

PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
MARCH 12, 2014
7:00 P.M.
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PRESENT: D. Smith, Chair, A. Lemieux, K. Barry, P. Migneault, C. Haskell, R. Benoit, M. O'Neil, C. Hull, K. Di Pietro, Superintendent; R. Lussier, Business Manager, K. Curran & A. Thomas, Student Representatives; B. Salisbury, Sterling Representative, T. St. Amour, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL: Taken silently by the Board Secretary.

3. CONSENT AGENDA:

MOTION: Ms. Barry moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

SECOND: Ms. Haskell

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- The Minutes of the Meeting of February 12, 2014
- The Minutes of the Special Meeting of January 13, 2014

4. COMMUNICATIONS:

- NEASC Communication: Mr. Di Pietro stated that he received a letter from NEASC regarding the accreditation at Plainfield High School. He said that they listed some of the commendations that they felt the high school has earned along with a few recommendations that they would like to see enacted.
- Complaint Status: Mr. Smith said that they received word from the state office that they will continue further with the investigation. He said that this does not infer that any discrimination has taken place, only that they are looking into the matter.
- Request from Plainfield Police Union: Mr. Smith said that the police union is having their fundraiser. They would like the school to purchase an ad for their program for \$195. He noted that they only fundraise once every three years.

MOTION: Ms. Haskell moved to purchase an ad for the police fundraiser for \$195.

SECOND: Ms. Lemieux

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

5. PERSONNEL:

A. Appointments & Resignations: Mr. Di Pietro stated that he has received some letters of resignation for the purpose of retirement from the following teachers.

Nancy Emmi - PHS English Teacher

MOTION: Mr. Benoit moved to accept the letter of retirement from Nancy Emmi.

SECOND: Ms. Lemieux

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Robert Stellmaker - Special Education Teacher at Plainfield Memorial School

MOTION: Ms. Barry moved to accept the letter of retirement from Robert Stellmaker

SECOND: Mr. Benoit

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Mr. Di Pietro also informed the board that a letter of resignation had been received from Ms. Ericka O'Connell. Ms. O'Connell is presently a science teacher at Plainfield High School.

MOTION: Mr. Benoit moved to accept the letter of resignation from Ms. O'Connell.

SECOND: Ms. Barry

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Mr. Di Pietro presented the board with three teachers that received letters of non-renewal. He stated that the non-renewals were due to the fact that they were hired to replace a teacher that was out on leave. Their current position will not be available to them next year upon the return of the permanent teacher. Mr. Di Pietro said that they are welcome to apply for any vacant positions that may open. The three teachers receiving non-renewal letters were:

Danielle Fratoni

Candace Anderson

Bethany Croxton

MOTION: Mr. Benoit moved to approve the non-renewals presented to the Board.

SECOND: Ms. Barry

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

B. Request for Leave of Absence: Ms. Marybeth Kerr presented a letter requesting a leave of absence for the purpose of childrearing to the Board. She will begin her maternity leave on April 9th and would like to remain on leave for the remainder of the 2013-2014 school year.

MOTION: Ms. Barry moved to approve the request for childrearing leave for Marybeth Kerr.

SECOND: Ms. Lemieux

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

6. PUBLIC FORUM:

A. Public Forum/Agenda Items: Mr. Peter Coffey came forward to ask if a discussion of the 2015 budget would be on the agenda this evening. He was informed that the Board would be voting to approve the budget this evening. However, the budget will be presented at the public hearing for the town to express their interest and concerns with the budget.

B. Recognition of Natural Helpers: Mr. Worth spoke to the Board about the Natural Helpers group that is at the high school. He asked Mrs. Joyce Rice to come forward as the group's adviser to present to the board. Ms. Rice asked each of the member of the group to give brief description of what the group does. The Board was informed that the Natural Helpers are engaged in helping students and the community. They help new students become acquainted with the school, participate in career day, support the troops and help with the local Project Pin.

C. Student Liaison Report: Kendra reported that she and Alexandra attended the Day on the Hill sponsored by CAFE. She stated that they were able to listen to Governor Malloy and spoke with Representative Mae Flexer. Much of the day was regarding the Common Core.

Alexandra informed everyone that the National Honor Society will be holding a supper next Thursday. The Debate Team pair has made it to the State Championship and the cheerleaders took first place at Nationals. The soup bowl fundraiser will be held at the high school on March 27th. She also stated that the PIMA pageant will be held on March 29th.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Monthly Budget Report & Facilities Update: Mr. Lussier indicated that the Board was provided with their monthly report. He said that currently the district is on target for the end of the year and running under budget. He said that they are anticipating that the legal services budget will run over, however, the health insurance and fuel accounts are running approximately \$80,000 under budget and should cover that over run.

Mr. Lussier stated that there was a leak in the roof over the kitchen at Plainfield Central School. It has been repaired. He also noted that the district is getting rid of some outdated and non-useful items that have been kept in storage. He said that some of the items have a potential to be donated, but most will just need to be scrapped.

MOTION: Ms. Haskell moved to sell, donate or scrap the items that are no longer useful.

SECOND: Ms. Barry

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

B. Special Education Report: Mr. Klimkiewicz informed the board that due to staff leaves, they have been having difficulty finding staff to fill some speech, social work and OT/PT services. They have been able to contract out for those services at this time. He said that the PACT group has been having some great meetings including a presentation by Mr. Di Pietro on brain based parenting. He said that the April meeting will be related to mental health issues. He noted that the paraprofessionals have completed their six sessions of professional development. He said that the State department met with the district to review our action plan with regard to our drop out rate of special education students. He said that our data is improving and the state is pleased with our plan.

C. Capital Improvement/Bond Update: Mr. Di Pietro stated that he has reached out to EASTCONN to talk with the person responsible for handling the bond project of their new building. He said that they are willing to work with us to guide us through the process. Mr. Sweet stated that the Town has begun to put together the financial statements for the project. He noted that Moody's has assigned the town a bond rating of Aa3, which is very good. The Board of Selectmen has appointed the members of the building committee. He said that an ex-officio member of the Board of Education needs to be appointed to the committee. Mr. Smith stated that he has assigned Ms. Kathleen Barry to that position.

D. Adoption of 2015 Budget Proposal: Mr. Di Pietro stated that the Board has already developed the new budget. At this time, the Board needs to approve the submission of the budget to the Board of Finance. He said that there will be a Public Hearing with regard to the budget on the first Monday in May.

MOTION: Ms. Barry moved to submit the approved budget to the Board of Finance.

SECOND: Mr. O'Neil

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

E. Discussion Regarding Performance of a Public Official: The Board's attorney, Anne Littlefield, stated that the Board had met previously to review the report of the independent investigator but Mr. Benoit was not able to be present at the meetings. Mr. Benoit stated that he has read the report and stated that he is disturbed by the fact that it cost \$15,000 to conduct the investigation. He said that he agrees that there have been some issues with his conduct. Mr. Benoit said that he was not looking for special treatment when he asked for his daughter's CMT results. He said that he was informed by an administrator that he could request that of the superintendent.

Ms. Littlefield said that there were no recommendations by the investigator that Mr. Benoit resign from the Board. She informed the Board that they should reflect on what Mr. Benoit had to say and consider the conclusion and recommendations of the investigator when making their decisions on the matter.

Mr. Sweet said that the Board should be careful when using emails and texts to communicate.

He noted that all of that information becomes public when situations arise. He said that it is not appropriate behavior for a member of the board to send the superintendent over 400 emails.

Based on the information provided the Board had the following resolutions:

1. The Board finds that Mr. Benoit's conduct was unprofessional and inappropriate and that he has violated Board policies.
2. The Board directs Mr. Benoit to cease and desist from any further communications that violate Board policies.
3. The Board authorizes the Board Chair to schedule Board training for the Board on Board policies, agendas, public fora, communication styles and techniques.
4. The Board refers the matter of development of a Board Handbook to the Policy Committee.
5. The Board directs Mr. Benoit or anyone else involved in the investigation process to refrain from any retaliatory activities against Mr. Di Pietro and/or anyone who participated in the investigation and/or resolution of the complaint.

MOTION: Ms. Haskell moved to approve the five recommendations with #3 being voluntary.

SECOND: Ms. Lemieux

VOTE: Passed with abstentions from Mr. Smith and Mr. Benoit.

MOTION: Mr. Migneault moved to allow communication to resume between Mr. Benoit and the superintendent within the confines of Board policy.

SECOND: Ms. Lemieux

VOTE: Passed with opposition from Mr. O'Neil and abstentions from Mr. Smith and Mr. Benoit.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Budget Transfers: Mr. Lussier informed the board that he needed to perform a couple of budget transfers. One at the high school in the amount of \$5,686 for stage repairs, and one at Moosup Elementary for \$2,500 for daily supplies.

MOTION: Mr. Benoit moved to approve the transfers.

SECOND: Mr. Migneault

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

B. Healthy Food Certification: Mr. Lussier stated that this is a yearly requirement of the board. This allows the food service program to receive funds from the state department.

MOTION: Ms. Barry moved to approve the Healthy Food Certification.

SECOND: Mr. Benoit
VOTE: Passed unanimously.

C. Overview of Grants: Ms. Cadro presented the Board with a list of the grants that have been received this year. She said that they amount to \$1,751,896. She stated that it should be approximately the same amount for the next school year.

D. 2015 Calendar Adoption: Mr. Di Pietro presented the draft copy of the calendar to the Board. He said that it is basically the same calendar as the present school year. The first day of school will be on August 27th and the last day will be on June 15th. Ms. Lemieux stated that she would prefer to see fewer partial weeks of school throughout the year. She felt that it does not provide instructional continuity for the students.

MOTION: Mr. Benoit moved to approve the 2015 school calendar.
SECOND: Ms. Barry
VOTE: Passed unanimously.

E. Superintendent's Report: Mr. Di Pietro said that he has begun working with the Chromebook. He said that Mr. Smith and Ms. St. Amour were able to upload some of the content for this month's meeting and share the information between them. He is hoping to provide some training for the Board so that they may be used for the next school year.

9. STANDING COMMITTEES AND INDIVIDUAL REPORTS:

Mr. Benoit said that he attended the Eastern Region Middle School Concert. He was very impressed with the talent of the students. Twenty of the students were from Plainfield Central School. He also asked Mr. Worth if they were planning to have another day scheduled for the eighth grade students to visit the high school. Mr. Worth said that they are planning on having a tour and a step up day in June.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Mr. Migneault moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.
SECOND: Ms. Lemieux
VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy St. Amour
Recording Secretary