

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
July 21, 2008
Regular Board Meeting

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven on July 21, 2008. The meeting was called to order by Mark Palmieri, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Palmieri, Chairman
Gerald A. Calabritto
Eric Murillo
T. Sean Maher
Robert Saley
M. Toni Paine
Patrick Egolum
Howard Horvath Jr.
Andrew R. DePalma

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor John M. Picard

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
PRESENT:**

Chairman Palmieri stated that before beginning public session Mayor Picard has a previous appointment and is here and would like to say a few words before he leaves.

Mayor Picard congratulated Neil on his first official meeting. He informed the audience that Dr. Andrees had called him today to wish Neil good luck – not that he will need it because he does a good job. Dr. Andrees is doing well.

He wanted to talk briefly about the item on the agenda tonight regarding the position for Science Coordinator. He stated that everyone knows how he feels about new positions and things of that nature but in this respect he thinks it is something we sorely need. He thinks this is very important and is what we need to do here. He will not advocate for any individual but knows the person that is there has a good relationship with UNH and Yale and he does think it is important we focus on Science, Engineering and Math and he does support this position in that respect.

The board gave thanks.

B. Public Portion

Jon Capone, 326 Benham Hill Road. He is here tonight as the President of the West Haven Administrator's Union and would like to echo the same words that the Mayor just said. As a union we support the position of Science Coordinator. This is vital and is needed in the school system. This position has been in limbo for the last year and Neil has been negotiating this with our union and we have been nothing but positive; we want this position.

His daughter is a student in the school system and he can see how the science program has progressed. She is in the fifth grade and he can see the difference in the work she has done. This is not something for just the high school it is for the elementary and middle schools also. Again, the Administrator's Union supports this 100%.

The board gave thanks.

Joseph C. Mayhew stated he represents the Board of Education Supervisors, CWA Local 1103. My understanding is that tonight there will be an issue of a grievance that was filed. There has not been a third step grievance at CWA Local 1103 in many, many years; in fact so far back we have not even determined if there was ever a public discussion of this.

It is our position that when this contract was made the intention of the third step grievance at the point where the board would be involved would be that the board would meet with the union and with the grievant in order to settle the grievance at the lowest possible level. We do not believe that tonight is the proper place or the proper form for this grievance to be addressed. We are prepared, if necessary, to address this grievance; however, a letter was already sent to the Board of Education with the Union's position. It is purely contractual and our understanding is that the grievance was going to be discussed today. Again, we do not believe it should be done in a public forum; rather the board should make an appointment with the union and the grievant and discuss this privately. Thank you.

The board gave thanks.

Mary Lou Dixon spoke. She worked for the Board of Education for almost 30 years and was a CWA member, Steward and Chief Steward. Never in almost 30 years had any action such as this taken place. I can show you every transfer that was made but never when there wasn't a vacancy; including mine. If and when any further discussion takes place I will be more than happy to show you all the information. Thank you for your time.

The board gave thanks.

Pat Libero, 146 Connecticut Avenue. I'm here regarding the Science Coordinator's position. I met Raffaella back in 2000 when we worked at the high school. She is dedicated to the children of our city and has done a great job in that position. Under her guidance she has introduced Foss Kits K-5; she has assisted the teachers in elementary

schools in teaching the science curriculum along with working with the Yale interns. Various other areas that Raffaella has helped in were mentioned. We now have an aligned curriculum which we did not have in many, many years and we need to be on top of the science curriculum and I do believe we need a science coordinator to do that. We need someone out there who will be with the students and teachers who knows their curriculum. I would appreciate it if you would approve this position tonight.

The Board gave thanks.

Nancy Rossi, 12 Robin Road. She is here tonight speaking for herself not as part of the City Council. She has issues one of which goes back to April when the half a million dollars was promised to the Board of Ed. The reason for this promise was so there would not be any layoffs. She sat through all the budget meetings and it was promised at that time, on the record, that there would be no new positions. My problem is that a Science Coordinator sounds like a wonderful thing for the school; so does all day kindergarten. However, not one of you came before the city council or contacted me and said this position was in the works. As soon as the money was appropriated now all of a sudden the position of Science Coordinator comes out. My position is wait until next year; you need to keep your word. To me my word means everything. One of the arguments I hear is that it won't cost us any money because we are missing an Assistant Superintendent and that pay will take care of it. I would like you to tell that to the taxpayers if they lack services in other departments like the Police Department or Public Works. If you have extra money by all means give it back to the department that gave it to you. Don't turn around and make a reason to spend it because it is not fair. Not one of you said we have a science coordinator position we would like to fill not one of you. If you did I would like to know where on the record you did because I would like to re-read it and then I would apologize. My understanding is that people would only be hired if somebody leaves and that wouldn't be a new position. If a Special Education child needed a para or something like that it would be taken care of but not this.

I must also point out that first off it does pay more than what it is paying right now by \$600. There is a stipend for \$4,800 and the department head stipend is \$9,600 I don't know if that is because she was here longer or what the situation is with that. The day's work is 185 vs. 220. However it is my understanding that all other department heads teach three classes this one does not. This gives her extra time above and beyond everyone else who receives the same pay. I am asking you to really take a look at this and to honor your word. Do this next year. Put it in your budget the right way.

The other matter is the grievance 08-153 another total waste of money. Anyone who reads the contract has to understand if you take this to arbitration you are going to lose. Why would you waste the taxpayer's money if you are going to lose. I will be right here if it goes to arbitration and I promise you I will pull Bertram Moses and Devlin's bills for all of this and I will pull up the arbitration. Rule on this grievance; put the woman back in her position the way it should have been. Meet with the union and discuss it. Get rid of the grievance and put her back in the job that she belongs in. Thank you.

The board gave thanks.

Board Member Howard Horvath asked about the Science Coordinator Position. His understanding is that financially it will be a wash and we will get more time from the individual than we did before. Is this correct? Neil stated at least for the last two years the person currently holding the acting coordinator's position has been doing the job and there is no one new who is going to be hired to replace this person. The difference is we get 220 work days per year compared to 185. Take into consideration that when the job goes to top step ultimately the teacher's salary is going to be going up as well so it is not that big a difference in salary. With respect to the difference between the \$9,600 and the \$4,800 there has to be a department head because we are asking for a full time coordinator's position that department head will only work out of WHHS. We had developed the concept of a grades 6 – 12 department head position before there were coordinators so that is why we would only have to put the position back at the high school and the salary would be cut in half. Howie thanked Neil.

John Coppola, 19 April Street asked that the grievance be handled through the union; don't open us up for lawsuits; we don't have the money right now. As you know the council worked very hard to give you the money. All we are asking is you follow the normal procedure. Don't do something that hasn't been done for 30 years. There was no vacant position; it was a changed position deal with it through the union please. Thank you.

The board gave thanks.

The public portion closed at 7:25 PM.

B.1. Administration

Neil stated that at our next board meeting we would have Jeff Grande from the Business Network at 6:00 PM tentatively. He is the person doing the research on our IT Department. Ken Carney will be here as well to update us on the status of all of the current on-going projects. We also anticipate Ron Stancil being here to talk about CAPT and our results in detail.

B.1.a. Status of Schools

Neil stated that since the CAPT results will be released before then we will talk briefly tonight about where we are and where we need to be and some of the ideas I have. By the next meeting we will know the status of AYP; we do not know this now. This will come out sometime in August. We will have information not only for the school system but for each individual school and the breakdown of each sub-group.

Most of you probably saw my comments in the New Haven Register last week. As far as CAPT we are stagnant and we are not happy. We have some good programs in place that will make a difference. This board played a crucial role in all of the following programs:

- Freshman Academy
- All 8th graders to take algebra
- Programs for grades K-8 in Science that we put in place

If we get the Science Coordinator's position in place one of the things that we will be able to do is teach the Language Arts, Math, and Science in a more meaningful way to kids. You can teach all subjects through Science. We have invested in a lot of non fiction literature to help kids not only in science concepts but also in the reading and writing part of the test. These things are in place and will help to increase our CAPT scores. We are looking at a pilot program at Forest where we are actually bringing in a math specialist because this is an area in need of improvement.

We have made small growth in all areas of the CAPT scores and we are especially pleased with our science scores. We are making small, steady growth and want to make larger and quicker growth. I think we are on the right track.

The critical part will be when the state releases the AYP results where we see what schools made it and what schools didn't. We are particularly concerned with Carrigan and Forest because they are schools that after so many years if they don't make AYP there are some consequences and some things will need to be put in place. We will talk to you as soon as I receive this information.

One of the concerns that we have is that kids are choosing alternatives to WHHS so Ron Stancil has come up with a survey to send to families who chose not to send their children to WHHS. These results will be tabulated and a plan will be put in place to address those concerns and we will use the results to market our high school a little better.

The posting for the Assistant Superintendent went out on all of the websites discussed at our last meeting, the site for job openings for the State of Connecticut, the Superintendent's website, and it was also placed in the newspaper. We received several applications; some from out of state. This closes August 1st and my goal would be by the first meeting in September to bring this to a conclusion.

Neil met with the man from ECI at the high school and the project for the removal of chairs from the auditorium is on schedule. They will be out of the auditorium by Thursday and we will paint the floors and the auditorium. By the start of the school year we will have at least 500 seats back. This will be just fine for the size of the Welcome Back Assemblies and those kinds of things.

As of today all of the elementary positions have been filled. We have an In-School Suspension and Tech Ed (shortage area) position at Bailey. There are two Science positions at Carrigan where interviews are scheduled. We have a Math position, Family Consumer Science Position at WHHS. The two positions I am most concerned about are the Spanish positions at WHHS as this is a severe shortage area throughout the state. We have two Media Specialist positions open at the elementary level and we have a Special Ed opening at Pagels and a system wide Speech Pathologist which is also a shortage area.

The poor design of the intercom phone system at Carrigan was discussed; the project cost us about \$166,000 and the phones are being knocked off the wall and breaking as they

are at the same height as the student's back packs and are close to the door and the light switch. We have had the building official and the Mayor over there to look at this and Attorney Dugas to see if we have any recourse. Pat Libero stated that when the warranty is over we will have to pay to fix them. Neil would like to see the phones moved to another location.

Neil appreciates Mrs. Rossi's concerns about the Science Coordinator Position. Again we are not asking to add one additional person to our staff and I believe we are going to get a better value for the money we are spending than in what we currently have. A 220 day work day is certainly more productive than a 185 day. A further discussion ensued.

B.1.b. Board

T. Sean Maher stated that he did visit the high school today and the work in the high school auditorium has begun. He stated he was very impressed with the systematic approach that is being taken. They are working very diligently and half the seats have been removed and put on pallets and loaded into the trucks. This is being done in a very organized way. He passed pictures around to the board and anyone else who would like to see them.

Rob Saley stated he spoke to Mike McGrath and Joe Yacono about some recycling programs. His original plan was to try to do one school but Mr. McGrath feels we could do all the schools and get the Public Works involved. He will keep you updated and will try to work on this over the next couple of weeks. We want to try to do something by the fall to increase our recycling and reduce our waste.

Howie Horvath wanted to apologize because a few weeks ago he had offered to assist the technology team in supporting what we were doing in that area. He had taken on a new responsibility at work and has been unable to do so. However he did do some work that he would like to review with the board (pass outs were made available). It was a simplistic look at the elements of any school technology plan and its infrastructure. When he took a look at the proposal from Business Network he noted that we had previously done a lot of work in assessing the network and assessing where we were as a district relative to technology back before we made the purchase. We had made a number of recommendations back then; many of which we started to follow. His concern is that the area you really need to focus on is in the software and in the professional development such as Power School, Compass, Blue Ribbon and other applications that either the students and/or teachers, could use. In the case of Power School the teachers have the ability to communicate to the parents at home in a way that lets them help prepare their children. They know what their homework is, they know what the grades are etc. These are the things we should be focusing on to really ensure that we are leveraging the technology we just bought and that in going forward we focus on the right things to be sure that the scores go up. Again, this is a great organization but I was worried a little bit as to where they were putting the focus. In looking at the proposal it is really focused on the infrastructure and that is no surprise as they are a network support organization for the most part. A further discussion ensued about this. Howie said the

area you would really want them to focus on would be services; they say consulting but they don't really specify what that means. They do talk about doing an organizational review when we have already done a lot of that work. We identified who is doing what, in what areas, etc. You should spend some time on what the organization looks like and how it looks against other school systems and spend some time to build a structured organization. We are not seeing a lot of deliverables. Howie stated he thinks this contract is in place already but Neil interjected that there is no contract it is on a consulting as needed basis. Nothing has been signed they come in and bill us per the hour. This is not different than our attorney's firm and several other companies that come in and work for us. Howie stated we should have a contract in place. Whether you are billing on a time and materials basis or a fixed fee; if you don't have a contract they don't have to deliver anything. Whatever it is we have them doing we should have a signed contract and we really need to know what we are going to get out of this. Howie asked if this started already and Neil said it started about three weeks ago. Howie said if is going to be \$10,000 a month and the stuff that they are doing is stuff we have done or is stuff related to the help desk where there is nobody to help we need to really understand it and get a project plan from them that lists deliverables and state this is what we are going to hand you at the end of this contract (even if it is for time and materials). It should state what we will receive if on a monthly basis at the end of the month. If it lasts six months we should get a long list of deliverables. Due to the nature of the school year when there is nobody at the schools what are they billing in June July and August and what will they be doing differently when school begins again? We need a timeline and a frame of reference. He doesn't want this to end up like our phone system at Carrigan where we thought we were doing the right thing and at the end we have something that is not quite doing what we want. I think these folks are very capable and we need to focus so that at the end we have something we want and it will be focused on helping to improve student achievement.

