

**TORRINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday October 23, 2013 – 7:00 P.M.
Torrington High School
Major Besse Drive**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:06.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Brady, Mrs. Cappabianca, Mr. Cavagnero, Mrs. Hoehne, Mr. Kissko, Mr. Merola, Mr. Nargi, Mr. Rovero, Mr. Thibault, Mr. Traub, Mrs. Batchelder, Mr. Campolieta, Mrs. Kloczko, THS Senior President for the Student Representatives

Absent: Mayor Zordan

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SESSION

Mr. Traub read aloud the purpose and rules of the School/Community Session.

There were no speakers.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mrs. Hoehne made a motion to amend the agenda by adding item 4.K, Field Trip Policy 6088 and item 5.D, Approval of Field Trip Policy 6088 and removing item 5. A, Approval of School Improvement Committee Meeting Minutes; and approve the amended agenda. Mr. Rovero seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

INFORMATION SHARING AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Student Representative Reports

The THS senior president reported.

B. Probus Club Award; Teacher of the Year

The president of the Probus Club presented Veronica Gelormino (TMS) with this award.

C. Superintendent Report

1. TAG Program

Mrs. Kloczko presented.

Mr. Rovero said that although he is happy there is some type of TAG program, he believes this is not a proper TAG program and would like the Board to work on obtaining the resources to reinstate a fully functional TAG program for the students.

Mr. Nargi asked what it would take to implement a proper TAG program.

2. Community Partnerships

Mrs. Kloczko reported.

Mr. Nargi asked about Community businesses taking in students for educational purposes.

3. THS Band Award

Mrs. Kloczko reported.

Mr. Traub and Mr. Campolieta spoke about some of the awards won by the THS Band.

D. Legal Cost

Mrs. Batchelder reported.

Mr. Nargi asked what changed in the State law for expulsion hearings to make costs go up.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if there are typically more expenses at the beginning of the year.

E. Memorializing all communication between Board of Education Chair and Superintendent with Legal Counsel.

Mr. Traub reported.

Costs were discussed.

Mr. Nargi gave his interpretation of the Board of Education's attorney policy. He stated the policy needs updating. He asked what the difference is between formal and informal requests made to the attorney. He inquired about having one (1) attorney in-district for Board members and/or Administration and faculty to consult with on any issue requiring

a legal opinion. Mr. Nargi requested that Mr. Traub keep the Board informed of the issues he discusses with the attorney. He stated that there should not be a conflict of interest with the attorney hired to represent the Board of Education because the attorney would be representing the Board of Education, not the Superintendent or Administration.

Mr. Nargi requested information on the costs associated with an in-district attorney and having that attorney available at the regular Board meetings for any legal discussion. He asked for the Superintendent to keep the Board informed of any discussions she may have with the attorney.

Mr. Traub suggested the Board revisit the attorney policy to discuss updating it. He took a “straw poll” of the Board members to see if he should request from the attorneys’ office the costs of having them available at Board meetings to discuss any legal questions Board members might have. Mr. Traub said he will implement Mr. Nargi’s idea and update the Board on the legal questions and/or concerns he or the Superintendent brings to the attorney, with the exception of any confidential information.

Mr. Cavagnero agreed with Mr. Nargi that this policy needs to be updated and the Board needs to be kept informed. He discussed having a single attorney on staff.

Mrs. Cappabianca said other districts have tried using one (1) single attorney and she would advise against it. She suggested that if any Board members want to be more informed they should attend the Expulsion hearings or Grievance Hearings where the attorney is already present. She said the Board elects a Chairman to deal with the day to day running of the Board of Education and if the whole Board wants to deal with this then they need to have a discussion regarding this issue.

Mr. Rovero said there may be a conflict of interest having a single attorney with regards to who the client is.

Mr. Merola suggested they have more Board retreats and then the attorney would be available more often.

Mrs. Kloczko stated that most of the discussions she and Mr. Campolieta have with the attorneys are confidential.

F. Grant Update

Mrs. Kloczko updated the Board.

Mrs. Cappabianca asked how situations are handled if a lesser amount than requested is received.

Mr. Cavagnero asked about the Even Start Program.

Mr. Traub asked about the grant for Forbes School Solar Roof.

Mr. Rovero asked which grants were the responsibility of the grant writer they contracted.

G. Two (2) Positions; Supervisor of Elementary Educational Services

Mrs. Kloczko presented.

Mr. Traub said he would like to ask the city for the funding of these two (2) positions.

Mr. Nargi spoke about the Board of Education budget history and keeping costs down; he said by adding these two (2) positions they will be moving in the wrong direction. He asked what other mandates and responsibilities will the administrators have to fulfill besides the teacher evaluations. Mr. Nargi asked the Superintendent if the State mandated teacher evaluation process has to be implemented this year.

Mr. Cavagnero asked why this was not discussed during the budget season. He spoke about costs associated with teacher evaluations. He asked how long the informal and formal observations of the teachers are. He voiced his displeasure about what the State is forcing the “great” teachers to go through--the amount of time and costs associated with these evaluations; he said they are counter-productive and unfair to poorer districts who need to use the money elsewhere. Mr. Cavagnero asked how much money is needed to fund these two (2) positions. He asked if the State identified what the penalty would be if they do not implement the teacher evaluation plan.

Mr. Traub explained why the costs of teacher evaluations were not included in the current budget; the Board of Education was told by the City of Torrington to cut any projected costs from their budget and the State mandated teacher evaluation procedures were not implemented at that time. Mr. Traub said he could have taken this request for funding for the two (2) new positions to the Board of Finance without speaking to the Board of Education first, but out of courtesy he brought this issue before the Board of Education for all the Board members input.

Mr. Rovero spoke about caps and asked if the two (2) positions are necessary or ideal. He asked if this could be done with one (1) position; if it could be structured differently. He said they need to fight the perception that they are hiring administrators just to hire administrators when they would rather be hiring teachers.

Mrs. Cappabianca said teachers may be less stressed regarding evaluations if they know the evaluators have a lower number of positions to evaluate instead of fewer evaluators with a higher number of positions to evaluate. She said if this Board really wants to get things done they need to work outside their meetings and push the State Representatives and Legislators to make the changes needed for the District.

Mr. Kissko said he realizes these teacher evaluations are state mandated, but the less you evaluate teachers the better off you are; he does not think teachers will be distressed if

they receive less attention than these evaluations will give them. Mr. Kissko asked if they will hire people for these positions without having the funding first. Mr. Kissko asked Mr. Traub if he could have taken this request for the funding of these two (2) positions to the Board of Finance without speaking to the Board of Education first. He then asked if the Chairman's policies would be changing.

Mr. Brady stated he believes these positions are needed for the purpose of fulfilling the mandated teacher evaluations, but asked what metrics the administrators are going to be held to.

Mr. Thibault said he realizes the need for the new positions but unless the city puts up the funding for them he sees no way to back them; he is not going to be financially obligated without the city backing these positions.

H. Technology Update

Mr. Thibault updated the Board.

A representative from the company involved in the updating of technology in the District stated they were given access to the city's departments only once and were not allowed to collect serial numbers or other information, they were only allowed to do a "walk-through."

Mrs. Cappabianca asked if all the equipment purchased has been located and if they have been given access to all the city's departments. She asked where the inventory was found. Mrs. Cappabianca said she has serious concerns regarding the shared IT and equipment with the City and the Board should look into doing a serial inventory to see what is the property of the Board of Education and what is the property of the City.

She said she believes that not all the equipment they have purchased is accounted for and would like to see the Board pursue this issue. Mrs. Cappabianca asked if the Board of Education could submit a written request to the Mayor of Torrington asking if any equipment purchased by the Board of Education was moved to the City.

Mr. Traub said the attorney's office has not given him a summary yet but he believes they had access to all the city's departments. They only have invoices of purchased equipment for the last two (2) years and all the equipment is accounted for. Mr. Traub said the attorney's office did do a serial inventory but there is no documentation of purchases prior to the last two (2) years. He asked for a list of what equipment has been deployed this year. Mr. Traub said he spoke to the former IT department head about missing equipment and was told that all the equipment purchased for the school district was sent to the school district.

Mr. Rovero asked if they could track down when and by whom equipment was purchased by giving the serial numbers to the manufacturer. He asked if all parties involved were cooperating.

Mr. Kissko asked if they found any equipment that was not the Board of Education's while conducting an inventory. He commended the company on the work they are doing to update the technology in the District.

A Board member asked Mr. Thibault what his conclusions are based on the update.

Mr. Nargi asked if there were any problems with the phone since the beginning of the year at the high school and if there are problems with the printers. Mr. Nargi asked who oversees the company updating the technology in the District and how that is documented.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if the District should have administrators with IT experience.

I. Staffing Data

Mrs. Kloczko pointed out a mistake in the staffing report of an employee being counted twice.

Mr. Campolieta presented.

Mr. Nargi asked about the structure of the spreadsheet. He asked about the level of salary for specific positions. He also asked about the hiring of a Latin teacher at the High School.

Mr. Rovero asked what the difference between M and MA is. He also had a question about an open position.

J. ACLU and THS Handbook

Mrs. Kloczko reported.

The Board decided to send the recommendations from the ACLU to the Policy Committee for review.

Mrs. Cappabianca asked if the information received back from the ACLU was going to Policy. Mrs. Cappabianca said she would like the legal opinion to include the responsibilities of the Board if a student is found innocent of the charges brought against them.

Mr. Traub suggested getting a legal opinion from the Board attorney on the language in the Athletic and Student Handbooks.

Mr. Cavagnero read aloud part of the recommendation from the ACLU regarding the disciplinary actions taken against students that have been arrested for a felony crime. He

asked if similar language could be put into the Student Handbook and not only in the Athletic Handbook.

Mr. Traub took a “straw poll” of the Board members to see if they wanted to obtain a legal opinion on the language of the Handbook. Mr. Traub clarified that the “straw poll” is asking if the Board supports obtaining a legal opinion from the attorney.

Mr. Rovero stated he does not like the idea of taking action against someone before they are found guilty.

Mr. Merola asked for clarification; are they being asked for their opinion or for the attorney’s opinion.

Mr. Nargi pointed out contradictions in the recommendations.

K. Field Trip Policy; Policy 6088

Mr. Campolieta presented.

Mr. Traub asked if there were any major changes made.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Financial Statement

Mr. Rovero made a motion to accept the Financial Statement. Mrs. Hoehne seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

B. Approval Budget Transfers

Mr. Rovero made a motion to approve the Budget Transfers. Mr. Thibault seconded the motion. The vote passed with one (1) opposed, Mr. Nargi.

C. Consent Agenda

Mr. Brady made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Rovero seconded the motion. The vote passed with one (1) opposed, Mr. Nargi.

1. Approval of September 18, 2013 Board of Education Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of September 10, 2013 Special Board of Education Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of October 8, 2013 Special Board of Education Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of Sub Committee Meeting Minutes

- a. Removed from Agenda
 - b. Policy Committee; August 7, 2013, September 4, 2013
 - c. Budget Committee; September 11, 2013
 - d. Personnel Committee; August 20, 2013, September 4, 2013
 - e. Grievance Committee; September 11, 2013
5. Appointments & Resignations
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6. Notices for Homeschooling
- a. S.M., Eff. 2013-2014
 - b. E.M., Eff. 2013-2014
 - c. L.M., Eff. 2013-2014
 - d. J.B., Eff. 2013-2014
 - e. P.C., Eff. 2013-2014
 - f. C.R., Eff. 2013-2014

D. Approval of Field Trip Policy 6088

Mrs. Hoehne made a motion to approve Field Trip Policy 6088. Mr. Merola seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

COMMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Brady said he would like to see the Board do their self-evaluations so they can evaluate the Superintendent. He suggested putting together some metrics to evaluate the performance of the District like a school report card.

Mr. Rovero said he has received some complaints from taxpayers regarding the lack of posting information on the District website for school events. He stated that he would like this problem to be solved and asked for a report from the Administration regarding who is designated in each building to obtain and post this information.

Mrs. Cappabianca said they need to have a Board Retreat. She talked about Board members wanting to have a leadership role on the Board of Education and how they should go about doing that. She said "cheap shots" are being taken against the current Chairman and it makes the entire Board of Education look foolish.

Mr. Nargi said one of the biggest problems the District has is the funding received from the State over the last several years, the monies received are not properly funding this District. He suggested that a Board member or a paid employee or both need to start advocating for the Torrington School District. He believes the State needs to justify their mandates and lack of funding.

Mr. Traub thanked Mrs. Cappabianca for complimenting him.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Personnel Committee; Mr. Thibault reported.
2. Policy Committee; Mrs. Hoehne reported.
3. Grievance Committee; Mrs. Cappabianca reported.
4. School Improvement Committee; Mr. Cavagnero reported.
5. Budget Committee; Mr. Rovero reported.
6. Education Connection; Mr. Kissko reported.
7. THS Oversight Panel; Mr. Kissko reported.
8. Juvenile Court Update; Mr. Nargi reported.
9. Turf Field Committee; Mr. Basetta reported.

ITEMS FOR UPCOMING AGENDA

- Financial Statement
- Committee Reports
- Law Suit Updates
- CT State Statue 10-151

FUTURE MEETINGS

Mr. Traub stated the City asked for all upcoming meeting agenda's be posted on the Thursday before the meeting.

1. School Improvement Committee Meeting; October 30, 2013
2. Policy Committee Meeting; November 6, 2013
3. Personnel Committee Meeting; November 6, 2013
4. Budget Committee Meeting; November 13, 2013
5. Regular Board of Education Meeting; November 20, 2013

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:21 Mr. Thibault made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Cappabianca seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.