

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 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 Exeter-West Greenwich Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Teri Cicero, Vice-Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Valerie Zuercher; Mark Rafanelli, Theresa Donovan, Paul McFadden, and Claudine Pande. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; and Student Member Matthew French (left at 8:00 p.m.) were present. Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar was absent.

ORDER – Vice-Chair Cicero called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member McFadden read the District Mission Statement.

OPEN FORUM – None

Member McFadden made a motion to move up on the agenda the Recognitions/Achievements item. Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Recognitions/Achievements – Girls' Varsity & JV Volleyball Team(s) –

State Champions – Dr. Geismar recognized the Jr. Varsity and Varsity Girls' Volleyball Teams as the Division II State Champions for the 2010-2011 season. He told the girls how proud the school community is of them and the phenomenal job they did this season. Coach Bednarczyk and Assistant Coach Waterson were presented with School Committee Apple Recognition Awards. Team member were presented with School Committee Recognition Certificates and gift cards.

Dr. Geismar took a brief moment to introduce the district's food service manager Brenda Forge. He said that the food in the cafeterias is very good and that Brenda and her staff do a great job.

Following a brief refreshment break, Vice-Chair Cicero called the meeting back to order (at 6:27 p.m.).

WELCOMING – New School Committee Members – Vice-Chair Cicero recognized and welcomed new School Committee members Claudine Pande of West Greenwich and Paul McFadden and Theresa Donovan of Exeter. Each School Committee member introduced himself or herself and made a brief statement describing their rationale for wanting to serve on the School Committee.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION – Elections of School Committee Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk, RIASC Delegate, and SORICO – Vice Chair Cicero explained the voting process to elect School Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk.

Member McFadden moved to nominate Greg Coutcher as School Committee Chairperson. Member Zuercher seconded the motion.

Clerk Coutcher answered Member McFadden’s questions significant to his potential role as Chairperson.

Student Member French collected members’ paper ballot votes and read each one aloud. Vote: 7 – 0 in favor for Greg Coutcher. The motion passed to elect Gregory Coutcher as Chairperson.

Member Pande made a motion to nominate Teri Cicero as Vice Chairperson. Member Donovan seconded the motion.

Member McFadden made a motion to nominate Mark Rafanelli as Vice Chairperson. Member Donovan seconded the motion.

Student Member French collected members’ paper ballot votes and read each one aloud. Vote: 6 for Teri Cicero, 1 for Mark Rafanelli. The motion passed 6 – 1 to elect Teri Cicero as Vice Chairperson.

Member McFadden made a motion to nominate Mark Rafanelli as Clerk. Member Donovan seconded the motion.

Member Donovan made a motion to nominate Valerie Zuercher as Clerk. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion.

Student Member French collected members' paper ballot votes and read each one aloud. Vote: 5 for Valerie Zuercher, 2 for Mark Rafanelli. The motion passed 5 – 2 to elect Valerie Zuercher as Clerk.

Member McFadden made a motion to nominate Chair Coutcher as RI Association of School Committees Delegate. Clerk Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Member McFadden made a motion to nominate Mark Rafanelli as SORICO Delegate. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 3

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ASSIGNMENTS – Members indicated if they were interested in serving on a particular standing committee.

The outcome of the School Committee Organization Assignments is as follows:

Career & Tech. Centers (1) Teri Cicero

Food Service Liaison (1) Paul McFadden & Teri Cicero

District Improvement (3) Coutcher, Rafanelli, Zuercher

Graduation Requirements Cicero, Zuercher

West Greenwich Council Liaison Greg Coutcher

Exeter Council Liaison Teri Donovan

Curriculum Director Liaison (1) Zuercher, Pande, Cicero

Legislation Action Group Liaison (1) Pande, Coutcher

Building Committee (2) Rafanelli, Coutcher

NE-CHPS Advisory Design Committee (2) Rafanelli, Coutcher

Transportation Subcommittee Teri Donovan

Policy Subcommittee (2) McFadden, Pande, Cicero - (Geismar, Clay)

Health and Wellness (2) Cicero, Zuercher

Vice Chair Cicero recognized community member Bill Clay as a member of the policy subcommittee. Mr. Clay told the committee that the policy subcommittee holds daytime meetings. In order to achieve a quorum, preceding Chairperson DeSack included Superintendent Geismar as a member of the policy subcommittee. Member McFadden said that he does not think that there has to be daytime only policy subcommittee meetings. Mr. Clay said that there does if he participates. Consensus of the committee was to have

Superintendent Geismar continue as a member of the policy subcommittee.

