

**Barnet School Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, December 9th, 2014**  
**Barnet School**

**Members in Attendance:** Robert Farlice-Rubio, Shellie Samuels, Mary Skovsted, David Warden; Principal Shawn Gonyaw, Superintendent Mat Forest

6:11pm

The meeting was called to order by Chair Shellie Samuels

6:12pm

A motion was made by David Warden and seconded by Bobby Farlice-Rubio to enter Executive Session to discuss busing and other contracted services. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approved**

6:30pm

A motion was made by Robert Farlice-Rubio and seconded by Mary Skovsted to exit Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approved**

At this time the meeting was joined by Donna Gaston, CCSU Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Coordinator.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Robert Farlice-Rubio and seconded by Dave Warden to approve the minutes of the November 11th, 2014 meeting without amendments. The motion passed unanimously with no further discussion.

**Approved**

6:38pm

At this time the meeting was joined by Louis Bushey, delayed by the evening's icy roads and blizzard conditions

**Pubic Input**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Chair Shellie Samuels decided to forward Donna Gaston's presentation on the Extended Learning Opportunities ELO program, from **New Business**, in order to allow her to get home earlier in the inclement weather.

Donna Gaston gave a prepared slide show presentation to summarize the wide variety of activities that take place during the ELO After-school program. Donna Gaston emphasized the fact that ELO is not a daycare program, but a diverse curriculum of educational opportunities including homework time, reading, Junior Historical Society, crafts, cooking, the Young Writer's Workshop, astronomy, filmmaking, Spanish Club, aviation, Lego club, gardening, kites, basketmaking, mountain biking, fishing, etc.

The ELO program is run by a combination of volunteers, staff, parents, and contracted services. In addition to activities at school, ELO participants have orchestrated a charity "bike-a-thon," an Easter egg hunt, swimming lessons, cooking classes, and have taken a field trip to Owl's Head in Groton State Forest.

Mary Skovsted asked Donna Gaston if there was anyway to evaluate the effectiveness of the program on students' performance. Donna Gaston said she was working with teachers to develop a method for evaluation, but there was already anecdotal evidence that some students were benefitting from ELO with increased focus and academic gains. Louis Bushey inquired about the number of students that were participating, and Donna Gaston stated that roughly one third of Barnet students were regular participants in the program. Louis Bushey asked if there were ways to increase participation, such as providing a bus. Donna Gaston said that a survey showed that only one family required busing in order to participate, and the neighboring Caledonia North Supervisory Union (CNSU) only averaged seven to eight riders on their after-school bus, so she felt the expense was not justified.

Donna Gaston ended her presentation with discussion of the future sustainability of the ELO program, as the originating grant funding was structured to provide 100% funding for only three years, 75% for the fourth year, and then 50% for the fifth and final year. CCSU could reapply for funding, but only at the 50% funding level. Donna Gaston mentioned that one possible solution was to charge fees for the program, with fees waived for students who are enrolled in the Free and Reduced school lunch program.

## **Administrative Reports**

Chair Shellie Samuels asked the board to review the Administrative Reports as hard copies were passed around. CCSU Business Manager Pat Amsden was unable to attend the meeting because of the dangerous driving conditions, but Superintendent Mat Forest provided hard copies of the draft budget for FY 2016. Chair Shellie Samuels asked if there were any questions about the Administrative reports, and none of the board members had any questions or concerns. Chair Shellie Samuels suggested that the board direct its focus to the draft budget, as it was the most urgent issue for discussion.

Chair Shellie Samuels reminded the board that there would be no audit until the middle of January, and therefore some of the numbers regarding the expected \$117,429 fund balance were possibly subject to change.

Principal Shawn Gonyaw explained that there was an increase of \$109,654 over the previous draft budget for several reasons, the greatest single expenses being \$71,288 in high school tuition increases: \$39,000 of this expense is for special education of which \$21,840 (56%) will be reimbursed by the State. An additional \$38,454 is needed to establish the state-mandated full-time Pre-Kindergarten program, but \$14,000 of this expense is a one-time cost. \$30,908 is needed to hire a special education paraprofessional, and \$11,514 is needed to increase a food service kitchen helper from .5 FTE to full-time.

Chair Shellie Samuels inquired if the ELO program could be incorporated into the full-time Pre-K, but both Principal Shawn Gonyaw and Superintendent Mat Forest agreed that it would make for too long of a day for such young children. Principal Shawn Gonyaw added that a family with a particular need could have their pre-K student remain through the ELO period if necessary.

David Warden asked if there was any State funding for this mandated change to our Pre-K, and Principal Shawn Gonyaw said that such funding was not available. Superintendent Mat Forest added that under provisions of the law, parents could choose to pull their children, and subsequent per-child funding, from Barnet School to send them to other programs, including private day-care providers. The law also guides school programs to be mindful of not driving local private day-care providers out of business. Bobby Farlice-Rubio inquired as to how the school could help keep private providers in business if the school is attempting to attract as many students as possible. Superintendent Mat Forest replied that Barnet School would remain competitive by maintaining a program of the highest ranking, known as "level five," and therefore could attract students and revenues from surrounding towns. Mary Skovsted asked if there would be a cap on the number of students allowed. Chair Shellie Samuels asked if Free and Reduced Lunch Program students would get priority. Superintendent Mat Forest concluded by saying that the law is not yet fully implemented, and some these details are subject to change in the coming year.

