



Hampton Board of Education
380 Main Street
Hampton, CT 06247

August 23, 2023
7:00 pm

HES Library

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Rose Bisson called the meeting to order at 7:01pm. Present: Rose Bisson, Mark Becker, Dennis Timberman, Diane Gagnon, Juan Arriola, Maryellen Donnelly. Not Present: David Halbach, John Russell. Staff and Others: Acting Superintendent Valerie Bruneau, Principal Patrice Merendina, Business Coordinator Sally Lehoux, and others.

2. Correspondence to the Board

Chair Rose Bisson shared a letter from Cynthia Cannata, Acting Clerk of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission. The letter states that the Freedom of Information Commission has received a complaint alleging a violation against the Hampton Board of Education, Dayna McDermott v. Rose Bisson, Chair, Hampton Elementary School Board of Education. The ombudsman will work with the BoE and filer of the complaint to come to a resolution.

3. Approval of the Minutes from 7/26/23

Maryellen Donnelly motioned to approve the Minutes of 07/26/2023, Mark Becker seconded the motion. Voting Yes: Rose Bisson, Mark Becker, Dennis Timberman, Maryellen Donnelly. Voting No: Juan Arriola. Abstention: Diane Gagnon

4-1-1

The motion carried.

4. Discussion and action on the appointment of the Board of Education member to replace Matthew Flegert

The Board of Education discussed the appointment of a new Board of Education member and was concerned about the application process. The only qualification stated in the opening was that it had to be a Democrat. It was only posted on the Town's website and hard to find. There was therefore only one applicant. Followed by a discussion about "what party a replacement member should be in". Mark Becker motioned to appoint Elizabeth Lindorff to replace Matthew Flegert for the remainder of his term, Dennis Timberman seconded the motion. Voting Yes: Maryellen Donnelly, Rose Bisson, Mark Becker, Dennis Timberman. Voting No: Juan Arriola, Diane Gagnon.

4-2-0

The motion carried.

5. Superintendent's Report; *(update on grants, school projects, etc.)*

- Acting Superintendent Valerie Bruneau shared with the Board that many people commented on the great changes that have already happened at the school. How the building and grounds look great and gave Kudos to Principal Merendina for doing a great job.
- Ms. Bruneau reported on how she keeps reviewing grants, looking for new ones and checking the status on grants she already applied for.



- The bathrooms were painted and touch ups are being made to finish the job. All rugs were cleaned and she is waiting on a quote to get the glass of the sunroom in the library replaced as requested by some F and O members. She shared that Principal Merendina received a letter of resignation from Mr. Anthony Gervase, SRBI/Intervention teacher. Furthermore, she shared that the two new hire contracts for the teachers filling Team positions are almost a “wash” from the old contracts and that the interviews for the two open positions are beginning this Friday.
- Valerie Bruneau, in collaboration with Principal Merendina, showed and explained the newly implemented safety clipboards and how they can empower students to be able to help in school and classroom safety.
- She mentioned that the brush and grass around the building is a safety concern because possible predators could hide behind the fence and would not be visible, this could cause a great threat to students. Perhaps a landscaping company or the town could help make the perimeter safer for students.
- Acting Superintendent Bruneau shared that Mark Sommoruga from Pullman and Comely is available for the September Board of Education meeting; he could attend the meeting and do a FOIA update for the members, if they wish. Chair Rose Bisson shared that Tom Hennick has done it free of charge for the Board before. Bruneau will find out if Sommoruga has a fee and will share with the Board chair what she finds out. She elaborates on what the presentation and update would include for the Board.
- Possibly adding numbers to all doors in the building as a safety feature, adding signage around the building and the roof access was discussed to end her reports and presentations.

6. Principal’s Report (*includes SBAC test scores, start of school updates*)

- Principal Patrice Merendina shared that a professional library by suggestion of Board member Dennis Timberman was added to the Staff workroom. She received positive feedback from staff.
- Merendina attended a Science of Reading workshop with the school’s Speech and Language Pathologist, Diane Holmes.
- She shared that Heggerty Phonics and Phonological Awareness is the curriculum that was chosen for PreK and that it included a Professional Development.
- WONDERS and Science of Reading materials were distributed to the classrooms and teachers were trained through Professional Development, Instructional coaching and unit mapping to make this resource usable in the multiage classrooms and Kindergarten.
- Principal Merendina expressed her gratitude towards Hampton Elementary School’s new hires and current staff that worked very hard to get their classrooms ready for the first day of school.
- She reported on Student Achievement Data and presented 2022-2023 outcomes to the Board. She elaborated on different charts that were used to show the data and shared this informational data to watch growth and her work as an instructional leader.

7. Business Coordinator’s Report (*includes 22-23 and 23-34 budget updates*)

Business Coordinator Sally Lehoux shared multiple reports and reported on an end of year surplus that was then discussed by the Board of Education and elaborated on by Board of Finance Chair Kathy Donahue who attended the meeting in the audience.

8. Committee and Liaison reports: Any updates will be presented by committees

- F&O committee did not meet in August and will meet again in September.
- EASTCONN met and Maryellen Donnelly reported that EASTCONN is working on a crowd sourcing policy, as well as a space for students in need. She furthermore shared that there will be a Northeastern Connecticut Transportation Hack from 09/15/23 through 09/18/23 where problems of transportation will be shared, discussed and a solution be determined.

9. Additions to the Agenda

The Board discussed to add the following items to the agenda:



- 9a. Discussion about creating a Negotiations committee
- 9b. Discussion about creating a Safety committee
- 9c. Discussion about the hiring process of new staff
- 9d. Discussion of reinstating a 2nd agenda slot for “Audience for Citizens and Staff”
- 9e. Discussion about creating an Ad-Hoc committee to support the schools audio needs

Mark Becker motioned to add all agenda items as listed, Maryellen Donnelly seconded.

6-0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

9a. Discussion about creating a Negotiations committee

The Board discussed and decided on Maryellen Donnelly, Mark Becker and Rose Bisson , as well as Joan Fox as the Observer of the Board of Finance to form the Negotiations committee.

9b. Discussion about creating a Safety committee

A discussion about adding another Board of Education member to the existing Safety committee occurred. There will be no need for another safety committee within the Board of Education. Dennis Timberman will be the Safety committee liaison and report back to the Board of Education.

9c. Discussion about the hiring process of new staff

A discussion about the hiring process of new staff occurred and Board member Juan Arriola questioned why teachers are hired at certain steps and who makes those decisions. Acting Superintendent Valerie Bruneau elaborated on pay scale and how the rates are being negotiated between the Board of Education and the teacher’s union. She, furthermore, explained details about certifications and contracts as she understands them.

9d. Discussion of reinstating a 2nd agenda slot for “Audience for Citizens and Staff”

Board member Juan Arriola suggested adding the first “Audience for Citizens and Staff” back on the agenda as it was only taken off for the agenda of a previously held Ad-Hoc and Special Board meeting. Chair Rose Bisson stated a concern about the “mis-use” of the agenda item but she was also open to reinstate the agenda item to be utilized in the “correct way”. A discussion about the “correct use” of agenda item “Audience for Citizens and Staff” occurred. Mr. Arriola raised a concern about his right to speak as a citizen and wants to make sure that all questions to the Board are being covered. The Board elaborated that the Audience gets 2 minutes to speak without the Board reacting. If a Board member wants to discuss a topic it is to be added to the agenda. Acting Superintendent Valerie Bruneau is to invite Mark Sommoruga or Tom Hennick to talk about the Freedom of Information Act and what it means for Board members depending on whose presentation is free of charge.

9e. Discussion about creating an Ad-Hoc committee to support the schools audio needs

Board member Dennis Timberman raised a concern about the schools audio needs and how there should be good speakers and microphones in the Gym for assemblies and student presentations. It is hard to hear the student’s presentations due to little noises and fans in the background. He suggested that the gym should get assessed to be a more professional auditorium. Dennis Timberman was encouraged to write a draft charge to create an Ad-Hoc committee to support schools audio needs.

10. Next Agenda Planning

- Presentation of Dennis Timberman's draft charge to create an Ad-Hoc committee to support schools audio needs
- Mark Sommoruga's or Tom Hennick's Presentation of Freedom of Information Act items and updates and what it means for Board members



11. Audience for Citizens and Staff

Chair of Finance Kathy Donahue shared her appreciation for Principal Merendina's and Acting Superintendent Valerie Bruneau's reports and presentations. She, furthermore, informed the Board that other committees have had an agenda item "Audience for Citizens and Staff" in the beginning for many years and thinks it is important to keep it that way. Kathy Donahue also stated that the town has worked on the outside maintenance of the school in the past and that a lot of people in town might have the proper equipment for the school's needs. Lastly, she mentioned that the Board of Education opening was hard to find on the town website.

12. Adjournment

Diane Gagnon motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 pm, Mark Becker seconded.

6-0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ramona Anderson

This is a draft until approved by the Board of Education.