Jerry Calabritto said that if I understand, what you are saying is that one of the most important pieces of the puzzle is to train our teachers to utilize the software in the educational process which is what an educator would do as opposed to a tech person. A tech person knows how a computer runs but an educator is the one who has gone to school and knows how a student learns the educational process.

Howie said there is a balance, obviously the equipment needs to work and these gentlemen have made good recommendations in the network area but if you don't really focus on the instructional end don't expect big changes in scores and big gains in student achievement which is what we all want.

Patrick O. Egolum asked the rationale for not signing a contract. Would this be a problem? Neil said it wouldn't be a problem he could ask them for a contract that is not an issue. They bill us hourly for a specific number of hours per month and it really is not to go beyond six months; this was the understanding. At the end of six months they were to give us a recommendation as to how to proceed as far as an IT structure setup.

Howie stated that this must be articulated in the contract. A further discussion ensued.

Eric Murillo stated that the whole plan was to give us help with the hardware and the structure of the whole system. He feels that the teachers and staff for the IT department were frustrated with the repairs etc. and not being able to get onto the internet. The idea was that if John Lessandrini was not going to be around we needed someone to come in and give us some advice. They will be working with the teachers now to get the development on the instructional end done. The same thing happened with the Smart boards. Howie agreed with Eric stating you really have to know what you are doing and make this as clear as you can.

M. Toni Paine stated she agrees that a contract is an excellent idea but feels someone should do a survey beforehand to decide what should be in the contract. Neil has them scheduled for an hour and he will share this with them tomorrow. A further discussion ensued. Neil said they have talked about going out to various districts to look at the IT setups and things of that nature and the information gathered should be ready for the next board meeting.

Eric Murillo stated that regarding the science coordinator position he was under the impression that the board and city council were presented with the idea of the science coordinator in the budget he thinks he saw it in there and will research his notes. Neil stated it was in our original proposal that was submitted to the Mayor and City Council.

B.1.c. Committee – Nothing was mentioned.

D.1. Approval of Minutes:

**D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting,
June 30, 2008 5:45 p.m. at the Blake Building**

**D.1.b. West Haven Board of Education Special Meeting, June 30, 2008
6:00 p.m. at the Blake Building**

T. Sean Maher made a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a. & D.1.b.

Gerald A. Calabritto seconded the motion

No discussion

All in favor

Minutes were approved

D.2. New Hires (Certified)

08-135 Heather Folmer, 1689 Unit 1, Litchfield Tpk, Woodbridge, CT
Reading/Language Arts Teacher - Carrigan
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$42,512.06 (Step 5 B.S. + 30)

08-136 Faye Marzinotto, 590 Campbell Ave., Apt. 11, West Haven, CT
School Psychologist – System wide
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$41,356.88 Plus Stipend (Step 3 B.S. + 60)

- 08-137** **Casey Stapleton**, 29 Danenberg Place, West Haven, CT 06516
Elementary Teacher Grade 5 – Thompson School
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$37,411.34 (Step 2 B.S. + 30)
- 08-138** **Elena Godoy**, 35 May Street, West Haven, CT 06516
Elementary Teacher Grade 2 – Thompson School
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$36,842.76 (Step 3 B.S.)
- 08-139** **Adair McCormack**, 171 Malcolm Road, West Haven, CT 06516
Language Arts Teacher Grade 7 – Carrigan
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$36,842.76 (Step 3 B.S.)
- 08-140** **Matthew A. Laudano**, 20 Fisco Drive, East Haven, CT 06516
Music Teacher
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$36,842.76 (Step 3 B.S.)
- 08-154** **Heather Rose Spadoni**, 55 Derby Avenue, Orange, CT 06477
Elementary Teacher, Grade 2 – Savin Rock School
Effective: August 26, 2008
Salary: \$37,411.34 (Step 2 B.S. + 30)
- D.3. Resignations: (Certified)**
- 08-141** **Catherine Maturo**, Elementary Teacher, Grade 2 SRCS
Effective: June 25, 2008
Reason: Retirement
- 08-142** **Michelle Raccio**, Full time Speech Pathologist - System wide
Effective: June 30, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-143** **Margaret E. Dolan**, Family/Consumer Science Teacher – WHHS
Effective: August 1, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-144** **Chris Coulter**, Instrumental Music Teacher – Pagels/Mackrille
Effective: July 8, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-145** **Karen Kraemer**, Library Media Specialist – Thompson/Molloy
Effective: July 8, 2008
Reason: Personal

- 08-146** **Sharon Garces**, Spanish Teacher-WHHS
Effective: June 20, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-147** **Dana Mendillo**, English Teacher – Carrigan
Effective: July 9, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-148** **Corri Davies**, Mathematics Teacher – WHHS
Effective: July 10, 2008
Reason: Personal
- 08-149** **Patricia Amodei**, Speech Pathologist System wide
Effective: July 15, 2008
Reason: Personal

Gerald A. Calabritto made a motion to approve D.2 – D.3. inclusive

Patrick O. Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion: T. Sean Maher questioned the hiring of #08-135 at Step 5. He was informed that this person was new to the area, had 6 years of experience and this is in a shortage area.

All in favor

D.2 – D.3. inclusive were approved.

E. New Business:

- 08-150** **Correspondence from David Russell, Director of Grant Administration** requesting approval of the completed Family Resource Center Grant Continuation for 2008-2009.

Gerald A. Calabritto made a motion to approve 08-150

M. Toni Paine seconded the motion

No discussion

All in favor

Item 08-150 was approved

- 08-151** **Request from Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools to**
reinstitute a district-wide Science Coordinator position.

Gerald A. Calabritto made a motion to approve 08-151

Rob Saley seconded the motion for discussion

Discussion: Rob requested that the nominal cost aspect be reiterated. Neil said the only thing new is that we have to replace a department chair person at the high school and that is a \$4,800 stipend. We do not need to hire a new teacher to fill the position. The person acting in that capacity will make the same salary; subject to negotiation. A further discussion ensued.

Gerald E. Calabritto stated that the way I understand what Mr. Cavallaro said is that if the board passes its motion the net effect dollar wise to this board's budget this year would be less than it was in the previous year and we would actually be getting 35 more days a year from the individual and hypothetically if there are 800 employees right now after this motion is passed we will still only have 800 employees.

Patrick O. Egolum said if this is the case there is absolutely no reason to wait until next year to do this. We should do this now because everything is OK. There was no further discussion.

All in favor

Item 08-151 was approved

08-152 Vote on Superintendent's Contract

Gerald A. Calabritto made a motion to approve 08-152

T. Sean Maher seconded the motion

Mark Palmieri stated that there is no discussion on this item.

Rob Saley was opposed

Howard Horvath stated he abstained and had a comment. Unfortunately he wasn't able to get this in enough time. When compared to the last and previous superintendents there are a couple of things that are not qualified dollar wise so I am going to abstain.

Remaining Board Member were in favor

Item 08-152 was approved

**08-153 C.W.A. Local 1103, AFL-CIO Grievance #007: Improper
Movement of Employee - Sue Adamo**

Neil said he certainly respects what Joe said before as far as the process. If you came in here under the idea there was going to be a different process – if you want maybe we can take a couple of minutes recess and talk about why we are doing it this way; if you want to talk about it. Joe interjected, is it allowed? Neil said that is what I am saying you made a point and before we go through the motions - you are not happy with the process so let's at least agree on why we are where we are now.

Jerry Calabritto made a motion for a 5 minute recess and M. Toni Paine seconded it. Board members were all in favor. A five minute recess took place.

The board meeting resumed and Chairman Palmieri stated we are going to honor Mr. Mayhew's request and needs a motion – Attorney Floyd Dugas interjected we are going to table this issue and move it over to the next board meeting. Mr. Mayhew has some questions about my opinion that was expressed to you before that these meetings be in public based on a Supreme Court decision several years ago. He will abide with that

authority and my agreement will be to bring it to the next board meeting once Mr. Mayhew is satisfied that in fact it has to be in public session.

Jerry Calabritto made a motion to table 08-153 to the next board meeting

Patrick O. Egolum seconded the motion

No discussion

All in favor

Motion 08-153 was tabled until the next board meeting.

F. Informational:

M. Toni Paine would like to check on something that the board voted on and passed about two or three years ago; the practice that the hiring of custodians would come off a sub list. She questioned if this area needed to be revisited and are we following it the way it was set up. Toni said she believes there was a list that was to be evaluated on a monthly basis. It was stated that board members expressed concern as to how we use the list and asked if it is the sole criteria. Chairman Palmieri asked Neil Cavallaro to have Mike McGrath come to the next board meeting so we will know before the school year starts. Neil agreed to talk with Mike and have him come to our next meeting.

Nothing further under informational

Andrew R. DePalma made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Howard Horvath. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary