

**Minutes**  
**Regular Board of Education Meeting**  
**September 9, 2019**  
**7:30 p.m.**

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

Others Present:

Karen Caputo, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Alyssa Gwinnell, Christine Sposito, Barbara Wilson and Kevin Quinn

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

Prior to moving to the pledge of allegiance, Chairman Lent observed a moment of silence in memory of Megan VanDyke, a student who passed away unexpectedly last week.

**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.

No one wished to be heard at this time.

**IV. Action Items (Consent)**

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Crim. SECONDED to move item a. Approval of August 5, 2019, Regular Board of Education Minutes to Section V. Action Items (Discussion and Action).  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve items b. Payment of Bills; c. Approval of 2018/19 Year End Transfers; d. Approval of revised Co-Curricular Appointments, e. Approval of Appointment: Ms. Kristin Spear, School Social Worker; f. Approval of Appointment of Ms. Tammy Lemke, Paraprofessional; g. Approval of Appointment of Ms. Erin Niemczyk, Paraprofessional; and h. Request of FMLA leave, Ms. Aliza Petrucci, November 2019  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

**V. Action Items (Discussion and Action)**

a. Discussion – Non-Lapsing Account

Chairman Lent explained the Non-Lapsing Account for attendees unfamiliar with it. The town has this account, which the Board of Education works with FIPAC to manage, directed by a Memorandum of Agreement. The BOE may request any unexpended funds from the BOE's prior fiscal year general operating budget, provided this amount does not exceed one percent of the

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total budgeted appropriation for education. This account may be used for unexpected expenditures such as special education costs. Currently the Non-Lapsing Account has a balance of \$140,000.

At year-end any unexpended funds are available for the Board to spend, spend only a portion, and/or give a portion back to the town. Tonight we have a surplus of approximately \$369,000 from the 2018-19 school year and the Board is going to determine the recommendation to be made to FIPAC. Of this surplus, how much should be transferred to this Non-Lapsing Account?

There was considerable discussion about the types of scenarios where it would benefit the town to have funds available for use in this Non-Lapsing Account, preventing the Board from asking for funds to cover unanticipated needs. Ms. Tolsdorf told of a time when the Board faced an unexpected \$400,000 expenditure and had to go to the town to request the funds.

While it may seem prudent to set aside as much of this surplus as possible, there is also the desire to help the town as a whole by returning these funds. Members stated this is not a for-profit entity and our goal should be that of a zero-balance budget. If our budget covers everything we anticipated with a zero balance at the end of the year, the budget was well developed. Does a surplus mean over-budgeting?

No, this surplus was not due to over-budgeting. Nor was it due to frugality. Unanticipated and uncontrollable changes in special education costs aided in this surplus.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to transfer \$75,000 from the 2018-19 Board of Education budget surplus into the Non-Lapsing Account.

Discussion:

Discussion about the process to utilize funds in the Non-Lapsing Account ensued.

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Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to transfer \$286,969.46 to the Town of Columbia general fund.

MOTION CARRIES 7:0

b. Discussion – Board of Education Goals

Chairman Lent said draft goals were provided at the last meeting.

At the October meeting the Board will be presented test results. Superintendent Geryk said the SBAC results and draft improvement plan will be helpful to consider in the Board's goals discussion. It was decided to review the Board's goals at the November meeting. Ms. Tolsdorf said it will be good to have solid goals set before establishing the next year's budget.

c. August 5, 2019 Regular Board of Education Minutes

Two changes are needed: one on page one and the second on page three.

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Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED and Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to amend the minutes by replacing the word *Special* with *Regular* Board of Education Meeting in the header; and in section VI.d., fourth paragraph, replace “Superintendent Geryk said *she’s been there for three years*” with “Superintendent Geryk said *the district anticipates contracting up to three years.*”  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

**VI. Reports and Board Committees**

Chairman Lent outlined for Mr. Napolitano how subcommittee assignments are made at the meeting following elections and the current subcommittee assignments.

**Policy**

Superintendent Geryk said next week she will send out the initial set of policies for the upcoming subcommittee meeting.

**Budget**

Chairman Lent said this subcommittee meets monthly to review expenditure reports. The budget season will heat up in the next month or two. The BOE, FIPAC and Board of Selectmen work together and discuss the upcoming budget season. The January/February timeframe is when input from the audience is sought.

**Teaching and Learning**

Superintendent Geryk said that there will be a very thorough update at the next meeting.

**Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs**

Superintendent Geryk said negotiations with Bolton and Region 19 are progressing nicely. All three districts signed waivers because of using the same legal firm. Rather than creating contracts from scratch, addendums are being prepared. These addendums will state the agreed upon changes and additions. More information is expected to be available and shared at the next meeting.

**Communications and Community Outreach**

Superintendent Geryk wants to have the subcommittee meet in the very near future. Tomorrow she is meeting with the tech company to provide what we want to see in pull down tabs on the district website. She will seek input from everyone once that is done to try to find out what is missing, test the ease of navigating the site, receive feedback from the broader community, etc.

Superintendent Geryk said monthly meetings with Lisa Massicotte, reporter from the Chronicle, are set up. The first article will be about steps the school is taking to improve school climate. Ms. Caputo will set up time for parents to talk about what we have done. The topic for October will be the new math program.

Superintendent Geryk continued by speaking of the Professional Learning Communities. Teachers are now able to access minutes so we are all on the same page.

**VII. Correspondence/Communications**

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- a. Shipman & Goodwin, LLP – Waiver of Conflict/Regional District No. 19 Board of Education
- b. Letter from Superintendent Kenneth V. Henrici, District 11

Chairman Lent said this is an offer for Columbia to consider Parish High School as part of our choice of high schools, at the rate of \$7,900 per student. It was decided that at this point in the negotiations with Bolton and EOSmith, we will not pursue this as an option.

- c. Back to School Luncheon Thank You from the First Grade Team
- d. HWP Enrollment Update

Preschool is now a full-day program. We maintain slots for children who are referred by Birth to Three. Responding to Mr. Maziarz’s question, Ms. Wilson said we are provided advance notice of upcoming preschoolers by Birth to Three only if parents sign consent.

- e. 8/20/19, BOE Appointment of Joseph Napolitano, BOE Member

Chairman Lent welcomed Mr. Napolitano, who is appointed through November 25, 2019.

**VIII. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings**

- a. Future Meeting Dates

Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 6:30 p.m. Subcommittee Meetings, H.W. Porter Conference Room  
Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 7:30 p.m. BOE Special Meeting, H.W. Porter Cafetorium

**IX. Superintendent’s Report**

*Start of the Year*

Superintendent Geryk shared staff say there is a lot going on, with many changes, and it is very positive. The first Porter Pride was held. Professional development for READY Math is underway.

*Student Celebration*

Audrey Merrill’s Logo was chosen for the Columbia Open Space Logo Contest.

*Communication*

Website Revision Progress, was discussed earlier. Superintendent Geryk said Alyssa Gwinnell created easily accessible information/resources for staff to access through the website. We will focus on increasing content for families and the broader community regarding news from Porter School. Anticipated launch date will be in October.

Karen Caputo and Superintendent Geryk will meet with Lisa Massicotte, reporter for the Chronicle, to discuss implementation of a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support framework to improve school climate. Hopefully articles will be written monthly regarding educational programming and will include information about upcoming parent nights.

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*PTO Fundraising Update*

The Planning & Zoning Board approved placing the PTO's community message display in front of the old firehouse. We are working on an internal process for approving and posting content.

*Contract Negotiations with Bolton and EO*

The Future Needs Subcommittee's proposals were shared with the Region 19 and Bolton superintendents on August 6. She met with each superintendent to share our proposals and the signed conflict of interest waivers permit Shipman and Goodwin to work on the contracts on our behalf. Superintendent Geryk reiterated the fact that we anticipate an addendum to the contracts, which will be written within the next month for review at a Future Needs subcommittee meeting.

*Teaching and Learning*

Scope and Sequence/Pacing Guides

The guides for ELA and Math K-8 are on the website. Science is also on the site and will be updated by mid-year. Social studies is still being reviewed.

Art Integration

We are exploring the integration of art into content area instruction. Kat MacDonald's schedule includes time for her to explore and begin this work.

*Facilities Update*

Superintendent Geryk acknowledged the hard work done by Director of Facilities Mike Sylvester and Facility Technicians Pete Hendrickson, Don Spooner, Matt Tew and Jerry O'Leary this summer. There is an extensive listing of projects underway. They include vinyl flooring in the main hall and in the preschool wing, painting, changing ceiling tiles, fire alarm upgrade, sink replacement, washer and dryer installation, fence around the dumpster space, duct cleaning of the building, window balances and glass repair in B and F wings, shower curtains in the locker rooms, toilet paper dispensers, repair of the ceiling in the server room, repair of sidewalks by the Department of Public Works, installation of air conditioners in the A wing and music room, and support of the visitor management system.

In response to questions posed at a previous meeting, Barbara Wilson provided Superintendent Geryk information about the eligibility requirements for Extended School Year (summer) programming. Decisions regarding a child's eligibility for ESY services are to be made on an individual basis based on the needs of the child. She also provided information about IXL, which has been used in a number of ways (ELA, Mathematics, and Social Studies). We are in the process of reviewing our student resources given our purchase of iREADY and RazKids. An update will be provided to the Board when decisions regarding the use of these resources has been made.

Open House is scheduled for September 12, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

We anticipate the start of a YWCA afterschool program in December/January. This program will be available for preK-8 students and will be available until 6:00 p.m. Representatives will be available at the Open House event to share this information with families. Costs will be per day or per week. There will be savings and bundles, as well as a sliding scale. The YWCA handles all staffing, etc.

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

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

Ms. Sposito asked for clarification about school choice of the high school to be either Bolton or EOSmith. Chairman Lent said there are two separate issues. The first is the decision to maintain Porter as PreK-8. The second was to continue offering a choice of high schools. It was decided at a later meeting to pursue negotiations with Bolton and EOSmith to extend our current options. The current contract continues for another two years, allowing us to pursue other options if negotiations did not go well.

Ms. Sposito asked the steps a parent would take if there is a concern about a child's teacher. Superintendent Geryk said the parent should start with addressing the issue with the teacher. After that, Principal Gwinnell. Then Superintendent Geryk.

**XI. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items**

Board of Education Goals – October 16

Policy – Before October 16

Future Needs

Budget

Teaching and Learning

**XII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks**

Chairman Lent again welcomed Mr. Napolitano to the Board.

Mr. Maziarz said his children had a great start to the school year.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said he did not know Megan VanDyke personally, but, as a fellow parent expressed sorrow over her passing. He said the communication received from the schools was commendable. Superintendent Geryk said that Megan was a student at EO, but both Bolton and Tech were very responsive acknowledging the loss to all Columbia students attending their schools.

Members spoke of the workshop opportunities available through CAFE. Many spoke of the benefits of attending them. Superintendent Geryk will look into attending the CAFE convention which takes place in November.

**XIUU. Adjournment**

Mr. Crim MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to adjourn.  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

The Board adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Christopher Lent, Chairman