

**SMITHFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2015 @ 8:00 A.M.  
HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER  
MINUTES**

Members present: Mr. Sean Clough, Chair, Mrs. Kellie-Ann Heenan, Vice-Chair, Mrs. Virginia Harnois Secretary, Mrs. Rose Marie Cipriano, and Mr. Brent Barrows. Also present were: Mr. Robert O'Brien, Superintendent, Mrs. Bridget Morisseau, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Craig Levis, Director of Special Education, Lisa Cournoyer, Director of Financial Operations. Absent: Benjamin Scungio, Esq. School Committee/School Department Attorney, Ryan Strik, Student Representative to the School Committee. Mr. Clough called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M.

1. Mr. Clough read the Emergency Evacuation and Health Notification, notified the public of the public comment sign-up sheet, and reminded the public to speak at the podium when addressing the Committee.

At the request of Mrs. Harnois, the Committee had a moment of silence. Mrs. Harnois requested a personal moment of remembrance for former School Committee Chairman Paul Dwyre, who passed away a few weeks ago. Mrs. Harnois said that Mr. Dwyre served for fourteen years on the Smithfield School Committee and was a great mentor.

2. Mrs. Harnois moved to approve Consent Agenda Items:
  - 2.1 Minutes of the January 20, 2015 School Committee Meeting
  - 2.2 Bills
    - A) Regular Bills
    - B) Prepaid Checks from January 20, 2015 through February 6, 2015.
    - C) Lunch Bills
  - 2.3 Appointments:
    - A) Jennifer Brissette, Speech Language Pathologist, effective March 1, 2015 for the 2014-2015 School Year.
  - 2.4 Leaves
    - A) Parental leave, Patricia Connell, March 2, 2015 through the end of the 2014-2015 School Year.
    - B) Medical leave, Lisa Carter, Science teacher, Middle School, February 23, 2015 through March 13, 2015.
  - 2.5 Non-renewals:
    - Robert Daniels, Special Education Teacher, Raymond C. LaPerche Elementary School, effective for the 2015-2016 School Year.

Mrs. Heenan seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

**3. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

A high school representative was not present at the meeting.

4. Mr. Barrows moved that the financial statements for FY 2014 be reviewed and approved. Mrs. Cipriano seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

Robert Civetti, CPA Director of Marcum LLP, presented the audit report. Mr. Civetti reviewed the report with the Committee and answered questions that the Committee had. In conclusion, Mr. Civetti warned that the school department's fund balance is getting low. He said the fund balance went from 6.2% to 4%, declining over the past 4-5 years. Mr. Civetti reviewed the Balance Sheets and went over the Notes to the Financial Statements pages. Mr. Civetti noted that again this year, the School Department did not have a Management Letter, he said Smithfield does a good job. Mr. O'Brien added that Lisa Cournoyer has the monumental task of doing 53% of the town budget. He said that he's been in this district for twenty years, and every year the School Department has a balanced budget. Mr. O'Brien and the Committee thanked Lisa Cournoyer for a job well done.

5. Mrs. Heenan moved that a Special Education Paraprofessional position for William Winsor be approved. Mrs. Harnois seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. Mr. Levis was present to discuss this with the Committee. He said this is a position that is needed to support students at William Winsor. Mr. Levis explained to the Committee that there is currently a position at the high school where that person will be laid off because the student that is being worked with is in another program. Mr. Levis said there will be no financial impact on the district because of this change.
6. The Committee reviewed and discussed the Student Data Privacy and Security Policy. This was a first reading and review of the policy. Mr. O'Brien said this policy was reviewed by the Ad-hoc Policy Committee as well as our Attorney. Mr. Barrette added that the content in the policy is the same with a few additions, and the layout is the only significant difference. The Committee members reviewed the policy and suggested changes. The changes will be incorporated into the policy. The policy would be on the next agenda for approval.
7. Mrs. Heenan moved the Chromebook Policy be approved. Mrs. Harnois seconded the motion. The Committee did a first reading at the last school committee meeting. The Committee members suggested further changes to the policy that included the removal of the actual costs on page five, and other spacing issues. Also, the signature page would be removed and would be a separate procedure from the actual Chromebook Policy. Mrs. Heenan and Mrs. Harnois withdrew their motion and second. Mrs. Heenan moved to amend the motion to accept the Chromebook Policy with the suggested changes as identified incorporated into the policy. Mrs. Harnois seconded the motion. The amended motion passed with a 5-0 vote.
8. The Committee discussed and reviewed the policy on State Assessment testing. Mr. O'Brien said this policy was reviewed by our Attorney and by the Department of Education. Mr. O'Brien said the state assessment is an annual check on our curriculum. He said we receive valuable information on our students, schools and curriculum. This was a first reading and review by the Committee. The policy would be on the next agenda for approval.
9. The Committee had a discussion about the Community STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) partnership with Dr. Robert Ballard and the Ocean Exploration Trust (OET). The OET is a 501 non-profit organization dedicated to the exploration of the ocean. Mr. O'Brien did a presentation reviewing a description of the Community STEM partnership, highlighting the Ocean Exploration Trust. Mr. O'Brien explained the integrated program's four-tiered approach and explained Mr. Ballard's partnership vision and what it

means for Smithfield. Mr. O'Brien told the Committee that there are only a couple of K-12 schools in the United States invited to this partnership. He said Smithfield would be ambassadors for the State of RI. Once partnerships are established, funding of \$200,000 per year will be made available to the partnered organizations. Mr. O'Brien said he would like Mr. Ballard to come to a future school committee meeting to speak about this amazing opportunity for Smithfield.

Mr. O'Brien said Smithfield was fortunate enough to get a MATS grant (Marine Technology for Teachers and Students) through URI. He said Mr. Sosnowski from the high school has committed to doing intense training throughout the summer for this program. Mr. Sosnowski will be giving up his weekends and next year he will be connecting technology into the science classes. Mr. O'Brien said we applied for another grant called Sense-it through the National Science Foundation, and he is hoping to get that grant as well. Mr. O'Brien informed the Committee that in part of the preparation for this, a new course selection called The Ocean Engineering is one of the new high school courses that will be added next year.

10. Mrs. Heenan moved that the high school new courses and Program of Studies be approved. Mrs. Harnois seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

Mr. Kelley and Mr. Hassell were present to review the courses and reviewed the new digitally designed Program of Studies with the Committee. Mr. Hassell explained that the course offerings are teacher and student driven. He said the Program of Studies has gone digitally and is very user friendly.

#### **11. COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

#### **12. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

1. Mr. O'Brien asked the Committee for potential dates to reschedule the joint meeting with the Town Council on the grounds merger and athletic facilities that was cancelled. Mr. Clough said he was asked by the Town Council President to delay on rescheduling this workshop until late March because the Financial Review Commission is still reviewing the proposed merger. Mr. Clough said he was told that the school department can come to an agreement on the track and field themselves and then approach the town council for help with funding. He said this will be on a future school committee meeting for discussion.
2. Mr. O'Brien said he recently attended an Academy of Finance open house and commended the Academy of Finance department for their incredible work they are doing. He said he is very impressed with the program and the students.

#### **13. PUBLIC FORUM**

None.

#### **14. COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

1. Mrs. Cipriano commented on the open house by the Academy of Finance group. She said the program is impressive and she is impressed with the connection with Bryant University. She congratulated everyone responsible for putting this together and making it happen.

2. Mrs. Cipriano addressed and clarified comments in regards to the school bond issue as it relates to her two different positions of serving as the chairperson of the Financial Review Commission and now a member of the School Committee. (See attached document that she has submitted to the editor of the Valley Breeze).
3. Mrs. Cipriano and the Committee congratulated Mr. Clough on being accepted into the honors law program at Roger Williams University and for receiving a scholarship for 65% of the cost.
4. Mr. Barrows questioned the plan for the makeup of the five snow days Smithfield has had. He expressed his concerns with the last day of school nearing the end of June. He suggested if the School Committee could look at cutting a few days off the April vacation to offset the last day of school being so far into June.  
Mr. O'Brien said he can look into this, and will look into other options such as the possibility of adding eleven minutes to each day in order to make up one day. However, Mr. O'Brien said we are still okay, currently the last day of school is on a Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> and we still have three more days to the end of that last week, but he doesn't want to go any further into June.

**15. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

None.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Harnois; seconded by Mr. Barrows. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Mrs. Heenan was not present for the vote to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa A. Petrone  
Secretary

School Bond comments, February 13, 2015

Rose Marie Cipriano, Smithfield School Committee member

Former FRC Chairperson: PROVIDE A SAFE AND HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN NOW

As Chairperson of the Smithfield Financial Review Commission (FRC), I presented our spring, 2014 required pre-town budget hearing commission report which reiterated our November, 2013 support for the Police Bond as well as other Bond request reviews. The FRC recommended not moving forward with Bond requests from the School Department, Fire Department and Greenville Library. The Town Council voted to support and move the School Department Bond request to voters in November. It was contingent upon support from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) for a 35-39% reimbursement.

The School Department had submitted the detailed data to RIDE in February, 2014, with a report by Saccoccio Architects. This first level (Stage 1) of acceptance passed RIDE and now required a full review of all town school building structural needs (Stage 2). Torrado Architects was hired to complete all aspects of Stage 2, including a five year needs projection. Stage 2 also include a third on-site review by RIDE granting division architects. The School Department Bond passed state legislative approval by June to put the Bond on the November ballot. Next, we waited for RIDE's Stage 2 review process and decision to be completed during the summer, 2014.

RIDE does not simply grant reimbursements to requesting districts. It has rejected many requests over the years and is still in a current "hold" status for reimbursements that they do not accept as immediate health and safety needs. Additionally, Smithfield will not receive the money until after the work on the Identified immediate health and safety needs are completed, including a "sunset" loss date. A district cannot spend the Bond or reimbursement money on anything it wants. The areas identified for this grant approval are the boundaries.

All Smithfield school building replacement requests were accepted by RIDE and the \$5.9 million Bond went to the voters in November. It received 74% Smithfield voter approval. The Bond included new high school and middle school roofs, fire alarm system upgrades, asbestos abatement, air-quality and air ventilation issues and plumbing issues. RIDE identified all items approved as immediate health and safety.

My Financial Review Commission four year term ended June 30th. The Stage 2 report was released in

July. I chose to run for School Committee and won in the November election. I am a former public education administrator, adjunct professor and educational consultant. One of the first things I did after being sworn in as a member of the School Committee was to tour the school buildings in detail and observe the needs identified in the Stage 2 report, including the five year estimated \$89 million projections. After a careful review and attentively listening and questioning various aspects of the RIDE reimbursement report, I fully support the \$5.9 million identified immediate need replacements.

As a former FRC Chairperson and a current School Committee member who has examined this issue for over a year in great detail, this Town must provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all our children NOW. Any long range renovations or new construction would be a future Bond request.

An Elementary School Re-configuration Committee has been established with two members each from the School Committee, Town Council, Financial Review Commission, school administrators, teachers, parents and community members. Any new Bond request would put future renovations/construction at least four to six years out while we have our children and staff in the current buildings that need immediate repairs now (\$5.9 million Bond). I am confident that the Elementary School Re-configuration Committee will carefully and thoroughly address how to deal with all future building needs that best fulfill school of the future health and safety needs in a cost effective responsible manner for all Smithfield taxpayers.

Rose Marie Cipriano