

East Haddam Board of Education  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Nathan Hale-Ray High School Cafeteria  
January 8, 2008  
7:00 p.m.

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

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Kevin Staehly

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE ABSENT:** Joseph Weaver

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Ellen Solek, Bob Carroll, Linda Dadona, Chuck Rinaldi, Cindy Mello, Mary Beth Havens, Jason Peacock, Ms. Butsch, Ruth Ziobron and approximately 15 other staff, students and citizens.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 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 stated that the following had been provided to the Board since the last meeting:

- List of recognition and awards;
- Packet containing information regarding the primary election;
- Update on wreath sale; and
- Physical education programs.

B. Report from Student Council Representative

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

- Multicultural Club will have an Australian themed dinner program;
- Mid-terms begin next week;
- Attorney General Blumenthal's visit;
- AP Art History will be offered next year; and
- FAA's annual Valentine's dance will be February 8<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Staehly excused himself.

III. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR (continued)

C. Report from the First Selectman

First Selectman Walter was unavailable to report due to a conflicting meeting.

IV. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

**MOTION:** Miett, Hyla; to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2007 as presented.

**FAVOR (6): Mordecai, Miett, Gionta, Perry, Fiala, Hyla**

**OPPOSED (0): None**

**ABSTENTIONS (2): Herden, Mather**

**ABSENT (0): None**

**MOTION PASSED**

V. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

A. 4-8 Middle School

Ms. Mordecai and Mrs. Fiala visited the school site. Ms. Mordecai reviewed the progress of the building site.

Ms. Mordecai stated there were plywood doors which were padlocked at night. Fencing should be complete by the end of the month. Guard rails have been installed going up the main entry driveway.

Ms. Mordecai will schedule a time for interested Board members to have a tour of the site.

Ms. Mordecai reminded the Board that the East Haddam Buy a Brick fundraiser was still in progress.

Mr. Mather questioned when the permanent doors would be installed and raised concern with security and vandalism.

B. Middle and Elementary Schools' Capital Improvements

Mr. Mather reported they had not met and he had nothing new to report. .

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLSA. Senior Class Trip Request

Linda Dadona, Devin Smith, Andrew Inman, Chelsey Roy, and Erin Murrey distributed and discussed the Senior Class Trip Itinerary.

Responsive to a question by Mr. Hyla, it was responded that the extension in time allowed the senior class to send out surveys to determine where students would be interested in going for their class trip.

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if any students were not attending due to the cost of the trip. Mr. Inman replied no.

Ms. Mordecai questioned how many students would be attending the class trip. Ms. Smith replied 2/3rds of the class had shown interest. Ms. Mordecai thanked the senior class for not requesting days off for school for their class trip.

Mr. Hyla questioned if there would be other offerings for students not interested in white water rafting to which Ms. Smith reviewed the other activities available.

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if other students from other class trips would be present to which Ms. Smith replied affirmatively.

Mr. Mather stated a few years ago, during a senior class trip, the Board of Education was made responsible to pay a teacher's salary who had attended the trip. Mr. Mather questioned Dr. Solek if the same thing could occur during this trip. Dr. Solek replied in that particular case it had occurred on a trip to Washington, D.C. in March and that it had been a snow day. Dr. Solek stated it was occurring in May so the likelihood of a snow day was not probable.

B. SDE High School Reform Initiative

Dr. Solek discussed the State Department of Education's high school reform initiative. An overview of the initiative was included in Board members' packets.

Mr. Iacovelli questioned if the initiative had defined which world languages would need to be taught to which Dr. Solek replied no and offered to review language requirements and report back.

Mr. Mather commented he did not understand the reasoning behind the requirements of an exiting exam. Mr. Mather stated it would be too late. Dr. Solek agreed.

Mrs. Gionta commented at the CAFE leadership meeting a key speaker had encouraged educators promoting the rules not legislature. Mrs. Gionta suggested the Board become very involved with the high school reform initiative. Mrs. Gionta will provide meeting dates of when it will be addressed at LEARN.

VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (continued)

B. SDE High School Reform Initiative (continued)

Mr. Hyla commented funding for the initiative would be a burden on towns.

Mr. Herden stated there would be a profound change on what electives could be offered and could significantly change staffing.

Mr. Herden questioned if there were technical requirements to which Dr. Solek replied not that she was aware of.

Mr. Hyla questioned if there had been discussion about funded mandates to which Dr. Solek replied no.

Ms. Mordecai spoke unfavorably about evaluating a student only on how they perform on tests.

Mr. Perry questioned the time frame for the initiative. Dr. Solek replied it had not been formally projected.

Mr. Herden spoke favorably about the work of the Curriculum Council and how it would effect the possible implementation of the initiative.

C. Finance Subcommittee Meeting

The Finance Subcommittee will be meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> to review the 2008-09 school budget.

D. Changes to School District's Website

Changes have been made to the school district's website. Dr. Solek thanked Nancy Allison for her work.

E. 2006-2007 Audit Report

Mr. Carroll reviewed the 2006-07 audit report which was completed by BlumShapiro.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Long Range Planning

Long Range Planning met January 3<sup>rd</sup> and the meeting minutes were included in members' packets and briefly reviewed by Mr. Herden. The next Long Range Planning meeting is scheduled for February 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the Central Office.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)A. Long Range Planning (continued)

Mr. Iacovelli commented that July 1, 2008 would be the date in which the Board would be turning the middle school over to the town. Mr. Iacovelli requested Dr. Solek to notify the First Selectman's office that the Board of Education would give the keys of the current middle school to the town, making them responsible for electricity, heating, etc.

Ms. Mordecai stated she was concerned about changing the dates around for the use of school facilities for voting. The Consent Agenda proposes to use the current middle school as the voting site for February 5<sup>th</sup> and to switch the dates of March 24<sup>th</sup> and February 5<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Mordecai stated the March 24<sup>th</sup> date allowed for a four day weekend during the Easter holiday and voiced concern for families that had already made plans for that date. Ms. Mordecai suggested reviewing attendance policies because of the short notice for families which had already made plans for that date. Mr. Herden stated it shouldn't be looked at as a penalty but what was best for the majority of citizens, not the minority. Mr. Iacovelli stated the State had changed the primary dates and it was the Board's civic responsibility. Responsive to a question by Mr. Hyla, Dr. Solek replied the option was chosen because it was the least disruptive to students.

B. Finance

Finance is scheduled to meet on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

C. Policy

Policy met January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. Mielt briefly reviewed discussions as documented in the Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes. Policy #1700 (Firearms on School Property), Policy #4212.42 (Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers), Policy #5131.2 (Weapons and Dangerous Instruments), and Policy #7241 (Permanent Physical Additions to Existing School District Property) are being presented this evening as a first reading.

Mrs. Gionta noted she did not attend the meeting.

D. Transportation

Mr. Mather reported there had been no more problems with the Vinyl Tech bus since his last update.

E. Personnel and Negotiations

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

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

F. Ray Board Liaison

Ray Board had not met. Mrs. Fiala had nothing to report.

G. LEARN

Mrs. Gionta reported she did not attend the LEARN meeting because it occurred on a snow day.

H. Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Council Liaison

Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Council had not met. Mr. Herden had nothing to report.

I. Open Space Committee Liaison

Open Space had not met. Mr. Perry had nothing to report.

J. Local Prevention Council

Local Prevention Council met on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hyla reported a juvenile review board will be formed at the Youth and Family Services for 1<sup>st</sup> time non-violent offenders.

The mini grant program through Youth and Family Services has been approved.

The Local Prevention Council has requested a meeting with Dr. Solek, Mr. Hyla, Mr. Rinaldi, and Mrs. McCabe for the implementation of an in-service training program which will educate staff on how to recognize symptoms of substance abuse.

The Needs Assessment Survey was reviewed. Council members discussed the need for more after school activities and supporting the funding of after school bussing.

The Chairperson has requested that Mrs. McCabe of East Haddam Youth and Family Services be on the February 12, 2008 agenda for a presentation of the findings of Youth and Family Services of the Asset Survey.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Lauri Alt, Registrar of Voters, thanked the Board for approving the voting date. Mrs. Alt spoke favorably about the artwork in the cafeteria. Mrs. Alt encouraged citizens to lobby the state legislatures to fund new requirements.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS (continued)

Joe Palleria questioned why the 2006/2007 audit had indicated \$200,000 left over and what it had originally been appropriated for. Mr. Palleria questioned why voting could not take place at the Senior Center.

Dr. Solek replied she would contact Mr. Palleria with the audit information. Mrs. Alt replied there were restrictions associated with the grant for the senior center limiting activities for five years under the charter and that the facility was too small.

IX. OLD BUSINESSA. Needs Assessment Survey Update

Dr. Solek informed the Board that the Long Range Planning Committee had critiqued the survey and that any future surveys will follow the Committee's recommendations.

X. NEW BUSINESSA. Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Mr. Herden requested item 4 be removed from the Consent Agenda for further discussion.

## 1) Warrant

a. To approve the warrant for 2006-07 in the amount of \$1,657,191.93.

b. To approve the warrant for 2007-08 in the amount of \$1,659,079.85.

2) To accept the resignation, with intent to retire, of Ms. Virginia Hayn, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies Teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective the end of the 2007-08 school year.

To accept the resignation, with intent to retire, of Mrs. Althea Liscombe, Speech/Language Pathologist at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School, effective July 1, 2008.

To accept the resignation, with intent to retire, of Mrs. Linda Bristol, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at East Haddam Elementary School, effective the end of the 2007-08 school year.

To accept the resignation, with intent to retire, of Mrs. Susan Kenny, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at East Haddam Elementary School, effective the end of the 2007-08 school year.

X. NEW BUSINESSA. Acceptance of Consent Agenda (continued)

- 3) In accordance with Policy #3280, to accept the gift of a vision screener, Model TITMUSi300, from the East Haddam Lions Club to be used at East Haddam Elementary School and to direct the Superintendent to send a letter of appreciation.
- 5) To approve Policy #4212.42 (Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers) as a first reading.
- 6) To approve Policy #5131.2 (Weapons and Dangerous Instruments) as a first reading.
- 7) To approve Policy #7241 (Permanent Physical Additions to Existing School District Property) as a first reading.
- 8) To approve the senior class trip request to White Haven, Pennsylvania and Hershey, Pennsylvania from May 16, 2008 through May 18, 2008.

**MOTION:** Mordecai, Mather; to approve the Consent Agenda items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

Mr. Herden voiced concern with the wording of Policy #1700 (Firearms on School Property). Mr. Herden explained an administrator had in the past not allowed a presentation at the school on gun safety which he had helped to facilitate. Mr. Herden stressed the importance of educating students on gun safety. Mr. Herden stated the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the policy would not allow for such a presentation. Mr. Herden stated it was not clear who would approve a safety presentation; i.e. the board level, administrators, Superintendent, etc.

Dr. Mielt stated the educational value associated with firearms had been included in the policy. Dr. Mielt stated as to whether it should be at the administrator's level or Dr. Solek's level could be discussed and added to the policy. Dr. Solek stated if there was a professional that wanted to come and make a presentation for school students involving weaponry, typically the administrator at the building level would be contacted and then have a discussion with Dr. Solek about allowing the presentation.

Mr. Iacovelli suggested having the policy specifically require administrators to contact the Superintendent prior to approval of a firearms presentation.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda (continued)

4) To approve Policy #1700 (Firearms on School Property) as a first reading.

**MOTION:** Miatt, Mordecai; to approve Consent Agenda item 4.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

B. **MOTION:** Gionta, Herden; to approve the proposed 2008-09 school calendar as recommended by the Long Range Planning Committee.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

C. **MOTION:** Mordecai, Fiala; to approve a one year Central Office rental agreement with two one year options at a 2% increase per year.

Mr. Perry questioned if there was a month to month rental option to which Mr. Carroll replied no.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

D. **MOTION:** Mordecai, Herden; to approve the use of school facilities for the primary vote to be held on February 5<sup>th</sup> and to direct the Superintendent to revise the 2007-08 school calendar accordingly.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

**MOTION:** Gionta, Hyla; to go into Executive Session at 8:16 p.m. for the purpose of discussing issues of negotiations.

**FAVOR: ALL PRESENT  
MOTION PASSED**

The Board returned to Regular Session at 8:37 p.m.

**MOTION:** Mather, Gionta; to adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Everett Herden  
Secretary