

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 24, 2014**

The Board of Education of the East Windsor Regional School District, Hightstown, NJ, held a regular meeting in the Administration Training Room 807A located at 25A Leshin Lane, Hightstown, NJ on FEBRUARY 24, 2014.

Members Present: Pete Bussone, Paul Connolly, Suzann Fallon, Lilia Gobaira, Christine Harrington, Robert Laverty, Kennedy Paul, Alice Weisman
Also Present: Dr. Edward J. Forsthoffer, Chief School Administrator
Thaddeus Thompson, SBA/Board Secretary
Lee Hutchinson, as Board Legal Counsel (o/b/o David Coates)

1. WELCOME/SUNSHINE NOTICE

Board President Alice Weisman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and read the Open Public Meeting Act Statement as follows: “Written advance notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with law. Minutes of this meeting are being kept by the Board Secretary and will be made available to any member of the public requesting them from the Board Secretary at the Administration building, 25A Leshin Lane, Hightstown, NJ. Minutes will be provided at cost and in accordance with Board policy.” Ms. Weisman asked “Are there any Board members present who believe this meeting to be in violation of the Open Public Meeting Act?” No one objected. “There being none, we may proceed.”

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. A. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Connolly moved, seconded by Ms. Fallon to approve the agenda with the following revision:
Amend Executive Session item to also include:

- Attorney Client Privilege
- Pension

Vote: On a roll call poll of the Board, Motion to approve was carried unanimously with 8 yes votes.

B. RESOLUTION: EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Connolly moved, seconded by Ms. Fallon, to approve the following:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the East Windsor Regional School District will hold two closed sessions during its Regular Meeting on Monday, February 24, 2014. These closed sessions concern:

1. Personnel – Interim Superintendent
2. Attorney Client Privilege
3. Pension

Minutes of these closed sessions will be available in accordance with board policy when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Vote: On a roll call poll of the Board, motion to approve was carried unanimously with 8 yes votes.

At this point prior to public forum, Mr. Weisman noted, that in case anyone is wondering why one of our Board members is missing, there is very sad news that Board member Lisa Abel died suddenly this past weekend, and today was the funeral. She and several Board members attended, as well as Dr. Forsthoffer, Mr. Thompson and Ms. Feaster on behalf of the District. She wanted to make the public aware; and that it was very sudden and unexpected.

4. FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Daunt of Cranbury NJ commented on the PARCC testing. Asked if parents would be informed in advance of the tests and what grades would be involved.

Dr. Forsthoffer responded that PARCC is being field tested in different classes and schools. At two elementary schools in language arts, at the middle school in math, and at the high school in math and language arts. He added yes parents will be notified ahead of time and that it's a pilot program; students can opt out of taking the test.

Nevada Doherty of East Windsor commented on the hiring process of a new superintendent. She shared her list of qualities the District needs in a Superintendent. Expressed her concerns that the Board select the best possible candidate. Education is changing; we should avoid corporate superintendents and seek a CSA who approaches the position with respect and humility and will be highly visible as well as approachable.

Stephanie Teitelbaum of East Windsor also commented on the PARCC testing and is glad to hear of the option not to take the test. Also asked about the cost of the exam, as it is expensive; whether it is in the budget. Also expressed concern about safety and security regarding the information being stored on our students; what if any data/ information is being shared with outside entities.

5. FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Bussone commended the Hightstown police and drug squads regarding the recent heroin seizure in Hightstown. It is critical that we open our eyes and be aware of what is going on in our own community.

Mr. Lavery spoke on the comments/concerns regarding security of student data and student records online. What is data being used for and how much if any is made available to corporate interests. Is this a legitimate concern for parents?

Mr. Dzwonar Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Assessment responded that NJSMART is the data collection system used by the NJ Department of Education. Students are identified by their student number only. The NJDOE scores the tests and returns the results to us. He added that the NJDOE does have plans to collect more data and track students all the way to college in an effort to gauge the effectiveness of educational programs. We don't know right now when or if it will be implemented.

Ms. Harrington thanked the public for coming out tonight and noted they spoke on some very important issues. She spoke on the matter of tying students' success to teacher evaluations. Glad parents are aware of and speaking up on this issue. Also spoke on the common core. It is a very complex issue which imposes increasing challenges. There are negative and positive consequences to increasing our expectations of students.

Mr. Lavery commented on the cost of the PARCC tests; do we have any information on this.

Mr. Dzwonar responded that the cost is built into our State aid. We do not pay and it does not come of the District moneys. Added that our technology is able to support the needs and provision of PARCC testing.

6. BUDGET OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Forsthoffer gave a brief update on where we are with the budget and specified certain budgeting items we are looking at for 2014-2015 which include:

- New teacher hires/ personnel
- Purchasing to support common core curriculum needs/resources and common core compliance
- Summer Academy for at risk students
- PSAT tests – make them mandatory
- Maintenance and Capital Projects
- Technology/Software licenses

He noted that he will present the tentative budget at the March 10, 2014 meeting.

Discussion:

A question and answer period ensued. Topics discussed were:

- Special Education tuition increases/out of district placements tuition costs
- Costs for Health Science Academy
- Revenues including State aid
- Tax levy aid
- Capital and Maintenance Reserve
- SDA Grant - phone system upgrade.
- Renovation/upgrade of science labs
- Full day kindergarten

Ms. Weisman suggested the possible formation of a Budget committee, and asked if any board members would be interested in this, possibly to start with the next year's budget.

Ms. Harrington noted that the whole Board should be part of the conversation; not sure of the value of a small subcommittee.

7. SECOND OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Daunt of Cranbury asked about whether the playground at the Perry L. Drew School will be fenced in.

Dr. Forsthoffer responded yes, we are planning to do the fencing in the Spring.

Stephanie Teitelbaum of East Windsor asked if the District would ever have full day kindergarten and spoke in support of this. She noted that many of these students come from a full day of preschool experience. It would benefit the students and parents.

8. SECOND OPPORTUNITY FOR BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Connolly commented that he had attended Rep. Rush Holt's town hall meeting and had asked about the discontinuous sidewalks in our community; for example on Dutch Neck Road and Hickory Corner Road

Mr. Lavery added our transportation department helped identify sidewalk areas where more paving was needed. Unfortunately we still have issues with this.

Mr. Connolly commented that he also asked about federal funding available for STEM at State level.

Mr. Dzwonar commented that federal grants are available for these programs and we have applied for these in the past. The hard part is that they typically involve us putting money into our operating budget to sustain them going forward.

Ms. Gobaira commented she would like to clarify her position on full day kindergarten, that she does support a full day, with half for education and half for some other activity for the kids.

Ms. Weisman asked for the Board's input on a timeframe to move forward with filling the open seat on the Board. We should advertise this as soon as possible.

Ms. Gobaira commented that we should be aware of what we are looking for, and if there are any specific questions we should be asking.

Dr. Forsthoffer responded that the last time we had an open seat the applicants sat up front and answered the questions posed to them.

Ms. Fallon added we want to make every effort to be fair.

9 DISCUSSION: PRELIMINARY SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

Ms. Weisman commented on the options the Board can consider going into a new superintendent search. We can use an outside search firm, or do it alone. One company has already reached out to us. Outside firms in the past have helped screen the applicants for us, and we were able to interview people from other parts of the country. We should set a date at a future meeting to hear from a few representatives on what they can offer us.

Ms. Harrington asked about the pros and cons as she has never been through the process before.

Mr. Lavery commented we should have a file on the last superintendent search as that may be of some guidance.

Ms. Fallon commented it may be worth it to have at least one firm present to the Board for those members who have not been through the process before.

The Board continued to discuss the pros and cons of using a search firm and how to go about it; how to interview; whether in closed or open session and which firms to they would we be interested in hearing from. NJSBA, McPherson & Jacobson and Hazard, Young, Attea were mentioned as possible search firms for consideration. It was agreed that the Board Secretary would contact these firms to determine their availability to present to the Board at the March 24th meeting.

10. DATE FOR SATURDAY RETREAT

Ms. Weisman commented that the Board needs to come up with a mutual date for scheduling a special meeting to analyze the self-evaluations and CSA evaluation; we should meet as soon as possible. After discussion, it was decided a work session/board retreat will be scheduled for Saturday March 8, 2014 beginning at 9:00 am.

11 EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board went into closed session

12 OPEN SESSION

13. ADJOURN

Thaddeus Thompson, Board Secretary

(transcribed by C Jablonski)