

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**May 20, 2019**

**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**

**Board's Meeting Room**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on May 20, 2019 in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT. The meeting was called to order by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education at 6:00 p.m. 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:** Pat Libero

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

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:**

Julia Walker  
Sumedha Chowdhury

**B. Public Portion of Meeting**

Chairwoman Russo welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked three times if anyone would like to address the board this evening during public session. There were no speakers.

**REPORTS**

### **C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools**

Superintendent Cavallaro said recently during the second meeting in May we have been in a holding pattern because the state has not passed a final budget and their session will end in a couple of weeks. We have begun working on an operating budget that we will present to you and are using the numbers presented to you last time which is between 1.5M and 1.6M from the state. We also have had several more retirements and it is bittersweet because Neil has worked closely with most of the people on the agenda tonight and I want to congratulate them, thank them for all their years of service and wish them a long and happy retirement. Again it is bitter sweet; however the good news is that given the number of retirements it creates a little more flexibility in our budget and the ability to put a few positions back that we have lost over the years which is good news. The number is higher than we anticipated back in January. We have begun the interview process to get a jump on so many open positions. Most of the subject area applicants we will be able to bring in at 1<sup>st</sup> of 2<sup>nd</sup> step. We sometimes lose a couple of people during the summer but that will be offset by the number of people we will be able to bring in at 1<sup>st</sup> step. Joe had interviews last week for Special Ed positions and we are setting some elementary interviews. We are trying to get a finalized plan in place with the Business Network Group and will meet on Wednesday and Patrick will join us to finalize a plan which we hopefully will present to you at our next meeting. This is a real high priority with the board. There are three weeks to go starting tomorrow.

Dr. Druzolowski said with only three weeks to go teachers are still getting 1 on 1 professional learning in our classrooms so they will feel a little more comfortable when they start the beginning of next year. At the high school Anne has seen a lot of progress; it is nice to know we work well together. They are getting ready for the new schedule and feel very comfortable at this point and there is no grumbling other than from some people who like to grumble. There will be a writing program and you will be able to see that in operation as it is at Bailey next year at the high school. This will be a nice support to the teachers and students with a big emphasis on students. Anne has been thinking about the lady who was here last week who addressed the board. Anne knows it would have been nice to clarify this but wanted the board to know that Anne felt the woman was so misinformed it wouldn't have mattered what Anne would say because the woman didn't know enough about every one of the topics she was talking about. We didn't have issues like this when Susan was here because she got all of our information out very quickly which stopped things before they began and we need to do a better job of communicating. Whether or not we have a person we are going to try to get something out there on a weekly not monthly basis from Neil's office just to let the community know what we are doing. This is not the best way to communicate but it is better than what we have which is not a heck of a lot.

Chairwoman Russo asked if all the teachers at the high school been able to participate in PD or were some excluded. Yes the CORE; it's the CORE staff it is really impacting. The others had extended periods in there. For instance the tech, the tech room's schedule was usually based on a longer spread or a double period. The places where they weren't used to it, other than mathematics, happen to be the other four and most of them are pretty good even Special Ed. Because of the new standards in science everyone is learning

from each other how to teach differently and the science people are leading the charge there. You have both teacher to teacher and coach to coach. Rosemary thanked Anne. Chairwoman Russo then talked about what happened at public session last time. That is a common occurrence at the City Council Meetings she has attended. She doesn't know if it is a lack of communication or just a sense of when people don't have children in the system they feel their part is done and we know that this is not true. Once you are a member of the community your part is never done. We all have to contribute. It was interesting because she did give the exact same speech that she gave during the City Council Meeting. Other people have also said the same things and Rosemary doesn't know how we can change this. It is something that we as a board have to look at and let the public know the good things that are happening in our schools. You know they are going to hear bad things but it is important for us to also let them know.

Rosa Richardson said that same woman came into the Community Development Office and complained about the Capital Improvement Project Funding that they receive from CDBG and Rosa tried to explain to her that without Block Grant Funds there would be no capital improvement end of discussion.

Rosemary feels a sense of responsibility to the teachers and paras to let the public know what they are doing. Rosa said one of the things we can do is bring back the communications person that we have been begging for over the last several years.

Superintendent Cavallaro felt there wasn't enough time to comment or try to convince her to change her mind at that point. Unfortunately there are a lot of people like that but it doesn't mean we shouldn't try to be more proactive and get our message out there. This is not fair to the person either because they can't make comments back to Neil. It was a difficult situation two weeks ago.

Rosa Richardson said the other misconception is that they get 90M, or whatever it is. It is not 90M from your tax dollars. It is 90M for an entire budget that includes state funding; yes, we all pay taxes on that too but.

Patrick Leigh asked Matt how many retirements we had for the year and ballpark range what the salaries add up to? Yes we have about 11 certified retirements 3 non-certified staff and he will get Patrick the exact salary number. OK but it is a few hundred thousand? In savings oh yes. Neil thinks it is about \$800,000.00 in certified salaries and you will put about 45 back so about half a million dollars in savings. Great thank you.

#### **C.1.b. Student Representatives' Report**

The Student Representatives Report will be found at the end of the minutes.

#### **C.1.c. Board**

Rosa congratulated Julia and said that was a great event and was glad she was able to attend. Julia thanked Rosa. Rosa had nothing to report on the Forest School Playground at this time.

Patrick Leigh was supposed to attend the WHHS Walk Thru and Signing Day but unfortunately he contracted some sort of horrible illness and spent the weekend in the hospital. He was sorry he wasn't able to make it.

Bob Guthrie attended College Signing Day and also the Forest School Spring Concert.

Lauren said two weeks ago when Ken Carney was here he talked about something that happened with CREC and she was confused about it and would like it if Neil could run through it or should she reach out to Ken and get more information from him. Neil will do the best he can but also suggests Lauren follow up with Ken. CREC was called the Owner's Rep and they were to look out for the city's best interest and make sure we get the best price and to put things out to bid and the paperwork is put in and we receive all of our reimbursement etc. Lauren asked if we had a contract with them. Neil said the contract is with the City of West Haven not the Board of Ed. OK. Until the project is complete and turned back over to the BOE the City is in charge of the project and Ken Carney is in charge of the building committee which is appointed by Mayor Rossi to oversee the city's best interest. Neil said the history he has on CREC is that when we started out the project back in 2009 we felt that they had a really good team in place and had just completed building a lot of new projects in the Hartford and surrounding town areas. Through the years they have not had as many projects and have seen a lot of turnover. We didn't feel we were getting the best in what we were paying for but Neil was not familiar with the exact reasons why their contract was suspended. Neil knows that Ken felt that we were not getting the most out of what we were paying for their services and believes Ken has assumed a lot of those responsibilities. Given the amount of the contract which is well in excess of a million dollars he doesn't believe we were seeing the return on our investment. As a result of the concern that Ken and the building committee made a recommendation to Corporation Counsel and meetings to resolve the issue or terminate the contract have been taking place. As of today their services have been suspended. Lauren said OK. Neil knows they were billing us monthly and we were paying them until around April 1<sup>st</sup>. Lauren said but it is not like we need to hire someone else now. No, Gilbane has assumed a lot of the responsibilities and have brought in a team to assist us in moving from the old high school to the new. This is costing us some money but CREC was going to bill us over and above their contract so there were disputes about what was included in the original contract and what wasn't and they were claiming this was in addition to the regular contract. Lauren said this is not bringing us over the projected amount for the project. The budget is 130M and what the resolve will be with CREC we don't know but any amount of money you may pay CREC is going to come out of that project. So yes it could cost us some money. OK Thank you.

Patrick Leigh asked what bucket of money was this coming out of the budget for the high school. Yes there was an owner's rep contract in place and there will have to be some kind of amicable settlement and/or agreement. Was there some kind of insurance policy we took out in case of something like this? Neil wasn't aware of any but that is between the building committee, the City of West Haven and Corporation Counsel. Do we have liability insurance? Neil's guess would be no but...Rosa said the City carries liability insurance...but Neil doesn't know if that would be for the project. Patrick is only

thinking because it is a city building right and the state must be involved too right? Neil doesn't want to speak out of turn but he doesn't think DAS was against removing CREC's services. Do they have the final say in saying yes you can? No the contract is clearly between the City of West Haven and CREC to serve as the owner's rep. Does the MARB have any say in this? That is a good question but to his knowledge they have never discussed the building project at a meeting that he has attended. Patrick said probably because it is independent of the city's funds.

Jim Morrissey said since Corporation Counsel is involved with the CREC representatives are there attorney's involved on the other side too? Neil would guess yes. Jim asked what the monthly charge to us from CREC was. No but it was around a 2M contract and they billed us monthly but Neil doesn't know how much we paid them and where it stands at this point. Rosemary Russo said she had been told it was \$70,000 monthly. Rosa Richardson said when it goes into litigation they will come to an amicable agreement and she can't imagine the city would settle with paying them the full amount. Although some cost will be incurred on the other end she doesn't see us settling since there is proof that CREC was not fulfilling their part of the contract. Neil feels that Gilbane is more than competent to step in and handle the duties and responsibilities but he is not involved in any of the negotiations and couldn't speak to what they have or have not done or what we are accusing them of not doing. Jim asked if you could find out how much was paid to CREC this far. Matt said sure.

Sue Walker took the tour of the high school again and it is amazing what a difference between January when we first went in there with the ice and snow and now how much work has gotten done. It is going to be beautiful and it is going to create a good environment for our students. Sue also attended College Signing Day our young ladies here did very well with the colleges they will be attending. Sue also said with the teachers who are retiring she has worked with all of them but one and they are remarkable people who have done wonders for the school system and she wishes them well.

Rosemary said this was her first Signing Day and she was so glad that she went it was really a neat thing to see and she has known some of the kids since they were babies. Rosemary congratulated all the seniors who have signed and are attending colleges. She also thanked the retirees for all the years of service and let them know that they will be missed and the board wishes them happiness and a long, long retirement.

## **D.1. Approval of Minutes**

**D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Special Board Meeting** held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, May 6, 2019 at 5:45 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Special Meeting minutes D.1.a.  
Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes  
Bob Guthrie seconded the motion

Discussion: Jim Morrissey and Patrick Leigh both abstained as they were not present at the previous meeting.

All other board members present were in favor

Special Meeting Minutes are approved

**D.1.b. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting** held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, May 6, 2019 at 6:30 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes D.1.b.

Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

Discussion: Jim Morrissey and Patrick Leigh both abstained as they were not present at the previous meeting.

All other board members present were in favor

Regular Meeting Minutes are approved

**D.2. Resignations: (Certified)**

Chairwoman Russo said she would like to do each resignation separately because these people have put in a lifetime to West Haven and she thinks that they all deserve to have their names read and to be wished well.

**19-17 Carol Franco**, Physical Education teacher – West Haven High School

Effective: June 30, 2019

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-17

Karen Pacelli made the motion

Rosa Richardson seconded the motion and wishes all the retirees well in their retirement

Discussion: All board members wished her good luck in her retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-17 is approved

**D.2. Resignations: (Certified) Continued**

**19-18 Joanne Conlan**, Science Facilitator – Savin Rock Community School

Effective: June 30, 2019

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-18

Bob Guthrie made the motion

Rosa Richardson seconded the motion

Discussion: All board members wished her good luck in her retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-18 is approved

**19-19 Patricia Fusco, Talented/Gifted Teacher – Carrigan Intermediate School**

Effective: June 30, 2019

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-19

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

Discussion: All board members wished her good luck in her retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-19 is approved

**19-20 Barbara Haut Russo, Special Education Preschool Teacher – Central**

Effective: June 30, 2019

Office

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-20

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

Discussion: All board members wished her good luck in her retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-20 is approved

**19-21 Jon Capone, Coordinator Health, Physical Education and Athletics**

Effective: June 30, 2019

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-21

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

Discussion: All board members wished him good luck in his retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-21 is approved

**D.2. Resignations: (Certified) Continued**

**19-22 Jill F. Goldman, Special Ed Teacher – Bailey Middle School**

Effective: July 1, 2019

Reason: Retirement

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-22

Karen Pacelli made the motion

Bob Guthrie seconded the motion

Discussion: All board members wished her good luck in her retirement

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-22 is approved

#### **D.4. New Business**

##### **19-23 Two Year Contract for Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent of Schools**

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-23

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Patrick Leigh and Bob Guthrie simultaneously seconded the motion

Discussion: Jim Morrissey said to Anne based on performance you definitely would have my vote. However he will vote no this evening because in looking at the contract and vacation time he feels that vacation should be used in that yearly time period. He thinks our city has to do things differently in the way of doing business because we are not financially solvent. This is nothing against Anne personally and Jim fully understands that this contract is not going to make or break the city of West Haven. Jim would like to see employees use their vacation time during the yearly period it is earned. He can see that there are 15 days you can accrue and he doesn't know if this has occurred or not. He is not really sure but at the end of a term when an employee accrues vacation time there are a lot of big buyouts. Vacation is what it is; vacation and he would like to see people use it as such. This is not a reflection on Anne who does a great job and if he thought there was a vote that she wasn't going to get approved he would be voting to approve her and he wanted to make this perfectly clear. Jim thanked her for taking a salary decrease a couple of years ago and he said she does a great job and that this is not personal and this is just his thoughts on the contract. Jim also said Rosemary worked very hard on this and he thanked her for her diligent efforts in negotiating the contract. Rosemary thanked Jim. Rosemary Russo asked if there were any other comments. Seeing none Rosemary wanted to add a few comments which can be found at the end of the minutes.

Discussion ended

Chairwoman Russo said all in favor

All board members present were in favor

Any opposed: Jim Morrissey was opposed

There were no abstentions

Motion passes

Item 19-23 is approved

Rosemary, the board and Neil congratulated Anne and applause followed

##### **19-24 NEDP Program Grant Adult Education**

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-24

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Patrick Leigh seconded the motion

Discussion:

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-24 is approved

##### **19-25 ED-099 Connecticut State Department of Education Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs**

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 19-25



#### **D.4. New Business (Continued)**

Bob Guthrie made the motion

Rosa Richardson seconded the motion

Discussion: Rosa Richardson said to Neil nothing has changed in that correct. Neil responded correct. Rosa said it is the same language that allows us to move forward for extracurricular activities and special events and all that. Yes and it is not going to affect our free lunch status or anything like that...Rosa said or our summer programs yes or our summer programs. Thank you.

All board members present were in favor

Item 19-25 is approved

#### **F. Informational**

Jim Morrissey asked to say something under informational if possible. Sure of course replied Rosemary Russo. Jim sees that Kenny Voss is retiring and he has been a long time custodian and a heck of a good employee. He was there when Jim's kids were at Mackrille School and if you needed anything done at Mackrille Kenny was the guy you went to and as Rosa said the floors do shine. He took great care of Mackrille School and I wish him nothing but the best in his retirement.

Jim Morrissey also sees Bob Beecher is retiring and he was another good employee for our district. Bob could basically fix anything and is a good mason and we are going to miss him. We lost a lot of good employees tonight and Jim agrees with what our Superintendent said it is very bittersweet. The teaching staff that we lost tonight will be very difficult to replace, no question about it, but it is always exciting to see new young teachers come in to fill that void. He wishes all the retirees tonight the best of luck in the future.

Superintendent Cavallaro said we really did our best with Kenny to try and talk him out of retiring and rethink it. Tammy's kids went to Mackrille around the same time Jim's kids did and she held his resignation for a while to make sure we did everything we could to try and talk him out of retirement but he felt it was time and in his best interest to move forward. Chairwoman Russo thanked Neil and Jim for their comments and reminded everyone to stay seated after we adjourn for an announcement.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn

Rosa Richards made the motion

Patrick Leigh seconded the motion

All board members were in favor

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary

**BOE Student Rep Report**

**May 20, 2019**

1. Tomorrow, May 21<sup>st</sup>, is our Honors/AP Awards ceremony at 10am.
2. Scholarship night is on May 29th.
3. Thank you to those who attended College Signing Day!
4. Prom is this Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the Woodwinds in Branford.
5. No school this coming Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup> because of Memorial Day.
6. Health Day is also on May 29<sup>th</sup> at 5pm in the high school.
7. The Top 20 Luncheon is on May 30<sup>th</sup>.
8. Senior Picnic is on May 31<sup>st</sup>.
9. The choir concert and the senior play were amazing! Thank you for attending and congrats to the performers.
10. The Senior Band Concert is on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

The following pages are from Chairwoman Russo's comments regarding Dr. Druzolowski's Contract.

I would like to add a few comments. January 2018 Dr. D was asked if she would consider taking a 1% decrease in her salary. Without any hesitation she said yes, and subsequently received a 1% pay cut. This was negotiated in a time, when it was thought that other city employees would also take a pay-cut. In actuality there was not any other employee in the city that took a cut in pay. Anne was the only one. Personally I do not think that is right. This year we put back her 1%. It still remains she lost money and she is ultimately receiving less than 2 zeros. Anne has never complained to me or any other Board member that I know of. She has continued to do her job in the same manner as years before. I cannot find any reason not to restore her rate of pay.

The next topic I would like to touch on is that of our teachers. The job of our teachers is to educate our children. I do not believe it is part of their job description to help fund the cost of educating our children. Our teachers took a hard freeze. They received no increase and no step movement. This was a HUGE sacrifice on their part. This should be the exception not the rule. Our city was/is in a financial crisis the teachers stepped up to do their part. Many of our citizens do not understand exactly how much of a sacrifice this was and truthfully I feel like it was just taken for granted. I want to be on the record in saying that I will never vote for a contract that takes away money from an individual again, I also will

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not put the responsibility of saving teacher jobs or educational program for our children on the backs of our teachers. Free, public education is a constitutional right, therefore it is up to the entire city to make sure it is funded properly. It is not the jobs of our administrators, teachers, paras, secretaries and custodians to bear the brunt of this. And furthermore, I do not believe that the MARB believes this to be the case either. During the meeting before last, a MARB member, I believe Scott Jackson, pointed out that once again the city was not investing in education by flat lining the BOE. We cannot continue to let this happen.

In conclusion, I plan on voting yes to the contract that is before us tonight. And I would like to once again publicly thank all of the people involved in the education our children . I know I speak for this entire Board when I say how much all of your hard work and sacrifices are appreciated.