

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
November 21, 2011
Regular Board Meeting
Council Chambers

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Council Chambers of the City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on November 21, 2011. The meeting was called to order by Howard Horvath, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman
Sean Maher, Vice Chairman
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer
M. Toni Paine
Cebi Waterfield
Patrick Egolum
Mark Palmieri
Robert Saley

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Dorinda Borer

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT: Marium Majid
Stacie Hurley
Abdul-Razak Zachariah

B. Public Portion

Chairman Horvath welcomed everyone to the board meeting and said we would start with the public session. He asked if anyone would like to address the board.

Toni Paine asked for two items to be added to tonight's agenda under New Business

Item #11-184 Superintendent's Contract Extension

Item #11-185 Assistant Superintendent's Contract Extension

Howie asked if there was a motion. Toni Paine had made the motion above

Mark Palmieri seconded the motion

Discussion: Rob Saley would like a roll call vote

Howie asked if there are any other questions or comments

Howie said about two years ago he agreed to do an extension right before the new board came on and before they were seated. He has come to believe that the new board should have the appropriated conversations required to make that decision and he believes it creates immediate buy in and mutual commitment to the goals and objectives of both the board and the superintendent going forward so based on that he is going to abstain.

Howie asked if a roll call vote is the only comment or question. Yes Mr. Chairman.

Howie wanted to clarify that we are not voting on it now it is in New Business.

Toni Paine said we are just voting to add it to the agenda. Howie asked for a vote to add this to the agenda.

Eric Murillo Yes

Patrick Egolum Yes

Rob Saley Yes

Cebi Waterfield Yes

Mark Palmieri Yes

Sean Maher Yes

Toni Paine Yes

Howie Horvath Abstained

Motion to add to tonight's agenda Items #11-184 and #11-185 is approved

Howie then asked would anyone like to address the board.

Patricia Fusco, 311 Shingle Hill Road, West Haven stated the following:

I am speaking to you tonight as President of the West Haven Federation of Teachers and School Nurses, but specifically on behalf of the Teachers. Mr. Horvath has approached us numerous times over the past year and a half about piloting a new Teacher Evaluation System based on the New Haven plan. We were not averse to working to create an evaluation plan that included student achievement as a factor, but we did not feel that the New Haven plan was right for us. We wanted to take time to study that plan and others, and then craft a plan that would be perfect for West Haven. We wanted a plan that would take into account all the members of our bargaining unit, not just classroom teachers. Mr. Horvath wanted us to only include classroom teachers, which is one of the reasons that we have withdrawn our offer to move forward this year as well as the Memorandum of

Understanding that we had proposed in September or October. He also was insistent on running a pilot now, before the plan has been created. That seemed senseless to us. When you pilot a new program, you have a program that you want to pilot. We have no such program or plan yet. AFT CT has cautioned all of us to move forward thoughtfully, as the State Department of Education has not yet drawn up guidelines for an evaluation plan that includes student achievement, and in fact, the Connecticut General Assembly has passed a bill that gives districts until July of 2013 to do so. That being said, we are working with the Administration to craft a new plan. We have established a committee of teachers and administrators, and have been meeting and discussing what needs to be included. We are planning to attend the CAPPSS conference to hear what Dr. Robert Marzano, a leader in the field of Teacher Evaluation, has to say on the topic. We will research other plans and then decide what is right for West Haven. The Federation strongly feels that student achievement is affected by all persons involved in the school, from the bus driver, to the lunchroom workers, to the secretary, to the teachers the custodians, everyone who comes into contact with the child. School climate has a definite impact on students, and we are working to figure out how to include everyone involved with the children to be accountable. Thank you for your time.

The board gave thanks.

Rosemary Russo, 115 Pleasant Road wanted to thank the outgoing board members for all their work and service that they did for the kids of West Haven. Whether we agree or didn't agree at times she wanted to thank them for the time that they put in for the kids. By coming to these meetings I have realized how much time is involved so thank you very much and congratulations to the new board members that will be sworn in.

The board gave thanks.

Robert Guthrie, 11 Spruce Peak Lane (a new board member) thanked the outgoing board members for their time and service. Those members that were involved in much more than just board of education meetings he is sure will continue to be involved; be a voice, speak up.

He didn't plan on speaking tonight but to add an item to the agenda he feels is not good, open government. He understands the eight board members have the right to add a motion but again potentially it is this board's last meeting together and there was certainly plenty of opportunity to add this to the agenda before this point. He doesn't think it is an open government in the interest of the people our constituency to add tonight to be voted on at ten after seven when the general public knew nothing about this until eight minutes ago. Thank you.

The board gave thanks.

Public Session closed at 7:15

C. REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro congratulated Sean and Margi and the cast of Mame it was a great play and a lot of fun. You guys do a great job and make us really proud.

Mrs. Gardner wanted you to know that the Peer Advocates raised \$1,000.00 in cash and \$300.00 in food donations that were delivered to WHEAT today. Our kids always do a great job and are very involved in the community. It is a tribute to the staff and the people at WHHS by the various ways you can get involved with things. They get you involved and get you to be active members of the community. It is a great thing.

The five year capital plan for Bailey and Carrigan is just about done and he anticipates a report from Mr. Barbarotta the end of next month. Bailey and Carrigan are complete and he is waiting for the Rink.

Rob said those were the first two schools we were going to do and we are looking at the elementary schools now. Neil said yes we decided to put the high school off given the status of the project. Rob asked the timeline. Neil said we were going to do it over three years and cost about \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year per school and has been cost prohibitive to do it all at once.

Neil thanked Rob, Howie and Sean for their years of service to the board; Howie 8 years and Rob and Sean 4 years. Like Mrs. Russo said we didn't always agree but you make us think a little harder and work a little harder and that is our job. Over the last four and especially the last two years we have made some really difficult decisions. Some not so popular but I really believe the decisions that we made are setting the tone and will put us in a better shape to make financial decisions and long term decisions down the road. In the long term our school district will be better off.

Neil said as a token of our appreciation we started a tradition about two or three boards ago of giving you each a jacket and the only thing we stopped doing because of people like Mr. Guthrie and Mr. Calabritto was put your years of service because we never quite know if you are coming back or not. (Laughter) We hope you will wear this in good health and enjoy it.

Howie said we will move on the Student Representative Reports.

C.1.b. Student Representatives

All three student representatives were present at this meeting: Marium Majid, Stacie Hurley and Abdul-Razak Zachariah. Their report is included as Schedule A. (Thank you very much for the typewritten report). Howie thanked the student representatives.

C.1.c. Board

Mark Palmieri would like to commend Margi and Sean the Play Mame was very good. He really enjoyed Gouch. The play was excellent. He said he just met Sean during the

past four years and really appreciates the time he has spent with him and becoming friendly with him and also giving him a new look on the Arts he really appreciates that.

Mark said he has known Mr. Horvath for awhile through sports and he appreciates his time and effort over the past eight years.

Mark said jokingly that his mother always said if you can't say something nice about a person don't say anything at all. Rob said that's not your mother (laughter ensued). Mark said he and Rob have had some very good discussions and he hopes they can continue to do so. He always appreciates Rob's agreement to agree to disagree. Thank you very much.

Mark said he wasn't going to say anything but we added those two items to the agenda tonight and he feels he has to respond to what was said during public session. When he first was elected to the board a new superintendent was hired and that was done before he became a board members. The two items that were added tonight have been going on for months and he thinks it has been a matter of timing and everything else because we all were in agreement and we all gave the superintendent above or meets in his evaluation and this is approving the contract and he really doesn't feel as though this board is doing anything wrong. When he came on board they had a new superintendent and the contract said starting in January and the superintendent didn't come until July. He had no say in who the new superintendent was so I think that had more of a public perception of the old board giving it to the new board than this. We were all in agreement (the nine members) here on the evaluation and this is that we agree now to move forward with their contracts. We already gave the three year evaluation and I just wanted to set that clear. Thank you very much everybody have a nice Thanksgiving.

Cebi Waterfield said there was a student at Carrigan School Cassie Ridgeway who received the Issah Valentine Award for courage during a gala in Stamford. This is an award named after a cancer patient that passed away and this fund was started from. Cassie's dad let Cebi know this over the weekend. Cassie has been amazing with her recovery and is doing very well.

Cebi wanted to say thank you because even though she has only been on the board a few months she appreciated all three board members that are leaving for reaching out to her at different times and trying to help her future things out and guide her through confusing processes. She appreciates all three board members and especially their friendship.

Sean Maher thanked his fellow board members for all their encouragement, support and for challenging him. Sometimes challenge can mean more than he thought. He thanked his wife Margi for her amazing support, to the teachers he worked with, and especially to his kids. He gave a message to the future board to make sure they use this forum for constructive decisions and strong board wide communication; it is very important that you talk to each other. This shouldn't be a forum for axe grinding and shouldn't be a forum for vengeance and shouldn't be a forum for arguments and pettiness it should not matter what party you are on; the side you are on should be the side of the kids and that is

the most important thing. It has been great and challenging and I am sorry to be leaving but as most of you who know me know I am not going far and I am going to keep working for the kids.

Toni Paine was also at the play this weekend and she had one question. Who did the scenery? Sean said he designed the scenery but had a crew of about 12 people helping. Toni said it was absolutely beautiful and the costumes were gorgeous. She thought she was going to hear a musical and she was pleasantly surprised. It was really nice.

Toni thanked the outgoing members for all they have done. She knows they haven't agreed and sometimes they didn't even agree to disagree (laughter) but as everyone knows I wear my heart on my sleeve as well as all of you and I am sure we all do things and say things with the right intent. She wished them all well. Toni said she didn't work with Howie and Rob too much but did with Sean and she thanked him and said he will be sorely, sorely missed.

Howie thanked everyone for this opportunity; he has learned a lot. He wants to think he has made a contribution he has certainly tried and will continue trying. He thanked Superintendent Cavallaro and Assistant Superintendent Druzolowski who were very open to his participation and there are a lot of administrators and leaders who might not be. You have heard Mrs. Fusco say that I have been kind of like a dog on a bone for what I think is the right reason but regardless they were open and willing to talk and to let me participate and take my suggestions and work with them so thank you. To my colleagues around the board you usually say the eight years went fast but I'm not so sure they went so fast; it feels like eight years but I think that means that it was challenging and worthwhile work. It seems like eons ago when I joined that first board eight years ago and it seems like a couple of decades ago but it has been an excellent experience. He is always impressed and pleased with the student representatives. They make him and everyone in the room incredibly proud. You are shining models of examples of what everybody in our school system should be aspiring to. It is a lot of time to spend as well and we appreciate that. He encourages them to weigh in and ask questions so think about what you hear and make comments because you are the voice of the students. He believes this district has a great group of teachers and administrators and we can continue to really work hard and he has never seen us work any harder than in the last couple of years. He hopes CALI continues and we add a few more things. Thank you.

C.1.d. Committee

Rob asked if it was \$30,000 for the five year capital Program for schools. Rob asked about the Energy Plan and where we are with that. Neil said the Board didn't do anything at all and the consensus was that they didn't see us realizing a savings after the last presentation. A discussion continued.

He was curious about the high school plan. Neil said his understanding is that after the first of the year we have to ask for a two year extension and we believe we will be granted one and we then will ask for another one year extension after that. He hopes we

will break ground by the spring of 2014 and it could be sooner. Again, the Mayor is committed to the project and he is looking at when his debt comes down. Neil believes it is the right thing to do. He can't believe that for the next 20 years we won't put the money into it that would be the cities cost to bond for the new project.

