

Minutes
Board of Education Meeting
March 2, 2020
7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Linette Dooley, Christopher Lent, Michael Maziarz and Kathy Tolsdorf

Board Member Absent: Joseph Napolitano

Others Present:

Assistant Principal Karen Cavuto, Finance Director Beverly Ciurylo, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Principal Alyssa Gwinnell and Special Education Director Barbara Wilson

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:44 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Chairman Lent welcomed all present and opened the floor to comments from the audience.

Superintendent Geryk said March is Board of Education Appreciation Month. She said Board members volunteer countless hours of their time each year to the students, families and staff of the Columbia School District. She asked all present to join her in recognizing these dedicated individuals in thanking them for their service. The Board received a round of applause.

No one wished to be heard.

IV. Action Items

(Consent) A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.

- a. Approval of February 3, 2020 Regular Board of Education Minutes
- b. Approval of February 24, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes
- c. Payment of Bills
- d. Acceptance of Letter of Resignation, Mr. Matthew Tew, Facility Technician
- e. MOU Consent, Non-Certified

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to move a. Approval of February 3, 2020 Regular Board of Education Minutes to V. Action Items (Discussion & Action) item d.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to approve b. Approval of February 24, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes, c. Payment of Bills, d. Acceptance of Letter of Resignation, Mr. Matthew Tew, Facility Technician and e. MOU Consent, Non-Certified
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

V. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

a. Approval of the 2020-2021 Board of Education Operating Budget

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve the 2020-2021 Board of Education Operating Budget anticipating net of grants \$12,786,543

Discussion:

Mr. Crim opened the discussion by acknowledging the hard work Superintendent Geryk and her team put into the proposed budget. He asked if we, as the Board, are 100% positive this is absolutely what is best for the school. Are we cutting too much by coming in with such a nominal increase? Superintendent Geryk said she believes this budget represents what we need and addresses identified areas of improvement. Sometimes adding different things presents more problems. Adding more would be difficult to manage because so much change is already happening. Level of needs of children could change, but she believes this is a very solid budget. All staff and services are intact and in place with this budget. She is very confident in this budget.

Discussion ensued about presenting as close to a zero increase as possible versus ensuring we maintain gains made and continue improvements. Principal Gwinnell confirmed all requests for materials and supplies are either included in the budget proposal or being purchased this year. She continued by saying all programs remain in place without removing anything and improvement goals are being pursued. It was reiterated that much is dependent on our student population. Students moving in or out of the district may have an impact on our budget.

All Board members' questions were answered. Superintendent Geryk concluded by saying the following year we may have different requests. At this time she and her team believe all needs, including improvements, continue to be supported in the proposed 2020-2021 request.

Superintendent Geryk said \$65,000 worth of purchases are being made this year to support next year. It is important to note our 2020-2021 budget request would have been \$65,000 higher if we were not able to make these purchases this year. Items being bought now include texts, supplemental materials and supplies. It is possible assistive tech purchases could be made this year because it is not an annual expense like materials and supplies are.

Sometimes achieving a zero percent budget becomes a goal instead of an endpoint. Superintendent Geryk said this may need to be a discussion with FIPAC. We have taken a very critical look at our budget. It is a very responsible budget. We are committed to maintaining and improving what we have achieved.

Superintendent Geryk said retirements have offset our salaries request. Tuition lines have shifted, resulting in considerable savings. The school budget is based on student needs. Increases and sway are beyond our control because there is unpredictability in areas such as special education costs.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to add e. Approval of the 2020-2021 capital improvement budget for \$184,000

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

b. Approval of Board of Education Goals

Chairman Lent said these are a product of the recent retreat. Four short term goals and one strategic plan goal were developed. Discussion about the district's mission and vision was conducted. The vision is at the top of the Board's agenda, but it is listed as the mission on the district's website. To help clarify the distinction between vision and mission, Superintendent Geryk suggested she provide the members what she finds and this topic. This will be an agenda item at an upcoming meeting.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve the Board of Education goals as presented.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

c. Approval of the Superintendent's 2019-2020 Mid-Year Evaluation

Ms. Dooley MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to approve the Superintendent's 2019-2020 mid-year evaluation.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

d. Approval of February 3, 2020 Regular Board of Education Minutes

There was brief discussion about amending page 3, section VI. d., to add the sentence "Policy 1007 to be further reviewed in the near future." Both Ms. Tolsdorf and Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said they will abstain from voting on this motion because they were absent at that meeting.

Mr. Maziarz MOVED, Ms. Dooley SECONDED to approve the February 3, 2020 minutes after amending page 3, section VI. d., to add the sentence "Policy 1007 to be further reviewed in the near future."

MOTION CARRIES 4 Yea (Crim, Dooley, Lent, Maziarz):0 Nay:2 Abstentions (Chakulski, Jr., Tolsdorf)

e. Approval of the 2020-2021 Capital Improvement Plan budget for \$184,000

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve the 2020-2021 H.W. Porter Capital Improvement Plan of \$184,000.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VI. Reports of Board Committees

Policy

Superintendent Geryk said Ms. Dooley offered to assist in the review and revision of Policy 1007. Others on the Policy subcommittee also shared their availability and offers to help in this process. Options to tackle the project of reviewing the different sections were discussed.

Budget

Nothing additional to share at this time.

Teaching and Learning

Chairman Lent said the subcommittee met earlier tonight and he expressed gratitude for the presentations for the various content areas. Ms. Tolsdorf and Ms. Dooley agreed, saying it was very helpful.

VII. Correspondence/Communications

a. Chronicle Article “In memory of Megan”

This is a beautiful article about a toy collection at E.O. Smith High School to benefit a Willimantic-based aid group in memory of Megan VanDyke who died unexpectedly last fall.

b. Save the Date – Afternoon of the Arts

Superintendent Geryk and Board members expressed excitement about the March 12 Afternoon of the Arts.

c. 1st Annual American Heart Association Dodgeball Tournament

This is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on March 12 and is bound to be a lot of fun!

d. Souper Bowl – March 12, 2020 – Art Show

Enter your favorite soup in this competition. Be a taster and vote for your favorite for only \$5 per person or \$20 family max.

e. Enrollment Update

This has been updated by another two new students in the elementary level since printing.

f. YWCA – Seeking Applicants

Superintendent Geryk said we are waiting for state approval for the after school program. The Y is hiring and room is ready for start-up upon approval.

VIII. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

a. Future Meeting Dates:

- Monday, April 6, 2020, 6:30 p.m. BOE Subcommittee Meeting, HWP LMC
- Monday, April 6, 2020, 7:30 p.m. BOE Regular Meeting, HWP Cafetorium
- Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Public Hearing on 2020-2021 Budget, Town Hall

Chairman Lent shared additional budget meetings, following submission to FIPAC on or before March 15:

- Wednesday, March 18, 2020, 7:00 p.m. Board of Selectmen and Board of Education present to FIPAC.
- Meetings on April 1 and 8 as needed at 7:00 p.m. Board of Selectmen and Board of Education are invited for further budget workshops
- Legal notice by April 10 for the April 22 town meeting.

IX. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Geryk said Principal Gwinnell wrote up a description of the Raptor Visitor Management System, which we plan to have up and running shortly. We will be scanning people when they come in. Information will be shared with families and staff within the next few weeks. Currently Principal Gwinnell is working with IT and office staff on the best way to implement. Principal Gwinnell said she is meeting with teachers next week and this will be rolled out the week of March 16. We do not need to add a policy for this.

Superintendent Geryk responded to a parent's question posed at an earlier meeting about the experience or certification of the person who will be providing special education reading services next year. The person will be Wilson Reading certified. This person also has many years of experience. Superintendent Geryk will personally reach out to the parent who raised the question.

The possibility of extending the school year if necessary, due to the Coronavirus, were raised. Superintendent Geryk said that was more for universities. She receives information daily. Primarily it is about prevention and cleaning the building. We are disinfecting high touch area. We are also stressing kids stay home when sick. Principal Gwinnell responded to questions about students learning the importance of prevention, including coughing into their elbows, frequent handwashing, etc. She said children are continually lined up at classroom sinks to wash their hands for one reason or another.

Superintendent Geryk said we are staying on top of this. We take direction from the state. They put a flyer on the website on how to talk to kids about illnesses. Mr. Maziarz said the decision about school closures most likely will come from the state rather than individual schools.

Ms. Dooley asked about the increase in Porter Pals tuition. Parents will be charged \$350 per month (\$3,500 per year) for preschool tuition beginning in August 2020. This is a \$50 increase per month over our current fee structure. The tuition is still below many of the area preschool options for family. Tuition reduction is available for those families who qualify. Superintendent Geryk said this is a full-day preschool program and the cost is still very reasonable, less expensive than other programs, and contributes toward the costs incurred by the district. The program is in place to provide mandated services to special education preschoolers.

X. Comments from the Audience

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes

No one wished to be heard.

XI. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Ms. Tolsdorf said she was very impressed with Nick Caruso at the retreat. While this may not be needed every year, it is very helpful every time they hold these retreats.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. spoke of an article he wrote that was published in the February issue of the Columbia View, a quarterly periodical. It was about great accomplishments of Columbia runners.

Chairman Lent congratulated the Porter middle school boys and girls basketball teams. They won the NEMSAC Championships. He also congratulated the EO Smith Chamber Singers who have been selected as a performing/showcase ensemble for the 2020 ACDA Division Conference.

Superintendent Geryk agreed we have very impressive kids.

Mr. Crim spoke about the Robotics competition he recently attended. E.O. has a small team and they got to go to the finals. Discussion included the types of lessons students learn, such as collaborating with other teams. Exposure to science and enrichment at a very young age contributed to their success. Mr. Maziarz spoke of a similar opportunity for very young elementary children, First Lego. Principal Gwinnell said there had been an afterschool club for robotics. The costs were covered with money in after school program. There was also a Saturday event for this club. Perhaps this will be explored again.

Ms. Tolsdorf asked if Math Olympiad would be reinstated. Superintendent Geryk says it will be back again next year. She is hoping the new math teacher will be interested in leading it.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Crim MOVED and Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

The Board adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Approved 4/6/2020
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Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Lent, Chairman

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