PRESENTATION – Student Member Report – Student Member Matthew French reported that EWG’s Drama Department performances of A Christmas Carol have been going well and turnout has been good for every show. The upcoming schedule is as follows: Thursday, 12/9 and Friday, 12/10 at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, 12/11 at 2:00 & 7:00 p.m., and Sunday, 12/12 at 1:00 & 4:00 p.m.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA – Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda. Director of Administration Robert Ross and Superintendent Geismar answered Member Donovan’s questions regarding Bills.

Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 0 – 1 in favor. Member McFadden abstained. The motion passed.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 4

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2010; Executive Session Minutes of November 18, 2010; Regular Minutes of November 23, 2010

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

3. Resignations

4. Grievances

5. Recalls

6. Non-Renewals

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$334,910.90

D. Home School Approvals

End Consent Agenda

Correspondence – (1) School Committee Presentation Schedule 2011; (2) School Committee Members' Contact List; (3) Race to the Top Scope of Work

Member Rafanelli referenced Correspondence (3) and requested that the Superintendent address the Race to the Top (RTTT) Scope of Work to inform new members. Dr. Geismar briefly explained that RTTT is a federal program that provides grant funding to help districts improve. Rhode Island won in round two and has \$75 million to spend over the next four-years. The state holds the funds and the funds will be used to perform the scopes of work set out by school districts and for training, etc. EWG will work with other districts to

achieve goals. All SORICO districts have agreed to collaborate on this.

Member Pande referenced Correspondence (2) and requested to change her email address to claudine_pande@ewg.k12.ri.us to replace the one listed.

MONTHLY STATUS REPORTS – Maintenance – In response to Member Rafanelli's request, Dr. Geismar updated members on Metcalf School's new water system project. He reported that the new water tank would be delivered soon. The architect has finalized the change orders with the contractor. The new tank will be installed over winter break. One of the tanks from the temporary system will remain in place as backup in the event that it is needed. There is no fiscal impact to the change order.

Superintendent – Member Pande referenced the Superintendent Status Report and offered topic ideas for By the Fire videos. She suggested utilizing these videos to educate voters on the great things going on in individual school. Vice Chair Cicero suggested advertising the videos in the daily announcements that are emailed to parents.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 5

Business – Member Pande referenced the Business Status Report and informed Mr. Ross that there are many qualified parents available to recruit for the District Emergency Response Planning Team (DERPT). Mr. Ross said that he plans to have administrators connect with those parents through their School Improvement Team (SIT) membership, etc.

In response to Member McFadden’s inquiry, Mr. Ross said that he is projecting an unaudited 2009-2010 – June 30, 2010 reserve fund balance of approximately \$191,000. He said that the audit would be finished in January.

Special Services – Member Pande referenced the anticipated addition of a .5 FTE Pre-School Teacher for next school year as reported in this month’s Special Education Status Report and asked if the tuition for preschool impacts paying for that position. Mr. Ross said that tuition for preschool is minimal (approximately \$15,000 per year) and comes in under miscellaneous income. He said that he would bring those figures back to the committee. Dr. Geismar explained that there are more and more special education students requiring services in the program than there are regular education students. During the budget process, administration will look first at moving current FTE’s from within; however, the district will have to provide services to students requiring services. That will become part of the budget process.

Technology – Member Pande referenced the Technology Status Report and asked if the grant writer has looked at technology grants. Dr. Geismar explained that the district employs professional grant writer Alicia Condon on a consultant basis. He said that he would bring the committee a report of the work she has done thus far. Dr. Geismar said that recently Ms. Condon got the district \$100,000 for lights for the new athletic field. In addition, she is presently looking at a RI Foundation BPIS grant.

