

LITCHFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 11, 2009

A regular meeting of the Litchfield Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, at the Litchfield Intermediate School art room.

Present were: Mr. Katzin, Chairperson; Ms. Carr; Mrs. Fabbri; Mrs. Reardon; Messrs. Falcetti, Gorman, Noone, Shuhi, Simone; Dr. Papallo; Ms. Della Volpe; Ms. Marinelli; Mrs. Longobucco; Mr. Buccitelli; Mr. Johnson; Mrs. Knox, members of the press and the community.

MOTION made by Mrs. Reardon and seconded by Mr. Noone: to move agenda item #8 to in between items #3 and #4.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative except Mr. Falcetti, Mrs. Fabbri, Ms. Carr and Mr. Shuhi who voted in the negative. There were no abstentions.

MOTION made by Mr. Gorman and seconded by Ms. Carr: to approve the consent agenda:

- a. Approve the Minutes of Regular meeting of January 21, 2009 and special Meeting of February 4, 2009 with the following corrections: the meeting was held in the Intermediate School Art Room, Mr. Zaremski was not present, and on page 2744 under Mr. Shuhi's report, the phrase "that has been hired regarding the lawsuit" should be changed to "retained to evaluate the project"
- b. Approve the payment of invoices and adjustments to line item expenditures for 2008-09 budget as required
- c. Approval of out-of-state field trips (Metropolitan Museum of Art – LHS – 5/19/2009 and 5/26/2009; Norman Rockwell Museum – Center grade 3 – 5/5 and 5/7/2009).

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. Mr. Shuhi abstained.

Public Comment and Correspondence

Board members reviewed the Building Committee status including the following: waiting for 3rd party report; many loose ends; punch list status; timing for taking the buildings over; problems in the buildings now; heating issues; water damage; roofing issues; kitchen problems; and need to have representatives from the Board at the Building Committee meeting.

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Ms. Egan commented on the subject of the holiday practices in the schools and read an extensive letter to the Board regarding the topic. She referred to the CAFE guidelines, commented on some poor communications from some of the administration and requested that the Board further discuss and address these issues regarding holiday practices.

Dr. Garden commented on the subject of the holiday practices in the schools and asked that there be a balance between learning and fun since children will remember these celebrations for a long time.

Ms. O'Leary commented on the subject of the holiday practices in the schools as a teacher and a parent of a student with food allergies and feels that holidays are taught in her classroom along with other cultures and instead of food handouts, students should handout random acts of kindness to observe the days.

A member of the public commented on the subject of the holiday practices and requested that along with other cultures being taught our culture should be celebrated and include all types of holidays.

Ms. McKenna commented on the subject of the holiday practices and stressed that the students should be learning about all holidays as they did in years past in order to have a personal connection.

Ms. D'Aversa commented on the subject of the holiday practices and noted that she never felt slighted in her childhood when she wore green on St Patrick's Day.

Mr. Pettinicchi commented on the subject of the holiday practices and stressed that tolerance is needed and we should not put pressure on the administration to stop holiday observations.

Mr. Scappini commented on the subject of the holiday practices and noted that if parents don't want their student to participate the burden should be placed on the parents.

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Mr. Falcetti: to move to Executive Session at 7:45 p.m. to discuss Superintendent's Contract Negotiations.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

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Executive Session

Present: All the above Board members, Dr. Papallo and Mrs. Knox.

Board members returned to Open Session at 8:15 p.m.

MOTION made by Ms. Carr and seconded by Mr. Falcetti: to authorize Mr. Katzin to enter into a contract with Deborah Wheeler in accordance with the terms of the contract that was reviewed during Executive Session earlier this evening.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

Old Business

Dr. Papallo thanked the community members for their comments regarding the holiday practices and is surprised about the miscommunication to the public. Mrs. Longobucco and others worked hard crafting a program that was consistent with the feelings of the parents. Since there seems to be such strong feelings about the holiday practices, it is suggested that a committee be started to study, review, and come up with guidelines for future holiday activities.

Board members discussed the following: input from the Board; guidelines followed by all schools; decisions made by former administration; need to come to resolution; community input; alignment with state policy; not so rigid and not so vague; recognize separation of church and state; secular traditions; reason why things changed; possible Policy Committee input; food issues; past practices; Valentine's Day issues; questions need to be reviewed in committee; ad hoc committee with Board, administrators and the public; constitutional directive; something is wrong with perception; and recommendations from the committee to be submitted to the superintendent.

New Business

Dr. Papallo reviewed the 08-09 budget as presented in three document types with a positive balance of \$5,413.

Dr. Papallo reviewed the 09-10 budget with Board members.

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Board members discussed the following: need for a monthly expense report; schools cannot go into debt; freezing and releasing funds; accounts in red and black; shifted priorities; projections for future; trends in budget; data driven decisions; transfers must be approved; some categories in the budget are easy to freeze; need to generate a report of the budget trends; need for “0” budget; February 25th possible vote on budget in order to present to Board of Finance on March 2nd.

Committee ReportsFacilities and Technology Committee

Mr. Shuhi reported that there hasn't been a meeting yet but asked for an update on the technology plan that is due to the state by June 30th. Mr. Shuhi felt Education Connection headed this issue and he asked for an update, and that the board could make comments regarding the technology plan. Mrs. Longobucco will be contacted to coordinate something. Also, an update on the bus building and Mrs. Longobucco's office is needed.

Finance Committee

Mr. Noone noted that the report was given under New Business.

Programs and Personnel Committee

Mrs. Reardon reported that a meeting will be scheduled with Dr. Papallo to put together a Superintendent's Evaluation document to present to the Board.

Board members discussed CAFE recommendations about the expectations. The new superintendent will be receiving emails of all budget and other items pertinent to the schools and will hopefully be on board on or before the first week of April. CAPSS may still have a mentor program available to help new superintendents. Dr. Papallo will help with the transition.

MOTION made by Mr. Simone and seconded by Mr. Falcetti: to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

MOTION carried. All votes were in the affirmative. There were no abstentions.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Reardon, Secretary
Joanne Bertrand, Recording Secretary