

NORWICH BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY MAY 6, 2009
7:00 PM, MARION CROSS SCHOOL

Minutes

Present: Board members Addante, Callaghan, Day, Mackall, Vitt; Administrators Gersen, Aubin, Kelley; and 8 members of the public. Recorded by R. Lohr

1. Call to order – Chair Callaghan called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Agenda Review – Business Requiring Discussion

3. Approval of minutes

Linda Addante moved and Anne Day seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 1, as submitted and amended, and the Executive Session of April 1, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously. The changes to the regular meeting minutes included on item 3 in the third line the word “terms” should be “teams”; item 6a, second section should refer to the Norwich Town Long-Range Plan; item 6b, in the principal’s report the word “enrolled” should be replaced with “registered”; item 10, last motion spelling of Anne.

4. Communications and Reports

a) Report of Chair

Chair Callaghan announced that the next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 7:00 PM, at the Marion Cross School Library. The Board retreat meeting is scheduled for May 11 from 4 to 9 PM at the Norwich Congregational Church.

The Board thanked Geoffrey Vitt for producing and sending a letter to Representative Peter Welch regarding school construction funding.

b) Reports of Administrators

Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Gersen introduced Marion Cross School nurse Jan Hopkins, who spoke about the school district’s response to public concern about influenza A H1N1 (swine flu). Nurse Hopkins said several parents had expressed anxiety about the flu, and that she had cautioned them to practice good hygiene and that ill students or staff should stay home until 24 hours after flu symptoms have ceased. All schools in the SAU have communicated updates from the states and the CDC regularly to parents.

Vermont Teacher Recertification

Learning specialist Jeanne Woodward-Poor reviewed the Vermont Teacher Recertification process in her role as chairperson of the Local Standards Board. Ms. Woodward-Poor noted that nine teachers must be recertified this year, and each teacher recertification requires a minimum of 135 hours of documented professional development related to seven-year goals. She shared sample portfolios and responded to board questions on the recertification process.

The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was briefly discussed regarding available funds for the school district. The Superintendent reported that the school district expects to receive \$153,000 for specific categories of spending in special education. The administration will

learn more about the funding and recommend a course of action to the Board during the summer. The government will require transparency on the district's use of the money, and will terminate the funds within two years. Therefore, it should not be spent on long-term expenses such as personnel or ongoing projects.

He also briefed the board about the septic system in the Norwich Green, referencing a report by engineering consultants included in the packet. The consultants concluded that the cause of recent odors may have been organic fertilizer or simply odors sometimes associated with septic systems. It was suggested that some of the town activities on the Green be relocated to the school district fields along Route 5.

A document about proposed ARRA energy projects was discussed by the Board.

Principal's Report

Principal Kelley and Deb Carter gave a presentation on the Parents' Survey. There were 118 parent/student responses, which represented a 40 percent response rate. About 42 percent of the respondents have been associated with the school for one to three years, and 26 percent were from the sixth grade. There were approximately 500 comments. The survey findings were positive about the teachers and overall school atmosphere. The areas of concern were: the lack of a means of receiving parent feedback; the need for more differentiation in classroom instruction, and the desire for fewer field trips, better playground supervision, and more instruction in writing and math. Dr. Kelley described how she planned to respond to the concerns revealed by the survey.

There was also a discussion about the LAP goals (writing, math, and communication) and efforts that were conducted to meet those goals. Dr. Kelley indicated that she intended to change the process so that it becomes a part of the long-range strategic planning process.

Assistant Superintendent Report

Assistant Superintendent John Aubin reviewed the financial report overages and the revenue accounts that are under expectations. He is currently forecasting a year-end fund balance of roughly \$28,000. The projection during the budget development process was \$90,000. Mr. Aubin indicated that the difference was because of lower interest rates and additional medical insurance costs. The Federal projects income is expected to be \$198,883, \$82,863 of which was unencumbered.

The Quarterly Investment Report was reviewed by Treasurer Cheryl Lindberg. It is expected that the account interest rates will decline when the Citizens Bank and Ledyard Bank CDs mature in June. There will be an effort to bid out the funds to find the best rates.

5. PTO Report

Anne Day gave a review of PTO activities, including: the successful spelling bee; Walk/Bike to School activities May 12 and 21; Pie Day for teacher appreciation on May 18; a library display about the French program; teacher retirement gifts; and the Norwich Historical Society event scheduled for June 5-6. She reported that the school's listserv should be running soon. The next PTO meeting will be 3:30 p.m. June 1 in the Art Room.

6. Business Requiring Discussion

There was a first reading to rescind Regulation EDA – Transportation/Safety Belts, Regulation EDDB-1, and Regulation EDDB – Walkers and Riders, and Policy EDG - Drivers. The transportation consultant recommended rescinding these policies and regulations.

There was a first reading of Policy EEA about transportation principles. The Board discussed regulations about residents who are entitled to bus transportation. Assistant Superintendent John Aubin will review state laws on the issue. He also spoke about the bus route software that has been acquired and installed by the school district.

The Board had a first reading and discussed Policy BHE – Board Use of E-mail. There was a question about how to handle an e-mail and response between a resident and a school board member. Superintendent Gersen will look into this issue and get back to the Board.

7. Business Requiring Action

The Board discussed Policy IJOC and decided to table it and find out more specifics about Vermont law on the issue of conducting background checks of school volunteers.

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to appoint Joy Blongewicz as media specialist at a salary of \$70,889. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to adopt the resolution regarding the offering of the 415 compensation plans as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to readopt DFA-1 – Investment Policy with the revisions recommended by the administration. The motion passed unanimously. A quarterly report will be established as part of the policy revision.

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to approve the non-union salaries and wages as recommended by the administration. The motion passed unanimously.

A letter of resignation was received on April 14 to go into effect at the end of the school year.
Linda Addante moved and Anne Day seconded a motion to accept Lisa Durstin-Madigan's letter of resignation. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to approve the meeting times for 2009-10 as attached to the original meeting minutes and amended. The motion passed unanimously. The change included the May 5 meeting date.

8. Adjournment

Linda Addante moved and Jim Mackall seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM.