

East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria
December 11, 2007
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nick Iacovelli, Tracey Gionta, Tom Mielt, Bryan Perry,
Mary-Beth Mordecai, Deborah Fiala, Alan Hyla

MEMBERS ABSENT: Everett Herden, Robert Mather

STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Kevin Staehly

ABSENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE: Joseph Weaver

OTHERS PRESENT: Ellen Solek, Bob Carroll, Linda Dadona, Chuck Rinaldi, Cindy Mello,
Mary Beth Havens, Jason Peacock, Bonnie Butsch, Dave Scata,
Mark Walter, Ruth Ziobron and approximately four other staff, students
and citizens

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Nick Iacovelli.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

A. Communications

Mr. Iacovelli welcomed Mr. Hyla. Mr. Hyla will be serving on the Policy Subcommittee, Personnel and Negotiations Subcommittee, and as the Local Prevention Council liaison.

Mr. Iacovelli stated Dr. Solek had included the following in their packets per requests at the last regular meeting:

- school and town wide activities were included on board members' calendars;
- history/background about how students are bussed to off site campuses.

Mr. Iacovelli informed the board the fund raising question asked during the audience of citizens at the last regular meeting had been reviewed by Dr. Solek indicating that Board Policy was to be followed.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR (continued)

A. Communications (continued)

Mr. Iacovelli stated that Dr. Solek will provide the Board with information regarding ways to recognize student achievement and current physical fitness programs as related to the 2006 physical fitness test results.

MOTION: Mordecai, Gionta; to add Senior Class Trip at the end of the agenda.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

B. Report from Student Council Representative

Kevin Staehly reported on the following activities at the high school:

- Shoreline Student Council Conference. The Student Council is considering a fundraiser for obtaining a spirit banner;
- Spirit week begins December 17th;
- Progress reports will be mailed this week;
- Mid-terms are scheduled to start January 17th.

C. Report from the First Selectman

First Selectman, Mark Walter, has requested the Board to provide him a seat as an ex officio member of the Board of Education. Mr. Iacovelli explained it was Mr. Walter's rights as an ex officio to be on all town boards and commissions. Mr. Iacovelli explained Mr. Walter had full power to participate in debate and raise questions but was unable to vote.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

MOTION: Mordecai, Gionta; to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2007 as amended.

- Include First Selectman, Mark Walter, under *Others Present*;
- Page 4, 2nd paragraph, strike "the purpose" and add "one of the purposes".

FAVOR (5): Mordecai, Miett, Gionta, Perry, Fiala

OPPOSED (0): None

ABSTENTIONS (1): Hyla

ABSENT (2): Herden, Mather

MOTION PASSED

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES (continued)

MOTION: Fiala, Perry; to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 27, 2007 as presented.

FAVOR (3): Gionta, Perry, Fiala
OPPOSED (0): None
ABSTENTIONS (3): Mordecai, Hyla, Mielt
ABSENT (2): Herden, Mather
MOTION PASSED

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

A. 4-8 Middle School

Ms. Mordecai reported the school will be lockable by the end of the year. The two-story structure has been primed and some rooms have been painted. The windows are 70% installed.

Ms. Mordecai stated an abutting neighbor has reported that his well has run dry. The committee has received advice from two experts advising that it was unlikely that the school building was the reason why the well had gone dry and that there had been an abnormally dry season. First Selectman Walter will review and address the issue.

First Selectman Walter stated he agreed with Ms. Mordecai's analysis. He stated one of the report's summary had clarified that the summer was unseasonably dry. He also stated there was mention in the report that when the up gradient watershed was vegetated, the capacity of the well would be the same as prior to construction.

Ms. Mordecai stated she believed the area he was talking about was where the trailers were currently located. Ms. Mordecai stated when the trailers were removed; the area would be softball fields. Ms. Mordecai stated the well in question filled by ground water. Mr. Walter stated he would get clarification with regards to the vegetation on the up gradient watershed.

Ms. Mordecai reviewed three boards titled East Haddam 4-8 Middle School Finishes Presentation.

Ms. Mordecai distributed and discussed the following document:

- East Haddam Buy a Brick. This document has been distributed to all students and will be included in the town newsletter.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

Mr. Mather was unavailable to report. .

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. Naming of New 4-8 School

Dr. Solek reported the Middle School Transition Task Force, designated by the Board as the recommended committee, was recommending the new school be named Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School.

B. Use of Facilities Request

The Registrar of Voters has requested to use one of the schools as a venue for the February 5th primary voting.

Responsive to a question by Mr. Iacovelli, Dr. Solek replied she had not determined if there was legislature which declares that a school must be closed because of voting.

Ms. Mordecai questioned why more room was needed. Ms. Mordecai questioned why democrats and republicans couldn't just use the old town hall as was customary. First Selectman Walter explained the Registrar of Voters had informed him the elections would be different than normal requiring two separate processes for both democrats and republicans. There will be different check-ins. The new voting system requires more privacy booths which requires more space. It is the desire of the Registrar of Voters to set up two mirror images of the process for both political parties. This will require two scanning machines to tally votes. First Selectman Walter stated the Registrar of Voters was questioned why it could not be contained in the existing town hall. It was explained that the existing town hall would be difficult to divide causing confusion between the two parties and requiring people to wait outside. Ms. Mordecai questioned if two buildings could be used, to which First Selectman Walter replied no, because it would cause confusion among voters. The changing of the official voting spot requires a town vote. First Selectman Walter reviewed the timeline.

First Selectman Walter stated a dedicated phone line would be necessary for public use. Mr. Iacovelli stated he was not against the idea and questioned how it would effect the school day. Mr. Iacovelli stated the gymnasium could be blocked, but that if school was required to be closed, it would require a make up day. First Selectman Walter stated the whole gym and hallway would be needed for February 5th. It will be necessary to set up prior to the election and break down equipment after the election.

Mr. Hyla commented this appeared to be three days of school disruption. Ms. Mordecai suggested having the set up and break down of equipment after the school day ended.

Ms. Mordecai stated she was not in favor of having to close the school for the elections and have a make up day at the end of the school year. Mrs. Gionta commented if it were in the gymnasium, there would be no need to close the school, but that students would not have gym those days.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)B. Use of Facilities Request (continued)

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if the town had statutory right to determine where the elections would be held. First Selectman Walter replied he believed so, but that he wanted it to be an amicable decision. Mr. Walter stated if the Board decided that they did not want to have the elections at a school facility, the town would try to find another option. Mr. Walter further stated it would be a good test to see if the system works before the presidential election. Ms. Mordecai stated the current middle school would be available by then for that purpose.

Mr. Iacovelli stated the Board was concerned with losing a day of school; however, if something could be worked out where a day of school was not lost and set up and removal of equipment was performed after the school day, the Board would be willing to have the elections at a school facility. Dr. Solek agreed to review options.

Dr. Solek questioned who would be responsible for providing a dedicated phone line. First Selectman Walter replied the town.

C. Staffing Change at the High School

Dr. Solek stated the administration was recommending increasing the current .4 FTE Vo-ag teaching position to .5 FTE beginning in January of 2008. Dr. Solek stated the recommendation was based on an additional needed section of an existing course at the high school.

D. Community Survey Results

Dr. Solek reviewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation titled *Needs Assessment Survey Report to the East Haddam Board of Education*.

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if the survey results would be used to develop a new Strategic Plan. Dr. Solek replied the results would be incorporated as part of the Plan's ongoing revision process. Dr. Solek stated the results exhibited a desire for the expansion of foreign languages, computers, and extra curricular activities.

Mr. Hyla stated he was disappointed with the low residential response to the survey. Mr. Hyla questioned how the surveys were distributed. Dr. Solek replied the resident portion of the survey was administered online and that there was not a lot of advertising of it because of the cost involved to perform a full residential polling. Mr. Hyla questioned what was preventing the Board from reaching out to residents to complete the survey. Mr. Hyla stated 2/3 of the town budget was allocated to education and residential feedback was important. Mr. Hyla stated efforts did not produce the desired results by the Board. Mr. Hyla questioned if there was a deadline which needed to be met. Dr. Solek replied it would depend upon when the update of the strategic plan was planned. Mr. Iacovelli suggested that Long Range Planning review options for the survey.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)D. Community Survey Results (continued)

Ms. Mordecai stated 98 parent responses was a very low percentage of parents (there are approximately 1,400 students in the school system). Ms. Mordecai stated she relied on teachers and administrators for determining how best to educate students. Dr. Solek was asked to review discussions with Long Range Planning.

Mr. Hyla requested if the survey were to continue, to include administrators and faculty.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTSA. Long Range Planning

Long Range Planning met on December 6th. Dr. Solek briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Long Range Subcommittee meeting minutes.

Mr. Iacovelli stated the Long Range School Facilities Plan locates the Superintendent/Board of Education Office at the vacated middle school. Mr. Iacovelli stated this was also a part of the Planning and Zoning Commission's long term plan.

Ms. Mordecai requested information regarding a mural located in the library at the current middle school and whether it would need to be relocated to the new middle school.

B. Finance

Finance met November 14th. Mrs. Gionta briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Finance Subcommittee meeting minutes.

C. Policy

Policy had not met. Dr. Mielt had nothing new to report.

Mr. Iacovelli stated he attended the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on the draft Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Iacovelli informed the Board that some sections of the plan pertained directly to the Board of Education. Mr. Iacovelli cited the following sections:

- Chapter 3, Environment. The Board of Education's responsibility regarding outdoor lighting;
- Chapter 4, Sense of Community and Volunteerism;
- Chapter 5 regarding a program for expanded school transportation.
- Chapter 7 regarding town wide turf management, running/walking trails at the high school and additional tennis courts.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

Mr. Walter noted the draft Plan of Conservation and Development were goals and that specific goals needed to be financially supported.

It was noted that these goals would have a significant impact to the budget. Mrs. Gionta stated the plan involved the Board of Education, yet they had not inputted their opinions during a meeting. Mrs. Gionta stressed the importance of making their comments known to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The next meeting on the draft Plan of Conservation and Development will be December 17th.

D. Transportation

Transportation had not met. Mr. Mather was unavailable to report.

E. Personnel and Negotiations

Personnel and Negotiations had not met. Dr. Mielt had nothing to report.

F. Ray Board Liaison

Mrs. Fiala reported Ray Board met November 29th. Cheryl Mathiason demonstrated hand held GPS systems, funded by the Ray Board which are used in class.

Mrs. Fiala stated the Ray Board voted to distribute \$290,000.00 to the Board of Education for the 2008 – 2009 school year for the operating budget and \$20,000.00 for the capital budget. Grant money is being accepted by the high school staff and administrators until February 15th.

Ms. Mordecai requested information about who Mr. Ray was and why the funds had been set aside. Mrs. Dadona stated there was a plaque upon entering the high school as well as pamphlets available at the office. Mrs. Gionta commented information was also available online at the high school site.

G. LEARN

Mrs. Gionta reported LEARN will meet Thursday, December 13th.

H. Curriculum Council Liaison

Mr. Herden was unavailable to report.

I. Open Space Committee Liaison

Mr. Perry reported the committee had not met. The next scheduled Open Space Committee meeting is January 28th.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

J. Local Prevention Council

Mr. Hyla reported Local Prevention Council will meet tomorrow.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None noted.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

First Selectman Walter thanked Mrs. Fiala and Mrs. Mazzaferro for their contributions to the lighting ceremony at the Moodus Green.

Mr. Walter requested the assignment of a sign team for the purpose of redoing the sign at the end of the bridge to acknowledge the FAA convention award and previous state champions.

Mr. Walter questioned when the fences would be installed at the new middle school, explaining additional funds had been appropriated for state troopers to watch the area for potential vandalism. Ms. Mordecai replied she would get an answer at tomorrow evening's School Building Committee meeting.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

1) Warrant

a. To approve the warrant for 2006-07 in the amount of \$1,656,720.21.

b. To approve the warrant for 2007-08 in the amount of \$1,561,356.44.

2) Mrs. Karen DiMascola, 7th grade Language Arts teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, is requesting an unpaid leave of absence beginning December 13, 2007 to the end of the 2007-08 school year for child-rearing purposes.

3) To approve Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School as the name of the new 4-8 middle school.

X. NEW BUSINESS (continued)

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda (continued)

4) To approve the following staffing change as recommended by the Superintendent:

- Eliminate .4 FTE Vo-Ag (HS);
- Create .5 FTE Vo-Ag (HS).

MOTION: Miatt, Perry; to approve the Consent Agenda items 1, 2, 3, and 4.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

Senior Class Trip

Board policy stipulates there needs to be a six month window between the time the trip is presented and the time with which the trip actually occurs. The senior class has requested a one month extension to present their class trip.

MOTION: Mordecai, Fiala; to waive the required six month window and give a one month extension for the Senior Class Trip presentation.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

MOTION: Mordecai, Gionta; to adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT
MOTION PASSED**

Respectfully submitted,

Everett Herden
Secretary