

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the RTM Education Committee
Monday, April 2, 2018

Place:

Darien Town Hall, Room 206

Start Time: 7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Lucy Fiore, Jay Hardison, Patrick Keane, Young-Sup Lee, Carolina McGoey, Ann Reed, Peter Riordan, Clara Sartori, Sandra Savage, Bill Smith, Barbara Thorne, Theresa Vogt

Members Absent: Janet Grogan, Edward Washecka

Members of the Public:

<i>Board of Education (BOE)</i>	<i>Central Administration</i>	<i>CDSP/Public</i>
Tara Ochman	Dan Brenner	Shelly Skoglund
Betsy Hagerty-Ross	Susie DaSilva	Julie Best
Katie Stein	Shirley Klein	Catherine Piorkowski
Debra Ritchie	Marjorie Cion	Sara Parent
Dennis Maroney	Michael Feeney	Cheryl Saba
Jill McCammon	Laura Straiton	Owen Coventry
	Marc Marin	Gregory Saba
	Michael Lynch	Connor Russo
		Cameron McGraw

Call to Order:

Ann Reed called the meeting to order with a quorum at 7:30 p.m.

Motion to Approve Minutes from the Meeting on 3/15/18:

- Sandy Savage made a motion to approve the minutes;
- Clara Sartori seconded the motion;
- The minutes were approved unanimously.

Agenda:

1. Discussion with Board of Education Members

BOE chair Tara Ochman started the meeting by clarifying that the role of the BOE is to educate children inside a fiscally responsible budget.

From here, RTM Education members looked to delve deeper into the answers provided by the BOE at the prior meeting. Topics discussed:

- The Assistant Athletic Director (AAD) and the concern that we are losing a “set of eyes” on the students. The BOE and Administration explained that after reviewing the Athletic program, they felt that a change needed to be made and that the addition of the AAD fills

that need with respect to the demands of the program and expectations from the Community. They feel that having the continuity of one person throughout the year vs. different faculty advisors is in the best interest of the program and the students. Unlike the faculty advisors, the AAD would be in a better position to supervise the students and games, field parent questions, manage the equipment and maintain the website. When asked how the AAD's success would be measured, Dr. Brenner answered that feedback from coaches, parents and students would be used. The BOE and Administration also stated that adding the position came after analyzing the current model, which they felt was no longer the best model for Darien. They also thanked RTM Education member Clara Sartori for her suggestion during public comment at one of the budget meetings that the District consider hiring a college intern to assist with the program. The Administration has reached out to local colleges. Tara Ochman added that this action is just one example of how the Board is listening during public comment.

- The number of students outplaced: While not in the budget book, Tara Ochman mentioned that they had given this information to the Board of Finance. The number of Special Education students outplaced is 37.
- Fitch Academy: how does the District calculate savings? One can argue that the savings is \$0, but at the same time we can calculate a number as there are students in Fitch who would have been outplaced based on their most recent PPT meetings. There is currently a waitlist for Fitch which illustrates that it has met a need for many students. When asked if Fitch will bring outplaced students back, Dr. Brenner stated that he would never force a successfully outplaced student into Fitch unless the family wanted the student placed there. Peter Riordan commented, and Tara Ochman agreed, that the savings from Fitch can be looked at as a cost avoidance. Clara Sartori asked for more clarification as to the type of student who attends Fitch given that it is not a SPED exclusive program and how can we talk about savings when a General Ed student would not be outplaced. Dr. Brenner agreed with her assessment. However, it was noted that some of the kids do have IEPs or 504s for a variety of reasons (i.e. medical needs). With regard to attendance requirements, the BOE reiterated that students at Fitch have the same attendance requirements that they would have if they were at Darien High School. Graduation requirements are also being met and it is always the goal that all DHS students will graduate in four years. The program is also organized in a way that a student can easily acclimate back to classes at DHS if they so choose.
- More detail on the savings at copy center: Dr. Brenner stated that a very detailed report on how the savings were achieved can be found on the District website, but he highlighted that savings have come from the redeployment of aides, the renegotiation of leases and a significant reduction in the number of copies made, especially color copies.
- Holmes roof question: do we need to do something sooner than the summer? The district thinks that we are okay right now.
- Follow up from the School tours, Clara Sartori asked if there is a policy with regard to who cleans the fields. This came in reference to the fact that the softball team cleans

their fields and that the coach has created a 501 3(c). There were also questions regarding the General Fund which is the money that is raised by the parents. The BOE suggested that any questions/comments regarding Athletics be emailed to them for when they discuss Athletics over the summer.

- Carolina McGoey asked about any perks the District may get for using software. The only “perk” we get is bulk discounting.
- Substitutes: the Administration clarified that under the current contract, teachers get 3 personal days. The Administration can ask them to account for 2 of those days. Sick days are monitored for patterns of abuse. Unused sick days do not carry over nor are teachers paid out for unused days.
- Young Sup Lee talked about the complexity of the sump pumps at the schools which he witnessed first-hand on the facilities tour. Dr. Brenner noted that it is important to not compare certain capital projects with what they would be in your home. A good example is the skylight in the Holmes gym.
- Peter Riordan thanked the BOE and Administration for coming to the meeting and stated that as our budget approaches the \$100 million mark, we need to look for different ways of doing things. The copy center was cited as a good example, but he also mentioned that there may be potential savings opportunities in a new Ox Ridge.

2. *Other Business*

Jay Hardison addressed his frustration with not having had this meeting sooner. Tara Ochman reiterated that she was not asked to have the meeting, but if she had been, she reminded him that the BOE had not yet adopted the budget. She also spoke to how the BOE took public comments (and noted that there is opportunity to speak at every meeting) regarding the budget very seriously when they made their own cuts and suggestions to the Superintendent’s budget. She also stated that there is a process to the budget and it is important to follow the process.

ADJOURNMENT:

- Jay Hardison made a motion to adjourn the meeting;
- Peter Riordan seconded the motion to adjourn;
- The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Theresa Vogt
RTM Education Clerk