

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION
October 29, 2015**

**Special Board Meeting
Board's Meeting Room**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut on October 29, 2015. The meeting was called to order by Patricia Libero, Chairwoman of the Board of Education at 6:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Patricia Libero, Chairwoman
James W. Morrissey, Vice Chair
Betsy Davis, Secretary/Treasurer Robert Guthrie
Patrick Egolum (arrived after meeting started)
Robert Guthrie
Mark Palmieri
Rosa Richardson
Rosemary Russo
Cebi Waterfield

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor Edward M. O'Brien

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
PRESENT:**

Chairwoman Libero welcomed everyone to the Special Meeting of the Board of Education set for the purposes of the Superintendent's Evaluation and Contract Extension. Do I have a motion to go into Executive Session.

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Mark Palmieri seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members were in favor

Motion passes and the Board entered into Executive Session at 6:04 PM

Rosa Richardson made the motion to exit Executive Session

Chairwoman Libero asked do I have a second.

Jim Morrissey seconded the motion

All in favor

The board exited Executive Session at 7:20 PM

Chairwoman Libero asked for a motion to approve Superintendent Cavallaro's Evaluation and goals

Rosa Richardson made the motion to accept and approve Superintendent Cavallaro's Evaluation and goals

Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion: Jim Morrissey said this is for goals and evaluation correct. Yes, the goals and evaluation that we just went over; all seven of them.

Chairwoman Libero asked if all were in favor of accepting the goals and evaluation.

Board Members said aye

Chairwoman Libero asked if any were opposed

Superintendent Cavallaro suggested that Chairwoman Libero write up a statement and share it with the board members and at that point it would become part of his file.

Chairwoman Libero said OK motion passes

Betsy Davis and Jim Morrissey simultaneously asked to make a motion.

Jim Morrissey said we have the public here tonight and I would like to make a motion that if anybody would like to address the board tonight I make a motion we have a public session here tonight. Chairwoman Libero doesn't believe but Bob you know this better than I do but when we posted the meeting we didn't have a public session in it. Bob said through the open meeting laws and F.O.I. you have to state it. Jim said but what are the rules governing this can you show me the rules governing the Board of Education please about public session. Mayor O'Brien checked with Corporation Council and it was said by 2/3rds vote you can have a public session but you just have to talk about just what is on the agenda.

Chairwoman Libero asked if there was a second to this

Rosemary Russo seconded the motion

Discussion: None

A role call vote was taken

No votes: Patrick Egolum, Robert Guthrie, Betsy Davis, Pat Libero, Cebi Waterfield, Rosa Richardson, and Mark Palmieri

Yes votes: Rosemary Russo, Jim Morrissey

Jim Morrissey asked to make a new motion then.....

Betsy Davis said she had a motion on the table too

Betsy Davis made a motion to extend the Superintendent's contract

Chairwoman Libero asked if there was a second to this

Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion:

Rosemary Russo feels that we approved Neil's evaluation and it was a good evaluation and there were really good points. Rosemary feels that extending the contract while there is still two years on it is not in the best interest of the students and the city. There is still two more years and that is a long time and we never really renegotiated the contract. Are you getting a raise; what are we extending I don't know what we are extending.

Jim Morrissey agrees with Rosemary. Neil has 21 months left on his contract and we don't know what the contract says. Is there going to be a raise? We are in tight financial straits right now with the city finances. The public didn't have the opportunity to address this and Jim doesn't know why we had to address this tonight because we could have had a regularly scheduled board meeting on a Monday night that would allow public input. I don't see why the public is shut out in this process. This is nothing against Neil personally; we don't know what we are negotiating as far as what he is getting. We are asked to approve this and not know where we are going with it.

Chairwoman Libero asked Neil if we extend the contract is it an extension of the existing contract. Correct. This goes in conjunction with the administrator's contract is that how it generally works. That is what we have always done; it is open for negotiation. In my eight years here I don't think we have ever negotiated any changes. There would be no language changes and we would look at the percentage he thinks 1.75 and whatever the administrators received he would accept. He has never gotten more than anybody else and doesn't think it fair to take more.

Jim Morrissey said the public should have a right and doesn't know why we are rushing to do this tonight. We have two more meetings to go before a new board gets in place. We all know when the meetings are scheduled and there is no reason why this whole board can't be here on Monday night and discuss this particular matter and allow the public to come before us and give their views and how they feel. To shut the public out at this particular time is just not right. By doing this right now you are stopping the public from having public input.

Chairwoman Libero said it is her opinion that we have had open board meetings the whole year and we have always done his evaluations and extension of contract at a special meeting that was set up the same way it is tonight. Jim Morrissey said the special meeting last time was last December now it is in October so you are having meetings at different times. Chairwoman Libero said the special meeting in December accepted his goals and we had already set them up prior to that. Right but you are not holding them at

a certain time and he doesn't recall it being a special meeting. He thinks it was a regular board meeting. Mark Palmieri said we had to have a special meeting like tonight though. Jim Morrissey said he was told they were going to hold a meeting on October 29th so you must have had five board members who said they could make the meeting; you didn't give me the courtesy of asking if I could make the meeting; he only missed one meeting in two years. Betsy Davis said she didn't have that courtesy either she was told to come after work. Chairwoman Libero said Jim this is the night we had the meeting everybody is here the meeting is over. Mayor did you want to say something? Mayor O'Brien said Neil did have a good evaluation and he and Neil work very well together and hopes Neil agrees with this. There are a lot of issues in the city from finances to the school buildings to the city buildings; there is a lot going on and he has received many calls asking why we are doing this two years out from the contract. Mayor O'Brien doesn't know of any business in the world and he comes from a small business but has worked in some larger companies and he doesn't know of any business that would extend a person's contract two years out. The answer he received is because that is the way it has always been done. This city has a lot of problems and he doesn't know if this board realizes the shape this city is in and we are not just talking finances; there are a lot of other issues. He doesn't know if that's the way we have always done it has ever worked out for us to this point. He doesn't see the harm in waiting to approve the contract until about six months out because that is when you start doing these kind of things. Mayor O'Brien knows Neil had a great evaluation but that is his job but he doesn't say because he did a great job we are going to extend it out for three years. You are hired to do a good job and each of us in our own particular job is hired to do a good job. Would any one of you get a year's extension 20 months before your contract is up; I don't think so. I would encourage you not to extend it and put it off until the next meeting.

Betsy Davis remembers doing this last year with the same conversation and discussion and if a board member had an issue with the way this was done maybe it should have been brought up throughout the year not at this time. It's been done this way and we all knew it was going to be done tonight and if you didn't like the way it was done from the way it was done last year why wasn't it brought up earlier.

Jim Morrissey said he did bring it up and said the past practice was a bad practice so to say I didn't bring it up is not true. Betsy said it should have been brought up and added to an agenda by saying you don't like this past practice so we could discuss it and then it could have been addressed. Well, once again you hold a meeting in December of 2014 and now you hold a meeting in October of 2015 there is no rhyme or reason when you hold these meetings let's not kid ourselves here. Rosa Richardson said it should have been done in August Jim. Jim said if it was done in August that means we are giving him six months OK. Rosa said it should have been done in August Jim. Jim said we reviewed him last December. Rosa said motion to close discussion. Cebi asked toPatrick Egolum seconded the motion. Cebi Waterfield said she thinks we are at a critical point....Patrick said we are wasting a lot of time; we have had enough of this discussion let's do the vote. Cebi just wanted to say one thing; she thinks we are at a critical point right now in our city's future and thinks we need to uphold the integrity system above all else. We need stable leadership at this point in time. Just like the mayor said with what

is going on in the city we need stable, continuous leadership over the next couple of years and I won't be around to see it on this board however she hopes to see in the future that we continue on the path that the Superintendent has put us on. With all the things we just talked about a few minutes ago like the Mayor said with your past term two year's is not enough to make a difference and she thinks the same thing should be extended to the superintendent. With the year and some odd months he has left she thinks it is important that we continue letting people know we have stable leadership in the educational system. Mayor O'Brien said he has two years left though and we aren't saying we are going to fire Neil by any means. Our test scores are down no matter...Cebi said she thinks this is a vote of confidence and we have already stated that he is doing a good job and moving us in the right direction. Chairwoman Libero said the discussion is now closed; Marylou we will do a role call vote to extend Neil's contract.

Patrick Egolum Aye

Rosemary Russo No

Bob Guthrie No

Betsy Davis Yes

Pat Libero Yes

Jim Morrissey No

Cebi Waterfield Yes

Rosa Richardson Yes

Mark Palmieri Yes

Chairwoman Libero said Motion passes; so moved

Rosa Richardson made a motion to adjourn

Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion

Discussion: None

The meeting closed at 7:50 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary