

NEW SHOREHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Block Island School  
April 11, 2011  
7:00 p.m.

The New Shoreham School Committee met in open session on Monday, April 11, 2011, in the media center of the Block Island School. Chair William Padien called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The following members were present: Elizabeth Connor, Patricia Doyle, Annie Hall, Sean McGarry, and William Padien. Robert Hicks was also in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion (McGarry, Hall) to approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 21, 2011, as presented carried with a vote of 5-0.

A motion (McGarry, Hall) to approve the executive session minutes of the meeting held on March 21, 2011, as written carried with a vote of 5-0.

**Reports**

William Padien reported that after several work sessions the town council increased the amount budgeted for the school for the 2011-2012 fiscal year, but it will be discussed later on the agenda.

Mr. Hicks reported that the Rhode Island Department of Education recently released the 2009-2010 Uniform Chart of Accounts data, the accounting system now being used by all Rhode Island school districts to provide a consistent data set for the comparison of expenditures. He thanked Dani Martin for her hard work in setting up the system and submitting accurate data. He pointed out that Block Island's per pupil cost is higher than the rest of the state, but when you compare percentages, some of the line items are not that different from suburban and state averages. Mr. Hicks stated that year-to-year comparisons will be easier with UCOA. More information on all of the districts can be found at the RIDE web site.

The auditor's report (Independent Accountants' Report on Applying Agreed-Upon Procedures) was submitted for School Committee review. A motion (Padien, Connor) to accept the Independent Accountants' Report on Applying Agreed-Upon Procedures carried with a vote of 5-0.

At the request of the School Committee, Mr. Hicks submitted a student attendance report through the first 124 days of school. He listed the absences as 0-4 (30 students), 5-9 (63 students), 10-19 (29 students), and 20-32 (7 students). When asked by Pat Doyle if there is a policy or protocol on attendance with steps for intervention, Mr. Hicks stated that there is no written protocol, but the principals and guidance counselor are working on a case-by-case basis with students missing the most days. Mr. Hicks would be willing to develop a policy if that is the committee's pleasure.

Mr. Hicks reported that Block Island School met all nine objectives/criteria in which it was evaluated under NCLB, but was held accountable for fewer requirements than a larger school. Sub groups (special education, ELL, poverty students, etc.) must have at least 45 students over three years to count and our numbers are much smaller.

The standing of accounts through March 31, 2011, was submitted for School Committee review. Mr. Hicks reported that we are still running in the black even though the fund balance is smaller because the severance package was included and food service was higher. Revenue is short by \$40,000 but spending is under by \$43,000. A motion (Padien, Hall) to accept the fiscal report through March 31, 2011, carried with a vote of 5-0.

### **Old Business**

Mr. Hicks reported that the Town Council restored \$44,100 to the school budget and the Town Manager supported the switch in health care coverage to Interlocal Trust for a rate increase of only 3.9 percent, which leaves a shortfall of approximately \$39,000 to fully fund our budget. He was able to find areas in the budget where cuts could be made and savings of approximately \$60,000 could be realized. Some of the areas listed included using approximately \$8,000 from the teacher salary line which, usually over the last several years, has been under spent; freezing coaches salaries would save \$1,300; deleting the sailing program in the upcoming budget would save \$6,000; and reducing the superintendent's days from 90 to 75 per year would save approximately \$9,000. Next year's budget will be discussed further after the financial town meeting, which is scheduled for May 2.

Mr. Hicks reported that at the last meeting the School Committee requested that he survey the staff and parents regarding their preferences for school vacations. The faculty and staff preferred the current model and parents had a slight preference for a vacation in March, but otherwise it was evenly spread across the board. After Mr. Hicks tallied the results he learned that some parents had not received the survey via email, which explained the low response rate from them. A lengthy discussion was held on the pros and cons of the various vacation weeks, including deleting the April vacation and spreading those days to other vacations (before Thanksgiving, extra days in February, making long weekends in March and April) and having a March vacation instead of the customary February and April breaks. A motion (Padien, Hall) to accept the 2011-12 school calendar as presented and to send out a survey for the 2012-13 calendar so that any changes that are made are done well in advance was defeated by a vote of 2-3 with Elizabeth Connor, Pat Doyle, and Sean McGarry voting in the negative. School Committee members felt more data was needed and requested that Mr. Hicks send out another survey based on the comments heard this evening (keep the current calendar with vacations in February and April, eliminate vacations in February and April in favor of a week in March with three-day weekends in other months). Mr. Hicks stated he would use an online service such as Survey Monkey. A motion (Connor, McGarry) to table the 2011-2012 calendar until next month carried with a vote of 5-0.

### **New Business**

Policy HN: Substitute Teachers was submitted for School Committee review. This policy was drafted because of a Commissioner's decision made several years ago requiring districts to set up salary scales for substitute teachers, especially for those who work more than 130 days per year.

The Block Island School is not currently in this position, but it may face it in the future. A motion (Padien, Connor) to post Policy HN: Substitute Teachers for the required 30-day period carried with a vote of 5-0. The proposed policy will be sent to the attorney for review.

Chris Warfel, under the Access to Public Records Act, requested all of the IT bills for a particular period of time. He was in attendance to question those bills, voicing concern that approximately six months of billing history was missing. He was informed that others bills were received after his initial request and that Ms Spero was recently asked to submit bills on a monthly basis. After a lengthy discussion Mr. Warfel was asked to follow the chain of command and have the superintendent and finance director answer his questions in the office. If he feels his questions have not been answered satisfactorily he may then request placement on the agenda. Mr. Hicks stated that he would be willing to set up a meeting with Mr. Warfel.

A request was received from Recreation Director Rob Closter seeking permission to construct a community skating rink on the school field. The rink would be constructed in December and dismantled when the ice melts. The field will be scoped first to see if it is level enough. If it is determined that the field is a good location for a rink the committee, who are in favor of having the rink at the school, will work out any necessary details for its use.

A motion (Padien, Hall) to approve the request from Stacy Henshaw for a maternity leave beginning in early June through December 2011 carried with a vote of 5-0.

### **Calendar of Events**

A calendar of events for the months of April and May 2011 was submitted for School Committee information. The next regular meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Monday, May 16, 2011.

### **Correspondence**

A copy of the resolution on binding arbitration passed by the Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee was forwarded for School Committee information.

### **Adjournment**

A motion (Padien, Hall) at 10:01 p.m. to adjourn carried with a vote of 5-0.

Marsha L. Gutierrez, Clerk  
Date approved: May 16, 2011