

**Bellows Free Academy, Union District #48, and Northwest Technical Center  
Board of School Directors**

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Board Meeting  
October 2, 2007

Present for a Quorum: Nilda Gonnella-French, Al Corey, Jim Mercier, and Bruce Scott

Absent: Sally Lindberg

Administrators: Dennis Hill, Assistant Principal; Sally Tarr, Director, NWTC; Laurence Carnahan, Director, Support Services; Geoff Lyon, Assistant Principal; Ned Caron, Principal; David Kimel, Manager, Collins Perley Sports Complex; Wendy Meunier, Associate Principal; and Marilyn Grunewald, Superintendent, FCSU

Visitors: Michelle Monroe, *St. Albans Messenger*; Paul and Irene Bouchard; Robert Crawford, Yearbook Advisor; Joshua Friedman, Spanish Teacher/Nicaragua Trip Advisor; Keren Turner, Spanish Teacher/Nicaragua Trip Chaperone; Sara Howard, Yearbook Advisor; Lynda Ulrich, Parent; Martha McGinn, Parent; Greg Christie; Tiffany Schwicker; Yearbook Student Editor; and Frank R. Spendley

1. Call to Order: Jim Mercier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Visitors:

3.1 Collins Perley Sports Complex Expansion: Lynda Ulrich addressed the board in support of keeping the expansion project open for debate. She sees the complex as serving the important function of a community center. She came to learn more about the expansion, and feels an opportunity was lost in not putting forth a bond vote. She has met with several people within the community regarding the matter. She spoke with developers who expect the St. Albans area to lose 4,000 jobs in the near future from businesses moving out of the area. She warned that you won't be able to attract people to the area if the community cannot support a vote to put a roof on the City School, or if the community does not support the arts and sports programs. She sees the CPSC expansion as a catalyst that could bring a lot of people together. She spoke to the hockey people, who represent the largest constituency, and asked if they would like to participate in a public debate on the issue. She has gathered 80 signatures in a petition from people who would like to hear more about the issue through a public debate. She left the petition with the board and a chart showing infrastructure needs. She feels putting it out to a vote might bring about positive changes for St. Albans.

Martha McGinn's husband put in a great deal of time, along with a lot of people, serving on the exploratory committee, and she felt it was a shame to dismiss their efforts, and that too much was thrown away. Mr. Bouchard felt that repudiation of all their work would discourage people from serving in the future. Also, he feels St. Albans needs to keep competitive, along with the school sports programs.

Mr. Spendley spoke of the length of time spent by the committee, but noted that it is, after all, a part of the process. What bothers him the most about the process is that it shows a real lack of respect for the way we govern. He feels the public would have more confidence in the board if

they were elected by the people, instead of being selected by the City Council; however, he feels this board has done an outstanding job. The board is held responsible for the CPSC, which they never had been before. He added that the decision of the board was made on behalf of the community. If we go ahead and have the public debate, it shows no confidence in our government and school board; the board represents us. Mr. Spendley would like all the needs placed on the table at the same time; he feels you have to represent what other problems exist in order to make a proper decision. He notes that it has been rightly pointed out that CPSC is a real asset to the community. If you look at the age of the CPSC and the City School, which one should be given the highest priority? That should be the proper approach; let's take care of our old problems first and then go on to others. We need to think in terms of our total needs. He strongly feels it is a dangerous thing to take board business to the voters.

Jim Mercier thanked the visitors for their input, and said the board appreciates the large amount of work put in by the exploratory committee. There was a lot of review done in 18 months, and the board made a decision based on it. Where do we want to be ten years from now? Enough questions were raised which indicated we were not ready to go ahead with that project. The board could have circumvented the committee and gone ahead and fix the rink. We learned a lot about it by having the committee do the work. There are immediate needs, and the board will not abandon the project. The board acknowledges more should have been done on the financial aspects.

Al Corey noted that all the people on the committee did a yeoman's job. It was entrusted to the board to make an educated decision. The school board has to weigh what is in the best interest of the community as a whole. The board appreciates the fact that there is strong interest. Al has received a significant number of telephone calls; many callers support the board's decision, and others have said it's not the right time. Al's decision was not his personal wish, but was based upon what he thought needed to be done.

Jim Mercier says it is important to focus on what is the goal line. The sports complex is important to the community, and the school and its needs would be developed in the future. He pointed out that there are significant infrastructure needs, and the school board has a rink that needs to be fixed. We need to be wise about how we move forward, and we should not preclude work to be done in the future. We don't have to have a vote, we simply need specificity to make a valued judgment.

Martha McGinn noted that she spends a great deal of time at the rink, and is astounded by the amount of money needed to run the complex. Lynda Ulrich asked for assurances that the board will keep the ball rolling. What can we do to keep the interest going? Jim Mercier responded that the board should be allowed to determine that.

