

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

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 Gregory Coutcher, Chairperson; Teri Maia-Cicero, Vice Chairperson (arrived 6:08 p.m.); Valerie Zuercher, Clerk; Mark Rafanelli; Theresa Donovan, Paul McFadden, and Claudine Pande. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar, Director of Administration Robert V. Ross, Student Member Matthew French, and Attorney Brad Gorham were present. Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar was absent.

ORDER – Chair Coutcher called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member Pande read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum – None

Recognitions/Achievements – RIASC Leadership Development Academy – Chair Coutcher congratulated Member Pande and thanked her for completing the RI Association of School Committees Leadership Development Academy. Member Pande gave a brief overview of the program and said that it was a great experience.

Presentation – Student Member Report – Student Member Matthew French reported the high school had its first masquerade ball (fundraiser) this past Saturday. There was a good turnout and it was a great success. Student Council held a meeting today and talked about next year’s school calendar. Student Council determined that it is in favor of keeping February vacation. One more thought discussed was to suggest that the School Committee consider switching the start time at the high school with the elementary school so that high school classes would start later in the morning.

Vice Chair Cicero arrived at this time, (6:08 p.m.).

Legislators’ Night Discussion – Chair Coutcher advised that this item has been postponed because the legislators are not available as the governor is giving his State of the State address and presenting his budget tonight. This item will be moved to a future agenda.

Member McFadden made a motion to move item, VIII. B. [Approve High School Program of Studies] up on the agenda. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion.

Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Approve High School Program of Studies – Principal Brian Butler presented the 2011 – 2012 EWGRHS Program of Studies to the School Committee for approval. He referenced page 75

-- Information Technology Essentials

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 2

and told members that the course should be listed as a full-credit course instead of .5 credit. Members asked clarifying questions. Principal Butler verified that the Cooperative Learning Course was removed from next year's schedule and the language surrounding Senior Seminar/Senior Project will not pose problems in the event there is a change from Senior Seminar to Portfolio.

Member McFadden made a motion to approve the 2011 – 2012 High School Program of Studies. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to move up under New Business agenda item, VII. C. [Reconsider and Vote on Voting Sites for the All-Day Referendum]. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS – Reconsider and Vote on Voting Sites for the All-Day Referendum – Superintendent Geismar reported that the Exeter and West Greenwich Board of Canvassers, (BOC) held a meeting today to discuss the possibility of having two polling places for the all-day referendum instead of one. The two sites recommended were the Fire Station on Route 3, West Greenwich for

West Greenwich voters and the Exeter Library on Route 102 for Exeter voters. Dr. Geismar advised it was the consensus of the BOC that having two polling places vs. one polling place would not add to the cost. The overall cost for the all-day referendum will be approximately \$1,500. One advantage to having two polling places vs. one is that the School Committee will be able to see the outcome of the vote on the proposed budget by town. The BOC needs to know how the School Committee would like to receive voting results. Consensus of the BOC was to have one member from each BOC bring the results to the School Committee at one specific location posted as a School Committee meeting. Dr. Geismar advised that the BOC would meet again next week to discuss how the ballot will be organized. Additional topics of discussion that took place today were about changing the charter to allow voting to take place on a Saturday, and the importance of clearly illustrating and explaining to voters how the new voting process will work.

Member Rafanelli made a motion to offer two polling places to vote for the budget at the all-day referendum -- one at the Route 3 Fire Station and one at the Exeter Library on Route 102. Clerk Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Attorney Brad Gorham recommended the School Committee vote to set the time that polling places would be open.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to have the voting polls open from 7:00

a.m. to 8:00 p.m. as per the recommendation of the Boards of Canvassers. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 3

Vice Chair Cicero made a motion to move up agenda item, VIII. A. [Policies Review and Adoption – 3203: Budget Approval by Referendum – Adoption]. Clerk Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7- 0 in favor. The motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Policies Review and Adoption – 3203: Budget Approval by Referendum – Adoption – Chair Coutcher reported a concern with section VII (C) 5 of the District Charter. The language that voters approved surrounding motions to increase or decrease the budget by ten thousand dollars or more not later than thirty (30) days before the date of the all day referendum allows for a very short window (only two-days) by which voter’s can submit amendments. However, the School Committee could grant a one-week extension, which would mean this year’s amendments could be accepted until Friday, March 18, 2011. Chair Coutcher advised that the language in policy 3203 surrounding submission of motions shows the old language, “...no later than ten (10) days subsequent to the latest date for adoption of the budget by the regional school district school committee”. It is not the language that was approved by voters. Voters approved the thirty (30) day

language. Therefore, policy 3203 needs to be corrected before the School Committee approves it. Attorney Brad Gorham answered members' clarifying questions surrounding policy 3203 and the ratification of the District Charter incorporating the all-day referendum provisions. Consensus of the School Committee was to vote to adopt policy 3203 with the understanding that the language in the charter and policy 3203 surrounding submissions of amendments would be modified back to what was approved by voters.

