter and four from the Town of West Greenwich. Provided, however, that in establishing four members from each town, one member from each town shall be a School Committee member elected to the School Committee from that respective town.

Member Bollengier seconded the motion.

Member Bollengier explained that existing Charter language pertains to only one Building Committee that was established when the high school was built. TFCR subcommittee member Robert Butler made this proposal conditional for repairs requiring bonding and/or otherwise in the discretion of the School Committee. Members discussed and reviewed the process in which the current Building Committee was formed. Member Walsh voiced her opinion that she prefers the School Committee form the Building Committee for school projects. She questioned why the Town Councils are presumed better able to establish a Building Committee than the School Committee. Chair DeSack pointed out that presently the School Committee typically solicits participation from both Town Councils and community members. The School Committee appointed the present Building Committee. They are doing a good job. She said that she does not see why the School Committee would relinquish this charge to the Town Councils.

Chair DeSack called for a vote on the motion made by Member Rafanelli and seconded by Member Bollengier. Voted 3 – 4. Chair DeSack, Vice Chair Cicero, Members Zuercher and Walsh voted no. Motion failed.

NEW BUSINESS – DECA Fieldtrip Approval – Member Bollengier made a motion to approve the DECA trip to the National Competition. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Sr. Class Trip Approval – Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to approve the Sr. Class trip. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

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Consideration, Discussion, and Vote on proposed High School Grading System – Superintendent Geismar introduced Student Council Advisor Barbara Wilmot and Student Council members to present the proposed high school grading system for consideration. Student Council members Raymond Moore, Angela Russo, Kathryn Dufresne, and Abbey Dallas narrated a PowerPoint Presentation entitled Student Council’s Grading Proposal. Each student

participated in presenting supporting detailed information for the proposal to change the current grading system from letter grading to numerical grading. Principal Butler expressed his appreciation to Student Council members for an exceptional presentation and told the School Committee that he endorses this very accurate presentation. He reported that this proposal was vetted through the Guidance Department and has been reviewed and endorsed by the School Improvement Team and senior high faculty.

Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to accept the Student Council's change in the current grading system from a letter system to a numerical system. Member Walsh seconded the motion.

Members commended Student Council members for an excellent presentation. Chair DeSack said the proposal does not negate the School Committee's current policies. Additional language regarding the implication process will need to be added to the current policies.

Chair DeSack called for a vote on the motion made by Vice Chair Cicero and seconded by Member Walsh. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Discuss Bullying and Threats made Electronically and the School Committee's Legal Rights and Responsibilities – Chair DeSack advised that this item was brought to tonight's agenda at the request of a School Committee member who asked to discuss and review the

legal action the School Committee may or may not take based on electronic bullying outside of school. Dr. Geismar informed members that he consulted with one of the attorneys at the Rhode Island Department of Education. The attorney advised that while there are some clear areas where the school has authority to impose discipline, there are still gray areas too. Therefore, this is not a simple issue and issues are looked at on a case-by-case basis. There are limitations on where schools can and cannot act. Dr. Geismar recommended that the policy subcommittee review the current district policy and Athletic Handbook. Member Zuercher expressed that her concern is to review District policy to ensure in-house resources are in place to educate and support all parties. Chair DeSack requested the policy subcommittee review the bullying policies and add language to address internet bullying.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Transportation Update – None

Capital Project Update – None

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Reports/Comments – None

Important Dates and Meetings –Thursday, February 25, 2010-Budget Workshop; Tuesday, March 2, 2010-Joint Meeting; Wednesday, March 3, 2010-Budget Workshop; Tuesday, March 9, 2010-School Committee

Meeting-(Budget Adoption); Thursday, March 18, 2010-Deadline to Change the Budget by more than \$10,000; Monday, March 22, 2010-Public Hearing; Tuesday, March 23, 2010-School Committee Meeting-(Metcalf Presentation-@ Metcalf)

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

Adjournment - Member Bollengier made a motion to adjourn. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK