

LITCHFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 11, 2009

A regular meeting of the Litchfield Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Litchfield Intermediate School art room.

Present were: Mr. Katzin, Chairperson; Ms. Carr; Mrs. Fabbri; Mrs. Reardon; Messrs. Falcetti, Noone, Shuhi, Simone; Dr. Papallo; Mr. Buccitelli; Mr. Johnson; members of the public and the press. Mr. Gorman arrived at 7:35 p.m.

MOTION made by Mrs. Reardon and seconded by Mr. Falcetti: to approve the consent agenda:

- a. Approve the minutes of Regular Meeting of February 25, 2009 with the following correction on page 2752 the first sentence after the approval of the motion should end with, “no teachers to be let go” and not “no certified staff people being rif’d”
- b. Approve the payment of invoices ad adjustments to line item expenditures for 2008-09 budget as required
- c. Out-of-State Field Request (Six-Flags New England-Music in the Parks Festival, MA)
- d. Acceptance of Resignation(s) of Patrick Brintle (LHS Guidance Counselor) effective end of 2008-09 school year.

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

Public Comment and Correspondence

Mr. Waugh reported on the School Building Committee including the following: meetings being held once a month now; results from the engineering evaluation firm; copy available in the Central office; quality of job issues, concrete, soil, valves, heat balance etc.; agreement is near; gym roof issues not an easy fix; remediation or credit due; lawsuit update; \$212,000 contingency plan left; responsibility of the Board or the Public Works Dept.; need for detailed concrete study for future reference; and possible May date for completion of checklist.

Mrs. Fabbri reported on the STPC activities as follows: end of successful concession stand fund raising; thanks to all volunteers especially the Robotics team members; new fundraiser to begin with gourmet food and desserts to be sold.

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Mrs. Eisenhaure reported on the PTO activities as follows: a variety of cultural enrichment program funding, healthy food projects; family game nights; a special thanks to Ms. Clementson for her support and a special thanks to all the volunteers who help make all of this possible.

The following community members commented on the holiday celebration issue including the following:

Mrs. Garden distributed a 17 page handout with 11 documents included and commented on the issue of holiday celebrations in the Litchfield schools especially Center School. She commented on the following: researched findings; communications from Center School; policies made; without Board or Superintendent input; differences in the other two schools and concerns about an email from a Board member's spouse.

Mr. Garden commented: parental opinions in favor of the old way; constitutional establishment of religion is false; Jewish holiday request granted; no committee established then; issues of symbols as religious; issue of bias; need to look at things the same way; process was corrupt (not a person); and issues of being attacked.

Mrs. Brogis commented: forcing children to grow up too soon; need for them to enjoy small pleasures in life; need to be cognizant of different cultures; holidays promote giving and fellowship; and concerns about what is happening in the lower grades.

Mrs. Smith commented: why a committee has to be formed; parents didn't know changes were being made; reasons for changing how holidays were celebrated and how it was done.

Mr. Gorman arrived at 7:35 p.m.

Mr. Donnelly commented: the number of Board members that approved Yom Kippur to be added to the calendar; need to know what is going on at Center school and kids need to know their culture.

Mrs. Deering commented: how the committee members were chosen.

Mr. Olmstead commented: why was Christmas taken out of the school, it is a federally recognized holiday along with Thanksgiving; and why Board members can't answer questions made by parents.

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Mrs. Mello: need for the Board to get answers to the community in a short amount of time.

Mrs. Lutz commented: if symbols are removed then we are telling children that they are wrong, need to be culturally sensitive; need to recognize cultural minorities and our own culture for students to understand what they are.

Mr. Snow asked the Board to whom the committee will report.

Board members clarified the following: the charge of the committee is very serious; large, diverse group of people involved; recommendations will be presented and acted upon; need to go forward; Board duty is to vote on a calendar each year; holiday celebrations are not part of Board policy except that they are indicated on the school calendar; need for community opinion; and if change needs to be made the committee will put fourth that recommendation and the Board will move forward.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Papallo discussed the following: grateful that all groups are reasonable; committee will satisfy both sides regarding how holidays were celebrated and what is needed; Board is ultimate decision maker; information will be available throughout the process now that the committee has been formed; some members requested to be included; all schools are represented; Bill Burgess is chairperson; CAGE guidelines are just guidelines; no one made a concerted effort to make changes; concerns may be addressed to the chairperson; all comments made will be shared with the chairperson; and concerns may also be put in writing.

Dr. Papallo informed the Board that there are two possible dates put aside for graduation; Saturday, June 20th and Tuesday, June 23rd. The 181st day is Friday the 19th. If the weather cooperates, a recommendation will be made at the March 25th board meeting for the June 20th date at the Warner.

New Business

Board members discussed the presentation of the Board of Education 2009-2010 proposed budget to the Board of Finance on March 9, 2009 including: zero based increase; increase in transportation costs; difficulty next year coming close to zero increase budget; Board of Finance request to do more coop classes; things outside of our power; issues of consumer revenue being down; grand list down; re-evaluation affect; need to look more closely at bus routes; correlation between student population and impact on budget; possible committee

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to look into consolidation with Region 6; need for new administration to be in place; meetings held with administration from Region 6; and the new superintendent has worked at the Region 6 system and is familiar with their system.

Committee Reports

Facilities and Technology Committee

Mr. Shuhi reported that he is waiting for the completed draft from Mrs. Longobucco before setting a date to meet.

Finance Committee

Mr. Noone reported that a meeting will be scheduled to review research data gathered by Mr. Shuhi.

Programs and Personnel Committee

Mrs. Reardon reported that material for Superintendent's evaluation is being reviewed.

MOTION made by Mr. Simone and seconded by Mrs. Reardon: to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

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

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