

Minutes
THOMASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting

Thomaston Town Hall – Meeting Room One

Date: Monday, June 10, 2013

7:00 p.m.



Members: Lucy Santopietro, Chair; Roxy Fainer, Vice Chair; Kathleen Freimuth, Secretary; Holly Herbert, Treasurer; Rebecca Guay, Member; Alexander Lee, Member; Anne Petrucci, Member; Joanne Gilland, Member; Debra Schriver, Member

Minutes

Present:

Lucy Santopietro, Roxy Fainer, Kathleen Freimuth, Holly Herbert, Becky Guay, Debra Schriver, Joanne Gilland, Alexander Lee and Anne Petrucci

Absent:

High School Assistant Principal, Jonathan Kozlak

Also Present:

Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Business Manager, Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick; High School Administrator, John Perrucci; Center School Administrator, Anne Uberti; Black Rock School Administrator, Alisha DiCorpo; Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer; Student Board Representatives, Phil Sechow and Sarah Guay; Board Clerk, Patricia George

I. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro established a quorum and called to order the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m.

Before continuing with the meeting, Board Chair, Lucy Santopietro indicated that tonight would be her last meeting of the Board of Education. She is stepping down at the end of the month due to health reasons. She has served the Board for ten years.

II. Pledge of Allegiance:

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro led the pledge of allegiance.

III. Approval of Agenda:

A motion was made by Anne Petrucci and seconded by Debra Schriver to accept/approve the agenda with the following amendments:

Under VII. Communications, Subsection B, Resignations/Retirements/Replacements: add an item 8, Resignation, Margaret Reagan, Science Teacher, Thomaston High School, effective June 20, 2013;

Under VII. Communications, Subsection B, Resignations/Retirements/Replacements: add an item 9, Resignation, Tammy Kocienda, Thomaston Center School, effective at the end of the 2012/2013 school year;

Under VII. Communications, Subsection B, Resignations/Retirements/Replacements; add an item 10, Resignation, Donna Sanford, Paraprofessional, Black Rock School, effective June 30, 2013;

Under XI. Standing Committee Reports, Subsection 2, Transfers are amended to \$134,668;

Under XVI. Executive Session (anticipated), Superintendent Search Committee;

No further discussion, Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Joanne Gilland and seconded by Anne Petrucci to accept/approve the minutes of the Board of Education dated Monday, May 13, 2013; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

V. Student Representative Reports:

Phil Sechow reported that there were only nine days left to school. He also reported that AP (Advanced Placement) classes were squeezing in projects; graduation will be held on June 20th; and Kathryn Fitzpatrick won the Connecticut Young Writer's competition last Sunday.

Sarah Guay reported that spring sports were over and the baseball team had a good season. She said softball lost in the semi finals 6-7 and the girls' 4x8 team came in first in Class S. She also reported that the bio group had a speaker from safe haven at an assembly for the school and that it was a powerful discussion about harassment and rape, the difference between the two, and sexting.

VI. Incredible Classroom/Student Presentations/Recognitions: n/a

VII. Communications:

1. New Hires/Rehires/Replacements

On a motion made by Kathleen Freimuth and seconded by Anne Petrucci to accept/approve the new hire as presented;

Further Discussion

Board member Becky Guay asked if a savings would be realized from what the new hire would be earning, in comparison to what the exiting teacher was earning to which Principal Perrucci responded, "Yes".

Motion carried unanimously.

1. Resignations/Retirements/Exit Interviews:

A motion was made by Kathleen Freimuth and seconded by Holly Herbert to accept/approve the resignations and retirements as presented;

Further Discussion

Board member Alexander Lee asked if exit interviews were held. Superintendent Mitchell indicated that she planned to interview exiting teachers.

Board member Becky Guay asked if the exiting staff would be replaced. Superintendent Mitchell indicated that some would be and some would not.

1. Athletics: n/a

1. Transfers: n/a

1. Leaves of Absence: n/a

1. Field Trips: n/a

1. Correspondence: n/a

VIII. Superintendent's Report:

1. Student-of-the-month: Michael Callaghan

Superintendent Mitchell did not have the honor of introducing Michael at the Rotary Luncheon due to a conflict in her schedule but wanted to share a few notable items from his resume. She said Michael will be continuing his education at Tunxis Community College and plans to pursue a career in Psychology. Reading from his resume, Ms. Mitchell quoted Michael, "which will be a good avenue to connect with people through my charismatic and caring personality".

1. First Selectman, Ed Mone

Superintendent Mitchell deferred to First Selectman Ed Mone who wanted to inquire about the possible use of municipal parking at Thomaston Center School. Mr. Mone indicated that municipal parking has long been an issue for the downtown business district as well as a concern of the Economic Development Commission, both current and former. In order to spur some economic development downtown, Mr. Mone decided to move forward with some ideas. One idea is to utilize the Center School parking area after school hours, potentially starting at 5:00 p.m. and ending at 2:00 a.m. with absolute direction to the police department that cars be removed that surpass that timeframe. The lot would be lined out to maximize the spaces and parking would be encouraged with signage.

One major concern expressed by Board Member Roxy Fainer was the possible conflict with after school activities.

Board member Kathleen Freimuth suggested the possibility of utilizing a sign to indicate that the lot was closed due to school activities to avoid parking conflicts. Mr. Mone was receptive to that idea. If such a protocol was implemented, it was the consensus of the Board that the lot could be used for municipal parking as Mr. Mone requested.

1. Chief James Campbell – Security

Superintendent Mitchell continues to focus on security measures in the district and meets with Chief Campbell periodically.

Chief Campbell was present and noted that the police have always had a very strong police-student, police-school administration relationship.

Building security assessments have been completed and reviews of school security policies are in process. The police department has picked up police presence in the schools, with a higher visibility after the tragedy in Newtown. Patrol officers make frequent visits to the schools, check in with administrators, and speak with students.

Chief Campbell noted that the police department's budget for next year includes an officer to address school security.

Board member Becky Guay asked if a report of suggestions was generated as part of the police department's security walk-through of the schools. Chief Campbell indicated that the report was still being compiled and should be available prior to the start of school in September.

1. EEF Mini Grants/Thomaston Savings Bank

Superintendent Mitchell deferred to Board Member Joanne Gilland. Ms. Gilland wanted to remind the teachers and administrators that monies were still available through the EEF Mini Grants and Thomaston Savings Bank Grants and the district should take advantage of those funds.

1. Board Meeting Structure/Start Times January 2014

These items have been noted under agenda item XV., Items for future agendas for a number of months. Superintendent Mitchell asked if the Board wanted to discuss these possible changes. Board Member Anne Petrucci at one time brought forward the possibility of moving the meetings to an earlier start time of 6:30 p.m. but found most members felt that the 7:00 p.m. time worked best. The items will be removed from future agendas.

IX. Business Manager's Report:

A. Excess Costs

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick began her report by stating that the district's two national winners of the I.C.E. competition, Zachary Stevenson and Caleb Zenobia will be traveling to Washington D.C. this week. They will be slated to attend the August Board meeting to share their experiences.

On the subject of excess cost and referring to Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick's presentation, Board Chair Lucy Santopietro asked that she explain the "actual numbers". Board member Anne Petrucci asked Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick if what was being presented tonight was what the Board of Finance requested. Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick answered that she, "had hoped so". She had provided information to them on several occasions previously, but was told it was not the information they requested.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick asked that the members look at the Special Education out-of-district tuition; there were three years of information that was requested by the BoF. When the BoE budget is created, she has to take into account that the state will provide the district with money for excess costs for those students who are placed out-of-district. If the monies weren't taken into account, the budget would be bigger than needed.

Using the 2013 budget as her starting point, the out-of-district tuition and transportation initial calculations used to lay in the budget were \$730,000 and \$181,000 respectively. The excess cost money expected from the state and that was taken into account totaled \$345,000, so what was actually budgeted in the operating budget was the resulting \$566,000. She furthered explained, once the state goes through all its machinations, it bases the excess costs dollars provided to the district this year, from the activity from the prior year. The activity in the prior year was greater than anticipated; therefore, \$581,000 came available to the district. If the BoE uses more than is budgeted in their tuition line, whatever the difference is can be supplemented with the Special Education Excess Cost Funds (ECF).

Year-to-date, or May 31st, when Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick's report was prepared, the Special Education out-of-district costs for dollars already spent and for dollars already encumbered (contracted for) was over \$1,037,000; the transportation costs were \$345,000. She said, "Looking at how much greater that is from the budget in both cases, odds are the district will use most of the \$581,000 if all these costs 'true up' as the district gets closer and closer to year-end".

She then moved to the previous year where the budget was \$570,000; excess costs funding received was \$327,000, and actual dollars expended totaled \$577,000. Since the district did not utilize all of the monies, excess cost dollars returned to the town totaled \$26,000 along with operating budget dollars in the amount of \$82,000 for a grand total of \$108,000 being returned

to the town. She stressed that this is "expenditure tracking", expense accounting for the state to show that the district is utilizing the resources in the fashion that they were designed to be used.

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro invited members of the audience to ask questions.

Phil Sechow

Student Phil Sechow noted that there is a dramatic leap from actual expenditures last year compared to this year and even this year compared to two years ago. He wanted to know if there is a specific reason.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick responded that it depended on the students in the district and what their needs are.

Julie Ingham

Ms. Ingham provided a handout to the Board members and offered to present a brief summary. She indicated that she had met earlier in the day with Tracy Decker, the Town's Finance Director. She said the process is confusing and very complex. Basically, she said, the BoE provides a budget where special education expenses and grant revenues are estimated. She went on to explain that an account, "Special Education Excess" is a special account that remains with the town. At the end of the year, if the BoE has a shortfall, the money would come from that account. The problem is she felt, is that there is nothing to substantiate what was submitted to the state as an expense and what the revenue was to offset it.

She pointed out a discrepancy in the budget numbers that were presented by Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick and Ms. Decker and went on to provide an explanation.

During her meeting, she said Ms. Decker felt that what the Board of Finance requires of the Board of Education is a breakdown of quarterly reports that are submitted to the state.

Ms. Nancy Schnyer, Director of Pupil Services, noted that on March 1st, she reports on every out-of-district student through SEDAC G. If it is a town placed out-of-district student, the district has to accumulate 4.5 times the amount of the out-of-district placement costs before the district receives any reimbursement back from the state. If an agency places a student out-of-district, i.e. through the courts or DCF, using a per pupil cost for example of \$10,000, the district would receive anything over the \$10,000. She said that there are also in-district students who are included in that amount who may have a one-on-one paraprofessional, for instance. Paraprofessionals, teachers and autism consultant costs would also be included. The information all comes together for the March 1st snapshot. If a student is placed out-of-district after the March 1st snapshot, that information will not be recorded until the October 1st data reporting period.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick explained that the excess cost has not been fully funded in a number of years and is currently holding around 70%.

Ken Santopietro

Mr. Santopietro asked Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick if the district was making money. Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick responded no, that the district is reimbursed for some of the costs expended.

Julie Ingham

Ms. Ingham asked if the excess cost reimbursement from the state identifies per student costs.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick said that it does not.

Pupil Services Director Nancy Schnyer said that in her March 1st report to the state, she provides the paraprofessional cost per student, summer school cost per student, the bussing cost per student, the school-year cost per school student, inclusive of the student's name and whether or not they were court placed, DCF placed or school-system placed.

Tim Scatena

Mr. Scatena asked how many out-of-district students the district has.

Ms. Schnyer said that it was a "complicated question". The district has approximately 14 out-of-district students but she also has to account for students who attend Maloney, Rotella, WAMS, and Bristol Technical schools.

First Selectman Ed Mone

Referring back to the comments made by Ms. Ingham earlier in the evening regarding the discrepancy in the reports provided by the town's Finance Director Tracy Decker and BoE Business Manager Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick, Mr. Mone felt that a good starting point would be for the two to sit and reconcile in some fashion. He felt that if there are two different accountings of what occurred and there continues to be a discrepancy between the two, discourse will persist.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick said there is no discrepancy, that she and Tracy Decker have been through the audits together and their numbers agree.

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro said that Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick and Ms. Decker met and the difference was the capital monies.

Mr. Mone did recall the conversation that there was money left over at the end of one of the fiscal years, and that the BoE had requested the funds for capital and the BoF granted that request.

Gail Lascko

Ms. Lascko wanted to know how the additional \$50,000 cut was going to affect the district.

The cut would most likely come in the form of a certified staff member noted Ms. O'Dea –Wyrick.

Board member Becky Guay suggested sending an e-mail to the Board of Finance asking if the last piece of correspondence sent by the BoE was sufficient to answer their request. She also stated that the e-mail should request the \$50,000 back.

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro stated that she would send an e-mail to the entire Board of Finance noting the above information. Additionally, if the last piece of information was not what they were looking for, she will ask that the BoF put their request for information in writing so there is no confusion in the future.

Unidentified Speaker

The speaker asked the BoE if there was actually any more information to be sent to the BoF regarding the expenditures of the money.

Board member Holly Herbert said that the BoF was not in possession of all the information, specifically the March/October reports submitted to the state by the Pupil Services Department.

Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick said Ms. Schnyer's report is what is "expected" to be spent, and her report indicated what "actually" is spent.

Philip Sechow

Phil asked if the requested information was reformed and sent to the BoF, could the BoE be certain that the \$50,000 would be returned back to the school budget.

Board Chair Lucy Santopietro reiterated that she would send the BoF an e-mail requesting the monies back.

X. Administrators' Reports:

- A. Black Rock School, Alisha DiCorpo/Thomaston Center School, Anne Uberti
Written, as presented.

Board member Becky Guay asked for the number of incoming Kindergartners. Ms. DiCorpo answered currently there are 51.

In light of the amount of rainfall that has recently occurred, Ms. Guay asked about the roofs at Black Rock school. Ms. DiCorpo noted that they are finding spotting throughout the building but no mass water was entering in. She continues to monitor the situation.

B. Thomaston High School, John Perrucci

Principal Perrucci noted that Board Member Alexander Lee had e-mailed him earlier in the day requesting information regarding the school climate survey. Principal Perrucci deferred to Ms. Michelle Dayton, Chair of the Culture Committee who was on hand and provided a copy of the latest survey to the Board members. Ms. Dayton indicated that the committee was formed a little over a year ago and one of their first goals was to create a survey for faculty and staff assessing where improvements could be made, what was being done well and what they needed to work on. The first survey was, "very enlightening" she said. The committee then followed up with a second survey and examined the results this year.

With this year's survey, "All of the answers showed improvement, some of them greatly", she said.

Moving onto other business, Board member Becky Guay followed up with Principal Perrucci regarding the computer lab at the high school which had been recently closed due to vandalism. Principal Perrucci indicated that students have been in the lab for the past two weeks completing Accuplacers; Assistant Principal Jon Kozlak is currently working on protocols for the computer lab which is expected to be open when school starts in September.

Board Member Anne Petrucci asked if the work outside had been completed with regards to the outside stairwells. Principal Perrucci indicated that quite a bit of work had been done and the safety hazard is gone.

Board Member Becky Guay questioned Principal Perrucci about the e-mail that was sent home to parents regarding social media. Principal Perrucci said they are struggling with the social media sites with another vulgar, anonymous occurrence today.

Ms. Guay also questioned Principal Perrucci regarding the change in graduation credits. Principal Perrucci was looking for feedback from the Board. He said he is running into a problem with seniors accumulating enough credits to walk out the door the beginning of their senior year. He said that the district is behind in the state with regards to the number of credits students require for graduation. The Grading Committee is requesting a move to 24 credits from the current 21.5 beginning with the incoming Freshmen Class of 2017. Additional information was outlined in his written report.

It was the consensus of the Board to have the Grading Committee move ahead.

C. Pupil Services, Nancy Schnyer
Written, as presented.

XI. Standing Committee Reports:

1.
 - i. Budget

Summary-by-Budget-Line Y-T-D expenditures in the amount of \$13,151,866.72

On a motion made by Holly Herbert and seconded by Kathleen Freimuth to accept/approve the budget-line y-t-d expenditures as presented; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

2. Transfers for the month of June 2013 in the amount of \$134,668.

On a motion made by Holly Herbert and seconded by Kathleen Freimuth to accept/approve the transfers as presented;

Further Discussion

Board member Joanne Gilland asked for clarity on the transfers for projectors/laptops for Math at Center School and why one line was \$2,000 and one was \$10,000.

Business Manager Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick explained it was the combination of the three lines for a total of \$22,000.

Motion Carried unanimously.

1. Curriculum/Instruction: no report

C. Maintenance/Facilities: no report

D. Technology: no report

E. Personnel:

1. A motion was made by Holly Herbert and seconded by Anne Petrucci to empower the Superintendent (newly appointed) to act and contract with district personnel including appropriate non-renewed teachers over the summer; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

F. Transportation: no report

G. Athletics: no report

1. Long Range Task Force/Building Committee: no report

I. Policy:

1. Policy 3323, Second Read, Business/Non-Instructional Operations

The town changed their bid tolerance from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The figure was noted in more than one policy. The only change would be the \$ noted in the policy

On a motion made by Alexander Lee and seconded by Kathleen Freimuth to accept/approve Policy 3323 as presented; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

J. Government Relations: no report

1. Affiliations: no report

1. Legislation: no report

XII. Public Participation:

Marisa Santopietro

Marisa wanted to discuss her schedule for next year. She said the way her schedule is currently structured, she will not be able to take any of the courses she wanted to take because she has to take Algebra I and Algebra Part B.

Principal Perrucci asked that Marisa meet with him.

Carol Cervellino

Ms. Cervellino recently attended a PPT and wanted clarification on an issue that both Principal Perrucci and Pupil Services Director noted may have been mis-information.

Gail Lascko

Ms. Lascko said the Board of Education should strongly note the fact that the atmosphere amongst the teachers and staff is turbulent and many of them are looking to leave the district because of what is happening to their schools. She said the district is losing some wonderful, excellent teachers and administrators and it should be duly noted.

Trish Brody

With regards to the additional \$50,000 position cut, Ms. Brody wanted to know which school would be affected by that cut.

Business Manager Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick indicated that it was not decided yet.

Ms. Brody also wanted to confirm that exit interviews were going to be completed with departing staff.

She asked if the school psychologist/social worker positions were to be shared, would that alleviate the loss of a teaching position.

Superintendent Mitchell said she would have to look at it.

Ms. Brody also asked about internal transfers from one grade to another or one building to another, what is taken into consideration and who makes the decisions.

Superintendent Mitchell said that the needs of each building are taken into consideration as well as certifications; in some instances there are personal requests. The rationale is always a strong piece, there is usually a determination educationally; who is the person who is going to serve the needs of the students.

Julie Ingham

Ms. Ingham asked that everyone come out and support the budget Wednesday night. At the recent town meeting, Julie said that everyone spoke in favor of the budget. She said she heard comments about BoF members not attending tonight's BoE meeting, but pointed out that she did not see one BoE member at the town hearing. She realized that there was a meeting conflict that evening, but felt that there should have been some representation from the BoE to support their needs.

Recognizing that the BoF Chairman, David Collavecchio had just entered the room, Ms. Ingham said if anyone had questions for him, they should ask them now if the Board would allow.

Board member Holly Herbert asked Mr. Collavecchio, "What are you looking for so that we can put this to bed, give you what you need and move forward". She also asked if the BoF would consider giving back the additional \$50,000 budget cut.

Mr. Collavecchio said, "There will be no return of the \$50,000". The budget has been past by the Board of Finance and moved to a town meeting where he believes signatures are there to force a referendum. First Selectman Ed Mone confirmed.

He said the BoF asked the BoE for three years worth of data for ECS grant money, what came in, what was used to balance the BoE budget and what was left over. When they asked for the information and didn't receive an answer for six weeks, they figured some hiding of information was going on so the BoF acted on it.

Board member Kathleen Freimuth said the BoE was willing to move forward, if there is anything further the BoF requires, Business Manager Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick would reach out. Board member Holly Herbert asked why the BoF was not responding, the BoE reached out after the cut to give the BoF information or to have a meeting. Mr. Collavecchio said that after the public hearing, the BoF went into, "pass the budget mode".

Board member Roxy Fainer asked why this was an issue all of a sudden.

Board member Debra Schriver asked why the \$50,000. The taxpayer group wasn't against the budget and there wasn't a lot of negative feedback.

At the end of the day Mr. Collavecchio said the BoF made a lawful and legal request for financial information and six weeks later still didn't have any. Mr. Seabourne along with other members of the BoF felt that there was actually revenue that wasn't being reported thoroughly and accurately.

Board member Roxy Fainer stated that the BoE was passing their audits and not hiding any money.

To avoid further miscommunication, Board Chair Lucy Santopietro asked for future requests in writing. She thanked Mr. Collavecchio for attending the meeting.

Joyce Knowlton

Ms. Knowlton felt it would be a good idea to regularly schedule meetings between the BoE and the BoF before budget time so that this doesn't happen again. She said it's a punitive point to take away the money that ultimately hurts the BoE.

XIII. Old Business:

XIV. New Business:

XV. Items for Future Agendas:

1. Field Trip to Greece, Spring 2014

XVI. Executive Session: (anticipated)

On a motion made by Kathleen Freimuth and seconded by Debra Schriver to enter into executive session at 9:10 for the purpose of the Superintendent search; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

The Search Committee, which consists of the Board of Education members, entered into Executive Session.

Public Session

On a motion made by Roxy Fainer and seconded by Kathleen Freimuth to exit Executive Session at 9:56 p.m., no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

Motion

None

XVII. Adjournment:

On a motion made by Roxy Fainer and seconded by Kathleen Freimuth to adjourn the Regular meeting of the Board of Education at 9:56 p.m.; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.