

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

July 29, 2009

(approved as written 8-12-09)

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

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

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:31 p. m.

2) Review and Revision of Agenda

Revisions to the agenda included an addition under Business Affairs, RSA 91-A discussion.

3) School Board Members' Comments

Mr. Miller announced that the meeting is being recorded, but is not being broadcast live due to technical difficulties.

Mr. Boehm announced that, when preparing the FY11 budget, the Board should keep in mind that Litchfield stands to have an \$850,000 revenue shortfall. He indicated that in preparation for the budget, reductions should be left to the administration. Mr. Boehm also commented that there are ways the public can assist in increasing education aid for the District: accurate reporting of median household income on the census; filing a federal tax return, even if you think you may not need to file; applying for free/reduced lunch for children in the school district. Mr. Boehm noted that all these things help to increase the amount of federal and state aid the District receives. Mrs. Jewett agreed and suggested the Board look into informing residents of the Active Adult communities.

Mr. Boehm commented that he noticed signs on the Timberlane High School field that indicated donations by sponsors and suggested that the Board looks into sponsors for field improvements in the District.

Mrs. Couture suggested that handouts and information Board members receive for each meeting be posted online for community members. Mr. Guerrette agreed.

Mr. Guerrette commented on a policy, The People & Their School District, that was rescinded last year. He believes that the policy is important and reflects the culture of the community in relation to the schools. Mr. Guerrette requested the policy be placed on the next Board agenda for consideration as a philosophical statement.

Mrs. Flynn provided information previously requested by Board members relative to the NH Municipal Center and the NHSBA proposed litigation against NH Retirement System and a query about the existence of District Meeting discussions relative to computer vendors for the District.

4) Summary of Non-Public Actions

Mr. Miller read the non-public actions from the July 15, 2009 meeting.

From the July 15, 2009 Non-Public Session:

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

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the nomination of Karen Martin as Tech Ed teacher at LMS for a salary of \$51,911 for the 2009-2010 school year. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Mr. Boehm made a motion to approve the nomination of Bonnie Barry as part-time Special Education teacher at GMS for a salary of \$19,163.50 for the 2009-2010 school year. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 4-0-1, with Mr. Guerrette abstaining.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the nomination of Dan Kiestlinger as part-time (65%) Athletic Director at CHS at a salary of \$46,155.64 for the 2009-2010 school year. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 3-0-2, with Mr. Guerrette and Mrs. Jewett abstaining.

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to authorize District negotiations for the First Student contract. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

5) Community Input

Sue Ann Johnson suggested that in light of the H1N1 Flu, hand sanitizer be provided in the schools. Mrs. Johnson commented on the short story review process, indicating her disappointment. She commented on some of the short stories in question and believed that they had been removed from the course by the Board. She indicated that the criteria for selection in the policy is vague. Mrs. Johnson commented that she is not in favor of people she does not know sharing ethical and moral standards with her children. She believes that the policy and curriculum should be in line with corporate America (if it can't be read on television it doesn't belong in school). Mrs. Johnson believes that we are not preparing the students for the real business world. She indicated that if people are exposed to something enough they will think it is normal. Studies show that exposure to violence tends to make children grow up with violent tendencies. Negative exposure yields a negative effect. She suggested tighter guidelines and standards for what is appropriate for children in schools.

Kevin Smith, 47 Garden Drive commended the Board and Dr. Cutler for their swift action when concern was raised over the English curriculum. He looks forward to the work that the committee will bring forward. Mr. Smith mentioned that parents were being harassed on internet blogs and expressed his concern. He indicated that there has been a lot of discussion about censorship and that there is certain age appropriate material that should be brought into the classroom. He commended Mrs. Johnson for raising concerns about the curriculum to others in town. Mr. Smith added that he is sure the committee will be prudent in their action toward censorship.

Laura Gandia, 3 Chamblberlain Drive expressed concerns about the committee selection process. She believed it is not representative. She disagreed that recent graduates should serve on the committee. She commented that there are some people that are not parents with valuable input that would like to serve on the committee, and that exclusion of these people is not fair. She indicated that the Board must think about their legal responsibility to students as there could be legal liabilities if policies are not strict enough for materials. Ms. Gandia indicated that balance is critical for the well being of the students and the town. Parents need to feel that they can send their children to school with trust and confidence. She indicated that this district wants students to have an open mind and take good values into the world. Ms. Gandia believes the current policy gives too much discretion and too broad a range for teachers and not enough parameters about what is appropriate. She is asking the Board to reconsider the selection process and review the policy in fine detail.

