

LITCHFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 8, 2017

A Special Meeting of the Litchfield Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Center School Gymnasium.

Present were: Mr. Simone, Chair; Ms. Carr; Ms. Fabbri; Ms. Stone; Mr. Bongiorno; Mr. Clock; Mr. Falcetti; Mr. Pavlick; and Mr. Shuhi.

Also present were: Superintendent Turner; Mr. Fiorillo; Board's Attorney, Daniel Murphy; and members of the public and the press.

New Business

a. Community Conversation

Mr. Simone stated that the Board is offering an opportunity for parents and community members to ask questions about the budget and school operations. The Board will clarify some of the questions asked in a letter presented at the last Board meeting.

Superintendent Turner reported on the following clarifying some of the questions from that letter including: school climate and teacher turnover; hire quality teachers; have professional growth and development opportunity; LEED evaluation document; developed by teachers and administrators; PDEC done with teachers and administrators; have PD in district; TEAM, teacher certification process; and tier I and II for non-team members.

School climate: PA # 11-232 strengthen school bullying policy; all according to state statute; Julie Haggard administers "Safe School Climate Program;" paper work for appropriate school intervention; revisiting some programs; survey being developed; target for end of March; run for 2-3 weeks; will have feedback; results determine what schools need; K-12 social and emotional curriculum; survey provides data for school intervention; collaboration with Greenwoods Counselling services and Prevention Council and new survey this year.

Mr. Fiorillo reported on the following clarifying some of the questions from that letter including: All-Star Transportation Contract concerns; procurement policy; options available; original contract with Laidlaw; acquired by All-Star; 2017-2021 contract worked on; CT State Statute states can enter into contract to provide transportation; falls under local Board policy #3323A, 1983 approved and undated 2014; read policy; state and local statutes followed in procurement process; Feb. 24th met with officials; agreed to update contract; presented to Board; asked All-Star to renegotiate; reached out to other districts to compare contracts; discussed bidding vs. negotiations with Board; reviewed safety record; presented to Facilities committee and agreed to move forward; waiver required; spent time regarding cost for taxpayers; 50 other contracts reviewed; rates reviewed; limited vendors in area; difficult for bidding process; half contracts are negotiated; very common practice; satisfied with provider's services; taxpayers concerns

considered; possibly can get a better price; children's safety considered; reliable organization; no accidents; if go out to bid not a lot of contractors available; but not sure of reliability of a new provider; Special Ed transportation considered; Pre-K – 12 programs; sports use; sports consolidated with Region 6; saving money; bus maintenance is good; bus safety always considered; have sub busses available; not sure if get lower costs if go out to bid; All-Star in NW CT; vendor has allowed us to break the contract; new vehicle costs for vendor; vendor feels confident and can win bid if do that; and multi-year contract be in agenda and recommend to the Board to do so.

Superintendent Turner on communication and transparency: can contact Superintendent anytime for conversation; paper sign up needed at Board meeting for information to reply; agendas are available; confidentiality issues; meeting minutes in compliance; Executive Session used exclusively for confidential issues; Superintendent's Goals are available to public; Superintendent performance is during Executive Session.

Stacy Morgan commented with a statement including: addressing facts; parents are afraid of retribution for their children; children treated poorly because parents make public statements; teachers and staff afraid of speaking up; anonymous texts received; intimidation and posturing done; offended about having Board attorney present at community conversation; concerned about self-interest; need change.

Patti Laure questioned: need for STEM programs in schools; and 6th graders not involved.

Ms. Fabbri replied: rigor in Science for K-12; ahead of State requirements; confident in Science curriculum; and K-5 math has new curriculum.

Ms. Garman questioned: issues with bus contract for field trips.

Mr. Fiorillo replied: part of contract fee within Litchfield; \$60.00 fee; slightly higher daily rate for system; conversation with All-Star.

Stephanie Round questioned: results from survey will be shared.

Superintendent Turner replied: teacher evaluation plan; administrators' goals, teacher goals, school goals; have analysis and results; haven't given survey yet; survey is State recommended; how best to view results; given Grade 3 and up; and for parents to see.

Jodie Tenney questioned: provisions for vans for music program needs; initial drivers lost; 2 school vans with 2 school drivers gone; and concerns about having transportation for music events.

Mr. Fiorillo replied: had 3 vans when started; needs change; issues with safety seats; recoup this year; vans very expensive; are consolidating one route; 2 vans and 2 bus drivers left;

use for transportation; bigger burden for drivers; small pool to begin with; possible outsource van; teachers not always willing to go through Type 2 driving program to drive students; and music and athletic transportation will be covered.

Michelle Sanford questioned: need for TAG program in Litchfield for kids who are bored in school and not being challenged.

Superintendent Turner replied: Julie Haggard coordinating proposed programs; enrichment program for all students; all students can attend; for high achieving students evaluation to be done; TAG screened in 3rd grade; and enrichment in high school.

Michelle Sanford questioned: lack of Foreign Language choices in Litchfield compared to other districts and efforts and financing put into Spanish classes; and Region 6 has a flourishing French program which we can possibly participate in.

Ms. Fabbri replied: on-going discussion; numbers going down; French teacher not available; issues with attendance and sharing Region 6 classes; online program is preferable but not optimal; and issues with Latin teachers changing.

Sarah Warden questioned: TAG program starting time.

Superintendent Turner replied: teacher recommendations needed; PPT screening needed; need criteria; and presented before subcommittee, Curriculum, Programs and Personnel.

Jodie Tenney commented: not good to start TAG without program guidelines; need to identify students before have program; law designed to give criteria for identifying TAG; and don't rush until have formal program.

Brenda Barns questioned: need for mentor program for French teachers to retain them.

Superintendent Turner replied: mentoring required by law; TEAM mentoring program in place; assigned mentors; have to be trained; very supportive environment; have to follow; Principal has to sign off; and school held accountable.

Audience member questioned: mess of LIS gym.

Mr. Bongiorno replied: limited Capital funds given to Board; gym cleaned out downstairs done recently; need for auditorium to be updated; need for people to help with improvements; need for sound system to be updated; bleachers are capital project; need for possible grants; and bleachers are last on capital list.

Christie Morgan questioned: teacher turnover issues especially with Special Ed coverage.

Superintendent Turner replied: strive to hire good teachers; have effective teacher in front of every student; focus on teacher evaluation plan; PD on evaluation plan; are in compliance; emphasis on growth and development; teacher evaluation in process; what mean to be Litchfield teacher; no longer have CEUs; have individual PD; pre K – 12; evaluation at end of year; good conversations had; cultivate teacher leaders and coordinators; and positive impact on new teachers.

Kristi Morgan questioned: attracting teaches who came here to stay here; student had 3 or 4 Special Ed teachers in one year; possible committee to hire teachers; need for best for job; issues with money, location; and what the problems may be; students not happy going into 6th grade; don't like Spanish; teachers talk in circles; not happy going to school; need to identify the problem.

Ms. Carr replied: can't mix up who we attract, teacher retention and teacher leaving; very different; can't comment on confidential info; some teachers retire; issues with location of school-relocating; quality of schools is excellent; students are successful; input from home and schools; extra-curricular issues; some move from out of state; Litchfield performs really well; issues with unhappiness in populace; members of Board are volunteers; tremendous amount of time need to serve on the Board; where want to apply and where want to work; commuting issues; pick teachers for school; come in schools to teach lesson; special sub- committee involved; have interview, see records, and transcripts; have sample lesson; see how interact with students; Superintendent makes recommendation; Board reviews documents; sometimes issues noted and not recommended by Board; multi-level process with hiring; hired in Executive Session; follow statutory guidelines; Board has final decision; usually Board goes with Superintendent's recommendation, but not always; and policies here not the same as Hartford.

Kristen Wells questioned: concerns with teacher turnover; need to ask why leaving; issues of unrest; parents are not the enemy; and something seems wrong in town of Litchfield.

Mr. Bongiorno replied: can remember three times when he voted against a teacher recommendation from the Superintendent; new teachers are taught by professors to move more and more to make better money; not like when relatives worked as a teacher for 40 years in the past; trained to move on; part of culture now; can't fix that; teachers do leave; a lot more to it; and there are concerns about teachers leaving.

Jodi Tenney questioned: need for a more competitive contract; comes down to fulfillment in jobs; is problem; hope for continuity; need for school climate surveys; surveys make big difference; issues with students not wanting to go to school; many teachers gone; one student has 35 students in HS class; is an issue; need to get to them before they leave; and need some kind of communication before they leave.

Ms. Carr replied: can't tell why teachers left; if problem, will address; all confidential info; can't discuss why teachers left; is disruptive to educational process; have to trust we are keeping up with concerns; can run for office if not confident with Board; and openings in fall.

Eric Marriott questioned: comparing teacher turnover with other districts; and input from administrators.

Carol Andrulis questioned: Latin III having 3 different teachers; not acceptable in outside world to have such turnover; effect on bottom line; issues with lack of management with teachers; some retired teachers work at other jobs in other districts; is it teachers or management; need for extra-curricular; in past have had debate team, model UN; have nothing now; need to look into this; surveys are great but now always anonymous; some administrators have questioned students regarding questions from survey; need to do surveys every year; importance of STEM programs; issues at LIS; library coverage with non-certified staff; and not putting best person in front of students.

Visko Hatfield questioned: budget issues and schedules; two schools of thoughts; teacher harmony and teacher retention; turned down several times with Region 6; bussing issues; all want same thing; good to make comparison with 50 towns; nothing nefarious; need inspiration for students to do better; raise the bar; issues with random drug searches; issues with 7th graders asked about sexual orientation in survey; think higher; reach higher; raise bar for kids; not good to have bored kids; need for inspiration for children.

Sabrina Spelman questioned: relationship between Board and community; initiative to strengthen the relationship; want to feel heard; possibly hold similar meeting everyone 3 months; praise for having opportunity; and need to set up quarterly.

Board members agreed.

Chris Combs questioned: appreciate what Board does; quarterly meetings would be great; turnover issues; teachers desire to leave districts like Hartford, New Britain, or Middletown; Litchfield a more liked district; how do other districts fair with teacher turnover; need to communicate with community and improve customer relationships.

Diane Wilson questioned: attended meetings often after Sandy Hook; community members need to attend more meetings including Board of Finance, and capital; limited capital spending for education; need for tables at CS; need to go to budget meetings; and need to fight for what we need.

Mr. Bongiorno replied: the process of capital spending; need to share funding; road money is in capital; needed firetrucks and ambulances; needed cameras and security; willing to look for other sources for funding; much to do for this; items don't affect learning directly; and will put tables in budget.

Kathleen Reidy commented: appreciate productive conversations; and questioned when enrichment program will begin.

Superintendent Turner replied: Enrichment for grades K-6 with community effort and participation; one Friday a month; parents share talents; menu of items to pick; card games, cooking, science projects; pilot this year; Sarah Reynolds parent on committee; parents will get info; get things off the ground; parent contributions; for all kids; and running this school year.

Carol Andrulis suggested check into grant funding.

Eileen Marriott questioned: moved from other system two years ago; focused on standardized tests; need to look into teacher turnover; indicator of how far reaching children affected; and need comparison with other schools.

Stacy Morgan questioned: the percentage of time Board goes into Executive Session seems excessive; in excess of 70%.

Board Attorney, Daniel Murphy replied: Executive Session is used appropriately and this statistic is for another issue.

Michelle Sanford questioned: issues with two weeks bus changes notifications; and some are emergencies and not safe for the students involved to go home alone.

Board members replied: schools getting on average 50 a day; difficult to track where students were going; took 4 hours of staff time to complete; Principals do have flexibility; emergencies will be handled; don't fault principals, fault policy; emergencies can handle; Board concern, safety issue for students getting wrong bus; principals will be notified with emergency issues; HS and MS issues; not good for working parents; showed package of notes from day and one school; and willing to take time to solve such issues.

Visko Hatfield questioned: issues with HS website; when go to it is "under development," and even the number of Superintendent is large.

Mr. Shuhi replied: a lot of what we are talking about is under operation level.

Ms. Carr replied: last Superintendent got married and left; more important that parents plan ahead; took 4 meetings to make changes; issues with small children ending up in the right place; safety of children most important; when policy on bus passes was discussed it was done during open Policy Committee meetings and during open meeting for the first reading with the Board and open meeting for the second reading; and need for parents to attend more open meetings to keep up with what is going on with the Board.

Ms. Garden commented: positive things now in MS; in past, little communication; poor field trips planned; no overnight field trips; few dances; difficulty having moving up ceremony for 8th graders; now improvements made; better field trips; spirit week; have overnight field trips; have conferences during early dismissal with HS exams; 8th grade moving up is better; have writing

project; literature club; advisory period; some new hires are retained, some not; and trust in her decision making and her staff.

Jodi Tenney questioned: need to work together especially on policies that have big effect on education.

Mr. Shuhi replied: after reading questions, not sure what the community thinks we do; but it is for the good of all the students.

Ms. Hodges commented: Superintendent's Assistant; apologized to the Board for not making the right configuration at the last meeting; thought there would be enough room for community members that attended; stay on task to provide any and all information needed by community members that is public information; thank the Board for all they do; they work hard to do the best for your students; and information will be provided when requested.

MOTION made by Mr. Shuhi and seconded by Ms. Carr: to move to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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

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