

WEST BOYLSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
WEDNESDAY, December 12, 2012**

LOCATION: West Boylston Middle/High School Media Center

PRESENT: SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Owanisian, Chairman
Richard Shaw
Erin Palumbo
James Pedone

ADMINISTRATORS

Elizabeth Schaper, Superintendent
Lawrence Murphy, Principal Middle/High School
Christopher LaBreck, Associate MS Principal
Marjorie McCarthy, Principal Elementary School
Eric Bokankowicz, Technology Coordinator

COMMUNITY

Faculty & Staff:	8	Guests:	8
Student Advisors:	1	Press:	1

Mr. Owanisian opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the December 12, 2012 School Committee Meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Shaw made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular School Committee Meeting of November 14, 2012; Ms. Palumbo seconded. Motion approved. **Voted 3-0-1.**

Student Advisory Council

Rachel O'Connor advised those in attendance that the Fall Production was held on December 1, 2012 and it was a great success. Rachel also updated the School Committee on issues relating to the National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, Girls' Running Club, Student Council, Helping Paws and the Football Team's win in the Super Bowl.

Student Recognition Awards

Mr. Murphy announced the student of the month for the high school was Amy Peterson, a senior at West Boylston Middle High School, who was nominated by Mr. Todd Salmonsens.

Ms. McCarthy advised all that the student of the month for Major Edwards Elementary School was 5th grader, Sophia Croft.

Acknowledgment Of Camera Crew

Mr. Owanisian thanked the camera crew for all of their hard work.

Highlight on Schools

Teachers, Michelle Gangai, Dawn LaRocco, and Denise Lavesque presented information to the committee regarding the Major Edwards' Elementary School MCAS results.

The teachers presented information to the committee regarding MCAS performance at Major Edwards Elementary School. They stated that they had spent quite some time going over, in depth, the areas on which they needed to focus their attention. They explained that there were common threads throughout all of the grade levels and between the content areas.

The areas they are focused are the open response questions, the conventions of standard English

such as parts of speech, sentence structure, and basic writing skills. They are also working to address issues with the integration of knowledge and ideas into writing.

The 4th grade ELA scores were at the state average. Teachers indicated that there is room for improvement.

5th graders need to focus on open response questions, genre, points of view and author's purpose.

Ms. Gangai explained these efforts start with the youngest children of the school, in kindergarten, where they are building that love of reading.

Mr. Shaw indicated that at last month's committee meeting the teachers went over a new reading program, which is being implemented in the elementary schools – Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA), seemed to be a very good program.

Ms. Gangai said there is a vertical alignment between the English Language Arts program from K-5. She stated that there are no "quick fixes". We must work to help students develop the basic skills and imbed higher order thinking skills.

Ms. Palumbo asked if all teachers will be implementing the program, or just those that chose to.

The teachers explained all of them, at this point, are doing the program. They explained there are "lab teachers" who get more intense training than others.

Mr. Owanisian asked if they were to do periodic assessments, how often they would be done.

The teachers explained that it would depend on the grade.

Dr. Schaper indicated that there are different types of assessment; some measure performance against the standards that you are teaching and others are based on the national norms. Dr. Schaper stated that determining which assessments and benchmarks we measure is part of our curriculum development process that is currently underway.

Ms. Palumbo asked the teachers why they thought the third grade really suffered with regard to their MCAS results.

The teachers explained that maybe there was not enough prep work done in the past. They stated that teaching specific test strategies/concepts would help them to understand how to properly proceed in the future.

Mr. Shaw asked the teachers if there was a time when teachers could be sent to other schools who's MCAS results were much higher, to see what they were doing to get the high test scores; what types of programs they were putting into practice.

The teachers mentioned that a group of them had gone to Amesbury, where they have implemented TLA, and their MCAS scores – they were a level 4 school – and they are now quite higher. The teachers that went from West Boylston were able to see what they were doing and what's working for them in a collaborative effort.

The teachers explained the MCAS math results. They indicated that open response requires attention, as well as math skills which required more focus, such as data, measurement and fractions.

Some mistakes on the math tests were simple calculation errors.

Appointment of Business Administrator

Dr. Schaper introduced to the committee, Roger Pontbriand, applicant for the position of Business Administrator in the West Boylston Public Schools.

Dr. Schaper explained that Mr. Pontbriand is a well-established business administrator who served in the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District for more than 20 years. Mr. Pontbriand holds a Massachusetts Educator's License as a Business Administrator as well as a Bachelor's Degree and an MBA.

Dr. Schaper stated that our district is extremely fortunate to have attracted a candidate of Mr. Pontbriand's caliber for this position and she respectfully asked the committee's support to appoint Mr. Pontbriand as business administrator pending successful contract negotiations.

Mr. Owanisian asked Mr. Pontbriand how he would contrast the financial and business operation here in this district as opposed to some of the regionalized districts he's had experience with.

Mr. Pontbriand indicated that working for one town is less complex than administering a regionalized district. He stated that there would be a little bit of a learning curve here because his experience is totally from regional schools. He explained that in a regional district they do everything themselves such as payroll, health insurance and all of the accounting/bookkeeping duties. Mr. Pontbriand stated that in West Boylston these tasks are split between the town and the school district itself. He stated that Cande Kristoff has been a great help to him in orienting him to this town's processes.

Mr. Pontbriand also mentioned that there are fewer political obstacles in the budget process because there is only one town. In regional districts there can be animosity between the district and the different towns during the budget process.

Mr. Shaw stated that during his interview with Mr. Pontbriand, he found that he was very, very impressed with Mr. Pontbriand's wealth of knowledge and appreciative of his skills that he could bring to West Boylston.

Mr. Shaw made a motion to hire Mr. Roger Pontbriand as Business Administrator for the West Boylston Public Schools, Mr. Pedone seconded; **Voted 4-0-0.**

Sub-Committee Reports

Mr. Owanisian called for the report of the Budget Subcommittee. Mr. Pedone indicated to the committee that a letter they received from Mr. Murphy regarding the football team's win in the Super Bowl. A request was made to get rings for the athletes who won that game. Mr. Pedone recommended we use the Middle/High School gift account to a lot up to \$2,500.00 towards the purchase of the rings.

Mr. Murphy stated the basic cost of the ring is \$130.00. The athletes themselves would pay for any additional cost of the rings.

Mr. Pedone made a motion to allow up to \$2,500 to purchase the rings for the football teach and coach from the Middle/High School gift account; Mr. Shaw seconded; **Voted 4-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian indicated it would be nice to recognize the football team themselves at some point. Dr. Schaper stated that January of 2013 would be a good time to do so – during the highlight on schools possibly.

Mr. Owanisian stated that the marketing subcommittee met (he and Ms. Palumbo). Ms. Palumbo indicated that they met with her father, John Fitzgibbons – he’s a national advertising consultant. He works with local businesses to help them thresh out what their best avenue to market their business is. She stated that he would be of no cost to the school.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report of the Marketing Subcommittee. Ms. Palumbo stated that her father came and spent an hour or so with the marketing subcommittee and went over what might be the most beneficial to the school to pursue with relation to marketing.

Ms. Palumbo indicated she would update the School Committee further when her father gets back to her with his marketing suggestions.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report of the Negotiations Subcommittee. Mr. Shaw stated that negotiations were still ongoing with regard to the Negotiations Subcommittee and hopefully they would come to a resolution soon.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report of the Building Subcommittee. Mr. Shaw updated those in attendance regarding the School Building Subcommittee. He indicated that a few weeks prior the committee met with an engineer and the superintendent and went upon the Middle/High School roof to analyze what needs to be done as far as repairs.

They are looking to prepare a document for the Capital Investment Board for the town so that they can move forward with these repairs as soon as possible.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report of the Technology Subcommittee. Mr. Pedone reported that the Technology Subcommittee discussed the implementation of School Brains program, which is an ongoing project. The Community Portal has started in the middle school, where students and parents can review grades and assignments. People are working to get the high school student account portion set up; the goal for that would be sometime in January. In addition looking at the district website was discussed. The subcommittee asked Dr. Schaper to conduct a survey that would go out to the user community to be able to get feedback on the overall design and functionality of the website.

Communication and Reports

Mr. Owanisian called for the report from Major Edwards Elementary School. Ms. McCarthy indicated the students recently had a chorus and band concert which went very well and that she is incredibly please with the amount of students that participated in the event.

Ms. McCarthy mentioned to the committee that they recently had a half day teacher development day where teachers modeled books, and taught so well, that people were pulled into the story. She stated that the strategies are truly working and it was a bonding experience for all the teachers.

Mr. Owanisian called for the report from the Middle School. Mr. LaBreck was not in attendance so no report was given.

Mr. Owanisian called for the report from the High School. Mr. Murphy stated that today, December 12, 2012, the school did a “Day for Change”, which they’ve done for about 15 years. The new twist this year, was the students really worked on activities to ensure that the goodwill that’s built during the day for change is continued throughout the year. The students talked about courage and the courage to make the change.

Mr. Murphy wanted to thank Mr. Pat O’Connor for the posters of the football team in the front of the Middle/High School.

Mr. Owanisian called for the report from the Special Education Director. Ms. Traina updated all in attendance as to what is happening in the Special Education Department. She stated that every 6 years they undergo what is called a 4 day program review where the department comes in and reviews everything from the Special Education Policy Procedures to the homeless policies and procedures, civil rights, etc. The Department comes and goes through all of the school district files, interviews staff, administrators and checks to see if they are meeting the criteria that the state puts out on those procedures. If not, then an action plan has to be implemented to improve or meet those standards.

Ms. Traina stated that halfway through that 6 year cycle (every 3 years), they come out and do what's called a Mid-Cycle Review. During that Mid-Cycle Review they look specifically at Special Education and what we was not met, not improved upon or partially met and how far the district is with that action plan. She stated that we are currently undergoing the Mid-Cycle Review.

Ms. Traina indicated that in July she was busy preparing files that had to be electronically submitted to them on those criterias. She stated they will come out now and do an in-school visit with some additional criteria that they are looking at. Ms. Traina stated on Wednesday, December 19, 2012 she would have an orientation meeting and then there will be a team of maybe two or three reviewers that will come out and look at our files and policy/procedures. She stated that sometime following that meeting, we will then get a report.

Mr. Owanisian called for the Superintendent's Report. Dr. Schaper reiterated praise for the fine arts performances that occurred in early December. She mentioned that we have a very high rate of student participation in the fine arts. At the elementary school, it was nearly 100% of the kids that participated in the holiday concert. At the middle school, more than 50% of students participated in the musical performance and more than 250 pieces of middle school students' art were on display. Dr. Schaper stated that it is a testament to our teacher's dedication and persistence to draw out the best in these students by encouraging them to maintain these high levels of engagement in the arts.

Dr. Schaper updated the committee and the community with regards to the window project at Major Edwards Elementary School. She stated that at the completion of the installation project the project specifications required testing of all of the windows to ensure that they meet the criteria for energy efficiency. This involved completing two kinds of tests, water and air. She indicated that as of today, December 12, 2012, not all of the windows have passed those tests. On December 4th a team came in and assessed the current condition of the windows and developed a plan for addressing the remaining issues. Dr. Schaper explained that we are going to have the manufacturer come and confirm that the product was correctly fabricated and is installed correctly. They are going to conduct additional diagnostic testing on Saturday, December 15, 2012. Adjustments to the windows will be made based on that diagnostic testing with a final (hopefully) testing scheduled on December 22, 2012. The completion of any of the open punch list items will occur during winter break.

Dr. Schaper praised former school superintendent, Thomas Kane's participation in this project, as he ensured that no school days were disrupted by this project. She is very grateful for his assistance in this matter.

Mr. Owanisian presented the report of the school committee. He stated that he would like to draw the committee's attention to a draft letter, which was in their packets with reference to "The Banner". Mr. Owanisian stated that The Banner is a way in which to get a broader audiences' attention to the things that are transpiring within the school district. He stated that he feels that it is a very effective tool.

Ms. Palumbo made a motion to submit the letter to "The Banner" as written; Mr. Owanisian seconded; **Voted 4-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian mentioned that he did attend a conference on Labor Management with Dr. Schaper and members of the West Boylston Teachers Association. He attended session on the new Educator Evaluation and one on Interest Based Bargaining.

Mr. Owanisian explained that the School Committee has an annual retreat in August and he would like to propose doing a second retreat, maybe sometime during the week of February vacation. The purpose of the retreat would be to develop a scorecard that we could use periodically to evaluate how we are doing in certain areas.

Ms. Palumbo suggested that maybe the week of February vacation would not be a good time to have the retreat, as many families are on vacation, but that she would be open to another date.

Executive Session

At 8:46 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Owanisian that the committee goes into to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining, returning to open session only to adjourn, Ms. Palumbo seconded; **Voted 4-0-0.**

Adjournment

The School Committee returned from Executive Session and a motion to adjourn was made at 9:43 p.m. by Ms. Palumbo, seconded by Jim Pedone. **Voted 4-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Johnson
Recording Secretary