

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**May 18, 2015**

**Regular Board Meeting**

**Board's Meeting Room**

The Regularly Scheduled 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 May 18, 2015. The meeting was called to order by Patricia Libero, Chairwoman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag. Before beginning the meeting Chairwoman Libero stated that a few members are not here tonight because there have been medical emergencies with their families.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Patricia Libero, Chairwoman  
James W. Morrissey, Vice Chair  
Betsy Davis, Secretary/Treasurer  
Patrick Egolum  
Robert Guthrie  
Rosa Richardson

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mark Palmieri  
Rosemary Russo  
Cebi Waterfield

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

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:**

Alice Obas

**B. Public Portion of Meeting**

Chairwoman Libero asked if anyone would like to address the board. Albert W. Sinclari Jr., 438 Savin Ave. has been a resident of West Haven for the last 64 years, taught for 35 years, coached football 33 years, retired from coaching 12 years ago, returned to teaching 3 years ago and has been the President of the West Haven Alumni Association for the last 3 or 4 years. He and fellow members will say a few things about the selection of the next football coach at West Haven High School. Coaches have a phenomenal impact on children that he doesn't think teachers or parents can make. The person we put in the driver's seat needs to be carefully selected. The attributes he would look for are integrity, loyalty, and respect. He said to notice that he is not saying anything about football because that is at the bottom of his list. He would also

look for a black coach since 85 to 90 percent of the players are black. A black coach who is married and has children will have an influence on black players because the number of fatherless black guys is mind boggling. The x's and o's people are for assistant coaches. What we are looking for is a figurehead; a person these kids need to look up to. The number of families that have fallen apart is at an all-time high. This is a way that we can start revitalization in the city of West Haven.

Anthony Barnes had lived in West Haven for five or six years. He has been employed at Sikorsky Aircraft for nine years. He does a lot of community service and volunteer work at Sikorsky and said a mentoring program with the WHHS Football Team started about two years ago. Last year he mentored Ervin Philips who went to Syracuse last year and is doing very well there. When WHHS was welcoming Notre Dame to West Haven during the Soderman Bowl Erv didn't play because he didn't get his physical in time. Mr. Barnes sat down with Ervin and when he started talking about college and dorm life Erv really looked up and started asking questions. None of Ervin's family had gone to college and neither had anyone from the neighborhood. There are certain things I can say to him as a black man that nobody else can say and there are certain things you need to hear as a black man and you only can hear it from another black man. Mr. Barnes was a student athlete at Perdue University and played basketball there. He shattered his wrist sophomore year. Over 90% of NCAA athletes don't make it professionally but Erv will get a degree and he may come back here and teach. X's and O's win sure; lets win and try to win a championship if you can but after that they will be telling these old high school stories on the corner while they are drinking with their buddies. So who really wins with that? Pat Libero said Ervin ended this semester with a 3. something. Applause followed. Mr. Barnes said they just registered eight of the nine students they are working with for the SAT's. We asked who would like to take the exam and one student finally said he would and then the rest went along and said they would. The reason it took so long for them to want to take the exam was because of the money; they couldn't pay the \$50.00. All of his support engineers quickly said they would pay but when they arrived the assistant principal said they could all take it for free; they never knew. There are over 1,500 students here and a lot don't even know they can raise their hand for help.

Vincent Natido said he is a relic of West Haven Football past. You are not just hiring a football coach you are hiring an authority figure who will have the best interest of the kids and understand where they are coming from. Most of these kids don't know where they are going in life, some are afraid of failing and have self-worth issues and the coach will help them understand what is available for them and help them through the rocky road to find their way. The x and o's are immaterial; there are people who will handle that and that is the easiest part of coaching but to help these kids help themselves to find their way in life is important. The coach is not going to help everyone; he is not going to save everyone but if he can save one person how cool would that be.

Christopher L. Dukes said that was a great segue because he thinks he is that one person. He was born in Connecticut in 1972 and was a resident of Hilton Drive which is now Walmart. He was a raw kid who grew up in a house full of domestic violence. He, his mother and siblings were evicted and had to live with cousins in New Haven but still

