

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2013**

The meeting of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Hemant Marathe at 6:04 p.m. in Dutch Neck Elementary School's administrative conference room. The following board members were present:

Ms. Rachelle Feldman Hurwitz	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Alapakkam Manikandan
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Hemant Marathe
Mr. Robert Johnson	Ms. Dana Krug	

Board Member Xu was initially absent, but arrived to participate in the discussion. Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning.

CONVENE

In accordance with the State's Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE TRENTONIAN, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro's and West Windsor's township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. He noted that discussions of the calendar recognizing an additional community perspective has long been discussed; he shared a newspaper article from 1997.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Aderhold also welcomed the Board to the retreat. He outlined a protocol to be used tonight to provide a structure to the process. Key elements are allowing each board member an uninterrupted 5 to 10 minutes to state their thoughts on the calendar. Then an opportunity would be for members to ask clarifying questions relating to the comments made. Finally, each member would have two minutes to make a final statement on the subject.

DISCUSSION

The Superintendent reviewed sample school district calendars for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. For each year, a list of dates to be kept in mind was provided. Lastly, the experience of the district over the years with the number of days the district was closed, provides a feel for the adequacy of weather days in each calendar. Calendars are much constrained by the general desire and past practice: to not start students before Labor Day, a desire to have firm winter and spring break dates, and wanting not to go into the fourth week of June – and yet get 180 days of instruction and sufficient professional development into the schedule. Mr. Kaye observed that the ideal would be to capture an overlap of three main areas: professional development, learning & instruction, and the community's profile.

Board members statements brought out a large number of relevant factors on a calendar. A district might weigh heavily for federal holidays only. This might require contractual changes over time. A calendar might focus on employee preferences for time off, whether contractual or more informal. Another perspective would be to factor student/parent preferences into the dates selected. Members noted the wide variety of practices across the county and even in our region. Some start in the summer, others have off for the first day of hunting, while others recognize the cultural and religious days of importance to staff and community of a particular locale.

The discussion was thoughtful. Everyone was heard. There was respect for each viewpoint expressed.

Overall, the board wants the administration to develop calendars that balance these varied requirements for the two years. A likely way utilizes professional development days to provide student days off for culturally/religiously important days for our community. The administration will meet and having developed such calendars, share these calendars with a variety of staff and community and will then bring these calendars to the Board of Education for adoption late this month.

Superintendent Aderhold and President Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Kaye, seconded by Ms. Kaish, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
November 20, 2013**

The meeting of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Hemant Marathe at 6:02 p.m. in the media center at High School North. The following board members were present:

Ms. Rachele Feldman Hurwitz	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Alapakkam Manikandan
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Hemant Marathe
Ms. Louisa Ho	Ms. Dana Krug	

The ninth Board of Education position is currently vacant. Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning. Guests attending were: Scott Powell and Taylor Zhong.

CONVENE

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No other members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. He noted that the main purpose of the meeting was to develop an understanding of the district's financial picture as we prepare for the 2014-2015 budget; and, to understand and come to an agreement on how we will utilize the addition to the Village School.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Aderhold also welcomed the Board to the retreat. He outlined a protocol to be used tonight to provide a structure to the process. As a start to tonight's discussion, he asked each participant to turn to another and briefly discuss "why do you do this Board of Education role that you put so much effort into throughout the year?" In a brief recap of the discussions, the dominant motivation to serving on the Board was: community service; a desire to give back to the community.

DISCUSSIONS

Budget 2014 - 2015: Guiding Principles and Priorities

Mr. Shanok reviewed the financial history of the district in the context of educational excellence and financial moderation. The district budget lays out the financial resources available for use in meeting its goals; the budget must allow for contingencies and risk. This is facilitated by adopting a multi-year perspective and working to allow as much flexibility as can be attained.

The 1990s were a period of tremendous district growth: enrollment, staff, and facilities. Experience across the state and nation demonstrates that excellence is a goal that most districts do not successfully achieve; yet, the district flourished within its choices. The district was allowed more flexibility back then: years ago, there was no cap on property taxes per se; even when a cap was first imposed it was twice the size of the current 2% general fund tax levy cap. Also, the district was allowed to have a much larger general fund balance – the district generally would maintain a 4.5 to 6 percent balance - allowing much greater year-to-year flexibility than the current 2% cap allows.

There was a price to the district's success: six of the 1990's budget-to-budget annual increases exceeded 10%. The district enjoys tremendous community support, yet as spending rose, three budgets were defeated. While building on educational excellence, the Board of Education charged the administration to reduce the rate of spending growth in a meaningful manner. This began concerted efforts that continue to this day to moderate the rate of growth in spending. As a practical matter, it is observed that unless one cuts significant numbers of personnel and programs, what is accomplished is a moderation in the rate of spending increases and not a literal spending reduction over a period of years. The discussion then covered the steps taken to accomplish this and the impact of these steps.

Within two years of this effort, district per-pupil spending went from \$336 per student above the state average to \$152 below the state average; continuing squeezing of costs – with an emphasis of staying away from the classroom – eventually brought the district to more than \$1,000 per student below the New Jersey average. Students, parents, staff, and facilities all support learning, but there can be no doubt that this is done in a relatively “lean” financial manner. Spending in other high-performing districts generally is well above our spending level.

With lower total spending comes some inevitable anomalies: WWP spends about \$8,000 per student in the classroom spending category; \$1,500 to \$2,500 per student less than Hopewell Valley and Princeton; this is about 65% of total district spending compared to 61%-63% at Hopewell Valley and Princeton. If we spent \$1,000 per student more, the figures would be ten million more dollars to be spent each year – a great deal of increased spending that we presently do not do.

A variety of other aspects of finance and budgeting were discussed. The district cannot have a line of credit, initiate bank loans, or access private equity sources as a corporation can. The district must budget adequately or face unpleasant last-minute cuts in programs when costs rise. Examples of rapid cost increases were discussed, among them: health benefit spending has increased by more than 10% in 6 of the last 12 years; 5 of the last 12 years have seen increases in workers' compensation insurance costs of 19% to 59%; 4 of the past 12 years have seen increased utility bills of 15% to 22%. Squeezing spending has led to tighter practices that occasionally have an impact on specific students; such impacts range from class size and availability to co-curricular activities. Utilizing excess surplus for tax relief and capital reserve, in turn, has led to heavy use of Regular Operating District grants that provide 40 cents on the dollar from the state for approved projects. These are among the tactics used to moderate growth in tax levies.

While the district has achieved a considerable amount of excess general fund balance in the last two years, this cannot be counted upon; and, past experience was reviewed to demonstrate this. The State of New Jersey has proven that it will abruptly impact funding and mandate additional expenses. It was shown where the squeezing has brought change: student: teacher ratios, student: administrator ratios, and other staffing levels. Each year there remain fewer available options to impede the rate of increase of costs without impacting programs and people.

General desires for more technology, security, facilities, and programs will require continuing attention and careful decision making. The pressure on expenditures will continue and the choices will not be easy to make.

Addition to Village School

Dr. Aderhold reviewed the history that led to the district decision to build an addition to Village School. Among the considerations are: a lack of additional classrooms for regular and special education needs; and, the confusion and inconvenience to parents from having Registration, Community Education, Special Services, Guidance, and Transportation at different locations due to the lack of space. The existing Central Office is not suited to its role; it has been seen by the Board of Education that portions of the building are not to be used as an all-day workplace. An addition allows the district some flexibility in addressing these issues without resorting to a referendum and \$40-\$50 million in bonding to support construction for another school. If further growth should develop in the future, a new school may be necessary; but, the addition creates the possibility of rearranging present district activities in a manner that assists parents, improves continuity of learning for students, and provides a few years in which to see how new township construction and demographics of the community develop.

Spirited discussion ensued among the Board members and administrators. Support for the direction outlined was broad based. To honor the district's practice of advanced awareness and communication it will be appropriate to expand the conversation to more and more district constituencies.

Superintendent Aderhold and President Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Ms. Krug, seconded by Ms. Kaish, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
March 20, 2014**

The meeting of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Anthony Fleres at 6:00 p.m. in High School North's media center. The following board members were present:

Ms. Rachelle Feldman Hurwitz	Ms. Rachel Juliana	Ms. Dana Krug
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Scott Powell
Ms. Louisa Ho	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Yu "Taylor" Zhong

Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning. Also in attendance was: Rick Cave, Director of Technology; Mark Wise, Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction; and, Russ Wray, Supervisor of Instructional Technology.

CONVENE

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No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Fleres welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. The main purpose of this retreat is to develop an understanding of the direction of our district technology initiatives in support of learning and, to come to an agreement on how we plan to move the district forward.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Aderhold also welcomed the Board to the retreat and thanked the Director of Technology, Rick Cave, Mark Wise, and Russell Wray, for their attendance. He indicated that as a result of this retreat an understanding will be reached on what we believe and value regarding the utilization of technology to support our Mission Statement; understanding the district's initiatives and programs; looking forward and setting technology parameters; and, recognize how our technology priorities impact the work of the Board Committees moving forward.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Smith reviewed the district mission and vision from the time a few years ago to the present. The Board Members separated into their respective committees and discussed the mission/vision, making comments at portions of interest and discussion. Reviewing the committee work, Mr. Smith noted that the efforts are not about the tool, though it can be transformational. The bigger picture is student engagement.

Mr. Wise emphasized that the 1:1 program initiative is not to have \$300 “pencils.” Through redefinition, modification, augmentation and substitution this is to amplify learning, not to automate it. He described the end of year assessment and noted that many board members have participated as judges. There is not a technology gap, but an engagement gap that this can serve to close.

Mr. Wray led a discussion of the utilization of technology in support of the district’s mission. He described the initiatives and programs in support of instruction and the continuum of instruction grades three through seven. He noted expectations by grade.

There was a discussion of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). With the 20 day window, the impact on the instructional year is significant. The Superintendent asked that Board Members go back into their committees and address PARCC from their committees’ perspectives. After a discussion by the committees, Mr. Cave spoke about achieving our goals. Issues of reliability, access, equity, and support were addressed in his discussion. Issues as disparate as storage and cooling were noted. The technology inventory and resources, especially personnel, were described.

The Superintendent encouraged clarifying questions on these subjects. Each of the committees of the board spoke of their perspectives. Constraints were noted.

Board member Krug departed at 10:07 PM.

The discussion continued.

Superintendent Aderhold and Board President Fleres thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Kaye, seconded by Ms. Kaish, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
June 23, 2014**

The meeting of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Anthony Fleres at 6:02 p.m. in Grover Middle School's media center. The following board members were present:

Ms. Rachelle Feldman Hurwitz	Ms. Rachel Juliana	Ms. Dana Krug
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Scott Powell
Ms. Louisa Ho	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Yu "Taylor" Zhong

Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning.

CONVENE

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No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Fleres welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. He commented that the main purpose of this retreat is to brief the Board on the educational direction of the administrative team so that administration will have clarity and alignment between the Board and administrative staff about the goals for the 2014-2015 school year.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Aderhold also welcomed the Board to the retreat. By the end of the evening, with the Board providing feedback, Dr. Aderhold noted that these clarifications will help set the direction for this coming year. As an outcome of the retreat, Board Members will have a better understanding of the goals and the tasks associated with them; and, the administrative team will have clear direction and understanding of the Board's priorities.

He noted that the goals discussed tonight have taken Board of Education input into account, but in some cases the feedback may be more appropriate for utilization in board committees and in future retreats. Tonight the focus is on goals and tasks.

DISCUSSION

The Superintendent described the "maker" movement that is motivating many children to create; while it is found under a variety of names, invention and creativity is common to them all. A TED talk by Ayah Bdeir, an interactive artist, engineer, and founder/CEO of littleBits, an open source library of modular electronics that snap together with magnets, brought the subject to life; and, the Board of Education breaking up into two teams allowed the members to experience the process themselves.

Common Core. Martin Smith gave a Common Core Overview. He made clear the distinction between the standards movement which has been growing since the 1980's and the assessment movement which has gained momentum in recent years. NCLB tied assessments to standards. At this time 45 states and the District of Columbia are part of the Common Core effort. PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is an assessment option, has 13 states and the District of Columbia participating at this time.

Recently, the State of New Jersey and the district participated in a field trial of PARCC. The district's effort went well, but the entire field trial demonstrated that much detail remains to be determined in order to have a successful assessment effort next year. Unfortunately, the State of New Jersey is slow in reaching key decisions; this slowness will make advanced planning difficult.

Beliefs About Learning. Mr. Dalton led the Board of Education in a discussion of the article: Beliefs about Learning and Their Implications for Teaching and Learning. Utilizing the 4A's protocol, the group engaged in the process: silent reading of article, writing notes in answer to the following questions: what assumptions does the author hold? What do you agree with in the text? What do you want to argue with?

Three groups of Board Members engaged in the process. Wide ranging points were elicited. Ending the session with an open discussion let all members share ideas. Administrators stated that this article was successfully used in discussion with other district staff members.

District Goals 2014-2015. Dr. Aderhold reviewed the strategic goals and tasks associated with the goals for 2014-2015. Having separated the Board into three groups, as a first round the groups rotated through the three goals/tasks; the focus was on asking probing and clarifying questions to facilitate understanding among board and administrators of the tasks.

As a second round, the Board Members focused on measurable indicators associated with a task. Indications of whether the Board Members found the indicator a reasonable indicator for the task or whether there was an "off-base" element to the indicator. Questions were encouraged again to facilitate understanding. While most indicators received a "go" from the Board Members, the "off-base" indicators and notes will be studied to improve the document. The administrators will meet and integrate tonight's input into the process. The result will be shared again with Board Members at committee meetings as the 2014-2015 goals/tasks/measurable indicators are formulated.

Next Steps/Close. Feedback was encouraged. Board members sought better communication across committee members in the coming year. It was noted that there is a need to ask clarifying questions throughout the year whether one is a new member or an experienced one viewing an issue from a new perspective. The compound/complex nature of some indicators was noted. A desire for some of the tasks and indicators to give greater recognition to the multi-year flavor of several of the tasks and indicators was voiced. It was urged that where possible, information be shared in advance of retreats so that time can be spent familiarizing oneself with the material.

Superintendent Aderhold and Board President Fleres thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Kaye, seconded by Ms. Kaish, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary