

REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING MINUTES
April 6, 2010

Present: Barickman, Gaspar, Goldberg, Joyce-Kirk, Lewson, Miller
Administration: Cicchetti, Sullivan, Mas, Pierson Ugol, Wessman Huber, Martin, Wallin, Farrell, Freeston
Others: six members of the staff & community

Dr. Gaspar called the April 6, 2010 meeting to order at 7:36 pm in the Community Room of the John Read Middle School.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2010 meeting as corrected. Goldberg, Miller. Approved. 5-0-1. Mr. Lewson abstained.

Corrections: page 2, last paragraph, line 2, the survey referred to is the survey created for the “40 Developmental Assets of Adolescents”; page 3, under Superintendent Report, line 5, change meeting to meetings; page 3, Public Comment, Sara Sobel, typo in line 1, t he should be the.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Frank DeSalvo, member of the Board of Finance: Mr. DeSalvo complimented the Board and Facilities subcommittee on the comprehensive report on the capital plan. The presentation to the Board of Finance was well constructed and informative.

RECOGNITION

Dr. Cicchetti presented a CAFE Excellence in Communication award to Redding Elementary School for the RES Calendar.

WELLNESS REPORT

1. Wellness Committee: Mrs. Mas highlighted her written report on the work of the ER9 Wellness Advisory Committee. The Committee completed a review of the food guidelines for the schools, including clarification that a) schools may discourage unhealthy foods, but cannot prohibit them; b) birthdays will continue to be recognized at the elementary school without food; c) parent volunteers are not permitted to give students food; d) students are not permitted to share food; e) with the exception of curricular areas where food is written into the curriculum, food will not be used in instruction.

The Committee will move its focus in a new direction to consider the whole person, not just nutrition. The Towns of Easton and Redding would like to administer a survey developed through the “40 Developmental Assets of Adolescents” program to high school and possibly middle school students. The Easton-Redding Community Coalition is involved with this process.

Mrs. Mas reported that a wellness web page on the ER9 Web site will be developed to provide additional information for students and parents. The Chartwells Nutrition Grant (\$2,000/year for five years) was awarded to Samuel Staples Elementary School for their farm-to-school program. Each school in the district will receive one \$2,000 grant over the five year period. Mrs. Mas also reported on a Lyme disease curriculum, Time for Lyme, which is available at no cost to the district and targets instructional opportunities for grades K, 3, 6 & 9. Dr. Cicchetti underscored the importance of the

schools developing a partnership with parents and community organizations to inform students of safety precautions. The information will be sent to parents via the listserv and posted on the website.

2. Chartwells Food Service Update: Mrs. Ann Metcalf provided an update on the changes in food service and acceptance of changes by students. The number of meals served is down this year, something to be expected with the changes, elimination of “favorite” foods and probably also due to the economic conditions.

Tom O’Donnell of Chartwells reported that the kitchens at both RES & JRMS were both renovated as part of the contract negotiation. He plans to conduct focus group session, both with parents and students to get feedback on the food service program. Chartwells nutritionist, Meg Whitbeck, also provided information on the menu specifications, the basic menu, the “ideal” menu, and the blended menu (improved but not yet ideal). She included steps underway to move from the blended menu to the “ideal’ menu, and the plan to provide nutrition information and improve nutrition literacy.

3. Healthy Food Certification: The State of Connecticut requires an annual agreement to participate in the Healthy Foods Program. Districts that participate in the program receive 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches served in the National School Lunch Program in the prior school year.

MOTION: Move that the Redding Board of Education approve the continued participation in the State Healthy Food Program for the 2010-2011 school year. Goldberg, Miller. Approved. Unanimous.

2009-2010 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Dr. Cicchetti recommended the planned last day of school be changed from a full day to an early dismissal day. Traditionally, the final day of school for students was an early dismissal day and that provided teachers and staff time to complete necessary close-out activities for the end of the school year. Board member discussion centered on the loss of instructional time, staff commitments to education, and the need for staff to complete end-of-year reports and complete classroom closure for the summer months. Many of the classrooms at Redding Elementary are used for summer programs and require extensive packing of materials/equipment. The teaching staff returns the following day for a full day of staff development activities.

Mr. Goldberg commented on the importance of the teachers completing the full day of work, and the early dismissal should be only for the students. This will provide the staff with three hours of time, without students, to complete their end-of-year chores.

MOTION: Move that the Redding Board of Education approve a change in the 2009-2010 school calendar, making the last day of school an early dismissal day without impacting the responsibility of the teachers to work the full day. Goldberg, Joyce-Kirk. Approved. 5-1. Mr. Miller cast the dissenting vote.

FIRST READING, POLICY 0521 – NONDISCRIMINATION

MOTION: Move that the Redding Board of Education accept Policy 0521 – Nondiscrimination for a first reading. Barickman, Miller. Approved. Unanimous.

2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET

No discussion.

CAPITAL BUDGET

The Board and Facilities Committee will present the Board of Finance with the finalized capital needs report at the BOF meeting on Wednesday, April 7, 2010. The report contains detailed information and cost estimates, with supporting documentation, as requested by the BOF.

AGENDA ADDITION

MOTION: move to add to the executive session a discussion of collective bargaining for the teaching staff. Goldberg, Miller. Approved. Unanimous.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

RES Principal, Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported the school mascot has been formally named Rocky through a poll of students. The Big Science event was successful with the students who were able to learn and have fun with science. Singer/song writer, Kevin Briody, worked collaboratively with staff on a topic for the annual 4th grade song. The song, One, was created by the 4th graders working with Mr. Briody throughout the school year.

JRMS Principal, Diane Martin, reported on the participation in the Western Regional Music Festival. Seventh grade teacher, Courtney MacRae recently completed the CES Leadership Conference. On Monday, students were treated to a performance of scenes from Hamlet by Joel Barlow High School students.

Special Education: Brian Farrell reported that area preschool programs were contacted regarding the rates being charged to compare them with the rates for the Redding program. Mr. Farrell reported that Redding's fee is the second lowest for the 5-day program and in the middle to low range for the 3 & 4-day programs. Compared to area public school programs, Redding is on the high side. Board members suggested that the topic of pre-school program and tuition be a topic for exploration as a part of the strategic planning process.

Director of Finance, Peggy Sullivan, reported she met with Redding's Controller, Steve Gniadek regarding the sharing of services. It was determined that the area of technology was a good start. The services of the IT staff are used 6.5 hours/day and only during the school year. The staff will work for the Town during available hours and days, benefitting both the town and staff. Regarding the 2010-2011 budget, the health insurance rate increase is now lower than originally planned, but not finalized as yet.

Mrs. Joyce-Kirk suggested with the change in the health insurance increase, perhaps the board could revisit the proposed change in the Woodshop program in the budget. Mr. Miller agreed and commented the logistical difficulties in scheduling for ½ of a program and the amount of widespread public opposition to the decrease in the program. Dr. Cicchetti commented that during his visit to JRMS the previous day, he had an opportunity to visit the woodshop classroom and observed how engaged the students were in the class. Mrs. Martin noted that the scheduling for next year is not yet complete, and the change would mean that students would have Woodshop only two of the four years at the school. The topic was discussed further and there was a general preference for restoration of the Woodshop program, but the board members asked for additional information from the administration regarding the program both long-term and short-term, scheduling problems, etc. The topic will be discussed further at next month's meeting.

Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Marie Mas highlighted her written report. The report on the Tri-State Consortium's report on the science visitation will be distributed, and the topic will be discussed at the May board meeting. She, Dr. Cicchetti, and Mr. Farrell attended the CES Fairfield County Teacher Recruitment Fair and connected with a number of good candidates. Dr. Cicchetti commented on the importance of attending these events. Mrs. Mas participated in a Quinnipiac University mock interview session for graduate students of the Master of Arts Teaching Program. The Textbook Committee is scheduled to review the Grade 6 Science textbooks and online resources.

Superintendent, Michael Cicchetti commented on the importance of having a presence at various job fairs. He and Mrs. Mas will attend the University of Connecticut job fair. Dr. Cicchetti distributed copies of the Connecticut State Boards of Education Position Statement on Creating a Healthy Learning Environment that is Physically, Emotionally and Intellectually Safe. Dr. Cicchetti was the guest speaker at recent League of Women Voters meeting. He is also visiting Redding Elementary and John Read Middle School, spending time meeting staff and students, and observing classes.

AGENDA ADDITION

MOTION: move to add a Board Member Comment to the agenda following Public Comment. Barickman, Lewson. Approved. Unanimous.

PTA LIAISON COMMITTEE

Dr. Gaspar reported the last meeting centered on a discussion of the budget process and how best to communicate the budget priorities.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike D'Agostino, Glen Hill Road: Mr. D'Agostino commented that he thought it was irresponsible to submit a budget without locking in oil prices. He also expressed a concern about the reconsideration of the reduction in the Woodshop program while not addressing the 0.2 FTE reductions in art, music and P.E. at the elementary school. Dr. Cicchetti responded the reduction of 0.2 FTE in art, music and P.E. is strictly enrollment driven and services to the students will not be reduced. Mr. D'Agostino commented that the district's preschool program should not be a money making program.

Jeannie Wendschuh, Deer Spring Drive: thanked the board and commended them for their thoughtful and civil discussions, and for recognizing public input.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: move that the Redding Board of Education recess to executive session for a) discussion and possible action pertaining to collective bargaining with teachers and b) discussion and possible action pertaining to a public employee, Linda Loud. Goldberg, Miller. Approved. Unanimous.

Dr. Cicchetti, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Pierson Ugol and Mrs. Sullivan were invited to be present for item a.

The meeting recessed at 10:00 pm.

RECONVENE

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 10:50 pm.

MOTION: Move to authorize the Superintendent to finalize retirement terms for Linda Loud. Gaspar, Miller. Approved. Unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 10:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Recorded by Mary Maday