

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 4, 2019

Regular Board Meeting

Board Meeting Room

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 4, 2019 in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order at 6:28M by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer
Lauren Aceto
Patrick Leigh
James W. Morrissey
Karen Pacelli
Rosa Richardson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Patricia Libero

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
Matt Cavallaro, Finance Director

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor Nancy R. Rossi

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT:

Brendan Carew
Sumedha Chowdhury
Julia Walker

Chairwoman Russo said before we start public session we need to add an item to the agenda.

Rosa Richardson put a motion on the floor to add item #19-08 under New Hire Certified Jim Morrissey seconded the motion

Discussion: Superintendent Cavallaro said neither the position on the agenda or the one being added are not new positions. This person that you are adding to the agenda has been a long term sub in that job and just recently we lost an employee so both of the jobs are current jobs.

All board members present were in favor

Motion passes Item 19-08 is added to the agenda

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Chairwoman Russo asked if anyone would like to address the board three times. There were no speakers.

Public Session closed at 6:32 PM.

REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro said we have a few announcements and one report. Budget books were sent to the board, the Mayor's Office, the council members, and to MARB. If you have any questions or feel anything was left out we will try to get you the answers as quickly as possible.

We have been talking about the scheduling and Dana has been working with the staff, students and parents and has answered a lot of questions. At our March 4th meeting she will do a presentation. The MARB meeting is Thursday and all materials have just been received and we will pass them along to you and our union leaders.

Meg Kingston was concerned because we were not serving the number of breakfasts at Bailey Middle School that some of the other schools were serving. Bailey was doing about 110. Rob looked at this and worked out a system. Today Meg informed us they did 333 breakfasts and feels this number will rise once the kids know it is available to them. We are feeding the kids for free because they need the meal. Neil appreciates Meg and Rob working together on this.

Dana is here to give a little presentation because there have been questions on the midterms at the high school and what we are doing on half days. Anne and the coordinators will also weigh in and talk about some of their interactions with different departments. Dana said normally we have regular midterm examinations but as we presented to you earlier in the year we will not be doing the traditional exams anymore we will be going towards a hefman. The reason we are changing the way we talk about them is we want to make clear to all the stakeholders is that we are not talking about paper and pencil multiple choice, fill in the blank tests we are talking about application. This idea was previously presented and now we must carry through. We already had the half day scheduled for January after Martin Luther King Day. Because we were not giving the traditional midterm exam we decided the students would have some kind of informal dipstick assessment of progress. We had two hour blocks in the afternoon where each department worked with the department head, the curriculum coordinator and for some departments someone from ACES to really dedicate that block of time to create quality assessments for the final of the year. Those assessments are taking all kinds of different forms; some are performance tests, debates, just about anything you can think of that is an application based way to assess knowledge in a course. This is what the high school teachers spend their time on during those four days. This was amazing because you don't ever get that kind of time to dedicate with your colleagues and with experts in the curriculum area to work on something like this and create assessments. This is what we spent our time doing and it really worked out well. We don't need to do this every year because once the assessments are designed they will just need to be tweaked as

things change, especially fields where technology develops like in engineering, nursing and civics. The base is created and we will just expand from there.

Dr. Druzolowski said that they have been doing a lot of professional learning since September letting people understand better how teaching could look much like you see in elementary education. Not that it is elementary education but it is a different way of leading children in learning which has worked out the best for us. On a regular basis now they are integrating much of that type of teaching and philosophy of learning into what they do all the time. It is not just an assessment it is what that leads to an assessment. It made everybody at ease when they realized how it fits into the big piece rather than in just their classroom or content area because it is not about the content it is about how you use the information to build an information system and a theory about learning.

Nicole Danishevsky said a big piece of this while the students are working on the task, the assessment, the performance task, the teacher is conferencing with their students so there is some goal setting and some reflective process. In the math department we created a rubric that no matter if you are in Algebra I or Calculus when the teacher is conferencing with the student they will be reflecting on certain questions some students will have written a reflective paper leading up to that some teachers want to see the student's responses and thoughts before so they can prepare and really know how to further probe and get the students to reflect on the year and perhaps set some goals for the following school year. We are talking about this in the math department now and imbedding in our upcoming professional development days. How do we continue or start to engage students in that process now so that by the time June comes it is more natural. Colette Bennett said considering that we are looking at understanding by design which is backward design like what do we want them to be able to do. They had the opportunity now to design and assessment that they can now gather little bits between now and June that they can refer to as they have a target as to where they are going. They are getting the competing and the imbedded professional in conferencing and an ACES Coach is coming in and going into their classes and coaching them through how to conference with students. There is no better tool than the one on one teacher to student. Examples can be tell me what you meant here, what did you explain, that kind of opportunity and learning how to do that effectively is a real gift. They were able to design questions like what is American Literature and one of the teachers said why don't we look at it through the language of The Declaration of Independence and have kids come up with a definition using ideas of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; how do you see this in literature. This is sort of the conversations they were having at a very high level and now they were looking to see how you would confer with a student to get them to give you those points. The conferencing will be a part of this how are we going to do this in terms of timing so that some of them are doing a good portion of the gathering of information so the kids come prepared to the final exam with their conference materials already done.

Dr. Druzolowski said it is all of us sitting there trying to work through these changes and how they impact everything so we ensure that all students have access to information and are learning well and it has been a collaborative effort on our part. Questions were asked by board members and responded to. Board member Jim Morrissey asked if we could here from the student representatives about this. Julia Walker said originally she was against it but after hearing more about this from the point of view that she would benefit from this it made her realize that it will work out in the long run. She will be able to talk

to her teachers about the material, talk to an adult and learn how to communicate her thoughts and what she has learned and she will still get an exam or assessment. She will still get the practice with the material plus she will be able to have a conversation with an adult who can help her in that area so she saw that it was better for her. Sumedha Chowdhury said during the half days they did lose a little bit of instructional time but she thinks it is better that the teachers had the time to talk through all of this and when it came to the finals it wasn't a random kind of thing where nobody knew what was happening. It is actually structured and we all know what is happening now so she thinks it was really beneficial. In terms of midterms in some of her classes like AP classes they still had midterms so it is not like they are completely gone because in AP classes you need to keep your place. She feels this was beneficial because we have a structured final that they kind of look forward to. Brendan Carew said with a structured final everyone is on the same page together that will prepare us as a student body for the next step in college if we choose to go to college. The board gave thanks.

C.1.b. Student Representatives' Report

The report will be found at the end of the minutes.

C.1.c. Board

Jim Morrissey had a comment regarding the last board meeting when Superintendent Cavallaro presented the budget to us. Jim thinks we have a \$400,000.00 increase from last year from the city. Superintendent Cavallaro said that is what is projected in the 5 Year Plan; that is not a definite. Right. Jim said the teachers have saved us about 1M through the new health insurance plan is that correct? Superintendent Cavallaro said because they went over to the high deductible plan. Jim said he wanted to thank the teachers because it seems like every year they are the ones who are taking the brunt of the burden in the school system and they have been very good about it. They have had their wages frozen, steps frozen and now they have the high deductible plan and I see the dedication of our staff, teachers and our paras. Jim has heard Superintendent Cavallaro and Matt Cavallaro talk about how we are going to get less and less grant money, Alliance money from the State of Connecticut, and he wants to caution us because if we get less money from the state it will put a financial burden on this board of education. He doesn't have the exact answer but he does echo the concerns of our superintendent and finance director that we are probably on a collision course down the road because our costs are going to increase and we are not adequately funding education as we go along. He is concerned as to what the future will hold for the board of education. Jim wanted to thank the superintendent because he has done a good job as far as trying to put a band aid on the Titanic for lack of better words. Down the road he sees some major problems if we don't get more money for education and this will hurt the system and our students drastically. Jim again thanked the teachers because during the six years he has been on the board they have done an awful lot and they have been really good to this board.

Superintendent Cavallaro said Jim's points are very well taken and he is exactly right. Short term we are OK next year it is a freeze, no step movement, and it is OK the following year everybody gets a 1% raise with no step movement; again short term we are OK. Long term the danger which Neil wants to caution the board on is in attracting

teachers to the district. This is going to be a huge issue, especially as people retire. This is a real concern which may occur sooner rather than later.

Bob Guthrie said the other thing we all have to watch is that legislative leaders are talking about crafting and adding language allowing a municipality to give boards of education less money in future years. Right now the language is written that you don't. Superintendent Cavallaro said we are carved out as an Alliance District but again that is year to year and that can change too. Bob said in the legislative language they are looking to change that whole composure; it is early on in their process but it is something that would have a domino effect. Neil said there are a lot of things going on right now that we have to pay attention to and the bottom line is that we can't expect to take zero, zero, zero and move forward.

Rosa Richardson wants to agree with Jim and his sentiments but she thinks the most important thing is the fact that we continue to develop awesome teachers and then they leave us. We as a board and we as a community are putting all of our heart and soul into making our teachers the best that they can be and then lose them to another district. Rosa has been watching that trend for a few years. Of course we are going to lose our senior tenured teachers to retirement but we have to find a way to keep our young teachers here. Rosa applauds our educators for taking those zeros and thinks that most unions have done that in the city; but we have to find a way to keep them we can't keep letting them go. Especially our secondary education teachers who are specialized and are not easy to come by and we are losing them. Thank you.

Sue Walker agrees it has become a problem to retain teachers and you can hardly blame them as they have families, mortgages, and student loans to pay back and need to make more money. Most want to stay here anyway but it is a hard thing because education needs to be a major priority in the town and unfortunately the town doesn't have much money to pay for it. We have to find a way to make them want to stay and if it is not monetary maybe it is providing an environment for other opportunities. A better health plan would be great and things like that. Sue thought the presentations from Mackrille and Washington were fabulous and the kids were fabulous; it is great to see things like this. She is still on the fence a little about the assessments but would like to see what some of them are and then maybe she will understand better coming from the old school. She believes there are things that need to be in a kid's head that can be shelved in their brain somewhere so that if needed it can be pulled out. They need to learn that kind of stuff. Sue is very anxious and interested to see the assessments as it sounds like it could be quite fascinating.

Chairwoman Russo agrees with Jim's comments on how the city has to keep up with education and thinks a lot of time the average citizen feels the bill for education is 90M but they don't realize that West Haven is paying less than half of that 90M and that is what I think we have to start letting people know; that the city doesn't pay for the whole tab. We can't keep letting teachers take a pass with zero, zero and whatever. Jim's points were really valid and it does fall financially on the shoulders of our teachers and they have the brunt of the burden. We have to keep this in mind as we go through the next few

budgets. Rosemary thought tonight's meeting was great. She loves this kind of meeting because we talked and interacted and she understands a little more about the midterms and the finals. Rosemary enjoys when the schools come and both schools did a great job. Rosemary said this was my kind of meeting and she thanked everyone for coming.

C.1.d. Committee

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. The **West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting** was held in the Board's Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Tuesday, January 22, 2019 at 6:00 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes D.1.a.
Karen Pacelli made the motion to approve the minutes
Patrick Leigh seconded the motion
Discussion: Rosa Richardson abstained due to her absence at the last meeting.
All board members were in favor
Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations

D.3. New Hire: (Certified)

19-07 April K. Regan, 89 Pond Hill Road, Wallingford, CT 05492
Position: Special Education Teacher – West Haven High School
Salary: \$41,232.00 Step 1 BS
Effective: March 25, 2019

***19-08 Danielle Ruiz**, 370 Narrow Lane, Orange, CT 06477
Position: Special Education Teacher – Savin Rock Community School
Salary: \$51,515 Step 3 BS + 30
Effective: January 22, 2019

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve items 19-07 and 19-08 inclusive
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
Discussion:
All board members were in favor
Items 19-07 and 19-08 are approved

D.4. New Business

F. Informational

Chairwoman Russo said the rest is informational

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn.
The motion was made by Rosa Richardson
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
The meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary

BOE Student Rep Report

February 4, 2019

1. There is a half day this Wednesday for professional development.
2. Honor society will be selling carnations for Valentine's Day.
3. The three of us are going to start meeting with WHHS students to hear what issues they fac around the school starting this upcoming advisory (Feb. 13th).
4. The Science Olympiad Team will be competing in the Sacred Heart Invitationals this Saturday.

