

*Our mission is to provide rigorous and varied educational opportunities that challenge and engage all students to attain their highest level of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth. (2007)*

**LITCHFIELD SCHOOL BOARD - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT NO. 27**

Litchfield, New Hampshire 03052

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**April 1, 2009**

**(approved as written 4-22-09)**

Present:

Mr. Dennis Miller, Chair  
Mr. Ralph Boehm, Vice Chair  
Mrs. Cindy Couture, Board Member  
Mrs. Pat Jewett, Board Member  
Mr. Jason Guerrette, Board Member  
Dr. Elaine Cutler, Superintendent  
Mr. Steve Martin, Business Administrator  
Dr. Ronda Gregg, Director of Special Services  
Mr. Robert Manseau, Principal, CHS  
Mrs. Michele E. Flynn, Administrative Assistant

**1) Public Session – Call to Order -Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**2) Review and Revision of Agenda**

Revisions included the addition of staff matters in non-public session and under Committee Reports, NHSBA.

**3) School Board Comments**

Mrs. Couture commented on the agenda indicating that in the past the agendas were packed with many items that led to inordinately long meetings. Board members opted to streamline agendas with just 2 meetings a month for Business and Curriculum, and added a third meeting for a Work Session to work on policies. She noted that this type of arrangement worked well; however, it appears that agenda planning has not been consistent with the streamlined process. Mrs. Couture felt that she should bring this to the Board's attention.

**4) Community Input**

There was no community input.

**5) Recommended Action**

a) Business Affairs

1) Draft School Board Minutes

a) Public Minutes of March 18, 2009

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.*

2) Donation Acceptance

Dr. Cutler asked Board member for acceptance of the donation of a laptop computer to be used for the CHS Athletic Department track program from the Lajoie family. Board members thanked the Lajoie family for their generous donation.

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to accept the donation of a laptop computer from the Lajoie family, which will be used by the CHS Athletic Department. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.*

3) Graduation Date

Dr. Cutler presented options for the 2009 CHS graduation date. CHS Senior Class Officers and Mr. Ballou, the Senior Class Advisor, and Mr. Manseau were present to speak about the options for graduation.

Dr. Cutler indicated that Litchfield schools were closed six days this year. CHS students have exceeded the state required hours by 175, with 172 days of instruction. She indicated that options included:

- Option 1: June 12 Graduation and petition the Commissioner of Education for a waiver for three days of instruction based on clock hours.
- Option 2: June 19 Graduation that includes two days without classes.
- Option 3: June 17 Graduation with a Wednesday evening graduation.
- Option 4: June 12 with a Saturday extension for seniors only, but with the additional cost of compensating 14 Senior Advisory teachers.
- Option 5: June 12 Graduation and petition Commissioner of Education for a waiver for two days and count the first day of the Senior trip as an instructional day.

Mrs. Couture was concerned with asking for a two or three day waiver. Mr. Manseau indicated that the date of graduation is problematic as parents plan a year in advance for family events.

Mr. Ballou indicated that he met with Senior Class Officers to discuss the options for graduation. Their concerns were both personal and family related. The students were positive on Options 1 and 5.

Alex Prolman, Senior Class President, commented that many seniors would not be able to attend graduation if held June 12 or later. Ten seniors will not be able to attend June 17; five will not be able to attend as a result of a conflict with college orientation; three are starting jobs; three are leaving for military assignments; eight have family obligations, and one is moving shortly after June 12.

Mrs. Couture suggested another option that included the recommendation of Option 5, but with a petition for a waiver of one day, counting the first day of the Senior trip as an instructional day and counting Senior Projects Night as an instructional day. Dr. Cutler asked for Board agreement.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve CHS Graduation Day on June 12, 2009, with a one day waiver, using Senior Project Night and the first day of the Senior trip as instructional days. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

Dr. Culter will petition the Commissioner of Education for a one day waiver and acceptance of Senior Project Night and the Senior Trip as instructional days.

#### 4) GMS School Approvals Update

Dr. Cutler announced that the Commissioner of Education has approved GMS for the next two years based on the District's plan to resolve school approval standards issues.

- 12 general education classrooms have less than the minimum 900 sf: a lower class size will result in the alternative compliance measure being accepted by the NH Board of Education.
- Kindergarten portable classrooms have been ordered with bathroom facilities. The existing Kindergarten program will be moved to a portable classroom.
- The Litchfield Code Enforcement Officer determined that student handicap bathrooms are adequate.
- The Litchfield Code Enforcement Officer determined that non-metallic (Romex) wiring within the school must be removed this year.
- Additional storage on site has been provided.
- There continues to be insufficient footage for the special education classrooms, OT, PT, and speech; however, the situation has improved since the District provided 2 portable classrooms for Grade 3 students.
- There is not a music classroom, but music classes are conducted by a certified music specialist in grade level classrooms.
- A four year plan was devised to replace all lighting at GMS.
- Replacement lighting in rooms 1-10 and the gym have been included in the 2009-2010 budget.
- Recommendation by the Code Enforcement Officer regarding Air Quality testing every two years has been budgeted and will continue to be scheduled.
- Life safety issues were addressed during the summer of 2008. A voice notification system for the fire alarm system will be installed over the summer of 2009.

Mr. Guerrette queried if Litchfield will be approved for five years at the end of the two year approval if we show the work is being done in the second year. Dr. Cutler indicated that would probably not happen; however, may be a possibility at the end of the fourth year when the lighting is completed.

5) Budget Review Discussion

Mr. Guerrette reported that he attended the Budget Committee meeting on March 26 where Committee members requested that the School Board review the budget and discuss options that will result in the District returning as much money as possible to the taxpayers. Mr. Guerrette indicated that his perception, as well as many others, is that the District lives in a bubble and they would like to know that we are doing everything we can to return money to the town. He indicated that he committed that the Board would be diligent in reviewing the budget.

In response to a request not to spend the voter approved Special Education Capital Reserve appropriation, Mr. Martin indicated that the 2010 operating budget has already been reported to the NH DRA on the MS-22, which is used to set the tax rate. The District is bound by the regulations of the NH Department of Revenue Administration in this matter and our auditors would require the transfer.

Mr. Guerrette was concerned with expenditures in the manifest. He commented on particular expenditures, asking for justification. Mr. Guerrette indicated that he expected to see justifications for expenditures and questioned if they are wants or needs. Mr. Martin clarified the Superintendent's instructions to administrators and staff to only expend for what is needed in order to return as much as possible to the taxpayers. He added that to provide more detailed explanation for expenditures would require research at the requisition level and would take up a large amount of time.

Mr. Guerrette commented that the town is asking for our help and that we should monitor the budget very tightly. He noted that although the schools need what they need, the town is more important. He added that he will look very closely at every expenditure and question each one as to whether or not they are needed.

Dr. Cutler clarified that she met with administrators and instructed them to be budget conscious so that the District can return as much as possible to the taxpayers. She sent a message to employees reminding them to be budget-minded as well. Dr. Cutler added that she instructed employees in January that there will be no overtime unless it is an emergency. She indicated that we will be happy to listen if there is further direction from the Board.

Mr. Guerrette stated that the manifest should include justification on expenditures. Mr. Martin asked for guidance from the Board for the District Business/Finance department to provide justifications for all expenditures and noted that this level of micromanagement would be very time consuming. Mr. Guerrette disagreed, indicating he believes it is oversight, not micromanagement.

A lengthy discussion relative to town and district finances followed. During the discussion, Mr. Miller pointed out that the Superintendent urged employees to be fiscal minded and return as much to the town as possible, reading the Superintendent's Message in the SAUcy News to the public. (*See March 2009 SAUcy News Superintendent's Message which will be attached to the approved minutes.*) After much discussion, Board members decided that no motion was necessary and the Business Administrator would continue with his standard preparation of the manifest.

6) Stimulus Funds Update

Dr. Cutler updated Board members on stimulus funding indicating that the District will have opportunities for IDEA entitlement money. More information from the State will follow on April 7. She added that Dr. Gregg will prepare the request from the District that must be submitted to the State by April 13. Dr. Cutler will update Board members as information becomes available.

Dr. Cutler reported that the District may have an opportunity for technology funds included in the stimulus package. Ms. Lecaroz will write a grant for \$4,000 for students' digital portfolio storage, which is to be submitted by April 10. Dr. Cutler also reported that competitive grants for stimulus funds include funding for energy planning and hopes that replacement windows at GMS will meet eligibility. She announced that a teleconference regarding the stimulus funds is scheduled for April 7, which she, Mr. Martin, and Ms. Lecaroz will attend.

Mrs. Jewett suggested contacting Carol Holden, Hillsborough County Commissioner to inquire about county grant opportunities.

Mrs. Couture reported that Bud Fitch spoke to the NHSBA Board of Directors regarding stimulus funds for New Hampshire. The Governor is planning to use some of the stimulus money to help offset education adequacy aid. She added that the State expects complete accountability all stimulus funds. Dr. Cutler clarified that accountability has not been resolved relative to education adequacy funds, but districts must account for the use of all grant monies. Mr. Martin commented that any construction in school districts must be done in the summer; however, there has been no training on federal government bid guidelines. Many districts may not apply for the construction money because of the time restrictions. Mr. Guerrette commented that he spoke with Senator DeVries who indicated that stimulus timelines are short and the windows of opportunity for the grants close quickly.

7) Manifest

The manifest was circulated and signed by the Board.

6) **Policy Amendment**

a) Home Education Instruction policy & procedures (IHBG/IHBG-R)

Revisions to the policy were made to the age bracket affected by the change in the law regarding compulsory attendance age. Board members had concerns about other areas of the policy. Dr. Cutler will discuss Board suggestions for revisions with Dr. Gregg. The policy will be revisited at the May policy work session.

7) **Policies – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading & Approval**

a) Personnel Policies (GA)

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a second and final reading. Mr. Boehm seconded.***

Mr. Miller asked for any discussion. Mr. Guerrette suggested that many of the District's policies that have a perceived budgetary impact should include the following statement: *The Board understands that achieving this goal is dependent upon the financial ability of the school district.* He felt that the indicated wording should be included in the Policy GA because of the reference to hiring personnel and compensation. Mrs. Couture pointed out that we have overriding policies that contain the embedded statement.

Mr. Guerrette was persistent upon the inclusion of the statement in the policy, indicating that everything should be derived from the mission statement and policies should be in line with district goals.

***Mr. Guerrette made a motion to add the statement, "The Board understands that achieving this goal is dependent upon the financial ability of the school district", to Policy GA, Personnel Policies.***

Hearing no second, Mr. Miller asked if there were any other discussion. Mr. Guerrette felt that if the statement is not included in the policy, then it appears there is no limit on compensation offered to attract and retain employees. Mr. Boehm indicated that the District has guidelines on the budget when hiring new employees, and felt that the statement could be misconstrued. Dr. Cutler pointed out that when setting schedules and ranges, they are set based on the position and there is a defined limit. Mr. Guerrette disagreed with other Board members.

Mr. Miller asked for a second on the motion. There was no second to Mr. Guerrette's motion. Mrs. Couture called the question, referring the first motion that had been seconded. No revisions were made to the policy.

***The motion carried 4-1-0, with Mr. Guerrette voting in the negative.***

b) Anti-Fraternization (GBCC) (related to Employee/Student Relations policy)

Mr. Guerrette commented that when researching the policy he found that some districts included a statement about anti-fraternization when not on school district property. No revisions were made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve Policy GBCC, Staff Anti-Fraternization, for a second and final reading. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

c) Employee/Student Relations (old, GBH; new, GBEBB)

Some minor revisions were made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve as amended Policy GBEBB, Employee/Student Relations, for a second and final reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

d) Employee Gifts and Solicitations (old, GBI; new, GBEBB)  
A minor revision was made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve as amended Policy GBEBB, Employee Gifts & Solicitations, for a second and final reading. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

e) Staff Health Examinations (old, GBE; new, GBGA)  
A minor revision was made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve as amended Policy GBGA, Staff Health Examinations, for a second and final reading. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

f) Personnel Records (old, GBL; new, GBJ)  
A minor revision was made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve as amended Policy GBJ, Personnel Records, for a second and final reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

g) Highly Qualified Teachers (GCAA)  
No revisions were made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve Policy GCAA, Highly Qualified Teachers, for a second and final reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

h) Professional Staff Contracts (GCB)  
A minor revision was made to the policy.

***Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve as amended Policy GCB, Professional Staff Contracts, for a second and final reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.***

**8) Policy Work Session  
SECTION D: FISCAL MANAGEMENT**

a) Financial Management Plan (DA)  
Minor revisions were made to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

b) Annual Budget (DB)  
Mrs. Couture indicated that the Board asks for and tracks budget requests each year, even if they are not included in the budget. She suggested adding the statement: *The Board shall be informed of any budget requests that are not included in the proposed budget and the reason those items are not included in the budget.* The policy will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

c) Budget Preparation (DBC)  
Mrs. Couture commented that this is one of the policies that includes the statement previously suggested by Mr. Guerrette relative the district's financial ability. The statement will be included in the policy. The policy will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

d) Budget Implementation (DBI)  
There were no revisions to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

e) Taxing & Borrowing Authority & Limitations (DC)  
Revisions were made to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

f) Funding Proposals & Applications (DD)

Minor revisions were made to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

g) Audits (DIE)

Revisions were made to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

h) Sales Calls & Demonstrations (DJGA)

Minor revisions were made to the policy, which will move to a 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

9) **Committee Reports**

a) Budget Committee

Mr. Guerrette reported that the Budget Committee met on March 26 and requested the Board and District review the budget and return as much money to the town as possible.

b) Selectmen

Mrs. Jewett reported that the Selectmen asked Fire and Police departments to review budgets and recommend reductions. She added that the Selectmen continue to work on the town budget. Mrs. Jewett also reported that money is available from the stimulus funds for fuel assistance and the deadline to apply is approaching quickly.

c) Legislative

Mr. Boehm commented positively on a visit to the Academy of Science & Design, a charter school in Merrimack, where six week electives are offered.

Mr. Boehm reported that the following bills passed in the Senate: a bill relative to student representation for school boards; HB143 relative to the Request for a Change of School Assignment; HB154 relative to Truancy; HB509 relative to Parental Consent for Psychological Exam by School District. The following bills failed in the Senate: HB305 relative to Giving Public Employees the Right to Strike; HB231 relative to the Repeal of the Evergreen Clause; the Homestead Bill, which reflects a tax exemption on the first \$150,000 of the value of a house, and includes increasing the state portion of property taxes. HB351 relative to People Who Do Not Pay Property Taxes on Time was amended to reflect late payment penalties will change from 12% and 18% to 8% and 12%. HR7 relative to Supporting Teen Dating Violence Education was amended to remove gender references and failed.

d) NHSBA

Mrs. Couture reported that the NHSBA Board of Directors met and discussed the economic stimulus. The NHSBA is working on strategic planning with other organizations that were part of a Joint Education Council. They are planning to reorganize a council at the state level. Mrs. Couture announced that a National Delegate Assembly will be held in San Diego during the upcoming week that she will attend. The trip is being funded by the NHSBA. She indicated that the upcoming assembly will have much information that she will share with the Board.

Mr. Guerrette mentioned that he received an invitation from Chief Scofield to accompany him to a fire safety event.

10) **Community Input**

There was no community input.

11) **Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3II (a-c)**

*[Minutes of Non-Public Session are written under separate cover.]*

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to go into non-public session at 9:39 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3II (a) The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. (b) The hiring of any person as a public employee. (c) Matters, which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the body or agency itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried by roll call: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes; Mr. Guerrette, yes.*

12) **Return to Public Session**

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to return to public session at 10:01 p.m. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried by roll call: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes; Mr. Guerrette, yes.*

13) **Adjourn**

*Mrs. Couture made a motion to adjourn at 10:02 p.m. Mr. Guerrette seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.*

14) **Upcoming Meetings**

*>Litchfield School Board: April 8, 22, 2009 - CHS Media Room – 6:30 PM*

*Read into the April 1, 2009 minutes by Mr. Miller, School Board Chair.*



## SAUcy News

March 2009

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### Superintendent's Message

March 2009

Economic challenges are the headlines every day at the national, state and local level. The community of Litchfield is not insulated from this phenomenon. I believe that we all agree that our schools have been well supported by the community for many years, and certainly parent participation and support at athletic and academic events has been exemplary. We are privileged that this community truly values education.

Although I believe that we have always been fiscally responsible, this is the time that we must be even more vigilant with every taxpayer dollar. To that end, we will renew our efforts to maintain the high level of academic and athletic opportunities for our students in the most economic manner. Every dollar that we do not expend from our budget by June 30 is returned to the Town of Litchfield. Those dollars are then used to reduce the tax rate for the community.

We want our families to be able to live in Litchfield, as well as attract more families to join the community.

As taxpayers, I know that you would value, appreciate and expect this same renewal of effort in your own community. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this time of economic challenge.

Respectfully yours,  
Elaine F. Cutler, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn  
School Board Administrative Assistant