Monthly Budget Update 2010 - 2011 – Director of Administration Robert Ross told the School Committee that he typically submits a monthly budget projection update. However, with so much going on now with the new Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA), the audit, and preparing the upcoming budget, the projection is not available at this time. Mr. Ross said that he would bring a written projection to the committee in January. He advised that currently there is a \$1.5 million balance with anticipated expenses of approximately \$1.3 million. Mr. Ross said that he is anticipating approximately \$200,000 in savings this year.

NEW BUSINESS – SORICO Update – Dr. Geismar reported that Southern Rhode Island Collaborative (SORICO) is experiencing serious financial problems. To cut costs, Executive Director Mike McKee resigned his position as of the end of this month. Last week the SORICO Collaborative Council met and appointed a committee to either sell or lease SORICO's building. The council also discussed

whether to dissolve SORICO at the end of the fiscal year or to put SORICO into hibernation. Dr. Geismar advised that during

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 6

his time as Superintendent, the district has not received many services from SORICO.

Currently, SORICO helps the district with Special Education transitions. He offered assurance that the district could look to collaborating with other districts to begin an alternate plan immediately for transitions. If the School Committee decides to withdraw from SORICO, the by-laws require notification of withdrawal six-months prior to the end of the fiscal year, which is December 31, 2010. Dr. Geismar introduced Attorney Andrew Henneous who attended the SORICO meeting last week. Dr. Geismar said that he invited Attorney Henneous here tonight to offer his opinion and advice concerning this matter.

Attorney Henneous gave a brief account of SORICO's current financial condition that includes an expected deficit of \$21,000 at the end of this fiscal year. He advised that because of the way the bylaws are drafted, if SORICO folds or if SORICO incurs liability it exposes each of the nine member districts to one-ninth of the liability. Based on the bylaws, even if the School Committee were to vote to withdraw now, the district would remain a member through June 30, 2011. Therefore, the district is going to be responsible for potentially

one-ninth of whatever those liabilities are through June 30, 2011. If the district does not give notice by the end of this month, it would remain a member until at least June 30, 2012. Attorney Henneous recommended that the School Committee consider withdrawing. He said that there is going to be some kind of liability. If SORICO dissolves and there are assets remaining after all liabilities are paid, those assets would not be distributable to SORICO members. Member districts were told that SORICO would have an updated audit and financial information available in mid January. He said that even if the School Committee withdraws, there is nothing in the statute or the bylaws that says the district cannot decide to rescind that decision at any time before June 30 in his opinion.

Dr. Geismar gave his opinion that since the district is not really receiving any services to speak of from SORICO, this is really more of a business proposition than it is an educational proposition. There is no state mandate requirement to be in SORICO. Dr. Geismar said that although it is a tough recommendation to make, at this time it makes more sense to him to withdraw from SORICO than to stay.

Member McFadden moved that the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee at this time decide to withdraw effective June 30, 2011 from SORICO. Member Zuercher seconded the motion.

Attorney Henneous strongly suggested that the district continue as an active member district participant all the way through June 30,

2011 to at least do the best it can to ensure that the liability does not grow.

Member Rafanelli asked the superintendent to make certain that student services continue to be provided for transitions so that the district does not violate mandates. Member

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 7

Donovan said that she supports the motion but she would want to be sure that it is clear that the six-month clock begins now.

The motion on the table was read back to the committee.

Member McFadden said that he would slightly modify his motion.

Member McFadden moved that the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee immediately request to withdraw from SORICO effective June 30, 2011. Member Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Attorney Henneous left the meeting at this time, (7:35 p.m.).

Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to move up the Charter Amendment item on the agenda. Member Pande seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - Charter Amendments Discussion –

Attorney Brad Gorham reviewed the two charter amendments that were passed by the towns. (1. Hold an all-day referendum on the school budget. 2. The method for revising the charter for the future is to be by all-day referendum). After writing the charter language for the all-day referendum provision, problems became evident concerning motions to amend the school committee's presented budget. Attorney Gorham noted the current proposition does not eliminate the possibilities of amendments, and the budget has to be adopted by a majority vote. These two elements could present a problem to achieving a majority vote if there are multiple amendments resulting in the need to have to hold subsequent all-day referendum until a budget receives a majority vote.

He offered two different ways to approach the problem. First, amend the charter of the district again to eliminate the possibility of amendments to the School Committee's financial budget. Second, add a provision to the charter clarifying the process by which the budget amendments can be voted on. Attorney Gorham said that the latter option gets complicated. The elimination of the possibility of amendments seems like the simplest thing to do. Although in that case, people may vote the budget down requiring having to schedule a second all-day referendum.

Member McFadden voiced several concerns. First being any dialogue about a change to the charter by the School Committee should be socialized out to the Town Councils. Second, any amendments to the

budget should be discussed among the townspeople. In his opinion, elimination of amendments to the proposed budget is not in the spirit of the original charter. That change does not allow for engagement of citizens, which is a fundamental right.

Chair Coutcher said that this proposal to the charter would not take place this year. The main reason for this discussion is to talk about what the ballot is going to look like in

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 8

April 2011. It appears that there is one option: The School Committee's proposed budget with any amendments. He asked if going forward, the committee wants to look at something different. Audience member Lee Kissinger offered that Chariho Regional School District conducts an all-day referendum and does not allow for possibilities of amendments. Chariho has never required more than two all-day referendum votes to pass the school budget. Members debated whether voters could submit amendments that cause the budget to be less than the previous year's budget. Attorney Gorham advised that if the amendment is contrary to what the law allows, the School Committee could will it out of order. Members discussed modifying the charter to change the word majority to plurality. Chair Coutcher said that he thinks the committee will have to explore eliminating the amendments all

together and to mirror Chariho's process.

Attorney Gorham advised that if the committee chooses to amend the charter by eliminating motions, it is a simple proposition. The School Committee would vote on the proposed charter amendment and communicate it to the two towns. The towns would set up an all-day referendum on the charter amendment. Chair Coutcher said that his thinking is that if that is something the committee is going to explore, it would be done in conjunction with the actual first budget vote. Member McFadden reiterated that the committee should engage the town council on that discussion. Clerk Zuercher agreed that the School Committee needs to listen to input from community members. She said that she does not want to take away the ability to submit amendments. Chair Coutcher said that the only difference he sees in the all-day referendum vs. the District Financial Meeting (DFM) is that the majority is defined at one vote over fifty percent of the vote at the all-day referendum. What took place at the DFM was that voters voted on one amendment at a time. At the all-day referendum, voters would be asked to pick only one.

Attorney Gorham asked to make a final comment. He said that the way the charter reads now allows amendments to be offered. However, procedure of how it will go on the ballot is lacking. He asked that the committee at least adopt his drafted paragraph that includes detailed provision on how amendments will be voted on. This additional language is just a draftsmanship to the charter. It sets

procedure and the layout of the ballot. It does not take away the right to amend the budget. If the committee decides to make a change, it can be taken out. This would only require a school committee vote.

Student Member French left at this time, (8:00 p.m.).

Chair Coutcher asked if it is the committees' wish to wait to vote on this language until the next meeting. Consensus was reached to delay the vote on the draftsmanship language change until the next meeting. In the interim, Dr. Geismar recommended having each town council liaison of the School Committee take the language to the town councils. Member McFadden asked Chair Coutcher to direct the liaisons to reach out to the town councils in order to afford Exeter and West Greenwich the opportunity to review this

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 9

material. Chair Coutcher noted this can be done and the towns can come to the School Committees' January meeting. Member McFadden suggested that the liaisons present the entire language done by Attorney Gorham. It was noted that there is a joint meeting scheduled for Feb10. This timeframe would give the towns a month for processing the information prior to the joint meeting.

Dr. Geismar raised the following concerns. The canvassers need to have time to prepare the ballot and will need direction on how to set up voting procedures. They will probably need six-weeks to prepare. In addition, liaison should inform town councils that the all-day referendum is to be held on either the second or the third Monday in April. The third Monday in April falls during school vacation (when people may be away). The second Monday in April falls on a school day. Member McFadden expressed his opinion that there is no way to promote safety for students if the all-day referendum takes place while school is in session. Clerk Zuercher said that she agreed with Member McFadden. Chair Coutcher proposed that Exeter move its polling place and not use Metcalf School as a polling place. Member McFadden said he agrees with Member Donovan that the easiest way is to do it is over spring break. He agrees with Clerk Zuercher that some people are going to be out of town during spring break; however, if it is advertised in advance people will have the ability to utilize mail in ballots

Member Rafanelli left the meeting at this time, (8:30 p.m.).

Chair Coutcher concluded that this item would continue to the next regular meeting agenda. Member Donovan and Chair Coutcher will take care of notifying the town councils.

[Back to]NEW BUSINESS – Establish Healthy and Safe Schools Committee – Clerk Zuercher made a motion to continue this item to

the second meeting in January to have Mary Smith, Junior High School principal at the meeting to talk to this. Member McFadden seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Vice Chair Cicero explained that this type of committee might already be in place.

Member Rafanelli returned to the meeting at this time, (8:35 p.m.).

Board of Regents Secondary Regulations Update – Dr. Geismar referenced the Board of Regents Secondary Regulations revisions enclosed in members' packets and gave a very brief explanation of the 3-tiered diploma system.

Attorney Gorham left the meeting at this time, (8:40 p.m.).

Superintendent Geismar reported that when the regulations are approved, they will go to public hearing before they are adopted.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 10

[Back to]UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Student Information System (SIS) Approval – Director of Administration Robert Ross reported that the discussion for moving to a new Student Information System (SIS) provider has been ongoing with the School Committee for the last

six-months. The most significant reason for the change is that the current SIS provider Harris has been unable to successfully launch an upgrade in over five-years. Mr. Ross advised that presently the district could capture approximately \$20,000 from AARA funds to pay for a new SIS system. He recommended accessing the remaining balance of approximately \$32,000 through the projected general fund balance. Mr. Ross said that he anticipates going live with the new vendor [ASPEN X2] in September 2011. Dr. Geismar said that the district would collaborate with the state to interface the new SIS system. If the School Committee would like, the vendor could be brought to a future meeting for a demonstration.

Member Pande made a motion to approve ASPEN X2 as the new SIS system for the district. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Member McFadden voted no. The motion passed.

DRAFT 2011 – 2012 Budget Development Timeline and DRAFT 2011 School Committee Meeting Dates – Consensus of the committee was to consider both the Draft 2011-2012 Budget Development Timeline and the Draft 2011 School Committee Meeting Dates items together. Vice Chair Cicero recommended rescheduling the January 11, 2011 School Committee meeting to January 4, 2011 to afford the committee the opportunity to meet only once per week every Tuesday in January during the budget process. The January budget workshops would take place on the 11th and 18th. Clerk Zuercher requested that final

copies of these two documents be emailed to members.

Consensus of the committee was to carry the budget on every School Committee agenda throughout the budget process and to schedule the all-day referendum on Monday, April 11, 2011 – not during school vacation. Member Donovan requested that when the Superintendent meets with the Board of Canvassers from Exeter and West Greenwich to ask if the provision for absentee ballots is available for the School Committee budget ballot.

Capital Project Update – Dr. Geismar reported that he and Mr. Ross recently met with the contractor, architect, and engineer regarding the new security system. He reported that the security cameras are in place and briefly described how the card striker and buzzer systems work. He said that part of the Capital Project Improvement Plan was to install a security system in all EWG schools. This final phase of the project is about to be accomplished and the new security system will initiate when students return to school at the conclusion of winter recess. A decision will be made as to how the system will work during and after school hours.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH December 7, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 11

REPORTS/COMMENTS – None

IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS

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

ADJOURNMENT – Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to adjourn. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned 9:10 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK