

# NEWPORT CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Monday, April 25, 2016

## Present

### **Board:**

Vicky Lantagne, Chair  
Chris Royer  
Wendy McGillivray  
Mary Ellen Prairie

### **Community Members/Parents:**

Christine Russell  
Laurie Grimm\*\*  
Amy-Lucas Brasseur\*\*  
Hugh Flanders\*\*  
Faye Stocker\*\*  
Lesley Rae Larsen  
Corinna Lancaster\*\*  
Anne Chiarello\*\*  
Pam Ladds\*\*  
Ira Batchelder\*\*  
Julie Raboin\*\*  
Tom Evans\*\*  
Colleen Moore Ortiz\*\*  
Robert Brasseur\*\*

### **Staff and Administration:**

Melinda Mascolino, Asst. Principal  
Nancy Frenette, Interim Principal  
Kristen Morey, Teacher  
Judith McKelvey, Teacher  
Samantha Knight, Bookkeeper  
John Castle, Superintendent  
Nancy Griffith, Recording Secretary  
Elaine Collins, Incoming Principal  
Glenn Hankinson, Director of Finance  
Sharon Pare\*\*, Teacher  
Mary Ellen Maclure, Teacher

\*\*partial attendees

## **I. Call the Informational Meeting to Order at 6:02 p.m.:**

Lantagne indicated that the purpose of tonight's informational meeting was to answer any questions that the community may have around the new proposed FY17 budget. She then opened the floor to the attendees.

GRIMM inquired as to what the differences were in the new budget. MCGILLIVRAY indicated that it came down to changes in administrative salaries based on a new hire for the principal position as well as the modification of the assistant principal position. FLANDERS inquired about the special education mandates and if any of those were reimbursable. HANKINSON responded that approximately 60% of those expenses were reimbursable. FLANDERS also inquired about the pre-k reimbursements and CASTLE explained that they are reimbursed at approximately 47% based on them not having to attend as many hours per week.

CASTLE pointed out that the main purpose of the trifold that was distributed to taxpayers was to explain how the tax rate is calculated. CHIARELLO asked why NCES' cost per pupil went up by approximately \$1,000 versus the state average of \$300, and CASTLE indicated that it came down to the drop in equalized pupil count. CHIARELLO asked if the drop of students was across the grades and the board indicated that mostly it was, but also the Pre-K enrollment was lower than anticipated in the fall when the count is calculated.

RABOUIN expressed disappointment that the new budget vote was not better advertised and promoted compared to the negative press from certain city councilmen. She asked as to what the next steps would be if the budget failed again. The Board responded that the budget is bare bones, and that programs and students will suffer if they have to make more cuts. LARSEN discussed how she felt the budget re-work

was widely advertised in various media outlets but that few people had taken advantage of those opportunities. Attendees expressed frustration that council and school board meetings are the same night.

GRIMM asked for clarification around potential reductions in art and music that were not included in the new proposed budget. MCGILLIVRAY expressed that the Board felt those programs were very important and that if it was a case of the teachers having some spare time they could look at adding responsibilities to those positions versus reducing those positions. BATCHELDER indicated that he agreed that art was very important to students.

Discussion was had around special education. EVANS pointed out that when you remove the items that are out of the school districts control (increases in insurance premiums, negotiated salary increases and special education mandates) the district actually cut the budget by close to \$170,000 over last year, and he applauds them. The current anticipated tax rate increase of \$0.005 based on the new proposed budget would represent a measly \$4 a year for a \$100,000 house. EVANS was flabbergasted that this would be an issue for any taxpayer.

