

The special meeting of the New London Board of Education was held in the Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School Library on February 28, 2008.

PRESENT:

DRAFT

Ms. Elaine Maynard-Adams, Vice President
Dr. Christopher P. Clouet, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Susan Connolly
Mrs. Elizabeth Garcia-Gonzalez, Secretary
Mr. Alvin Kinsall, President
Mr. William Morse
Mr. Anthony Nolan
Mr. James Pearce

ABSENT:

None.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kinsall called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Kinsall led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dan McSparran, Elm Street, New London, presented a formal complaint to the Board and disseminated copies to each Board member.

Mr. McSparran advised the Board that he attended the City Council's Finance Committee meeting during which Mr. Goodrich, the City's Finance Director, informed the Council that the City's Fiscal Audit had to be delayed and an extension filed because the Board of Education's books had not been balanced or closed. Mr. Goodrich went on to say that he has tried for the last 7 months to get this resolved and cited the fact that there were between 2400 and 3000 voided checks that still needed to be verified. When asked who Mr. Goodrich tried to resolve this with he informed the Council that he had been in touch with the Superintendent and the Business Office and stated that his efforts were unsuccessful. Mr. McSparran commented that as we talk about a new Board of Education Budget, it is critical to know the level of failure on the part of the Superintendent and the Business Office when asked to cooperate with the City's Finance Director. Mr. McSparran alleges that the Superintendent is derelict in his responsibilities as outlined in Board of Education policies. He urge the Board of Education, as a policy body, to take immediate and swift action in regard to this most egregious policy violation that impacts the entire City of New London. Mr. McSparran feels that these actions or inactions should not go without consequence and that any discussions pertaining to a new budget should be suspended until the Board of Education closes out its books from the previous year. Mr. McSparran stated that at the

Board's February 25th Finance Committee meeting he requested a complete copy of the Board's Budget and inquired as to when he might receive it.

In closing, Mr. McSparran requested a meeting with the Board to discuss his complaint.

Jay Wheeler, Willetts Avenue, New London, stated that this is the first Board meeting he has ever attended. Mr. Wheeler stated that he is dismayed at the lack of leadership from the Teachers Union with respect to the drug testing policy. He asked the Board's indulgence to use their influence with the Teachers Union to support the proposed drug testing policy. He feels it is important for teachers who have supervision over the children of this city and who are role models for students to come out strong in support of this proposal. Mr. Wheeler commented that he is unsure why the Teachers Union has not come forward to support this initiative.

3.1. Responses to Public Comments

Mr. Pearce responded to Mr. Wheeler's comments and advised him that the Board does have a policy regarding substance abuse, as do most school districts, and he feels it is an adequate policy. The policy does not call for across the Board drug testing, but it does indicate steps that may be taken by the principal and the administration if someone is coming in under the influence or their work is impaired. Mr. Pearce stated that it is difficult to know exactly where to come down because there are many gray areas. He advised Mr. Wheeler that the policy is available, and that it may be worthwhile exploring with the union. Mr. Pearce stated that while he cannot see testing across the board, we always have to be on our toes. We obviously cannot have people who are impaired teaching our children.

Mr. Morse stated that he would be interested in knowing if there are other municipalities in Connecticut who have across the board random drug testing. This would include not just public works but police, fire and schools.

Mr. Morse also asked for an explanation of the closing out of the books by the Finance Director.

Dr. Clouet responded. He stated that we have a new Finance Director for the City with a new set of staff and responsibilities. We also have a new computer program called ADS that has just been instituted by the Business Office. He agrees that there have been some glitches, but the reality is that some of the glitches have taken place on both the City side and the Board's side. Dr. Clouet advised the Board that we are working together with the City to finish it out. He emphasized that there is no hint of impropriety and there is no suggestion of a deficit. It is a question of technical systems working with each other. Dr. Clouet added that there has also been some communication confusion which has been resolved, and he expects in the next few days to see these issues taken care of.

Ms. Adams stated that she is familiar with the issue of the audit not being complete yet. More than two weeks ago the information requested by the City's Finance Department was delivered to the City. Ms. Adams stated that she really takes offense that the Director of Finance's remarks resulted in a citizen accusing us of wrongdoing. Ms. Adams stated that she thinks it is unfortunate all around on the part of the Director of Finance for having pointed the finger of blame incorrectly and on the part of the member of the public who spoke that assumed because he was told something was wrong that something was wrong.

Mrs. Connolly referenced Mr. Wheeler's comment about a proposed drug testing policy. She advised Mr. Wheeler that since she has not seen this proposal she cannot say if she is in favor of or against the Board lobbying the union to support it.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Ms. Adams, seconded by Mr. Kinsall,
that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the special Board of Education meeting of February 28, 2008, be approved or received for the record, unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools.

There was no consent agenda.

4.1. ACTION ITEM

4.1.a. BUDGET APPROVAL

Motion by Ms. Adams, seconded by Mr. Kinsall,
that the Board of Education approve the 2008-2009 Budget, as recommended by the Budget Committee.

Motion by Mr. Morse, Mrs. Garcia-Gonzalez,
that the main motion be amended to state that a budget figure of \$17,414,004 be passed along to the City Manager as the Board's 2008-2009 Budget.

Motion by Mrs. Connolly, seconded by Mr. Morse,
that a friendly amendment be made to recommend that the proposed budget be reduced by \$250,000 for a total budget of \$40,465,736.

Motion failed, 1 – 6

*Voting No: Ms. Adams
Mrs. Connolly
Mrs. Garcia-Gonzalez
Mr. Kinsall
Mr. Nolan
Mr. Pearce*

Vote on amendment:

Motion failed, 1 – 6

*Voting No: Ms. Adams
Mrs. Connolly
Mrs. Garcia-Gonzalez
Mr. Kinsall
Mr. Nolan
Mr. Pearce*

Vote on Main Motion:

Motion carried, 7 – 0

5. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS AND SETTING OF FUTURE BUSINESS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Adams, seconded by Mrs. Connolly,
that the Board adjourn its meeting.

Motion carried, 7 – 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Garcia-Gonzalez
Secretary