Rob asked how it looks going forward for this year. With all the concessions and the savings for health care we were looking at a substantial amount of money so how do we look for the budget this year. Neil said the up-coming budget. Neil said we may be able to carry over some of that jobs bill and if we realize some of the savings we anticipated from the Rink, and things from AFSME with the contract extension concession on the health benefits we may be able to purchase a new language reading series for the elementary schools this year and that would put us in pretty good shape for next year. We will start a series of meetings early next month to make a presentation to the board in early January. Since we exceeded the number of teachers that we anticipated retiring we will see some savings there and that will be savings going forward given the contract that was negotiated. We are in pretty good shape. A further discussion ensued. Rob thanked Neil.

Mark Palmieri said he was sorry about having to cancel the Athletic Committee Meeting tonight but had a personal problem and he apologizes.

Sean Maher said that being the Curriculum Chair for the last four years has been pretty fantastic. Being able to witness what has been done with all the teachers and all the hard work they put in along with the hard work of Dr. Druzolowski and Mr. Cavallaro shows we have been moving in a positive direction that I am proud to be a part of. I encourage you to just keep going forward at the speed it is going because so many things are happening.

Howie Horvath said we had an ERIN Committee Meeting which took place and reported on what we considered to be our findings and they were summarized as:

- great teachers and great teaching matters the most
- student academic growth is the new and better measure
- hiring and supporting great teachers is essential to success
- the growing consensus that the way most states and districts evaluate and support teachers fails to improve student learning or teacher practice

Our conclusion was that we believe that the district; its teachers and students would gain significant value and benefit from the experience, insights and teacher buy-in that a well designed pilot program around teacher support and evaluation conducted this year would provide. This is our recommendation and our greatest hope around this work.

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 October 17, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.1.a.

Sean Maher made the motion to approve D.1. a.

Eric Murillo seconded the motion

Discussion: None

Howie abstained because he was not there.

All other board members present were in favor

Motion passes

Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

11-171 Joel Gargano, Culinary Arts Teacher – WHHS

Effective: January 26, 2012October 13, 2011

Reason: Personal

D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

11-172 Fran Stratton, 10 Month Clerk – Bailey

Effective: November 2, 2011

Reason: Personal

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to approve resignations D.2. and D.3. 11-171 and 11-172 inclusive

Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.2. and D.3. 11-171 and 11-172

Rob Saley seconded the motion

Discussion: Sean Maher said he is very sorry to see Mr. Gargano go he was an asset to the Culinary Arts Department. Sean understands he is going on to much bigger and much better things. Neil said it sounds like he has a bright future ahead of him. He is a talented person.

All board members were in favor

No one abstained

Motion passes

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

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

11-173 Patricia Roy, 43 Howe Street, Milford, CT 06460

Literacy Aide – Carrigan School

Effective: October 31, 2011

Salary: \$16.09 Hourly

11-174 Stephen Dionne, 98 Robart Street, West Haven, CT 06516
Math Aide – Washington School
Effective: October 31, 2011
Salary: \$16.09 Hourly

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.6 11-173 and 11-174
Dorinda Borer made a motion to approve D.6 11-173 and 11-174
Eric Murillo seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
No one abstained
Motion passes

D.7. New Business

11-175 Request to approve the proposal from ConnCASE that the State of Connecticut Board of Education take immediate action to repeal or revise the regulation concerning burden of proof in special education due process hearings to place the burden of proof on the moving party.

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to approve 11-175
Toni Paine made a motion to approve 11-175
Rob Saley seconded the motion
Discussion: Rob said this is just a request for us to ask them; is this a binding...Neil interjected no it is a resolution that says we are in support of you (ConnCASE) looking at changing this.
Howard Horvath said he would oppose this he knows it is counterintuitive but just based on his experience with his brother in years gone by and this concern about availability of advocates.

Eric Murillo abstained because he would really like to see a presentation on what facilities we have now. It has been about two years now and we haven't heard anything about what we are offering, our curriculum and what facilities we have so I would like to see that before I make the decision even though it is not binding.
All other board members present were in favor
Motion passes

F. Information

Nothing was discussed.

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to adjourn
Sean Maher made the motion
Eric Murillo seconded the motion
All board members were in favor

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary