

Pending BOE Approval

**Watertown Board of Education  
Regular Board of Education Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** November 23, 2020

**Meeting Time:** 7:30 p.m.

**Meeting Place:** Remote Meeting

**Members Present:** Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman  
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Vice Chairman  
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Secretary  
Mr. Robert Makowski  
Ms. Diane Bristol  
Mr. Brian Flaherty  
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa  
Ms. Cindy Eastman  
Mr. Jason Malagutti

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Dr. John Ramos – Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Natalie Lindstrom – Student Council Representative

**A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.**

**B. Salute to the Flag**

**C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson**

**D. Minutes**

**Ms. Crotty** - Before we continue this evening, I would like to request that we table agenda item Q: A this evening. Is there a motion?

Agenda Item: D.1  
Subject: To Table Agenda Q: A

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: So moved.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

**Ms. Crotty** - Before we continue, I would like to ask if there is ask if there is a motion to add agenda item Q, Executive Session, for possible discussion regarding a proposed agreement concerning a record of collective bargaining strategy between the Board of Education and the Watertown Administrators Administration?

Agenda Item: D.2  
Subject: To Add Agenda Item Q: Executive Session

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: So moved.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: D.3  
Subject: Minutes of the November 9, 2020 Regular Board of Education Meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Rinaldi  
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Bristol

Text of the Motion: I move, with edits, that the Board approve the minutes from the November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Regular Board of Education meeting as presented by Ms. Davidson.

Discussion:	Ms. Crotty – Just as a note, the edit you are speaking of is that you were not in attendance at the November 9 <sup>th</sup> meeting, is that correct? Yes.
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion passed

#### E. 2020 Connecticut American Choral Directors' Association (ACDA)

**Ms. Crotty** – The Watertown Board of Education wishes to congratulate Mr. Jack Zaino, Music Teacher at Swift Middle School, for being selected as Connecticut Outstanding Young Choral Director. Jack was highly recommended by all of his colleagues for this nomination, and it was a well-deserved honor. To qualify for this recognition, you must be someone that maintains high performance and repertoire standards, attends and is active in Connecticut American Choral Directors' Association activities, and promotes choral music in the community. Jack will be officially recognized by the ACDA in a virtual awards presentation on Saturday, December 5th. We would like to congratulate you, thank you for being here, we are very proud of you, congratulations!

**Dr. Ramos** – We are so very proud. In these times, when there is so much to be concerned about, it is great to have a bright light shine through. Thank you so much and we know you will represent your colleagues and show a lot of strength in our system. Thanks so much for representing so well.

#### F. Report form Student Council Representative – Natalie Lindstrom

**Ms. Lindstrom** - At **John Trumbull Primary School**, with the help of the most amazing PTO, administrators at JTPS celebrated "Nacho" Average Staff on Thursday. Mrs. Meka and Mr. Paylor delivered nachos with salsa and hot cheese sauce to the delight of all staff members! Teachers were busy with parent conferences and planning for the change to the remote learning model. All staff has worked hard to ensure a smooth transition so our students experience success beginning on Monday. We were extremely proud to participate in our first ever "District Food Drive". We collected over 1,000 food items to give to the Watertown Food Bank! Nearly 100 **Polk School** community members joined together for our 3rd annual Turkey BINGO event. While this year things looked a little different and the event was held over Google Meet, students and their families still enjoyed playing 6 fun, silly, and highly competitive games of BINGO. The winner of each round, after demonstrating their best turkey dance, won a turkey courtesy of LaBonne's. Family Meetings– Earlier this month we also reinstated our Polk Family initiative. Started last year, Polk Families serve as a way to roster connections between students and adults from around the school community. This year, due to COVID restrictions, students remain in their homeroom and support staff, such as our school nurse, secretaries, and security officer, are assigned to different classrooms and get to know and work with children in different

ways. Our first Polk Family meeting worked as a get to know you activity and then each class created a class nickname and worked together to decorate a sign with the selected name, all of which are displayed outside our classroom doors. We're excited to continue this, even virtually! At **Judson**, our teachers are continuing to use the Mood Meter tool during our daily Morning Meetings. The Mood Meter is a way in which students are able to identify and name their feelings. The Mood Meter has come in handy this past week as teachers discussed the shift to Remote Learning with their students. Many are feeling very sad about being away from their teachers and friends. Judson participated in the district-wide Friends Feeding Friends Food Drive. Our students brought in 1,479 items to donate to the Food Bank!! We held a school-wide competition and Mrs. O'Toole's class was the winner with 250 donated items! They earned a free ice cream at lunch time! Mrs. Raymond made a deal with the school that if we brought in 1,000 items, she would dress up like a turkey!