Superintendent Mat Forest addressed the increases in the budget that were due to the Supervisory Union's expenses. Deficits from the prior year, due to legal fees, amounted to a share of \$5,797 for the Barnet School. A sum of \$10,085 is needed for staff raises, annual fees, and financial software leases. Having found unsatisfactory performance in the contracted services provided by Wild Branch Solutions, Inc. for maintaining the Information Technology (IT) Hardware, Superintendent Mat Forest strongly recommended the creation of two new positions in the CCSU: An IT Director, and an IT Assistant. At a combined total of 1.7 FTE, these positions will cost the Barnet School \$10,314 more than the service contract with Wild Branch.

Louis Bushey asked if having a dedicated IT director would prove more effective, and if there were any similar cases in the other school districts in the area. Superintendent Mat Forest stated that he consulted with Superintendent Beth Cobb at the Orange East Supervisory Union in Bradford, VT, and found that she was satisfied by having a dedicated IT director on staff. Superintendent Mat Forest added that Wild

Branch left many problems neglected, other schools in the CCSU had hardware misplaced due to errors by their technicians. Superintendent Mat Forest said he believes it is preferable to have staff accountable only to the schools for every day of the week, to address problems as soon as they arise. He acknowledged the increase in cost, but also said the current arrangement with Wild Branch was simply not effective. Principal Shawn Gonyaw added that his past experience with an IT director at the Rivendell School was preferable to his experience with Wild Branch at Barnet School. David Warden expressed his desire to ensure that Barnet School is always at the forefront of educational technology, and encouraged the board to work towards keeping the school facilities ahead of technological advances. Louis Bushey expressed his concern that more technicians would not necessarily solve the IT problems at some schools, and asked as to how the needs would be prioritized in an SU with both large and small schools. Louis Bushey expressed his preference for bidding out the IT contract to other providers, instead of creating new positions at CCSU. Principal Shawn Gonyaw added that having good equipment, as the Barnet School currently does, reduces the need for maintenance, and that by hiring an IT Director and Assistant, the Supervisory Union could streamline the purchasing of equipment, ensuring compatibility and functionality and thereby reducing repairs and maintenance.

Addressing the \$109,654 increase in the draft budget, Superintendent Mat Forest expressed his hope that since it was still less than the unaudited fund balance of \$157,996, it would not cause any increase in Barnet residents' property taxes. Chair Shellie Samuels replied that this was not necessarily the case, as this budget may trigger the need for two separate votes on the budget at Town Meeting. Chair Shellie Samuels reminded the board that the Town of Barnet's revenue data was not yet available, and its release would necessitate another meeting in January in order to finalize the budget. The board unanimously agreed to schedule another special budget meeting for January 7th, 2015 at 6pm.

## **New Business**

Superintendent Mat Forest asked the board to make a first reading of the newly formulated "Staff and Student Relations" for the new CCSU policy manual. Superintendent Mat Forest emphasized the fact that in our small, tight-knit communities, it is common for a teacher to be treated as a virtual family member, but that it was very important for teachers to remember that professional boundaries must be maintained. The board was generally in agreement with most of the policy points, but Louis Bushey and Bobby Farlice-Rubio brought up their concern that rule "4" was potentially too burdensome:

"4. Staff members shall not associate with students in any situation or activity which could be considered sexually suggestive or involve the presence or use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs."

Bobby Farlice-Rubio asked that if a teacher were hypothetically invited to a wedding, would they be unable to drink a beer at the reception if Barnet School students were in attendance. Superintendent Mat Forest acknowledged that these same

concerns were also mentioned by the other school boards in CCSU, and that he intended to change that point so that it referred only to events at which staff members were attending as representatives of the school. This issue brought up a lively discussion about the overlapping roles that teachers assume when working in such a small, rural community where everyone generally knows each other's business.

### **Old Business**

The board conducted a second reading of the "Staff/Student Conduct and Boundaries" policy for the new CCSU policy manual. This document was first read at the November 11th, 2014 school board meeting.

A motion was made by Robert Farlice-Rubio and seconded by Louis Bushey to approve "Staff/Student Conduct and Boundaries" policy for the new CCSU policy manual. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approved**

### **Other Business**

Principal Shawn Gonyaw informed the board that he had met with Ed O'Leary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund regarding potential grant funding for new playground equipment at the Barnet School. Chair Shellie Samuels mentioned the availability of a matching grant from the Esden Fund. Principal Shawn Gonyaw said there was already a committee of students eager to begin spending those funds.

Superintendent Mat Forest asked if he should hire an independent architect to determine the ultimate cause of the perpetual corrosion problems with the Barnet School's steel roof. Principal Shawn Gonyaw showed pictures of the rust damage to the board. Louis Bushey suggested that the board limit the cost of the architect's services to a sum of \$4000. Chair Shellie Samuels suggested finding a firm that was not in any way connected to the contractors who built the school.

A motion was made by Louis Bushey and seconded by David Warden to authorize Superintendent Mat Forest to hire an architect, for an amount not to exceed \$4000, to determine the cause of Barnet School's roof decay. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approved**

### **Future Business**

Chair Shellie Samuels reminded the board that it would be having a second reading of the "Staff/Student Relations" policy at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. Superintendent Mat Forest said he would have an update on the roof by then. Chair Shellie Samuels advised that the newly scheduled January 7th, 2015 meeting would strictly cover budget issues.

A motion was made by Bobby Farlice-Rubio and seconded by Louis Bushey to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobby Farlice-Rubio, Board Clerk