3.2 Yearbook Presentation: Tiffany Schwicker spoke briefly to the board, and finds there is more input from staff and students this year. There is a core of dedicated enthusiastic students working on the yearbook. Robert Crawford hopes it won't be necessary to raise the price of the yearbook this year, which they had to do last year. Last year was the first time they actually made a profit, and so they were able to purchase a digital camera and scanner. They sold 375 yearbooks last year, and are confident that they could sell an estimated 425 copies this year, which represents 75% of the student body. They sold out last year's yearbook, and have only two left. He is requesting \$5,000 from the school board. He distributed an overall income and expense report for the past year. Sara Howard reports that she did a lot of fundraising work last year, and that this is her third year as an advisor. She has received a lot of support from parents. It has been a joyful, happy experience for her. Jim Mercier thanked them for coming and noted

how great it is to see such enthusiasm.

**Al Corey made the motion to fund the yearbook in the amount of \$5,000; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

3.3 Nicaraguan Trip: Joshua Friedman and Keren Turner will not be taking the trip this year, and are recommending Dan Larrow and Lindsey Blumenfeld as chaperones for the group. They are here to request endorsement from the board. Mr. Friedman and Ms. Turner will assist in organizing the trip. Jim Mercier asked them to be mindful of security issues, and general safety concerns.

**Bruce Scott made the motion to approve the Nicaraguan trip; Al Corey seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

Al Corey called for a recess at 7:15 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 7:25 p.m.

#### 4. Consent Agenda:

4.1 Approval of Minutes of September 6, 2007 and September 11, 2007:

**Al Corey made the motion to approve the minutes of September 6, 2007; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

**Al Corey made the motion to approve the minutes of September 11, 2007, with corrections; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

Corrections: Gonnella-French spelling corrections throughout the document; Page 4, Item 6.5, Line 3 of the last phrase should read "...contingent upon..."

4.2 Superintendent's summary: Included in mailed packet.

#### 5. Old Business

5.1 Revised Bylaws: Bruce Scott called attention to the following corrections: Delete names of committee chairs under Article IV, J., 6.1 Committee Reports; delete the letter "n" under Article V, B, first word on the second line; Nilda Gonnella-French recommends rewording the last sentence under Article IV, M., and feels it is wordy and the meaning vague.

**Al Corey made the motion to approve adoption of the Board Bylaws, with corrections; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

5.2 Job Descriptions: the Personnel Committee has reviewed the job descriptions presented. The board discussed, in particular, the Information Services Director job description. Under Item 7., delete "...of..." Nilda Gonnella-French recommends rewording the Education and/or Experience paragraph under Item 8. Ned Caron explained that it gives the administrators greater flexibility based on ability as it is worded.

**Nilda Gonnella-French made the motion to adopt the job descriptions presented; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

5.3 Collins Perley Building Project Update: The project is moving forward. The

Finance/Building Committee will work with the CPSC board representatives, and Marilyn Grunewald will do some prioritizing in preparation. The board will want to reprioritize in order to leave room for expansion down the road. Nilda says the committee will be meeting October 24th. David Kimel says he has not heard a clear directive from the board; this needs to be determined. If you are going to fix the surface, then you need to take care of the refrigeration, and then you would need to replace the boards, and finally, the bleachers. Jim Mercier noted that the Finance/Building Committee would determine this, and that Collins Perley needs to be involved in it. Marilyn pointed out that it would be the job of herself, Sally Tarr, and David Kimel to provide the committee with information they need so that they could arrive at a decision. We need to address immediate needs that should be done in a manner that keeps in mind some room for future expansion. David will come back to the board with estimates, and will ask the chairman of the board what he wants to do. Al Corey noted that we are getting dangerously close to the point where action will be required. Nilda would need a list of the rank order of repairs with an estimate of costs, and a decision would be made based on the list presented. Al Corey urged that we should avoid taking a band-aid approach, and make certain we don't find ourselves questioning why we didn't take care of issues such as the bleachers. We need to know how much it's going to cost and to do it right.

## 6. New Business:

### 6.1 Committee Reports

a. Curriculum: Bruce Scott reports an exciting meeting held this morning, where they accomplished a lot. They discussed scheduling for the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) exams for juniors. Wendy Meunier is trying to put together a schedule so that the other classes would attend school on the test day. They are reflecting on the possibility of having the juniors come in late and leave early on October 16 and 17, with an opportunity to earn the privilege of getting off campus for lunch as an additional incentive to taking the test, if they make a certain grade or if they improve. Bruce reports that the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) is going to visit model schools. He reports that the Green and Gold theme to build up spirit at Homecoming was a huge success. Wendy is resubmitting an application for grant money needed for a coordinator; they received helpful feedback on their previous submission. Bruce reports that the parents are getting involved in tracking their children on the computer. Al Corey heard from two parents that they are enjoying it. It was suggested that a due date should be included for homework assignments. During the in-service this past week, they discussed expanding the advisory program to improve relations between teachers and students; better relations relate to better student performance. The committee also discussed going from a trimester to a semester system. There was also a discussion about putting together a negotiation team, which would create an eight-hour day, instead of the current 7.5-hour day.

b. Finance/Building: Nilda Gonnella-French reports that the committee met on September 19th. They discussed lease renewal for driver education cars; they need new cars with more mileage benefits, which she feels makes perfect sense. They also discussed the Pepsi contract, which has an exclusive contract for scoreboard advertising. Clarification is needed regarding to whom the check should be made out, BFA or CPSC? It is not stated in the contract. The money received from Pepsi will go toward two Pepsi scholarships. The committee will meet again October 16th.

6.2 Collins Perley Report: Al Corey reports that the last meeting took place on September 13th, and that there is not a lot to report other than the successful car show held at CPSC.

6.3 Secondary Special Education Agreements: Laurence explained the terms of the agreement with the sending schools, and the state and federal requirements. This agreement outlines responsibilities of BFA regarding special needs students., and must be approved annually.

**Al Corey made the motion to approve the Secondary Special Education Agreement between Bellows Free Academy Union High School District #48/Northwest Technical Center and sending schools Fairfield School District, Grand Isle SU, Franklin West SU, Sheldon School District, Bakersfield School District and Berkshire School District; Nilda Gonnella-French seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

**Nilda Gonnella-French made the motion to authorize the chair to sign the Secondary Special Education Agreement; Al Corey seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

6.4 BFA and NWTC Action Plans: Ned Caron and Sally Tarr and the rest of the team worked toward specific goals. They talked about a lot of things we are doing that are proactive actions to improve student performance for all students. They are working closely with the tech center. Sally says the Perkins requirements affect NWTC plans. They maintain a partnership with the sending schools. The initiatives must meet indicators or must have plans in place to achieve them. The tech school also has an action plan. They are focusing on the portfolio project; they want them to be more of a document that reflects what they have done and what it means for their future. Ned pointed out that the Breaking Ranks program is working hand-in-glove with the tech center. Both faculty and staff are working together, and he is delighted with that kind of cooperation. They have made an effort to align the actions with the FCSU Strategic Plan. Marilyn Grunewald says she really likes the way they weaved the action plans together, and the very nice way it's set up. Jim Mercier noted that there is a lot of good information in the plan, and he wondered how you could present it in such a way that the information is presentable to the public. Ned continued by pointing out that this is a document that is required by the state. Administrators are out in the classrooms every day now, which they call Game Day. They are directly linked with the Breaking Ranks Program.

**Al Corey made the motion to add to the agenda New Business items the Pepsi Scoreboard Advertising Contract and the new Driver Education car leases; Nilda Gonnella-French seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

6.5 Pepsi Scoreboard Advertising Contract: Pepsi normally pays the full amount to BFA, which is split with Collins Perley. David Kimel would like approval from the board to have the CPSC portion of the check to go directly to CPSC from the Pepsi office. The auditors are requesting that this should happen. We are in the middle of a five-year contract with Pepsi. Nilda noted that the Finance Committee didn't have a problem with the request. It will be discussed further at the next meeting.

6.6 Driver Education Car Leases: Sally Tarr reviewed the leases and the mileage figures. She recommends considering leasing cars with a 75,000-mileage benefit. There would be a \$2200 fee for terminating the lease early.

**Nilda Gonnella-French made the motion to negotiate termination of the Driver Education Lease Agreement, and enter a new lease agreement; Bruce Scott**

**seconded the motion, with three in favor and one abstention. Motion carried 3-1.**

7. Other Business:

7.1 Northwest Technical Center Director's Report: Included in mailed packet.

7.2 Department Reports: Included in mailed packet.

Bruce Scott commented that he read both reports and found them to be well done and fantastic.

8. Agenda Items for Future Meeting:

8.1 Schedule Changes

8.2 Pepsi Scoreboard Advertising Contract

9. Approve Warrants:

**Al Corey made the motion to approve the August and September warrants; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

10. Executive Session:

**Al Corey made the motion to enter Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. for personnel; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

**The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:40 p.m.**

**Al Core made the motion to hire Glenn Patterson as the CIP Case Manager beginning on November 1, 2007; Bruce Scott seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 in favor one abstention.**

**Al Corey made the motion to hire Carolyn Pelkey as a paraeducator for the Summit Program; Bruce Scott seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 in favor one abstention.**

**Al Corey made the motion to hire Stephanie Brannon as a paraeducator; Bruce Scott seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 in favor one abstention.**

11. Adjourn:

**Al Core made the motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.; Bruce Scott seconded the motion, with all in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlotte Ryan, Board Secretary