During the week of November 11<sup>th</sup> at **Swift**, all students took part in lessons in which they learned about our veterans and why and how we celebrate Veterans Day here in America. Students read articles, watched videos and even listened to real-life memoirs by and about veterans. Our staff also held a Dress Down event and raised funds to support our local VFW, which has been recently vandalized and needs repair. They have always been there for us and now it's time for us to help them out! During the week of November 16th, our students and staff supported others in our community through their contributions to our local Food Bank. Hundreds of items were dropped off to the school and became a larger part of the district food drive. We are especially proud of our student council president and homeroom representatives for taking this on during a hectic time. Bocce has come to Swift! Our Unified Sports program kicked off this week with a socially distant bocce tourney including several Swift athletes and typical peers. We are hoping to continue our Unified Sports through the winter with activities designed to be both fun and safe.

**Watertown High School** administrators and teachers held the second of two virtual Question and Answer sessions for eighth grade students and families to learn more about the offerings at Watertown High School. Since we were not able to have an in-person open house this year, each department created a video about courses that the department offers. We then created a website with all of the department videos, as well as club and co-curricular information for families to review. The link for the eighth-grade website is:

<https://sites.google.com/watertownps.org/8thgradeopenhouse/home> Two important WHS committees began their work: The Assessment Study Group and WHS Wellness Advocates. The Assessment Study Group is considering the variety of ways that students can demonstrate their learning, especially during times of hybrid and remote teaching. The group's first step was to send out a student survey to gain an understanding of students' thinking about the best ways to demonstrate learning. The group will then examine these results, read related research about best practices in student assessment, and then present preliminary findings during the January faculty meeting. The WHS Wellness Advocates are considering a variety of ways to encourage and inspire well-being and self-care among WHS staff members. This work is in line with the social/emotional teaching and learning occurring for students. Rehearsals continue for the WHS fall theater production of "The Laramie Project". The structure of this play allows for social distancing on stage as well as virtual participation by remote learners. We are so glad that our

students have this performance opportunity. Dr. Parlato recorded the first episode of her podcast, Principal Insights. The first guest was School Resource Officer Jeff Desena, who talked about his path to a career in law enforcement as well as the necessity of relationship development in community and school policing. More episodes will follow, and the podcast can be found presently on Google Podcasts, Anchor and Spotify.

#### **G. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report**

##### **1. Appointments – (Information Only)**

Ms. Jodi Dunikowski to the position of Purchasing Clerk for Watertown Public Schools, effective November 16, 2020, being paid the contractual hourly rate of \$22.23, Step 1 of the Secretaries Contract.

##### **2. Transfers – (Information Only)**

None

##### **3. Resignations – (Information Only)**

None

##### **4. Superintendent's Report**

**Dr. Ramos** – Good evening. Let's begin by recognizing that today was the first day to be in the all remote learning model. Things went relatively well, but there were state wide issues with Google today, particularly with the Google Meets and breakout sessions. This is a software issue that Google has to work through and is it because of the demand that has intensified in the last few weeks. It is something we can't fix, obviously, so we ask our community to be patient about that. Otherwise, we are doing ok. I had an email come across my screen that I want to share with you. It says, "Hello families. Join me at 7:00 p.m. for a bedtime story, Monday thought Friday. Spike and I can't wait to see you tonight." This is from our John Trumbull Principal, Laura Meka. This is indicative of how all of our people, every principal, every administrator, every teacher and para, everyone who works in the system, tries to pitch in and make this work despite the circumstances that we are in.

We, in fact, had more Covid cases today. Both at Swift and the high school. This issue obviously doesn't go away because we are remote but it does lessen the impact. The lunch program, today, served 1680 breakfasts and lunch. They were a three day portion to each family. That is pretty amazing. They were not expecting so many people, so we are sorry for those that might have had to wait in line longer than you had hoped. It is a great thing and as we get a better handle on the numbers, we will be able to eliminate those waits.

#### **H. New and Updated Board Policies – Second Reading**

**Ms. Crotty** - Tonight is the second reading of the five new and revised policies initially presented to the Board at the November 9th Meeting.

**Personnel - Series 4000**

1. Code of Ethics (NEW) 4045 - You may recall that the Code of Ethics is a new policy designed to provide employees notice of expected professional conduct.
2. Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Personnel) 4140 & 4140R - As discussed prior, this personnel policy was revised in accordance with the new Title IX federal regulation that became effective on 8/14/20.

**Students - Series 5000**

1. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 - Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Students) (formerly titled Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment) with **Appendix A** (5105 & 5105R) - This student policy was also revised in accordance with the new Title IX federal regulation that became effective on 8/14/20.
2. Student Dress – 5125 - The student dress policy was revised to clarify that attire or accessories depicting the Confederate flag or the Nazi swastika are prohibited and that masks may be worn in school in conjunction with health and safety protocols.
3. Transportation – 5145 - This policy was revised to include the statutory requirement that the Superintendent report to the DMV Commissioner any complaints that are received within a twelve month period and any accidents involving pedestrian students at or in the area of a school bus stop.

**I. Discussion Regarding Snow Days**

**Dr. Ramos** – The CT State Department of Education Board, at its October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting, approved that Superintendents may choose to treat snow days as remote learning days or as a day to be made up later in the school year as has been the case in the past. What I am proposing to you this evening for your consideration is that during the time that we are all remote, which is today through December 11, if there is a need for a snow day, I would like to use it as a remote learning day. It makes sense as we are already in that model and students are already home. After we return on December 14<sup>th</sup>, any necessary snow day would be an actual snow day for the first two occasions. We don't want to deny our kids the opportunity to go outside and do what they do for a snow day. Then, after that, barring a power outage, I am recommending that the district use any possible snow day as a remote learning day. Rather than adding time on at the end of the year, which typically, those days are hard to deal with, it is hot, learning doesn't happen the way it does during the normal school year, it is a smarter use of instructional time. So, the first two days would be real snow days and thereafter, we would go remote unless circumstances don't allow it, such as a power outage.

**J. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)**

**Via Email:**

**Barbara Burr – (No address given)** – Ms. Burr is in favor of the removal of the Indian mascot retirement

**Judy Wyman Kelly – (No address given)** – Ms. Kelly is in favor of the removal of the Indian mascot retirement.

To hear both letters read to the Board, please go to:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIf9pwrH64gbrzGfmV4dtSw>

**K. Communications – Secretary**

**Ms. Rinaldi** – The Board of Education received five letters regarding the retirement of the Indian mascot.

**11/23/2020 - J. Kiku Langford McDonald (Town of Killingly)**

**11/23/2020 – Shoran Piper Waupatukuay (Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe, Trumbull)**

**11/23/2020 – Brian Stiltner (Chair of the Steering Committee of the CT Human Rights Partnership)**

**11/23/2020 – Hoween Flexer (Member of the Killingly Board of Education)**

**11/23/2020 – Barbara Gurr (Professor of the Woman’s’ Gender & Sexuality Studies, UCONN)**

The letters can be read in their entirety by going to <https://whs.watertownps.org/o/watertown-public-schools> and clicking on Public Mascot Documents.

**L. Committee Reports:**

**Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No**  
**Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair – Yes**

The Board was presented with the new and updated Board policies for a second reading and Board approval later on this evening.

**Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – Yes**

On Friday, I was fortunate enough to be part of a meeting with you, Dr. Ramos, Gino Faiella, and the Town Manager, the Director of Finance, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Council and we had ongoing discussions relating to the Board of Education capital improvement plans.

**Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Ms. Leslie Crotty – Yes**

Mr. Faiella will be presenting to the Board of Education in Decmeber on some of the capital improvement projects.

**Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Robert Makowski, Chair – No**

**M. Report from the Board Chair**

**Ms. Crotty** - Over the past month I have, along with other Board of Education Chair colleagues across the state, participated in workshops, presentations, and meetings with the CT Association of Boards of Education, the State Department of Public Health, and the State Department of Education. Of special note is the “Principles of Disaster Psychology” that I attended with Dr. David Johnson where we examined the pandemic response through the lens of trauma and disaster recovery. While our primary goal in Watertown as a public school continues to be education, our schools, like schools across the country, are also the source of many other vital things for children and families in our community. In addition to education, we are a source of food for many families, child care, mental health services, physical fitness, and medical services. And for those Watertown Public Schools staff members and partners responsible for those things on a daily basis, we ask you to be good to yourself. It is a heavy burden to carry the knowledge that how effective you are will have a huge impact on many children and many families for years to come. This endeavor is truly a marathon, and like our community, you too need to recover from this pandemic; and that recovery must start before the pandemic is over. Your recovery must start before the pandemic is over. To our staff, we ask that you get rest when you are able- real, rest, and lower other demands on yourself. You are subject to so much stress and blame; forgive yourself and others so your priorities can be clear. Reach out to each other and abandon the idea that everything has to be the way it was. We are so proud of the job that you are doing for our students. This is a long haul and we will be dealing with the consequences of the pandemic for a long time; way beyond a vaccine. So, please, tend to your own capacity and do not forget about your own needs, and in the spirit of giving thanks, know that the Board of Education is most grateful to all of you.

#### **N. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent**

Agenda Item:	N.1
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval of Board of Education Policies for Watertown Public Schools – Second Reading
Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Rosa
Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the board approve of new Policy 4045 Code of Ethics, revised Policy 4140 & 4140R Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, revised Policy 5105 & 5105R Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment with Appendix A, revised Policy 5125 Student Dress, and revised Policy 5145 Transportation, effective November 24, 2020.
Discussion:	None



Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: N.2  
Subject: Consideration of the Approval to Appoint a Member to the Cablevision Advisory Board

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Flaherty

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board appoint Rob Makowski to the Cablevision Advisory Board and that a notification letter be sent to the Town Clerk, Lisa Dalton.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: N.3  
Subject: Consideration of the Approval to Classify Snow Days on Remote Learning Days at the Superintendent's Discretion

Motion Presented By: Ms. Rinaldi  
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rosa

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve that Watertown Public Schools can now use snow days as remote learning days at the Superintendents' discretion.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

**O. Future Agenda Items and Board Members Comments**

**Mr. Makowski** – A message to parents to support our teachers by supporting your children and vice versa and just work with the teachers and help them. As they say, it takes a village. Help them navigate through the process and social challenge that we are dealing with.

**P. Public Participation – (Please state your name, address and topic of discussion)**

None

**Q. Executive Session (8:11 p.m.)**

Agenda Item:	Q.1
Subject:	To Go into Executive Session
Motion Presented By:	Mr. Makowski
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Eastman
Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of a possible discussion regarding a proposed agreement concerning a record of collective bargaining strategy between the Board of Education and the Watertown Administrator’s Association. Attending the Executive Session will be Dr. John Ramos, Leslie Crotty, Janelle Wilk, Cathie Rinaldi, Diane Bristol, Brian Flaherty, Josephine Rosa, Cindy Eastman, Jason Malagutti, and myself, Rob Makowski.
Discussion:	None
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion passed

**R. Regular Session (8:34 p.m.)**

Agenda Item:	R.1
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval to Designate the Superintendent to Request an Appropriation from Town Council to Compensate Administrators for Additional

Days Worked During the Summer of 2020 in  
Preparation for Opening Schools Safely During COVID-  
19 Pandemic.

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Malagutti

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve that a request to make a supplemental appropriation is made to the Town Council by John Ramos on behalf of the Board of Education.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

**S. Adjournment**

Agenda Item: S.1  
Subject: To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Eastman  
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Bristol

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None

Vote: Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson  
Recording Secretary

Cathie Rinaldi  
Secretary of the Board