

Alexa Garvey, Chairwoman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the District Office Board Room, Pawcatuck, CT. Members present were Alisa Morrison, Jack Morehouse, Farouk Rajab, Craig Esposito and Heidi Simmons.

Member Absent: Candace Anderson, Board Secretary

Also present were Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, members of the staff, and interested citizens.

Communications and Recognitions

Jack Morehouse commented on the anxiety presentation adding Candace Anderson brought this issue up last spring and Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services took it upon herself and scheduled a speaker, the room was full of people it is obviously an issue we need to discuss and learn more about and it was very informative. Mr. Morehouse also communicated he attended the track meet at Yale where he was watching a long distance races and recognized one of the high school athletes Rhys Hammond who started out first and by the time he finished he had an almost a full track behind him. He is an elite athlete and awesome to watch and runs a 4.24 mile, "Way to go Rhys" said Mr. Morehouse.

Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent recognized Deans Mill School who for the second year in a row has been identified by the State Department of Ed as a school of distinction. Last year it was recognized for high academic performance, and this year it has been recognized for all students in high growth in mathematics and English. They were also recognized for high growth in high needs students, ELL, students with disabilities and students that are eligible for free and reduce lunch for high growth both in reading and math, congratulated Jenn McCurdy and her whole team. Mrs. Butler also spoke about Stonington Middle School whose proposal has been accepted by the New England League of Middle Schools. Mr. Smith and his team will be presenting a session on March 9th at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, titled Enhancing Learning Opportunities through the Encore Classes. She added that the particular structure he and his team have created is getting attention in and outside of the state. We hope to take that to DC with some Fulbright friends soon.

Chairwoman Garvey thanked Gary Shettle for attending the Board of Finance meeting on February 5th, it was greatly appreciated. She thanked him for answering the questions they had provided, this helps bridge our communication gap, puts us working forward with them and improving our communication. She also reported Candace Anderson is home from the hospital, she had surgery yesterday it went well, we send our thoughts and prayers to her.

Comments from Citizens

John Thornell, girls' varsity crew coach for the high school gave an overview of his time with the program, how the program works, cost and needs of the program. He shared a handout with the Board that summarized the program. He added that the program usually has about 60-80 students who participate. He spoke on the cost involved to participate, fundraising, and scholarships. He voiced his concern regarding the need for a fourth coach and a replacement of a rental truck to transport the equipment. He asked the Board for their assistance in the funding of a fourth coach and funds for a rental truck. Chairwoman Garvey noted that the coaches are a stipend position in the teachers' contract which the Board has no control over and that contract negotiation was just completed.

Rob Simmons thanked all the Board members for the hard work they do. He thanked Coach Thornell for bringing us up to date on the crew information. He spoke on the ratio of funding that the organization provides in relation to what the district contributes to the sport. He voiced his concern and had photos of the existing condition of the truck that is being used by the program to transport equipment. He suggested the Board start a sports committee to look at the long term issues that we have in our sports programs. He urged the Board to approve the \$2,800 funding of the rental truck for the high school team for the remainder of this fiscal year 19-20 and \$4,200 of funding for next year 20-21.

Rachel O'Dell a paraprofessional in the district commented on the para job description and added that beyond that job description there are some paraprofessionals who have specialized training. She feels they have been put on the back burner. She asked that the Board think about what paraprofessionals are worth in the classroom and other areas of the schools and how they can help with the contact negotiations this year.

Consent Agenda

A. Minutes -January 9, 2020

January 16, 2020

January 23, 2020

January 27, 2020

B. Checks and Bills - January

C. Personnel Report

D. Transfers

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Heidi Simmons:

Motion 1: To approve the consent agenda items A-D as submitted.

All Aye

Curriculum Second Read/Approval

Grade 6 ELA

Algebra II

Encores:

Bells of Fire

Engineering by Design

Music Technology

International Sports & Games

Uncracking History's Mysteries

Chairwoman Garvey asked the Board if they had any questions on any of the Curriculum listed. The Board had no questions.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Alisa Morrison:

Motion 2: To approve the curriculums as presented.

All Aye

Monthly Reports

The Board had no comments on the monthly reports.

Committee Reports

The Board had no comments on the committee reports.

2020-2021 Budget Approval

Heidi Simmons thanked Coach Thornell for an excellent introductory presentation. She added what he presented reveals an obvious imbalance in the organization of the sport which will have a negative impact on students and is what we the Board need to be concerned with. She noted if the first step is to ask that funds be put in the budget to rent a dependable truck then it is the Board's responsibility to do that.

The following motion was made by Heidi Simmons and seconded by Jack Morehouse:

Motion 3: To approve funding for a rental truck for the Stonington Crew team for \$2,800 for the remainder of this fiscal year 2019-2020 and \$4,200 in the fiscal year 2020-2021.

The Board discussed the motion.

Alisa Morrison commented on her concern of doing a budget transfer of the funds in this budget year. She also noted we need to look at athletics as a global thing. She spoke on perhaps forming an athletic committee like in years past to look at all the athletic funding and fundraising. She voiced she does not feel we should single out one team, there are issues with all sports. We need to look at all the athletic teams as a whole. Jack Morehouse spoke about crew and drama program which are two exceptional programs and how much money they have raised, and felt that if he were to see them on the side of the road broken down and we have not supported them after they have raised \$102,000 he believes it would be shameful. Heidi Simmons spoke that this a pressing issue of safety. Mary Anne Butler spoke there are two different pieces to this issue there is the immediate action that we can bring this back to the Cabinet or Finance and Facilities Committee level for discussion, but that is this year's budget which is not on the agenda this evening. She added next year's budget is on the agenda and you are charged to move the budget at a 2.88% or did the Board want to add \$4,200.

The Board members discussed the idea of moving funds in this year's budget. Craig Esposito expressed it is premature we don't know what our budget is going to be and didn't have the opportunity to look at the bigger picture as our perspective as a Board. Mr. Esposito believes it would be better to look at the larger picture of the athletic expenses and then make a reasonable decision. Farouk Rajab noted he would be happy to take this concern to the Finance/Facilities Committee and address the safety issue of the equipment if that helps make a resolution and the decision to withdraw the motion being discussed. Mrs. Simmons voiced we have responsibilities when we see there is something not working for our children, we need to act on it.

The following motion was made by Heidi Simmons and seconded by Jack Morehouse:

Motion 4: To withdraw Motion #3, (To approve funding for a rental truck for the Stonington Crew team for \$2,800 for the remainder of this fiscal year 2019-2020 and \$4,200 in the fiscal year 2020-2021).

All Aye

Chairwoman Garvey commented she will bring this topic to the Finance/Facilities Sub-Committee and will be placed on March's agenda for discussion.

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Alisa Morrison:

Motion 5: To approve the 2020-2021 Education Budget as presented.

All Aye

The Board took a set up break at 7:32 p.m.

Chairwoman Garvey noted the Board will take a short break then come back for the discussion on the independent investigation.

Chairwoman Garvey called the meeting called to order again at 7:40 p.m.

Discussion/Direction Regarding Independent Investigation with Nick Caruso CABA Representative

Chairwoman Garvey thanked Nick Caruso, CABA representative for helping in moderating this difficult topic. We will be looking at a possible rubric, scope and investigators. Mr. Caruso asked the Board to come up with ideas for the scope. Each Board member shared their ideas and concerns. The Board with the help of Mr. Caruso narrowed down ideas for a scope as follows:

Stonington Public Schools Board of Education calls for an independent investigation to examine the following:

- What Happened
- Policies and Procedures correct and followed
- Where, what did the communication breakdown and why did it breakdown
- Identify potential climate contributed issues

The Board discussed their options for investigators and what type of knowledge and background the investigators should hold. The Board came to a consensus on three firms who they would bring forward for interviewing; Attorney Paula Anthony, Attorney Christine Chinni and Joseph A. DeLuca Advisory and Consulting Services. The Board discussed the expense of the investigation and timeline for the interviewing. Chairwoman Garvey will reach out to the three firms with dates for the interview.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Action on this Agenda

Faith Leitner thanked the Board for the workshop, this is a good step in transparency. She suggested adding one more bullet point to the scope list. She said when you have volunteers such as staff members talk to who is running the investigation that they should feel there won't be any repercussions from what they have to say. She also noted that staff members might be worried about whether their job is in jeopardy or not. She wants them to feel safe that they are able to talk and that administration will not have something to do with them in the future. She also asked for an update regarding the report from Ms. Egan.

Board Comments/Concerns

Jack Morehouse agreed with Mrs. Leitner that her question was a very legitimate question and a great one. Chairwoman Garvey will propose that to the investigators, they will find a way to keep the names anonymous for students and adults. Farouk Rajab added we can propose to the investigator the concept of power, permission and protection. He explained, the power to speak, give them the permission and the protection.

Chairwoman Garvey spoke on agenda items for the March meeting, such as the young lady from West Vine Street School who is from the Governor's Committee who will be speaking to the Board; will add the Athletic Committee and Alisa Morrison will give background on the committee which may cover athletics and activities. Chairwoman Garvey noted that March 10th is the Board of Education's presentation to the Board of Finance. Heidi Simmons asked if the Board had any jurisdiction over the paraprofessional contract. Chairwoman Garvey responded no, the Board is not part of that negotiation.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 6: To adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

Candace Anderson, Secretary