

REGULAR MEETING OF THE GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

TIME: January 25, 2007, 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Glenville School

PRESENT:

Board: Mrs. Colleen Giambo, Chairman
Mrs. Leslie B. Moriarty, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Nancy Weissler, Secretary
Mr. Steven B. Anderson
Mr. Michael C. Bodson
Ms. Virginia L. Gwynn
Mr. William G. Kelly
Mrs. Nancy Weissler

Absent: Dr. Susan S. Ellis

Administration:

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Kathleen Greider, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. John P. Curtin, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Susan O. Wallerstein, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Director of Human Resources
Mr. Anthony Byrne, Director of Facilities
Mr. Richard Calcavecchio, Director of Budget
Ms. Mary P. Forde, Director, Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Kim Eves, Director of Communications

Other: Mrs. Janice Richards, President, Mrs. Nancy Chapin, Mrs. L. B. Savitz, Mrs. Julie Farynarz, PTA Council; Ms. Cathy Delehanty, GEA; Mrs. Carol Nicholson, Mrs. Marianna Ponns Cohen, Mrs. Laura McBurney, Mrs. Paula Bleakley, Mr. & Mrs. Tom Povinelli, Mr. & Mrs. Neil Augustine, Mrs. Lauren Shack, Mrs. Nella Pignataro, Mrs. Jennifer Bello, Parkway School; Mr. Marc D'Amico, Principal, Mrs. Tania Santoro, Mrs. Carol Tuite, Mrs. Deborah Haight, Mrs. Kristy Dreher, Mrs. Sue Rogers, Mr. Frank Carbino, Mrs. Cindi DelVecchio, Mrs. Claire Crocco, Mrs. Eric Craft, Mrs. Laurie Polastro, Mr. Carl Marinacci, Glenville School; Mrs. Leslie Perry, Mrs. Wendy DiChristina, Mrs. Wen Hsu, Mrs. Donna Berzulla, International School at Dundee; Mr. Bill Robbins, Mrs. Alicia Comesana-Vila, New Lebanon School; representatives from Greenwich Time and Greenwich Citizen. An attendance list is on file in the Superintendent's Office.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Giambo, Chairman, at 7:05 p.m.

After a welcome from Mr. Marc D'Amico and a chorale presentation from the students, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Moriarty to adjourn to a reception.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

The meeting returned from adjournment at 7:30 p.m.

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Moriarty and seconded by Ms. Gwynn to move Item 6.j, Action on Revised Committee Formation and Charge on RISE, to 6.a.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC HEARING

The following people spoke at the Public Hearing:

Mrs. Janice Richards, PTA Council President, addressed the anxiety within the parent community regarding the rumors that are rampant on possible school closings. She stressed the importance of a comprehensive communication plan for the RISE task force. She also requested that financial and budget implications surrounding possible resolutions of the issues be included – both long term and short term. She also indicated it would be helpful to everyone to learn what comparable suburban communities have done effectively through magnet schools, not just urban school districts. She also addressed the revised Strategic Roadmap Initiatives and how helpful it is to have a clearer sense of the direction of the district, while stating that it was a long and ambitious list. As for the RISE Committee, she thought it would be helpful to have a steering committee, as proposed, and to understand the legal issues related to the state racial balance law.

Mrs. Cathy Delehanty, GEA President, advised the Board about the NEA's Northeast Regional Conference in Boston which she recently attended. The Conference identified the following factors as critical to improving student performance: smaller classes, high quality education and teaching, parental support, and adequate resources. She also cautioned that while it was necessary to be fiscally responsible in developing solutions to the declining enrollment, the needs of students should be the first priority.

MOTON: It was moved by Mr. Bodson and seconded by Ms. Gwynn to limit the time for each speaker to two minutes.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

Mrs. Eileen Tang, Parkway PTA parent, addressed RISE by suggesting that the following options be considered: adding preschools or daycare in underutilized schools, reducing class size, moving to a K-6 or K-8 model, and introducing magnet programs. Closing schools should not be considered

Mrs. Rebecca Balikci, Parkway PTA parent, noted that the discussions about declining enrollment had intensified the anxiety level of Parkway School parents and that they need to be reassured that the RISE Committee is not starting with any preconceived notions. She also questioned how applicable the urban magnet programs that have been discussed are for Greenwich

Mrs. Marianna Ponns Cohen, Parkway parent, asked why only four schools were being singled out as part of the RISE Committee charge and focus. In light of RISE, she also questioned the wisdom of the plans to continue with the Glenville renovation.

