



**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL  
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEETING MINUTES/MOTIONS**

**In order to comply with Connecticut General Statutes regarding minutes of meetings, the following will be used to record information during all public meetings that take place. An original must be submitted to the Town Clerk of Rocky Hill within 48 hours of the meeting being adjourned. Motions should be complete, showing the maker and second of the motion as well as how each member voted. Unanimous votes may be listed as unanimous.**

NAME OF PUBLIC BOARD OR COMMISSION	Board of Education
DATE MEETING AGENDA POSTED	February 24, 2010
LOCATION	Training/Conference Room
DATE OF MEETING	<b>February 25, 2010</b>
TIME MEETING STARTED	5:00 p.m.
PERSON PREPARING MEETING MINUTES	Jo-Anne Booth, Recording Secretary
VERBATIM NOTES TAKEN	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
AUDIO, VIDEO OR LIVE TRANSMISSION OF MEETING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**MEMBERS PRESENT AT MEETING**

1. Dilip Desai (Entered at 5:01 p.m.)	2. Maria Mennella
3. Frank Morse	4. Also present: Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar
5. Assistant Superintendent Marian Hourigan	6. Darlene Brown (Language Arts Coordinator)
7. Principal Mario Almeida	8. Principal John Colonghi
9. Principal Cori-Ann DiMaggio	10. Various Teachers
11. Various Parents	12.

NUMBER REQUIRED FOR QUORUM   5   QUORUM PRESENT  Yes  No

**TEXT MOTIONS AND RESULTS VOTES**

1st MOTION  Passed  Failed  Tabled

No motions were made during this special meeting to review the school calendar. (William MacDonald (Chairman), Rene (Skip) Rivard (Vice Chairman), Marc Beliveau, Raffaella Calciano-Coler, Brian Dillon and Edward (Alex) Silva were absent.)

LINK TO WORKING NOTES (will be attached if available) ACTION

CORRECTION(S) (will be attached if available)

TIME MEETING ADJOURNED:   6:01 p.m.  .

TIME DELIVERED TO TOWN CLERK:                     .

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL  
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2010**

**Members Present:** Dilip Desai (Entered at 5:01 p.m.)  
Maria Mennella  
Frank Morse

**Members Absent:** William MacDonald (Chairman)  
Rene (Skip) Rivard (Vice Chairman)  
Marc Beliveau  
Raffaella Calciano-Coler  
Brian Dillon  
Edward (Alex) Silva

**Also Present:** Dr. Jeffrey Villar (Superintendent)  
Marian Hourigan (Assistant Superintendent)  
Darlene Brown (Language Arts Coordinator)  
Principal Mario Almeida  
Principal John Colonghi  
Principal Cori-Ann DiMaggio  
Various Teachers  
Various Parents

A special meeting of the Board of Education was held on Thursday, February 25, 2010 in the training/conference room. Mr. Morse called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**1. Discussion of the Upcoming School Year Calendar (s)**

Superintendent Dr. Villar said this group was charged with reviewing proposed calendars for the Rocky Hill Public Schools. They are very late in this process and they had wanted to do this in December. He had proposed to Chairman William MacDonald of the Board of Education that they ask the Board of Education to adopt two years of calendars at a minimum. Copies of the proposed calendars were given to everyone. There was one for the 2010-2011 school year and two for the 2011-2012 school year depending on whether school would start before or after Labor Day. He told them another important document they needed to consider was the memorandum that had been written by Interim Superintendent Parmelee-Blancato. He also mentioned how there are approximately thirty-four students at GHAMAS.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said they were present this evening to get input and to come up with something they can recommend to the Board of Education that they are comfortable with. Superintendent Dr. Villar asked everyone to look at the 2010-2011 school year calendar. Mr. Morse confirmed that the first day of school will be on August 30, 2010 and Superintendent Dr. Villar said that will be the first day of school for students. New

teacher orientation will be held on August 24, 2010 and professional development for all teachers will be held on August 25, 2010, August 26, 2010 and August 27, 2010.

Mr. Ed Chiucarello (parent) said he works for the City of Hartford where he is a teacher. He had sent a letter to Superintendent Dr. Villar and he had copies of this for people this evening. Mr. Chiucarello said he was lobbying that Rocky Hill go to a one week vacation. Hartford has done this and they only have a school vacation at the end of March and beginning of April after the CMTs. He stated in his letter some arguments as to why people have had February vacations. He mentioned some school districts that currently only have two days off in February. He thinks it is better to keep students in school before the CMTs instead of having them leave school for a week.

A parent said she liked the idea of having one vacation. They have a lot of snow days and she would rather see a long weekend in February such as maybe having a Friday and Monday off then they could have a school vacation at the end of March or first week of April. The students could then get out in early June and it still won't be so late if they tack on the few snow days. She doesn't mind having the students starting school in August. In a lot of other states, students don't have a February vacation and this seems to work so much better. She would rather see more continuity of learning. The students could have the CMT break, finish up and then have a little vacation. It seems like the rhythm would be better.

Principal Almeida asked Mr. Chiucarello when his students have the winter break, if they go right into Three Kings Day or if they go back to school and then go back out on Three Kings Day. Mr. Chiucarello said the students are back at school on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday then they take Three Kings Day off. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this would probably depend on when this holiday falls.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said if this district was to move to a combined spring vacation then they would get out of school a lot earlier. He referred to Hartford's school calendar and said this could be advantageous. He personally has no position with regards to this and he is for whatever works for the community.

Mr. Bill Pentland (a parent) asked if this would be a problem with the union contracts. Superintendent Dr. Villar said no. Teachers are paid by the number of days.

A teacher mentioned how this had been done approximately fifteen years ago and this was a disaster healthwise. Schools need to clear out. There had been massive absenteeism when this had been done. The students need a break and this is more so at the high school. The cycle of every eight weeks is helpful. It helps students to take a break because a lot of them are under a lot of pressure due to their work loads, etc. He said he wasn't opposed to this because it doesn't affect him one way or another as a teacher but he thinks this is important to the students. He would be concerned about the health issues.

Another teacher said she would be concerned a little about the health issues. She remembered when this had been done in 1987. A lot of students had been absent and they had a lot of teachers who were ill as well. The CMT issue also was a concern of hers and she explained why. She is fine though with whatever is going to happen.

Principal Colonghi likes the idea that they could get out of school earlier. He said looking at the schedule, the students would start school on August 30, 2010 then they would get out on June 13, 2011. Hartford students are looking on getting out on June 7, 2011 so this is only a difference of three and a half days. He can see when they get into February that everyone needs that break. He thinks it is better to have the break at that point. They will do what they think is best but he thinks the way the breaks are spaced now is appropriate. He knows what the students are like a few days before they are going on vacation. He would be a little worried if those days are the ones that they would be taking their CMTs on because he isn't sure if they are going to be concentrating like they should be. He told Mr. Chiucarello that he could see his point and the merits in it. Principal Colonghi said he wasn't sure if he was ready yet for this. A teacher said if this was spaced differently then maybe.

Principal DiMaggio asked if there could be a good compromise. She suggested in February that maybe they could have a longer weekend and then they can have the April vacation. She thinks the April vacation is a nice time for students who don't go away to be able to get outside.

A parent remembered when school had started a little late one year. They had done a long weekend in February because school had started so late that year and then they took the first week in April off. She said that year went fine. A teacher said they still had a February vacation that year as well as an April one and they also had a long weekend in February. Superintendent Dr. Villar said if they had a Monday and Tuesday off then the question becomes if they are shortening the school year by three days versus not having a full block in February and he said some of the arguments that had been put forth earlier had suggested that the full block is a good idea.

A parent said there is also the snow day issue and this may add days at the end of the school year. She said this year seemed to be a sick year more than usual. A teacher said there have been days where they only have twelve students in the classroom.

Mr. Chiucarello said they are very much geared up for the CMTs in Hartford and he was sure that Rocky Hill is as well. He doesn't see giving his son and other elementary students that week off in February and he said to let them have vacation when they are done with the CMTs. Principal Colonghi asked Mr. Chiucarello what he would be saying for February. Mr. Chiucarello said he was saying for there to be no February vacation. Principal Colonghi said this would mean that the students would come back to school in January and not have another break until late March or April. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the ideal compromise would be to have a vacation in the middle of March but they can't do this.

A teacher asked when all of the test booklets have to be back and if this would be an issue for teachers. Mrs. Brown said they currently don't test on Fridays at the elementary level so the test schedule spans a full window in March. They also have makeup days. She has to get everything boxed up and shipped out by the last week in March. They stretch things out so students and teachers don't get stressed out. She explained more.

Mr. Morse said he came to this meeting anticipating talking about February vacation but he didn't anticipate doing anything in the 2010-2011 school year. He thinks people have already made plans because they know the February vacation is there. He did anticipate suggesting that they shorten February vacation in the 2011-2012 school year to a four day weekend. He thinks the children do need a break then and it is easy enough to add one extra day because President's Day is there anyways. He knows some people go away for vacation in February but he doesn't think this is as many people as those who go away in April. He thinks this would be a good compromise and they should leave February vacation for this coming year. In the school year 2011-2012, people can get ready and they will know they have four days off instead of a week. Principal Almeida said people would be given two years of schedules. Mr. Chiucarello said he wasn't saying not to have February vacation for the next school year. He was just throwing this suggestion out to get the mindset. Mr. Morse said they have always said that they have to follow CREC's calendar but when he looked at Hartford's school calendar today, Hartford doesn't follow it. Mr. Chiucarello said in the first year or so the teachers of Hartford were complaining about not having February vacation but after awhile it just was the same as it always was. Principal Colonghi said it becomes the norm. Principal DiMaggio thinks more towns are going towards this and that South Windsor is doing away with their February vacation next year. She is not sure what the reason is behind this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are still doing the same number of school days. Principal DiMaggio said they probably just want to get out earlier. Mr. Morse said Portland is doing the same thing this year too.

A teacher said he didn't see any great benefit. They would be getting out a little earlier but the students would be pushed to work a little quicker and a little harder. They would run the risk of health issues coming up. At the high school, there are exams which are intense and there is a lot of pressure on seniors. For February vacation, the space is cleared out for nine days and he thinks this works better for the children. He thinks the rhythm that is there works. He doesn't see a big advantage of changing this just to pick three days up.

Mr. Morse said school will start after Labor Day in 2011-2012 if they follow the CREC calendar. That would really push the end of the year and the last day of school would be on June 19, 2012. If the February vacation that year is shortened then they will be into the third week of June instead of the fourth week. He has heard arguments that people love their Labor Day weekend but now students are going to school a full week before this a lot of times. He asked everyone if they are looking at two years of school calendars if they can agree that they will keep February vacation for this year (2010-2011). Mr. Pentland said he didn't think they had a choice because there are already people who

have made vacation plans for next February so they would have to push this to the following school year calendar. The Board of Education should see how it feels about this and if the members like this idea then Superintendent Dr. Villar should see if there is any information out there that could help everyone make a decision one way or another. If teachers would rather have the February vacation then maybe some of the states that don't do this can be reached out to and they can see if there is any information to help people make the decision.

Principal Almeida said another issue for the high school with regards to why they have to keep next year the same is that they have so many days that students are allowed for absences before they lose credit. This has been a Board policy forever. If a student goes on vacation that is not considered an excused absence. If February vacation is taken out for next year, some parents won't have their children go to school for the week vacation was supposed to be. He said it will put them in a tough spot and he explained more. They need to keep the February vacation at least one more year and then he thinks the four day weekend in February will work. The logical way would be to have a Monday and Tuesday off. He would leave April school vacation where it is. A parent said they could make school vacation in April on the second week instead of the third week. Another parent said whatever decision they make will be okay as long as people know in advance.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said their other impact is for the students who participate in the partial day programs at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and at GHAMAS. Their schedules will be impacted but this can be overcome. Mr. Morse said parents will be given two years to understand this and it will give the Board of Education time to figure out if busing has to be provided for those students for that week.

Mrs. Brown asked if there has been any talk at CREC as to if they are going to be changing their school calendars in order to make it easier for surrounding towns or she asked if they are committed to keeping this traditional calendar. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he reached out to the Director of the magnet schools but hasn't heard back yet. Mr. Chiucarello said he did this as well and heard back from the Director that they weren't talking about it but she was vague so he wrote again but she hasn't written back. Superintendent Dr. Villar mentioned what his suspicion is and he said they can adapt if they consciously make changes with enough forethought planning.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he wasn't hearing a full consensus but he was hearing the recommendation to look at having an extended weekend around President's Day in the 2011-2012 school year and to have two days off. He made suggestions as to what days they could take off. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said one thing they could look at is that the professional development day could be tacked onto this. This could come out of March and go into February so that would give them extra time. She suggested having this on February 17, 2012 and then the students could have February 20, 2012 and February 21, 2012 off.

Mrs. Brown asked if the Rocky Hill calendars that they currently had in front of them aligned with CREC and their calendars. Superintendent Dr. Villar said yes. Mr. Morse referred to one of the calendars and said it wouldn't align. He explained that if Labor Day falls on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> then school shall begin the Monday prior to Labor Day. It was asked as to why there is this rule. Superintendent Dr. Villar imagined that the CREC Council sat down at some point and talked about some guidelines when they were trying to build some consensus around a school calendar.

A teacher asked what the benefit of taking away February vacation is and he asked if this would be the saving of three days in June. A brief discussion took place. Mr. Pentland said it has always been historical that April vacation can be broken into if they have a really bad winter. If February vacation is taken away then they won't be able to do this and everything will have to be added at the end of the school year.

Superintendent Dr. Villar referred to the H1N1 Virus scare. He said in discussions with the Commissioner of Education about this that a couple of districts shut down for a week and it was very clear from the State Department of Education that these days have to be made up before July 1, 2010. This is a very atypical scenario though.

Superintendent Dr. Villar went over the points as he saw them. He questioned if it is healthier for staff and students to have the whole week off in February. He then referred to the CMT argument. Both of these have merit. This will come down to what makes them feel better. This all impacts when they will get out of school. The statutory number of days have to be met and they have to look at how this plays out. He thinks there is merit to the argument that having a break for children every eight weeks is a good thing and he thinks it is a good thing for the teachers. He doesn't know what the impact will be of having a long weekend but he said it will give them a break. They are running against tradition in one way so they would probably want to have a good argument for it. Mr. Chiucarello said they have data and there are four towns that are doing this already (Hartland, Hartford, Region 10 and New Britain). A teacher said there are a lot more towns that aren't doing this. Mr. Chiucarello said no towns were doing this two years ago. He didn't think that time on task was that important to a high school student compared to an elementary student and he explained why. He thinks the elementary students' time in school is very important. One week makes a huge difference in students retaining information. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said the CMT test is based on information that was presented two years prior and it should be mastered by this point. She didn't know if three more days was really going to help the students achieve mastery. Superintendent Dr. Villar agreed. He thinks that readiness on task though is an important issue. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this district has a history of high achievement on the CMTs with the current schedule they have in place.

A parent said if they don't want to get rid of the February vacation then they could look at the school calendar and she would like to see the date for the end of the school year be a little earlier because they always end up tacking on snow days and it gets late. She gave an example of them looking at the school calendar and saying they want to get out

of school by June 12, 2011. They could back into this to see how they could achieve this even if it means that they start before Labor Day regardless of what CREC is doing. They would then still be getting out at a reasonable time in June in anticipation of some snow days.

Principal DiMaggio said in the past that they have always had full professional development days and she suggested for a good compromise that maybe they can go towards half days for professional development so the students can get their days in. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this was an intriguing idea to him and he would like to provide faculty with regular time to sit down and look at student achievement data. Some school systems have done this by having half days. He thinks it is a very powerful form of professional development to have teachers sit down and look at student achievement. He said Assistant Superintendent Hourigan could bring people in to work with teachers as they do this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he is supportive of this concept and he would love the opportunity to try to make this work. Principal DiMaggio said this would help with the end of the school days in June. Students would be going to school and they would have the afternoons off.

A parent referred to how students have the day off on Election Day. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the buildings are needed. This parent said she remembered that schools were open when there had been a primary and it worked. She thinks they can still use the buildings when there are local elections. Principal DiMaggio told this parent that this has more to do with the parking. The parent said this was always the argument. Mr. Pentland said this isn't just a parking issue but it is also a security issue. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he wouldn't want to have hundreds of people going into the school when school is in session. Mrs. Brown said this is for the safety of the students.

Mr. Morse referred to the issue of having half days for professional development. He said periods are shortened at the high school and he asked if the students are actually getting value on those half days. There is the same thing for the elementary students because they know they will be getting out at lunchtime. He asked if children are learning on those days. The teachers said they are. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the other thought is that they could set up a schedule throughout the course of the year where it is built into that there are different courses and different days of the week depending on how many half days they would be talking about. One half day it could be Periods 1, 2 and 3 and then the next half day it could be Periods 4, 5 and 6. He said they would have to do a calculation on the number of hours offered to make sure they don't drop below the state mandated hours. Principal Almeida referred to the half days they had this year for NEASC and he said they couldn't have done what they did without these. He likes the half days. Mr. Pentland believed they used to do half days for professional development at some point. A brief discussion took place about having half days.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he and Assistant Superintendent Hourigan would be thrilled to take the 2011-2012 school year calendar and work the professional development days in then they can bring this back. They can gather up those days and

see where they fall as far as impacting the students' schedules. They also have to do the calculations to make sure they don't fall below the hours. Principal DiMaggio said the students would be missing half days as opposed to whole days. Superintendent Dr. Villar said time is being missed but this would be counted as a day. Hours have to be done. For the elementary level, nine hundred hours per school year are needed and for the secondary level this is around one thousand hours. A parent asked if they aren't well above this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are in some of the categories. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this will be very close at the elementary level because they are very close to getting what they are supposed to when they do the SSPs and add up the subject areas. They take out half days for report card conferences. Principal DiMaggio said full days are also taken out for professional development too so she thinks this will balance out. Superintendent Dr. Villar explained that the full days don't count against the hours.

Superintendent Dr. Villar told everyone that they had to look at the 2010-2011 school year calendar and he thought they would need another date to have another meeting with regards to all of this. They have agreed not to make any drastic changes to the 2010-2011 school year calendar. He asked if there was anything on this that needs to be changed. A teacher referred to the conference days that are in December. They have done this for three years and they have had a snow day during these conference days for two out of the three years. She asked if these can be divided up differently. They did a Monday, Wednesday and the following Monday in the past. Principal DiMaggio suggested that they do a different week and do these even the week after because the snow day hit on the same week two years in a row. The teacher said they have to consider that the holiday is coming too which is a big impact on some families. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan suggested that they add a potential snow day in. Mr. Pentland asked how they would reschedule parents. Superintendent Dr. Villar agreed there should be some days in between. Principal DiMaggio gave a suggestion and said if there is a snow day on December 8, 2010 then they would go to December 15, 2010 and if there is a snow day on December 9, 2010 then they would go to December 16, 2010. People thought this was a very good idea. Superintendent Dr. Villar said what is nice about doing it this way is that it would be the same day of the week so hopefully the parents will have a similar schedule. He said it would be nice for the teachers to change their communication to parents to tell them that their conference is on December 8, 2010 and if school is cancelled then it will be held on December 15, 2010. Mr. Pentland suggested that the teacher should put in this communication that the parent should contact the teacher to reschedule this if they can't make it on December 15, 2010 for example. Mr. Chiucarello referred to where it states "early dismissal" on the calendars and he asked if this could be changed to "parent teacher conferences". Mr. Morse suggested that this could state "early dismissal K-5 parent teacher conference".

Superintendent Dr. Villar told everyone that it looks like most of their work is going to be for the 2011-2012 school year calendar. He suggested that they meet again very soon so that they can get all of this bundled up before the March 18, 2010 Board of Education meeting maybe and they could give two years of school calendars to the Board of

Education. If they can't get the 2011-2012 school calendar done by then, they will have the 2010-2011 school calendar done so that can be adopted. He would then push that they work on the 2011-2012 school year calendar and the 2012-2013 school year calendar because he wants to get a couple of years out in advance. They can then meet again next year and look at three years out after the three years they have approved already.

It was decided to have the next meeting on March 4, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Morse said he liked the idea of half days for professional development. He asked if there was any way they could attempt to have a half day in the 2010-2011 school year on March 25, 2011. That would then bring their last day of school to June 10, 2011 instead of June 13, 2011. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they would need two half days in order to get a full day of professional development. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is one of the things they will have to work on. Mr. Morse said they could bring this forth at the next meeting they are having.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth

Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_