



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES (REVISED)

April 21, 2014

Seymour Middle School

7:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
Saundra Gesek
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Theodora Klarides
Jennifer Magri
Allison Sobieski-McAndrew
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello

THERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Rick Belden, Asst. Superintendent, Finance & Operations
Ginny Tagliatela, Director of Special Services
Jim Freund, Assistant Principal, SHS
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Leslie Sojka, Assistant Principal, CLS
Fred Dorsey, Board Attorney

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 p.m.

II. REPORTS AND INFORMATION

A. Information

1. **Bylaw #9132 – Bylaws of the Board – Permanent Board Committees**

Mr. Putorti suggested there be an open discussion on what should be done with the current committees and asked Mr. Hatfield why we wanted to do this. Mr. Hatfield said he had done some research on how many times each committee had met since 2007 and found there were some committees that have had very few meetings. Mr. Putorti reminded the Board that if they want more information from a committee they can attend the committee meeting. All committee meetings are open to all Board members. He confirmed there have been times when they were able to speak at the meeting also. He explained the purpose of the committees is to streamline the process. The committee does the legwork and then brings the recommendation to the Board. He said the committees will do a better job of communicating what has transpired in their meeting. Mr. Hatfield said he felt if you have an interest and want to sit on a committee you should be able to and questioned why it had to be limited to three members. Mr. Dorsey said it was part of the existing bylaws. There was a discussion of having the Liaison Committee separated, into Certified and Non Certified. Doing this would allow all nine Board members to participate in the contract negotiations. Mr. Dorsey said the committee is structured for efficiency saying it would be difficult to get all nine members together for the number of meeting necessary and to meet the mandated timelines.

A committee of the whole is not a committee at all instead it is just a Board vote. If the committee of the whole participates in the negotiations, the BOE must ratify that contract. Ground rules dictate that if they reach an agreement, they must support it. You will never technically act publically on the largest contract in Seymour because the whole Board would have already acted on it as a committee of the whole. Mr. Dorsey confirmed that in most of the districts he worked with, the committees are comprised of three members and he recommended three member committees. Mr. Hatfield asked if other districts rotate members and Mr. Dorsey said they did. Mr. Dorsey said for consistency purposes, you should maintain at least one member who has participated in the past so you do not have to re-educate the entire committee. He said if you want to split up the Liaison Committee he recommended doing it as certified/non certified and to keep at least one previous Committee member from previous negotiations for consistency. Mr. Dorsey said he strongly recommends not having a committee of the whole. Mr. Dorsey explained what constituted a quorum with regard to committees. Ms. Harmeling said she felt the Board does a lot a lot of rubber stamping and this is a concern especially when it comes to Curriculum which she considers the heart of education. She said the Board misses out on input from administrators with regard to curriculum. She said she would like to see Curriculum as a committee of the whole. She would like to have important conversations with the public regarding curriculum. Mr. Putorti said this would make no time to conduct business. Mr. Strumello commented on the fact that our agendas are long and we often spend 30-40 minutes on discussion. Mr. Dorsey said you can have public input in a section of the agenda but not for each item. Ms. Magri shared that she has served on the Liaison Committee since she was elected and it has been very educational. It involves very long nights; taking off from work. You have to put a lot of hours in; there are timelines that must be followed with certain contracts. She said it is not what you think; you cannot change the world. She went into it with that mentality and found that it is not that easy. She stated she has concerns about splitting the Liaison Committee saying there are many reasons why some Board members cannot serve on the Liaison Committee such as those who have relatives who benefit from the contract. Mr. Dorsey confirmed if someone has a relationship with someone who has an interest in the contact then they cannot serve. Mr. Strumello said he felt being on a committee that does more work makes you feel more a part of the Board. If you sit on a committee that rarely meets, you are not involved. Ms. Harmeling said she felt there should be an additional committee with the focus on communication which she feels we are lacking in. It should be made up of Board members, teachers, and citizens. Mr. Dorsey said he has seen this type of committee and offered a caution. There is a lot of information that is protected and cannot be shared and a committee of this type needs to be cognizant of this. The committee needs to be well versed. Mr. Hatfield said he felt some committees could be combined such as facilities and transportation. Mrs. Syriac said she did not see a reason to eliminate any of the committees. There are committees that are important to be there when there are issues that need to be resolved. The number of times a committee meets is not relevant. She said with regard to the Curriculum Committee, we need small groups to vet the information and if the Board wants information, the administrators are available for presentations to the full Board. Mr. Strumello said he felt lumping safety with nutrition is not a good fit. He would like to see Safety and Facilities. Mr. Hatfield said this Board can empower a committee to make a change. Mr. Dorsey reminded the Board that they must follow the bylaw that deals with changes.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Strumello) to add to the agenda making changes to the bylaw #9132 Permanent Committees

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Putorti, Mr. Stanek

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to remove safety from the Nutrition, Health, and Safety Committee and place it with the Facilities Committee; remove #4 last sentence and move to committee #2 to Facilities Committee

Mr. Stanek said he was opposed to this motion saying we are changing mid stream. We already have members sitting on these committees. He said he does not understand the logic; these committees have worked for years. Ms. Harmeling said that she felt safety was a better fit with facilities but it does not have to be done tonight. It was recommended that this go back to the Policy Committee to put together a proposal so everyone can really see what is being suggested. Mr. Dorsey reminded the Board that there is a process that you cannot just simply change a bylaw, it must be accepted and then adopted in four weeks.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Strumello) to postpone this discussion to the next regular Board of Education meeting

SO VOTED:

AFFIRMATIVE Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Stanek Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Gesek, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Stanek

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Magri) to direct the Policy Committee to offer recommendations on bylaw #9132 Permanent Board Committees and bring back to the full Board for discussion

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Gesek, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Stanek

2. **Improving our Relationship with Local State Representatives**

Mr. Hatfield invited our state representative Theresa Conroy to give an update to the Board on legislative issues. Mr. Putorti said he was not sure that it fit with the agenda item. Mr. Hatfield said there are CAFE workshops where we can be updated on legislative issues but these are usually during the day and those of us who work cannot attend. We should invite representatives to give us updates; it should be on the agenda. Mr. Putorti agreed saying it was a good idea but not appropriate for this agenda. Ms. Magri spoke of her frustration with the legislative process. She said CAFE advocates on our behalf and gives us their input. She recommended the Board members read the CAFE recommendations. Ms. Harmeling agreed but pointed out how we receive the information from CAFE is difficult. Ms. Magri said the next CAFE Legislative workshop will be on May 15. Mr. Putorti said he thought it was a good idea to have our legislative representatives come and speak to the Board.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Stanek) to add to the agenda to have Representative Theresa Conroy give a legislative update to the Board

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

At 9:39 p.m. Representative Conroy spoke to the Board opening her remarks with the statement that her door is always open and if you have an issue to please call her. She discussed the process of legislative issues and spoke of some the current legislation. The Board asked when the best time of the year to have her come and speak to them would be and she suggested it would be best when they are not in session. She confirmed that CAFE is the best communicator of legislative issue when it is proposed for the BOE. Ms. Magri reminded the Board that they can sign up for an email every morning from CAFE. Representative Conroy gave Mrs. Syriac some posters on the Common Core from Region 16. The Board thanked Representative Conroy for updating them this evening.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to adjourn

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk