

**Thomaston Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Thomaston Town Hall  
Meeting Room One  
Monday, January 11, 2010  
7:00 p.m.**



**Minutes**

**Present:** Laurie Barrett, George Counter, Beth Yaffe, Steve Catania, Roxy Fainer, Joanne Gilland, Holly Herbert and Laura Rieley

**Absent:** Lucy Santopietro

**Also Present:** Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Business Manager, Susan Laone; Board Clerk,  
Patricia George; High School Principal, John Perrucci;  
Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio; Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer; Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson; and School Board Representatives, Alexander Lee and Leah Miller

**I. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:**

Chairperson, Laurie Barrett established a quorum and called to order the Regular Meeting of the Thomaston Board of Education at 7:05 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance:**

Board Chair Laurie Barrett, led the pledge of allegiance

**III. Approval of Agenda:**

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Steve Catania to approve/accept the agenda with the following amendment:

Under Section VII., Superintendent's Report, add an item D., Race-to-the-Top

No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Approval of Minutes:**

Regular Meeting of the Board of Education dated December 14, 2009  
On a motion made by Joanne Gilland and seconded by Beth Yaffe to approve/accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education dated December 14, 2009; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

**V. Public Participation: n/a**

**VI. Communications:**

- A. New Hires: n/a
- B. Resignations: n/a
- C. Athletics: n/a
- D. Transfers: n/a
- E. Leave of Absence: n/a
- F. Field Trips: n/a
- G. Correspondence: n/a

**VII. Superintendent's Report**

- A. Student of the Month: Mike Giapponi - Superintendent Mitchell had, unfortunately, missed the student-of-the-month Rotary Luncheon. Reading from Michael's resume, she noted that he is an outstanding student, a leader in his class, President of the Thomaston High School National Honor Society, Vice President of the Student Council and has had many successes throughout his years.
- B. Legislative Update/Charter Schools: Superintendent Mitchell did not wish to elaborate on this piece. She noted, however, that she continues to keep her eyes open as things come forward to the district. Currently, the district only has one student at a Charter School but there may come a time that the district may have to absorb some kind of cost.
- C. Cable Television Advisory Council: First Selectman Ed Mone provided Mrs. Mitchell with correspondence requesting a liaison to the Cablevision Advisory Council. Subsequently, Ms. Mitchell brought the information to the Board. Board Member George Counter agreed to attend the January 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 session.
- D. Race-to-the-Top: Superintendent Mitchell reviewed with the Board the Race-to-the-Top initiative. The document included the preliminary scope of work, the required initiatives and several elective initiatives. The amount of money Thomaston would receive over a 4 year period would be \$99,000. Mrs. Mitchell explained that there was also a bow out clause. The underside of the initiative is what happens in four years. The Superintendent's recommendation, at this point, is to sign the document. It was the consensus of the Board that the district should move forward with the initiative.

On a motion made by Steve Catania and seconded by George Counter to have the Superintendent sign Connecticut's Race to the Top, Participating Local Education Agency Plan, Memorandum of Understanding, no further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

## **VIII. Business Manager's Report:**

### **A. Second Quarter Financial Update**

Beginning the discussion, Board Member George Counter asked Ms. Laone, "if Special Education costs are running over, does the district put a hold on everything else in an effort to reduce the deficit?" He stated that at the time the budget was approved, the actual costs of Special Education were not known. He felt that when unanticipated Special Education costs occur (above and beyond the budgeted dollars) causing a deficit on the line, it is fine to a certain point. Recognizing that this was only the opinion of one person, he felt that the Finance Board needed to be informed of the deficit so that other programs may continue such as field trips, the purchase of school supplies, etc. He noted that fees were implemented for athletics to help offset the budget. He continued by stating that there are certain mandated costs that are required and out of the public's hands.

Ms. Laone stated that it is one of the toughest situations the district has been in because of the cut in funding. She recommended waiting until February to see what the actual Excess Cost would be. If her projections were correct, she said that there would be a pretty big deficit in Special Education.

Board member, Beth Yaffe asked if the budget would be submitted including the current deficit. Sue Laone indicated that they were struggling with the idea. If submitted based on current out placements and what the district is expecting for funding next year, (which will be less than this year), the district should see a 20-25% increase in Special Education costs. The question then posed was does the district under fund? If under funded, you will always end up with a deficit Beth Yaffe stated.

## **IX. Administrators' Reports:**

### **A. High School Principal, John Perrucci**

Principal Perrucci noted a correction that needed to be made on Thomaston High School's NEASC Two-Year Progress Report that was included in the Board packet. The correction addressed the dropout rates and should be noted as follows:

From 2.8% 2009 to correction of 1.3%

From 3.1% 2008 to correction of .78%

From 2.4% 2007 to correction of 2.9%

Continuing with the Two-Year Progress Report, Mr. Perrucci answered questions fielded to him by several Board members. Concluding his presentation, he read from his monthly written report highlighting information relating to Academics (RtI/SRBI), Civics, and Assessments and Evaluation (Data Teams).

- B. Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio  
Principal Diorio's presentation included the following:
- The upper level ceiling has been fire rated and the lighting has been completed.
  - The auditorium will go out to bid a second time because the first round bids came in too close to the actual monies that are available.
  - RTI teams continue to meet on a regular basis to help improve learning for struggling students.
  - The Town Times has provided positive coverage with school events including holiday support efforts.
  - The sixth annual Spelling Bee will be held at Thomaston High School, March 20<sup>th</sup>.
- C. Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson
- Linda Blethen has written a grant and received \$800 from Target which will allow for the entire first grade to participate in a field trip.
  - Jim Diorio and Mr. Johnson have divided grades K-6 into four groups. The groups, facilitated by Mr. Johnson, Mr. Diorio, Nancy Schnyer and Paula Banas, will hold meetings to discuss topics along the lines of RTI and assessments. Follow up meetings are tentatively scheduled for late May/early June.
  - The boiler at the school has been replaced.
  - Board member, Beth Yaffe asked for clarification of comments relating to his budget, specifically the cuts in art and music. Mr. Johnson noted that the cut created a significant concern over student supervision during recess which was brought up at a recent PAC (Parents' Advisory Council) Meeting.

Mr. Johnson further explained the way the schedule currently works he had to provide for contractual planning time for those teachers on Thursday and Friday. From 1:10 to 1:40 Mr. Johnson, if not involved in meetings, will go outside with several paraprofessionals from the lunch room for recess supervision. A parent, who attended the PAC meeting, was surprised that teachers were not supervising the students. Ms. Yaffe felt that paras are just as capable of supervision as teachers. Board member Roxy Fainer, who attended the PAC meeting, clarified that the parent's concern was actually over the indoor recess where there are three paraprofessionals covering five classrooms. Ms. Yaffe asked why they could not all be in the gym eliminating the need for three paras to rotate between five different classrooms to provide coverage. Board Chair Laurie Barrett suggested that perhaps two classes could be combined utilizing one para for coverage so that each class is supervised at all times. Overall, Mr.

Johnson's point was to note the significant changes that had to be made with cuts.

Board Chair Laurie Barrett had concerns and said that, unfortunately, the district has had to make significant cuts, it is just the way it is. However, she felt that there has to be creative thinking going on in the buildings to make sure that the children do have appropriate supervision in the context that the district can provide for.

Board member Steve Catania asked about utilizing volunteers to which Mr. Johnson responded that they are not utilized for student supervision.

- D. Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer  
Ms. Schnyer had a few pieces of information to add to her written report stating that she has spent the month of December collecting data to send to the state. She also talked about the Preschool Open House which is scheduled for the end of February. A flyer was included in the Board packet.

**X. Student Representatives' Reports:**

Student Representatives Alex Lee and Leah Miller spoke to the Board regarding building participation at school games, service projects for the Martone Family and upcoming Spirit Week.

**XI. Standing Committee Reports:**

A. Budget:

On a motion made by Laura Rieley and seconded by Steve Catania to approve/accept the budget expenditures of \$6,592,739.34 and monthly transfers as presented, no further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

On a motion made by George Counter and seconded by Holly Herbert to approve/accept the 2010/2011 Proposed Pre-K Tuition increase as presented, no further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Black Rock School Preschool Tuition for 2010-2011 (Non-Special Education)

Day	Preschool Tuition	Annual	# of Days	Per
	2 ½ days per week per year \$17.00	\$1,224		72
	3 ½ days per week per year \$15.00	\$1,560		104
	5 ½ days per week per year \$11.00	\$1,947		177

PATHS

\$11,550

- B. Curriculum/Instruction:  
Pupil Services Director Nancy Schnyer and High School Principal John Perrucci were asked to provide their use of data analysis and chose to use a state directive to report on. One piece asked to identify route causes as to why a percentage of Special Education students were not performing well on CMT and CAPT math across the district. According to the state, a percentage of this student group, which are included in regular education classes, are not making adequate progress. The two collaborated on the project and created a data wall pin pointing CAPT Math. Their analogy included a written response to the data wall as well as graphs.
- C. Maintenance/Facilities:  
No report
- D. Technology:  
No report
- E. Personnel:  
1. Superintendent's Evaluation  
The Board Clerk will e-mail each Board member the evaluation outline as well as the timeframe from previous years.
- F. Transportation:  
No report
- G. Athletics:  
No report
- H. Long Range Task Force/Building Committee:  
No report
- I. Policy:  
No report
- J. Government Relations:  
No report
- K. Affiliations:  
No report

**XII. Old Business:**

- A. Honor Roll (Principal John Perrucci)

Per the Board's suggestion, Mr. Perrucci surveyed the staff for their input to as to whether or not they should move from a letter grade to a numeric grade. The vast majority of staff surveyed, except for a small group that felt it would elevate competition, expressed a desire to move to numeric, however, they felt certain questions needed to be addressed i.e. do you want to allow for zeros? Mr. Perrucci provided an example including zeros and the effect it would have grading.

In conclusion, he felt that it would be best to make a decision for next year. He also thought that the change would need to be well publicized prior to being implemented.

**XIII. New Business:**

None

**XIV: Items for Future Agendas:**

- A. Vice Principal Posting
- B. Math Teacher Posting

**XV. Executive Session:**

**XVI. Adjournment:**

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Steve Catania to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at 9:35 p.m., no further discussion, motion carried unanimously.