

BROOKLINE-NEWFANE JOINT SCHOOL BOARD RE-ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Thursday, March 17, 2011
6:30 PM at *NewBrook Elementary School*

Draft Minutes

Present: Lee Anne Parker, Dan Seiden, Kim Colligan, Kim Friedman, Pam Meihak, Brandy Pickering, Steven John (WCSU Superintendent); David Parker and Gary Keiser (NewBrook teachers); Amy Jo Cable (recorder)

I. Call to order (Dr. Steven John): Dr. Steven John called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

- Dr. John announced that the *Brookline School Board* appointed a third member to their board, Somara Zwick. Steven advised that Somara was also appointed as Clerk for the Brookline School Board, Lee Anne Parker was appointed Chair and Dan Seiden was appointed Vice Chair.
- Pam Meihak announced that she is now the *Newfane School Board's* Vice Chair, Kim Friedman was appointed Chair and Kim Colligan was appointed Clerk.

TASK: Lee Anne Parker will contact Somara to let her know she was appointed and give her the necessary information regarding being sworn in.

TASK: Kim Friedman will contact Somara to welcome her on behalf of the Joint Board.

II. Re-organization

I. Elect officers

- *Chair:* Dr. Steven John asked for nominations for the Chair of the Joint Contract Board. Dan Seiden nominated Kim Friedman for Chair of the Joint Contract Board. Kim Friedman told the Board that she would be happy to serve. Pam Meihak gave her second. No further nominations were given. No discussion. Dr. John called for a vote. Kim Friedman abstained. All others were in favor. Motion passed. Dr. John turned the meeting over to Kim Friedman at 6:36 PM.
- *Vice Chair:* Kim Friedman nominated Lee Anne Parker for Vice Chair of the Joint Board. Lee Anne accepted the nomination.

Brandy Pickering gave her second. Kim Friedman called for a vote. Lee Anne abstained. All others were in favor. Motion passed.

- *Clerk:* Dr. Steven John distributed two handouts, *How To Write Meeting Minutes*, by Kristin Wood and *What the Law Says About the Role of Board Chair and Clerk* (information excerpted from the *Vermont Education Statutes Annotated*). A short discussion followed regarding the duties of the Joint Board Clerk. Kim Colligan nominated Brandy Pickering as Clerk. Lee Anne Parker gave her second. No further discussion. Kim Friedman called for a vote. Brandy Pickering abstained. All others were in favor. Motion passed.

- II. WCSU Board representatives for each Board
 - Newfane: Kim Friedman advised the three representatives for the *Newfane School Board* would continue to be herself, Kim Colligan and Pam Meihak.
 - Brookline: Lee Anne Parker advised she was elected as the *Brookline School Board's* representative.
- III. Designate Treasurer: Kim Friedman asked if there were any concerns regarding the Newfane Town Treasurer remaining the Joint Board's treasurer. No concerns were brought forth by Board members.

TASK: Kim Friedman will contact Maureen Albert-Piascik and confirm this with her. (Note: Maureen has been confirmed as NewBrook Treasurer.)

- IV. Designate WCSU Policy Committee: Lee Anne Parker nominated Ken McFadden to represent the Joint Board on the WCSU Policy Committee. Kim Colligan gave her second. Kim Friedman called for a vote. All were in favor. Motion passed.

TASK: Brandy Pickering will contact Ken McFadden to confirm his acceptance of the appointment on the WCSU Policy Committee.

- V. Determine authorized signatures for vendor pay orders and payroll (Newfane & Brookline through June 30, then two for the Joint Board)
 - Newfane: Ken McFadden with Pam Meihak as an alternate.
 - Brookline: Lee Anne Parker with Dan Seiden as an alternate.

- On behalf of the Joint Board, Kim Friedman designated Lee Anne Parker and Ken McFadden as authorized signatories for vendor pay orders and payroll effective July 1, 2011.

- VI. Designate Paper of Record: All agreed that *The Brattleboro Reformer* will continue to be the Joint Board’s Paper of Record.
- VII. Confirm meeting schedule: It was agreed to continue to meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month beginning at 6:30 PM with the intention of ending each meeting at approximately 8:30 PM.
- VIII. Maintenance of Joint Board’s NewBrook Bulletin Board: Pam Meihak advised she will continue to try and update the NewBrook Bulletin Board on a regular basis (agendas and minutes).

III. Review Agenda: Kim Friedman reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any other topics that board members or members of the public wanted to add. Lee Anne Parker requested that some time be spent discussing the “open meeting” laws and also Australian ballot. David Parker advised he was present to give input regarding the upcoming discussion regarding social studies and science curriculum at the *NewBrook Elementary School* (part of Principal’s report). Kim Friedman also invited David to give his input to the joint district discussion.

IV. Consider joint school district (versus joint board)

- Kim Friedman and Dr. Steven John explained that a joint school district would mean abolishing the Brookline and Newfane School Districts and combining them into one NewBrook School District, where Brookline and Newfane would share the same tax rate. Also, the town of Brookline would no longer have a Brookline School District meeting as part of their town meeting, and Newfane would no longer have a Newfane School District meeting as part of Newfane’s Town meeting. However, there would still be an annual meeting for the Joint District Board. A discussion ensued where Board members offered their thoughts of what could be considered pros and cons of combining the Brookline and Newfane School districts.

PROS:

1. Joint Board Representation at WCSU level
2. Same tax rate for both towns
3. No change on practical level from current structure (change is at a governance level)
4. Reduce administration at central office (Kim Friedman believes this to be the most significant advantage)

5. Sense of unity among Brookline and Newfane
6. Helps pave the way for the RED (Regional Education District) discussion
7. Eliminates additional individual Board meetings
8. Less time on governance questions related to a joint contract board vs. school district board

CONS:

1. Loss of contact of school on Town Mtg day
2. Would require separate town and school budget votes
3. Difficult to explain to voters
4. Takes Brookline voters further away from their school identity

QUESTIONS:

1. Rep from two towns on joint board?
2. Eliminates joint annual meeting and vote by Australian ballot at town meeting?
3. Any impact on kids? Staff? Learning opportunities?
4. Re-inventing the wheel?
5. Impact on small school grant?
6. Change in Brookline and Newfane tax assessment?

Kim Friedman pointed out that it may be best to wait until a later date to continue with this discussion. If the board was going to study the possibility of forming a RED (Regional Education District), a minimum number of school districts participating are needed to qualify, therefore having both the Brookline and Newfane School Districts was an overriding advantage at this point until further information is known about forming a RED. Kim Friedman moved that the Joint Board take up this discussion again at a future meeting pending further exploration of a *Regional Education District*, without taking any action tonight. Kim Colligan gave her second. Dan Seiden gave his second from Brookline. Some further discussion took place, where Dr. Steven John advised that he supports the motion. Kim Friedman called for a vote. No further discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

V. How Are We Doing?

i. Superintendent's Report

- Regional Education District update: Dr. Steven John reviewed some additional information he had regarding the possibility of forming an RED with other school districts within our Supervisory Union. He pointed out that such a study may take a year to eighteen months to complete. Dr. John also confirmed that the *Leland and Gray Union High School District* would have to be dissolved before forming such a RED. Dr. John advised that both dissolving the *Leland and Gray School District* and forming an RED would need to be on one ballot and both

would need to be approved for the formation of the RED to take place. He also explained that a discussion of forming a RED was on the agenda for the upcoming *WCSU Re-Organization* meeting on March 30, 2011 at 7 PM at the *Leland and Gray Union High School*. Brandy Pickering and Dan Seiden both expressed concerns about forming an RED. Brandy stated that she supports a study of an RED, but she was concerned that it may possibly take away local control of the school boards and therefore the ability to serve the needs of children in our community. Dan Seiden expressed similar concerns but also would support a study of a RED. Kim Friedman clarified that the Joint Board is entering into the RED study to learn more about the projected impact, particularly on student learning.

- Open Meeting or Sunshine Act: Dr. John and Lee Anne Parker discussed recent information they had regarding *the Open Meeting Act, Senate Act #67*. Lee Anne and Dr. John gave Board members new information pertaining to what constitutes a “meeting” and what meetings need to be public meetings. A lengthy discussion followed with both NewBrook teachers David Parker and Gary Keiser participating in the discussion.
 - Much of the discussion revolved around the possible misuses of e-mail that would be in violation of the Sunshine Act, for example, if board members used e-mail to move a discussion forward. Kim Friedman pointed out that Dr. John had reviewed the Sunshine Law details with the Joint Board members in the past and if new updates developed, for example, if Senate Bill #67 passes, Dr. John would again advise Joint Board members.
 - A large portion of the discussion also centered on what conversations between school board members and teachers were appropriate, especially if the teacher in question currently had a student whose parent or parents were school board members.
 - Dr. John advised that more information about the S.67 could be obtained by contacting Steven Dale and also that Steven Dale may touch on this conversation at the *WCSU Re-Organization* meeting on March 30, 2011 at the *Leland and Gray Union High School* at 7 PM.

ii. Principal’s Report

- Prioritization of student outcomes: Steven explained that Bruce could not be at tonight’s meeting due to a death in the family. Steven distributed a packet which Bruce had prepared for Board members with information on the *NewBrook Elementary School’s* Social Studies and Science Curriculum and also Bruce’s priorities on the Board’s

strategic planning document (“Getting It Right”). Steven reviewed the information on Bruce’s behalf. NewBrook teacher David Parker also gave input and talked about goals of instruction and *Great Expectations*.

- Steven advised that more planning for next year’s Science curriculum at NewBrook Elementary would be discussed by the staff in May.
- Lee Anne Parker asked for more clarity regarding the goals of instruction. For example, if students learning about tracking animals, what is the goal of that instruction? Kim Friedman asked Steven John if he would ask Bruce Garrow to bring that information to April’s board meeting.
- Steven noted that Bruce indicated on the “Getting It Right” document that Bruce’s priorities were #1, 4, 9 and 15. Kim Friedman asked each Board member for their priorities also.

TICKLERS FOR RETREAT

- **How to maintain emphasis on promoting a positive school Climate**
- **How to build in regular contact/info. exchange between the School Board and teachers**
- **Getting It Right strategic planning document: have fewer outcomes; fold existing outcomes into fewer broad categories**

TASKS

- **Brandy Pickering will give a copy of Bruce’s information packet to Ken McFadden.**
- **Steven John will forward Lee Anne Parker’s request for clarity regarding the goals of instruction to Bruce Garrow and ask Bruce to bring to the board’s April meeting.**

VI. Short Items That Require Action

- I. Discuss after-school program request: Dan Seiden reported that he had a request from Megan Outschuler regarding using the former Brookline Elementary School building for an after-school program and he had forwarded the letter from Megan to Dr. Steven John and Kim Friedman. Kim advised she had forwarded the letter to Board members. Dr. John will bring a recommendation to the Board’s April meeting for the Board’s review.

VII. Information-Sharing

- I. Next steps with Australian ballot discussion: Lee Anne Parker distributed information about Australian balloting questions in a hand-out to

Board members. Kim Friedman advised that she and Dr. John had not had the time to research more information as they had planned.

TASK: Steven John and Kim Friedman come up with a “win/win” situation for using the Australian ballot to be used at Brookline and Newfane’s Town Meeting Days.

- II. Follow-up on curriculum discussion at last meeting: Steven John passed out a hand-out entitled: *Creating Virtual Classrooms for Rural and Remote Communities*. No discussion due to the time. Kim Friedman acknowledged to Board members that it was best not to personalize conversations during school board meetings by bringing one’s own children’s names into any conversations since it was in everyone’s best interest to keep those types of conversations objective by not mentioning names of our children or their teachers.

VIII. Consent Agenda: Approve minutes

- I. January 24 budget information meeting
- II. Feb. 17: February Joint Board meeting

Brandy Pickering moved to approve the consent agenda. Kim Colligan gave her second. Kim Friedman called for a vote. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Executive Session: Went into Executive Session at 8:44 PM to discuss a personnel matter. Left Executive Session at 9:07 PM. No action was taken.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.

Upcoming Meetings

- Wed., March 30: WCSU Board of Directors re-organization meeting
- Special Joint Board meeting prior to April 14th to consider Superintendent’s recommendation for candidate for Principal’s position (exact date TBD)
- April Joint Board meeting: Thursday, April 14th (note change of date due to school vacation)