

**Thomaston Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Thomaston Town Hall, Meeting Room One  
December 8, 2008  
7:00 p.m.**



**Minutes**

**Present:** Laurie Barrett, Beth Yaffe, Deborah April, Lucy Santopietro, Holly Herbert, Laura Rieley, Cheryl Roberts and Steve Catania

**Absent:** Joanne Gilland

**Also Present:** Superintendent, Lynda Mitchell; Business Manager, Susan Laone; Board Clerk, Patricia George; High School Principal, James Wenker; Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson; Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio; Pupil Services Director, Nancy Schnyer; and Student Board Representatives, Nick Guertin and Adam Scheppard

**I. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:**

Chairperson, Laurie Barrett established a quorum and called to order the Regular Meeting of the Thomaston Board of Education at 6:59 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance:**

Student Board Representatives Nick Guertin and Adam Scheppard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Approval of Agenda:**

On a motion made by Beth Yaffe and seconded by Deborah April to approve/accept the agenda as presented, motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Approval of Minutes:**

**Regular Meeting of the Board of Education dated Monday, November 10, 2008:**

On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Deborah April to approve/accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education dated November 10, 2008. Steve Catania, Beth Yaffe, and Cheryl Roberts abstain; motion carried unanimously.

**Special Meeting of the Board of Education dated Wednesday, November 12, 2008:**

On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Holly Herbert to approve/accept the minutes of the Special Board of Education dated November 12, 2008 with the following amendment:

Under approval of agenda, replace Steve Catania's name with Lucy Santopietro's name.

Deborah April, Beth Yaffe, Steve Catania and Laurie Barrett abstain; motion carried unanimously.

- V. **Student Presentation:** School- to- Career Coordinator, Joan Batten, along with students from the Future Teachers' Club, spoke to the Board regarding the NetSmartz Internet Safety Program. Mrs. Batten indicated that there were many programs available but felt the NetSmartz Program was the most advantageous. On an invitation from Mrs. Batten, Senator Kane also addressed the Board regarding the program reiterating some of the information provided earlier. Senator Kane, through the help of Representative Piscopo, plans to take the initiative to Attorney Blumenthal's office who also stated his interest in the program. Senator Kane would like to see the program in each school in the state of Connecticut. He gave credit to Mrs. Batten's students for taking the initiative and said that the program had his full support.

Mrs. Batten asked for support at the Board level. Board Chair, Laurie Barrett, indicated a letter would be generated to the Future Teachers documenting their support.

VI. **Public Participation:**

None

VII. **Communications:**

A-H:

On a motion made by Deborah April and seconded by Beth Yaffe to approve/accept Communications A-H as presented; motion carried unanimously.

VIII. **Superintendent's Report**

- A. Employee of the Month: Ralph Gilnack  
Superintendent Mitchell deferred to Principal Wenker to provide a few words on Mr. Gilnack's behalf. Mr. Wenker stated that Ralph has been the head custodian at the high school for approximately 7 years and 18 years at Black Rock prior to that. He indicated that Ralph does an outstanding job of maintaining the facility and through the expansion has picked up an additional 20,000 square feet. He concluded by stating that Ralph has made invaluable contributions to the school.
- B. Student of the Month: Jessica Zebrowski  
Superintendent Mitchell noted that Jessica is charming, humble and very bright. She added that Jessica is number one in her class of 82 students. Mrs. Mitchell read from Jessica's resume and highlighted a few of her accomplishments. She went on to say that Jessica "is worthy, very bright, and a very competent young woman".
- C. Strategic School Profile follow-up:  
Superintendent Mitchell reminded the Board members that as they read through the SSP (Strategic School Profile) document to highlight those areas they would like to discuss further as it contains a volume of information. She plans to keep the item on the agenda for the next few meetings.

**IX. Business Manager's Report:**

**A. 403b Plan Document**

Business Manager, Sue Laone indicated that ING was approved as the third party administrator for the 403b Plan Document at a previous Board meeting. The next phase is to have the plan document in place prior to January 1, 2009 and asked the Board for their approval.

Mrs. Laone indicated that there are currently four vendors who are not willing, at this time, to sign information sharing agreements. Letters are being mailed to those employees who participate with those vendors asking them to choose new ones. In the event that non-participating vendors would like to sign an agreement prior to the January board meeting, Mrs. Laone asked that the Board empower her or the Superintendent to approve them.

On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Deborah April to accept/approve the 403b Plan document as presented and to empower the Superintendent to approve future vendors. Motion carried unanimously.

**X. School Principals and Pupil Services Director's Reports:**

**A. Pupil Service Director, Nancy Schnyer**

Nancy Schnyer reported that a representative from ECKERS would be visiting the Pre-K program at Black Rock School to see if it meets the standards for accreditation/certification. She also reported that the SEDAC grant data has been sent to the state, CMT/CAPT accommodations are currently being updated for state reporting and that the destruction of records will take place around December 19<sup>th</sup>.

**B. High School Principal, James Wenker**

James Wenker reported that he is in the beginning phase of reviewing the Program of Studies for the upcoming school year. He also reported that a review of the honor roll system is underway. Currently, a student with 3- C's can make the honor roll. Mr. Wenker would like to make the guidelines more stringent. He is also reviewing the CIAC guidelines.

**C. Thomaston Center School Principal, James Diorio**

James Diorio reported that Math consultant, Paula Banas has been well received by the Math teachers at Center School. He also reported that 65 students auditioned for the May drama club performance and that the school is in the early stages of implementing Parent Connect.

**D. Black Rock School Principal, Paul Johnson**

Paul Johnson reported that on November 24<sup>th</sup>, Pam Sangster from Education Connection provided a technical support day. Of the 8 professional development days requested through a grant, only 2 were approved.

**XI. Student Representatives' Reports:**

Board Chair, Laurie Barrett, asked the newly elected Student Representatives to introduce themselves and provide their reports.

Nick Guertin, the senior class representative, reported that his class is currently working on a food/clothing drive and would like to make it a district- wide initiative. The class has additional plans of sending greeting cards to local service members serving overseas. A Thomaston alumni versus Terryville alumni basketball game has been scheduled for December 26<sup>th</sup>.

He also reported that the National Honor Society has plans to attend one or more local senior centers to provide companionship. The members hope to make this a year- long endeavor.

Adam Scheppard, the junior class representative, reported that the class is focusing on a town- wide dinner which would be free to attend; however, donations would be accepted. The donations would be contributed to a cause such as cancer research. In addition, he noted that the class is currently working on field trips and is in very good standing monetarily.

## **XII. Standing Committee Reports:**

### **A. Budget:**

On a motion made by Lucy Santopietro and seconded by Cheryl Roberts to approve/accept the November budget expenditures of \$5,110,650.68 and the monthly transfers as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2009/2010 Budget Discussion:**

Members of the Finance Board and Union Presidents were invited to attend the meeting in order to generate an open dialogue regarding budget expectations. Board Chair, Laurie Barrett thought it would be beneficial if they were to attend budget subcommittee meetings as well, to keep the dialogue going.

Finance Committee member, John Scheppard, reported that at this point in time the revenue and expenditures are both very good, further stating that the revenue is right about 50%. He also stated that taxes are a wildcard and he would know better in January and February. It was after January and February of last year that everything came crashing down.

He went on to say that what he has heard to date is that the Governor is trying to protect all of the municipal aide. Casino revenue is way down along with revenue generated by the real estate market. The town may be down approximately \$100,000 - \$120,000 between the two.

Additional discussions included ECS, unfunded liability for future retirements, capital improvements and salaries.

Business Manager, Sue Laone reported that the consolidated grant, which was used to pay some salaries is down \$10,000 this year plus

an additional 20% was allocated for supplemental education programs at the Center School.

Superintendent Mitchell said retrieving what was lost would be a difficult challenge at best. She said the district needs to look at those things that are mandates. She stated as an education entity, the board can't let certain things go; it is their job to educate children. How does the district move forward in a successful manner?

B. Curriculum/Instruction:

No report

C. Maintenance/Facilities:

No report

D. Technology:

No report

E. Personnel:

No report

F. Transportation:

No report

G. Athletics:

No report

H. Long Range Task Force/Building Committee:

No report

I. Policy:

The district does not have a callback policy for non- union members. Business Manager, Sue Laone said that each individual contract has their own callback policy. Several Board members asked that the CAFE policy be reviewed for recommendations. Principal Wenker cautioned the Board against offering the same protection to non- union employees as union employees.

J. Government Relations:

No report

K. Affiliations:

No report

**XIII. Old Business:**

None

**XIV. New Business:**

None

**XV: Items for Future Agendas:**

None

**XVI. Executive Session:**

**XVII. Adjournment:**

On a motion made by Deborah April and seconded by Beth Yaffe to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at 8:30 p.m.; motion carried unanimously.