

Minutes
WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 4, 2016
Regular Board Meeting
Board's Meeting Room

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut on January 4, 2016. The meeting was called to order by James Morrissey, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

James W. Morrissey, Chairman
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer
Patrick Leigh
Patricia Libero
Karen Pacelli
Mark Palmieri
Rosemary Russo

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Rosa Richardson

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
PRESENT:**

Evelyn Fabian
Susannah Beyl

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Chairman Morrissey welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if anyone would like to address the board. There were two people who spoke.

Dave Saldibar, 144 Painter Avenue a longtime resident of West Haven congratulated the new members on the Board along with the members who remained on the board. You have a difficult job ahead of you with decisions that have to be made. Many people will not like your decisions but you have to remember the taxpayer who put you in office; do

the right thing. Never look over your shoulder at what you could have done always look forward at what you are going to do and march forward. West Haven is in the hands of a great group right now and he sees nothing but good things happening. You must remember that you are the voice of the taxpayer that put you in office; they can't get up and speak for you but you can speak for us. Thank you. The board gave thanks.

The next speaker was Jennifer Morrissey, 305 Country Hill Drive, West Haven. Her report will be found at the end of the minutes. The board gave thanks. There were no other speakers. Public Session closed at 7:10 PM

REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro said due to the Holiday break there will not be a lot to report on tonight but Jen brought up some points we are in the process of working out. There is no set plan on scheduling at this point we are talking with teachers to get feedback. No final decision has been made on midterm exams. Superintendent Cavallaro's concern is that we came back to school on January 4th and standardized testing starts on March 2nd and that doesn't leave much time for instruction. That is the dilemma we are facing. His concern is not that kids aren't taking tests but that kids are staying home when it is important they are in school. He would rather see the kids in school however it is a decision that we have not finalized yet but we have a meeting Thursday with the Department Heads and administration from WHHS to have some feedback. Teachers should be in the classroom teaching and kids should be in school. Not everyone is making good use of the time studying for midterms. We block out a 2 hour time period for each exam and we are not sure a test for two hours can be meaningful so these are the issues. It is not just getting rid of midterms for the sake of getting rid of midterms. We plan to have representation from the administration come to the next board meeting to update us. At one time at WHHS we were losing three weeks of instruction. We lost a week preparing for midterms and during midterms, we lost time during the CAPT Exam, and we lose time to prepare for finals. Given where we are as a school he feels it is more important for kids to be in school. If we move to a block schedule (no final decision has been made) we can work a midterm much easier because classes will be longer into the schedule. Dana has been working on a proposal for the grade point average and we will try to finalize that. He agrees with Jennifer about the CNA Program and expanding our partnerships with Gateway and those other programs and offering more college credit and we are headed in that direction. Neil also said on tonight's agenda we are hiring a Preschool Teacher because of the increased number of special education students. When they turn three years old we are required by law to educate those students. Dr. Larry sent out a letter stating that we are not taking any regular three year old students. The intent of the letter was to explain we might not be able to take them in the special education classes however there are other opportunities at the West Haven Child Development Center where we can offer space to your child. We created six new classrooms when we added All Day Kindergarten and expanded our Preschool and added several classes of the last couple of years and we just don't have the room and the regular ed kids (3 or 4 to a class) that get into the class by lottery are not getting the attention because of the needs in the special ed class. Neil had Dr. Stefania Larry talk about the need for the new class

which will be at Mackrille. Dr. Stefania Larry oversees Pre-K through grade 2 and went over the Preschool Program for the new board members to give them some background information. Pre-K is not mandated and we are a smaller program that primarily serves students who receive Special Ed services and then we invite typically developing students into our program to serve as role models. We have 8 Pre-K classrooms across the district and each elementary school has at least one Pre-K classroom and some have two so students can go to their home school and be prepared to transition into kindergarten. Each of the 8 classrooms is led by a certified Special Ed teacher and there are medical paras to assist students who are medically fragile. These are integrated classrooms meaning that they have Special Education Students and typically developing students. The majority of our Special Education Students come from birth to three so children who receive services at home then transition into our program on their third birthday. We take in our typical students through a lottery process which was explained in detail. Last year they had 40 students and 4 to 5 names are pulled per classroom and they are mostly three year olds and our three year olds automatically transition into the four year old program and later on transition into kindergarten. A discussion about testing and evaluation results took place and it is not automatic that because you receive birth to three services that you would be placed in our program. What we are finding because of the cuts to birth to three services students who receive birth to three services are very impaired so generally they are qualified for our program. Students must start on their third birthday even if it is on a Friday but if we are not in school they wouldn't have to start. We must have a program for a child on their third birthday. A further discussion took place. The website has the full presentation. Board members asked questions and received answers from Dr. Stefania Larry.

C.1.b. Student Representatives' Report

The student rep report is located at the end of the minutes.

Chairman James Morrissey thanked our student reps and stated they do a great job and ask a lot of great questions. The public doesn't see a lot of things that that high school students do on behalf of this community; they are phenomenal. Chairman Morrissey thanked the student reps and all the students at WHHS for the wonderful job that they do.

C.1.c. Board

Pat Libero said she went to the Christmas Band Concert and it was great. She emailed all the board members about an Educational Forum that she and State Rep. Charles Ferrara are hosting on January 14th in the morning at the Savin Rock Conference Center on emotional intelligence and public policy. Marc Brackett from Yale will explain the RULER Program. Chase Masterson who starred in Star Trek and who is a Westie will be there and will speak along with Carrie Goldman co-founder of the Bob Culture Hero Coalition any-bullying group. Superintendents, legislators, board members and the public have all been invited. It starts at 8:30 and the presentations begin at 9:00 AM. This is a great opportunity please try and attend.

Rosemary Russo handed out information sheets on Adopt a School. She will try to give board members the school they want and asked board members to let her know if they are interested in adopting a school.

Jim Morrissey said Rosemary's idea that each board member adopts a school is a great idea but also they should feel free to come to all the schools. They can be in charge of one school but to visit as many schools as possible and talk with the principals, teachers and students. There are a lot of great things happening in our educational system in West Haven. He was at the high school earlier today and had a meeting on the block scheduling and a lot of teachers participated. A lot of questions remain concerning block scheduling. He felt very good about the excitement shown by the teachers who came in about the leveling for the core subjects.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on December 21, 2015 at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.

Rosemary Russo made the motion to approve the minutes

Patrick Leigh seconded the motion

Discussion: Pat Libero and Mark Palmieri abstained as they were absent from the meeting.

All remaining board members were in favor

Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

16-01 Catherine Reno, Reading Consultant - Washington

Effective: June 30, 2016

Reason: Personal

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item 16-01

Mark Palmieri made the motion to approve item 16-01

Bob Guthrie seconded the motion

Discussion:

All board members were in favor

Item 16-01 is approved

D.3. New Hire: (Certified)

16-02 Amy Clark Derderian, 48 Side Cut Road, Redding, CT 06896

Preschool Teacher - Mackrille

Salary: \$44,000 Step 1 BS+30

Effective: January 11, 2016

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item16-02
Mark Palmieri made the motion to approve item 16-02
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
Discussion:
All board members were in favor
Item16-02 is approved

D.4. New Business

16-03 Approval of Educational Specifications for the May V. Carrigan Intermediate School Roof Replacement Project

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item16-03
Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve item 16-03
Rosemary Russo seconded the motion
Discussion: Superintendent Cavallaro said the City Council passed the resolutions last week which allow for the building committee so we are good to go if the board approves this tonight. The next step will be to put out RFP's for architects. Bob Guthrie said for the benefit of the new board members the educational specs are being approved and if they are to change they are coming back before this body to change correct.
Superintendent Cavallaro said absolutely and with the conversation he had with Mayor O'Brien it was stated that when he appoints a building committee it will include board of education members that will keep the board more informed. Bob thanked Neil. Chairman Morrissey said he believes we are getting about seven million dollars is that correct? Neil said the cost of the project is about 7.2M the city's cost for all of the work is about 1.4M and we are combining three pots of money our reimbursement rate from the state, some alliance grant construction money and some energy saving money that the state has made available. Neil said of the 1.2M only a small percentage of that about \$500,000.00 will be part of this year's Capital Plan that our Finance Director will be presenting to the City Council so it is within the allotted amount that he had figured for the BOE this year and the rest will be put aside for next year. The plan is to start the roof this summer.
All board members were in favor
Item16-03 is approved

16-04 Approval of Educational Specifications for the May V. Carrigan Intermediate School Energy Conservation Upgrades ARC 133 Contract

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item 16-04
Pat Libero made the motion to approve item 16-04
Mark Palmieri seconded the motion
Discussion:
All board members were in favor
Item 16-04 is approved

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to adjourn.
Mark Palmieri made the motion
Rosemary Russo seconded the motion
All board members were in favor
The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary

Public Portion of Meeting Continued from page 2 begins on the next page. Speaker Jennifer Morrissey. The Student Rep report follows on page 10.

Good evening everyone, my name is Jennifer Morrissey, I reside at 305 Country Hill Drive, West Haven. I hope everyone had a Happy New Year. I am a graduate from WHHS, class of 2012 and I am currently a senior in college.

I'm here tonight to discuss a few issues at the high school. But first, I just wanted to speak to something that was discussed at the last meeting regarding the college credits. I graduated the high school with 4 incoming college credits from gateway. Due to my major, I was only able to use two college credits, but I didn't realize how important having those incoming credits were until college. My fall freshman semester I was required to take 6 classes, as a freshman, 6 classes can be overwhelming with having to learn how to adjust not only to college in general, but how to use time management for the course loads. But since I had an incoming English credit, I only had to take 5 classes my first semester allowing me to focus on my other classes. The other credit was a math class that I was able to use my spring semester my freshman year allowing me to advance on to my next math class that I was required to take.

I brought this up because I wanted to recognize the importance of these college credits and although students may not realize it now, it will help them in the long run. I was afforded this opportunity because of the CNA (certified nursing assistant class) I took at the high school and my teacher Mrs. Consenza set up this opportunity. The CNA class I took at the high school I believe correlates to the shop classes at the high school. I say this because many students that take the CNA class as well as the shop classes may or may not go to college, but our high school should afford our students the opportunity to take these shop classes and earn college credits. So thank you for those individuals that designed and took the time to go above and beyond for our students and make sure they are afforded this opportunity,

The first issue I wanted to discuss tonight is the GPA. The GPA at the high school needs to be revised. Leaving the high school and going to college only made me realize as well as many other students I have spoke with who graduated from the high school, that the GPA is unrealistic. Many of these students graduate in the top of their class with GPAs that exceed 4.0. How can someone get a 5.3 GPA on a 4.0 scale? I understand that if someone taking an honors or AP class they should have their grade weighted differently than someone in an

academic or basic class, but being able to get greater than a 4.0 on a 4.0 scale is simply unacceptable. This needs to change by the next upcoming school year because it is affecting, which colleges students get accepted into and that is simply unacceptable. Faculty members should be visiting surrounding schools and asking how they weight their students regarding their classes and GPA. I know Amity has a 4.0 scale that weighs AP/Honors classes more with students not exceeding a 4.0. Lets use our resources and visit surrounding schools so our students can go to college actually knowing where they stand as students. This also speaks to the importance of leveling, which also needs to be addressed by the staff.

Midterms are important. Students in high school NEED midterms because guess what, college has midterms and I have yet to have a core class that did not give a midterm. Midterms should not be taken away and I do not understand the reasoning of taking away midterms. If we are not preparing our students to take midterms we are preparing them for failure. If I was a high school student, I may be happy because its one less test I would have to take, but as a college student looking back - those exams were beneficial. Also, WHY as we making it optional for the teachers to give midterms? All teachers NEED to be giving midterms. We should not be shifting marking periods around to make up for the loss of midterms because midterms ARE essential. It doesn't seem to make any sense to me to get rid of midterms to prepare students for a different test(is that why we are getting rid of them? I don't really know why so correct me if I am wrong- but regardless of why we are getting rid of them- we still need them). Shouldn't we be preparing students for college and life? I am not a strong test taker, but I do know that time management -for example deciding which subject is more important to study for - is essential not only in college, but in life.

My last issue is the block scheduling. There are some rumors going around about block schedules that I heard from current high school students. To my understanding Mondays are going to be periods 1-8, Tuesday and Thursdays will be periods 1-4 and then Wednesdays and Fridays will be periods 5-8. This wouldn't be bad if it was to my understanding that AP classes will actually be losing class time. AP classes are extremely important, especially since you can possibly earn college credit and as I stated before, we all know how I feel about how it is important to have the opportunity to earn college credit. Can someone please clarify the block schedule to me and the rest of the

board? I think setting up a meeting with teachers and students to allow them to talk about block scheduling would be beneficial because it is them who will be impacted.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the board divides up into members of 2-3 and each take a topic to revise at the high school. These issues are important and students may not realize the importance of these issues until they become a college student, like me or land a job. I would like each of the groups to come back at least once a month to update the rest of the board about the improvement they have with each of these topics: college credits – partnering up with gateway and recruiting more students, getting the GPA on a 4.0 scale, leveling, NOT getting rid of midterms, and finally, block scheduling. I ask that as a board, you raise these important issues. I have spoke to numerous college students and high school students to make sure that I am voicing not only my opinion, but opinions of others as well. I know I do not represent everyone of course, but I do know these topics are of importance and need to be addressed. I would also be happy to speak with any one that has any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time.

Board of Education Student Report – January 4, 2016

Congratulations to West Haven hockey coach Joe Morrell on posting his 200th career victory today with a 5-0 victory over Ridgefield.

Congratulations to West Haven High School soccer stand-out Salah Oumorou, who is the New Haven Register Area MVP for soccer for the second year in a row!

In conjunction with the West Haven Fire Department, the Peer Advocates assisted with another successful *Toys for Joy* toy drive, providing over 150 families and almost 500 children with toys for the holidays.

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 7th.

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

Auditions for *Cabaret* will be held January 12-13, 2016. All students are encouraged to audition.

The Mock Trial Team participated in a cross-examination workshop on December 29th with alumni Shari-Lynn Cuomo (01), Jeffrey Mueller (00), Erick Russell (06) and facilitated by Catherine DePino (14), Sierra Santana (14), and Santorini Rivera (12). Mock Trial quarterfinals will be held the end of this month at Northwest Catholic High School.

Class of 2016 Westie Wear is on sale – short sleeve and long sleeve t-shirts, hoodies and sweatpants - see Susie to purchase yours today!

On December 29, the Volunteens club and Leo club volunteered at the project hope soup kitchen to serve a holiday dinner to the homeless. Students delivered home cooked meals and sweets. The night concluded with a visit from Santa Claus and a distribution of gifts to each attendee.

Jazz band auditions are next Monday and Tuesday

January is School Climate Survey month at WHHS. There will be a school-wide focus for all students, staff and parents to complete the school climate survey this month.