attended Stiles School. In fourth grade he took a bus to the center of New Haven by himself then another bus but exited before Stiles because if anyone knew he was commuting it would be a problem. At the age of 7 or 8 he had to learn how to deal with this. Eventually they moved back to West Haven and he went to First Avenue School which closed then went to Forest School so he had a lot of new beginnings. He had a lot of great teachers along the way and then when he got to the high school he had a coach who cared about him and was able to reach him despite the racial difference. He cared enough to reach him and molded him in so many different ways. He did what a coach is supposed to do. He can't think of any conversation about x's and o's but they have had conversations about life. Those footprints and seeds that he planted in him stayed with him. He graduated WHHS and was the first member of his entire family who actually made one step onto a college campus. He went to Central Connecticut State University and graduated. He still works there using the principals he learned from his coach who taught him about integrity, loyalty and all the attributes that he spoke about tonight. He worked as a Residence Hall Director and as an Assistant Director of Admissions and now he is the Director of the Student Conduct Office and hopes to retire there. His character makes him a better husband, a better father to his children because of the principals that his coach instilled in him way back when. There have been more than one who has been saved but he is one and has given his history to show how raw it really was. He had every excuse to be in jail and to use that anger that was building inside of him to do something negative but he had a coach who took the time to mold him into something positive. He is using that energy to do so many positive things and tries every day that he has a chance to shape students because of these principals so please be open to finding the best candidate. Applause.

Dave Retting is a 1973 graduate of WHHS and went on to Syracuse. He thinks we all know how important a coach is. The West Haven Football Alumni Association started interacting with the team about four or five years ago. These kids are very good kids. They had a lot of stereotypes when they started the organization. All we heard were negative things like single parent, undisciplined, kids not caring etc. but they found the total opposite. We worked with the kids, painted the locker room, collected money for the Wounded Warriors with them; these are very respectful kids. These kids are looking for someone to reach them. When you talk to them you walk away being very proud of who these kids are. It is not that the coach is going to change the world he is starting with something very positive. Please consider everyone. There is a lot of talent in WHHS and you will win a lot of ball games but you only get one opportunity to help a kid and these are very good kids thank you.

Shannon Joaquin, Front Avenue said her son played football in West Haven and being a single parent of a bi-racial child it makes a difference with the coaches that you have in place. If we can get someone who can handle kids that are somewhat behavioral and who have parents that are in and out of their lives it will make a big difference. One of her son's coaches from Pop Warner comprehended everything and understood but when her son started high school football last year it was a disaster. One coach really wanted him and another didn't get everything that was going on and many kids were affected. We need someone who will support these kids, listen to the parents when they have concerns

and not push them away saying we will handle it and not approach some of the things that need to be approached other than just those on the football field. These kids need somebody that they can talk to and trust. She hopes all of this will be taken into consideration. The board thanked all the speakers. Public Session closed at 7:27 PM.

## **C. REPORTS**

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

Superintendent Cavallaro said Susan Misur told him they almost have 300 downloads for our new App in two weeks and that is pretty good. We are getting the word out so hopefully by September it will be really ramped up.

Neil acknowledged Kamran Farid from Edible Arrangements. Mr. Farid, a former ELL student from Forest Elementary School brought his two daughters with him to Forest School on Friday and met with Neil. When Mr. Farid was an ELL student at Forest there were only five ELL students in his grade and now there are 15 receiving ELL help. He was able to see a working classroom during his visit. Mr. Farid made a \$5,000 donation for iPads, headsets and software to help ELL kids. He plans to work with us in the future and has donated \$4,000 for our backpack program for kids to go home with on the weekend with food and fruit to eat. Mr. Farid had a tour of the building and they had a nice discussion that brought back many wonderful memories. His is quite a success story for someone who came to this country with literally nothing. His parents taught him about the importance of giving back and the importance of education. Mr. Farid is very grateful to the people at Forest School for helping him build a foundation. Neil thinks his aunt was one of Mr. Farad's teachers.

Neil stated that we have had a few people take advantage of our early retirement on this agenda and have received a couple more so we could be up to 10 people by Friday when the early retirement incentive closes. The legislature is still in session and they have not resolved their budget issues so this could impact us to the good or the bad. Bids for both the copy center and IT are going out so we will have news in a couple of weeks.

Matt Cavallaro gave a brief report on the budget, passed out budget sheets, and said as of right now we have a little over 16.5 million left in the budget and all payroll has been encumbered for the month of May. We only have June left which is our biggest payroll because our summer checks are charged to June. We are a little bit better than we were last year at this time but there are some things to keep an eye on. Special Ed tuition is already over budget but we do have some grant money to offset the cost. We are in a positive situation for now. Jim Morrissey asked Matt how much he said was left in the budget. Matt said a little over 16.5 million.

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

The student representatives' report is attached at the end of the minutes.

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

Jim Morrissey attended National Signing Day and it was a great time. It wasn't for the athletes but for the students themselves. It was a great idea and they had

entertainment by Tommy Nelson and Kevin McDaniel and they were really great. They had about 100 kids there and they had a video of Michelle Obama addressing all the students. This was really nice and stressed the importance of academics. Mr. Paolino and his support staff did a wonderful job and the kids really enjoyed this. Jim is looking forward to this again next year. Neil said Mayor O'Brien and he were supposed to attend but that was the day of the accident on Martin Street so they were detained and were very sorry to miss the event. They were both glad Jim was able to attend.

Rosa Richardson said she is looking forward to the interview process for the football coach.

Pat Libero said she was at Carrigan's Play Aladdin, Bailey's Play Cinderella and the Substitute Fairy Godmother, and the Drowsy Chaperone and felt very cultured. Everyone did a fabulous job and the kids were tremendous. It is nice to see that we are putting more and more into this so that kids in all grades have plays to participate in and attend. Student Rep Alice Obas said the musical for next year will be Cabaret.

**D.1. Approval of Minutes**

**D.1.a. 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 May 4, 2015 at 7:00 PM.

Chairwoman Libero asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.

Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes

Jim Morrissey seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members present were in favor

Minutes are approved

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

**15-40 Aretha Rankine**, Family and Consumer Science Teacher – WHHS  
Effective: End of the school year  
Reason: Relocation

**15-41 Paula T. Brackenbury**, Special Ed Teacher – WHHS  
Effective: June 30, 2015  
Reason: Retirement

**15-42 Deborah L. Weiss**, Elementary/Kindergarten Teacher – Seth Haley  
Effective: June 30, 2015  
Reason: Retirement

**15-43 Catherine Ross**, Library Media Specialist – Seth Haley and Washington  
Effective: End of the 2014-2015 school year  
Reason: Retirement

Pat Libero asked for a motion to approve items 15-40 through 15-43 inclusive  
Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve  
Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion: Pat Libero said that Aretha Rankin worked with her at Carrigan and she will be a real loss and I'm sorry to see her go she does a great job. She is planning on coming in June with her kids for a fashion show. Pat also taught with Paula Brackenbury and she will be missed. Neil said Debbie Weiss has been a long time teacher at Washington and ended up being a kindergarten teacher at Seth Haley and this will be a big loss to the school district as is Paula who is another long time employee. Catherine Ross just decided to retire the last minute and we are really sorry to see her go.

All board members present were in favor.

Motion passes. Items 15-40 through 15-43 inclusive are approved

Chairwoman Libero asked for a motion to adjourn.

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou C. Amendola  
Board Secretary

Board of Education Student Report  
May 18, 2015

The week of May 4-8<sup>th</sup> was Respect Week at WHHS. Each class had a speaker - Jimmy Williams, Richard Luby, Scott Driscoll, and C. Woods - who shared his story and spoke about Respect. All were well received by the student body. The week concluded with the Respect Week Big Night featuring a catered dinner and a panel presentation. The panel features ESPN commentator Alex Pombo, WHHS grad and UNH admissions Rep Monique Bolt, Gateway Community College Dean Dr. Mark Kosinski, WHHS grad and Yale senior Stacey Matakaetis, & WHHS senior and actor Tommy Nelson. Their discussion was amazing, all touching on a different aspect of respect.

Some of the quotes were:

It's "important to talk to each other" Stacey Matakaetis

"Believe in yourself and follow your dream" – Alex Pombo

"Find pleasure in what you do; find pleasure in your work" – Dr. Mark Kosinski

"You have a choice with everything you do, and how you respond is all about your character. So, begin by respecting yourself" – Monique Bolt

Have "respect for the people who help you get there. It keeps you humble." –

Tommy Nelson

The School Governance Council will be carrying the theme of Respect throughout the summer and in to next year through the book, *This I Believe, The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women.*

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 FBLA Talent Show – Kevin McDaniel and John Delgado.

The Senior Prom will be held at Fantasia this Friday.

The WHHS Honors Award Ceremony will be held on May 27<sup>th</sup> at Westwoods/Cielo at 9am. We'd love for you to join us.

Also on May 27<sup>th</sup>, please plan to stop by the Savin Rock Conference Center for the K-12 Fine Arts Show and see the the Senior Arts Showcase.

The Girls varsity lacrosse team will pay tribute to the memory of Amanda Houley before tonight's game around 6:45 p.m. They are also selling purple shirts to raise money for the Amanda K. Houley Foundation.

Congratulations to senior Kial Watts, who picked up her 100th career hit in West Haven's 9-7 victory over Sacred Heart Academy on May 11<sup>th</sup>

Congratulations to the Boys' Lacrosse team for qualifying for the CIAC playoffs for the first time since 1996 with their 13-4 victory over Cross on May 13<sup>th</sup>

Samantha Lee, new Assistant Children's Librarian at the West Haven Public Library has been visiting WHHS to sign students up for library cards and get insight into what teens are looking for at the public library.

WHHS continues fundraising for Camp Rising Sun. Biology Teacher Ms. Patnaude will be running in a marathon this weekend with all funds raised, donated to Camp Rising Sun. The Student Council is holding a Cup Song Video event tomorrow afterschool. It costs \$2 to participate and all members of the school community will be videotaped participating in the Cup Song from Pitch Perfect.