

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 - Revised
August 26, 2009
(approved as amended 9-2-09)

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
Ms. Amanda Lecaroz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Mrs. Michele E. Flynn, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1) 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 6:05 p.m. under RSA 92-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.

2) Return to Public Session

Mrs. Couture made a motion to return to public session at 6:32 p.m. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried by roll call: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes; Mr. Guerrette, yes.

3) Public Session – Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance **6:30 p.m.**

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

4) Review and Revision of Agenda

Revisions to the agenda included: Item 6, Presentations to the Board, postponed until the September 9 meeting; Item 12(a) Continued Discussion of Instructional Materials Policy (IJL/R) moved after Community Input (Item 8).

5) School Board Members' Comments

Mr. Boehm prepared a statement commenting that he was setting the record straight. He clarified that he did not vote for or against the short story curriculum, but voted against a motion to reorganize the Short Story Review Committee and open membership to the entire town, which would have been detrimental to the District. Mr. Boehm stated that the District needs a proper policy in place. He commented that public schools have to cater to the needs of all students, even a small minority. He indicated that if a small minority has a concern with offensive curriculum, the problem needs to be resolved. Mr. Boehm stated that the course in question is an English class, not a social agenda class and we have no right to push an agenda on our students.

Mr. Guerrette commented that he made a proposal to re-assemble the Short Story Review Committee at the previous meeting, clarifying that his intention was to allow the widest entrance to our selection process. He believes that the

Review Committee was not offered to the entire town, but to a select group. He commented that the materials selected were that of a small group and not of the entire town. Mr. Guerrette believes that all residents should have

been able to participate and discuss the short story review process. He clarified that he never stated the books should be banned. Mr. Guerrette stated that he proposed a policy statement that excludes library materials and non-fiction books. He believes that his proposed policy statement is not too far to one extreme or the other. He indicated that every citizen has the right to present their point of view, the right to free access, and the right to agree or disagree.

Mrs. Couture commented that she attended first day of the opening of the schools to the staff. She indicated that it was enjoyable to see the staff return, ready to begin the new school year. Mrs. Couture commented that it was exciting for staff members to be recognized for their years of service. She noted that it was interesting to learn some of the background of those that were honored.

6) Summary of Non-Public Actions

From the August 12, 2009 Meeting:

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

Mr. Boehm made a motion to accept the nomination of Robin Maloney as a one-year temporary Science teacher at CHS at a salary of \$42,811 for the 2009-2010 school year. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 4-0-1, with Mr. Guerrette abstaining.

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to approve an early graduation request. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to approve the request for a Hudson student to be tuitioned into the Litchfield School District subject to a special education Memorandum of Understanding. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

7) Presentations to the Board

1) CHS Band/Chorus European Trip

This item was postponed until the September 9 School Board meeting.

8) Community Input

Mr. Miller spoke to community members before opening the floor for community input. He welcomed community members to the Board meeting and read a statement about public participation. He reminded the audience that this is a Board meeting in public and not a public meeting of the Board. Mr. Miller instructed community members to adhere to public participation guidelines that included: only comments from residents of Litchfield are allowed, community members are not to engage in debate or discussion with the Board, and comments are limited to three minutes and a community member may only speak once.

[Proposed Policy Language for the Instructional Materials Policy (IJL/IJL-R):

“Those responsible for selecting educational materials shall be sensitive to the values and demographics of the town of Litchfield. Any fictional material selected and utilized for class instruction should not contain profanity, sexual acts, gratuitous violence, or be of a nature that promotes or endorses the occult, alternative lifestyles, sexist or racist behavior, or the use of recreational drugs or alcohol. When selecting material, teachers and staff should strive to ensure their selections promote good morals, positive role models, healthy values and messages.”]

John Oberti, 32 Bear Run Drive, disagreed with the proposed policy language relative to the Instructional Materials policy/procedures. He indicated that the proposed language is severely restrictive and not consistent with the District Mission Statement. He noted that the proposed language would restrict what is offered to students. Mr. Oberti encouraged the Board to carefully consider their decision to adopt the proposed language

Peg Prolman, 31 Chase Brook Road, disagreed with the proposed policy language and encouraged the Board to allow teachers to teach.

Andy Prolman, 31 Chase Brook Road, rejected the proposed policy language. He noted that most people are pleased with the quality of education their children receive in the District. He believes that the senior members of the Board should be particularly proud of our graduates as they have become critical thinkers. Mr. Prolman commented that the proposal is attempting to fix what is not broken. He believes a drastic resolution is not necessary and will be impossible to implement without tearing the town apart.

