

LITCHFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 20, 2013

A regular meeting of the Litchfield Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 20, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the Litchfield High School Library/Media Center.

Present were: Mr. Simone, Chairperson; Ms. Carr; Ms. Fabbri; Ms. Rosser; Messrs. Bongiorno, Falcetti, Katzin, Shuhi and Waugh.

Also present were: Dr. Wheeler; Mr. Lathrop; Mr. Zaremski; Ms. Della Volpe; Ms. Murphy; Ms. Turner; and members of the public and the press.

Approve Minutes

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Mr. Bongiorno: to approve the minutes of regular meeting February 6, 2013 with the following corrections: on page 3100 under public comment, change "I.S." to "L.I.S." and "Batiste" to "Battiste."

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

MOTION made by Mr. Falcetti and seconded by Ms. Carr: to add to the agenda as item VII a, a discussion and possible action on an overnight field trip for the student council.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Ms. Fabbri: to add to the agenda as item VII b, a discussion of the letter sent to parents from LIS on BYOD.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

Approve Payment of Invoices

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Ms. Fabbri: to approve payment of invoices for 2012-2013 as required.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. Mr. Simone abstained.

Public Comment and Correspondence

- a. STPC – no report.
PTO – no report.
- b. LHS student council – no report.
- c. Other public comment:
 - Ms. O’Leary read a letter from several staff members of Center School and commented: need for classroom teachers in the lower grades and need for Speech and Language Pathologist position.
 - Ms. Brouillet read a letter from Ms. Albert and herself and commented: effect on students if Speech and Language Pathologies is cut; and effect on students if Kindergarten and 1st grade position cut.
 - Mr. Sandrib commented: replacements for L.H.S. positions is pivotal; college readiness needs; remediation needs; importance of swim program.
 - Mr. Sandrib commented: read a letter from Gordon Brown, Swim Coach; successful swim program; Berkshire League participation and championships and number of participants involved in swimming compared to other sports.
 - Ms. Morgan commented: need to continue swim program; need for specialized Science teacher at C.S.; need for small class sizes to achieve DRA increase; and possible assistant in classes over 17 in the lower grades.
 - Mr. Shuhi commented: balancing the budget; different priorities; needs to work for everyone; and no one wants to push class sizes up.
- d. Correspondence
 - A letter from Debbie Downs, Cindy Zeller and Lisa Knowles regarding proposed budget cuts.
 - A letter from Shelly Hill regarding Honor Roll.
 - A letter from Education Connection regarding \$1,000 scholarship availability for a senior from LHS.
 - A letter from CIRMA Representative.
- e. Administrators’ Report
 - Ms. Murphy reported: CMT test window starting in a week and a half.
 - Ms. Turner reported: CMTs starting for 3rd graders; letter home to parents regarding testing; NHS students to read to Kindergarteners on March 5th and 6th; and Fancy Day held last week with teachers participating.
 - Ms. Della Volpe reported: laptops given out to middle school students; parent meetings well attended; tutorials available; 3 students selected for Art Scholarship and displayed at the Library; talent in town on Saturday (snow date possible for Sunday); Girls Basketball to states; senior night at swim meet tonight; 7th grade winter survival tomorrow; random acts of kindness week last week; and Harvey Alliston speaker at assembly well received.

- Mr. Zaremski reported: excess cost tuition up; issues of reimbursement from state is a variable in the budget; and 7 high cost tuitions; changes since started budget development process.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Wheeler presented 2013-2014 Budget Recommendations for discussion and possible action.

Board members discussed: Kindergarten enrollment and possible enrollment; 53 students if all enroll; amount of budget and possible increase of 2.99%; health benefit issues; possible reductions; custodial phones; dues and fees; unemployment; Special Ed transportation and tuition; software; stamps; 1st grade teacher; Kindergarten teacher; World Language at H.S.; medical costs; security issues; possible 3.15% increase; other districts' budget increases; budget needs to support our programs and possible enhance it; Speech and Language Pathologist numbers 46 with 1031 students and 6 years ago 81 with 1217 students; extreme drop in enrollment; comfort level with only two; IDEA grant money; consulting issues; need to identify speech and language needs; regular ed students' needs; keep 2 classes small and put an assistant in the third with larger enrollment; resources for students who are challenged the most; reasonable class size now; fiduciary responsibility to the town; supplemental skills specialized training and services to students; dental line; medical self-insurance; tuition; leasing; computer coordinator; NEASC at L.I.S. and C.S.; FTE=\$53,888; possible elementary grade teachers to teach science; timing for teachers to teach science labs; enriching program; goal to push toward excellence in math and science; STEM issues; broad based science curriculum is essential; challenging science and math curriculum; AP language; 6th grade science program similar to 7th grade; rigor and quality of instruction; FTEs in music cut .2; need for computerized music teacher at H.S.; need for French program rather than phase out; possible share French with Wamogo; possibly eliminate extra tech support to keep curriculum; \$250,000 project; need for tech position if investment is so large; need to maintain integrity of system; need to cover costs for next year; I.T. program has been cut 33% over last 4 years; academics should not be cut; need for balance between academics and technology; buy technology but need to provide training with support; need for PD; defray cost with cost of technology consultant that will not be used next year; need to evaluate technology impact in the near future; already invested in technology so need to continue with the plan; Smart Boards; 1 to 1 computers; maintenance of technology; need to see how effective technology is; need to look for smaller cuts that could accumulate to FTEs; OT, PT, medical advisor, children with special needs; possible reduction in number of computers and price of computers; infrastructure costs; budget available on website.

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Mr. Bongiorno: to support the Superintendent's budget for the purpose of Boards consideration.

Board members discussed: compromises with .8 music to 1.0 French; difference between last year's budget and this year's; class size 18 in 1st grade with 3 teachers; possible 54 Kindergarten students; history shows that usually lose students in 1st grade; supplemental skills support teachers help with lower level needs; concerns about DRP level going from 18 to 24; need for meeting with CJR; need to use leverage; tax exempt status; community center use of pool; residential program uses it again; fee for service; open for public use; mandates for CC standards for earlier grades; no more spiral curriculum, has to be mastery; salaries and benefits at around 75%; population in H.S. from 710 to 475; need for 2 full time administrators; bullying mandates; difficult to cover for one person; administrators cover 7 – 12; possible merge of elementary schools; district has no assistant Superintendent, Curriculum coordinator, or department chairs which has to be covered by administrators; 235 reduction equivalent to 3 grades; safe school issues; easier to combine at elementary level; possible share of tech coordinator with town offices, similar to maintenance; education time has increased by 15 minutes having own laptops; French swap with music .2; drop medical costs; Board of Finance input; Special Ed department support; positions at H.S. redefined for SRBI; quality of service affected; less flexibility for scheduling; autism issues; numbers don't justify position; possibly keep .5 Speech Pathologist instead of 1.0 to ease transition; possibly change other specials to .8 like music is now; supplemental skills are specialized in addressing needs; look at big ticket items to see if any reductions possible; 5 – 10% deduction to Special Ed transportation; adjustments to institutions used; reduction in tech supplies; copiers bid; internet access possibilities could be reduction sometimes free; Board of Finance books needed by March 8th; meeting on the 6th; and possible cut in dues and fees.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. Mr. Shuhi abstained.

Old Business - none

New Business

- a. Dr. Wheeler presented a request for an overnight field trip request from the student council.

MOTION made by Mr. Shuhi and seconded by Ms. Carr: to approve the overnight field trip for student council members to Wesleyan University to attend a leadership council conference.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

- b. Board consensus was to table the agenda item VII b. discussion of LIS letter to parents for the next agenda.

Committee Reports

Curriculum, Programs and Personnel – none

Finance, Facilities & Technology – none

Policy - Ms. Carr reported that the committee will be meeting tomorrow night.

Policies – none

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Mr. Bongiorno: to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

Respectfully submitted,
Donald Falcetti, Secretary
Joanne Bertrand, Recording Secretary