

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE March 06, 2014 MEETING  
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

**January 13, 2014**

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Monday, January 13, 2014 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Leigh Rankin, Lauri Wichtowski, Jane Cavanaugh, Chris Riley, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Mario Gioco, Ann Monaghan, Jennifer Clark as well as Senior Student Representatives Phoebe Petrovic and Emily LeGrand

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,  
Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Joanne Beekley  
Business Manager Garth Sawyer;  
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Chris Riley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the regular meeting of November 07, 2013.

**AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

8 citizens were present. No comments made.

**OTHER ITEMS**

Students Rachel Trezza and Maya Gold updated the Board on recent events at JWMS including the faculty/student volleyball and basketball games recently enjoyed by all. The MathCounts Regional Competition is coming up soon, and the mock trial team will be competing again on Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>. The student body raised money to help cover holiday expenses for children and families in need in the tri-town area.

Senior Student Representative Phoebe Petrovic reported on the holiday breakfast with Santa sponsored by the National Honor Society. She also discussed the first mock trial competition held in December, where the varsity team moved on and will be competing in the State quarterfinals on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Senior Student Representative Emily LeGrand reported on winter sports at Valley, including basketball, indoor track, and gymnastics, and noting that the Ski Club travels every few weekends. She also reported on the progress of the school musical. Roles have been cast and students are working on music, general lines and choreography.

**REPORTS**

**Financial Status Updates**

Business Manager Garth Sawyer reviewed the financial status report, as well as the cafeteria account report.

Unexpected out-of-district placements for special education have put that line item into deficit at this point. Because some of those costs will be reimbursable he is still anticipating a small surplus, however it will be much smaller than expected at the last meeting due to those unanticipated special education costs.

Chair Chris Riley read excerpts from a New London Day article praising Valley Football Coach Tim King, Principal Kristina Martineau, and the Valley football players after a recent playoff loss. A copy of the article will be shared with the Board.

## **Principals Update**

Teacher Meagan Sirimongkhouné introduced students Jill Larsen and Maddie Kozlik who gave a slide show presentation on their recent Spanish class trip to Costa Rica with 18 other Valley students for a 7 night stay. Their presentation highlighted various aspects of their trip which included service and learning through volunteer work, home stays, conservation efforts, and exposure to the biodiversity of the rainforest and the culture of the Costa Rican citizens. Both felt the full immersion family stay was very helpful in advancing their Spanish language abilities, and that this was the trip of a lifetime.

Teacher Meagan Sirimongkhouné next introduced student Christina Mitchel who gave a slideshow presentation on her Spanish class trip to Spain. She was one of 14 students who traveled to Spain over the Thanksgiving Break with 2 chaperones.

They stayed for 6 nights with host families and enjoyed many cultural and academic opportunities. She shared that she had gained an appreciation for Spanish culture and broadened her mental horizons as well. In addition to the opportunities to use and improve her Spanish language abilities, the trip also put history into a whole new, “real” perspective for her; tying into current topics she is studying in her AP World History class. She noted that it was an eye-opening and incredible trip.

Chair Riley asked both groups if they had any personal safety issues that the Board should know about for future trip approvals. All students reported that they personally felt very safe the entire time. Elaine Fitzgibbons asked the teachers present if the students achieved what was hoped by the trip. The consensus response was “yes”, and also that the advances in the students’ language ability and their steps toward fluency were incredible. Additionally the students’ world view was changed by their experiences; students were excited about the language, the world, and being a part of that big picture.

Valley Regional Principal Kristina Martineau was unable to attend the meeting due to the postponed date. Her SAT report will be held until the next meeting.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal, William Duffy updated the Board on the 2013-14 school year which is now at the mid-year conference point. JWMS is already looking toward next year, recently holding a an information night for parents of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade next year. Faculty shared basic information about curriculum, options, and expectations. The students visited the school the following day. Additional orientations will be held throughout the year for both parents and students.

## **Committee Reports**

Garth Sawyer reported that the Joint BOE Finance Committee will meet again on January 27<sup>th</sup> to continue their review of the proposed business procedures manual.

Dr. Levy reported that the Joint BOE Policy Committee will meet again on January 21<sup>st</sup> . (note: due to weather this meeting was moved to January 27<sup>th</sup> )

Dr. Beekley reported that the Joint BOE Curriculum Committees will meet again on January 21<sup>st</sup> . (note: due to weather this meeting was moved to January 27<sup>th</sup> )

**Supervision District Committee Update** - The first budget workshop was cancelled due to weather. They did hold one last week and the second one is scheduled for tomorrow night.

## **Assistant Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. Beekley gave a general update on activities within the districts and reviewed the school performance reports received recently.

Dr. Beekley noted that this report is directly linked to CMT/CAPT report she made to the Board back in November, at which time Principals presented their action plans for areas needing improvement. There was a brief discussion regarding graduation rates, achievement gaps, societal issues, changeover to Common Core State Standards, and different standardized tests being administered soon.

It was noted that the district made the commitment to move to the Common Core curriculum a few years ago, even though it wouldn’t align closely with CMT/CAPT assessments. It is hoped that commitment will begin to pay off once SBAC testing, which is aligned with CCSS, begins.

Superintendent Levy discussed possible budgetary impacts on achievement, including the loss of a remedial reading teacher about 7 years ago at VRHS. She also noted the need to increase social worker/student contact to be able to better address whole student issues, which do impact academic achievement.

Any further questions regarding the report should be sent to Dr. Levy and/or Chairman Riley.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Levy shared a report from teacher Laura Hilton on VRHS music students' successful participation in the New England Concert Music Festival.

There will be another meeting of the Security Advisory Committee on Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>. The Committee will continue to examine priority lists and current status at schools, as well as a preliminary safety report put out by State.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> a Community Dinner and Conversation will be held in the JWMS Cafeteria with a guided community conversation among parents and administration of all 5 schools regarding our strategic goals, and input on how we're doing.

On January 29<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 p.m. there will be a "Welcome to Central Office" workshop for new BOE members to give them a chance to meet with Central Office administrators and learn more about each of their areas of focus.

Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> is next scheduled Joint BOE and Supervision District regular meeting. A vote on the proposed 2014-15 Supervision District budget is planned for that date.

Dr. Levy recommended that the Board approved the following donations from Valley Travel Basketball, a score table valued at \$1300 to VRHS and practice jerseys for JWMS.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept a donation of a scoring table from Valley Travel Basketball to VRHS.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept a donation of practice jerseys from Valley Travel Basketball to JWMS.

Dr. Levy led a second discussion regarding a teacher's request for a sabbatical for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2014-15 school year. She reviewed the current policy on the matter and presented information requested by the Board at the last meeting, including cost to district, which would be the cost of a long term sub of \$23,000-\$60,000 depending on the substitute's level of education. The Board discussed the policy and financial implications, and expressed concerns regarding both issues.

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to deny the requested sabbatical leave as presented.

**AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS** – 1 present, no comment was made.

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Region 4 BOE Next Regular Meeting (March 6, 2014 @ 7:00 p.m.)
2. Region 4 Budget Workshops for 2014-15 budget Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>, Feb. 04<sup>th</sup>, Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> at CO at 6:00 p.m.
3. SAT report - *K. Martineau* – (Mar)
4. BOE and Community input for 2014-15 budget (on-going)
5. Student Report on French Trip (TBD)
6. BOE Self-evaluation (TBD)
7. Possible discussion regarding cafeteria status and future options (TBD)

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Bryan, Clerk