

**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH    October 12, 2010**

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **MINUTES**

**The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 6:00 p.m. in the Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Teri Maia-Cicero, Vice-Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Mary Walsh; Valerie Zuercher, (left at 8:24 p.m.); Mark Rafanelli, and Robert Bollengier. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar, Director of Administration Robert V. Ross, Attorney Nick Gorham, (left at 8:43 p.m.); and Student Member Matthew French, (left at 8:32 p.m.) were present.**

**ORDER – Chair DeSack called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Clerk Coutcher read the District Mission Statement.**

**Open Forum – Principal Brian Butler introduced Matt French as the new School Committee Student Representative for the 2010/11 school year. Members welcomed Matt and he took a seat at the table.**

**Presentation – NECAP Science Results – Science Department Chair Matt Savoie reviewed the Spring 2010 NECAP Science Test Results comparing district scores to state scores. On behalf of the Science**

Department, Mr. Savoie presented ideas for improvement focusing on three areas - continue to align the curriculum, work to improve student motivation, and implement a class wide pretest review. Mr. Savoie acknowledged that arguments about the validity of the NECAP test and suggestions that student effort is lacking because NECAP results holds no merit are circulating, however, the scores are not acceptable and changes need to be made. Mr. Savoie and Principal Butler reported that faculty members plan to visit other schools with specific gains to look at curriculum and to gain feedback. Principal Butler and Dr. Geismar concurred that they have the utmost confidence in the Science Department. Superintendent Geismar said he advised the department to make certain that EWG has a guaranteed and viable curriculum and to look at a method of review. Dr. Geismar emphasized that the results are not what is desirable. Mr. Savoie requested that members share any input, comments or ideas they may have with him. Audience member Cathy Long said that she works in Cranston Schools and recommended that Mr. Savoie contact the Cranston School Department as it is in the midst of a 3-year process of working with The Dana Center out of the University of Texas in an attempt to acquire a viable curriculum for science.

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

Clerk Coutcher made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Vice

**Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.**

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**The following items were approved:**

**A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of September 28, 2010**

**B. Personnel Items**

**1. Appointments**

**2. Leaves of Absence**

**3. Resignations**

**4. Grievances**

**5. Non-Renewals**

**6. Recalls**

**7. Sabbaticals**

**C. Bills – In the amount of \$271,912.11**

**D. Home School Approval**

**End Consent Agenda**

**Correspondence - None**

**Budget 2010 – 2011 – None**

**Monthly Status Reports – Superintendent – Members did not express**

**questions or concerns regarding the monthly status reports.**

**Business**

**Special Education**

**Maintenance**

**Technology**

**NEW BUSINESS – DECA Washington, DC Trip Proposal – Member Walsh made a motion to approve the DECA Washington, DC trip proposal. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion carried.**

**DECA Orlando, FL Trip Approval – Member Zuercher made a motion to approve the DECA Orlando, FL trip proposal. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.**

**Discuss, Consider and Approve Recommendation Regarding Sr. Project – Superintendent Geismar said that it is his recommendation that the School Committee adopt the proposal recommended by the Steering Committee to allow students to choose to take Senior Seminar as pass/fail or as a grade for this school year. Additionally, students shall receive a grade for senior seminar beginning in the 2011-12 school year and beyond. Dr. Geismar also recommended that the Senior Project Steering Committee continue to streamline the requirements, in that the district's requirements exceed state requirements.**

**Principal Butler defined Senior Seminar as a course that seniors take in their senior year to help them prepare for their senior project cumulated project. He reported that at its last meeting, the Senior Project Steering Committee voted eight in favor, four opposed, and one abstention to permit students/parents to choose a grading assessment for Senior Seminar Class of either pass/fail or numerical grade for the class of 2011, and then move toward pure numerical for the Class of 2012 and beyond. Audience members Kim Ives, Cathy Long, Beth Heaney, Susan Neff (parent/teacher), Theresa Donovan, Maria Sullivan, Bob Quindazzi (teacher), and Principal Brian Butler each addressed the School Committee with expressions of concerns and offered their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the proposed recommendation regarding the Senior Seminar grading assessment. Afterward, each School Committee member offered his or her view regarding the proposed recommendation. Member Rafanelli said that he sits on the Steering Committee and he supports the option for this year because he is concerned that some students may become de-motivated and decide that they can do the bare minimum but still pass. Those students would achieve the same score as the student who is an overachiever. Member Rafanelli said that he supports the numerical grade because it may give the student with a 2.9 GPA the**

