

March 25, 2009

The Brooklyn Board of Education held its regular monthly meeting on March 25, 2009 in the Middle School library. In attendance were: Mrs. Lyons, Mrs. Downs, Mr. Gutierrez, Mrs. Johnson and Ms. Gerardi-Voccio. Also present were: Mr. Yanku, Mrs. Sweet, Mrs. Muscente, Dr. Keefe and Mrs. Berry. In the audience were members of the staff and the community.

1. **The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Lyons at 7:10 p.m.**
2. **Public Comments/Comments by Representatives of:**
  - a. **BEA** - Mrs. Nault, president of the Brooklyn Education Association read a letter concerning the planned reduction in staff for 2009-2010 as a result of limited funds in the 2009-2010 budget; specifically:

Comments to the Brooklyn Board of Education - March 25, 2009

Brooklyn Education Association recognizes that our community is going through tough economic times. We work with families and children who are feeling the effects of layoffs, threats of foreclosures and other obstacles. Many of us are also dealing with similar types of issues in our own families. We appreciate that creating a budget, where there are costs of which the Board of Education has no control and where the Board of Finance and Board of Selectman are requiring a 0% increase, is difficult. We believe that the Board of Education and the Superintendent are as troubled by making cuts in programs as we are. As president of the association that provides the direct service to students, I would like to share some thoughts and concerns.

It is our understanding that the four and one-half (4 1/2) positions that are proposed to be cut this evening are primarily from the elementary school. This is the place where the foundation of learning begins and where early intervention and remedial services are most effective. Beginning in July, schools all over the country are required to use what Connecticut is calling the Scientific Research-Based Intervention model (SBRI) in our work with children. This model is a three tiered continuum that focuses on prevention and early intervention. Among its critical features is a school-wide and district-wide high-quality core curriculum instruction and comprehensive social/behavioral supports. Although we understand that one of the Board's criteria for determining cuts in class size, with this new model and other requirements through NCLB, we do not believe that cutting classrooms is the best interests of children.

Since most students are identified with learning disabilities and special education at the elementary level, remedial teachers and social workers who provide these services are necessary to help them be successful. The position of Reading consultant is in the proposal for cuts so this means there will be cuts in Title 1 services. This year, due to the overwhelming demand for reading services for children, the reading consultant has been providing direct service to groups of students in the elementary and middle school. The value of early intervention services cannot be underestimated as prevention at the elementary level can save money in special education and their related costs later.

One of the most troubling cuts being proposed is the elimination of the elementary school

social worker, who works with students who have social/emotional and behavioral issues, as well as children in crisis. Families are under a great deal of stress, particularly with changes in economy. As a result, many children are coming to school with more behavior and emotional issues than ever before. For many, the school social worker is their life line. The elementary school social worker's present case load is approximately forty (40) students, whom she sees once a week. In addition, she runs twelve (12) social skills groups working with a total of sixty-eight (68) children who are in both regular and special education programs. The middle school social workers have very similar schedules, and they deal with the additional issues of pre-adolescence. One of those middle school social workers also works in the elementary school to assist with the caseload. Our concern is that fewer students will be able to receive these services and behavior issues will increase in the classroom. This could disrupt the learning for all children in the classroom. Students cannot learn if they do not have emotional security. For some students, this is the only way they can receive any kind of support because their parents may not be able to provide for counseling for their children.

In conclusion, please know that we are not trying to make your task harder. As the people who work with the children of Brooklyn, we want you to know our concerns that the effects these cuts could have on them. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share these with you.

- b. **Local 1303 - AFSCME** - no report
- c. **PTO** - Mrs. Frost, representing the PTO, spoke on the boundless playground and the costs for grading and installation of curtain drains.

**3. Minutes of Board Meetings**

MOTION: (Downs/Gutierrez) to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2009 meeting. VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio/Johnson) to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2009 meeting as amended. VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio/Downs) to amend the agenda to include an educational presentation on the revised technology plan as Item 4. VOTE: Unanimous

**4. Educational Presentation**

Mr. Lessig presented the latest revision of the Brooklyn School's Technology Plan and commented on the changes from the present plan - integration of technology into the curriculum and expansion of professional development activities utilizing data analysis. The 2009-2012 plan has been reviewed and approved by EastConn and will be sent to the State Department of Education for approval.

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio/Downs) to accept changes in the 2006-2009 technology Plan and approve the submission of the new plan (2009-2012) to the State Department of Education.

VOTE: Unanimous

**5. Proposed Budget**

Following review of the latest draft of the proposed 2009-2010 budget which included additional reductions in a number of accounts, the Board members discussed other ways to reduce the budget; specifically eliminating sports and combining transportation schedules.

Mrs. Berry presented an analysis of the transportation program, specifically, the potential savings in diesel fuel but also the need for additional buses should we try to transport almost 1,000 students in combined trips (middle and elementary schools) within a period of one and one and one-half hours (morning and afternoon). The report also addressed the potential problems with student discipline/behavior should we transport students with a wide-age range. Finally, the report included information on the terms of our contract with First Student which extends thru June, 2012.

In reference to the issue of eliminating school sports with a projected cost in the 2009-2010 budget of \$51,977, Board members discussed the cost per student - Pay for Play Program - and decided to consider this at the next meeting prior to final action on the proposed budget.

With more than fifty people in attendance - staff and parents - the Board of Education members took the following action:

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio/Gutierrez) to amend the agenda to move Public Comments from after the Administrators' Reports to before Administrators Report (Section 5) to provide the opportunity for public comments.

VOTE: Unanimous

Many of the public comments centered on the reductions in staff at the elementary school and many expressed the opinion that the educational program in that building would be negatively impacted by reductions in staff. Other comments included recommendations that cuts be in non-academic areas rather than the elementary academic staff.

Following comments and questions on the proposed budget for approximately two hours, Board members discussed the federal stimulus money and the possible restrictions on the utilization of these funds. In addition, they discussed the cost of health insurance, the possible reduction in the Woodstock Academy tuition for 2009-2010, and the elimination of all sports or implementing a pay-for-play sports program.

## **6. Correspondence**

A letter from Attorney Muschell concerning the unpaid Killingly High School tuition bill (2 students) for 2007-2008 was received. Mrs. Lyons will be in contact with the Chair of the Killingly Board of Education to discuss this issue.

## **7. Consent Agenda:**

- a. Payment of Bills - a list of bills dated March 25, 2009 was distributed.
- b. Extracurricular - no report
- c. Use of Facilities - no report
- d. Bus Driver Approval - no report
- e. Library Books - no report

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio) to approve the consent agenda.

VOTE: Unanimous

**8. Administrative Reports:**

**a. Middle School Principal**

Mr. Yanku's report included comments on the following:

- The Honors Assembly and the Lions Club Awards Program on February 26th;
- The Brooklyn Middle School ERMS Music Festival in South Windsor on February 27th;
- Seventh and Eighth Grade Dance on March 13th; and
- The CMT Program which was organized and supervised by Mrs. Sweet at the middle school.

**b. Elementary Principal**

Dr. Keefe's report included comments on:

- The CMT testing in grades 3 and 4;
- The Grade 2 science unit study on weather;
- The recycling project sponsored by the Student Council;
- Curriculum work in language arts;
- The March BES Family Calendar;
- The staff monthly meeting calendar for March; and
- The power point presentation by Mrs. Frost on recycling.

**c. Assistant Principal**

Mrs. Sweet presented the ERR report for the period of February 10th to March 13th.

Listed below is a year-to-date chart of referrals to this program:

Educational Resource Room Program - Year-to-Date

	Minor Infraction 1		Major Infraction 2		Academic, etc. 3		# Students 4
8/28/08-9/25/08	18		8		12		17
9/26/08-10/27/08	58		10		60		41
10/28/08-11/25/08	64		10		31		45
11/26/08-1/8/09	70		9		38		44
1/9/09-2/9/09	97		4		50		45
2/10/09-3/13/09	114		17		51		48

**8. Administrative Reports (continued):**

c. **Assistant Principal (continued)**

Mrs. Sweet's report on spring sports is listed below:

Softball - Mr. Bucky Lohbusch has returned as our Softball Coach this season. Sign-ups have been completed and tryouts are underway. Our first game will be an away game on April 21, 2009 against Wheeler (weather permitting). Both the baseball and softball teams will travel together to away games this season.

Baseball - This season the baseball team will be coached by Mr. Trevor Larrow. Trevor is a graduate of Brooklyn who is excited to return to Brooklyn to coach. Sign-ups have been completed and tryouts have commenced. The first baseball game is scheduled as an away game against Wheeler on April 21, 2009.

Track - Mr. Partyka is coaching the track team once again this season. He is hoping for an injury free, successful season. Approximately 45 students have signed up for the program to date. The first track meet is scheduled for April 23, 2009. This meet will be at the Ellis Tech track.

d. **Director of Student Services**

Mrs. Muscente's report included a review of the March, 2009 enrollment in the Special Education program (156) with (123) in attendance at the Brooklyn School; (20) attending our designated high schools; and (13) placed out of the district.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT MARCH (19) 2009**

<b>BES</b>		<b>BMS</b>		<b>KHS</b>		<b>WA</b>		<b>OUTPLACEMENT</b>	
FEB.-09 GR./NO.	MAR.-09 GR./NO.	FEB.-09 GR./NO.	MAR.-09 GR./NO.	FEB.-09 GR./NO.	MAR.-09 GR./NO.	FEB.-09 GR./NO.	MAR.-09 GR./NO.	FEB.-09 GR./NO.	MAR.-09 GR./NO.
PK 16	PK 16	5 12	5 11	9 6	9 6	9 5©	9 4©	PK 0	PK 0
K 7	K 7	6 6	6	10 0	10 0	10 1©	10 1©	K 0	K 0
1 10	1 10	7 18	7 18	11 2	11 2	11 5©©	11 5©©	1 1	1 1
2 9	2 9	8 19	8 18	12 0	12 0	12 2\$	12 2\$	2 0	2 0
3 11	3 11							3 0	3 0
4 16	4 17							4 1	4 1
								5 2	5 2
								6 1	6 1
								7 1	7 1
								8 0	8 0
								9 3(1DP)	9 3(1DP)
								10 2*	10 2*
								11 1	11 1
								12 1	12 1
								Ungraded 1	Ungraded 0
								Total: 14	Total: 13
Total: 69	Total: 70	Total: 55	Total: 53	Total: 8	Total: 8	Total: 13	Total: 12	<b>Grand Total: 156 (March)</b>	

\* State Agency Placement -- © Capped at Woodstock Academy -- \$ Over 50% (High School) -- DP - Diagnostic Placement -- H - (Home (N/C) -- HT - Home Tutored -- (G) Graduated

**8. Administrative Reports (continued):**

e. **Superintendent's Report**

The following reports/issues were included in Board packets and Mrs. Berry commented on a number of them:

**2009-2010 School Calendar**

Mrs. Berry presented a draft of the 2009-2010 calendar which was similar to last year's calendar.

MOTION: (Johnson/Gerardi-Voccio) to approve the 2009-2010 calendar as presented.

VOTE: Unanimous

**E-Mail Accounts**

Mrs. Berry commented on Board members' requests for accounts on the school's e-mail system and stated that it could easily be done but the cost of archiving the e-mail records appeared to be very costly and she asked the Board to review this issue when more information is available on archiving electronic communications. At the present time, there will be no school accounts for Board members.

**Scotland's Request for Student Placement**

Included in Board Packets was a letter from the Selectmen and the Board of Education members in Region 11 requesting educational placement for their students in grades 7-12 following the dissolution of the Region 11 School District. The Brooklyn Board of Education members agreed to study this issue. Mrs. Berry suggested that it may be a source of revenue for the town if we accept a number of grade 7 and 8 students.

**Staff Salary Freeze**

Letters have been sent to all employees at the Brooklyn School - both union and non-union members of the staff - requesting a salary freeze at this year's level for the next school year. The BEA has requested additional time to consider the impact of the federal stimulus money, as well as the state grants for education. Local 1303 is meeting on March 29th to vote on the request. Of the non-union members, some have agreed to a freeze and others have not responded.

Other reports presented by the Superintendent included the cafeteria report for February and the enrollment report for March.

9. **Committee Reports:**

- a. **Budget** - discussion of the proposed budget for 2009-2010 was moved to Section 5.
- b. **Curriculum** - no meeting
- c. **Educational Planning** - no meeting

9. **Committee Reports (continued):**

- d. **Facilities/Capital Improvement** - the Facilities Committee met earlier today and reviewed the Capital Projects Priority List prepared by Mr. Kowolenko. Committee members decided to include the following projects in next year's repair budget:
- Sanding and varnishing the elementary gym floor;
  - Re-pointing/waterproofing chimney leaks at the elementary;
  - Padding of steel beams in the elementary gym; and
  - Repair of the canopy at the front entrance of the middle school.

In addition, the committee decided to: 1) submit an application to the town to replace three electric hot water heaters which are forty (40) years old; and 2) recommend an asbestos abatement project at the middle school to the town as a "shovel ready project" for federal funding.

On the issue of replacing a freezer at the middle school, Mrs. Lyons offered to check the minutes of the 2008 meetings of the Board of Finance for action on this issue as it had been referred to that Board a year ago.

On the issue of the bids for a comprehensive study of the repairs needed in the middle school gym, six bids have been received and Mr. Kowolenko is in the process of checking references on the bidders. The bids range from \$4,900 to \$29,800 for this study. Enumerated below are the requirements listed in the bid:

The Brooklyn Board of Education is requesting bids for professional architectural/engineering services in connection with the gymnasium at the Brooklyn Middle School.

The goal of the Board of Education is to obtain a feasibility study that examines and respond to the following:

1. repair and renovation of the existing facility;
2. upgrading and expansion of the existing facility to meet future educational and community needs; and/or
3. demolishing and rebuilding a new gymnasium on the same site.

#### **Overview:**

There is a persistent moisture problem in the gymnasium that has occurred for many years. The moisture causes the interior paint to peel, the masonry to spall, and the wood flooring to buckle. Further, the interior air handling units are constantly stressed in order to de-humidify the area.

The existing facility was built in 1969 and problems with roof leaks, moisture on the north wall and buckling of the floor have required a number of repair projects during the past twenty (20) years, all of which have provided only short term improvement.

## **9. Committee Reports (continued):**

**d. Facilities/Capital Improvement (continued):**

**Scope of Work**

The design firm's broad scope of work relative to evaluation of the existing facility should be to:

1. Analyze the extent of ground water in and near the gymnasium foundation, including adjacent parking lots.
2. Analyze the robustness of the concrete vapor barrier within the gym and the locker rooms.
3. Analyze the building structure, including the foundations, the steel, the interior and exterior envelope, and the roof, looking for robustness relative to moisture infiltration (expansion joints, contraction joints, sealants, hard interfaces like masonry on steel, etc.)

The information returned from these assessments will provide guidance whether the building in its current form is repairable, salvageable, or beyond reasonable repair.

While the information might tell us what to do relative to the building, there are other questions relative to program and operation that need to be determined. Additional design firm scope should be to:

4. Analyze the functionality and condition of the equipment, including the divider, the bleachers, the floor, the paint, the interior and exterior doors, the sound, the visual displays, the lights, the HVAC, the locker room (showers, floors, benches, lockers, drainage, air flows, etc.)
5. Analyze the current operating costs of the gym with fans constantly running to decrease the present moisture problems and heat loss regularly occurring.
6. Analyze whether the gymnasium in its current form meets the programmatic requirements of the community.

**e. Policy** - no meeting

**f. Public Relations** - no meeting

**g. Special Education** - no meeting

**h. Staff Negotiations** - no meeting; a meeting is needed to negotiate four administrators' contracts.

**i. Staff Relations** -no meeting

**j. Technology** - no meeting

**k. Transportation** - no meeting

**10. Board Representatives to Other Committees:**

- a. **Eastconn** - Mrs. Johnson reported that Eastconn was experiencing budget problems and had cut 32 positions. She also shared with Board members the newest reference guide "I have a Student . . . ." which Eastconn provides member community/schools. This guidebook includes information on programs for students with disabilities and is a resource on services available at the regional education center.
- b. **Board of Finance** - no report
- c. **Insurance** - A meeting of this committee was held on March 5, 2009. The next meeting is scheduled for April 2nd when an insurance consultant will be present to discuss the parameters of a study of our existing plans and alternatives. Representatives of school and town unions are asked to participate.
- d. **Killingly Board of Education** - Mrs. Johnson reported that the Killingly meeting is being held this evening. She also noted that eleven teachers and paraprofessionals are being laid off. The present enrollment at K.H.S. is 730 students.
- e. **PTO** - The Board of Education members discussed the lack of representation from the Board to the PTO and Mrs. Johnson volunteered to represent the Board at PTO meetings. Mr. Moses will be reassigned as a representative to the Killingly Board of Education.
- f. **Preschool Building Committee** - Mrs. Lyons reported that the building project is almost completed with a few issues still to be resolved.
- g. **Recreation Commission** - Mrs. Downs reported on the following activities:
  - Magic Show on March 27th to benefit the Boundless Playground;
  - Easter Egg Hunt on April 11th; and
  - Summer Camp Program

Mrs. Downs also commented on the budget of the Commission and noted that all salaries were frozen and the proposed 2009-2010 budget has been decreased by \$9,400.

The next meeting of the Recreation Commission is April 16th.
- h. **School Readiness/Brooklyn Collaborative** - Mr. Gutierrez reported on the Community Conversation Night which is scheduled for tomorrow evening and the planned discussion on full-day kindergarten and noted that the next meeting is Monday, March 30th.
- i. **School Safety Committee** - no meeting

**10. Board Representatives to Other Committees (continued):**

- j. **Woodstock Academy** - Mrs. Gerardi-Voccio reported on the various reports presented at the last meeting of the Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees; specifically:
- funding for the sewer system and the cost of the Bentley Complex - 2.5 million;
  - student trip to Costa Rica for next year;
  - student trip to Egypt in July;
  - visit of candidate for superintendent/headmaster to Woodstock Academy on April 3rd for a site visit and a meeting with the Administration and faculty and an interview with Board members;
  - independent research study with area colleges;
  - World Language Program;
  - College Planning Evening on March 19th;
  - Counseling Mini Fair for eighth grade students and their families scheduled for April 25th;
  - letter from Region 11 and towns involved with a request to send tuition students to Woodstock Academy after dissolution of Region 11; and
  - Advanced Placement Program with Eastern Connecticut State College.

**11. Old Business:**

- a. Proposed 2009-2010 Budget - This issue was discussed in Section 5 of the agenda.
- b. Woodstock Academy Contract - Brooklyn's responses to the proposed extension of the Woodstock Academy Contract was sent to Mr. Foye, Headmaster at Woodstock Academy on March 5, 2009.

**12. New Business:**

- a. 2009 Graduation Date - With Killingly High School scheduling their graduation on June 19th and Woodstock Academy's graduation on Sunday, June 21st, Brooklyn took the following action:

MOTION: (Gerardi-Voccio/Johnson) to schedule Brooklyn's eighth grade graduation on Thursday, June 18, 2009.

VOTE: Unanimous

**13. Other:** none

**14. Public Comments:** none

**15. Adjournment**

MOTION: (Downs/Gutierrez) to adjourn at 11:25 p.m.

VOTE: Unanimous