

WEST BOYLSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
WEDNESDAY December 11, 2013

LOCATION: West Boylston Middle/High School Media Center

PRESENT: SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Owanisian, Chairman  
Jennifer Breen  
Richard Shaw  
Erin Palumbo  
James Pedone, Jr.

ADMINISTRATORS

Elizabeth Schaper, Superintendent  
Lawrence Murphy, Principal Middle/High School  
Christopher LaBreck, Associate MS Principal  
Richard Meagher, Elementary Principal  
Roger E. Pontbriand, Jr., Business Administrator  
Sherri Traina, Special Education Administrator

COMMUNITY

Faculty & Staff:	5	Guests:	12
Student Advisors:	1	Press:	1

Mr. Owanisian opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to December 11, 2013 School Committee Meeting.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Mr. Shaw made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular School Committee Meeting of November 13, 2013; Ms. Breen seconded. Motion approved. **Voted 5-0-0.**

**Student Recognition Awards**

Mr. Meagher congratulated Julia Borque on her student of the month status. She is a fifth grader at Major Edwards Elementary School.

Mr. Murphy introduced the student of the month for the High School, Suzanne Ross, and congratulated her on her accomplishments.

Mr. LaBreck congratulated Joey Walker – a seventh grader in the Middle School.

**Student Advisory Council**

Anthony Himmelberger indicated there were several interesting events taking place this month in the West Boylston Schools: The National Art Honor Society (NAHS) students made bowls at Claytime, which were then sold through a silent auction – the proceeds to benefit Habitat for Humanity, Yearbooks may now be purchased, PBIS welcomed two new student ambassadors, both the varsity and freshmen math teams recently had math meets and the Day for Change took place in the Middle High School on Tuesday, December 10, 2013.

**Acknowledgment Of Camera Crew**

Mr. Owanisian thanked Mr. Bokankowitz for his work filming the meeting.

**STEAM program update**

Mr. LaBreck introduced four girls currently in the STEAM program to the School Committee. They described the program and how they work together to discover the answers to problems with which they were presented. The girls described projects that they have been working on such as: the heat project/hand warmers, logo project/implementing a new logo for the STEAM program, mitosis project/division of cells and the Big Foot Project/critical thinking. The girls stated they have more freedom in this program and more time to do their work. They advised the committee that, although challenging, they highly enjoyed being able to participate in the program.

## **Highlight on Schools – MCAS reports – Math and Science**

Teachers from Major Edwards Elementary School, Michelle Gangai, Dawn LaRocco and Denise Levesque, presented information regarding the MCAS Math and Science tests. The teachers reported to the committee that compared to the Math results of 2012, students' scores in West Boylston went up in many categories and were above the state average in most cases. Some of the areas that needed improvement were: Mastery of basic facts, fractions and Using formulas and conversions. They indicated that their action plan included such things as: Building test taking stamina, optimizing schedules of math staff to meet the needs of at risk students and to develop an incentive program to motivate students to master basic math facts.

The teachers stated that Science scores were above the state average. She described the action plan for improvement including: Aligning the Science curriculum with the MA Frameworks, increasing the use of non-fiction texts, developing vocabulary

Teachers from the Middle High School, Leslie Garrison and Jeanne DeRosa presented information relative to the Math and Science scores for grades 6 through 10.

Ms. Garrison explained some of the areas where the middle school students were the strongest in Science were: Cells – Earth's History and Introductory Physics – Motion and Forces and she stated that some of the areas they were the weakest were: Energy Topics – Systems in Living Things and Introduction to Physics – Electromagnetism/Open Response.

Ms. Garrison stated that their action plan included such items as: Increasing writing across grade levels, balancing the curriculum year to year to avoid chasing the test and increasing the instruction of math strategies.

Ms. DeRosa presented information to the Committee with regard to the Middle School MCAS Math results. She indicated many students scored above the state average in: Statistics and probability – grades 6-7, the number system and expressions and equations. She explained some of the strongest areas for our High School Math students were: The number system, Geometry and Building Functions.

Ms. DeRosa explained some of the areas our Middle School students were the weakest were: The number system – fractions – Gr. 7 and Geometry – Gr. 8. The High School weaknesses were: Geometry – use of formulas and creating equations – applications/word problems.

Ms. DeRosa stated that their action plan for the Middle School included: Continuing to have 3 (three) full time math teachers on staff, and their curriculum would continue to meet the needs of the Common Core. Ms. DeRosa stated that for the High School they would like to re-align flow chart for course offerings as well as to use circle back examples throughout the curriculum to help with retention. She indicated the Math teachers were also working on inclusion with the Special Education teachers and teaching technology in the classroom.

## **Community Input**

There was no community input this evening.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Budget Subcommittee. Mr. Pedone indicated they had met last week to discuss the budget timeline and House Bill 96 which could change the requirement for out of district placement tuition from April 1<sup>st</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Pedone stated that this would be beneficial to the district. If someone were to move into the district on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, we would have to pick up the out of district placement for that following school year. This would be a very large sum of money that was the district was not prepared to pay for. Mr. Pedone stated that if the bill were to pass and the date were to move to January 1<sup>st</sup>, we would then have more notice and be able to plan appropriately.

Dr. Schaper stated that she had sent a letter to Representative O'Day to support the bill and she encouraged anyone else who felt the desire to do so to also send a letter expressing support.