Mrs. Anna Porricelli, Parkway parent, commented that she thought the decline in enrollment was a result of a decline in the quality of education in Greenwich. She encouraged the District to consider the options of magnet programs and preschool.

Mrs. Wendy DiChristina introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) for Greenwich Committee, which comprises parents, teachers, administrators and community members. Their purpose is to advance the IB program at the elementary school level and introduce it in middle schools and high school, as well.

Mrs. Wen Hsu, Chair of the IB for Greenwich Committee, addressed the same issue.

Mrs. Nancy Chapin and Mrs. Lisa Beth Savitz, Co-Chairs of the PTA Council ALP Committee, requested that ALP parents and ALP administrator be involved in the selection of the consultant who will review the program. They also favored a rigorous assessment of the performance of the District's ALP students and including both preschool and middle school ALP in the study.

Mrs. Francis Avery and Mrs. Alicia Comesani Villa, New Lebanon PTA Co-Chairs, stated that the RISE process should be an open process and not have neighborhoods be the driving force in the decision making process. They stated that communication is vital, and that the best education for all students should take precedence.

Mrs. Allison Kural spoke on the need to change school start times and urged the Board not to defer discussion and decision making on this subject.

Mrs. Kim Daine spoke on the same subject urging the Board to put this item on the agenda for discussion this school year.

Mrs. Leslie Bhutani spoke on the same subject of later start times for high school students.

Mrs. Betsey Frumin, RTM member, spoke on the importance of the Board's maintaining its independence from the Town, and her appreciation for the way the Board of Education operates.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT/SHARING INFORMATION

Reports of Officers, Committees, Liaisons, and Superintendent

Mr. Anderson reported from the Parks & Recreation Committee that the reconstruction of the retaining wall at Greenwich High School is progressing. The work is being done at no cost to us since insurance will be paying for the work.

Mrs. Weissler advised that the Greenwich Alliance recently held a fundraising breakfast targeted at the financial services sector. The Alliance will begin its program of free music lessons for elementary school students this spring and launch its early literacy programs in the fall.

Mr. Bodson advised that the Hamilton Avenue construction schedule is back on schedule. He stated that the Glenville project which has been sent to the Selectman's CIP Committee includes additional funds for geothermal heat.

Mr. Kelly reported that negotiations are starting with "little" LIUNA and they are meeting on Valentine's Day.

Mrs. Giambo announced Board Committees as follows:

Executive Committee	Mrs. Giambo, Mrs. Moriarty, Mrs. Weissler
Policy Governance Comm.	Ms. Gwynn, Dr. Ellis, Mr. Bodson
Negotiations Comm.	Mr. Kelly, Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Weissler
RISE Liaisons	Dr. Ellis, Mrs. Moriarty

She reiterated the goals of the RISE Committee are to address declining enrollment, facility utilization, and racial imbalance. The committee will develop a multi-year plan, which can be incorporated in 2008-2009 budget, as necessary. The RISE Liaisons will keep the Board advised of their progress. She emphasized that no decisions have been made and everyone will be kept informed throughout the process via the website.

Dr. Sternberg reviewed her report to the Board on her activities and school visits since her arrival. She also noted that a meeting with all the principals had been very productive and a full day meeting with the magnet schools is planned to discuss common issues.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS

j. Action on Revised Committee Formation and Charges on RISE

Dr. Sternberg reviewed the revisions to the RISE document and asked for input from the Board on the revised document. Mr. Kelly suggested changing the language in the “Results” category to “which addresses compliance” instead of “which complies” in the current document. After some discussion, it was agreed that it would read “addresses” instead.

Mr. Anderson talked about eliminating the tuition student concept from consideration. However, it was decided that this would continue to be included in the list of possible options for consideration, while noting the reservations that some Board members have. In response to questions raised by some residents about the desirability of moving forward with Glenville at this time, Mrs. Giambo advised that all school buildings must be maintained to satisfy space needs in the next upturn and that Glenville is in dire need of the renovation work.

A bullet was added to the recommended options to read “improve student achievement and work toward closing achievement gaps”.

The Board added “as well as potential for cost savings” as another consideration

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Anderson to approve the Revised Committee Formation and Charge on RISE, with the revisions made tonight.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

a. Action on 2007-2008 Board Meeting Calenda

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Anderson to approve the 2007-2008 Board Meeting Calendar.

AMENDMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Kelly to move the October 11, 2007 Board Work Session location from the Havemeyer Building to Wilbur Peck Court.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION AS AMENDED

7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

b. Action on 2008-2009 School Calendar

After much discussion about the testing dates and timing of holidays in the 2008-2009 School Calendar, it was withdrawn until Dr. Flanagan has an opportunity to work with the GEA, PTA Council and others to develop a calendar that will be brought back to the Board next month.

c. Action on Approval of Plans for Phase 1, Glenville School Renovation

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Bodson and seconded by Mr. Kelly to approve the Phase 1 plans as submitted by the architect and approved by the Glenville Building Committee.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

d. Discussion of Board Position and Possible Action Regarding Sidewalks for Mallard Drive

MOTION: It was moved by Ms. Gwynn and seconded by Mrs. Weissler to adopt the following recommendation:

“The Board of Education supports the Mallard Drive Sidewalk Construction approved by the RTM in May 2006 and encourages the Town Government to move ahead expeditiously with this construction. Mallard Drive is a major walking route for elementary students attending Julian Curtiss School and for high school students attending Greenwich High School. Completion of this project will improve safety conditions for walking students, parents and other community members.”

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

e. Review and Approval of Revised Fifteen Year Capital Plan

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Moriarty to approve the Fifteen Year Capital Plan.

The Board discussed the items included in the Capital Plan and their order of priority. It was recommended by Mr. Kelly that the High School Auditorium and Classroom project be put ahead of the Havemeyer relocation. Mr. Bodson stated his agreement with putting the auditorium ahead of the Havemeyer project.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Bodson to change the fifteen Year Capital Plan by including the \$20,000,000 for the High School Auditorium and Classroom project in 2008-2009 and the \$13 million for the Havemeyer project in 2009-2010.

In response to a question about the feasibility of this proposal, Dr. Wallerstein cautioned that it would take two years to complete the feasibility and architectural and engineering work for the Auditorium and Classroom project.

MOTION WITHDRAWN

VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION:

7 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

f. Action on Month End Financial Report 12/30/06

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Anderson to accept the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2006

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

g. Action on Request for Interim Appropriation for Electric Costs

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Moriarty and seconded by Mr. Anderson to authorize the Superintendent to request an interim appropriation to meet electricity cost overruns in the amount of \$475,847.00.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

h. Action on Transfers Exceeding \$10,000

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Moriarty and seconded by Mrs. Weissler to approve the transfers exceeding \$10,000.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

i. Action on Update on Strategic Roadmap Initiatives

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Weissler and seconded by Ms. Gwynn to approve the Update on Strategic Roadmap Initiatives.

Dr. Sternberg provided the Board with a detailed explanation of the changes in the Strategic Roadmap Initiatives. In general, the Board expressed concern that there were too many initiatives, creating too much pressure on staff with the timeline, particularly in light of the RISE Committee demands. Everyone agreed that the 21st Century Skills for the high school was an important initiative, but recommended it be included as part of a review of secondary education. Dr. Sternberg suggested that a session with Dennis Cheesebrow, a strategic planning consultant, might be helpful in establishing priorities for the District. Dr. Sternberg also introduced an updated version of the “Blue Sheet.” Board members commended Dr. Sternberg for the impressive visuals of the updated version and recommended that it be reissued once priorities had been agreed on.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Moriarty to add fifteen minutes to the meeting.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

a. Hamilton Avenue School Update – Final Elements

Mrs. Greider provided the Board with an update on the Renaissance School at Hamilton Avenue. She provided updates on the magnet theme, preschool, student selection, seat availability, transportation, overall timeline and marketing. Several Board members indicated that it would be important to provide transportation for non-neighborhood students if the school is to be successful in attracting them. It was noted that there is some inconsistency in the current transportation practices among our magnet schools. A question also arose about the rationale for the proposed priorities for non-neighborhood students.

b. Review of Request for Proposal for ALP Study/Evaluation

This item was removed from the Agenda.

BOARD CONSENT AGENDA

a. Action on Secretary's Request to Approve Minutes of December 7, December 14, and December 19 (2), 2006.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Ms. Gwynn to approve the Minutes of December 7, December 14 and December 19 (2), 2006.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

BOARD OPERATIONS PLANNING

a. Agenda Planning

It was agreed that the February 1st work session should be extended to 2-1/2 hours due to the lengthy discussion expected on the Monitoring Reports.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Bodson and seconded by Mrs. Weissler to approve the Agenda Plan, as revised.

VOTE: 7 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

The Board also discussed getting periodic updates on the RISE initiative and including a discussion of IB for the middle schools and Greenwich High School at an upcoming Board meeting.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Anderson to move into Executive Session to receive a negotiations update and to receive an update on the Superintendent's Evaluation at 10:25 p.m.

VOTE: 8 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

Upon motion duly made Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mrs. Weissler, the meeting returned to regular session at 10:45 p.m.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Weissler
Secretary