



Minutes
THOMASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting
Thomaston Town Hall – Meeting Room One
Date: Monday, February 8, 2010
7:00 p.m.

Members: Laurie Barrett, Chair; Beth Yaffe, Vice Chair; Lucy Santopietro, Secretary; Laura Rieley, Treasurer; Joanne Gilland, Holly Herbert, Roxy Fainer, George Counter and Steve Catania, Members

Minutes

Present: Laurie Barrett, George Counter, Beth Yaffe, Lucy Santopietro, Roxy Fainer, Holly Herbert, Laura Rieley

Absent: Joanne Gilland and Steve Catania

Also Present: Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Board Clerk, Patricia George; Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio; 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 7:04 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance:
Board Chair Laurie Barrett asked the Student Representatives to lead the pledge of allegiance.

III. Approval of Agenda:
On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Beth Yaffe to approve/accept the agenda with the following amendments:

Under VII., Superintendent’s report, add item C: John DiPesa/Flag Etiquette and item D: District Goals

Under VIII. Business Manager’s report, Item A. tabled due to the unforeseen absence of the Business manager

No further discussion, motion carried unanimously

IV. Approval of Minutes:
 Regular Meeting of the Board of Education dated Monday, January 11, 2010
On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by George Counter to approve/accept the minutes as presented; Lucy

Santopietro abstains; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

- Budget Subcommittee Meeting of Wednesday, January 13, 2010
On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Holly Herbert to approve/accept the minutes as presented; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.
- Budget Subcommittee Meeting of Wednesday, January 27, 2010
On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Holly Herbert to approve/accept the minutes as presented; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.
- Special Meeting of the Board of Education dated Monday, February 1, 2010
On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Roxy Fainer to approve/accept the minutes as presented; Laurie Barrett abstains; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Participation: n/a

VI. Communications: n/a

VII. Superintendent's Report

- A. Student of the Month – Leah Miller
Superintendent Mitchell read from Leah's resume and cited a few of her accomplishments, which included her honor roll and National Honor Society statuses. Additionally, Ms. Mitchell noted that Leah is a CAPT Scholar, a Student Council Representative and an athlete.
- B. Invite Legislators to attend Board of Education Meetings
Ms. Mitchell expressed the difficulty in trying to balance the budget with the number of unfunded mandates placed on the district. She thought that inviting legislators to future meetings might bring forward where the district is and the challenges that it faces. She feels that the mandates are sometimes insurmountable.

Board member Lucy Santopietro noted that she spoke with John Piscopo regarding the growing number of unfunded mandates and the burden they place on an already overburdened school district. Mr. Piscopo invited Lucy to generate a list of those mandates to bring to the state.

- C. Flag Etiquette
Superintendent Mitchell met briefly with John DiPesa, a local Veteran, who has offered to bring discussions regarding flag

etiquette to the schools, something that he is impassioned about. Administrators will be given his contact information.

D. District Goals

Based on the administrator's goals and mandates, an incomplete draft of what would ultimately be the district goals was prepared by the Superintendent. The draft was then forwarded to the administrators for their contribution. She stated that the mission statement was only a place holder, adding that it needs to be a very strong mission and a concerted effort. In order to carry it forward, everyone in the district has to participate; all three schools, the Superintendent, the Board, administrators, and teachers.

Board member Beth Yaffe felt that the services provided by CABE in the past, which offered assistance in establishing goals and a mission statement, were very helpful. It was suggested that perhaps a district workshop which encompassed the same process be entertained.

VIII. Business Manager's Report:

- A. Second Quarter Financial Update
(tabled due to Business Manager Sue Laone's unforeseen absence)

IX. Administrators' Reports:

- A. Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer (no report)
B. High School Principal, John Perrucci (written report)

Board member George Counter brought forward a question regarding the high school's written report, which addressed the subject of bullying. He stated that on a recent trip to Massachusetts, he learned that a middle school child, a young girl, had committed suicide due to bullying. He said, "A lot of times it isn't a problem, until it is a problem." He felt the Thomaston School District should have a position and a statement addressing the issue. Lucy Santopietro responded to his concerns by stating that the high school currently has in place a "Second Step" program which addresses various issues relating to bullying. Her child, an 8th grade student at the high school, attends the program every Wednesday with his classmates. Roxy Fainer added that bullying is addressed in the student handbook. It was also noted that the Superintendent has a "no tolerance" letter on the district's webpage. Principal Diorio commented on a school climate survey which will be made available to parents, students and staff in the near future. The object of the survey will be to provide a snapshot view of each school's climate from their perspective allowing for a more "proactive" than "reactive" approach.

Mr. Counter also requested that the Superintendent ask for clarification from Mr. Perrucci on his use of “I” and “we” in his written report. Who is “we”? Is it the Board, the faculty or another group?

Another issue brought forward from Mr. Counter related to the cost on transitioning from SASI to Power School software. Quoting from the last page of Mr. Perrucci’s report, “our new server must be installed before we can install the Power School software”, he asked if it was part of the technology budget. Superintendent Mitchell said that the money was incorporated into the budget because the district has to make the transition. She added that the server is a mandate in order to meet the needs of the Power School software.

Some questions and discussion ensued on the servers and software as to whether or not they were actually in place. Principal Johnson indicated that the district has the software but it is not being used currently. Plans are to train personnel over the summer and to have the district up and running by the first of September.

- C. Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio
In addition to his written report, Mr. Diorio added that the bid opening for the auditorium will take place on Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. in Meeting Room One of the Thomaston Town Hall.
- D. Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson
The following items were added during Mr. Johnson’s oral presentation:
 - 1. Helen Davis, the Food Service Manager at Black Rock School was highlighted due to the recent Health Department inspection where Black Rock received a 100% compliance standing. He stated that Helen does a wonderful job and is worthy of recognition for her efforts.
 - 2. A math screening test report, generated by the math intervention teacher Sue Dalka, was distributed to Board members by Mr. Johnson. Although all students in the school were tested, the information provided to the Board outlined results for kindergarten and first graders only. For first graders, the number of students performing at or above goal had increased from 57 to 79 and the number of students performing at proficient or below had decreased from 35 to 14. For kindergarteners, the number of students performing at goal or above increased from 35 to 52 and the number of students performing at proficient or lower decreased from 31 to 15.

Board member Beth Yaffe asked Mr. Johnson if the testing was part of the RtI weekly assessments (Response to Intervention) to which he replied that it was. He reported that all youngsters that were proficient, basic and below basic all had intervention above and beyond the classroom which was provided by Sue Dalka.

3. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Diorio are preparing for their second cross-grade meeting. Discussed during these meetings are assessments that are actually being used in the classroom, strategies used when a student doesn't comprehend the material, and smart goals, which are written with a very specific outcome in mind. The second meeting is scheduled for May.

X. Student Representatives' Reports:

The students reported that plans for Spirit Week were being completed with a different activity planned for each day. The week culminates with a pep rally.

Board member Roxy Fainer asked the students about their attempts at publicity. They indicated that they made contact with several papers, the *Waterbury Republican* and the *Thomaston Express*, with no response from the *Waterbury Republican*. Laurie Barrett was quick to respond that the *Waterbury Republican* did, however, report on their recent fundraising endeavor.

XI. Standing Committee Reports:

A. Budget:

On a motion made by Laura Rieley and seconded by Lucy Santopietro to approve/accept the budget expenditures and monthly transfers as presented; no further discussion; motion carries unanimously.

B. Curriculum/Instruction:

New Course Descriptions/Thomaston High School
In Mr. Perrucci's absence, Ms. Mitchell reviewed the course descriptions included in the board agenda. New courses for the high school program of studies, if approved, would include Information Technology Research and Development, The AMP Math System, SAT Review, Mathematical Modeling, Robotics, and a Corrective Reading Program.

Board Member, George Counter, asked how the courses came to fruition. Mark Olsen, a math teacher at the high school, offered his perspective stating that his department would meet, make a recommendation and then bring it to administration.

Laurie Barrett asked if there might be any budgetary concerns with the new courses, using the Robotics course as her primary example.

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Lucy Santopietro to approve/accept the new course as described; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

C. Maintenance/Facilities:

No report

D. Technology:

No report

E. Personnel:

Assistant Principal Posting

Mr. Banas currently serves in the position of Interim Assistant Principal at the high school. Board member Beth Yaffe asked to have the posting done as quickly as possible as there are only five months remaining in the school year. She thought it would be best to bring the new assistant principal in as soon as possible. Other members felt that July 1st would be the best time due to budget concerns and for ease of transition. Ultimately, it was decided that the start date would be negotiable.

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:

CABE: A Day on the Hill

Laurie Barrett reminded Board members of the CABE sponsored event, "A Day on the Hill."

XII. Old Business:

A. Cable Television Advisory Council

George Counter indicated that he attended the January 14th meeting and will also attend the next meeting which is scheduled for March 11th. He asked the administrators what Cable Television does for the schools. Principal Johnson said that cable television is provided to all classrooms.

Track Update

Co-Chair, Chris Martin and Mark Olsen, members of the newly formed Track/Athletic Committee brought to the Board the committee's plan to construct a track/athletic facility in Thomaston. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to share information gathered to date and to obtain the Board's support.

Mr. Martin provided each Board member with information that was recently submitted to the Capital Improvement Committee, which included a preliminary cost estimate of \$1,200,000 for the project.

Mr. Martin said that the committee is energized behind fundraising and obtaining grants. Several locations under consideration were made available for Board members to view. No decisions have been made to date.

A motion was made by George Counter and seconded by Beth Yaffe that the Thomaston Board of Education lend moral support to the Track/Athletic Committee in their efforts to provide a track to the citizens of Thomaston.

No further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

XIII. New Business:

None

XIV: Items for Future Agendas:

XV. Executive Session:

Motion for Executive Session made by Beth Yaffe, seconded by Lucy Santopietro; to discuss personnel issues relating to the Superintendent's evaluation, motion passed unanimously at 8:20 p.m.

The following individuals entered into the Executive Session:

Lynda Mitchell, Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education Members:

Laurie Barrett

George Counter

Beth Yaffe

Lucy Santopietro

Roxy Fainer

Holly Herbert

Laura Rieley

Public Session:

On a motion made by Laura Rieley and seconded by Holly Herbert to exit Executive Session at 9:15 p.m.; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.

XVI. Adjournment:

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Lucy Santopietro to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at 9:16 p.m., no further discussion; motion carried unanimously.