Mr. Pedone then explained to the committee that he had an update with regard to SAFIS – a new national program in addition to CORI checks for teachers/volunteers involving a finger printing process. This program has an initial cost associated with it for employees/volunteers. Mr. Pedone mentioned the committee had also discussed bus costs. He indicated an evaluation regarding transportation fees would be conducted regarding the feasibility of acquiring our own bus and whether or not that would cut back many transportation fees that we currently have. Mr. Pedone stated they were additionally looking into the option of changing the option of full day kindergarten to be always full day kindergarten with no tuition fee.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Chapter 74 Subcommittee. Mr. Shaw indicated there was nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Communications Subcommittee. Ms. Palumbo stated they had discussed the possibility of writing some articles such as the option of full day kindergarten and restoring a new librarian to the elementary school. Mr. Owanisian stated that he was working on creating his blog, which he would like to start early next year.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Negotiations Subcommittee. Mr. Shaw indicated there was nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Policy Subcommittee. Ms. Breen stated the committee had not met since the last School Committee meeting, but the policy had been redone and was included in their packets. She indicated that they had received more feedback from some of the teachers at Major Edwards. She stated that they were working on trying to create a balance between having enough homework to prepare children for MCAS exams and too much homework causing stress for them and their families. Ms. Breen indicated that they hope to make this policy for the district with specific requirements for each grade level. Mr. Shaw made a motion to accept the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of the IKB Homework Policy as presented; seconded by Mr. Pedone. Motion approved. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the School Building Subcommittee. Mr. Pedone indicated there was nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Owanisian indicated the Technology Subcommittee meeting was rescheduled, but they did learn that the bandwidth the school has, has been quadrupled due to the increase provided by Charter.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Transportation Subcommittee. Ms. Palumbo indicated there was none at this time.

## **Communication and Reports**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Elementary School. Mr. Meagher reported there was a book drive in early November that brought 500 books into the school. He stated that they also concluded a Spellathon, art teacher, Leia Roberts had returned to the school from maternity leave and the winter concert would take place next Wednesday, December 18, 2013.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Middle School. Mr. LaBreck thanked Mr. James Lindsay, a supervising engineer at I-Robot, for giving a presentation to Mr. Mulcahy's 8<sup>th</sup> grade science class. Mr. LaBreck told the committee that the presentation in their packets was from Mrs. Kunz's class. Google Documents allows Mrs. Kunz to share information with students, and then the students respond to her and she can comment on their work, correct it or grade the work within the journal.

He indicated this was a very impressive way to learn by making connections.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the High School. Mr. Murphy stated it has been a very busy time of the year – sports have been very active. The PTA ran Career Day with 30 presenters – it was very successful. The art/music concerts were held and Mrs. Somma’s play “Irena’s Vow” was very inspiring and it helped to connect this year’s theme of “Courage”. Mr. Murphy also indicated Ms. Goodwill’s Peer Class has been promoting a safe, comfortable and positive school climate by discussing words that hurt and the “Day 4 Change”.

Mr. Murphy asked the School Committee to consider approving a field trip to New York, NY, June 4, 2014 – Ms. Sheila Tetler’s annual trip with her art students. Mr. Shaw made a motion to approve the June 4, 2014 field trip to New York City; Ms. Palumbo seconded. Motion approved. **Voted 5-0-0.**

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Business Administrator. Mr. Pontbriand indicated there was a warrant to be signed by the committee this evening and with regard to the expenditure report for the month of November, the encumbrances would be due to salaries and would be therefore be updated globally. Mr. Pontbriand stated that the only areas of concern would be related to Special Education – transportation/tuition. He indicated that both deficits could be offset by Circuit Breaker Funds.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the Superintendent. Dr. Schaper described the work of the two current curriculum committees that the district sponsors this year, mathematics and writing across the curriculum.

Dr. Schaper stated that the Writing Across the Curriculum Team is responding to the standards in the English Language Arts Curriculum that pertain to writing in all content areas.

Dr. Schaper described steps being taken to build and support a strong professional culture that is aligned with the new teacher evaluation system.

Mr. Owanisian called for a report from the School Committee. Mr. Pedone and Mr. Shaw indicated they had nothing to report. Ms. Breen thanked Dr. Schaper and Mr. Meagher. Yesterday, Tuesday, December 10, 2013 there was a professional development half day. The Recreation Department took over the afterschool children program on half days and Tuesday was their second time doing it. She stated 53 kids were kept busy all day. One of the things she has been involved with is the PTA at Major Edwards. She wanted to let School Committee and parents know that the PTA is slated to pay for \$9,000.00 in enrichment programs in grades K-5. She stated that does not include field trips; there is about a \$700.00 budget per grade level for field trips. She stated that it is all paid for by the generosity of our community.

Ms. Palumbo indicated she had nothing to report at this time.

Mr. Owanisian stated that with regard to his Channel 12 interviews, he’s conducted an interview with Dr. Schaper, the district principals and lastly with Mr. LaBreck. Mr. Owanisian stated that he would like to interview a representative of the PTA and possibly a representative from WestBEST. Mr. Owanisian reminded the committee that the special meeting/mini-retreat is scheduled for February. Some of the agenda items will include re-vamping the mission statement, as it is quite lengthy, taking a look at the subcommittee structure and taking a fresh look at the Data Dashboard.

Motion to adjourn was made at 9:30 p.m. by Mr. Shaw; seconded by Mr. Pedone. **Voted: 5-0-0.**

## **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

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Marie Johnson  
Recording Secretary