**opportunity to achieve a 3.0 GPA. At the conclusion of the discussion/debate, Chair DeSack assessed that consensus of all but one School Committee member is in agreement to remain with a pass/fail grading assessment for Senior Seminar for this year and to revisit this topic in the future to investigate all of the concerns mentioned this evening.**

**Member Zuercher made a motion to keep Senior Seminar as pass/fail. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Member Rafanelli voted no. The motion passed.**

**Dr. G left the meeting at this time, (7:25 p.m.).**

**Chair DeSack requested to temporarily skip over item, VI. D. EWG Sports 4 Kids Update until the person(s) who will speak arrives.**

**Student Information System (SIS) Report – Director of Administration Robert Ross informed members that changes in the district’s Student Information System (SIS) provider would be necessary in order to meet the needs of the district, as the demands from the state require districts to capture more data. In particular, the SIS will need to have a more comprehensive robust special education component going forward. Mr. Ross said that he has contacted ASPEN X2, a SIS vendor that was the vendor of choice at the conclusion of the state’s RFP. The district can use the state’s RFP outcome to make this SIS purchase and thereby avoid the exorbitant costs of going out to bid**

for a new SIS. Mr. Ross reported that ASPEN offers an all in one package that will meet the current and future needs of the district.

Dr. Geismar returned to the meeting at this time, (7:27 p.m.).

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Mr. Ross said that the district could be aggressive in the first year purchase by using its ARRA and IDEA funds for the components that are important to special services, thereby reducing the district's costs in the first year. ASPEN has indicated that the end of first semester, (January 2011) would be a desirable conversion timeframe. In closing, Mr. Ross advised that his report tonight is to notify the School Committee that his recommendation could be brought forward within a month. Chair DeSack commented that when the current SIS was initially brought forward, it was presented as the up and coming product and it was very expensive. It has been in place for less than five-years and now needs replacement. Chair DeSack said that she is not sure that she wants to make this type of purchase every five-years. Mr. Ross agreed that Chair DeSack has a valid concern. He said however, that typically after five-years these types of products would require a refresh. SchoolMax tried to launch a new version but could not debug their system. At this point in time, the state is affording the district the opportunity to use approximately \$30,000 of the AARA funds to make this purchase. Chair DeSack advised that this item would continue to

**the next regular meeting agenda.**

**EWG Sports 4 Kids Update – Sharon Pelsler and Mike Sullivan updated the School Committee on the current state and next phase of the EWG Track and Field Project. Mrs. Pelsler reported that the final, small piece remaining to complete the project is to finish the throwing area. An informational handout was disseminated to illustrate plans to complete the next phase, if the organization is awarded the grant they have applied for, which includes removing underbrush and approximately 30 to 40 small trees. Member Bollengier suggested that since this project will affect the football practice field that the group should contact the football coaches for their input. Mrs. Pelsler agreed to do so. Mr. Sullivan said that a tree line will remain to separate the practice field. The shot put buffer area is being planned so that the event areas are viewable from the existing bleaches. Member Rafanelli said that he would like to talk to and work with Mr. Sullivan on the project layout. Mr. Sullivan agreed to walk the area with anyone who is interested in doing so. Member Bollengier suggested that part of the plan should include a way to restore the practice field in time for the athletes' return in the fall.**

**Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to move up Policies Review/Adoption on the agenda. Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion. Vote 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.**

**Policies – Review/Adoption – 8402: Enrolling Foreign Students – 1st**

**Reading – Policy Subcommittee Member Bill Clay and the School Committee reviewed the seven policies as presented for first reading by the policy subcommittee as part of their work to update the policy manual. Chair DeSack said that only those policies that require edits would be enclosed in members’ October 26 packet. All seven policies will continue to the next regular meeting agenda for 2nd Reading.**

**1101: The School Committee and Its Responsibilities and Duties – 1st Reading –**

**1102: Superintendent’s Duties and Responsibilities – 1st Reading –**

**1401: School Committee’s Public Interactions – 1st Reading –**

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**1501: Policy Manual – 1st Reading –**

**8401: Admission of Students – 1st Reading –**

**8509/8510: Managing Controlled Substances in the School Setting – 1st Reading –**

**Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to move up item, UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Approved Charter Amendments Discussion. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Vote 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Approved Charter Amendments Discussion – School Committee members, Superintendent Geismar, Director of Administration Bob Ross, and Attorney Nick Gorham**

engaged in a comprehensive, lengthy discussion to clarify and understand how the implementation of the provision to the charter for an the all day referendum to approve the budget will work. Particularly since the charter permits community members to submit amendments to the budget. Attorney Gorham said that he read the provision, which was written by his father Attorney Brad Gorham, and he agrees that it is going to be very difficult; however, he does not know how else it can be done to comply with the charter. Chair DeSack said that one major concern the committee has is that in the event multiple amendments are submitted, potentially the budget could go to voters repeatedly, yet never realizing a majority vote. In response to Member Zuercher's statement, Attorney Gorham concurred that whichever ballot item receives the most votes prevails; however, it must also attain the majority of the both towns. If there is no majority then there is no new budget. Attorney Gorham said that he believes statute permits to then default to the previous year's budget. Dr. Geismar pointed out that the provision allows the School Committee to bring another budget forward. Attorney Gorham agreed and said that the committee has done that before. In response to Vice Chair Cicero's question about how other districts manage an all day referendum, Dr. Geismar reported that Chariho School District has an all day referendum to adopt its budget; however, amendments to the budget are not allowed.

Recommendations, concerns, and views were exchanged regarding modifying the charter to not allow for amendments to the budget, the

**layout of the ballot, the probability of realizing a majority vote of more than 50%, modifying the charter to either eliminate the word majority or to replace the word majority with the word plurality, the School Committees' authority to unilaterally change the charter without voters' consent, whether future recommendations for proposed changes to the charter must come to an all day referendum and/or to the General Assembly, and the timetable to submit legislature to the General Assembly.**

**Chair DeSack suggested that the committee would have to put together an informational packet and would have to have an all day referendum to offer voters the option of either, a.) Vote to not allow amendments at all or b.) Vote to change the language to read, the amendments with the highest vote count. Attorney Gorham said that he thinks that regardless of what the committee decides to bring forward, based on the new charter, in**

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**order to change the charter the committee will need to have an all day referendum. In any event, the School Committee must hold an all day referendum in April 2011 to vote on the budget, unless the committee decides to have an all day referendum before April 2011, to change the amendment process and to somehow modify this to the committees' satisfaction. Otherwise, the School Committee will have to do the very best it can with what it has. Chair DeSack and Attorney**

**Gorham pointed out how expensive election costs would be. Attorney Gorham advised that if the committee wants to make changes, it would need to do so soon.**

**Member Zuercher left the meeting at this time, (8:24 p.m.).**

**Chair DeSack advised that something must be done soon otherwise if it remains as is and even if only two amendments are submitted there is the chance of never realizing a majority vote. Chair DeSack concluded that what the committee needs to do is resolve this issue so this item will have to be added to the next agenda. She said she does not know if the committee needs the lawyer at the next meeting but the committee does need answers. Attorney Gorham advised that one thing he wants to answer for the committee is can the committee repeal the provision that allows for amendments with the voters. Is that an option in light of the fact that it was put in place by the General Assembly? Chair DeSack said she is not sure that will help the committee. Mr. Gorham said that he knows that, however, he will do so still just so the committee will know what its options are. In response to Chair DeSack's inquiry, Attorney Gorham advised that the RI constitution requires a plurality of the vote and not a majority. He said that he believes that the committee has to go to an all day referendum to get that language changed now. He will find out.**

**Student Member French left at this time, (8:32 p.m.).**

**Chair DeSack requested that Attorney Gorham write the language for the School Committee so it can hash it over before having to go for an additional all day referendum. Attorney Gorham said he would. He advised that the committee could choose to either eliminate the word majority or just replace the word majority with the word plurality. Then put a question to change to plurality on this year's ballot for the following year's budget. Chair DeSack requested Attorney Gorham to look at the language and make sure that the word plurality will fix what the problem is. Make sure that the language fits the issue discussed this evening. Attorney Gorham said that he would check that. He advised that if the committee is thinking about taking the legislative route, it can always do both. If the voters change it in April on a ballot, the committee can then have its legislator amend the bill to be a ratification of what was done.**

**Attorney Nick Gorham left the meeting at this time, (8:43 p.m.).**

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**NEW BUSINESS – Approve Grounds Keeping Bid – Director of Administration Robert Ross reported that currently Seascap Landscaping is performing the grounds maintenance for the junior – senior high school campus. The single groundskeeper in the district is currently out on leave. Seascap has demonstrated their**

capabilities well. However, Mr. Ross said that as the qualified low bidder, he is requesting that the School Committee award the grounds maintenance bid to Shalvey Bros. Landscaping on the following conditions. 1) The price holds on the unit cost. 2) The work will commence immediately. 3) Because the junior – senior high school complex falls under the CBA, this is not to displace a Council-94 position. Mr. Ross advised that legal counsels are creating a Memorandum of Understanding, MOU. The extent of the MOU is limited to the junior – senior high school complex for which the district has one grounds keeper. Chair DeSack suggested that if the landscaping vendor maintained the grounds for all campuses, there would still be a need for one groundskeeper, so why not go out to bid for all campuses? She argued that the scope of work is too much for one groundskeeper. Mr. Ross pointed out that a potential issue with the CBA language could be disregarded because the district would not be displacing anyone and it is within management rights to do this. Chair DeSack asked Mr. Ross to go out to bid for all campuses. She said the district still needs a groundkeeper for shoveling sidewalks, trash pickup twice daily, etc. She said the committee needs to see what the total cost would be. Member Bollengier and Member Rafanelli agreed with Chair DeSack that the committee needs to see what the total cost will be for the entire package. Member Bollengier questioned if there will still be a need for a 40-hour groundskeeper. He said that he has no problem putting all campuses out to bid. He expressed his opinion that the grounds look great this year. However, the district would be maintaining a person on the

payroll on a retirement basis who would be working as a fulltime groundskeeper. Chair DeSack said to keep Seascope until the bid process for all campuses is complete. Mr. Ross withdrew his recommendation to award the bid, and said that he recommends the grounds maintenance will continue as is. He said that he would rebid the grounds keeping bid in the springtime. Chair DeSack asked about the other three campuses. Mr. Ross said that Seascope has demonstrated they can do the work. Chair DeSack said to continue with Seascope and go out to bid for all campuses in the springtime.

**Approve Dishwasher Replacement Bid – Member Bollengier made a motion to approve the dishwasher replacement bid. Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.**

**Approve Electricity Contract – Director of Administration Robert Ross reported that the Constellation New Energy (CNE) (electricity) contract ends December 1, 2010. Mr. Ross requested authority to enter into a contract with CNE for a new contract at a time and price that is most beneficial to the district.**

**Member Walsh made a motion to approve authorizing the Director of**

**Administration to lock in the electricity rate with Constellation New Energy. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 0 in favor. The motion carried.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS – EWG Sports 4 Kids Track Building Committee Disbandment – The School Committee discussed and considered whether to take action on former Track Building Committee Chairperson Robert Corriea’s request to disband the Track Building Committee. Consensus of the committee was that the Building Committee needs to continue to oversee the project and remain intact until the project is complete. Chair DeSack advised that typically a building committee would stay intact for one-year after completion. Since Mr. Corriea has resigned as chairperson, a new chairperson can be appointed. Dr. Geismar said that he meets with Mrs. Pelser tomorrow and can relay this information to her then. Chair DeSack asked Dr. Geismar to inform Mrs. Pelser and to call a meeting with the Track Building Committee to inform all members. Chair DeSack said that if needed, she would go to the meeting and if necessary, could bring legal counsel to the meeting as well.**

**Race to the Top Update – Superintendent Geismar said that he has a meeting tomorrow with district leaders to begin the work to develop the district’s plan for Race to the Top. He gave a brief summary of the scope of work and timeline.**

**Concession Stand/Storage Building Update – Superintendent**

**Geismar reported that the concession stand has been cleaned out and was used at the last football game. He said that he is pleased with the outcome. Mr. Ross reported that Director of Maintenance Bill Plumley worked with Boosters to facilitate improvements at no cost to the district.**

**Capital Project Update – Superintendent Geismar reported that the RI Department of Health has approved the plans for the water system at Metcalf. The contactor and architect are going forward with ordering the tank and are looking at completing the installation in stages. Dr. Geismar said that the architect is still negotiating with the contractor about credits and changeovers.**

**Dr. Geismar reported that the district is still wrestling with a reoccurring issue with the water at the junior – senior high school. Chair DeSack advised that since this item is not part of the Capital Project it cannot be discussed at this time.**

**Reports/Comments – None**

**Important Dates and Meetings – Tuesday, October 26, 2010-School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, November 9, 2010-School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, November 23, 2010-School Committee Meeting**

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

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**Adjournment – Vice Chair Cicero moved to adjourn. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.**

**ROBIN CERIO**

**CLERK**