Member Pande made a motion to approve policy 3203: Budget Approval by Referendum with the language change to section IV., the ten (10) day language change to thirty (30) days before the date of the all day referendum. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to move up under New Business item, VII. I. Approve Request for Legislative Approval of the Charter as Amended. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Approve Request for Legislative Approval of the Charter as Amended – Member Pande made a motion to approve the amendment to the Charter with the language of Section VII. (C) 5 amended to read 30-days before the date of the all-day referendum replacing language 10-days subsequent to the latest date for adoption of the budget by the regional district school committee. Member Rafanelli seconded

the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Member Pande made a motion to have the RI General Assembly ratify the district charter incorporating all the referendum provisions.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 4

Member Pande stated that she would amend her motion.

Member Pande moved that the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee request the senator and representatives representing the district to introduce and seek passage of the attached amendment to Public Laws, 1965, Chapter 80. Clerk Zuercher seconded the motion.

Member Pande requested to make sure not to include the language of the policy when sending the amended charter to the senator and representatives.

Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to move up item, VII. A., Accept 2010 Audit Report on the agenda. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Attorney Brad Gorham left the meeting at this time, (6:51 p.m.).

NEW BUSINESS – Accept 2010 Audit Report – CPA Pat Boucher of Bacon & Company gave an overview of the EWG Regional School District Annual Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2010. Ms. Boucher and District Treasurer Patricia Ruizzo answered clarifying questions regarding the accounting practices used for tracking the high school student activities funds. Ms. Boucher stated that procedurally, day-to-day transaction practices were good. However, one area of concern was that monthly bank reconciliations for the High School Student Activity account were not performed in a timely manner. Mr. Ross stated that capacity issues and time factors caused this deficiency to take place. Mrs. Ruizzo reported there was a change in personnel and she has been working with the individual to complete reconciliations. Presently, all Student Activity Fund bank reconciliations are submitted to Mrs. Ruizzo on a monthly basis.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to accept the [2010] Audit Report. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

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

Member McFadden requested to pull consent agenda item, B. 2. a. for

discussion.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to accept the consent agenda with item B. 2. a. pulled. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 5

The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes – Joint Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2011; Regular Minutes of February 15, 2011; Executive Session Minutes of February 15, 2011

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

a. Item Pulled

3. Resignations

4. Grievances

5. Non-Renewals

6. Recalls

a. Please see attached (C-94) recall list

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$321,836.53

D. Home School Approvals

End Consent Agenda

Correspondence – None

Monthly Budget Projection 2010 – 2011 – Director of Administration Robert Ross referenced the March 8, 2011 Budget Projection and reported a projected June 30, 2011 2011 General Fund Balance of \$1,062,832. He stated that the fund balance continues to move in a positive direction.

Monthly Status Reports – Superintendent – Member McFadden requested additional information regarding certified staff absenteeism. He requested that the data provide details showing Monday/Friday trends, the top ten individuals - (excluding names), reason for absence(s), and indicate any circumstances skewing the data. Mr. Ross said that he would bring that information to the next regular School Committee meeting.

Business – Member Pande referenced Mr. Ross' report regarding issuing an RFP for student pictures. She stated that changing from building based student photo contracts managed by the principals to an RFP rendered by the district would give EWG negotiating power to achieve a better price as a district. The district is obligated to present a reasonable fundraiser to parents. Member Pande said she heard from one parent that Coventry School Department student photos cost half the price of EWG's. Mr. Ross reported that he called five

different districts and learned that none issued RFPs and all left it as a school based decision. One concern is that student photos are purchased by parents and there is no purchase of service rendered by the district therefore no RFP is needed. Another concern would be how to negotiate the incentive clauses at the administrative level. Consensus of the School Committee was to add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration and to invite building principals to attend if they desire.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 6

Special Education

Maintenance

Technology

NEW BUSINESS – Approve Consultant for Data Analysis for the Reading Pilot – Dr. Geismar proposed the need to have an objective review of test data for the reading pilots to aid in the decision regarding which program to recommend. The East Bay Educational Collaborative, (EBEC) has recommended consultant Dr. Ellen Hedlund to conduct a comprehensive review of the data. Dr. Geismar stated that EBEC is a first-rate organization and all consultants are outstanding. EBEC will charge a flat fee of \$5,000 to conduct the study. In response to Clerk Zuercher’s inquiry, Dr. Geismar agreed to explore whether this item would qualify for Race to the Top funding. Dr. Geismar advised that he did not think it would; however, he would

explore that possibility.

Member McFadden made a motion to approve consultant services for data analysis for the reading pilots. Member Pande seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Final Budget 2011 – 2012 – Adoption – Dr. Geismar presented his recommended 2011-2012 budget to the School Committee for adoption. The proposed operating budget is \$30,828,944. Debt service is \$811,094. The town share for Exeter is \$10,365,920 and the town share for West Greenwich is \$12,411,315.

Clerk Zuercher commented that the \$345,000 the district will pay next year to transport students to parochial schools is unaffordable. If a parent chooses to send their child to a non-public school, they should also absorb the cost of transportation and books. Dr. Geismar stated that he sits on the Superintendents' Association Executive Board. He agreed to request to put this item on the agenda to see what type of a response is received. In response to Member Donovan's inquiry, Mr. Ross stated that the proposed budgeted amount for parochial transportation appears to have more than doubled FY12 because last year this line item was paid out of AARA funds. In response to Member McFadden and Member Donovan's inquiries, Mr. Ross said he would e-mail the Budget Summary sheet and a clean copy of the FY12 Proposed Budget to members tomorrow.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to approve the 2011 – 2012 Budget of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District in the amount of \$30,828,944. Member Donovan seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Approve Establishment of a Public Relations Subcommittee – Dr. Geismar presented Member Pande’s request to approve and establish a Public Relations Subcommittee to help with marketing the school district, and Policy 3901: Use of School Funds to Communicate with Town Residents.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 7

Member Pande stated that she feels community members need to be more informed about what is happening in the schools. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for the School Committee and the district. She gave an overview of the capacity and composition of the PR Subcommittee that she is proposing.

Student Member French left the meeting at this time, (7:46 p.m.).

A discussion ensued and members exchanged opinions regarding subject matters that would be communicated by the school district to town residents. Member McFadden voiced concern that groups

opposed to some issues might declare that the School Committee is subsidizing school funds to advocate an opinion. Clerk Zuercher stated that Member McFadden makes a good point; however, policy 3901 speaks to his concern and safeguards are in place that the School Committee will authorize communications before being released. The discussion continued and focused on language within the policy to advocate for passage of school budgets or referenda. Some members proposed changing the language and questioned whether the policy subcommittee should review policy 3901. The result of that discussion was inconclusive. Member Rafanelli raised a point of order that this item is to approve the establishment of a public relations subcommittee and is not a discussion about policy 3901. Member Pande stated that she is proposing the makeup of the subcommittee to include Chair Coutcher and one School Committee member from each town. She stated that she would like to represent West Greenwich.

Member Pande made a motion to create a Public Relations Subcommittee for the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Member McFadden voted no. The motion passed.

Clerk Zuercher made a motion to appoint Chair Coutcher, Members Claudine Pande and Mark Rafanelli to serve on the Public Relations Subcommittee. Member Donovan seconded the motion.

Member Pande requested to also include a community member with media public relations backgrounds to serve. Chair Coutcher advised that the subcommittee and Dr. Geismar could appoint the community member.

Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Publication of Legal Advertising Update – Dr. Geismar reported that Member Donovan suggested that the district investigate less expensive means for legal advertising. The legal advertising specialist for Southern Rhode Island Newspapers, (SRIN) submitted a proposal to the district. SRIN publishes the Standard Times, which covers Exeter and the Coventry Courier, which covers West Greenwich. The cost to run the same ad in both of those newspapers as has run in the Providence Journal is \$95.00.

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 8

This will save the district approximately \$10,000 per year. The committee came to a consensus to notify the school community of the change through the district website, both town websites, and the listserv and to begin the change for the advertisement of the April 12, 2011 meeting agenda.

Approve Electric Electronics Maintenance Repair Bid Award –

Director of Administration Robert Ross requested the School Committee award the Electric/Electronic/Maintenance/Repair bid to Eastland Electric, Inc. He advised that having a vendor of record to perform electrical services for the district will save time and cost. These services would include an electrician and a helper. There would be additional cost for materials.

Clerk Zuercher moved to award the bid for Electric/Electronic/Maintenance/Repairs to Eastland Electric, Inc. based on the recommendation of Mr. Ross. Member Pande seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Policies Review and Adoption – 6255: Managing Personnel Records – 1st Reading –8301: Student School Attendance – 1st Reading –8305: Response—When Student is Missing from School – 1st Reading –8501: Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Parents – 1st Reading – Members did not communicate any questions or concerns regarding policies 6255, 8301, 8305, and 8501. These four policies will continue to the next regular meeting agenda for 2nd Reading(s).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Establish Healthy and Safe Schools Committee Composition – Dr. Geismar put forth his recommended Safe and Healthy Schools Task Force purpose and composition. He advised that the district is required by law to establish this committee.

Clerk Zuercher moved to approve the Safe and Healthy Schools Task Force purpose and composition with the two School Committee members, Vice Chair Cicero and Clerk Zuercher. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion passed.

Approve 2011 – 2012 School Calendar – Dr. Geismar recommended that the School Committee take time to review supplemental enclosures from the teachers’ union surrounding next year’s calendar. He said that he would also like to review a couple of points made by the teachers’ association. Clerk Zuercher acknowledge that she was hasty in her decision to vote to change the calendar next year basing that change on the last two-years of exceptional weather. She stated that she would like to reconsider eliminating the February vacation. She voiced concern that eliminating the February vacation will not be in alignment with neighboring communities. Therefore, individuals involved in team sports would be affected and daycare issues would arise. Dr. Geismar shared comments that he received from parents regarding eliminating February break and

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 9

changing spring break from April to March. He offered his opinion that the School Committee should probably decide on next year’s calendar by the next regular meeting. Chair Coutcher emphasized that the parent survey results clearly showed that parents want

students to get out of school earlier at the end of the year. He stated that he would agree to align with April for spring vacation. In response to Dr. Geismar's comments regarding Professional Development days, Member Pande stated her opinion that parent teacher conferences are important and need to remain in place as usual.

Capital Project Update – Mr. Ross advised that a meeting of the Capital Project Building Committee would perhaps be scheduled for next Wednesday, March 16 in the afternoon.

Reports/Comments – In response to Member Donovan's inquiry, Dr. Geismar agreed to research whether the Student Information System, (SIS) which includes the i-Parent program qualifies for Race to the Top, (RTTT) funding.

Chair Coutcher reverted to consent agenda item V. B. 2. a., which was pulled by Member McFadden for discussion. Member McFadden stated his opinion that additional information is necessary regarding the reason for the request for a six-month leave of absence, (LOA). Dr. Geismar said he wants to look at the Collective Bargaining Agreement and can bring additional information back for the next meeting. Clerk Zuercher questioned whether additional information is requested from other individuals seeking an LOA. She said that she does not want to treat this individual differently. Vice Chair Cicero pointed out that this individual has been with the district a

long time. Member McFadden stated that he wants an informed reason for the request. Chair Coutcher advised that the following consent agenda item would carry over to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.

VI. Routine Items

Consent Agenda

B. Personnel Items

2. Leaves of Absence – (As Recommended by the Superintendent)

- a. Request for a Leave of Absence from Carol Belanger from her position as 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher Assistant at Lineham School, effective for the first six-months of the 2011– 2012 school year**

Important Dates and Meetings – Tuesday, January 11, 2011-Budget Workshop; Tuesday, January 18, 2011-Budget Workshop; Tuesday, January 25, 2011-School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, February 8, 2011-School Committee Meeting; Thursday, February 10, 2011-Joint Meeting; Tuesday, February 22, 2011-School Committee Meeting; Monday, Tuesday, March 1, 2011-Joint Meeting; Wednesday, March 2, 2011-Budget Workshop; Tuesday, March 8, 2011-School Committee Meeting (Budget Adoption); Friday, March 18, 2011-Deadline for Motions to Change the Budget by More than \$10,000;

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 8, 2011

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Page 10

Monday, March 21, 2011-Public Hearing; Tuesday, March 22, 2011-School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, April 12, 2011-School Committee Meeting; Monday, April 11, 2011-All Day Referendum

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

Adjournment – Clerk Zuercher moved to adjourn. Member Pande seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK