

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2013**

The meeting of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by President Hemant Marathe at 6:04 p.m. in Dutch Neck Elementary School's administrative conference room. The following board members were present:

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

Board Member Xu was initially absent, but arrived to participate in the discussion. Present also were: Dr. David Aderhold, Superintendent; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Mr. Martin Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Gerard Dalton, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services/Planning.

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 TRENTONIAN, 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 meeting and thanked them for their participation. He noted that discussions of the calendar recognizing an additional community perspective has long been discussed; he shared a newspaper article from 1997.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Aderhold also welcomed the Board to the retreat. He outlined a protocol to be used tonight to provide a structure to the process. Key elements are allowing each board member an uninterrupted 5 to 10 minutes to state their thoughts on the calendar. Then an opportunity would be for members to ask clarifying questions relating to the comments made. Finally, each member would have two minutes to make a final statement on the subject.

DISCUSSION

The Superintendent reviewed sample school district calendars for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. For each year, a list of dates to be kept in mind was provided. Lastly, the experience of the district over the years with the number of days the district was closed, provides a feel for the adequacy of weather days in each calendar. Calendars are much constrained by the general desire and past practice: to not start students before Labor Day, a desire to have firm winter and spring break dates, and wanting not to go into the fourth week of June – and yet get 180 days of instruction and sufficient professional development into the schedule. Mr. Kaye observed that the ideal would be to capture an overlap of three main areas: professional development, learning & instruction, and the community's profile.

Board members statements brought out a large number of relevant factors on a calendar. A district might weigh heavily for federal holidays only. This might require contractual changes over time. A calendar might focus on employee preferences for time off, whether contractual or more informal. Another perspective would be to factor student/parent preferences into the dates selected. Members noted the wide variety of practices across the county and even in our region. Some start in the summer, others have off for the first day of hunting, while others recognize the cultural and religious days of importance to staff and community of a particular locale.

The discussion was thoughtful. Everyone was heard. There was respect for each viewpoint expressed.

Overall, the board wants the administration to develop calendars that balance these varied requirements for the two years. A likely way utilizes professional development days to provide student days off for culturally/religiously important days for our community. The administration will meet and having developed such calendars, share these calendars with a variety of staff and community and will then bring these calendars to the Board of Education for adoption late this month.

Superintendent Aderhold and President Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Kaye, seconded by Ms. Kaish, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary