

DRAFT
Minutes
Board of Education Meeting
January 8, 2019
7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Linette Dooley, Joanne Prague Doyle, Chairman Christopher Lent, Gary Littlefield and Kathy Tolsdorf

Others Present: Nicholas Caruso from CAFE; Tom Doyle; Superintendent Maria Geryk; David Kohn; Kevin Morris; Nancy Sagal; Christine Sposito; and Director of Special Education Barbara Wilson

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Presentation – Recognition of the CAPSS Award Winners 2018/2019

Elizabeth Morris and Luke Ruchalski

Chairman Lent said this reminds the Board of the important work that goes on at the school. We are very pleased to announce the CAPSS award winners Elizabeth Morris and Luke Ruchalski. Elizabeth and her family are present and Luke was unable to attend tonight.

Superintendent Geryk said this award acknowledges two students for their contributions to our school. Ellie, as she is known at school, is a quiet leader, a great role model, and is loved both in school and outside in the community. She is an excellent student, on the honor roll and honor society. Ellie volunteers her time and participates in drama events at Porter. Her solid commitment to academics makes her a natural for this award. Superintendent Geryk, Chairman Lent and the Board congratulated her for this achievement.

IV. 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.

David Kohn, 10 Columbia Landing, introduced himself as a retired teacher who started teaching 40 years ago. He congratulated Ellie and Luke for the honor of winning the award. He is here tonight to share his concern about the daily rate of pay the district offers substitutes. He believes \$85 per day is considerably less than what is offered elsewhere and is not comparable to area districts. Mr. Kohn said he understands substitute coverage is difficult to arrange and many times paraprofessionals are required to take the place of teachers because subs cancel assignments when one becomes available elsewhere. He concluded by asking the Board to consider raising the daily rate of pay for substitutes to get the best candidates possible to work with our students.

Superintendent Geryk responded by saying she provided information to the Board for consideration from area towns including Ashford, Bolton and Mansfield to name a few. She thanked Mr. Kohn for his input and said the Board will consider his request to see if the substitute rate will be increased. Mr. Kohn reminded the Board that last year there was a budget surplus and the recommended increase will make us more competitive.

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Christine Sposito, 62 Doubleday Road, said she has two questions. First, she is concerned because her fourth grade son has not yet been introduced to science this year, even though it is January. She asked if her son is not providing correct information when answering her questions about his schoolwork, though his report card said it wasn't reported on.

Second, she is very pleased with the Teaching and Learning presentation earlier today. She said the excitement for K – 4 ELA is apparent. She also said it is concerning it took until this year to get this far, but is glad it is being recognized. Another concern she has is about the middle school, not being sure where we are with the curriculum.

Superintendent Geryk said she would get back to Mrs. Sposito directly regarding science. In terms of Teaching and Learning, she also believes great work is being done. Probably in the next few weeks a more comprehensive picture of curriculum development will be available, perhaps by the next meeting. It will all be addressed. ELA is the focus this year, and math is next year's focus. Science is in pretty good shape.

Ms. Sposito said in previous years parents would ask for Scope and Sequence at Open House, which would be done per grade per subject area. It was a helpful tool for families who might be able to take steps such as planning a family trip that would relate to what was being taught. Superintendent Geryk said we will have that.

Tom Doyle, 145 Route 87, said this is an empty room and he can barely make out what is being said from where he sits. He referenced the speakers in the cafetorium that are not being used and asked what amplification options are being considered by the Board to rectify the situation. Superintendent Geryk said there is a communication subcommittee meeting next month and the Board will consider possibilities to improve communication as a whole.

V. Discussion – BOE Self Evaluation, Mr. Nicholas Caruso, CABE

Chairman Lent welcomed Mr. Caruso back, as Mr. Caruso has worked with the Board for several years. Mr. Caruso provided Board members with a copy of the results compiled from a self-survey they completed. While members were given an opportunity to peruse the document, he stated the results are very consistent with those completed the past couple years.

Responding to Mr. Caruso's request for members' observations to the report, Chairman Lent asked about the Community Leadership question, "The Board advocates at the national, state and local levels for students and the school district and promotes the benefits of public education." How many districts does Mr. Caruso work with who rate themselves as strong in this area? Mr. Caruso said some boards have somebody assigned to that area, government relationships. As an example, one town talked about how they could work cooperatively with neighboring communities. This area on the survey is noted as a deficiency according to the Board's self-evaluation. However, this is an area where the Board could have influence at the state level because Board members have a voice. Mr. Lent said there is not a lack of interest. Members on the Board have taken vacation days from their full-time jobs to attend state training sessions, etc.

