

REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING
February 2, 2010

Present: Barickman (7:50 pm), Brey, Gaspar, Goldberg, Joyce-Kirk, Lewson, Miller
Administration: Cicchetti, Sullivan, Mas, Pierson Ugol, Wessman Huber, Martin, Wallin, Farrell,
Freeston
Others: 20 members of the staff & community, and a representative of the Redding Pilot

Dr. Gaspar called the February 2, 2010, meeting to order at 7:36 pm in the JRMS Community Room.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2010 meeting as submitted. Lewson, Miller. Approved. 5-0-1. Mr. Brey abstained.

Motion: move to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2010 meeting as submitted. Miller, Goldberg. Approved. 5-0-1. Mr. Lewson abstained.

Motion: move to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2010 meeting as submitted. Lewson, Joyce-Kirk. Approved. 5-0-1. Mr. Goldberg abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike D'Agostino, Glen Hill Road: asked the board to make reductions that do not have a negative impact on students and suggested further consideration of the full-day kindergarten program that has potential savings.

Gwen Denny, Wayside Lane: stated that she had reviewed portions of the NABR "10 in 10" report and believes the suggestions regarding education would have a negative impact on the quality of education in Redding and further stated that she does not believe there is support in the community for the NABR suggestions.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Miller commented that he had reviewed the NABR proposals and found that many of the suggestions would be in violation of state laws and contracts.

Mr. Brey attended the NABR presentation of the "10 in 10" report at the Republican Town Committee meeting and commented that the problem with the proposal for online learning is that Connecticut State law requires a certified teacher in classrooms. In addition, there are state enforced minimum spending requirements that must be considered.

Mr. Goldberg commented that the board was aware of the economic conditions at the federal, state and local levels and that to reduce the entire town budget by 10% would mean the education budget would need to be reduced by 17%. He took the NABR proposal seriously, he read the report closely line by line, but fears it would be irresponsible of the board of education to consider the proposal in large part because it would result in massive litigation.

PROPOSED 2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET

The administration presented reductions to the 2010-2011 operating budget in a tiered format. The first tier of reductions represents technical edits and brings the proposed budget increase to 5.65%.

Discussion of the reductions in the second, third and fourth tiers followed. Board members asked about the impact of the reductions to students.

Motion: move that an executive session be added to the meeting for a discussion of contract negotiations. Goldberg, Brey. Approved. Unanimous.

Discussion of the full-day kindergarten proposal centered on the need for a comprehensive study and implementation of such a change. This proposal could be considered as a part of the strategic plan for the schools.

Board members were asked to submit questions or further areas to explore to the administration. Board members asked the administration to provide further prioritizing of the items in Tier 3, but not include the full day kindergarten.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction: Mrs. Mas reported on the transition process for students moving from 8th grade to the high school. In addition, the ER9 World Language Curriculum Committee from both the Redding and Easton middle schools and the high school met to review the textbooks for French and Spanish. The ER9 Wellness Advisory Committee met and discussed the Chartwells Nutrition Grant opportunity, reviewed the school menus, and discussed the development of an ER9 Wellness Webpage.

Director of Financial Operations: Mrs. Sullivan reported the following:

- Health Insurance claims for December were \$204,000; the average for the year is \$251,000.
- Budget Object Summary was distributed.

Special Education: Mrs. Freeston reported the lottery for the Preschool was held and there is a short waiting list for the program. She applied for and received a \$500 grant to cover the cost of the preschool accreditation process.

RES: Mrs. Pierson Ugol provided a written report. She reported the Kindergarten registration is currently at 83, with a projected enrollment of 97. Staff professional development has centered on grade level review of student work. The winter carnival was successful and a "pajama day" included the wearing of pajamas and donation of new pajamas & books for needy children.

JRMS: Mrs. Martin submitted a written report. She reviewed professional development activities, most of which involved the incorporation of reading into curriculum work. Power School was introduced to the staff and is now in use.

Superintendent: Dr. Cicchetti reported on his meetings with various community groups, town officials, and staff. He has a schedule of planned visits to each of the schools. A PTA sponsored reception is planned for February 3, 2010.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Joyce-Kirk reported the planned session was cancelled due to a snow event. This meeting will be rescheduled.

PTA LIAISON

Dr. Gaspar reported the highlights of the last meeting:

- Questions on renovation of a specific room
- Budget concerns
- Support for the specialists
- The 2% budget increase last year was supported by 2/3 of those voting
- Support for the instatement of professional development
- Concern that the number of paraprofessionals seems to be increasing and questioned why that is happening
- Discussion of full-day kindergarten program

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lewis Andrews, High Ridge Road: commented on the NABR “10 in 10” report and specific suggestions. He suggested that if the board members did not like the suggestions, they should have other new and creative means to reduce education costs.

Mike D’Agostino, Glen Hill Road: questioned the proposal to eliminate the homework center in the budget and urged the board to consider the full-day kindergarten program.

Gwen Denny, Wayside Lane: commented on the need for capital improvement work at Redding Elementary School, especially the correction of ventilation problems and the replacement of carpet with washable flooring.

AGENDA ADDITION

Motion: move to add Board Member Comment to the agenda. Miller, Goldberg. Approved. Unanimous.

BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

Mr. Barickman suggested the board give further thought to how much risk should be included in the budget proposal, specifically with regard to special education and health insurance costs. He asked Mrs. Pierson Ugol how the “recess before lunch” program was progressing. Mrs. Pierson Ugol reported the concept is being piloted at one grade level and there are plans to expand to other grades.

Mr. Brey commented that the board should consider citizen input on the budget, but they also must consider the legal obligations of the board. The failure to meet the minimum education requirement can result in mandates and considerable fines. The board needs to be concerned about the state’s ability to continue funding the excess cost program. The replacement of paraprofessionals with interns or volunteers has legal ramifications that must be considered.

Mr. Goldberg commented that the full-day kindergarten program could be a cost savings measure, but that change requires thoughtful student and planned implementation. He added that the cost of education has increased primarily due to unfunded mandates, and that the board of education has a moral responsibility to educate children with special needs.

Mr. Lewson commented that the budget process is transparent and open to all views.

Mr. Miller commented that the board is reviewing the budget carefully and has reviewed the NABR report. The board of education is responsible to all taxpayer groups, NABR is not the only one, and may have different goals in mind.

Mr. Barickman suggested the kindergarten program be discussed at the next meeting rather than defer it to next year. Dr. Gaspar stated that it would be more appropriate to discuss the program in conjunction with the Strategic Plan.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2010, in the Library of the Redding Elementary School at 8:00 pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education recess to executive session for a discussion of contract negotiations. Brey, Joyce-Kirk. Approved. Unanimous.

Dr. Cicchetti was invited to be present.
The meeting recessed at 10:17 pm.

RECONVENE

The meeting was reconvened in public session at 11:35 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 11:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lewis Brey, Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday