

Wilmington Public Schools
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School Committee

Minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting

August 31, 2011

1. **Roll Call:** Chairwoman Margaret Kane called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
Present were: Superintendent Joanne Benton, Assistant Superintendent Kathleen Burnham, Mr. Quincy Vale, Mr. Mario Marchese, Ms. Ginny Bonish, Dr. Leslee Quick, Mr. Robert Hayes, Mrs. Kathleen Carroll and Mr. Paul Ruggiero.

2. **Approval of Items by Consensus:**
 - A. Introduction of Items by Superintendent
 - B. Requests to Withdraw Items
 - C. Items for Approval:
 1. Approval of Minutes: June 22, 2011 – Regular Session
 2. Approval of Minutes: June 22, 2011 – Executive Session
 3. Approval of Field Trip: England – High School – April Vacation
 - D. Transmitting of Treasury Warrant:
FY11: L85, L86, L87, L88, L89, L90, RE240, RE241, G432, G433, G434, FS21, FS22
FY12: L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, RE200, RE201, RE202, G400, CF1, CF2, CF3
Payrolls: 6/20 (2), 6/22, 7/6, 7/20, 8/3, 8/17
 - E. Consideration for Items Withdrawn From Consensus

Superintendent Joanne Benton reviewed the three (3) items for approval on the Consent Agenda.

Chairwoman Margaret Kane called for a motion to approve the June 22, 2011 Regular Session School Committee minutes and the June 22, 2011 Executive Session School Committee minutes (not for release).

Motion, by Mr. Quincy Vale, seconded by Mr. Robert Hayes to approve the June 22, 2011 Regular Session School Committee minutes and the June 22, 2011 Executive Session School Committee minutes (not for release).

Four (4) in favor; two (2) abstain--Mr. Mario Marchese and Mrs. Kathleen Carroll abstained from vote.

Chairwoman Margaret Kane called for a motion to approve the high school field trip and the transmission of the Treasury Warrant as listed.

Motion, by Mr. Mario Marchese, seconded by Mrs. Kathleen Carroll to approve the high school field trip and transmission of the Treasury Warrant as listed.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairwoman Margaret Kane called for a motion to approve the Payroll Warrant for June, July and August.

Motion, by Dr. Leslee Quick, seconded by Mr. Mario Marchese to approve the Payroll Warrant for June, July and August.

Five (5) in favor, one (1) abstain--Mrs. Kathleen Carroll abstained from vote.

3. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Joanne Benton requested a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Doug Chernovetz.

1. Personnel Update and Report

Superintendent Joanne Benton reported that the staffing changes for the 2011-2012 school-year are indicated on the spreadsheet included in the meeting packet. All but one (1) of the 27 positions have been filled; she anticipates a mid-year hire for the .5 Strings position.

Ms. Benton thanked Mr. Richard Barry who volunteered to fill Mr. Chernovetz's position. She welcomed all new staff and invited them to attend the next School Committee meeting on September 14.

On July 1, Ms. Kathleen (Kate) Burnham began as Assistant Superintendent; Ms. Benton stated, "Kate has blended in beautifully and we are thrilled to have her."

2. Opening of School Report

Superintendent Joanne Benton reviewed the progress of ongoing improvement projects that took place over the summer vacation. Ms. Benton stated that the windows at the Shawsheen School are at 85% completion and work on the front door and entrance will occur this week. The roof at the Wildwood School has been partially replaced and the C.A.R.E.S. offices have moved to the North School.

Ms. Benton thanked the Town Manager, the Department of Public Buildings, custodians at the Shawsheen School and the Massachusetts Green Repair program for their support.

Ms. Benton stated that further renovations may be possible with remaining funds of the Stimulus Grant; we will keep you informed of future discussion.

The Leadership Institute took place on August 17; Attorney Andrew Waugh reviewed the new Evaluation regulations and Lt. Scott Scencebaugh presented new ideas around school evacuations. Ms. Benton stated that new strategies will be discussed and we will keep you informed of ideas.

The Superintendent acknowledged the Police and Fire Departments for their support and welcomed Resource Officer, Mr. Brian Gillis.

Ms. Benton reported that weather on Opening Day was beautiful and fall-like, the buses were timely, and all went smoothly. She acknowledged the problem with Middle School Bus 1 and

requested patience as it is being addressed. She further commented that the true test will be next week when Kindergarten begins.

Ms. Benton stated that Assistant Superintendent Kate Burnham conducted the New Teacher Orientation Workshop on August 25 and did an outstanding job.

Ms. Benton concluded her report stating that she cannot believe this is her fifth year as Superintendent and is “humbled to be leading this great system; Wilmington is an incredibly collaborative community to work in.”

Superintendent Benton announced that the school department will be involved with the town in the September 11-- Ten-Year Anniversary Event. Social Studies Teachers at the high school expressed interest in participating in this event and there has been discussion of placing a memorial in the high school courtyard. Students will participate in the project by donating their spare change.

On September 11, services will be held at St. Thomas’s at 3:00 p.m. then move to the Green Common; a reception will follow. Additional information will be provided after Tuesday’s meeting.

3. Preliminary Accountability Status under NCLB – not to be released

Ms. Benton reported that this information is not for publication until September 14; Ms. Burnham will provide an extensive report at the next meeting.

4. Old Business

1. High School Building Project Update

Superintendent Joanne Benton announced that on July 27, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) voted to approve the recommendation for a new high school on the present site; this approval moves us into Module 4, Schematic Design. As part of this process we will develop a detailed scope, budget and schedule which will be submitted to the MSBA Board of Directors for approval.

Ms. Benton stated that the High School Building Committee did not take a summer vacation; we have spent many hours on this project this summer. She reminded the committee that all handouts and presentations are available on the website and encouraged committee members and the community to get involved. The tentative date for the next Public Forum is October 13 at 6:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium; the next High School Building Committee meeting is Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

2. Electronic Device Policy – first reading

Superintendent Benton stated that back in the spring, the Ambassadors Group from the high school came before the committee and presented changes they would like to have made to the Electronic Device Policy. At that time the School Committee directed the School Committee Sub-Committee on Policies to draft a recommendation.

Mr. Quincy Vale performed the first reading of the proposed Electronic Device Policy.

“During the school day, students may have in their possession a silenced personal electronic device such as, but not necessarily limited to, a cellular/mobile telephone, smartphone, audio/visual player/recorder, or laptop/tablet/handheld/pen-based computer. The use of the communication features of such devices

during instruction time is prohibited, unless the classroom teacher or other school official has provided authorization for their use.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, students may use the communication features of such devices during their designated lunch period within the cafeteria and cafeteria lobby only; provided, however, that the Principal or his designee shall have the right to prohibit or otherwise regulate the use of such devices within the cafeteria and cafeteria lobby.

Students who utilize such personal electronic devices in the halls, in classes without permission, or in a manner that is disruptive will have their device taken and held at the Assistant Principal's office to be picked up by a parent or lawful guardian. Use of a personal electronic device's audio or visual recording features is not permitted without prior approval of an administrator or teacher.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy will result in disciplinary action and may result in suspension."

Superintendent Joanne Benton reported that a parent survey was conducted over the summer. A 12% response was received, being statistically acceptable. The results indicated an 83% response in favor of the Electronic Device draft policy; 17% were not in favor.

Ms. Benton further stated that she took this opportunity to obtain feedback on future use of technology and surveyed parents on their ability to supply students with a laptop for school use during half of the school-year. The results indicated 67% with the ability to provide the technology; 32% were unable.

Additionally, a request for feedback on visions for a 21st century high school was also included in the survey.

Ms. Benton thanked all families that responded; she stated that if the Electronic Device Policy is approved it will be on a six (6) month trial basis.

Questions and Comments:

Dr. Leslee Quick stated that if this is to pass for pilot, she would like to ensure monitoring of students actually eating lunch and communicating with one another. She additionally stated that working parents may have difficulty picking up devices that have been taken away.

Superintendent Benton replied that the high school is open at 6:30 a.m.

Ms. Ginny Bonish asked for clarification surrounding regulating the use of camera features.

Mr. Quincy Vale stated that attention was given to the audio/visual features, specifically to the recording others without authorization; this is covered in the policy as it states it is not permitted without prior approval of an administrator or teacher. Mr. Vale further commented that this can be regulated during the pilot.

Dr. Leslee Quick agreed and commented that a policy should be as specific as possible.

Chairwoman Margaret Kane stated she is strongly against the policy and does not see the educational value of it. She suggested creating time for student use in a media center rather than

during lunch. She also suggested obtaining legal advice before adoption. Ms. Kane clarified that she has no objection to teachers providing these devices for educational purposes. Superintendent Benton stated that legal counsel has reviewed and approved the proposed policy. She further commented that there are two (2) elements to be considered: the ability for students to be able to legally use these devices during the outlined times, and to support the teachers' interest in educational use of technology in the classroom—Ms. Benton provided two (2) examples of benefits: internet use and audio response. She further stated that she is asking that the committee keep an open-mind and allow a trial.

Mr. Robert Hayes stated that at a recent sub-committee meeting, Mr. Mahoney invited members to visit the high school for observation during lunch-time use. Mr. Hayes additionally stated that he communicated with Mr. Tracy and requested examples of the benefits of device-use in the classroom: benefits described were real-time research, submitting work, updating work, audio response, signing up for global activities, voice recorder for ideas, and Google docs.

Chairwoman Margaret Kane stated that she supports classroom use but does not agree with lunch-time use.

Mr. Robert Hayes stated that initially he had reservations, further commenting that after research indicated support from over 80% of community members, various councils, 2/3 teacher support and informational links indicating support of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, “my mind is pretty-much made up.” He hopes to be able to address some of the negative concerns such as cyber-bullying and cheating at a later date.

Mr. Quincy Vale stated that this is a “brand new world” for many of us; technology is migrating and there are many beneficial features of these devices that allow teachers to maximize their use while teaching students how to use technology responsibly.

Mrs. Kathleen Carroll stated that data packages are not affordable for all families.

Superintendent Benton replied that they are to be used only if all have the device.

Dr. Leslee Quick commented that data usage and minutes may become factors in classroom use.

Mr. Quincy Vale commented that this is not an equity-based argument.

Discussion continued surrounding those students not equipped with devices in the classroom.

Mr. Mario Marchese commented that he feels we are losing sight of the intention of this policy; we are not trying to force the curriculum be based on cell phones--although they do have the ability to enhance the classroom. We are trying to move forward with technology and provide students the opportunity to use that technology in an appropriate time and place. He further stated, “I am in favor and think we should go forward with it.”

Mrs. Kathleen Carroll stated that teachers' texting homework is a concern since parents cannot regulate all text messages their children receive.

Mr. Mario Marchese stated that type of communication should not happen; students are instructed to refer to the teachers' website if they have questions on their homework.

Superintendent Benton stated that back in the spring, we heard from the students and they stated they are using these devices all day now; what we are trying to do here is find a place that we can regulate use of these devices. She asked the committee to keep an open mind.

Chairwoman Kane commented that it was a wonderful discussion; we will bring this to vote at the next meeting.

5. New Business

1. Professional Development Plan

Superintendent Joanne Benton stated that the 2011-2012 Professional Development Plan has been included in the meeting packets for review. The plan requires a vote to adopt; voting will take place on September 14. Please direct questions to Ms. Burnham.

Ms. Burnham referenced informational links and websites.

Superintendent Benton stated that Teachers Contracts has a section that requires a Professional Development Committee collaborate throughout the year to plan for Professional Development. Workshops and meetings are coordinated and staff is then surveyed. The committee provides significant input into the plan. Ms. Burnham will meet with the committee next week to finalize plans for the November 1 Professional Development Day.

Questions and Comments:

Chairwoman Margaret Kane commented that Differentiated Instruction is a fantastic Keynote Speech and recommended attending.

Ms. Kane additionally stated that a vote on the plan will take place at the next meeting.

2. Draft of 2011-2012 Superintendent's Goals

Superintendent Benton presented six (6) goals for the 2011-2012 school year.

- 1. Student Learning**
- 2. Adult Learning**
- 3. Finance and Budget**
- 4. Facilities and Space Utilization**
- 5. Climate and Culture**
- 6. Technology**

Ms. Benton stated that this year she will focus emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), continue to review the common core, continue to provide optional professional development opportunities for staff, and maintain a mindful budget. Key focus will be on the proposal to build a new high school; she stated she hopes to coordinate plans to support and upgrade additional buildings. Focus will continue on climate and culture, specifically anti-bullying and developing homework and stress policies.

Questions and Comments:

Chairwoman Margaret Kane suggested creating a sub-committee to collaborate with the Superintendent throughout the year in monitoring goals and progress. Ms. Kane stated this will

prove helpful when performing the Superintendent Evaluation in March. She asked committee members to consider this and stated discussion will be opened at the next meeting.

6. Public Comments

Ms. Martha O'Brien of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPEDPAC) invited all to attend their first fundraiser of the year, "Pizza Mania" scheduled for September 9 from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.; the cost is \$8 for adults; \$5 children.

7. Other Reports

There were no other reports this evening.

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence this evening.

9. Future Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

- a. **September 12, 2011—Joint Meeting with Selectman**
- b. **September 14, 2011--School Committee Meeting**

10. Adjournment

Chairwoman Margaret Kane requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion, by Mr. Mario Marchese, seconded by Mr. Robert Hayes to adjourn. Motion was carried by all.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mr. Robert Hayes, Secretary