FLANDERS asked what the student teacher ratio was at NCES. The administration indicated it is approximately 1:15, and then he asked what the ratio was for teacher aides. The group felt that was not relevant as the majority of aides were mandated by special education requirements as they are one on one aides. MOORE DE ORTIZ stated that Vermont mandates public education and that we should not exclude certain students and that the Board is trying to provide all of those services needed for all students. CHIARELLO asked that the board discuss how the actual reductions are broken out once you take away the items that the board had no control over. The board pointed out that some of the items reduced were: reduction of library aide position, contracted tech services versus direct employee, and a reduction in supplies line. LADDS re-iterated that better communication is needed as these items were very relevant. There was a feeling that a lot of answers were not provided at the initial city council presentation, thus leaving the community members feeling that the board was not taking the process seriously. EVANS thanked the board for all of their hard work, which received a round of applause from the crowd.

- II. **Approve minutes of March 30 and April 4, 2016** (*Attachments A1, A2*). Motion to approve the minutes – ROYER/McGILLIVRAY – **Approved**.
- III. **Public Comments, Communication with Parents/Staff/Citizens:** None.
- IV. **Presentation: Special Education:** Board is not aware of what this item is.
- V. **Financial Reports**
  - Action:
    - A. Approve the Warrants: Warrants will be reviewed tomorrow.
- VI. **Principal's Report** (*Handout*): LANTAGNE expressed that the students had been very excited about the baby chicks that were hatched in a first grade classroom. MOREY indicated that students from all grades were encouraged to pass by the classroom to view them as well. MCGILLIVRAY asked what the food audit entailed in the report and CASTLE confirmed it is a State mandate and that audits will be done in all the district schools.
- VII. **Superintendent's Report:** CASTLE talked about the learning walks, or instructional rounds, that will be going on in all of our schools. It is for administrators to witness student learning and observe various practices within the schools to encourage collaboration between all schools. They are not to collect specific student data. The walks will take place over the next few weeks, and his goal is to report the findings to all boards in June.

## VIII. Unfinished Business:

### Discussion/Information

- A. Considerations for FY17 Budget Revote: none
- B. Edward Jones proposal: **Motion** to have Edward Jones move forward with their recommendations – PRAIRIE/ROYER – **approved.**
- C. Locks project: PRAIRIE inquired as to the status of the change of door locks and FRENETTE indicated that not all handles were in so the project is not complete.
- D. PRAIRIE asked about first year teachers and their evaluations. She wanted to make sure they were all done by June 30 and administration confirmed that they would be.

### Action:

- E. Hire Assistant Principal: CASTLE summarized that 4 individuals had been selected by the search committee for interviews, however 2 backed out. After the initial interviews the committee had agreed on one being their top choice, but some confusion ensued as to what the next steps were. CASTLE asked COLLINS to be here this evening as she was part of the process. She did the reference checks on the preferred candidate and CASTLE met with the top candidate, Heidi Fortin, to discuss her licensure plan as she is currently not licensed as an administrator. She confirmed she has a plan in place to obtain licensure within the two year temporary license window. CASTLE confirmed that reference checks came back very positive, and that there did not appear to be any other candidates that would be viable. The administration's position is they would like to recommend Heidi for hire, but that the board can decide how they would like to proceed.

CASTLE is very supportive of the administration's recommendation, and even though Ms. Fortin lacks administrative experience he is confident that she would be eager and willing to learn. FRENETTE added that the other candidate that was interviewed has showed little movement in regards to his re-licensure plans. She also did reference checks on Heidi, and was very pleased with the feedback she received. CASTLE is confident that she would have a great mentor in Elaine. Re-opening the search would not necessarily bring any other viable candidates. ROYER asked for opinions from others that were on the committee so COLLINS expressed that even though the candidate pool was limited she was confident that she and Heidi would work together very well and that Heidi is driven to succeed. As Heidi would have no preconceived notions about job responsibilities she and Elaine could determine that split of responsibilities based on individual strengths. MACLURE expressed concern that most assistant principals she has worked with had lots of special education experience and were very involved in the process and it didn't appear that Heidi had that. There has been lots of chaos within NCES' Special Education department this year and she feels they need a strong leader in that area. COLLINS agrees that consistency with one administrator being involved in Special Education is important and that will have to be determined. COLLINS indicated that Ms. Fortin also has social work experience which brings another point of view with those situations as well. ROYER recalled that CASTLE had at one time mentioned renaming the assistant principal position to Director of Student Services, asking if that would not be a big focus on Special Education. CASTLE indicated that it would not.

CASTLE seconded COLLINS' thought that this will be a great opportunity to mold these positions into clear divisions of labor based on strengths. MASCOLINO also indicated that central office special education services are just an email or phone call away. LANCASTER expressed concern that Heidi may get burnt out with all the extra coursework on top of learning a new position. MCGILLIVRAY expressed that the chemistry she witnessed between Collins and Heidi at the interview was great and would be very happy with her. PRAIRIE expressed concern that COLLINS would be hitting the ground running herself learning a new building/staff and would also have to help mentor Heidi. She felt the staff needed a strong leadership at this time. LANTAGNE expressed

that everyone needs an opportunity to prove themselves and was confident with the administration's recommendations. ROYER asked who follows up on the coursework that Heidi would have to take and CASTLE indicated it is part his responsibility, partly the HR coordinator's and partly the employee herself. CASTLE indicates that Heidi does have special education experience just by being a classroom teacher, and that she will have respect from staff because of her classroom experience as she knows what it is like for them. A continued discussion will be had in executive session.

**IX. New Business**

Action:

- A. Approve hiring teacher Emily Scherer (5<sup>th</sup> grade): **Motion** to hire Emily Sherer: - ROYER/PRAIRIE. McGillivray asked for some background information on the candidate, which was provided - **Approved.**
- B. Approve hiring SLPA Kylie Atwood: **Motion** to hire Kylie by PRAIRIE/MCGILLIVARY – MACLURE and PRAIRIE were part of the interview committee and were very impressed – Approved.
- C. Approve IDEA-B (*Attachment B*): **Motion** to approve IDEA-B budget – ROYER/PRAIRIE – **Approved.**
- D. LANCASTER asked when the community breakfast would be. Discussion was had around charging or not charging attendees. NCES used to not charge as they paid it thru a Titles fund. LANTAGNE indicated they would reach out to the Abbey Group to look into this. PRAIRIE stated they should discuss the last day of school BBQ, which they indicated would be June 10. The parents that attend the BBQ pay for their food. PRAIRIE then asked about the field day, and MACLURE indicated that is normally the Friday before the last week of school, so it was determined it would be June 3<sup>rd</sup>. FRENETTE will work on these events.

**X. Other Business**

Information/Discussion:

- A. Support Staff Terms and Conditions Policy review: CASTLE recognized that the board may want to review this for a few weeks before taking action, but these recommendations are to encourage equity across the districts. Realistically it could take up to a couple of years to come up with one single unified policy. CASTLE also encourages the district to develop some sort of salary schedule as NCES has none. The board would like to review it and discuss at the May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

XI. **Agenda Items/Date for Next Board Meeting:** May 2, 2016: Audit recommendations, Farm to School presentation and Parents Club presentation.

XII. Executive **Session** (*If needed*): **Motion** to move into Executive Session at 8:20 inviting administration for personnel matter related to contract - LANTAGNE/ROYER - **Approved.** Exited executive session at 9:06 p.m. **Motion** to offer the assistant principal position to Heidi Fortin with a 2 year contract at \$68,000 for the first year and payment for 6 UVM tuition credits per year – MCGILLIVRAY/ROYER – **Approved.**

XIII. **Adjourn:** **Motion** to adjourn at 9:08 p.m. – ROYER/McGILLIVRAY – **Approved.**

<u>Meetings:</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
NCSU Policy Committee	Thursday	April 28	5:30 p.m.	NCSU A213
NCSU Executive Committee	Thursday	April 28	6:30 p.m.	NCSU A209
NCES Board	Monday	May 2	6:00 p.m.	NCES