

Pending BOE Approval

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

Meeting Date: December 14, 2020
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: Remote Meeting

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

Members Absent: Ms. Janelle Wilk, Vice Chairman
Ms. Diane Bristol

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

- A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.**
- B. Moment of Silence – In remembrance of Kaytlynn Schaefer**

Dr. Ramos - I would like to acknowledge the loss of one of our students, Kaytlynn Schaefer. Kaytlynn was a junior at Watertown High who passed away at home on Sunday, November 29th. Kaytlynn was a kind, caring and compassionate young woman with a superb sense of style and a fun, witty sense of humor. She was a member of the Watertown High School Chapter of Best Buddies, a club that encourages meaningful friendships between students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and non-disabled peers. Kaytlynn excelled at making her fellow Best Buddies members feel included, cared for, and valued by the high school community. Kaytlynn was an avid reader and enjoyed a great variety of books found in her homes away from home, the Watertown High School Library, and in middle school, at the Swift Library/Media Center. This lifelong passion for books provided Kaytlynn with many perspectives about the world and contributed to her great empathy for adults and peers alike. She was a brave and honest

participant in the high school's Anti-Defamation League workshop last year, and her insights about being an adolescent in 2020 made the workshop more meaningful for both staff members and all of the students who were in attendance. Kaytlynn was a recipient of a Watertown High School Good News Call recognition for being one of the first students to offer to help her teachers with tasks and for volunteering her time to make sure the school library ran smoothly. Most importantly, Kaytlynn cared deeply for her family and friends, often mentioning her mother and grandmother in conversation about how much they meant to her. Our school district's most sincere thoughts and condolences are with Kaytlynn's family at this very difficult time. I would ask you now to please observe with me a moment of silence.

C. Salute to the Flag

D. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

E. Minutes

Ms. Crotty – Is there a motion to accept the minutes of the November 9th, 2020 Regular Board of Education meeting as presented?

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| Agenda Item: | E.1 |
| Subject: | To Approve the Minutes of the November 9 th , 2020 Regular Board of Education Meeting |
| Motion Presented By: | Mr. Makowski |
| Motion Seconded By: | Ms. Rosa |
| Text of the Motion: | So moved. |
| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion passed |

Ms. Crotty – Is there a motion to accept the minutes of the November 23rd, 2020 Special Board of Education meeting as presented?

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| Agenda Item: | E.2 |
| Subject: | To Approve the Minutes of the November 23 rd , 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting |

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| Motion Presented By: | Ms. Rinaldi |
| Motion Seconded By: | Ms. Eastman |
| Text of the Motion: | So moved. |
| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion passed |

Ms. Crotty – Is there a motion to accept the minutes of the November 23rd, 2020 Regular Board of Education meeting as presented?

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| Agenda Item: | E.3 |
| Subject: | To Approve the Minutes of the November 23 rd , 2020 Regular Board of Education Meeting |
| Motion Presented By: | Ms. Rinaldi |
| Motion Seconded By: | Mr. Malagutti |
| Text of the Motion: | So moved. |
| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion passed |

F. Recognition & Award

Ms. Crotty – Dr. John Ramos has served as the Interim Superintendent for Watertown Public Schools since August 27th, 2020, and right from the start he quickly became an integral part of the community. Unfortunately, his time with us will come to a close as of tomorrow, December 15th. While Covid-19 has ended his time with us just a little earlier than anticipated, as you can see, Dr. Ramos is doing well. We are grateful for his service to Watertown Public Schools at such a critical and transitional time in our district. Dr. Ramos took the reins when we needed him most and immediately provided a stabilizing force during extraordinary circumstances. Given the pandemic and its impact on our community, Dr. Ramos had to make critical decisions from day one, and he did so with integrity and thoughtful expertise. He immediately focused on partnering with our leadership team to provide comprehensive guidance on the re-opening of

our schools. His dedication to our students, staff and families was nothing short of incredible, and he did not allow anything to compromise the safety and wellbeing of our community. I do not know that there was anyone else who could have handled the enormity of what he was asked to do at the time he was asked to do it with such grace and poise and dedication as Dr. Ramos has, and I know my colleagues want to extend their gratitude as well. Mr. Flaherty, Ms. Rinaldi, Ms. Rosa, Ms. Eastman, Mr. Makowski, & Mr. Malagutti all thanked Dr. Ramos and offered well wishes to him.

Ms. Crotty – Dr. Ramos, it was just four months ago that you answered my call on behalf of the Board of Education and here we are tonight honoring you for your outstanding dedication and service to Watertown Public Schools. We do have a plaque that I wish we were able to give you in person, but I will have to deliver it to you instead. We thank you for everything that you have given us in your service and we wish you only the best in the years to come. Know that on behalf of the entire community, you will always have a home in Watertown and in Watertown Public Schools.

G. Report form Student Council Representative – Natalie Lindstrom

Ms. Lindstrom - At **Polk**, as hard as it may seem to believe, Last week Polk school closed out their first trimester of the school year and shared students' first trimester report cards with families. While we know it hasn't always been easy, distance learning seems to be going well overall. Polk is pleased to be offering more live instruction and support for students in this learning model and love getting to see their kids every day! They are so grateful for all of the help, support, and kind words families are offering to their children and to us! In conjunction with John Trumbull and Judson, Polk Staff will hold a reverse parade on Friday, December 18th from 2-3. We're excited to welcome our families to come say hello and wish everyone a happy holiday before we close for winter break.

At **Judson**, Mrs. Raymond is incredibly proud of Judson staff members, students, and families as we transitioned to Remote Learning. At this time last year, this concept of "remote learning" would have been inconceivable! While this is so frustrating for many of us, it really is such a feat that we are meeting head on...together. Mrs. Raymond began live meetings with each grade level for daily morning announcements. It has been such a pleasure to see all the students. Report cards for our first trimester were made available on Monday, December 7. Our Student Council is hosting a Spirit Week which began today and will end on Friday, December 18 with a different theme each day. Spirit Week will conclude with a parade at Judson School. We are hoping our families will take a moment to come say hello to the faculty and staff of Judson School from 2:00 pm until 3:00 pm. In lieu of the annual Giving Tree, our staff members have purchased gift cards to donate to Watertown's Social Services for our families who are in need this year.

At **Swift**, the Swift Unified Sports team recently found a safe way to get together and participate in an after-school activity at school. On November 17th, members of the Unified program including a mix of general ed and special ed students had a great time playing "indoor bocce" in the gymnasium. For some it was their first time playing this backyard game. This was part of the

Sports Challenges set up by the CIAC and Unified Sports due to the cancellation of fall tournaments. We are hoping to hold two more Unified challenges this winter once we return to in-person learning.

At Swift we value our relationship with our local veterans and we have traditionally participated each year in the annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance ceremony held at the Oakville Green. This year, students remembered this significant day in American history in a different way. Students viewed a number of archival videos of the events of December 7, 1941 and watched short documentary interviews with survivors and eyewitnesses of the tragic events of that “*Day Which Will Live in Infamy*”. Discussions followed in each class about the reason’s nations “go to war” as part of our curriculum unit on the causes of the American Revolution.

And at Watertown High School, the Watertown High School Science department has been developing innovative ways to continue students’ experiences with laboratory activities. A team of students had been videotaping the laboratory procedures, another student wrote the script of the lab activity, and another student edited the video so that it was clear and easy to understand. The department hopes to create a video library of lab activities for use in future years as well. On Tuesday, December 8, Watertown High School teachers participated in a professional learning activity about individual conferencing with students across the content areas. Individual conferencing allows teachers to provide specific instruction to students, and it encourages students to articulate the steps they used to complete a task, as well as explain their successes and areas of struggle. The purpose of Tuesday’s professional learning was to get teachers to practice our conferencing protocol with each other using an object they created with Play-Doh. This activity allowed teachers to have a bit of fun while they became accustomed to the conferencing template, playing the roles of student and teacher in their practice. Teachers have a minimum number of individual conferences with students to complete in the upcoming weeks.

H. Superintendent’s Recommendations and Report

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

None

2. **Transfers – (Information Only)**

None

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

None

4. **Superintendent’s Report**

No report

I. Items of Discussion

A. Interim Superintendent

Ms. Crotty - As we know, an interim superintendent is necessary to maintain all district functions in a proper and seamless manner, and Dr. Ramos and I are pleased to recommend this evening that the Board of Education appoint Watertown High School Principal, Dr. Janet Parlato, to fill the role of Interim Superintendent, effective Tuesday, December 15, 2020. Prior to her appointment as Watertown High School Principal in July 2019, Dr. Parlato was our Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum & Instruction since August 2013, and she also served as interim superintendent for seven weeks in 2018. Before coming to Watertown, Dr. Parlato spent twenty years in the Berlin Public Schools as both a teacher and a building administrator.

Dr. Parlato's breadth of administrative experience will aid in her ability to simultaneously continue in her position as the High School Principal and will provide us with an effective, seamless transition from December 15th until a new Superintendent begins. Do Board Members have any questions or comments in regards to our recommendation to appoint Janet Parlato our interim superintendent?

B. Superintendent Search Update

Ms. Crotty - I am happy to report that the Superintendent Search Committee has concluded its work and has selected a new superintendent of schools. The announcement will be made once the candidate's district is properly notified and we reach the final stages of the process. I anticipate that the Board will be able to vote on and name the new Superintendent at a Special Remote Meeting of the Board of Education on Monday December 21st, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. I would like to thank Lisa Fekete, our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Lou Lerz, Administrators Union President & Swift Middle School Principal, and Terry Baldwin, Watertown Educators Association President and Swift Middle School Teacher, for accepting the Board's invitation to join us on the search committee and working side by side with us throughout the process. There is no question that they went above and beyond for their district in this endeavor, balancing the incredible workload they currently carry, on top of dedicating themselves to the superintendent hiring process over the last two months. On behalf of the Board, I thank you for that.

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

None

K. Communications – Secretary

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

The Board of Education received a letter from the following people regarding the Indian Mascot at Watertown High School:

Sage Phillips a member of the Penobscot Nation, one of four tribes belonging to the Wabanaki peoples with homelands located in the State of Maine

Amanda Benedict, teacher at The Taft School and parent of a John Trumbull Primary School student~ both expressing their concerns for the Watertown Indian Mascot and their recommendation to the Board of Ed to change it.

The Board of Education also received a letter from Brandi Lee Sawyer Emmans. Brandi is of Native American descent, a parent of a Watertown High School student and proudly supports the Indian Mascot at Watertown High School and recommends that the Indian Mascot not be changed.

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 – No
Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – No
Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Ms. Leslie Crotty – No
Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Robert Makowski, Chair – No

M. Report from the Board Chair

None

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

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| Agenda Item: | N.1 |
| Subject: | Consideration to Approve the Appointment of an Interim Superintendent of Schools |
| Motion Presented By: | Mr. Makowski |
| Motion Seconded By: | Ms. Rosa |
| Text of the Motion: | Madame Chair, I move that the Board appoint Dr. Janet Parlato as the Interim Superintendent of Schools, effective December 15, 2020 through the start date of a new Superintendent of Schools, at an additional amount of \$114.93 per day on top of her current salary. |
| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion passed |

Ms. Crotty – Is there a motion to table the consideration of the appointment of a new superintendent?

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| Agenda Item: | N.2 |
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Subject: Consideration to Table the Appointment of a Superintendent of Schools

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

Text of the Motion: So moved.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion passed

O. Future Agenda Items and Board Members Comments

Mr. Makowski – Thanked Mary Lu, Lisa and Terry for their guidance and input in the superintendent search. He also wanted to have a short remembrance of the people who lost their lives in the Sandy Hook tragedy 8 years ago. He reminded everyone to hug their children.

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

None

Q. Executive Session (8:05 p.m.)

Agenda Item: Q.1
Subject: To Go into Executive Session

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

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of a possible discussion concerning an attorney client communication related to the Board of Education's role and responsibilities in regards to school mascot decisions. Attending the Executive Session will be Dr. John Ramos, Dr. Janet Parlato, Leslie Crotty, Rob Makowski, Brian Flaherty, Josephine Rosa, Cindy Eastman, Jason Malagutti, Jessica Ritter, Tyler Bischoff, and myself, Cathie Rinaldi.

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| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion passed |

R. Regular Session (9:03 p.m.)

No action taken

S. Adjournment

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| Agenda Item: | S.1 |
| Subject: | To adjourn the meeting |
| Motion Presented By: | Ms. Eastman |
| Motion Seconded By: | Mr. Makowski |
| Text of the Motion: | Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn. |
| Discussion: | None |
| Opposed: | None |
| Abstained: | None |
| Vote: | Motion Passes |

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Cathie Rinaldi
Secretary of the Board