



Tanya Lane
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR ROY ZARTARIAN

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL NEWINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT SPECIAL MEETING

Helen Nelson Room
7:00 P.M.

October 6, 2016

Board of Education Chairperson Nancy Petronio called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Town Council Attendees:

Councilor Anest
Councilor Budrejko
Councilor DelBuono
Councilor Klett
Councilor Manke
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Serra
Mayor Zartarian

Board of Education Attendees:

Mrs. Nancy Petronio – Chair
Mrs. Jane Ancona-Siegel
Mrs. Sharon Braverman
Mrs. Emily Guion
Mr. Joshua Shulman
Mr. Steven Silvia
Mrs. Cindy Stamm
Mr. Robert Tofeldt, Sr.
Mr. Paul Vessella

Staff Attendees:

Tanya Lane, Town Manager
Dr. William Collins, Superintendent of Schools
Jaime Trevethan, Asst. to the Town Manager
Debra Craig, Board Clerk

II. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS A. Discussion and Sharing of Priorities

Board of Education Chairperson Petronio thanked those in attendance and indicated that the hope is for the Council and Board to share its needs and priorities in order to identify shared priorities and common

goals. Mayor Zartarian thanked the Board for the opportunity to meet and discuss areas of common concern. He remarked that he hopes that this is the first of many sessions.

Chairperson Petronio reviewed the Newington Public School's mission, core beliefs and strategies as outlined on the attached document. She reviewed the Board of Education's priorities and progress as follows:

- Improve student achievement (making progress)
- Ensure all students are college, career and citizenship ready (making progress)
- Optimize the integration of technology into instruction (making progress)
- Increase access to early childhood education (going backward)
- Provide infrastructure and environment that fosters modern learning (making progress)
- Increase opportunities for extended and enhanced learning (going backward)
- Increase number of students who are fluent in two or more languages (no change)
- Attract, develop, support and retain professional talent (going backward)
- Continue support for the arts, athletics, and student activities (making progress)
- Recognize ability of the community to support education (making progress)
- Address State and Federal initiatives (no change)

Chairperson Petronio stated that the Board would like to discuss some of the priorities in which they are struggling to make progress. Mrs. Ancona-Siegel indicated that improving student achievement is a great need, due in part to several teachers being hired on a one-year basis. She expressed concern with increased class sizes in the future and noted that classes are already larger than projected at the elementary school. Chairperson Petronio stated that the presence of the one-year teachers may also have an impact on classroom sizes. Mrs. Ancona-Siegel remarked that even an increase of one or two students may have a negative impact on the teachers. Mr. Vessella noted that class sizes of 27-28 were an issue when he was a teacher in the 1970's; it was a concern then and took many years to bring class sizes down to an acceptable level. He expressed concern about increasing class sizes and stated that the inclusion of special needs students into the classrooms adds to the class size concerns. Mrs. Stamm indicated that the Town must provide these students with services and noted that changing demographics in the Town have affected classroom sizes. Ms. Shulman indicated that guidelines for identifying special needs have changes, resulting in an increased number of such students. Councilor Marocchini noted the large increase in students at Anna Reynolds in particular. Mrs. Stamm noted that there is also a significant increase in the number of students who have severe emotional and psychological issues; this also impacts the teacher and classrooms. Councilor Marocchini inquired as to how many teacher's positions are funded as one-year positions only. Chairperson Petronio replied that there are 16 teachers funded as one-year positions. She indicated that an autism specialist has been hired, which presents a savings. She stated that the Board would like to look into regional efforts to support special education. Mr. Shulman noted that the Transition Academy, located at Town Hall, is full to capacity and may present space issues in the future. He stated that the Town is obligated to provide services to special education students from age 3-21.

Councilor DelBuono inquired about the special education services offered to Town students. (note: Dr. Collins's response is inaudible). Mrs. Stamm also noted ESLL students' needs. Councilor DelBuono inquired about social workers. Mr. Shulman replied that there are two at the High School and two at the elementary school level and none at the middle school level. Chairperson Petronio noted that middle school-level social workers have been a need for a long time. Mr. Silvia recommended that discussions have been held with Wethersfield and Rocky Hill Boards to discuss this issue at a regional level.

Councilor Klett expressed concern about cuts to the State's budget for CREC. Mr. Shulman replied that CREC has typically raised its rates accordingly. Mr. Shulman noted that increasing early childhood education in Newington is one of the Board's priorities. He stated that a rigorous, research-based preschool has been proven to provide an advantage to young children in their overall education. He stated that 78 Newington students attend CREC preschools at no cost to the parents. He stated that should those students stay in CREC schools it will be costly to the Town. He stated that in addition, the Town is legally obligated to provide early education to special needs students and remarked that the Town falls woefully short of the ideal 1:1 ratio of special needs students and peers. He stated that the Town should look into creative solutions, for example, utilizing the Library or Senior Center campuses and should seriously consider early childhood education. Councilor Nagel remarked that the Board needs to

talk to the Senior Center and Library staff to see if they have the capacity and/or are willing to house a preschool program. Mr. Shulman acknowledged space need issues and stated that it is still in the early phases of consideration. Dr. Collins noted that legislation requires certification of preschools; they can't be opened just anywhere. Mr. Shulman stated that he envisions more of a collaboration between those departments and the schools.

Mr. Tofeldt, Chair of the Facilities Board, explained that the Facilities Board identifies priorities, funded and unfunded mandates and emergency repairs. He stated that the Facilities Board receives a list of recommended CIP projects and assigns them each a number according to priority with emergency projects being the top priority. Mr. Shulman stated that while staff is committed to performing preventative maintenance, it is becoming more difficult to do so with the newest school built in 1972 and others having been renovated as new. Mr. Tofeldt noted the efforts of the maintenance staff.

Mr. Silvia stated that his highest priority is to identify and eliminate redundancy and inquired why the Town/Board needs two IT Departments, Facilities Departments, etc. He stated that departments should be consolidated where possible and expressed fear of creating two governments. He expressed disagreement that there will be funding available from the state, recommended consolidating internally first and then looking for regional solutions. Mr. Tofeldt stated that funded and unfunded mandates make it difficult and stated that both groups must set priorities. Councilor Klett stated that the Town/Board IT Departments are different and inquired whether it is feasible to consolidate the two. She inquired about whether there are any costs and/or savings in doing so and remarked that the subject never goes anywhere. She indicated experts can be brought in to give a report on what it would take to accomplish any consolidations. Chairperson Petronio noted that a list of shared services is available on the Board's website.

Mayor Zartarian requested a list of the lesser-known unfunded mandates. Mr. Shulman replied that the unfunded mandates include:

- Student Privacy Data Act
- SRBI
- Teacher Education
- Job-embedded professional development

Dr. Collins indicated that there is a comprehensive report of unfunded mandates on the BOE website. Councilor Budrejko inquired whether area Superintendents lobby together at the State level. Dr. Collins replied in the affirmative. Councilor Nagel indicated that this was a shared concern among members at a recent CRCOG meeting.

Mr. Tofeldt gave an overview of the School Career Technical Committee's discussion of the Newington High School project. He indicated that the Committee recommends appointing Enfield Builders to complete the construction of the aerospace, biomedical and culinary academies. He stated that the item will be on an upcoming Council agenda for approval and stated that a quick turnaround is needed in order to finish the work in a timely manner.

Chairperson Petronio gave an overview of the world language program. She indicated that it was not enough to teach world languages at the middle school level on special cycle only. She indicated that the Board did a lot of research on how to best proceed and hired a World Language Coordinator, with the goal being to roll the program out to seventh graders and eventually to the elementary school level. She stated that four teachers will need to be hired in order to accommodate the seventh grade program. Chairperson Petronio stated that community feedback has been strongly in favor of language education. Mr. Shulman stated that it is important to have conversations as to why the world language program is important as well as how to enhance the program at NHS. He indicated that Central CT State University now allows dual enrollment for high school students taking world language courses, which has been an incredible benefit at no cost to the Town.

Mayor Zartarian inquired as to which languages are taught. Chairperson Petronio replied that Spanish, Latin, French and Italian are taught at the high school, with only Spanish offered at the middle schools. Councilor DelBuono asked about the cost to add the four language teachers. Dr. Collins replied that it will cost about \$71,000 per teacher. Councilor DelBuono inquired as to whether there has been any thought to use the fund balance to fund the program moving forward. Mr. Shulman replied that hiring classroom

teachers would likely be a priority and stated that it will be more difficult than normal to fund the program next year.

Mr. Silvia expressed concern over funding being reallocated from the "five pillars" of education to maintenance. Mr. Shulman explained that life and people events create breakage and a difference in salaries that cannot be planned in advance.

Chairperson Petronio indicated that the bus garages have become an issue since the newer busses don't fit in the garage and therefore have a shorter lifespan. Dr. Collins stated that it makes sense to relocate the garages since doing so will also open up space around Mill Pond Park in addition to protecting the Board's investment. Mayor Zartarian inquired whether the Superintendent has a proposed location for the new garage. Dr. Collins replied in the negative but stated that approximately 42,000 square feet of space will be required to house 60 busses. Mr. Silvia stated that a cost/benefit analysis should be performed and that the Board should continue to attempt to identify other savings. Councilor Klett stated that removing the bus garages would improve the area. She stated that this topic has been discussed since 1985 and if Town Hall were to be improve it would be foolish to leave the garages in their current location. Mayor Zartarian asked whether the relocation could be reimbursable by the State. Dr. Collins replied that a partial reimbursement is possible. Councilor DelBuono inquired whether there are any environmental/brownfields concerns with the current garages. Mayor Zartarian replied that given the history of the garages there may be environmental issues.

Councilor Budrejko inquired whether early childhood education has been explored at a regional level. Dr. Collins replied that doing so is a complicated matter; towns are not allowed to form a cooperative without State permission, which creates many challenges. Councilor Budrejko urged the Board to keep regionalization in mind and to start the discussion. Dr. Collins noted that Newington holds "gentlemen's agreements" with area towns for other educational programs such as wood and auto shops at the high school level.

Councilor Delbuono inquired as to what percentage of Newington children stay out-of-district after preschool. Dr. Collins replied that while overall magnet school enrollment has dropped from 242 to 172 they won't have the preschool numbers until next month. He indicated that there are 260 three and four-year olds living in poverty in Newington.

III. REMARKS BY MEMBERS

Councilor Klett thanked the Board and staff for arranging for the meeting. Mayor Zartarian thanked the Board and indicated that the groups will need time to consider the topics at hand. He looks forward to holding additional sessions.

Councilor Marocchini inquired whether there are staff members in place for the planned NHS Career Technical wing. Chairperson Petronio replied that only the positions related to the culinary arts program are funded at this point.

Mrs. Braverman remarked that the budget process should be more genteel and stated that this is a great beginning. Mr. Silvia thanked Mrs. Braverman for her efforts in bringing this meeting to fruition. Mrs. Guion indicated that this meeting has been very important for both groups to have a better understand of their needs moving forward.

Councilor Budrejko stated that this has been a helpful meeting. She remarked that with the many unknowns at the state and federal level that this is a good start. Mr. Shulman invited Councilors to reach out to Board members for further discussion and remarked that there is a lot of thought and rationality behind the Board's decisions.

Councilor Marocchini stated that the Board is very innovative in thinking about the future. He remarked that he hopes the Town can follow – Newington can't get stagnant because it's afraid to move forward. He stated that the Town needs to evolve its CIP budget. Chairperson Petronio agreed and stated that the groups are moving in the right direction. Mrs. Ancona-Siegel noted that there is a tremendous amount of support for education in this community.

Mrs. Stamm stated appreciation for the collaboration and noted the Board's level of strategic planning. She emphasized the need for innovation to move the Town forward. Councilor DeIBuono stated that this has been a worthwhile endeavor and noted the passion for the Town by those around the table. She recommended bringing in experts to identify priorities among the Town and Board. She stated that both groups need unbiased opinions. Councilor Klett stated that current priorities have been put in place by previous administrations and stated that potential residents look for two things: education and public safety. She remarked that Council and Board members are committed to the community.

Councilor Nagel stated appreciation for the meeting and recommended having additional meetings. He stated that the Council is genuinely concerned about education as well as about taxes and has the financial responsibility to make the difficult decisions. He stated that an understanding of the Board's wants and needs helps a great deal.

Mr. Silvia extended his gratitude to Chairperson Petronio, Mayor Zartarian and Councilor DeIBuono for holding the meeting. He asked the Council to please keep the Board informed about pressures it faces related to the budget. Councilor Anest thanked both groups for attending and stressed the importance of Council and Board Liaison attendance at the meetings.

Mr. Tofeldt stated that it is a pleasure to work with a great group of volunteers. He noted that Grandparents/Special Friends Day is coming up in the schools and asked anyone who wishes to volunteer to visit a student to contact him.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shulman moved to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Motion seconded by Mrs. Ancona-Siegel. Motion passed 18-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jaime Trevethan
Asst. to the Town Manager

Attach.

NEWINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS – WHY WE EXIST

For almost 300 years our schools have provided an education to Newington students. We are driven by a mission toward a vision for every child and grounded by shared core beliefs and values.

MISSION

The mission of the Newington Public Schools, an educational partnership of school, family, and community, is to ensure every student acquires the knowledge, skill, and attitudes to continue to learn, live a productive life, and contribute to a diverse rapidly changing society. This is accomplished within a caring environment through a planned program of quality learning experiences that challenge and encourage each individual to reach full potential.

VISION

Every Student - College, Career, and Citizenship Ready

CORE BELIEFS

- Each individual has worth and deserves respect.
- Every individual is unique and deserves recognition.
- Every individual can learn.
- Motivation directly affects learning.
- Performance is directly related to expectations.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- Effective education empowers individuals to reach full potential.
- Education expands options throughout life.
- Effective education is essential to the future well-being of our society.
- Education is the shared responsibility of student, family, school system, and community.
- Individuals are accountable for their own actions.
- The teacher's role in the education process is vital to the success of the learner.
- Family support, commitment, and involvement strengthen student learning.
- The commitment of the entire community is vital to an excellent school system.
- Success builds self-esteem; self-esteem promotes success.
- The understanding of and respect for diversity strengthens society.
- Change is inevitable and creates the opportunity to grow.
- Excellence in education is worth the investment of time, effort, and resources.
- The entire community benefits from an excellent school system



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

1. Student Growth and Performance
2. Organizational Efficiency, Adaptability, and Effectiveness
3. Safe, Supportive and Healthy Culture
4. Infrastructure and Facilities that Support Learning
5. Family and Community Engagement



THEORY OF ACTION – (Cause and effect connecting theory with action)

If we focus on refining the work of professional learning communities to strengthen the Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI) Framework, then we can expect continuous, incremental growth toward all students' college, career and citizenship ready.