

WEST BOYLSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
WEDNESDAY October 9, 2013

LOCATION: West Boylston Middle/High School Media Center

PRESENT: SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Owanisian, Chairman
Jennifer Breen
Richard Shaw
Erin Palumbo
James Pedone, Jr.

ADMINISTRATORS

Elizabeth Schaper, Superintendent
Lawrence Murphy, Principal Middle/High School
Christopher LaBreck, Associate MS Principal
Richard Meagher, Elementary Principal
Roger E. Pontbriand, Jr., Business Administrator
Sherri Traina, Special Education Administrator

COMMUNITY

Faculty & Staff:	7	Guests:	15
Student Advisors:	2	Press:	1

Mr. Owanisian opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to October 9, 2013 School Committee Meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Shaw made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular School Committee Meeting of September 11, 2013; Ms. Breen seconded. Motion approved. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Student Recognition Awards

Mr. Meagher congratulated Sophia Agbay on her student of the month status. She is a fifth grader at Major Edwards Elementary School.

Mr. LaBreck congratulated Jacob Karsina – a sixth grader in the Middle School - on his accomplishments.

Mr. Murphy introduced the student of the month for the High School, senior Kelsey Book who will appear in the Fall Production “Irena’s Vow” in December 2013.

Student Advisory Council

Tyler Arme and Abby Colangelo indicated there were several interesting events taking place this month in the West Boylston School District: The National French and Spanish Honor Society inducted new members, the Sight Mobile will be at Major Edwards and the Middle/High School, there will be a flu clinic in the Middle/High School, the drama production for the fall will be “Irena’s Vow, Homecoming has wrapped up and there will be a blood drive next week.

Acknowledgment Of Camera Crew

Mr. Owanisian thanked Mr. Bokankowitz for his work filming the meeting.

Highlight on Schools

Dr. Schaper announced to the committee the teachers that have reached professional status within the district – Leslie Garrison, Nestor Cabrera-Valle, Denise Levesque, Justin Hagenbuch and Jenny Solano. The teachers were presented with crystal apple paperweights in recognition of their accomplishment. Dr. Schaper thanked them for their years of dedicated service to the Town of West Boylston.

Community Input

Ms. Linda Thompson and Ms. Monica April (both who have students in the West Boylston School District) presented information to the School Committee and those in attendance relative to Special

Education Parent Advisory Councils. They stated that they (along with another parent who was not at the meeting tonight – Jill Lenkarski) attended the Apple Institute, which is a workshop that was run by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. The purpose of this meeting was to talk about how to strengthen school systems' SEPACS, which stands for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils. Ms. Thompson stated every school system in the state should have a SEPAC. It is supported by the school districts, but it is parent run/lead.

Ms. Thompson stated that they have scheduled their first event to be held on Tuesday, October 29, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Middle/High School Cafeteria. This meeting will be a social for parents, families, anyone in the community who wants to come and learn/support the group. She indicated they are not an official SEPAC group as of yet, because they still are in the process or organizing the group. She passed out packets of information to the School Committee members and administrators.

Ms. Traina stated that it is a regulation that all school committees need to establish a SEPAC within their district. She indicated we have not had one for years, due to the fact that there has not been the parent interest until now. She encouraged anyone in the community who has an interest in the programs to come to meetings; they do not have to have a child with special needs.

Mr. Shaw asked the parents how they School Committee, schools/administrators help the parents get the information out to the public so that this organization can get off the ground.

Mr. Owanisian asked if something could be put on the district's website. Ms. Traina stated that it would be going under pupil personnel/special education site. She stated that her assistant, Jean Pray, has contacted both schools to make sure it gets on their calendars as well.

Mr. Owanisian asked if minutes of their meetings would be taken. Ms. Thompson stated that the plan is for a SEPAC member to come to every school committee meeting so that they have a presence and can update the committee on what's happening. She stated that this year would be a growing year. They would probably not be an official SEPAC until next September, as they still are looking for more community involvement creating bylaws, etc.

Dr. Schaper gave a 2013 MCAS Report presentation to those in attendance regarding District Level Data. She indicated that in November 2013 an in-depth English Language Arts Reports would be presented to the committee. In December the Math and Science reports will be given.

Dr. Schaper provided an overview of the performance and growth indicators. She reported that the West Boylston Schools have performed higher than the state average for the last four years in ELA and Math. She indicated that we have seen downward trend in Science performance while maintaining scores that are higher than the state average. Dr. Schaper indicated the special education subgroup finally surpassed the state average in 2013 in mathematics.

Dr. Schaper stated that in ELA we need to help our third graders. She explained to the committee that right now a significant number of students in this school district attend only a half-day kindergarten program. This means they receive 500 hours less instruction than students who attend the full day program. If the district is to improve grade 3 results, the district must consider implementing a full day kindergarten program for all students. .

The English Language Arts 4th grade students in West Boylston had the third strongest in the state of Massachusetts at 82%. Dr. Schaper stated this is remarkable growth for an entire group of students and this kind of growth is always attributable to excellent standards-based teaching. Dr. Schaper said the High School was scored in the top 15% for growth this year.

Mr. Shaw asked if there was a way to tell if the scores were in relation to the School Choice Program

MCAS Report

as this question has been around for some time.

Dr. Schaper indicated that her top smart goal for the year is to increase the percentage of students scoring advanced or proficient on MCAS by 5% by June 2014.

Mr. Owanisian gave Dr. Schaper credit for putting in such a specific measurement.

Ms. Breen made a motion to accept the West Boylston Public Schools District Improvement Plan for the year 2013-2014 as presented; Ms. Palumbo seconded. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Budget and Chapter 74 Subcommittees. Mr. Shaw indicated there was nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Communications Subcommittee. Ms. Palumbo stated that the student of the month from each school would be published in the Banner. She also indicated that the STEAM program and Lions Scholar Academy information had been featured in the Banner.

Mr. Owanisian stated that he started his interviews for the year by interviewing Dr. Schaper and next week he would be featuring Principal Richard Meagher.

Negotiations Subcommittee - Mr. Owanisian indicated that the teachers have ratified their contract. Dr. Schaper stated that the holdup was due to the Educator Evaluation language. The contract is now ready to be signed.

Mr. Shaw made a motion to accept the West Boylston Teachers' Contract of July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2016; Ms. Breen seconded. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Dr. Schaper stated that the contract for the Custodial staff (2013-2016) has been signed and is awaiting signatures from the School Committee.

Mr. Pedone made a motion to accept the West Boylston Custodial Contract of July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2016; Ms. Palumbo seconded. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian requested a vote to authorize an extended paid leave for a member of the teaching staff.

Mr. Shaw indicated that he had met with union representatives and that this particular teacher needed a period of time, and the sick time came into play to the maximum. Twenty days additional were needed before she could get back to work. He indicated there was no question with regards to the legitimacy of the request.

Ms. Breen made a motion to authorize the paid leave as put forth in the memo from Dr. Schaper; Mr. Pedone seconded. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Policy Subcommittee regarding the Homework Policy. Ms. Breen stated that a meeting was held to update the policy and a survey was sent out – about 280 responses were gathered. The subcommittee found that the majority of the responses for certain grades were in similar thought processes. Ms. Breen asked for feedback regarding the survey from the School Committee. Ms. Breen indicated it was their desire to get teachers, administrators and parents on the same page with regard to homework.

Mr. Pedone stated that Kindergarten was not listed on the policy; therefore, did that mean that

District Improvement Plan

Subcommittee Reports

homework for that grade could not be assigned? Ms. Breen stated it did not; it just meant that it was not mandatory.

Mr. Owanisian asked if these homework times were guidelines or mandatory. Ms. Breen indicated that that is what they were concerned about. She stated that what we don't want to happen is for the students to have too much homework, making it an extremely negative and frustrating experience for everyone. She indicated that what is being proposed is if the child has an expectation of 20 minutes of homework per night and if the child has been working diligently for 20 minutes and can only get through half of the assignment, a parent has the right to make the decision to sign that homework – draw a line and say – my child worked for 20 minutes and this is what they were able to accomplish. The teacher would know that the child had met the requirement for homework but that that child really could not complete it.

Ms. Breen cautioned adding requirements to the homework policy versus just having the teacher, parent or child realize the homework situation is going down a road that could become negative and teacher/parent just have an open line of communication as to what is going on with homework.

Ms. Palumbo indicated that is exactly why she thinks those requirements should be listed as policy, for when either the teacher or the parent feels that it's unjust and they look at the policy to see what they can do about the problem.

Mr. LaBreck indicated that in the Middle School they do have the parent sign off on the homework after the time limit has been exceeded for a student. That gives the teacher an indication that the student needs extra help. He does not believe they have an issue with parents signing things inappropriately.

Mr. Owanisian asked that Mr. Pedone's suggestion of adding Kindergarten to the list be considered and that maybe the principals could work with a designated teacher representative or two so that the people who would have to enforce the policy would have the ability to have some say in the policy implementation. .

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the School Building, Technology, and Transportation Subcommittees – Committee members indicated there was nothing new to report at this time.

Communication and Reports

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the elementary school principal. Mr. Meagher indicated there was a great turnout for the open house on the 19th followed by a tremendous turn out for the PTA in the library. He stated both staff and students have been doing incredibly well with a number of assessments such as Dibels, Fountas and Pinnell. Mr. Meagher listed upcoming events for Major Edwards to include: Cyber Bullying Presentation, Vision and Hearing Screening and the PTA Book Fair.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Middle School Principal. Mr. LaBreck thanked Mr. Brian Stefanelli and the Middle School Band as they have played at both of the home football games and the recent pep rally. Mr. LaBreck asked that the School Committee vote to approve the funding for the Washington, D.C. trip from April 29th to Friday, May 2, 2013 at a cost of \$725 per student which is \$15 more than last year (a result of fewer students in the 8th grade class than last year). Mr. Shaw made a motion to approve the cost of the Washington, D.C. trip for the 8th grade; Mr. Pedone seconded. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the High School Principal. Mr. Murphy stated the sophomores received their class rings, seniors were measured for cap and gowns, and homecoming occurred last week. Mr. Murphy mentioned that we had a special visitor to our schools, Secretary of Education Matthew Malone. Mr. Malone was very impressed with our students and visited

classrooms as well as the STEAM room.

Mr. Owanisian asked Ms. Traina if she had anything new to report. She indicated she did not.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Business Administrator. Mr. Pontbriand directed the Committee's attention to the September 30, 2013 Expenditure report in their School Committee packets along with a summary of the year ended June 30, 2013 report. Mr. Pontbriand stated that the current financial report is not complete as all of the current encumbrances have yet to be included. He indicated that his staff is currently working on the completion of that report and the information would be provided at the November School Committee Meeting. Mr. Pontbriand indicated that the new report would include figures pertaining to School Choice and Circuit Breaker Funds. Mr. Pontbriand stated that \$27,000.00 was turned back to the town on the total 10.2 million dollars.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Superintendent. Dr. Schaper indicated the district completed work on the state required District Determined Measures. She expressed gratitude for the work of Sheila Tetler, David Gustafson, Kelly Ouellette, Dawn Suire, Denise Levesque, Susan Penney and their principals.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the School Committee members. Mr. Pedone, Mr. Shaw and Ms. Palumbo indicated they had nothing new to report at this time.

Ms. Breen stated that WestBEST would be hosting the alumnae breakfast on October 19th in the Middle/High School cafeteria. All alumnae and their families are welcome and the breakfast is free.

Mr. Owanisian stated the School Committee retreat would again be scheduled to take place probably sometime during February vacation. He hopes to work with the committee on refining the Data Dashboard and working on making the mission statement more concise.

At 9:27 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Owanisian that the committee go into to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to non-union personnel, returning to open session only to adjourn, Mr. Shaw seconded; **Voted on a roll call Mr. Pedone-yes, Mr. Shaw-yes., Mrs. Breen-yes, Mr. Owanisian-yes, Mrs. Palumbo-yes.**

Motion to adjourn was made at 10:40 by Mrs. Breen, seconded by Mr. Shaw **Voted: 5-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Johnson
Recording Secretary

Executive Session

Adjournment