Responding to a question, Mr. Caruso said there were no comments on the summary because none were provided by respondents, even though a comments section was available at the end of the survey.

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There was discussion regarding the recent decision to maintain Porter as a pre-K through grade 8 school and have high school choice. Mr. Caruso acknowledged a lot of strategic planning was involved. Study, making a decision, and then moving forward.

Mr. Caruso led a brief discussion about the fact that the Board is doing a lot of policy work now. Boards have to decide if their policies will be to express vision or to express compliance. Are we legal? Is it clear enough that administrators and teachers know what step is to be next?

Board members asked about the responses to the question, “The Board conducts a comprehensive orientation to familiarize new board members with their role on the team.” This is an area that is rated low by virtually all Boards. Members agree training should be provided to – and accepted by – new members, especially in the areas of budget development.

Mr. Caruso concluded his presentation by sharing information about how CAFE chooses the workshops they will provide. It is based on feedback and recommendations from Board members. Superintendent Geryk thanked Mr. Caruso for his work on this report.

VI. Action Items (Consent)

- a. Approval of December 3, 2018, Regular Board of Education Minutes
- b. Approval of 2019-2020 Budget Timeline
- c. Payment of Bills

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Littlefield SECONDED to move item a. Approval of December 3, 2018, Regular Board of Education Minutes to section VII. Action Items (Discussion and Action)
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve items b. Approval of 2019-2020 Budget Timeline and c. Payment of Bills.
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

VII. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

- a. First Reading, Policy 5000 Series, Physical Restraint & Seclusion & Use of Exclusionary Time Out

Superintendent Geryk introduced Director of Special Education Barbara Wilson, who is presenting the first policy to be addressed. Ms. Wilson said this policy now needs to be thought of in terms of an emergency. This is no longer allowed to be written into IEP's. Ms. Wilson answered questions. Ms. Wilson and Superintendent Geryk, responding to a question about “a school employee” being referenced within the regulation, saying it is better than indicating a particular staff member, i.e., principal. Otherwise there is potential continual changes. There will be somebody assigned to contact parents within the mandated timeframe, as an example, but it is better to maintain the language “a school employee.”

Ms. Wilson was asked what a seclusion area is. She answered that while some public schools have spaces based on their population, we do not have a specific room at Porter. Further

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clarifying, seclusion rooms are regulated. Time out is more of a chance to de-escalate vs. seclusion.

Chairman Lent said the second reading will be the time for the Board to vote on adopting the policy. Superintendent Geryk said this is a policy from Shipman and Goodwin. Staff will be trained.

b. FNC Process Flow

Chairman Lent proposed a timeline to move to Phase 2, now that the Board voted to maintain Porter as a pre-K through 8 school and maintain school choice for high school students. Considerable discussion ensued, clarifying we are to notify current high schools of our intent to negotiate by May 2021 and our current contracts expire June 2022. There is much time available to work with, which is seen as beneficial.

There is a regular Board meeting on February 4. A presentation of the final plan could be made at a public hearing on February 25. An implementation plan would be developed March 2019 – December 2019.

We vote as a Board on the next steps for high school choice. If the vote is positive we would explore approaching E.O. Smith and Bolton. Present at the February meeting the fact that HWP will remain pre-K – 8, discuss the budget to support it. Then present the vote to reach out to EOS and Bolton to enter into negotiations.

Board members discussed how to notify the public of these meetings, in particular if a postcard mailing should be done. This is costly and may not be necessary. Ms. Dooley said people need to come to these meetings. They said they are willing to spend the money to support these choices. Ms. Tolsdorf said small schools are expensive to maintain. We need to keep people involved to maintain their support.

It was agreed there will be a vote at the public forum on February 25.

c. Approval of December 3, 2018, Regular Board of Education Minutes

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Ms. Prague Doyle SECONDED to approve the December 3, 2018, Regular Board of Education Minutes

Discussion:

These edits are needed –

Page 1: Correct the spelling of Ms. *Tolsdorf's* name on page one in III.b, III.c.2 and III.c.3

Page 3: Correct fourth paragraph to read “*Debbie Millette, 25 Pine Street ...*” in place of “*Erin Millette ...*”

Page 4: Correct third paragraph to read “*Carmen Vance, Beach Road said ...*” in place of “*A resident from Beach Road ...*”

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to approve the December 3, 2018, Regular Board of Education Minutes with the above amendments.

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d. Superintendent Evaluation Process

Chairman Lent acknowledged this was meant to be discussed as c., not d. The evaluation document to be used for Superintendent Geryk has been used previously. Superintendent Geryk will give the Board a status of her entry plan. In June will be the annual review. Superintendent Geryk said she is happy with this form. Chairman Lent said the mid-year typically does not have a lot of comments. The annual review will. Ms. Tolsdorf confirmed the Board's goals and Superintendent Geryk's goals will be common. Chairman Lent said they are unchanged from prior ones because the Board's goals have not changed. Ms. Dooley said really high or really low scores should have comments to explain why that score was given.

VIII. Reports of Board Committees

Policy

Superintendent Geryk said she was told by Shipman and Goodwin, whose policies the Board decided to use, that typically Boards vote to adopt all the policies in their entirety and then we take the time adjusting them to be specific to Columbia. There was discussion that all policies are already vetted by Shipman and Goodwin, are up to date and are a legal baseline. Lawyers say focus on compliant and then work on vision. It was agreed Superintendent Geryk will check with Shipman and Goodwin to see if we can accept all the policies without reading through each one. She will secure the necessary assurance in writing. Ultimately it is hoped to have these policies accepted by March 2019.

Budget

Chairman Lent said they met earlier this evening. Their next budget meeting will be on January 23 at 6:30 p.m. They will meet again on these dates:

February 4 at 6:30 p.m.

February 11 after the retreat at 7:00 p.m. which is expected start of budget discussion

February 25 at 7:00 p.m. will be a public hearing to present the budget and receive feedback from the public

March 4, Regular Board of Education meeting at 7:30 p.m., hopefully to adopt the proposed budget

Another meeting may be needed, based on the public hearing.

Meetings will also occur on these dates:

March 13 it will be presented at FIPAC

March 20 – April 3, weekly Wednesday meetings with FIPAC

April 24 public hearing of the budget presentation by FIPAC

May 14 Town meeting

Teaching and Learning

Chairman Lent said the presentation given sounds like we are heading in the right direction. A lot of hard work has gone into Teaching and Learning. Ms. Dooley said she disagrees with a comment made earlier at tonight's meeting about the work being done for/with the middle school curriculum.

Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs

Chairman Lent said there has already been much discussion on this earlier tonight.

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IX. Correspondence/Communications

a. HWP Enrollment Update

Superintendent Geryk said the numbers are the same as last time they were presented. Enrollment is stable.

X. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

a. Future Meeting Dates:

Wednesday, January 23, 2019, 6:30 p.m., BOE Budget & Communications Subcommittee Meeting

Monday, February 4, 2019, 6:30 p.m., BOE Budget Subcommittee Meeting

Monday, February 4, 2019, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting

XI. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Geryk referenced comments by an audience member earlier tonight. She contacted area districts to find out what the daily substitute rate is, and Columbia is comparable to the area. She further said the budget subcommittee may want to consider going from \$85 per day to \$90 per day next year.

Ms. Prague Doyle said she would like to see the number of days we have been without subs. Ms. Tolsdorf said she does not see a need to raise the rate. A year and a half ago the rate was raised to \$85 and she would like to see more data on when we were short subs. Chairman Lent said the discussion would be surrounding next year's budget. It's likely any increase in minimum wage will not go into effect until June or later. Superintendent Geryk offered to provide a copy of the rate information she secured from area towns in response to his concern/suggestion so he may see how comparable our rate is.

Continuing her superintendent's report, Superintendent Geryk said the pipes are fixed, the solar project is waiting for technology and then will be set, and she provided some articles for the Board members to read. Lastly, she spoke of professional learning with a systemic approach.

XII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items

Communication on January 23, 2019

Budget will dominate the agendas the next few months

XIII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

No remarks at this time.

XIV. Executive Session for the Purpose of Personnel Matters

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters.

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Board entered executive session at 9:51 p.m.

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to exit executive session and return to regular session.

MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Board returned to regular session at 10:45 p.m.

Chairman Lent said it was decided to add an executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters to the January 23 meeting.

XV. Adjournment

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to adjourn.

The Board adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Prague Doyle, Board Secretary