

Ashford Board of Education  
Special Meeting Minutes – April 3, 2014  
7:30 p.m.

*Note: Per C.G.S. §10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.*

**Call To Order**

Board chair J. Rupert called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Present were J. Lippert, K. Warren, J. Rupert, K. Rourke and D. Wesson. Member L. Donegan joined the meeting (7:57 pm) via telephone. Also present was Superintendent J. Longo, Principal T. Hopkins and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Present in the audience was Board of Finance Chair, C. Silver-Smith, several residents and members of the Ashford Education Association. Unable to attend was board member, B. Supina.

**Collective Bargaining Strategy (Non-Meeting)**

**a. Review of Attorney-Client Privilege Material**

Chair J. Rupert announced that the board would be leaving the meeting briefly to engage in a non-meeting to discuss attorney-client privileged communication received today concerning collective bargaining strategy. The expectation was that the board would be absent from the room for approximately 20 minutes and the meeting would resume upon return.

A member of the audience asked if this meeting was actually an executive session. The chair responded that upon advice of counsel, the matter should be considered in a non-meeting setting. It was anticipated that board member L. Donegan would participate in the non-meeting via telephone.

All board members present at call to order, Dr. Longo and Mr. Hopkins exited the library at 7:35 pm. All of the board members noted as present, Dr. Longo, and Mr. Hopkins re-entered the meeting at 7:55 pm. It was reported that Mrs. Donegan was able to participate in the non-meeting via conference call and would be calling back any moment to join the board meeting.

**b. Action**

Motion made by D. Wesson to accept the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Plan, with the dollar amounts as proposed by the AEA and as edited by board counsel. Motion seconded by K. Warren. Discussion ensued. Dr. Longo gave a verbal summary to the audience of the early retirement plan incentive that was offered. The AEA had spoken with Dr. Longo to request board consideration of an early retirement incentive plan. Atty. Anne Littlefield, board counsel was contacted, an offer was created, and discussion with the AEA and successive counter proposals ensued. An initial offer by the board of \$12,000 to partake in the early retirement plan incentive was counter offered by the union to \$15,000, and payable in two installments on or before June 30, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

There being no further discussion, the chair called for a vote. The motion carried unanimously with member L. Donegan casting her vote via telephone.

AEA Co-Presidents M. Connolly and J. Lindsay approached the chair and requested they be allowed to read a letter that may impact any decisions the board makes this evening.

Motion made by D. Wesson to add the reading of a letter by the AEA to the agenda, seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously. All members of the AEA rose while Mrs. Connolly read the letter (attached) asking the board to consider reinstatement of positions reduced in the current proposed budget.

**Personnel**

**a. Review of Superintendent's Salary**

Dr. Longo had submitted a letter to the board that was read at the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. The letter stated that Dr. Longo was offering not to accept a salary increase for 2014-2015.

**b. Action**

J. Rupert made a motion to accept the generous offer made by Dr. Longo, seconded by K. Rourke. Discussion followed. Member L. Donegan stated her appreciation of that offer, and J. Lippert thought that it should be known that Dr. Longo received a positive evaluation from the board, and that a 2.9% raise as was afforded to other members of the administrative and support staff was appropriate. Dr. Longo said that he felt in part it was "his turn" to bypass a wage increase as the teachers had done in the past, and as his salary is usually a lightning rod, he thought it was best to waive any anticipated increase. The board thanked Dr. Longo for his offer. There being no further discussion, the chair called for a vote. The motion passed with the following vote:

Yes: J. Lippert, K. Rourke, K. Warren, J. Rupert and L. Donegan. No: D. Wesson

## **2014-2015 Budget**

### **a. Final Review**

Following extensive review of the FY 15 proposed budget at two recent meetings, it had been determined there was \$30,499 available for reallocation within the budget proposal. Based on public concern and input, the board has stated its commitment to making restoration of positions a priority. Rather than taking action on reallocation of these funds at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, action was tabled until this evening.

### **b. Action**

Motion made by D. Wesson that following the open enrollment period, the early retirement closing date and the referendum, these funds would be reallocated to restore reductions made to the art and health positions. Motion seconded by J. Lippert. Discussion followed, K. Warren expressed her preference that the positions be restored in reverse order, health first, then art. Discussion followed resulting in D. Wesson withdrawing his motion. J. Lippert withdrew his second.

AEA Co-President J. Lindsay asked if she might address the board with some new information that may be pertinent to the budget discussion. J. Lippert made a motion to allow J. Lindsay to address the board, seconded by K. Rourke and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Lindsay deferred to AEA member A. Porri to read a worksheet (attached) with calculations containing potential savings that may be found if at least 2 current members opt to accept the retirement incentive voted upon earlier in the meeting.

Motion made by D. Wesson as follows: Contingent upon available funds after the close of open enrollment, referendum and retirement incentive deadline, the art and health positions be restored, in that order. K. Warren seconded the motion, and discussion followed. K. Warren re-stated that her preference would be health, then art, as health education is mandated and while all of the positions are important, they are not mandated. L. Donegan agreed with Mrs. Warren, and stated that public feedback supports that order of restoration. Other board member concurred. The funds revealed by the review would support the restoration of both of these positions.

D. Wesson amended his motion to include that upon restoration, the art and health curriculums be reworked from STEM oriented to a STEAM based focus, and to provide necessary time to rewrite curriculum, with board oversight. K. Warren seconded the amended motion. Discussion followed. J. Lippert agreed with that focus and stated that the amount of instructional time in health would see the largest impact of any of the staff reductions, and that health should have its own classroom. Other members were in agreement and directed the administration to locate classroom space for health education for next year.

D. Wesson agreed with J. Lippert and amended his motion as follows: \$30,499 would be reallocated to the restoration of positions in the order of health and then art, with administrative and staff focus on creating a schedule with a STEAM curriculum concept in health and art; contingent upon the passage of the period of open enrollment, the early retirement incentive deadline, and the budget referendum. Seconded by K. Rourke and carried unanimously.

### **Persons to be Heard**

Audience member Steve Morytko again stated that he had received some further information from the district office earlier in the day and reiterated concerns about the group insurance line and still thinks more savings could be found. He suggested that if any funds are found after the board reviews the current budget be placed in the 1% fund for salaries for next year. The chair reiterated that he had stated at a prior meeting that this was not a proper use of the 1% fund. From the audience, Board of Finance Chair Silver-Smith agreed. J. Lippert thanked Mr. Morytko for the time he has spent reviewing the budget figures on his own time.

C. Silver-Smith addressed the Superintendent's salary. Discussion centered on whether or not additional savings could be found here. The business office will be directed to review information on page 9 of the Superintendent Budget Analysis. If these additional funds are in that salary line, they would be added to funds already identified for the purpose of restoration. Mrs. Silver-Smith stated her appreciation of the effort the board has taken in its review of the budget and encouraged the board to step back and take a creative look and consider a three-year plan. Town Treasurer Cheryl Bowen was in the audience and noted that \$68,597 in excess cost funds had been received and have been applied to reduce special education overages in the current budget.

Audience member Rebecca Haeger said that she felt as though the board had acted to restore the positions, and now the board was saying that it would consider restoration?

The board chair responded that while the positions are not yet restored; the board's intent is to restore the reductions to health and art using the funds identified during the recent review of the budget after the deadline dates for the retirement incentive, open enrollment period and the referendum have passed.

As the board has stated its commitment to review position restorations, any further discussions concerning this matter will be considered by the board at a later date.

Member L. Donegan exited meeting participation by phone at 8:46 pm.

### **Communications**

The board received an invitation to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Small Ensemble Concert on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Any proceeds received from the concert will be donated to "Horns for Kids" a non-profit program that provides funding for musical instruments for children with financial hardships.

### **Approval of Minutes: 02/18/14; 03/20/14; 03/27/14**

Motion to approve the special meeting minutes of 02/18/14 made by J. Lippert with a correction to the misspelling of "Rouke" to "Rourke" in the executive session roll. Motion seconded by K. Rourke and carried with one abstention (K. Warren).

Motion to approve the special meeting minutes of 03/20/14 made by J. Lippert with spelling corrections throughout of "*Mortyko*" to "Morytko". Motion seconded by D. Wesson and carried with one abstention (J. Rupert).

Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of 03/20/14 made by J. Lippert, seconded by J. Rupert and carried with one abstention (J. Rupert).

Motion made by D. Wesson to approve the minutes of the special meeting held in the district conference room on 03/27/14. Motion seconded by K. Rourke and carried with one abstention (J. Lippert).

Motion made by D. Wesson to approve the minutes of the special meeting held in the library on 03/27/14. Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

The recording secretary notes that teacher Mark Phelps was unable to provide a copy of the letter he read at this meeting, rather it should be noted that he read aloud a personal statement.

### **Committee Reports**

None

### **Administrative Reports**

#### **a. Superintendent**

Dr. Longo thanked the board on behalf of the administration for all of their hard work during this budget process, for their acceptance of the early retirement incentive and statement of support for curricular improvements. He appreciated the suggestion by the Board of Finance concerning a three-year plan of vision; the administration will be creating a framework for implementation of that vision with board input and oversight. He and Mr. Hopkins will revisit classroom space and should not have difficulty locating classroom space for everyone as tentative plans are to use the current health classroom for a STEM lab.

### **Old Business**

#### **a. Minimum Budget Requirement**

The chair asked Dr. Longo to provide an update on this matter. Counsel has been contacted for final review, but Dr. Longo sees no concerns and this will be completed no later than the close of business on Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. J. Rupert will be notified upon recertification of the data, and he in turn will advise the chair of the Board of Finance that it has been completed.

### **New Business**

#### **a. Non-Certified Staff Resignations**

Dr. Longo has received two resignations. Part time custodian Melvina Macha has resigned effective March 24<sup>th</sup> to take a new position and driver Marilyn Rossi has resigned effective immediately.

Motion made by J. Lippert to accept the resignations of Melvina Macha and Marilyn Rossi. Seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously.

#### **b. 2014-2015 School Calendar Revision**

Motion made by J. Rupert to table this agenda item until the next regular meeting. Seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

### **Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items**

The next meeting date is April 17<sup>th</sup>. The Board's finance committee will meet at 6:30 prior to the regular meeting.

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at (9:13 pm) made by D. Wesson, seconded by J. Rupert and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau  
Recording Secretary