

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
June 12, 2012**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Hemant Marathe at 6:10 p.m. in the media center at High School North. The following Board Members were present:

Ms. Rachelle Feldman Hurwitz	Ms. Michele Kaish	Mr. Hemant Marathe
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Ms. Ellen Walsh
Mr. Robert Johnson	Ms. Dana Krug	

Board Member Xu was absent. Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. David Aderhold, Deputy Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; and, Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction.

CONVENE

In accordance with the State's Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro's and West Windsor's township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and thanked them for participating during this busy time of the year.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Kniewel thanked everyone for participating. The main purpose of the retreat is to brief the Board on where the administrative team is, where we are going, and why, so that we have clarity and alignment between the Board and administrative staff about the goals for the 2012-2013 school year.

Welcome/Review Purpose and Outcomes

Dr. Kniewel stated that by the end of the evening, the Board will provide feedback and help set direction for the 2012-2013 school year. Also, all Board Members will understand the current educational climate and that the administration will have a clear direction on Board priorities and an understanding of what significant success in each area would look like.

Discussion

Dr. Kniewel noted the resource constrained times we function within. For the last budget cycle a good level of excess surplus and additional state aid made for the rare opportunity to have a decline in total tax levy. As we noted in the multiyear discussions at a previous retreat, a decline to last years level of excess surplus and flat state aid will result in a perfectly legal total tax levy increase well in excess of 2% next time. Higher excess surplus or state aid may mitigate that result or the Board could choose to reduce programs to reach a desired spending level.

By sharing our thinking among the entire group tonight and asking questions of each other, we will set goals understanding what it will look like if successful. Ground rules were discussed as to facilitate useful, productive discussion.

As a check-in exercise, let's think about the big accomplishments. As a Board of Education, what are those accomplishments and what do we want to be known for? Is there a theme? Among the things mentioned were: process of successfully introducing the class placement changes for honors/AP; process and result associated with the 2012-2013 budget; recruiting and orienting new senior level administrators; curriculum and instruction program review process; exemplary handling of the HIB requirements imposed upon all school districts this year; actions relating to charter school issues; and, successful negotiations with employee associations. Among the "known for" were: being a "serious, professional" BOE, operating without histrionics; moving closer to "whole child, every child" in everyday practice; and, doing the "right thing" for the long-term operation of the district. Board Members noted the basic similarity of responses.

The next portion of the discussion evolved around the factors affecting the district: challenges and opportunities; consideration of both internal and external factors were made. The discussion moved to strategic goals and what tasks, measurable indicators would look like. Committee members rotated around these elements and indicated clarifying and probing questions. Around each goal, discussions with the administrators added depth and clarity to the discussion. These inputs will be utilized by the staff to develop these issues.

Individual rotations followed around these goals indicating where each member was "good" with the indicators and where the individual was "not so sure" about it. There was general alignment around "good" except for a few indicators. Discussions clarified the issues and many "not so sure's" were resolved on the spot; and, others will be worked on by the administrators for improvement.

One of the key areas was communication. Lively discussions noted both the general success for most of our constituencies and the areas that might benefit by improvements. An area for study and improvement is moving our website over time utilizing some "best practices" of website technology. It was noted that improvement in communication between committees would be beneficial. While there are existing processes, such as reporting out at Board of Education meetings and distribution of committee minutes, as well as past practices of going to committee chairs with specific questions, the usefulness of further improvement was established.

Closing and Next Steps

As a final exercise everyone was asked to state a word or phrase concerning the evenings' efforts. Responses were heavily positive in tone including: successful, collaborative, and good dialogue. In consideration of our recent accomplishments, future goals, and continuing work in a number of

areas such as evaluations, HIB, and program reviews, the Board expressed concern about burning out the administrative staff and what might be done to alleviate that risk.

Upon motion by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Fleres, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting moved to closed session for personnel and WWPEA negotiations at 10:00 p.m.

The public session resumed at 10:04 p.m.

The superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Fleres , and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:

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