

September 23, 2015

The Brooklyn Board of Education held its regular monthly meeting on September 23, 2015 in the middle school library. In attendance were: Mrs. Lyons, Mr. Rossi, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Majek and Aimee Genna. Also present Dr. Berry, Superintendent, Mr. Yanku, Middle School Principal and Anthony Tusia, Property Services Director. Mr. Otto, Board of Finance and Mr. Voccio, Board of Selectman, were in attendance. Members of the teaching staff and public were in the audience.

Absent: Mr. DonFrancisco

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Lyons called the to meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

2. Comments by:

- a. BEA - none
- b. Local 1303 - none
- c. PTO – Mrs. Landes, PTO President, stated that the back to school barbeque was a success. Despite inclement weather, the PTO, along with the help of two Board of Education members, parents, and Boy Scout Pack 44, served over 700 hamburgers and hot dogs.
- d. Public – A member of audience asked if a microphone was available. At this meeting there is no microphone available. Mrs. Lyons

3. Minutes of

- August 26, 2015 Board Minutes

Change the name Amy Anderson to read Aimee Anderson (page 7)

Motion to approve the minutes as amended

(Johnson / Majek)

Unanimous vote to approve

4. Administrative Reports:

a. Elementary School Principal:

- Report on start of school year

Mrs. King's report was included in the Board of Education members' packets.

b. Middle School Principal:

- Professional Development

Curriculum development was the focus of the professional development days held prior to the first day of school for students.

- Open House/High School Choice

Eighth grade students will be visiting Woodstock Academy on October 5, 2015. They will also visit Killingly High School on October 22, 2015.

Representatives from non-designated high schools will come to the middle school and give presentations to the students.

The math curriculum will be the focus of the professional development day on October 13, 2015. Elementary and middle school teachers will be collaborating

Mr. Yanku presented a PowerPoint presentation on Smarter Balanced testing scores for the 2014-2015 school year. The reports can also be viewed online.

c. Assistant Principal:

- Report on Fall Sports

The report was included in the Board of Education members' packets.

d. Special Education Director:

- Special Education Enrollment Report

The report was included in the Board of Education members' packets. Dr. Berry stated that at this time there are currently 145 students receiving special education services.

e. Superintendent:

- Payment of Bills

An itemized list of outstanding bills was included in the Board of Education members' packets.

Dr. Berry stated that the current enrollment report reflects updated information from August and September of 2015.

A member of the public asked what the current teacher to student ratio is at the Brooklyn schools. Mrs. Lyons stated that the information can be accessed through the state website under strategic student profile.

- Enrollment Report

Discussed earlier in the meeting. See above.

- Update on Speech Pathologist

Dr. Berry stated that there are 2 applicants for the speech pathologist position. There has been no final decision, but plans to resolve this issue by the end of the week.

- Bus Contract renewal

Dr. Berry informed that the current bus contract is up at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. Request for bids for a new contract will be posted by January 15, 2016, and discussions regarding the same will follow.

Mr. Rossi stated that when the current contract was signed three years ago, it came with a \$75,000 savings.

Mrs. Lyons suggested that a formal committee be formed to work on a new bus contract.

- CABA Convention

Dr. Berry stated that any Board of Education member who is interested in going to the CABA convention, let her know as soon as possible so reservations and payment can be made.

Mrs. Johnson suggested that the three people on the Board of Education ballot should have the opportunity to attend the convention. Dr. Berry stated that if the new Board of Education members are interested in attending the convention, they should contact her.

Dr. Berry informed that Mrs. King, elementary school principal, is current on leave of absence. Mrs. Sweet is assisting at the elementary school in her absence until an interim is hired.

Mrs. Lyons stated the length of Mrs. King's leave is unknown at this time. However, if it is going to be an extended period of time, an interim will be hired.

- e. Superintendent: *(continued)*
 - Legislative Report

Nothing was discussed.

f. Director of Property Services

Mr. Tusia, Property Services Director, informed the Board of Education members that some projects are complete and some are ongoing.

- Fire Alarm System

The fire alarm project is ongoing. The cabling has been installed, and workers are currently installing devices and cut-ins. The work crew is smaller than expected, but the quality of work is excellent, and completion is expected sometime in November.

- Wiring

The wiring is complete and operational.

- Telephone System

The telephone system is complete and operational.

The security cameras are installed and operational and will be activated next week in conjunction with the proximity cards.

- Roof Project

This project is ongoing. Mr. Tusia stated that he and Mr. Kelleher went to the state office to start the grant process. The state office informed them that the Brooklyn School needs to hire an architect to make drawings of repairs and submit them to the state as part of the necessary materials to receive grant funds. An architect is currently working on the drawings. Mr. Tusia informed that it would most likely be the end of October before we hear back from the state office. He estimates the timing for the roof repairs to be possibly over Christmas vacation or April vacation so as not to interrupt school days.

- Snow Removal

Mr. Tusia informed that the school custodial staff is responsible for clearing the sidewalks. The Town of Brooklyn is responsible for clearing the school's parking lots.

Mr. Otto suggested that the school and town should get together and discuss and clarify exactly what each are responsible for concerning snow removal.

Mr. Voccio, Selectman, stated that he would put it on their agenda for tomorrow night's meeting.

- Ongoing parent pickup efforts

Mr. Tusia explained that parent pick-up protocols have changed in an effort to increase school safety. He realizes that it is inconvenient, but it is a necessity for school safety. At present, staff members are trying to increase the efficiency and ease of getting students out of the building at dismissal time. He stated that while the time it takes at parent pick up has gotten better; it still needs some fine-tuning. He informed that he met with Mr. Ives, and they have discussed getting an engineer to possibly change the path of pick-up traffic.

5. Committee Reports:

a. Budget

Dr. Berry has not begun working on the 2016-2017 budget yet. She informed that the school is currently operating within the current budget.

b. Policy

Ms. Lyons stated that Mrs. Majek and Mrs. Genna should meet to discuss CAFE information. She also stated that she would like Mrs. Malstrom to attend the meeting in that she has been receiving information from CAFE and is most knowledgeable about school policies.

c. Curriculum

Mrs. Johnson stated that teachers are continuing their work on curriculum.

d. Capital

Nothing to report at this time. See above for update on capital projects.

e. EASTCONN

Mrs. Johnson informed that there has a lot of discussion concerning Smarter Balanced testing. She handed out information from a presentation by Dr. Bowden suggesting that parents be informed as to what SBAC testing scores mean.

She stated that the State of Connecticut informed the federal government that every student will take the SAT test. The state will pay for all 11th graders to take the test. She also stated that the test will be administered during the

school day, by school staff. The State of Connecticut will not pay for any subsequent tests.

f. High School Relations – WA

Mr. Rossi stated that there is a Board of Trustees meeting next week.

g. High School Relations – KHS

Mrs. Johnson stated that there is a new principal at the Killingly High School, Mrs. Verrastro.

h. Recreation Committee

Mrs. Lyons reported on behalf of Mr. DonFrancisco. The last meeting did not take place due to lack of a quorum. Work on the lower baseball field has begun. They have a \$30,000 budget and costs are currently at \$23,500. They are working within the budget.

There are currently 47 children enrolled in the after school program.

Work continues on the Spooky Nights event.

i. Board of Selectmen Liaison

Mrs. Lyons informed that there is a meeting tomorrow.

j. Board of Finance Liaison

Mr. Otto stated that he would like a discussion on the method used to calculate the pension payments and the increase in special education costs.

Mrs. Lyons informed that those issues would be put on the agenda to be discussed at the Board of Education meeting in October.

Representatives from PTO, BEA, BOF, and other committees that have issues to bring to the Board will be asked to present these issues to the Board of Education or appropriate committee as necessary.

6. Old Business

- Traffic Pattern – elementary

Discussed earlier in the meeting. See above.

- Outside maintenance – Town

Discussed earlier in the meeting. See above.

- Board Self Evaluation Form

Mrs. Lyons stated that the self-evaluation forms were handed out at last month's meeting. She asked that the members bring the form to the next meeting for discussion.

- Any other old business

Mrs. Johnson asked about the status of the reading specialist position.

Dr. Berry informed that no one on staff has the qualifications necessary to fill the position. There has been some in-house interest, however, the interested parties did not have the necessary credentials.

Mrs. Johnson asked if it is possible to contract with a company, perhaps EastConn, until someone with the state required certification for this position.

7. New Business:

- New Financial Software

Motion to approve the \$2,826.00 as the school's share of costs for the financial software with the Town of Brooklyn.

(Johnson / Rossi)

Unanimous vote to approve

- Pre K & K drop-off policy

Discussed earlier. See ongoing parent pick-up efforts section

- Afternoon dismissal times and instructional hours

There were days when instructional time was being cut short to get students organized for dismissal. That is no longer happening. Students are getting ready for dismissal at 3:15.

- Any matter the chair wishes to present

Nothing at this time.

8. Other

Nothing at this time.

9. Public Comments

Tiffany Rosen asked if a crosswalk could be added to make parent pick up easier.

Mr. Tusia explained that in an effort to ensure school safety, the school cannot have an open door policy at student dismissal time.

Mrs. Genna explained the current traffic pattern poses problems for incoming traffic that is not aware of the “opposite” pattern the Brooklyn School currently uses. Incoming vehicles are entering on the correct side of parking lot. However, outgoing traffic is exiting on the wrong side. This poses potential collisions.

Mrs. Congdon-Marr suggested getting a group of teachers together with Mr. Tusia to discuss the problems with parent pick-up.

A member of the audience asked if proper permits would be in place if any changes were made to add a new access road on the school grounds. He also asked who would handle designing a new road.

Mr. Tusia stated that a town engineer would design a new access road and they would attain all necessary permits.

Mrs. Tanner-Bellows reiterated her concern brought up at August’s meeting. The door is opened at the after school program to anyone who knocks. This is a safety concern. She suggested that any parents who enter the after school program during school hours should be buzzed in the front door.

Mrs. Lyons informed that Bucky Lohbusch is in charge of the recreation. Any concerns regarding their programs should be directed to him.

Mrs. Genna stated that she had questions concerning parent pick-up at the elementary school. She spoke with the building administrator and was told to speak to Mrs. Lyons, because she is in charge of the traffic pattern.

Mrs. Lyons informed that she is not in charge of the traffic pattern.

A member of the audience suggested parent pick-up protocols return to the way they were in the past.

Aimee Anderson stated that there was no set traffic pattern in years prior.

A member of the audience asked if there could be a safe place designated for parents to park and go in the building to pick up their child.

Mr. Tusia reiterated that to ensure school safety, the need to eliminate an open door policy at dismissal time is imperative.

Mrs. Lyons stated that it would be a good idea to put together a committee of a couple teachers who are involved in parent pick-up, a couple parents, Mr. Tusia and Mrs. Sweet to work together to come up with a plan that works.

A member of the audience asked if Mrs. King's position is going to be posted.

The Board of Education members explained that her position is not going to be posted because it is not a job opening. Mrs. King is on leave, and there may be a need for an interim principal. At this time, they are not sure how long she will be out. If it is for an extended period of time, an interim will be hired. At present, Mrs. Sweet has been spending some time each day at the elementary school as acting administrator.

Tiffany Allain stated that she is concerned with the amount of children on 504 plans that are not eligible for IEPs. She asked who, in Mrs. King's absence, would be responsible for overseeing that 504 services are implemented.

She also suggested that a school psychologist be hired to counsel students with behavior problems.

Mrs. Lyons stated that we have two social workers that counsel students daily in both the middle school and elementary school. Mrs. Lyons informed that at present, there is no money in the budget, but it is something that can be looked at during budget time.

Pam Nichols stated that in the past Mrs. Sweet was responsible for a 504 review for her child, and she has every confidence in Mrs. Sweet's ability to oversee all students who currently have 504 plans. She also stated that having a microphone at Board of Education meetings is a necessity.

Mrs. Lyons assured her that there will be a microphone at next month's meeting.

Ms. Nichols also mentioned that her daughter walks home from school. She asked how her daughter can safely cross the street with the increase in traffic flow. She stated that there are no crosswalks, shoulders on the road, or lines on the road.

Mr. Tusia explained that Gorman Road is not school property and changes to the road are not the responsibility of the Brooklyn Schools. Gorman Road is town

property and any requests for improvements have to made to the Town of Brooklyn.

A member of the audience asked if there could be more public comment times added to the agenda, so the public can ask questions throughout the meeting.

Mrs. Lyons stated that public comment times have to be limited so the Board of Education can complete its business.

Amy Landes, PTO President, questioned why funds were returned to the town rather than spent on materials to improve educational success, such as smartboards.

The Board of Education members reiterated that funds remaining after the fiscal year, June 30th, cannot be used. It is the law that any remaining funds are returned to the Town of Brooklyn. It is not the choice of the Board of Education; it is the law that mandates.

Dr. Berry clarified that \$159,000 that was not spent as of June 30, 2015. Regulations set by the State of Connecticut regarding spending are very clear that funds cannot be spent after June 30th, the close of the fiscal year. The financial department was waiting on, and had requested numerous times, a tuition bill from Killingly High School. The bill came in in July after the funds had been returned to the town.

A member of the audience asked if a request can be made to get the funds back to use to hire a reading specialist.

Mr. Otto stated that the Board of Finance supports funding for education. State regulations dictate what happens to excess funds appropriated for educational purposes. He stated that in order for funds to be returned to the school, the request would have to be made at a town meeting.

Dr. Berry stated that funds allocated for special education cannot be spent in other areas. She informed that when problems arise financially, the Board of Education discusses the issue with the Board of Finance.

Mr. Otto stated that the request would have to come from the Board of Education. It would then go to the Board of Finance for approval. Then it goes to a town meeting for approval.

Mrs. Genna asked if the money can be given back.

Mr. Otto stated that she would have to convince the people at a town meeting to agree to the same.

Mr. Rossi stated that smartboards were purchased with capital improvement funds. He also informed that funds were spent to improve the technological infrastructure, such as data cabling. Laptops, Chromebooks, and laptop carts were also purchased.

Mr. Voccio clarified that smartboards were purchased with Board of Education funds, not capital funds.

Mrs. Wimmer stated that she is on the Technology Committee, and laptop carts were a priority because they are utilized directly by the students.

A member of the audience asked if there was a system wide psychologist.

Dr. Berry informed that there is currently a part-time psychologist. She stated that she can look into increasing her hours to help students deal with their emotional needs.

Mrs. Lyons stated that the school social workers counsel the students; that is their job. The psychologist does the testing.

Dr. Berry said she would listen to parent concerns about the need for a behavioral counselor in the district.

A member of the audience asked if the reports in the Board of Education members' packets can be made public.

Mrs. Lyons stated that the Board of Education members will discuss if the reports can be put on-line.

A member of the audience asked if Mrs. King was out on personal leave or administrative leave.

Dr. Berry informed that Mrs. King is out on personal leave.

Tiffany Rosen stated that her child is interested in attending NFA next year. She asked if bussing to NFA is a possibility. She also mentioned collaborating a bus schedule with Canterbury.

Dr. Berry informed her that NFA is not a designated high school. Transportation is not provided to high schools that are not designated.

Mrs. Johnson stated that the Board of Education looked into making NFA a designated school in years prior. At the time, the tuition was costly as well as the transportation.

Aimee Anderson asked for the enrollment in Killingly High School and Woodstock Academy.

Mr. Rossi informed that at present at Killingly High School there are:

31 freshman
28 sophomores
27 juniors
28 seniors

At Woodstock Academy there are:

55 freshman
37 sophomores
40 juniors
36 seniors

The Board of Education was asked who is in charge of updating the elementary school website.

Mr. Lessig and Mr. Kelleher are in charge of the website.

A member of the audience asked if a letter to parents would be going out informing them about Mrs. King's leave.

Dr. Berry stated that a notice would be sent.

A member of the audience suggested that the Board of Education look into strategic partnerships with UConn or ECSU to utilize student teachers.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:54 pm.
(Johnson / Rossi)
Unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully submitted

Joann M. Engel
Recording Secretary