

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

January 5, 2015

Regular Board Meeting

Board Meeting Room

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Board Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut on January 5, 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.

BOARD MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
PRESENT:**

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Daria Weible, 129 Beatrice Dr., West Haven requested some information on the situation with the shops. It was understood that the shops were all set and now with what happened with Mr. Grant we would like to know who is going to be replacing him and who will be taking over his function working as a liaison? We found the whole thing that went down with Mr. Grant very disappointing. The man dedicated 42 years to the school educating these young men and women of West Haven and the fact he was presented in such a disrespectful way really took a toll on the shop kids at West Haven High. 17% of the kids that are going through the tech group think they are not wanted in West Haven High School and feel they don't belong and that is bad. Who are these kids going to be able to turn to for the things that are outside of the academic world? Mr. Grant taught them not only how to work in the shops but also taught them integrity, honesty and treated them with respect and for us to do this to them is just not right. If we could get some information tonight that would be awesome and maybe have someone talk to the tech group and tell them what is happening so that all the work they have done to save their shops will not be reversed on them. The board gave thanks.

Public session ended at 7:05

C. REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro said he will address some of what was raised tonight after giving a brief overview of the work that was done in our schools since our last board meeting. Bailey had a new lighting project done in concert with the U.I. Company where they financed the project and it comes off our bill. We save money by putting in all new LED Lighting. They finished the cafeteria and almost have finished the first floor and will be moving on to the second floor. Dr. Cordone said the building is much brighter and the Benson Corporation put in all new cabinets in the teacher's lounge. Neil said it really looks nice and our guys did all the work in house. They installed the new dishwasher at Carrigan and the emergency lighting at WHHS has been worked on over the break. This will help to prevent sending kids home in the future if the lights go out. Most of this was done in house. The lighting was done by a professional company but our guys did all the cutting and the ceiling tiles and did a terrific job in only four days due to the two non-certified holidays and regular holidays.

Neil addressed the concerns raised during public session tonight. Anytime a teacher leaves in the middle of the year that creates a vacuum and it is not easy to replace any teacher in the middle of the year. You bring in a substitute to try and cover the classes especially in the high school area where there is a certain level of skill involved. Not anybody can go in and start teaching kids to work on machinery and those kinds of things. We are in the process of advertising to try to find somebody to cover the classes for now. Mrs. Gardner has appointed John DellaCamera the Assistant Principal who oversees that department to act as a department head day to day in that area during the transition period as one of his responsibilities. We have a backup plan of coverage and all of the classes are covered in case we don't find somebody. We intend to move on this

quickly and our goal is not to disrupt instruction. Mr. Grant had all of his time in and certainly was eligible to retire for the past six or seven years. This is not the first time that this has happened and it won't be the last time. We have done the best we can to put a plug in and to start to think long term. Neil said nothing has changed with any plans for the new high school project to his knowledge.

Dr. Druzolowski said we will be applying for two grants; an innovation project grant related to common core and the larger grant is a technology bonded grant that is out today and due in a month. Hopefully we will have another opportunity to enrich all the classrooms. We will be working with Jeff Grande and our media specialists on this.

C.1.b. Student Representatives Report

Alice Obas and Susannah Beyl read the student rep report which is attached at the end of the minutes.

C.1.c. Board

Bob Guthrie thanked Matt Cavallaro and Susan Misur for getting the budget up as a board read document.

Jim Morrissey passed out information on an inspection that was done at the high school on December 30, 2014 on G-20 and G-23. He spoke with Neil this morning about this. He visited G-20 and G-23 today but the classrooms were closed when he arrived at 3:00 PM. Jim spoke with Frank Gladwin the City Building Inspector and Keith Flood the Fire Marshall who made the report and there are a lot of problems in these particular areas and this has been going on for some time. There are electrical problems and safety issues with the possibility of children getting hurt. The school opened in September and it is now January; he can't believe there are this many problems in three months. He is afraid there are other issues. A lot of these problems are not that expensive to fix. He knows we are planning a new high school but we have to maintain what we have right now and he is appalled at what he is seeing. The first inspection was done on December 23rd and they met with Mike McGrath on December 30th seven days later and it did not pass inspection. He is very disappointed and asked who is responsible to maintain all of this. The safety of our children is a major factor and the way he sees it is that somebody certainly dropped the ball. We don't have an emergency shut off on the equipment for saws and God forbid a major accident should happen. He is upset and hopes that the board will take a look at this. These are things that should have been taken care of before school opened up. Are we not maintaining what we should be maintaining? We have to maintain safety for our children and this work should have been done a long time ago. He will go to the high school on Thursday at 2:00PM with Frank to see what work has been done and what the plan of action is.

Superintendent Cavallaro said the plan of action is to address as much as we can and he thought he did that. Unfortunately as he told Jim when they spoke he was disappointed that he was not made aware of this until the afternoon of December 30th and at that point there wasn't much he could do other than to go there the next day and it had already been cleaned. He went back again today and there is a lot more sawdust. One of the major

issues is that the sawdust collector was full of sawdust and when emptied needed to be dusted and cleaned again. They have addressed most of the plugs and they are looking at the shut off switches. Several times during the last couple of days Neil has asked if these are inspected regularly and the answer was yes and for the most part they passed inspection which allowed us to open. Ultimately Neil will take his share of the responsibility both he and Mrs. Gardner agree they have some fault but just like any classroom the shop should be clean and the teacher bears some responsibility as well. He knows there wasn't a great relationship between Mr. Grant and the building people because there has been a lot of back and forth as far as what needs to be cleaned, OK I'll take care of it, and it wasn't cleaned. Neil doesn't know what precipitated this particular report but stated our maintenance people and I along with all of the principals pride ourselves with working closely with the three fire marshals and one thing we would never do is put kids in danger. We deal with Frank Gladwin on a regular basis and when he says something has to be fixed it has to be fixed. As long as he sees progress he will work with us if we say we need a little bit of time to fund the project. Are we perfect; no there are a lot of things out of date and a lot of things he would change but money drives a lot of what we can do around here. If there is a safety issue we are made aware of we are going to do what we can to correct it immediately just as we did when I got this report on Tuesday afternoon. A further lengthy discussion took place with Neil and most board members.

Jim Morrissey congratulated Mr. Grant on his 42 years of being a teacher in the West Haven School System and wishes him well. He was the leader of the Save Our Shops Movement for years and he sees some of the students here and he can tell them as a board member he will do whatever he can to make sure the shops will be in the plans for the new high school. He and Mayor O'Brien will fight to make sure the shop classes have their just space in the new high school. Jim wishes Mr. Grant well in his retirement and hopes we can find another person as competent to take his place.

Cebi Waterfield said parents had called mentioning the drop off situation was a little crazy at Bailey last month. She thinks with the colder weather more kids are getting dropped off instead of walking so she spoke to Karen and she spoke to the resource officer and Dr. Cordone. The resource officer is now outside and things are going more smoothly with fewer parents having their cars idling or sitting in the drop off zone instead of moving through. She thanked Dr. Cordone and Karen for addressing this so quickly. Cebi said to the kids who came to the meeting tonight that their attendance is admirable and it is definitely good to stay involved and make sure that your opinion is heard and she certainly agrees that the shops should stay in the high school and feels everyone on the board feels there is a place for everyone at the high school and everyone's interest should be represented.

Mark Palmieri thanked Pat Libero for the business cards board members received from her as a Christmas Present. Pat said they are from the shop at West Haven High School. Mark thanked the kids who made the business cards and reiterated what Mrs. Waterfield said. He thanked the students for coming and supporting the shops.

Jim commented on the excellence of the crossing guards at Bailey. They all do a great job. One woman Debbie Reilly is like a professional cop at the many entrances to the building and she deserve a big shout out. A few years back she received the Unsung Hero Award from Bailey. Cebi agrees and said she does a fabulous job.

C.1.d. Committee

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Board of Education's Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on December 15, 2014 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

Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion

All board members present were in favor

Minutes are approved

Board member Betsy Davis stated she would like to make a motion before moving on to the next agenda item. Betsy would like to make a motion to postpone a vote on the retirement of Gary Grant to refer to legal counsel and to commit it to the next board meeting. Pat Libero asked if there was a second on this. Mark Palmieri seconded this. Discussion: Jim Morrissey is opposed to it and for what reason at this point is this Motion to Table? Betsy said it is her understanding that the State of Connecticut is conducting an audit and she would like to wait until we find out the results of that audit to be able to make an educated and factual decision on this retirement. Rosa Richardson believes we would need to go into executive session to discuss any personnel matters. Neil doesn't believe you can go into executive session unless it is stated on the agenda and the topic of the executive session listed and the person is entitled to come and has to be invited to be here. Attorney Floyd Dugas had already left so he was no longer available to ask. Rosa said we cannot disclose personnel issues during public session. Neil said if you are you have to let that person know that he or she is the topic of discussion and invite them into that session so he doesn't believe you can do this tonight. Rosa said the motion to table is fine but the discussion is not fine. Pat Libero said that being said she would like to vote on the motion to postpone the vote. All in favor of postponing the vote of item 15-01 on the retirement of Gary Grant. Four were for postponing the vote and five were opposed. A roll call vote was requested.

Patrick Egolum – Aye

Rosemary Russo – No

Bob Guthrie – Opposed

Betsy Davis – Yes

Pat Libero – No

Jim Morrissey – No

Rosa Richardson – No

Cebi Waterfield – Yes

Mark Palmieri – Yes

Five to Four - The motion to postpone the vote did not pass.

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

15-01 Garrett O. Grant, Department Chairperson – Tech Ed – West Haven High School
Effective: December 22, 2014
Reason: Retirement

Rosa Richardson made a motion to approve D.2. 15-01

Bob Guthrie seconded the motion

Discussion: Bob Guthrie said he understands what Mrs. Davis is trying to do but a person has a right to provide a resignation separate from any pending future investigation. Five were in favor and 3 were opposed and 1 abstained. A roll call vote was requested.

Patrick Egolum – stated he is not in a position to vote on this as he hasn't been here for a while and has been overseas so he would like to abstain.

Rosemary Russo – Yes

Bob Guthrie – Yes

Betsy Davis – No

Pat Libero – Yes

Jim Morrissey – Yes

Rosa Richardson – Yes

Cebi Waterfield – No

Mark Palmieri – No

5 voted yes, 3 voted no and 1 abstained. The motion passes.

Item 15-01 is approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified) Continued

15-02 Cliff Casner, West Haven High School Assistant Softball Coach
Effective: December 2, 2014
Reason: Resignation

15-03 Frank Biondi, West Haven High School Softball Coach
Effective: 2015 Season
Reason: Retirement

Pat Libero asked for a motion to approve 15-02 and 15-03

Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve

Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion

All board members were in favor

Items 15-02 and 15-03 are approved

Cebi Waterfield wanted to say thank you to Mr. Biondi for his years of service with the girls' softball team. He has done a great job and was there when she was a student at the high school. He will be sorely missed.

Jim Morrissey said Cliff Casner is a long time West Haven resident and has done a great job being assistant softball coach with Frank Biondi and I want to wish them both well.

Chairwoman Libero asked for a motion to adjourn

Mark Palmieri made the motion

Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou C. Amendola

Board Secretary

BOE Student Representative Report
January 5, 2015

Congratulations to the following seniors who were selected to the University of New Haven
2015 Outstanding High School Seniors Program:

Timothy Arcadipani
Sarah Flynn
Jakub Grubski
Angela Riehl
Jesus Yanez

In conjunction with the West Haven Fire Department, the Peer Advocates assisted with another
successful *Toys for Joy* toy drive, providing over 100 families with toys for the holidays.
Students in the PACE program collected more than 200 pairs of socks for homeless teens.

The Cheerleaders will be heading to Florida at the beginning of February to compete in the
Nationals.

The School Counseling Department is hosting Alumni Day on January 8th.

Midterm Exams will be held January 20-23, 2015.

On January 16th, students in the Project Lead the Way classes will be volunteering for Habitat
for Humanity

On December 23rd, all students participated in the annual Door Decorating Contest based on
Holiday Traditions Around the World.

Auditions for the *Drowsy Chaperone* next week. All students are encouraged to audition.

Mock Trial quarterfinals on January 26th at Trumbull High School.