Richard Rafferty, 33 Century Lane commented that he doesn't share all the concerns of people that spoke this evening. He indicated that there are policies in place to guide the Board in situations like this. He suggested that the Board follow the policy in place and change it if necessary. Mr. Rafferty was concerned that the policy was not followed when the issue was first brought to light and that the proper procedure was not followed. He added that reconsideration concerns need to be submitted in writing and that he hopes the situation can be resolved with less drama.

Sue Ann Johnson commented that when she first raised concerns with the teachers there was no mention of any forms to file for challenged materials. It was mentioned at a subsequent meeting, but she was informed that the form wasn't necessary.

Matt Rafferty, 33 Century Lane commented that the students who read the stories in question disliked the characters and behavior of the characters. He believes that the dislike of these characters is the deterrent to emulation.

Nothing in these stores would inspire anyone to want to be like those characters. Mr. Rafferty believes that many students have the maturity to understand the differences. He added that a review committee and report would be of help.

6) **Recommended Action**

a) **Business Affairs**

1) RSA 91-A and Sequential Conversations

Mr. Miller was concerned with a correspondence [and public forum posting] by Mr. Guerrette to Mr. Miller indicating that Mr. Guerrette contacted each Board member except Mrs. Couture to poll them about having a special meeting regarding the selection of instructional materials review process. Mr. Miller indicated that the Board may need legal clarification if Mr. Guerrette's actions constituted a sequential communication, which would violate RSA 91-A:2-a. He asked for a consensus of the Board to seek legal clarification.

Mr. Guerrette denied that he had a conversation with any Board members. He indicated that he was attempting to resolve the matter by suggesting an agenda item. He believes that the communication was not an illegal meeting.

Mr. Miller asked Board members for guidance on seeking legal clarification of RSA 91-A:2-a. Mr. Boehm commented that his comment was taken out of context in the forum. Mrs. Couture commented that legal clarification may be necessary. Mrs. Jewett disagreed.

Mr. Guerrette indicated that his intention was to request a special meeting to discuss the issue. The remedy to a 91-A violation is to disclose all communication to the public, which has been done. He believes there is no reason to involve an attorney.

Mrs. Couture indicated that if it is clear that sequential polling of Board members is illegal, then it should not be done.

Board consensus: no sequential communications between Board members.

2) Draft School Board Minutes:

a) Public Minutes July 15, 2009

Minor revisions were made to the minutes.

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

3) Acceptance of Donation (Computers)

Dr. Cutler reported that the District received a donation of 30 computers, 17 monitors, and 1 printer from the IRS. The School Board publicly thanked Mr. Steve Bazzochi of Litchfield for facilitating the donation. They have been delivered to GMS.

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to accept the IRS donation of 30 computers and 17 monitors. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

4) 2008-2009 Board Accomplishments

Dr. Cutler reported that the Board has accomplished many important tasks during the past year. These accomplishments will serve as a guide to goal development for the 2009-2010 year.

5) 2009-2010 Board Goals

The 2009-2010 Board Goals worksheet was distributed to Board members prior to the meeting. Dr. Cutler indicated that the worksheet includes goal updates for 2008-2009 as well as recommendations for the 2009-2010 year. Dr. Cutler indicated that the goals are traditionally completed before the school year begins.

Mr. Guerrette commented that he believes more time is necessary for goal development. He indicated that the process of goal development requires community input and the goals should reflect the current climate of the community. Mr. Guerrette suggested scheduling goal development over the next year.

Mrs. Couture clarified that the goals are set for the long term (3-5 years). Each year the Board looks at accomplishment of each goal, progress that was made, challenges, and guidance from professionals. She indicated that the current goals originated from the community.

Dr. Cutler indicated that a community engagement plan was formalized last year. Much information is disseminated to the community and as many as 50 different meetings were held with parents and the community last year. Dr. Cutler noted that the Board has done a good job paying attention to the community.

Mr. Guerrette indicated that parent/teacher meetings about report cards was not reflected in the community engagement plan. He was also concerned with a particular notation on report cards stating “a meeting is not required”. He suggested that the report card reflect “parents are welcome to come in and meet with the teacher”.

Mr. Miller read the goals and objectives and noted any changes and recommendations.

Goal 1: Increase achievement for all students

Objective E. Implement kindergarten programming, was added.

Goal 2: Develop confident, responsible, and productive students with post graduate aspirations

The goal was unchanged.

Goal 3: Maintain a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment

Objective B. Create a documentation plan for individual student progress academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

There was a suggested addition of digital portfolios to this objective.

Goal 4: Increase community awareness of and involvement in the Litchfield School District

Objective A: To provide an adult education program for the Litchfield Community.

A suggestion was made to provide a report on the Adult Education program.

Mr. Boehm suggested the addition of the law on Accountability to the goals and objectives. Dr. Cutler indicated that would be added under Goal 1.

Mr. Miller suggested that Board members review the goals and objectives over the next two weeks. Mr. Guerrette suggested that suggestions and/or input can be submitted to Mrs. Flynn to formulate into the worksheet. Dr. Cutler suggested finalizing the goals and objectives at the August 12 Board meeting in order to focus on the FY11 budget process in September.

6) Community Engagement Plan

Dr. Cutler reported that an updated copy of the Community Engagement Plan that was created last year has been provided for Board members to review.

7) Discussion Item: Possible Site for Future SAU

Dr. Cutler reported that she spoke with Mr. Frank Byron, Selectmen Chair, and discussed the possibility of a future SAU building being located on town land. The Litchfield Fire Department has submitted a “shovel ready” fire station project for stimulus funding. If approved, it would be located at the town complex. The town also has a parcel of land on Talent Road that the Recreation Department is looking at for a new field. The position of these two projects on the respective properties would dictate if there would be additional space at either location for an SAU. Dr. Cutler recommended that the Board consider the town complex in order to expedite collaboration between the school district and the town. The Board agreed that the town complex would be the preferred location for a future SAU building.

8) District Newsletter Review

Dr. Cutler reported that the District Highlander has been published for four years. Eleven issues have been printed and distributed to the residents in Litchfield. Mrs. Flynn provided an annual cost analysis for the Board. Dr. Cutler indicated that Board direction is necessary to determine continuation of an online or printed newsletter. Board members indicated the publication of the newsletter should remain printed. Dr. Cutler suggested that Board members submit topics for the newsletter to Mrs. Flynn. The Board will revisit the item during the goal discussion at the August 12 meeting.

9) Manifest

The manifest was circulated and signed by the Board.

7) **New Business**

a) Policy Work Session

1) Selection of Instructional Resources (IJL/IJL-R)

Dr. Cutler noted that this policy has been revised for Board review. Revisions were made in comparison of NHSBA, Londonderry, Merrimack, Hudson, and Salem policies. Policy revisions were made with careful consideration of the recent short story issue.

Board members discussed the policy at length. Revisions to the policy included:

Under Section II - A, #5: Parents shall be informed of topics and materials used in coursework and classrooms. This notice shall include one or more of the following vehicles: distribution of course syllabi, course descriptions, curriculum guides, electronic communications, or other written notice.

Under Section II – A, #5, bulleted section: To ensure factual content in all non-fiction materials.

Under Section II – B, #4: To provide materials on opposing sides of issues so that young citizens, under proper guidance, may develop the practice of critical analysis of all media.

Board members made several revisions to the procedures as well.

Board members suggested that a list of all stories/books used in courses/classrooms be provided to parents. The following suggestions were made:

- the possibility of allowing parents/students to pick the stories they want to read;
- alternative selections in classrooms;
- teacher meetings for parents to view books and/or selections used in courses/classrooms.

The policy will return with revisions for another work session on August 12.

Dr. Cutler indicated that the Review Committee is looking at the short story materials and will submit their report on August 4. The course will be presented to the Board with revision, a syllabus will be developed, and parents will be notified. Mr. Guerrette suggested the report include a breakdown of data (teacher, parent, student).

The following items (2-11) were deferred to the August 12 Board meeting.

- 2) Student Accident Reports (EBBB) (Clarification)
- 3) Student Attendance & Absences (JH/R)
- 4) Home Education Instruction (IHBG/R)
- 5) Distance Learning (IMBA/R)
- 6) Traffic & Parking Controls (ECD)
- 7) Professional Staff Hiring (GCF)
- 8) Employee Job Actions (HP)
- 9) Employee Job Actions (Unauthorized Employee Absences) (HPA)
- 10) Right to Know Policy (Rescind)
- 11) School Superintendent (CB) (Amend)

8) **Old Business**

1) Policies – 2nd Reading

a) Photocopying Procedures (Amendment to Policy)

Mrs. Couture made a motion to approve the Photocopying Procedures. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 4-1-0, with Mr. Guerrette voting in the negative.

b) Transfer of Appropriations (DBJ)

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

c) Revenues from Local, State, & Federal Tax Sources (DEA)

Mrs. Jewett made a motion to approve the policy. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

d) Investment Policy (DFA)

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

e) Gate Receipts, Fees, & Admissions (DFE)

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

f) Free Admissions (DFEA)

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

g) Depository of Funds (DG)

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

h) Authorized Signatures (DGA)

Mr. Martin indicated that he made a revision to the policy prior to the meeting. Mrs. Couture recommended that the policy be approved for an amended 1st Reading .

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

i) Bonded Employees (DH)

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

j) Financial Management & Reporting (DI)

Mr. Miller indicated that Mr. Dennis Perreault submitted suggestions for a revision by written correspondence.

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

k) Payroll Procedures (DKA)

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to approve the policy. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

l) Cash & Checks in School Buildings (DM)

Mr. Miller indicated that Mr. Dennis Perreault submitted a suggestion relative to the second paragraph of the policy indicating that cash and checks left in school overnight be kept in safes. Mr. Martin noted that he mentioned at the policy work session on July 15 that approval of this policy will require the District to purchase safes.

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to approve the policy. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

m) Skateboards, Rollerblades & Scooters (JHFF)

Mrs. Couture requested that the Superintendent and Business Administrator confirm the insurance company's position in relation to prohibiting the stated recreational items in the policy. She indicated that the insurance company only mentioned skateboards in their last response. The policy will be deferred to the August 12 Board meeting.

9) **Committee Reports**

1) **Selectmen**

Mrs. Jewett indicated that plans for the town's 275th anniversary celebration are going well. The celebration will be held on September 19 with a parade starting from LMS. Residents can tour the library, church, fire and police stations, and meeting house. Food and activities will be held at GMS. A softball game between the police and fire departments will start at 3:00 p.m. and a bonfire is planned later in the afternoon. The raindate is September 20. Mrs. Jewett announced that volunteers are needed to run activities and concessions.

Mrs. Jewett reported that Selectmen will begin their budget process the first week of September.

10) **Community Input**

Kevin Smith, 47 Garden Drive, commented that he appreciates the time that has been spent on the curriculum issue. He indicated that the message the group wanted to convey is that there needs to be a standard of decency in what is offered and that appears to not have been addressed. He was concerned that half of the Review Committee is made up of students and believes that what they choose is not necessarily what is good for them. Mr. Smith commented that when reviewing the policy it would be nice to have a common sense clause. He expressed that he hopes the District is hiring teachers that know what is not appropriate when they see it. Mr. Smith was pleased that parental notification was included in the policy revisions. He indicated he was concerned with the amount of books that may be in kindergarten and first grade classrooms and requested that perhaps instead of providing a list of all the books, a list of themes would be more practical. Mr. Smith indicated that we elect the School Board to work for the community.

Sue Ann Johnson commented that she was encouraged by the progress made with policy and that she echoed Mr. Smith's comments. She suggested defining red flags in the curriculum. She believes that we need to challenge our children and ourselves and that there are so many more appropriate things that could be included in the curriculum.

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 10:14 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. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried by roll call: Mr. Miller, yes; Mrs. Couture, yes; Mr. Boehm, yes; Mrs. Jewett, yes; Mr. Guerrette, no.

12) **Return to Public Session**

Mr. Guerrette made a motion to return to public session at 10:38 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.

13) **Adjourn**

Mrs. Jewett made a motion to adjourn at 10:39 p.m. Mrs. Couture seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

14) **Upcoming Meetings**

>Litchfield School Board: August 12, 26, 2009 - CHS Media Room - 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn
School Board Administrative Assistant