

APPROVED
Newport School Board
Meeting
March 24, 2022; 5 PM

Lou Thompson Room (LTR), Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center
243 North Main Street, Newport New Hampshire 03773

School Board Members in Attendance: (LTR) Jenna Darling, Chair; Steve Morris, Vice Chair; Rhonda Callum-King, William Wilkinson, Bert Spaulding, Sr.

School Board Members Absent: none

Administration and Staff Present: (LTR) Dr. Brendan Minnihan, Superintendent of Schools; Shannon Martin, High School Principal; Patrice Glancey, Director of Education/Interim Richards Principal; Rob Clark, Assistant Principal, Richards School; Tom Ronning, Middle School Principal; Jennifer Opalinski, Director, Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center; Ed Oberhofer, Chad Howe, Darlene Ayotte, Lisa Ferrigno, Kris Kidder *via zoom*; Ed Emond, Business Administrator; Deb Stevens

Public Present: Miss Jennifer Swain, Miss Jessica Swain, Miss Nevaeh Hooper, Master Bristol Hooper Tim Beard, Charen Urban, Virginia Irwin, Kathy and Guenter Hubert, Lucy Wells, Jeff Kessler, Karen Dewey *via zoom*: "Concerned Croydon Citizens", Chris Prost

Videographer: Newport Community Television (NCTV)

Call to Order

Chairman Darling called the meeting of the Newport School Board (NSB) to order at 5:01 p.m. followed by a roll call of School Board members. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by third graders: Miss Jennifer Swain, Miss Jessica Swain and Miss Nevaeh Hooper. Chairman Darling thanked the third graders for leading the pledge.

Adjustments to the Agenda: (for full discussion go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Chairman Darling made a motion to:

- *Move Elementary Road to Success to Information/Action Item A. on the agenda and*
- *Move Croydon Tuition to Information/Action Item B. on the agenda*

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said he did not believe the Croydon Discussion should be in the public (meeting). Ms. Callum-King stated it was not a contractual discussion that will be held. There was a brief discussion on the agenda item among the Board members.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. moved *to eliminate the 3 minute limit for public to comment during the Croydon Tuition agenda item on the March 24, 2022 meeting*. It was seconded by Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris made a statement on his agreement to the elimination of the 3 minute limit for public comment. Chairman Darling expressed her hesitation; Mr. Spaulding, Sr. requested (a compromise for) only the elimination of the 3 minute limit for the Croydon agenda item. There was a discussion on the motion. There being two motions on the floor; Chairman Darling made a motion to: *Move Elementary Road to Success to Information/Action Item A. on the agenda and Move Croydon Tuition to Information/Action Item B. on the agenda*. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. seconded the motion. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

After clarification of the second item for an Adjustment to the Agenda; Mr. Spaulding, Sr. moved *to eliminate the 3 minute limit for public to comment during the Croydon Tuition agenda item on the March 24, 2022 meeting*. It was seconded by Mr. Morris. There was no further discussion. *The motion passed by a roll call vote 3-2-0 (Callum-King and Darling voted no).*

Approval of School Board Minutes: Public: March 10, 2022

March 10, 2022 Public meeting

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. made a motion ***to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2022 School Board meeting.*** It was seconded by Mr. Wilkinson. In discussion, Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked for the following correction:

Page two, under approval of February 3, 2022 minutes, fourth line down (just above Public Comment) under number1, should read “Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked to delete the sentence”... ***The amended motion passed 4-0-0 (Spaulding did not vote).***

A. Public Comment (for full presentation and discussion, go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Charen Urban, Newport resident, addressed the School Board members and thanked them for their service and the new members on their elections. She also thanked the taxpayers of Newport for their support at the polls on March 8, 2022. Mrs. Urban expressed her concern on the Croydon Tuition agenda item. She hoped Newport would educate the Croydon students, but only at the agreed upon tuition rate established and is fair to the taxpayers of Newport.

