

STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING June 13, 2013

Gail MacDonald, Chairwoman, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were Faith Leitner, Secretary, Deborah Downie, Alisa Morrison, Frank Todisco, Kevin Bornstein and Craig Esposito.

Also present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Joni Moody, Student Government, members of the staff, students, and interested citizens.

Communications & Recognitions

Communications

None at this time.

Recognitions

Gail MacDonald recognized George Crouse and the SHS girls' tennis team who recently were named state champions. Mr. Crouse introduced all the players. Mrs. MacDonald thanked Mr. Crouse and his team for attending the meeting. The Board and Dr. Riley presented Mr. Crouse with a token of appreciation for his accomplishment.

Dr. Van Riley recognized the following "We Are Stonington Public Schools" recognition recipients for June:

Chris Clarke – Staff - WBS
John Glover – Staff - WBS
Linda Kuja – Staff - WBS

Gail MacDonald recognized and thanked Joni Moody, the Student Government representative, for serving on the Board this year and presented her with a gift from the Board and Dr. Riley wishing her luck in her future studies at Central CT State University.

Alisa Morrison recognized the music and choral groups for an amazing POPS concert.

Deborah Downie recognized the SHS drama group for doing a great job and for their Halo nominations and awards.

Faith Leitner recognized how wonderful the Student Government Induction Ceremony was and MMS for having a bake sale to generate funds for the people of Oklahoma.

Gail MacDonald recognized and thanked Judy Samokar for all the work she did as Finance Manager and noted that that this would be her last meeting with us, Ms. Samokar will be retiring at the end of June.

Gail MacDonald recognized and congratulated Eileen Fiore, a teacher at PMS, for receiving the nomination of Teacher of the Year.

Comments from Citizens

Cindy Nadeau thanked Allison Van Etten, Tom Bousquet, and Dr. Van Riley for the wonderful Unified Sports banquet, and added the kids seemed to have fun and a good time, "thank you and it was much appreciated".

Pauline Murphy commented on the possibility of next year having the district check with the surrounding towns so that graduation does not fall on the same. Ms. Murphy also added that, although the Coast Guard Academy is a great campus, being from this area for many years she would like to see graduation held at the Stonington High School and asked why graduation is not being held indoors since the field is not available.

Sue Jones commented on X-block in relationship to conflicts with sports practice times and coaches being aware of this issue. Ms. Jones feels that X-block gives students time to see friends and noted that administration needs to look at all the students because some students use it as a very productive time. Ms. Jones commented on senior release as it relates to the new proposed X-block reconfiguration. Ms. Jones also had questions on AP courses and if they will be offered to Sophomores or Juniors.

Annie Hoops commented on proposed X-block reconfiguration. Ms. Hoops had questions on X-block as it relates to supervision, availability of teachers for extra help for students and reasoning behind the need to change the existing schedule. Ms. Hoops feel that the community should be asked to come up with ideas on this issue.

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Jenn Roberts noted that taking away X-block for students would make them very upset. Ms. Roberts also commented on AP classes as it pertains to enrollment numbers. Ms. Roberts spoke that capping the class at twenty-four students would mean that many would be cut and would be told to take online classes which are not the same as being in a classroom, and does not feel this is fair.

Antonio Pereira asked administration the reason why the high school does not recycle any paper and asked that this issue be fixed for next year.

Elena Wostrel addressed the X-block issue and AP class issue; she is a senior and feels that the teacher cannot give every student the attention they need when you have twenty-six students in an AP Calculus class. Miss Wostrel believes that whether you leave or take away X-block will not change the way students act and use this allotted time.

Dr. Riley explained that he would continue to meet with Dr. Murphy on the AP offerings.

Kevin Bornstein asked administration to explain how the current recycling is being done at the high school.

Bill King will be following up with the custodial staff on the high school recycling issue.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes - May 9, 2013 (Regular)
- B. Checks and Bills
- C. Transfers
- D. Personnel Report
- E. Digital Literacy 1 – Second Read
- F. Textbook Adoption: Discovering Our Past A History of the United States by McGraw Hill – First Read

The following motion was made by Frank Todisco and seconded by Alisa Morrison:

Motion 1: To approve the Consent Agenda items A through E as presented.

Aye: All

Gail MacDonald asked that the textbook adoption "Discovering Our Past A History of the United States" By McGraw Hill – First Read be taken off consent agenda for further discussion.

Deborah Downie asked administration if textbook is for Grade 10 students only.

Nikki Gullickson explained funding and distribution of the new textbook.

The following motion was made by Kevin Bornstein and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 2: To remove item F on the Consent Agenda the textbook, "Discovering Our Past A History of the United States" by McGraw Hill.

Aye: All

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Riley introduced and welcomed the four new administrators to the district, Alicia Sweet-Dawe the new DMS Principal, Jennifer Bausch, the new Assistant Principal of MMS/PMS, Ruth Rose, the new Assistant Principal of WV/WB and Allison Hine, and new Assistant Principal of DMS.

Dr. Riley reminded the Board of the upcoming August 3 retreat and asked that a start time be confirmed. The Board agreed and confirmed an 8 a.m. start time. Dr. Riley noted that he is looking into facilitator and location for the retreat.

Dr. Riley noted that after the presentation tonight of the new reading materials, the Board may wish to approve the materials tonight and therefore, no special meeting would be needed.

Dr. Riley reported on the MMS Crickets program and the transfers of teachers in this program. Dr. Riley reviewed his plan to move the teachers to their requested positions. Dr. Riley noted that after meeting with these teachers and the principal all felt that it would be too hard to hire two new teachers to teach this program. In addition, the enrollment was way down so the principal and I made the decision to not keep the program.

Dr. Riley reported on the DMS track project, which has been an item for discussion for a number of years. The PTO approved the funding and the district had \$1,500 to match the SEF funding the remainder of \$9,000 was left for the PTO to cover.

The Board had questions on what affect will removing the MMS Crickets programs have on students and class configurations.

Dr. Riley explained how this configuration will work using the existing teacher and how the new changes will take place without this program.

Policy 6145.1 Extra-Curricular Eligibility – First Read

Dr. Riley explained that the Policy Committee has reviewed this policy and compared it to the existing one. The committee decided to move forward and change the grade point to a 2.0 level rather than the existing 0.6 level. The Policy Committee will have students monitored and will help students stay at that level. Having a 0.6 was not placing the priority in the right area.

Frank Todisco noted that at each marking period information would come back to the Board.

Gail MacDonald noted that the decision to change the grade level was made so to challenge students to do their best work.

Joni Moody spoke that she agreed that academics should be put first and this is definitely necessary.

Craig Esposito asked how many students would be affected with this new policy.

Administration reported that approximately 19 students.

Policy 5113 – Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal – First Read

Gail MacDonald explained these were revisions in response to changes in legislation and laws.

Policy 5113.2 – Truancy – First Read

Dr. Riley and Gail MacDonald reported that this is a brand new policy.

Approval of Business Office Reorganization

Dr. Van Riley summarized his proposal of the reorganization of the Business Office and reallocation of various responsibilities throughout the district. Dr. Riley explained that he would like to hire students this summer to help with grounds and custodial needs. Dr. Riley adds that this is a budget neutral proposal.

Kevin Bornstein questioned the reorganization of the Business Office as it relates to the separation of duties and the legal aspect of the changes.

Dr. Riley assured that the changes are in compliance.

The following motion was made by Frank Todisco and seconded by Faith Leitner:

Motion 3: To approve the reorganization of the Business Office and the reallocation of funds as presented.

Aye: All

Presentation: Reading WONDERS from McGraw Hill – First Read

Nikki Gullickson and a committee comprised of various teachers, reading specialists and technology staff presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Reading WONDERS from McGraw Hill. The committee reviewed each piece of the program and justification for their recommendation of the program. The committee feels this is an outstanding program and is the first and only reading program designed specifically for the Common Core State Standards for Reading/Language Arts. The committee explained that both print and digital formats are available with this program for the younger students and added that students and teachers can access it online. The district will be holding various PD days to give staff an overview of the program and to familiarize themselves with this new program.

The Board had the following questions of administration on this new program:

- Grade levels are covered K-6
- Type of research done on the program
- SPS early adaptor of this program
- Implementation in other districts
- Release date of program
- Funding and expense
- Availability in audio and digital
- Licensing cost
- Assessments
- Technology alignment

Nikki Gullickson and administration answered the Board's questions as follows:

- Implementation of the program would start with grades K-4 and would be piloted with grades 5 and 6
- Extensive research has been done on the program
- District will be an early adaptor of the program
- Cost of all materials will be approx. \$116,000 which includes automatic updates as they are available, final adjustments on quantities will be made end of June
- Surplus of about five books at CO for new students
- Assessments can be done over three times per year
- Available in both digital and audio
- Licensing covers six years
- Data available to the Board on a semiannual basis, excellent progress monitoring materials
- Technology supports will be available for teachers
- Program very much needed especially with full day kindergarten coming in the fall

The following motion was made by Kevin Bornstein and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 4: To approve the acquisition for the purchase of Reading WONDERS from McGraw Hill program.

Aye: All

Presentation: SHS X-Block

Dr. Murphy and Mark Friese explained the proposal of the new X-Block schedule. Dr. Murphy reviewed all three proposed options and adjustments to the existing X-Block schedule. Dr. Murphy distributed to the Board a fourth option and explained the differences between each of the four options.

The Board had various questions regarding X-Block as it relates to:

- Student and staff involvement in the proposed options
- Effect on afterschool activities and schedules
- Comparison of current schedule to the proposed schedules as it relates to more, less or same opportunities for students
- Availability of teachers under current as opposed to proposed schedule
- Biggest challenges under current configuration
- School safety monitoring during afterschool hours
- Percentage of students enrolled in multiple AP courses and athletics
- Percentage of engaged and not engaged students during X-Block

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- Socialization between students
- Test make up scheduling
- Parent involvement in new proposal

Gail MacDonald asked Joni Moody, the Student Government representative, her opinion of the proposed and existing X-Block schedule and the groups part in generating the new proposals.

Frank Todisco also asked Joni Moody if during the group's meeting with Dr. Murphy on the proposed X-Block schedule if the all the group's questions were addressed in the plan.

Joni Moody feels that once students get accustomed to the new schedule it will be okay, while adding that Dr. Murphy did attend one of our meetings to get feedback on the schedule and all our questions were addressed.

Administration answered all the Board's questions and will address the need for future meetings with parents, staff, and students to get feedback on this issue.

Approval/Discussion – K-4 Ed Specifications

Faith Leitner, as liaison to the BOE, reported that the Building Committee will be meeting in mid-July to review results of the surveys that came from the WV/WB and DM staff. Mrs. Leitner also noted that these specs should not be taken lightly especially in the area of security.

Gail MacDonald asked that the committee provide more specific specifications.

The following motion was made by Kevin Bornstein and seconded by Frank Todisco:

Motion 5: To approve the K-4 Ed Specifications as presented.

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Gail MacDonald: No | Kevin Bornstein: Yes |
| Faith Leitner: No | Frank Todisco: Yes |
| Alisa Morrison: No | Deborah Downie: Yes |
| | Craig Esposito: Yes |

Motion: Passed

Dr. Riley will be supplying the Board with a detailed spreadsheet, which will have specific and detailed information in addition to the current K-4 Ed Specifications.

Monthly Report

All monthly reports were presented in written form as part of the Board packet.

The Board had no questions for administration.

Joni Moody mentioned how excited Emily Craig, the new student government representative, is to join the Board in the 2013-14 school year.

Committee Reports

Faith Leitner reported on the Building Committee and the Board's thoughts and ideas on what her role as liaison for the Board on the committee should be.

Gail MacDonald noted that all three Boards' role should be to contribute in any decision and vote making while being a full contributing member.

The Board discussed the definition of Board liaison on the Building Committee.

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Rob Marseglia commented that all committee members are appointed by the Selectman and made it clear that the liaisons of all three Boards are voting members and carry the same weight as other members on the committee. Mr. Marseglia explained that the committee will be approaching the BOF for \$50,000 to hire an architect in the July/August timeframe. Mr. Marseglia asked that the Board get all their questions and concerns to the committee.

Faith Leitner reported that the SEF has two new chair people who are very ambitious and are planning to have a big fundraiser sometime in the fall. Mrs. Leitner also reminded everyone of the Blue Monday concerts.

Alisa Morrison reported that the new field is looking good.

Gail MacDonald reported that she attended the CABA sponsored Legislative Rap up and that overall all the news was positive.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Action on this Agenda

Sue Jones commented on X-Block as it relates to after school athletics, scheduling, security and feels that students are being punished even those using it properly.

Paul Sartor commented on K-4 Ed Specs vs. space planning. Mr. Sartor noted that the Education Celebration would be in the fall due to scheduling and venue. Mr. Sartor feels that administration should find ways to address just those students during X-Block that need to be addressed and clear up the perception exists.

Cindy Nadeau commented on the Attendance /Excuses/Dismissal Policy concerning wording on medical note requirements and license medical professional.

Items for Future Agendas

- X-Block follow-up
- K-4 Ed Specifications

Board Comments/Concerns

Gail MacDonald asked administration about graduation schedule and parking

Administration will be forwarding graduation information to all Board members.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded Deborah Downie by:

Motion 6: To adjourn at 9:59 p.m.

Aye: All


Faith Leitner, Board Secretary