Mary Prindle, 26 Deerwood Drive, was opposed to the propose policy language. She believes the opening statement of the proposal is vague and that the School Board should not decide the values of the town. She indicated that much of the wording is open to interpretation and that prohibiting literature as stated is limiting much from our students. Ms. Prindle believes that teachers should be able to teach without such restrictions.

Laura Gandia, 3 Chamberlain Drive, commented that she believes, based on what has happened, that something is broken. She agreed that the proposed policy language can be viewed as limiting and she offered an amendment. She proposed that the policy language reflect that: *any fictional material not based on scientific accuracy be based on simplicity, dignity of presentation, a stern test of literacy and appropriateness, and scrutiny.* She indicated that this would allow leeway for educators to have input, see what is presented, and how it should be presented. Ms. Gandia commented that the course material should also support school behavior rules.

Daniel Marquis, 8 Nesenkeag Drive, commented on book banning with Orwellian connections. He also read passages from other sources relative to banning books. He indicated that the proposed policy language would restrict many other forms of literature. Mr. Marquis believes that by banning books, you ban concepts and critical thinking, resulting in the production of narrow-minded intellectuals.

Sue Rafferty, 33 Century Lane, queried about the Short Story Review Committee report results and about where to find the list of books reviewed for the course. Dr. Cutler indicated that the report results and list of books is the District website. Mrs. Rafferty also commented on Board member voting. She noted that, in her opinion, Board members abstain too often when voting on motions. She stated that it is her understanding that abstentions are made only under certain circumstances (i.e. conflicts) and not because a member does not want their vote recorded. Mrs. Rafferty suggested that the Board take that under consideration.

Darlene Carr opposed the proposed policy language. She indicated that this policy language would not allow for future works of contemporary literature to be used in classes. She commented that these stories are being treated as if they were a disease, which is not the case. These works will not contribute to bad behavior of our students. Ms. Carr believes we should not be deciding what is good for our society and that teachers should be allowed to educate our students.

Brian McCue, 11 Newstead Street, strongly opposed the proposed policy language. He stated that he attended a parochial school that had far less restrictive bans on what could be read. He stated that children are exposed to much more today and he strongly opposed the proposed policy language.

Janet Oberti, 32 Bear Run Drive, commented that it is important that our teachers and professionals that we hired are the ones to make the decisions. She encouraged the Board to trust the teaching staff. Teachers present literary knowledge to our students to teach them what they need to know. She indicated that it is not our job to figure out what they should be teaching our children.

Peter Moore, 34 Deerwood Drive, commented that in his opinion some mistakes were made in handling the short story issue. He noted that a valuable member of the staff resigned, which is a loss to our community. Mr. Moore indicated that the proposal is interesting, but was concerned that it is too extreme and does not solve the problem. He believes that the problem must be identified, understood, and analyzed. Mr. Moore suggested the administration work toward preventing the one very objectionable story from coming back into the selection.

Dot Beauregard, 8 Nightingale Lane, encouraged Board members to leave the policy as it is revised, without adding the proposed policy language. She indicated that the procedures should be followed. She expressed concerns with possible long and short term impacts of the proposed policy language.

Lou Framarini, commented that the teaching staff is wonderful and indicated that we should trust them to do the right thing. The students are intelligent and want to learn, and this proposal will limit their exposure to the world. He encouraged the Board not to include the proposed policy language and not to limit students' exposure.

Karen Tollick, 37 Nesenkeag Drive, commented that the Board meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, which represents our freedom. The proposed policy language restricts our freedom. She indicated that we should trust our educators and allow our children to learn.

Bobby Cautela 10 Naumkeag Court, opposed the proposed policy language. He stated that the language could be interpreted as banning books. He commented that the Review Committee report yielded positive results of the stories selected. Mr. Cautela indicated that banning all selected books would result in a hard-pressed effort to find a large list of acceptable literature.

Matt Rafferty, 33 Century Lane, indicated that the proposed policy language was censorship. He noted that these books do not need to be removed and that we should trust our teachers to deliver the material to our students. He commented that the policy language would impact many books, simply because some people may not understand the theme or context of the story. He gave the Board his written statement.

Sue Ann Johnson, 35 Locke Mill Drive, commented that the proposed policy language is not about banning books. She indicated that the guidelines are not efficient and the selection points are ambiguous. She believes that the selections should have more positive messages and that there are not enough choices if a parent wanted to opt their student out of reading many of the stories. Mrs. Johnson indicated that 70% of the stories contained violence and that an English teacher is not qualified to talk to teens about controversial issues (i.e. drug use, sex, etc.). She also expressed concerns about the It's a Mystery course, indicating that some stories used in the course are not appropriate.

Emilia Dicola, 5 Riverview Circle, commented that she has lived in Litchfield her entire life. She noted that teachers are not paid to be babysitters and that would be the result of the proposed policy language. The policy language would prohibit much future literature selection. She indicated that the lines between fiction and non-fiction can easily be crossed.

Kevin Smith, 47 Garden Drive, commented that he is looking for balance and moderation in materials selection. He was concerned that all viewpoints be allowed to be presented.

9) **Recommended Action**

a) **Business Affairs**

- 1) Draft School Board Minutes:
 - a) Public Minutes August 12, 2009

Revisions to the minutes included:

Under the Board Goals discussion: 8th paragraph, the second sentence was stricken and replaced with, *Mrs. Couture suggested we should be encouraging input from existing students as well as graduates. She also suggested that student government is the mechanism for that to happen.*

Under Committee Reports, NHSBA: the last sentence was amended to reflect that the lawsuit will be put to a vote of the NHSBA Board in September.

Mr. Guerrette strongly disagreed with the amendment to the Board Goals discussion. He believes it was accurately recorded.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Bohem seconded. The motion carried 4-1-0, with Mr. Guerrette voting in the negative.

2) Proposed FY11 Budget Calendar

Mr. Martin presented and reviewed the FY11 budget calendar with the Board. He indicated that Board members could opt to provide the SAU with a bottom line budget number or go line by line, but run the risk of several additional meetings in order to deliver the proposed budget to the Budget Committee on time.

Mr. Guerrette indicated that the Budget Committee discussed that the principals present their budgets to the Budget Committee in person. Dr. Cutler requested that the Board provide a budget number or percentage of increase/decrease, which would save a tremendous amount of work and time. She recounted that last year the SAU provided a separate list of anything the schools would normally request in the budget. This was done for historical and tracking purposes. She suggested that the Board could invite the Budget Committee to attend the budget work session when the principals will present their budgets.

Mr. Boehm commented that it is the Budget Committee's prerogative to ask questions of any department head in town or school business, but it is at the Budget Committee's request.

Board members ensued in a lengthy discussion about the budget process. Mr. Guerrette indicated that some members of the Budget Committee will be making more detailed queries about the FY11 budget. Mr. Martin commented that each year the Budget Committee Chair requests that questions are submitted in advance to the SAU. Mr. Guerrette indicated that may not be the case during this budget process. Mr. Miller commented that the School Board representative to the Budget Committee will be expected to defend the Board's position to the Budget Committee.

Mrs. Couture explained that each year the Board examines each line of the budget (at home) and suggests or reviews line items of concern at the budget work sessions. She also indicated that many questions are answered during the budget presentations. Mr. Guerrette indicated that the budget process this year may require more in depth work sessions. Mr. Martin suggested that he move two meetings from the Board approval sessions to the budget presentation sessions. Mr. Guerrette was satisfied with the revision.

Dr. Cutler indicated that she has already communicated to the District staff that the budget contain no new positions, no new programs, the possibility of increased class sizes, and no new equipment. She instructed staff to be cognizant of the potential loss of revenue to the District and town.

The Board directed Mr. Martin to revise the FY11 Budget Development Calendar. Board members agreed to delay providing a bottom line budget number.

3) Audit Update

Mr. Martin updated the Board on the 2009 audit. He indicated that the field audit is almost complete and that the unreserved general fund balance will be about \$522,000. He reported that Food Services ended with a loss of \$19,000, which was partially due to losses from the December 2008 ice storm. He cautioned the Board that the loss will be larger next year if the generation of additional revenue is not resolved. Mr. Martin noted that he will provide Board members with an audit report once it is completed.

4) GMS Buildings & Grounds Update

Mr. Martin updated the Board on GMS buildings and grounds issues. He indicated that the schools are ready to open. Lighting for GMS has been completed, with the exception of the lighting for the gym, which has been backordered. He noted that the kindergarten portables are installed and all other projects have been completed. Mr. Martin reported that the site preparation costs for the installation of the kindergarten portables were impacted by the Governor's Office on Disability and the State Fire Marshal's recommendations.

5) Impact Fees Discussion

Mr. Martin reported that the Selectmen have declined the Board's request to use impact fees to build a storage shed for the District. Legal counsel was slow to respond to the last question from Selectmen who made their decision prior to legal counsel's response. Mr. Martin suggested that the Board could use impact fees to pay down bond principal, which would free up money in the budget to build a storage facility. Mr. Guerrette was opposed to the suggestion indicating it was not good budget practice. Mr. Martin indicated that in this case the storage facility would be placed on a warrant article.

Mr. Boehm suggested that Selectmen provide impact fee expiration dates. He also suggested that those impact fees that are about to expire be used to pay down the bond principal. Mrs. Couture explained that a storage solution was

included and approved in the Capital Improvement Plan. Selectmen have been collecting impact fees for that storage project. She believes that the funds were collected under false pretenses.

Mr. Guerrette commented that Selectmen made their decision based on the decrease in enrollment in the District. Mr. Miller agreed with Mr. Boehm's suggested to query the timeline of the impact fees before making a decision. Mr. Martin will provide the information when it is received from the Selectmen.

6) 2009-2010 Bus Schedules

Mr. Martin distributed the 2009-2010 bus schedules to the Board.

7) 2009-2010 Board Goals

Board members reviewed draft goals and revisions. Mr. Guerrette suggested adding an objective for facility maintenance under Goal 3: Maintain a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment. Board members agreed and developed wording for the new objective.

Mr. Guerrette also suggested a new objective to actively engage or invite the public in Board and/or District actions. This objective would fall under Goal 4: Increase community awareness of and involvement in the Litchfield School District. Mr. Miller indicated that public participation is limited to community input, unless there is a specific committee that requires their involvement. Board members agreed to revise Objective C to read: Create quarterly cable programming focusing on district issues and Board action.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the 2009-2010 Board Goals as amended. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

8) Resignation

Dr. Cutler presented a staff resignation to the Board.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to accept the resignation of Amy Neithercut, a CHS science teacher, with appreciation for her service to the District. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

9) Manifest

The manifest was circulated and signed by the Board.

10) Curriculum Report

1) Annual Assessment Report

Ms. Lecaroz reviewed the Annual Assessment Report with the Board. Highlighted items included:

- Graduation rate jumped from 92% - 98.4%;
- dropout data indicates 4 student left last year, but not official until Oct 1;
- SAT rankings indicate CHS is below state and national averages; 32 students took AP exams ;
- 62% of graduates attending four year colleges;
- 87% of graduates pursuing further education;
- NWEA: Math (Gr 10) increase of 4.1%, Reading (Gr 10) increase of 1%;
- NECAP index scores show student performing in combined proficient with distinction and proficient levels increased 5% from previous year.

Ms. Lecaroz indicated that there are four other parts to the report: District, GMS, LMS, and CHS. NECAP results are also included. She indicated that the principals would speak to the report at the September 23 Board meeting.

Mr. Guerrette was concerned that the RIT scores as they are presented are vague without grade score comparison. He commented that he is not comfortable not knowing that we are being the best we can be. Ms. Lecaroz explained that there are other factors and a variety of assessments to consider and the overall data predicts if we are going in the right direction. Ms. Lecaroz encouraged the Board to review the report and prepare questions for the principals for the September 23 curriculum meeting.

2) Summer School Report

Dr. Cutler presented the Summer School Report to the Board explaining that all students that were failing courses were required to attend. She indicated that summer school was very successful as all students passed their courses and will be promoted to the next grade.

3) Adult Education Report

Dr. Cutler presented the Adult Education Report to the Board. She indicated that any offering that had less than five attendees will not be offered again.

11) Superintendent's Report

a) Superintendent's Report – August 2009

Dr. Cutler presented her Superintendent's report for July/August 2009.

b) Updated Enrollment – FYI

Dr. Cutler gave a kindergarten and 1st grade registration update to Board members. Currently, there are 66 students registered for kindergarten, and 106 students registered for 1st grade at GMS.

c) H1N1 Update

Dr. Cutler updated Board members on the H1N1 Flu. Mr. Kevin Lynch and Dr. Cutler met with school nurses on August 25 to discuss the H1N1 update. She will participate in a conference call on August 27 about H1N1 flu preparations. Hand dispensers are on order for all classrooms and common areas. She explained that she addressed staff members on Monday about preventative measures (hand washing, coughing protocol, staying home when sick). Dr. Cutler mentioned that she spoke to the nurses about the possibility of opening a flu clinic in the District with the assistance of the Health Department. She also mentioned that there is much controversy over the vaccine. The regular flu vaccine will be available soon. Dr. Cutler directed all custodians to wipe down doorknobs when emptying trash and directed all teachers to disinfect computer keyboards and doorknobs as well.

12) New Business

1) Financial Policies to be Reviewed:

a) Authorized Use of District-Owned Materials & Equipment (EDC)

Board members reviewed and briefly discussed the policy.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1st Reading. Mr. Guerrette seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

b) Purchasing (DJ)

Board members reviewed and briefly discussed the policy. A minor revision was suggested. Board members requested the purchasing procedures at the next policy reading.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1st Reading. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0

c) Local Purchasing (DJF)

Board members reviewed and briefly discussed the policy.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1st Reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0

d) Payment Procedures (DK)

Board members reviewed and briefly discussed the policy.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1st Reading. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0

e) Expense Reimbursements (DKC)

Board members reviewed and briefly discussed the policy.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the policy for a 1st Reading. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0

13) Old Business

a) Continued Discussion of Instructional Materials Policy (IJL/R)

**This item immediately followed Item 8, Community Input.*

Board members reviewed revisions to the policy. Other minor revisions were suggested. Board members discussed the proposed policy language suggested by Mr. Guerrette and Mr. Boehm.

Mr. Guerrette clarified that perception varies from person to person and that the policy does not provide a middle ground. He believes that the proposed language is not censorship, but commented that the initial course selection was censored by teachers who determined what was and was not moral. He believes the community should be invited to participate in review of the course materials and their selection. Mr. Guerrette indicated that the schools belong to the people and everyone in town has an equal right to due process and this selection process.

Mr. Guerrette respectfully rescinded the proposed policy language, but strongly suggested that we consider community input and apply standards to the policy.

Mr. Guerrette requested that, over the next year, the Short Story Review Committee be re-assembled with an invitation for participation of the entire town population.

Mrs. Couture believes that parents have the right to be responsible for what their children learn at school. She suggested that Section II, #5 of the policy addresses parent notification and communication, providing an opportunity for parents to be involved. Mrs. Couture also pointed out that the policy/procedures provides that parents can opt their children out of the course as well. She added that the policy provides more opportunity for people to challenge materials.

Mr. Guerrette expressed his concern over the amount of alternate materials from which parents and students are able to choose. He believes that there should be an adequate amount of materials from which alternate selections can be made, citing the It's a Mystery course as an example. Ms. Lecaroz reported that she spoke with the teacher of the "It's a Mystery" course and that no selections entitled "Texas Heat" or "Lord and Master" were used or discussed in the class or included in the final exam.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that there are a number of elective courses for students to consider. Mr. Guerrette commented that there should be more suitable alternate short story courses available to students whose parents express concern with existing courses.

Ms. Lecaroz proposed an amendment to the policy that allows parents to see what is coming up and what resources will be used. She added that curriculum guides will be provided for all materials. Mr. Boehm suggested the inclusion of a statement about local control of curriculum. Board members discussed at length concerns surrounding the revisions.

Mr. Guerrette asked Mr. Boehm to clarify his viewpoint on the re-assembly of the Short Story Review Committee. Mr. Boehm indicated that if problems continue to arise, he would agree to discussions of assembling a new committee to review the course. Mr. Miller redirected the discussion to focus on the policy.

The policy will go to a 1st Reading.

- b) Policies – 2nd Reading
 - 1) Early Graduation (IKFA)

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the Early Graduation policy. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

14) Committee Reports

1) Selectmen

Mrs. Jewett reported that Selectmen have begun their budget reviews. She also reported that work continues on the 275th Anniversary celebration.

2) Legislative

Mr. Boehm reported that there are not dates set for the legislature at this time.

15) Community Input

There was no community input.

16) Non-Public Minutes

a) School Board Draft Minutes:

1) Non-Public Minutes of August 12, 2009

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

17) Adjourn

Mrs. Couture made a motion to adjourn at 10:15 p.m. Mr. Guerrette seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

18) Upcoming Meetings

>Litchfield School Board - September 2, 9, 23, 2009 - CHS Media Room – 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn
School Board Administrative Assistant