Jeff Kessler, Newport resident, addressed the School Board and listed changes he would like to see: the time limit during public comment, the start of the school board meeting and agenda items.

Virginia Irwin, Newport resident, congratulated and welcomed the two new School Board members. She spoke on two items: Public Comment Policy (BEDH). She hoped they would reconsider the 15 minute limit. She also spoke to the Croydon Tuition agenda item.

Lisa Ferrigno, Newport resident, stated she was excited to see the Richards School “Road to Success” on the March 24, 2022 agenda. She read from a prepared statement and listed items she believed were necessary for the improvement at Richards School. She looked forward to hearing the Board’s plan for the future.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed Ms. Ferrigno and asked her to provide Superintendent Minnihan with a copy of her prepared statement.

Tim Beard, Newport resident, read aloud a prepared statement to the School Board concerning negative aspects at Newport high school and low test scores among the students.

Chairman Darling stated there were additional people who would like to speak. As stipulated in their BEDH Policy there had to be a vote to extend Public Comment time. She addressed the Board and made a motion ***to allow Ms. Kidder and Ms. Hubert to speak.*** Mr. Spaulding, Sr. seconded the motion. ***The motion passed 5-0-0.***

Kris Kidder, Newport resident, addressed the Board and stated she was happy they would be trying to make the schools better. She wanted to remind people that Newport used to be a “blue ribbon” school system. She listed personnel and educational opportunities available to students when Newport was a blue ribbon school.

Guenter Hubert, a concerned Newport citizen, addressed the Board with the following questions:

1. Does Croydon have a contract to send their students to Newport schools (4-12)?
2. Are there any consequences if they break their contract?
3. How much revenue does Newport count on from the residents of Croydon for our (school) budget?
4. If we don’t receive the revenue how much will it cost the Croydon taxpayer?
5. What other districts send their children to Newport? How much is that revenue?
6. There was a Croydon resident who made a statement about Newport accepting ‘half a loaf’. If the Board did that, would it be fair to assume that other communities would expect the same?
7. How much would the deficits cost the Newport taxpayer?

Chairman Darling addressed Mr. Hubert and stated the Board had the answers to his questions. It would be brought up during the Croydon Tuition agenda item.

Lucy Wells, Newport resident, addressed the School Board and stated that she and her husband believe strongly in vocational training; “Vocational education is what America is all about”. She spoke to the Croydon Tuition problem and the excellent vocational opportunities in the Newport school system.

Kathy Hubert, Newport resident, addressed the Board and spoke on the inequities of funding school systems in the State of New Hampshire (for more information on this go to: www.fairfundingnh.org), the Croydon problem and stated that Newport cannot subsidize Croydon.

Chairman Darling asked if there was anyone for public comment on zoom. There being none, Public Comment was closed and the Board moved to the business of Information/Action Items.

Information/Action Items

Superintendent Minnihan addressed the Board and public. He stated how the schools want to reach out to the students at a younger age to assist them with any learning difficulties. Identifying the problem is the first step. Acting on it is the second.

B. Elementary Road to Success (for full presentation and discussion, go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Ms. Patrice Glancey and Mr. Rob Clark addressed the Board and using a PowerPoint presentation gave a presentation on child development and elementary education. Newport preschool and kindergarten teachers were consulted and statistics on the student body (50% eligible for free or reduced lunches, 29% coded as special education, 25% proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA)) were identified in the student body. After the presentation Board members and administration discussed improving the academics in the schools, including parental engagement, hiring the needed staff and reviewing the curriculum. Superintendent Minnihan was asked to bring problems to the Board.

After further discussion, Ms. Callum-King requested that the Board table the 211/211 conversation until after an updated publication of the school rankings on www.schooldigger.com . For clarification, she stated that she did not want to end the discussion, but postpone it to a meeting after new scores were out. She wanted to attack the (identified) problem, table the negative conversation.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said that they should limit their scope of work to kindergarten and 1st grade. He believed if they tried to improve too many grades at once they will not be successful. Superintendent Minnihan addressed the Board and asked that they have the conversation every month of what is being put in place (in the schools). The administration will come to the Board with a plan for achieving the goal(s) they were discussing at the March 24, 2022 meeting. An immediate result on school digger was discussed. There was a commitment by all to work together to improve student success.

Mr. Beard addressed the School Board, spoke negatively about the schools and said that they were not accepting the responsibility of the underachieving students.

Superintendent Minnihan responded to Mr. Beard's statements. He said there were some schools in the state that were "targeted schools of improvement". Newport is not (a target school). He voiced additional facts. As an individual on the NH (state) Accountability Task Force he was aware of the metrics to acquire the funds. He stated that all through the meeting the Administration, staff and Board have acknowledged that there was an issue and that improvements needed to be made. Continuing, he spoke on the negative comments that are repeatedly directed to staff and administrators.

Chairman Darling stated they would continue the conversation to another meeting. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. made a motion ***to continue the "211" conversation to the first issue on the next (School) Board meeting.*** It was seconded by Mr. Morris. In discussion, Superintendent Minnihan asked what the topic will be under the agenda item. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said there were two parts: financial (where can we get the money) and a focus on kindergarten (K) and first grade; in his opinion it gives the school a better chance of success. The Board and school can "sell the success" to the community. Superintendent Minnihan stated he would bring both parts to the April meeting. ***The motion passed 4-0-1 (Callum-King abstained).***

C. Croydon Tuition

Chairman Darling began the agenda item with the questions from Mr. Hubert.

- 1) Does Croydon have a contract to send their students to Newport schools (4-12)? Yes, Croydon has a contract for 2022-2023. They have to tell Newport how many students they will send. Croydon has to pay for that number. There is nothing in the contract that states the students have to go to Newport.
- 2) How many students come from Croydon? 19 in the 2021-2022 school year.
- 3) Are there any consequences if they break their contract? It would have to be litigated. Their payment schedule is twice a year.
- 4) How much revenue does Newport count on from the residents of Croydon for our (school) budget? \$306,000.
- 5) If we don't receive the (full) revenue how much will it cost the Croydon taxpayer? Half would be \$153,000 of lost revenue.
- 6) What other districts send their children to Newport? How much is that revenue? 56 students come from Goshen. Revenue is just under \$1 million dollars (\$1,000,000). 3 students from Lempster attend; 10 students from Unity attend. The total revenue is \$1,431,722.
- 7) There was a Croydon resident who made a statement about Newport accepting 'half a loaf'. If the Board did that, would it be fair to assume that other communities would expect the same?
- 8) How much would the deficits cost the Newport taxpayer? \$700,000 (for 50% payments)

Chairman Darling asked for any other questions. There being none, they moved on to the next agenda item.

D. Policy- Public Comment and Participation at Board Meetings (BEDH) Discussion

(For full presentation and discussion, go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. read aloud Policy BAAA (School Board Policies and Administrative Procedures). He asked that the Board discuss and reaffirm Policy Public Comment and Participation at Board Meetings as passed on May 5, 2016. After statements on the BAAA policy, Mr. Spaulding, Sr. made a motion ***to go back to the BAAA Policy format instead of using the BEDH Policy.*** Ms. Callum-King seconded it for discussion (only). The Board members gave their opinions on keeping the BEDH policy as it stands versus amending it. After their discussion, Ms. Wells requested an explanation of the acronym BEDH; the general public did not know. It was explained to her by the Chair and Superintendent. She also asked how the general public could contact the Board to have their statements put into the record of the meeting. It was explained to her. Mr. Beard gave his opinion to the Board concerning BEDH. Chairman Darling stated that the motion on the floor was ***to revert Policy BEDH to Policy BAAA, adopted May 5, 2016.*** She called for a vote. ***The motion failed 1-3-1 (Darling, Rhonda and Wilkinson voted no; Morris abstained).*** There was a brief discussion to bring the BEDH policy to the Policy Committee for review. Mr. Morris made a motion ***to move the Policy to the Policy Committee to make adjustments based on public comments.*** It was seconded by Chairman Darling. There was a discussion on the changes procedure to make the changes and the members on the Policy Committee. ***The motion passed 4-1-0 (Spaulding voted no).***

E. Newport Support Staff (NSS) Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Signing

Superintendent Minnihan told the Board the changes in the agreement with the NSS.

F. School Board Training Date(s)

Chairman Darling told the Board members that she needed to inform presenter Mr. Matthew Upton, of available days and dates for the Newport School Board Training Workshop. After a brief discussion, a Saturday in the future would be allotted for the workshop. In polling the Board members only Mr. Spaulding, Sr. stated he would not be attending. Chairman Darling will contact the presenter.

Administration:

Superintendent Minnihan publicly apologized for his response to Mr. Beard's statements concerning the staff and schools in Newport.

Mr. Tom Ronning, Middle School Principal; spoke on the Career day for the Middle and High School students. Ms. Shannon Martin, High School Principal also told the Board about the March 23, 2022 Career Day and the pre-Pandemic bell schedule the high school will reinstate (4 blocks a day; up to 8 credits a year).

Ms. Jennifer Opalinski, Director of the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center told the Board:

- ❖ The CTE is trying to fill the Auto shop with a long term substitute
- ❖ Spoke about FFA (Future Farmers of America), FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) in the CTE
- ❖ The Town/School is looking for an Economic Development Coordinator
- ❖ Accounting Course Ms. Opalinski addressed Mr. Spaulding, Sr. and the Board and explained her research on having an accounting class. Ms. Opalinski stated they taught the basics of the class through Business in the Career and Technical Education (CTE). She explained the various ways to further incorporate accounting into the schedule.

Ms. Patrice Glancey, Interim Principal Richards Elementary addressed the Board and viewing public and gave a snapshot of the newly designed, user-friendly website. It will be up and running soon.

Superintendent Minnihan announced the retirement of Ms. Jennifer Opalinski, Director of the CTE. He thanked her for all her hard work to get the CTE Renovation Bond passed. Newport has been fortunate to have her (and Mr. Emond) as a part of our team. He informed the Board of the interim Director of the CTE: Mr. Eric Perry.

Mr. Perry is currently the Health Science Instructor at the CTE. The SAU has posted a job opening for a Business Administrator. Any Board member who would like to serve on the hiring committee should let the Board Chair know.

Shannon Martin thanked Ms. Opalinski for the time and effort she put in for Newport. She brought a skill set that we didn't have. She thanked her, and wished her the best in her "new chapter". Mr. Perry's knowledge and vision for our students is wonderful and she looked forward to working with him. Mr. Shawn Robertson, High School Assistant Principal will not be returning in the fall. Superintendent Minnihan stated there will be resignations at the next meeting for the Board to act on; he also stated he would like the Board's permission to hire personnel by the same process as in the summer months (it was explained to the Board members). On a motion by Chairman Darling, seconded by Mr. Spaulding, Sr.; ***the Board voted to allow Superintendent Minnihan to hire personnel by the same process, prior to a Board vote. The motion passed 5-0-0.***

Board-none

On a motion by Chairman Darling, seconded by Mr. Spaulding, Sr.; ***the School Board voted at 8:12 p.m. by roll call vote to go into nonpublic session pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (k) Consideration by a school board of entering into a student or pupil tuition contract authorized by RSA 194 or RSA 195-A , which if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general public or the school district that is considering a contract including any meeting between the school board or committees thereof, involved in the negotiations. The motion passed by roll call vote 5-0-0.***

Respectfully submitted,

Maura Stetson, Recording Secretary

Approved on: April 14, 2022