

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
November 19, 2012
Regular Board Meeting
Council Chambers

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the City Council Chambers of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on November 19, 2012. The meeting was called to order by Mark Palmieri Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:15 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Palmieri, Chairman
M. Toni Paine, Vice Chair
Patricia Libero, Secretary/Treasurer
Dorinda Borer
Betsy Davis
Patrick Egolum
Robert Guthrie

Cebi Waterfield

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Murillo

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT:

Catherine DePino
Abdul-Razak Zachariah

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Mark Palmieri welcomed everyone to the November 19, 2012 board meeting. He stated before getting started Chairman Palmieri wanted to clarify something. This board has been attending CABE Workshops and the board has received emails regarding the public session. What we are trying to do is have more effective, efficient meetings and have more concentration on our agenda. When people speak during the public session the board can not respond back to them. When there is an important issue we would like to have a special board meeting to address it. By no means did anyone on this board look to silence anyone from speaking. Our next CABE meeting is on February 13, 2013 and we will discuss this but at this time we will leave the public

session the way it has been. Mark stated that people sometimes get angry because there is no response back and they feel as though it is falling on deaf ears when they speak at a meeting. The board wants to get the correct information so we can answer the public and the issue at hand. Mark apologized for any miscommunication. This is something we are working on as a board and the whole objective is to focus on our children's education.

Mark asked if anyone would like to address the board.

Public portion began at 7:20 PM

Tracy Morrissey, 305 Country Hill Drive thanked Chairman Palmieri for clarifying that but will read what she had written for the future to take into consideration. Tracy is the PTA President and stated that parents have expressed concern with the new rule. They feel as board members you should be encouraging involvement, reaching out towards parents and be willing to listen to their concerns. They feel this was another step to eliminate the input of families. You were elected not to shut these families out but to listen. If parents want to come forward on important issues that may arise with their child's education they should be given the opportunity without having to make a request to the board for permission. A further discussion continued. Mrs. Morrissey is glad there has been some clarification of the policy but wants the board to know how the PTA feels.

As a parent Tracy voiced her concerns of experiences she has had that affected her children's education. She is thrilled about the change at Bailey regarding the grading policy.

The grading system at the high school is important. It is mind boggling that a student can take an AP class that is college credit and is three times the amount of work as an honors course and be rated the same in weight. Why would a student take an AP class and do three times the amount of work when that class is rated the same as an honors class especially with the policy on extracurricular activities. She is in favor of the policies that are being put in place. She would appreciate it if the weighted grading system at the high school was looked at because she does not think it is fair to the students. This needs to be addressed.

By removing the leveling system we removed the vigor from our courses and we are taking the competitive edge away from our kids at the college level. You can see this in the test scores. Our scores are the worse they have ever been. It is important that our children succeed. She asked if they follow kids who graduate to see how many continue in college. She would be interested to see the drop out rate. She asked how long it takes for our students to graduate. Are they on a 4, 5 or 6 year program. College is very expensive so it is very important to succeed and have that rigor. A further discussion continued. We want our kids to succeed and would like to have the leveling addressed.

The Bayer Award was discussed. In order to get the award you must take an Honors or AP course and have a B or higher for the first three marking periods. If you get a D or an F the last marking period they still get the award. She doesn't think that is fair. She would like this looked at. The board gave thanks.

Nancy Rossi, 12 Robin Rd. spoke as Councilman of the 7th district and is here because of the public speaking portion. She read her FOI request into the record. (Attachment A) If this ever comes into play she asks that it be put on an agenda item and be voted on. She discussed how the City Council handles their public session with Martha Bell's suggested rule that they follow. A further discussion continued. She feels it is important that before any changes are made a role call vote be taken in front of the public. The board gave thanks.

Mildred Caprio, 14 Middlefield Rd. She is here as a parent to address the 15 minute public speaking rule. She thanked Tracy because everything she said she was going to say. Upon reading the directive that this was going to go forward there was a comment that stated it is a privilege to stand in front of you. It is not a privilege; it is a parent right to stand before you and as a parent we expect your courtesy and we are the reason you have your seats so instead of making rules and judgments about what you feel do it as parent not as a board member and do what is right for our kids. The board gave thanks.

Jessica Chiong, 403 Painter Drive and is PTA President for Seth Haley and Treasurer of the PTA Council. She is here about the new 15 minute public speaking portion but Tracy just about covered everything. Parents are upset that the board has decided to cut down on the public speaking portion. People may not be able to talk about the new high school. She doesn't see how cutting down on parent's speaking time will benefit our children and their future. If you stop public speaking you will see people go out into the streets. They will petition and picket like they did a couple of years ago when the schools closed because they want their voices heard. Parents will go to your office and write into newspapers and it would be easier and morally better to allow people to talk longer during meetings. A further discussion took place. The board gave thanks.

James Morrissey, 305 Country Hill Drive stated he too is here to talk about the 15 minute public speaking rule. He went on the website last year and looked at the regular board meeting minutes and checked on the length of the public session. There was only one public session that went until 7:35 pm and that was only because you had a student presentation prior to the public session. In the last 15 meetings he checked there were only 14 speakers that have come to the podium so he doesn't see the reason to even bring up this issue. The board has an 82 million dollar budget and people should have a right to come here and speak. He serves on the High School Governance Committee and thanks the board for putting him on that but they want to get more parents involved. We want them to come to meetings like this. There are so many issues out there involving education. He would like to see a public vote for any changes to the public session and hopes the board has gotten the message. The board gave thanks.

Rob Saley limited his time to the statement that said they would gavel somebody if they were out of order if the conversation was not germane to the agenda. Rob said when he served on the board there were many good arguments that were not germane to the existing agenda. That is something that you really have to reconsider. He asked that the board rethink that policy if they are going to implement it so you would not be ruling anybody out of order and that you would consider something that is not on the agenda as long as it coalesces with everything else. The board gave thanks.

Public portion closed at 7:50 PM

C. REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro welcomed Catherine Elizabeth DePino to the board. Catherine is a student rep. Neil's comments follow at the end of the meeting (Schedule B). Superintendent Cavallaro explained the process for expressing interest in becoming a Student Representative. Twenty seven students were interested and provided information and applications. Five students completed the application and writing sample. Feedback was solicited from the entire faculty based on the six pillars of character. A committee of 2 teachers, 2 administrators and the current student representatives then interviewed the students. All five students are quality students involved in many aspects of student life at WHHS and it was a difficult decision. Catherine will be joining Stacie Hurley and Abdul-Razak Zachariah as Student Representatives to the Board of Education. (Applause)

Copies of the new school calendar were available and the school messenger will go out since schools will be open on Wednesday. One day has already been made up; election day. The 3rd day we will make up will be next week so we will have made up three out of the five days we have missed by the end of the month. He appreciated the cooperation from the teachers union and the other unions who in some cases had to use personal days for vacation days. Neil discussed the gift from Yale University that will go directly toward improving instruction in our school district. This presentation will take place at 11:30 at Savin Rock Community School tomorrow. Neil thanked all of the teachers, unions, students and local vendors who help collect items for the holidays and donating to WHEAT. Turkey dinners will be given out to 25 needy families per school. For a town that struggles a bit economically we do very well when it comes to rallying around and helping the community.

Dorinda asked if the commitment that Yale is giving part of the original commitment when they moved here or is this above and beyond. The original amount was a million dollars over a period of time his guess is they have exceed that amount so this is above and beyond that.

Dorinda asked if there was a contingency plan on line for each school. Neil said there is no formal plan yet but we mentioned it during the principal's meeting last week.

C.1.b. Student Representatives Report

Abdul-Razak Zachariah and Catherine DePino gave their report which follows at the end of the minutes. (Schedule C)

C.1.c. Board

Dorinda didn't want to ignore the commentary tonight and is glad we will revisit the issue and it sounds like we are all in agreement that we need to take a second look at it. Dorinda wanted to talk about the process because a couple of people mentioned the vote on the public record. We can have many discussions at the CABA Workshop but any actual vote item does need to be on the record.

Mark said no problem it is just that according to the CABA Workshop it is part of Robert's Rules that we are allowed to do that. It was spoken about during the CABA Workshop about having more structure and effectiveness. This definitely can be looked at but it was the majority of the board. I took it as if they didn't like the way the board meetings were being run and to have it more under Robert's Rules so things were more structured so I just went along with that. He doesn't think we really changed any policy or procedure. Everything can be brought up and definitely be voted on and put on the agenda. As I stated before it is more effective if there is an issue it looks much more professional to put it on the agenda so that we can discuss it and not come to a meeting on a Monday night and sit here and not have an answer. Then we have to wait another two weeks. Let's bring it to the board or Superintendent and put it on the agenda so we have the answers. This makes more effective meetings and our concentration is on the children of this district. That is the whole thing behind what are our goals and objectives are and what are our roles are as board members. I think that is the feedback I received from the board members who were there at the CABA Workshops and I went along with it and the majority ruled that was the bottom line. I don't think there is anything wrong with following the agenda and I also have no problem with someone calling and saying to Superintendent Cavallaro or myself saying this is a concern of the PTA's can we add this to the agenda. I can't see why not and then we can discuss it at a board meeting; why do we have to wait until Monday night. I want to give people answers right there and then I don't want them walking out of here frustrated. A further discussion took place.

Dorinda said she tries to give issues ahead of time and that is why she sent the email asking if this could be revisited.

Dorinda said she was asking about the bus count because a parent was concerned about overcrowding on the bus so she wanted to find out the bus count and that is what all those emails were.

Dorinda reiterated what Rob Saley spoke about during public session. Her understanding is that there is a standing agenda item called administration/status of schools. Anything that comes under this can be addressed under that agenda item. That is the Superintendent's report. Dorinda said can't we all talk about it or only the superintendent? Mark said he believes that the superintendent gives his report and you can ask questions under what he reports so there is no problem asking that question.

Once again I'm just going to ask this one question and I'd like to move on because once again this is what I was asked by this board that we stick to agenda and this isn't an agenda item. What I would ask is if there is an issue before the Monday meeting call the Superintendent or myself and ask if we can speak about this and add it to the agenda. You really have to do this by

Thursday and I can't see anyone saying no to use. Dorinda said she sent him an email two weeks ago and next time she will call him and talk live. Mark said that always works for him.

Cebi Waterfield said the goal everyone had when they sat through that 2 ½ hour presentation by CABE was to run more effective meetings; not to limit anyone's input. She had come before this board before she sat on it as well as the City Council and has spoken her piece on numerous occasions and would certainly not want to limit anyone's input and she wants to make sure everyone is clear of her intentions.

Cebi said parents and taxpayers sometimes make comments about something we plan to discuss during the meeting but when public session is over they leave so they never know that we were planning to talk about that anyway. She suggested holding public session at the end of the meeting but board members with more experience say that would be detrimental to people not wanting to sit through the meeting. A further discussion took place.

The scholar athletes that participate in the West Haven Sea Hawks Pop Warner Program's two teams ages 9 to 14 are playing on Friday in the New England Regional Final Championship games. If they win that have the opportunity to participate in the National Super Bowl in Orlando Florida the first week of December. Wish them good luck! This is the first time in many years that West Haven has had two teams compete at such a high level.

Pat Libero went to the Little Shop of Horrors and it was great; one of the best she has seen. She is looking forward to the March presentation. She and Bob went to the CABE Convention on Friday and Saturday and will have information on that. Her plug tonight is for the band that will perform at the high school tomorrow night. They do a great job. The kids also do a great job at The Trees of Hope and really do make us proud.

Toni Paine also went to The Little Shop of Horrors and is constantly amazed at the talent, discipline and devotion that everybody has. This has been going on for years. It was phenomenal. What a beautiful exercise this is in cooperation with all these people and kids working together and to see what they can produce by working together.

Mark Palmieri wished everybody a Happy and safe Thanksgiving.

C.1.d. Committee

Toni Paine said we met before the regular meeting for a policy meeting and went over truancy, attendance and extracurricular activities and discussed this at length. Attorney Dugas was here to answer any questions. We will get the final draft of these and I will mail them to everyone to look over. If you have any additional concerns please email or call her so she can answer any questions. There will be a 15 policy meeting called before our next board meeting to vote on this and then maybe bring it up at the meeting that follows.

Mark Palmieri thanked Toni and Attorney Dugas for those three great new policies.

Cebi Waterfield met with members of the advisory council at the high school and they want to set up a meeting with Dr. Druzolowski to discuss the leveling issue.

Cebi feels that if things that will be talked about are listed on the agenda it will spark more interest and more parents will come.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on November 5, 2012 at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Palmieri asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.

Robert Guthrie made the motion to approve D.1.a.

Pat Libero seconded the motion

All board members present were in agreement

Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

12-158 Edward N. Hoffman, Elementary Teacher – Savin Rock Community School

Effective: November 7, 2012

Reason: Personal

D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

12-159 Beau Kamykowski, 441 West River Street, Milford, CT 06461

Elementary Teacher, Grade 4 – Savin Rock Community School

Effective: November 13, 2012

Salary: \$38,638.83 Step 4 BS

Chairman Palmieri asked for a motion to approve D.2. Resignations 12-158 through

D.5. New Hire 12-159 inclusive

Cebi Waterfield made the motion to approve D.2. Resignations 12-158 through

D.5. New Hire 12-159 inclusive

Robert Guthrie seconded the motion

All board members present were in agreement

Items D.2. Resignations 12-158 through D.5. New Hire 12-159 are approved

D.6. New Hire: (Non-Certified)

D.7. New Business

F. Informational:

Mark asked if anyone had anything to discuss under informational.

Discussion: Nothing

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to adjourn

Bob Guthrie made the motion to adjourn

Toni Paine seconded the motion

All board members were in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary