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**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES**  
**May 12, 2010**  
**Special Board Meeting for the 2010/2011 Operating Budget**

A Special Meeting of the Board for the 2010/2011 Operating Budget was held in the auditorium of West Haven High School, 1 McDonough Plaza, West Haven, CT on May 12, 2010. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Howard Horvath.

**BOARD MEMBERS  
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman  
T. Sean Maher, Vice Chairman  
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer  
Dorinda Borer  
Patrick Egolum  
M. Toni Paine  
Mark Palmieri  
Rob Saley

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Andrew DePalma

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Anne Druzolowski  
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:** Brandon Patterson  
Eric Pang

Board Chairman Howard Horvath began by stating the following. I'd like to welcome everyone to this special budget meeting tonight. To preface our session I would like to reiterate my belief that our mayor, school leaders, city council and the members of this board have not and do not take the decisions we need to make to create a balanced budget and provide our students with a quality education lightly.

I also believe an unprecedented amount time and effort has gone into our budget deliberations to date. My colleagues on the board and our school leaders and I have spent many hours, days and weeks over the last five months looking at a number of potential scenarios for the upcoming school year and beyond. We have scoured the budget looking for ways to cut back or become more efficient and we will continue to do so since many of us are convinced that next year's budget could be even more severe. We have discussed healthcare issues with the teachers union and explored some preliminary ways to potentially improve our overall operations.

We'll now have had 4 public budget meetings. With all but one having provided the public with an opportunity to speak to make their thoughts and feelings known. And, as I've stated before, I am proud that West Haven's residents have presented those viewpoints and suggestions in a constructive, heart-felt and respectful way.

Some combination of the Board and school administration has met formally w/the city council on the budget three times. We've attended the mayor's presentation of the budget to the city -- which went until 11pm for those who stayed. We've gone out to schools and met with almost every PTA while simultaneously inviting PTA's to speak at our BOE meetings. Our school administration has responded to a plethora of requests for budget and school information from the board, council and community. And there have been a number of newspaper articles, emails

and blogs on the topic of the budget and potential school program plans which has served as an additional opportunity for people to share their views.

We're here today to continue that dialog in support of moving our district forward in these very challenging times.

### **Public Session – 30 Minutes**

Nancy Rossi, 12 Robin Road said that Chris Sanders, the President of the Molloy PTA, is here and Rose Russo. Nancy said she passed out a spread sheet tonight. She went through things that are not contractual and this is what the Mayor did on the City side. He sent back the budgets and had them cut off 5% of everything that wasn't contractual. I have come up with an additional \$326,163.00 in savings. I hope that you go through this and please don't vote tonight. I will turn this over now to Rose Russo. The board gave thanks.

Rose Russo, 115 Pheasant Road stated she would like to use her time to introduce Marcus Rivera who works for the State Department of Education. He is coming as a Hamden resident because he understands our plight. At this time I would like to introduce Marcus Rivera.

Mr. Rivera's complete presentation is included at the end of the minutes. The Board gave thanks.

Rose Russo thanked Marcus Rivera for coming here on his own time to stick up for the children of West Haven. She thanked the strangers who are here believing in Molloy School. We need our BOE to believe in fair and equitable education. The Board gave thanks.

Chris Sanders, 375 W. Spring Street ditto what Mr. Rivera just said. The Board gave thanks.

Carroll E. Brown, 56 Highview Avenue stated, "With me tonight is our Attorney Cynthia Jennings." She asked the board to please allow her to say a few words on behalf of the children at Thompson and Molloy Schools. I ask the board to take a look at what you are about to do to a City that has restored its commitment to a quality education to everyone and is now headed toward destroying racial equality in this city. Your actions in recent years have shown that an investigation is needed in this city by the United States Department of Justice and I can thank Mr. Rivera for speaking on behalf of the children in Thompson and Molloy.

We are looking like a school system in the 60's in Selma, Alabama and Little Rock, AK. Work being done on schools only in certain sections of the town while trying to justify closing schools in the other side of town is racism at its best. Telling me enrollment is declining in West Haven when more than 900 students are attending New Haven Public Schools and now closing schools in West Haven encourages more minority families to send their children to New Haven Public Schools; just a couple of issues that need to be investigated. This is racism at its best. When talking about minorities I'm talking about Latinos, Indians, African Americans, Muslims, Laotians, Mexicans and all others. It is closer to send a child to New Haven Public Schools than transporting them from the North End to the South End and from the South End to the North

End. We live in West Haven and pay taxes in West Haven; maybe we shouldn't pay our taxes. This is exactly what the President of the United States talked about when he stated be careful of the money being spent and how it is going to be used. He also expressed strong help to the educational systems across the trenches. West Haven, with the voice of one person said, this is his decision to choose to close the schools instead of reaching out to the government for financial help while help is on the way. When I talk about mismanagement I talk about our elected school board members closing two schools, laying off teachers, but we continue to maintain a building for hockey and we know we love our hockey. Our sports complex with artificial turf, beautiful everybody in West Haven knows it is beautiful and so do other schools around the state. You are building a new high school that was just recently renovated and maintaining all the schools that recently have been renovated with new gymnasiums in the south end while my area schools are being closed. There was never any intent to remodel Thompson or Molloy.

None of the schools in the North End have new gymnasiums, cafeterias or soccer fields. Renovating City Hall for your Ivory Tower Offices, renting office space when most school boards and staff operate out of their local schools across this state. You are mismanaging our money. If you as school board members think that just because you are trying to do a rush job on us, and that is how we are all feeling here tonight, we are going to sit back and take it. We will continue organizing and take a legal stand against this board of ed and get your plan of action reversed. This is not a done deal as far as we the taxpayers are concerned. I say to this audience, "Let's not give up. Let's keep the faith. Faith united for our kids." Help is on the way. The Board gave thanks.

Cynthia Jennings said she is a Civil Rights Attorney and a former resident of West Haven. As a Civil Rights Attorney I am also a former educator, former Assistant to the Commissioner of the State Board of Education, former texting consultant to the State Department of Education, and former Executive Director to the Connecticut Legislative Black and Latino Caucus of the Connecticut General Assembly. As an educator by profession I am urging the board members tonight to take careful consideration of any moves that they make in the name of public money. I am urging you to keep Molloy and Thompson Schools open. To close two North End schools with large numbers of black, Latinos, and children of color is an embarrassment to the board and the town and is certainly an affront to the taxpayers. Those elected officials that are currently representing the interest of people in this audience have to understand that it is their responsibility to make a non-biased decision as to how the monies the taxpayer's pay are going to be spent in West Haven. Potentially West Haven taxpayers have 900 civil rights lawsuits facing the taxpayers of this city if the board members can not make a reasonable decision as to how they are going to use the school money to educate all the children here. It is not only an injustice to even think that school students from West Haven should attend schools in New Haven; it is also taxation without representation because they are not represented by the New Haven Board of Education. Children here grow up in a cross cultural, cross racial coalition of children that care about each other and the parents are also in that situation. It is not a wise decision by the board to cut out large numbers of individual students and disregard the student. No Child Left Behind may not have worked for everyone but it is certainly still your responsibility to leave no child behind. West Haven is known for the educational programs. West Haven has no magnet schools they can absorb these students and we are in a situation now where a lot of hard decisions have to be made; but not on the backs of our children.

I'm urging the BOE to think carefully before they personally vote because public money also translates into personal liability if you spend it in an unjust or illegal manner. There are things Title 7 and Title 6 Lawsuits and in this case it would be a title 6 lawsuit for the discriminatory spending of the money. There are many things to consider starting first with our children and then with how are we going to spend the limited resources that we have and how are we going to educate all of our children. I urge you to take this into consideration urge you to keep Molloy and Thompson Schools open and to think carefully about the future of our children and how we are going to be educated in West Haven. That is your challenge and the challenge of every parent. She thanked the board for their time. The Board gave thanks.

Patti Rosete, 16 Harding Avenue, West Haven, CT stated Board of Ed members in the past week have you heard the outcry from the children, families and community leaders to stop this plan that has been placed before you called Plan A? We as a community have rallied together to show you through meetings, phone calls, emails and petitions to let you know we are not comfortable with the proposed plan set in front of us today. We ask that you pull back the reins and take time to carefully research all areas. Research different scenarios and come up with other solutions. We as parents have proposed alternatives to no avail with no research shown on your behalf. There is no written guarantee there will not be money next year. We need to be proactive and look at this optimistically and not pessimistically. Let's fight for our children not against them.

As board members I want you to look at the information that has been provided to you. Do you feel all the information is there? Is it accurate? Have you all worked together to check and recheck figures, look at other alternatives, and researched them? You need to be certain that you have left no stone unturned. When you are given only one plan to base your decision on is that fair? Does that in any way show you are doing everything possible to insure our children's educational future. You owe it to the children and families that depend on you. There are more than 600 people that have signed a petition from every district that we are opposed to your Plan A. As a voter you are given more than one candidate to choose from, when you make investments you research and collect data before you make that financial decision, when a jury deliberates they are told to base their verdict on findings, on the facts, and be certain when they read the verdict it is based beyond reasonable doubt that they come to that conclusion. I ask board members have you been given all the facts, all the alternative planned research, explore every data base, and have you left no stone unturned. Look into the faces of these families and think of how your decision will be impacting the lives of these families. We ask you to not move forward on a vote tonight. We did not ask for a public meeting to push for a vote; we want the board to show us exactly how they are coming to the decisions, how are they working together to save our schools. We want you to go back to the drawing board and with the brain power between the nine board of ed members come up with alternative plans. Give yourselves some options you owe it to the people who voted you into this position.

There is one more thing I would like to add to the families that have come together today. If your board motions for a vote let's peacefully move to the stage, join hands and let them see our faces up close, don't let the distance of this large auditorium be between us. Board members please do us the courtesy of looking into our faces and let your heart be your conscience and guide you to do the right thing. The board gave thanks.

Gerald Calabritto, 198 East Avenue. I came here this evening and did not have the intention of addressing the board. As I walked down the isle I was stopped and asked the question am I here for the board or am I here for the parents. It was an easy question to answer I am here for the children.

I don't propose to stand here and lecture you. I know the decision you have to make; I have sat in that seat and I know the pressure you are under. No matter decision you make it will make some people happy and some people unhappy. The advice I have for you is no matter when you make your decision you are a board of nine people, I know all of you and I know you have great character and will make the right decision. You have to make that decision without thoughts of politics down the road or politics next year or the following year. The children in this school system don't have a "D", don't have an "R", or a "IND" after them but they suffer for the politics of the adults.

Years ago when I first got on the board a board member that was leaving gave me the best advice he could give me. He said when you get up in the morning and you look in the mirror you comb your hair if you like what you see. This board may not like each other but you are going to have to make a decision collectively; together. I am sure the coach of the undefeated Miami Dolphins had a lot of dissention on the team and he said you don't have to like each other you just have to play together. You guys have to play for the kids. I know in my heart that you will make the right decision when it comes to the children; I know you will. It does my heart good to look out here because these are parents and they are here because they care. There are over 6,000 children in this district and these are the parents that care about the children because they are here and I thank you for being here.

A year ago I sat on this board and the Superintendent said to the board this is a one time fix and next year you are going to have the same problem. If you don't fix it this year, I don't know what the answer is, you are going to be right back again here again next year. You have to come up with a long term solution. I don't have any that is your responsibility. Thank you. The Board gave thanks.

Howard Horvath said there are five names left. I would like to ask that those who are remaining on the list to speak with a two minute limit if that would be alright.

David Carr, 29 Lake Street said the Plains Indians have a way of planning for their future and the use of their many resources. They consider what the effect will be on the seventh generation about 210 years from now. Tonight we are here to talk about educating our children. One of our resources of the hard earned dollar is every property owner and business owner pays to the city in the form of taxes. What do we buy with these dollars; what does everything cost; do we need everything we buy – I don't know. I did stop by the BOE about a month ago and I asked for a budget and I got last year's budget. I couldn't get this year's budget.

I think the teachers need to keep their jobs and they need to be directly accountable for the academic success of the students. Teachers are the ones who are working directly with and for our children. They have the credentials to teach and identify problems that may interfere with learning. Maybe the school board should think about leasing out space that is not needed and

would generate more income. The City paid about 3.1 million dollars for fuel and electric and maybe there is a way to get a better deal. Maybe the board should think about a Magnet School and attracting more students to West Haven. New Haven's magnet school is pulling kids from Branford, Milford, West Haven and other towns; it is a good school. Did anyone look at Keep Our Educators Working Act which proposes to get 23 billion dollars in federal funding to help the state find a way to save teacher's jobs which is an important goal. He spoke about the Renaissance of West Haven you have all read about. Last week it was in the Voice the plan to evaluate the need for future housing and economic development. It could get worse. We may have less demand for our schools as parents pull their kids into more successful schools. Won't it be a shame if West Haven dollars start to go to magnet schools in other towns. I think that a commitment to quality education provided by professional accountable teachers is the cornerstone for the future of West Haven. I know we have 30,000 registered voters and this year we had less than 12,000 that voted in the last election. Unless we think that the money should be spent on something else or someone else then teaching our children, the community feels it is the most important thing that we have to do. High quality, meaningful, significant and necessary service delivery is a mandatory requirement of any successful community. The future of our children in a global economy that will have more competition and less opportunity than most of us every knew – 9 billion people in our planet in 40 years. How are we going to equip our children to have the life we know. How will we feel when we realize we should have fought harder for them. It is not the right time to sell the children short it is never the right time to sell them short. Thank you.

Howard Horvath requested that the upcoming speakers shorten their comments just a bit. Elinor Slonbar, 18 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, West Haven, CT is Vice President of the Thompson School PTA. The Superintendent's budget targets children in at risk neighborhoods to bear the brunt of this systemic change. Thompson parents have already witnessed changes in their children. They have headaches, stomachaches, and tire more easily. One formerly avid reader stopped reading. The school social worker confirmed this type of escalated symptoms among the student population as a whole. The elimination of family support structures that families have created in a safe, walkable boundary for their common neighborhood schools is bad policy for the city. The addition of even a 20 minute bus ride will mean difficult managed time deficit for maintaining basic core family time. Longer rides will throw unmanageable kinks into the work and life routines of many of the households. Parents will be even less likely to be involved in their schools which will put kids further at risk. Thompson and Molloy are the only two West Haven Elementary Schools with ethnic backgrounds that are so mixed. We find alumni all over the city that say that Thompson is where they learned to speak English, learned to read and learned to give something back to the community. Thompson is for everyone. It feels like a school for our children not just a place we are allowed to be. Parents value the ability of their children to get along and make friends. This is par for the course in an educational atmosphere where no one particular has to be proved as dominant. It will surely cost the city if we destroy this mix. This question was asked to me and I don't know the answer but I think you have the resources at your disposal to find the answer and take an honest look at the answer. Thompson doesn't have much money what are we really saving if we pull Thompson are we really saving that much. We have each other, people are the most important part of education and at Thompson you really feel that and I hope that wherever the children go next year that they can stay together and that would still be true. The Board gave thanks.

Chrystal Fanelli, 91 Linden Street is here on behalf of the WHHS teachers and I'm a teacher at WHHS. and has gone through the system it saddens me that all our schools will be suffering budget cuts. I'm concerned about the rumors of additional cuts at the high school are a possibility. I strongly oppose any plan that would cut any programs. We recently mastered the accreditation process for the first time we are fully accredited. Any cuts will surely jeopardize our standings and have a negative impact on all the children. We are already losing many honor students to New Haven Magnet Schools. To cut your honors program would only make this worse. I understand you have a difficult decision to make but when you vote tonight I urge you to keep the future of WHHS in mind. The Board gave thanks.

David Orio, Captain Thomas Blvd. also representing AFSME Local 2706 and Non Certified Custodian, Clerical, Maintenance and Food Service. I have a lot of the same concerns as most of the people in this building but will change direction for just a moment. I would like to thank Mr. Saley for accepting my invitation to come to Food Service today to see our operation because I think it is important that people can get out to the field and too many decisions are made just on a biased (inaudible due to applause).

David wanted to talk about our union and what you would be voting on. The list I have shows that our union will be losing the following:

- 19 custodial positions
- 14 more will be cut from full time to part time
- 7 food service workers
- 10 clerical
- 4 clerical cut to part time
- 1 rink mechanic

A total of 37 people will be completely out of work which is 25% of our union and another 18 jobs will be cut to part time for a total of 55 jobs that will be affected which is 37% of our union. To me this seems like an incredible amount of people and I don't know how we are going to be able to function clerically and with limited custodians in these buildings. Before you vote and I think I am in the majority when I say I hope there will be more deliberations before you come to a vote. If you deliberate again I hope you think of some of the things that were said here tonight and keep in mind the people who are losing their jobs when school opens. Thank you. The Board gave thanks.

Lisa Sadowski, 196 Leete Street, Carrigan PTA and Danielle Searles, President of Carrigan PTA Thank you for hearing us. We are representatives of Carrigan Middle School PTA and represent teachers and students that have a great deal of pride and ownership in the learning environment that is Carrigan. It would be our preference to have our children remain at Carrigan however we do realize the realities of the current situation that necessitate changes throughout all West Haven Schools. The priorities in all these different discussions should always be the children who are the future of West Haven. Their education is their means to support all their goals. All students should feel they are supported, represented and feel comfortable in the school they are attending. We hope this is a goal that the board keeps in mind when they make up-coming decisions. With these priorities in mind we do have concerns about our children in up-coming transition years if they were to move from their current location. We understand that every effort will be made to



have a balanced teaching and support staff at Bailey Middle School; however, we are realistic about underlying issues that will accompany the integration of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders from both middle schools. We would like to put forward a suggestion that might prove an easier transition period. Would it be possible to have both principals present at the new middle school as co-principals thereby giving equal support to all students or to start over fresh with a new principal neutral to either school. Thank you. The board gave thanks.

Public session closed at 7:55 PM

Neil Cavallaro stated he would be brief because he knew that many of the board members had questions that they wanted answered tonight. The amount of money received from the City Council is far short of what we need to keep our operation functioning at its current level. Neil hopes the board will move quickly to adopt an operating budget that approves the restructuring of the school district. The plan presented, though not popular, is educational and sound. The plan will work educationally and will balance the budget which is something that the board must consider. This plan will also bring the community together. We are talking about bringing all kids together from grades 5 – 12 that can't be a bad thing. This plan does eliminate personnel throughout our employment area but it is a plan that doesn't eliminate programs and services at any level. The plan has the support of all our central office staff as well as most of the principals throughout the district. They are committed to making all or any plan that you agree with a successful one. That has been our pledge all along to the board. We will do what is best for students.

As I said before, it is not my intention, nor do I want to close schools and I take what students, parents and teachers say very seriously. The last thing I want to do is take them out of their comfort zone. I want all board members to remember the unanimous vote they took on February 1<sup>st</sup> and think about what it stood for and what has transpired since. You were not given what was needed and we have tried our best to get additional funding. We have tried at all levels, our state legislators, our congressional leaders as well as our city fathers. Now we have to take the appropriate steps to adopt a balanced budget that will continue to serve and educate kids. Again, our team will do what is best to answer your questions tonight, listen to your concerns and get back to you with answers that we don't have available tonight. I am proud of the work and efforts we put forth so far. We tried to accommodate any parent that has expressed a concern, sent us emails, asked for information and we really have done our best to reply in a timely manner. Neil thanked the board for allowing him to address them tonight and stated he is confident when all is said and done all of us will have done what is best for all of West Haven but most importantly the children and I thank you. The Board gave thanks.

Eric Murillo wanted to express his personal feelings I'm glad we came together again as a board And let's believe there is no one out there. I would like everyone to be as open, honest and as truthful as can be as to how they came to their decisions and I would like the audience to please keep their feelings and emotions to themselves so we don't make anyone uncomfortable. I am not here to grandstand. I have some questions for Mr. Cavallaro. I can't find the logic for closing two schools. We are talking about people's lives, students, and families and schools with 70% minority that is 2 schools with almost 150% minority; to me that is ludicrous. This is what I would like to discuss; did we make the right decision. Was the research made in good faith?

The two principal that are retiring from Washington and Mackrille do you have individuals going into the schools. Neil responded yes if two schools were to close the two principals would move to those two positions so it would balance.

Eric asked when was the first time you thought about closing the two schools Molloy and Thompson. Neil responded back in January we were starting our budget and developing an operating budget and we talked to all of the board members, we talked to the Mayor and we knew it was going to be a lean year so when we submitted our budget to the Mayor on February 1, 2010 we started looking at a number of scenarios. We thought realistically that one school would possibly have to be closed and we were anticipating more money from the city. When we didn't receive it we started looking at a second school in March. Eric asked Neil to elaborate on the scenarios and how many were there. Neil said #1 we looked at how many people can we realistically lay off and still operate at a certain level. We looked at scenarios that included laying off a lot more teachers but realistically we have contractual obligations at all levels in grades K – 12. There comes a point when you just can't lay off staff you have to consolidate your operation and that is how we got to the point of two school closings. What we can do is utilize the staff at those two schools to more adequately staff the other buildings that are staying open. Eric asked who is the we that Neil mentioned. Neil said we would be the central office staff at the Blake Building, Dr. Druzolowski, Curriculum Coordinators, Dave Cappetta and his office staff were very instrumental in putting together the budget. Eric said you are talking about ten people. Neil said yes around ten people. Eric said so you didn't set up any exploratory committee or advisory committee you knew you wanted to close the schools. Neil said I didn't want to close the schools. You and ten people decided you were going to close two schools. Neil said ultimately I can't decide that I want to close the schools ultimately the board has to decide. Eric said we as a board need to find out if that is the best way to go and that is why we are here tonight. You had no advisory committee, you had no exploratory committee to tell us if that was the right decision to make. Neil said when you say exploratory committee no but certainly we have been discussing this now for a couple of months and many board members have asked for a lot of different information and some have come up with some suggestions. We have sat down with anybody who has requested a meeting and answered various questions regarding what we can do and where we can cut. Right now that is the proposal. It is not a popular one and maybe it is not a good one and maybe its one the board won't accept but that is the proposal. Eric said he respects that and said I don't want you to think I'm trying to attack you or anything like that I have to make a decision and I want to be conscious I am making the right vote. It seems to me in your proposal to close the schools if you had a large group that would study the program would the chairman of that committee have minutes or documentation of what transpired. Neil said what it came down to was that Thompson is the oldest school and in need of the most repair. It is centrally located and it was probably the most logical building. When it came to a second school Molloy was the smallest population wise that was the rationale. Eric said well that is your choice.

Howie said we are going to have to pause just to see if there are any other questions and we will come right back to you. Eric said he would like to continue if the board members don't mind. Eric continued stating that he was sure that Neil knew the stimulus money was only for two years. Neil responded correct. Eric said and you were well aware we were headed for hard times. Neil said I believe I said that last year to the city council when I went before them at a

public hearing. I said for one year we can operate with no layoffs under the budget we were given from the city. Eric said so you pretty much think we have exhausted all the possibilities of not closing the schools. Neil said he believes in the plan he is offering. Eric said his feeling is that we have support groups and have everything in place for these young children to continue their education and I think there is more research to do for this year and next. If we need to make decisions we should start some committees to find out what is the best way to do this because you said this is a long haul. I don't want to make the decision to close the school and two years from now we don't have enough money. If you make some committees involving parents, board members, PTA members, union members, community members etc. to find ways to get additional money and save money. There are so many people who have told me ways to save money. For example you can cancel Pre-K, cancel after school activities, limit building use at night, vendors contract and lease agreements, cancel construction projects, hiring freeze, defer purchases, coordinated work week, sharing operation and services between local schools and districts, healthcare, defer teachers pay etc. We never researched any of this so did you? It takes a lot of time and planning and to me I think we have a whole year to plan and to keep the schools open and start to plan. Neil said if the board chooses to do that believe me I would be all for it but I think realistically as the Superintendent of Schools it is my job to make sure that by June 3<sup>rd</sup> the board adopts a balanced budget and right now we are over 5 ½ million dollars away from what we actually received and some of the things you mentioned we have talked to the teachers and the other unions about. Hiring freeze you don't have to worry about that we are laying off and I don't say that with jest. A coordinated work week doesn't work for us we have to have 180 school days; we have explored areas and have talked about some alternative medical plans. Believe me we have spent a good deal of time talking and learning about things we can or can't do. My question is again I think we all knew where we were two or three months ago and I appreciate all the suggestion and help but we are now a month and a half away from having to make a lot of changes. I respect what you are saying but we have to open school in 12 weeks. In 12 weeks we will start a new school year and we can't do it knowing we are going to run out of money anytime prior to that 180 days so we have been talking about most of the things you talked about for months and we tried to provide you guys with as much information as we can. Eric said he would have to take Neil's word on that because he didn't hear a lot of this stuff. Neil said all suggestions were taken seriously.

Rob Saley thanked Neil for all the time he has given him. He knows they are not always on the same side but he appreciates it. He asked Neil to elaborate on that four day work week. He knows it is days but can you work longer hours and save a little money. Neil said anyway you look at it we have to keep schools open for 180 school days. It has to be 180 school days. Rob's other idea was obviously moving I have a huge issue with that. I have no problem with moving the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. My son went to Mackrille along with Mr. Murillo's daughter when they put the sixth graders back in the middle schools. It did hurt for a little while; it is transition. I personally have a problem with closing Molloy. We have a school that does very well and was wondering if you just close Thompson could you give us and the public the scenario. If you do close Molloy is there a possibility of putting Pre-K or K in Molloy?

Neil said if we did close Molloy one of the main issues is the number of layoffs. He met with the personnel director and by closing Thompson and Molloy and eliminating other positions we are eliminating 55 total certified positions and this would get us to a balanced budget. Closing

Thompson only and adding some positions throughout the district the best she could do was get to 45 positions that didn't get us to a balanced budget. We would have to eliminate another 30 more positions. Once beyond that 55 number we can not offer many of the programs we need to offer especially at WHHS and there also would come a point where we could not keep up the contractual limits as well. Rob said we really don't want to see that especially if you would have to take some of the programs away. Can you expand on what programs might be closing? Neil said we would have to go back through each of the departments and eliminate a minimum of three in each of the departments and if that were to happen we just couldn't offer many of the honors classes, advanced classes, and electives.

Rob said if you close Thompson would the layoffs take place in the high school alone or would they come from the middle and elementary schools. Neil said we would have to cut services at the elementary school and look at positions like literacy positions. Rob said if we were to keep Molloy open we would be looking at laying off 80 people for a balanced budget. Neil said correct.

Rob said if you did close Molloy, and you put the 6<sup>th</sup> grade back in the elementary, could you put the Pre-K and K over at Molloy? Neil said putting the 6<sup>th</sup> grad back in the elementary is something we can look at but we would have to eliminate things like Art Rooms, Science Rooms and possibly computer rooms so there would be some sharing and we did not break it down cost wise but that could fit but I'm not sure what the overall savings would be because while we would be eliminating some staff there we would be operating the two middle schools and would not be able to eliminate several of the itinerant staff positions. Rob asked if you did put the 6<sup>th</sup> grade back in the elementary schools would it be adversely affecting the kids or would they be better off. Neil thinks that 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the elementary schools makes sense. Now you can operate one 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade school so do we close one of the middle schools? This can be looked into.

Rob said I think going forward with facility management is a good idea seeing some of the schools and things that can be done differently and give us some savings. If we did come up with some savings where would we put that money? Neil said we have cut to the bear bone so we would be leaving ourselves short. My feeling is that any savings we receive from facilities management should go back to making our buildings more efficient.

Mark Palmieri said in regard to Mr. Saley's discussion on K and Pre-K are we still closing just one school? Neil said when you were talking about putting the 6<sup>th</sup> grade back you have to keep all the elementary schools open. Mark said by leaving a building open would the cost of that be that more teachers would be laid off? Neil said the question is we have to find five in a half million dollars worth of savings. Again we are trying to get to a balanced budget as well as offering a good educational program. It gets to be a fine line.

Sean Maher said I think the public needs to know that if we do cut things at the high school and NEASC lessens our points it jeopardizes our accreditation and this keeps our students from getting into the good schools they have been getting into. We need to keep the high school in place and continue with the hard work we have been doing. I know the decision is a very

difficult one but if our students stop getting into good schools the future of our students will not be as bright.

Dorinda Borer had some general comments and some questions for Neil. It is safe to say that none of us feel comfortable about closing two neighborhood schools this is compounded by the fact that it will force us to do some sort of redistricting. The redistricting has a significant impact on families and is a decision that should be thought out longer than five weeks; it takes a longer period of time. We have the 5/6 & 7/8 model on the table and I understand the concept but I personally can't get around the bussing and transportation issue. I think it is too much to shuffle the kids around; that many children on school busses. I think the plan by the parents is not a perfect plan but we are trying to come up with a way to get around the bussing issue. I personally like the K Model and talked with Mr. Saley about it. I like putting kindergarten all together. We are one of few districts that don't have full day and that is the type of long term planning we need to look at. I would like to see before we go forward with any redistricting that we put these types of scenarios on paper – the pro's, con's, cost benefit analysis, educational impact, social impact and the personnel impact so we have some choices to look at because right now we only have one on the table to look at and that is going to be a yes or a no and I think we need a couple of scenarios.

Dorinda said we also need a housing committee to look at possible mixed use housing in the city. The city is looking at a plan to bring in more housing which we know means more children. They are looking at increasing the children while we are looking at decreasing our school resources. I think we are not in sync. We need to sit with our city leaders and plan out these things long term before we go forward.

Neil said when he saw that in the paper he contacted the Mayor and said I believe you should consider appointing a BOE member and to my knowledge he was going to appoint Mark Palmieri. I felt that education would certainly play a part down the road in the housing issue that would come up. The Mayor has agreed to do that and I don't know if Mark has been appointed to the committee yet. Dorinda said she appreciates that and doesn't think any decision to close two schools should be made until we are down that road.

Dorinda asked what would we do with Molloy if we closed it as it is one of our most significant assets and once we abandon that building the clock starts ticking and the building goes over to the city and there is no way we can get it back. We also put some investments into Molloy and we will have to take it off of the reimbursement we get back from the projects

Dorinda said when you say you have to do the additional layoffs from the high school is that taking into consideration that we don't find the 1.5M to cover Molloy? If we had 1.5M that we came up with savings to cover Molloy why would we have to take teachers from the high school because in that 1.5M is teacher's salaries, benefits, supplies everything is covered so why would we have to take teachers from the high school to cover that?

Neil said we are almost 6M from where we need to be. If we were applying 1.6M to keep Molloy open and using the 600,000.00 that we got from the city put that aside you are still operating on a 80M budget which calls for 55 teacher layoffs.

Dorinda said on Plan A when it has 54 teachers it is two million one hundred and ninety two thousand dollars that has the two schools and additional teachers in there but when I look at the operational costs for Molloy 1.5M and Thompson 1.75 that has the teachers in there so those teachers had to come out of the 54. How many teachers are at Molloy? Neil said 20 if you include social workers, psychologists, and reading teachers. Dorinda said so Plan A - 54 teachers was two million dollars and that included both schools and additional teachers. But if we come up with the 1.5 million that covers the teachers that are working at Molloy and those teachers are written in as 54 wouldn't we be able to reduce the number of teachers laid off? Dave Cappetta said no because you still need that savings from their salaries. She asked if they took into consideration cutting expense like heat, electricity etc. Yes they did.

Toni Paine asked if the figure we are using for Molloy for repairs and handicap accessibility are t included or does it have to be added to it? Neil said if we were to keep Molloy opened it is about 1.6M to operate, staff, and run the building for a year; with no repairs to be made to it.

Dorinda asked Dave where the figures for Worker's Comp and Unemployment came from. The risk manager from the city gave us the figures. So when we say we had a million dollars from the city but we are paying 800 thousand dollars more in expenses that we haven't paid that needs to be picked up. Correct.

Howard Horvath stated we certainly heard a lot of concerns relative to Plan A but I sense from conversations I have had with parents and teachers there are some other very positive things. He asked Neil and Anne to elaborate on plans for putting 5<sup>th</sup>/ 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> together across the district and state its impact on students of color.

Anne Druzolowski said one of the biggest issues facing us is when 6<sup>th</sup> graders hit 7<sup>th</sup> grade there is a dive in terms of achievement. The ability to put 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades is not unlike what Mr. Rivera had alluded to. You see great differences in ages of kids and their developmental level socially and educationally. The ability to still be nurtured in a setting of 5/6 is highly successful. The collaborative piece is that when you put the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> together you have the ability to take schedules, put teachers in teams, and work together as a team of teachers to meet the needs of all kids. The other piece is 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders require a lot of support services and we need to put some support services there. By putting them in the same facility you have better access to a larger amount of support services; whether it is Title 1 Supplemental Support, ELL Support, Reading Support or Math Support. I like 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade together much more than I like 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> together. Hopefully when they are taken from an older 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade population they will start to perform better. They are still youngsters and we have to remember they need to be nurtured.

Howard Horvath stated there are a couple of other questions related to some of the concerns and you kind of alluded to this. The impact on the high school if you have to take resources from the high school will you please discuss this. Anne said her first six months of tenure she just about lived at the high school and loved every minute of it. I am so proud of the high school teachers. They have been able to work together and develop collaborative teams, common form of assessments and have worked to better what is going on with the kids. By decreasing option s for kids including electives you have kids in study halls and we can't have that happen it is

asking for trouble behaviorally and educationally. Relative to NEASC we will have kids not able to get into the college of their choice because this high school will not be NEASC approved

Howard Horvath said a common sense suggestion relative to bus trips is that we might be able to provide some adult monitors on the bus. Anne said plans can be put in place so that kids are on the bus for less amount of time. Neil said we looked at taking a small piece of additional money we were given and hiring a few bus monitors for some of the busses

Sean said we discussed the bussing issue and a lot of people are concerned that their children won't be going to school with their friends. Neil said we are working with Winkle Bus Company to make the routes as efficient as possible and make sure that neighborhoods are picked up and once that last child for that particular route is picked up the bus will go to the school. You are not picking up kids as you do now for example when a bus comes from Forest and goes to Mackrille you pick up kids all along the route until you get to Mackrille.

Anne also said that putting our children together earlier than the high school will afford our kids the opportunity to bridge that gap. We have what is perceived as the school on one side of town and the school on the other. It is unfortunate because once they hit the high school that gets blurred. To be able to do this sooner cuts back on a lot of animosity.

Howie asked Neil if he had a sense of how 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were feeling about this generally. Neil had a very positive initial meeting and well received by fifth grade teachers who don't get to see each other as they are spread out all over town. They are excited about the opportunity work together. Most teachers would follow their classrooms as assigned in the building. We are working on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to see how we can set up teams to still have those teams specialize in certain areas. We would also have common time for language arts.

Brandon Patterson, Student Representative, talked about his experience at the high school. He went to Forest School for three years and then moved to Mackrille for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade and then went to Bailey. I met a lot of my friends there and I didn't lose touch with my friends from Carrigan but I still see an attitude. Sort of like these kids over here or those kids. I believe if we have 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade together and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade together there will be a unity and the possibilities are endless for the high school. If you are talking about cutting things from the high school and the honors classes I would hope this could be avoided.

Eric Pang supports what Mrs. Druzolowski said about having the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade together so you can really target those kids in a better environment. When I went to school in 6<sup>th</sup> grade there were kids driving already in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Dorinda said this has been a great discussion on the various restructures but I think it demonstrates that we are still not ready. I would like to get back to having us look at keeping the one school open and put the restructure on hold while we take all these considerations into play. We need to go back to the budget and look at where we can cut. We need this on paper.

Howie said here is what I am thinking you requested to get it on paper in a comparative way and this might assist us in being able to definitively decide between the two. Are you comfortable

with that Mr. Cavallaro? Neil said we started looking at the various positions and will get back to the board. Howie interjected I'm not sure if Monday is too soon but that is our next meeting and we should tough base between now and the agenda.

Dorinda asked what the next steps would be since we are not ready to vote on the budget or the restructure. What is our process to go through the budget to see if we can find additional funds? How do we as a group go through line by line?

Howie said frankly we have done a lot of that already and made close to \$800,000.00 in cuts. We will look through it again but what I'm suggesting is looking at additional cuts and comparing scenario's A, B, and C. That is the basis for us to get the clarity to make a final decision. It is important to the teachers out there as well as the families and the students to know what is going to happen and what will be going forth. The administration would like to execute the plan because time is of the essence. Hearing no other questions I would ask for a motion to adjourn.

Toni Paine made a motion to adjourn  
T. Sean Maher seconded the motion  
All members were in favor.  
The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola  
Board Secretary



West Haven Board of Education  
Public Testimony  
May 12, 2010  
Marcus E. Rivera, Hamden, CT 06514, anchma@earthlink.net

My name is Marcus Rivera and I live in Hamden, CT. Why is a Hamden resident at a West Haven Board of Education meeting? **To request that the West Haven Board of Education maintain its high level of success for ALL students AT Molloy School, especially the high rates of success for poor students, Black and Latino students, English Language Learners (ELL), and students with disabilities.**

I have directed successful educational programs serving these student populations -- and their educators and families -- for both local and national foundations and at the CT State Department of Education for over 25 years. The results at Molloy are exceptional! For an elementary school with:

- **half-day kindergarten,**
- **almost 75% students of color,**
- **over 70% Free and Reduced Lunch,**
- **20% ELL,**
- **almost 10% students with disabilities, and**
- **class sizes of over 20 students/class in Grades K, 2 and 5,**

to have **over 70% of its Gr. 3-5 students met or exceed the state GOAL on the CMT** -- not "proficiency and above" -- is outstanding! (Please see the ConnCAN summary in your packets.) In addition it seems that your English Language Learners are **exceeding** English proficiency benchmarks on state measures! ConnCAN recognized Molloy as one of the ten top performing schools **in CT** with a high percentage of low income families and students.

Molloy and Mackrille are the **only two** elementary schools in West Haven that have **not** been identified as "in need of improvement" according to federal No Child Left Behind reports for 2008-09. We find in Mackrille, however, that it has **far fewer** students of color (about 40%), poor students (about 35%), and ELLs (about 7%, per the 2007-08 Strategic School Profiles).

So what happens to Molloy students of color when they leave this great school to attend Bailey or Carrigan and then West Haven High? I looked at the public information on the State Department of Education website (you have these data in front of you) and found that they go on to attend federal "schools in need of improvement":

- **Bailey** is in its **1st year** in need of improvement, **Carrigan** in its **3rd year** and **West Haven High** in its **6th year!**
- **Bailey** had about 700 students in 2007-08 and was about **40% students of color** while **Carrigan** with about 750 students **was over 60% students of color** (School Year in 2007-08).
- **Bailey** had about **30% Free and Reduced Lunch** while **Carrigan** had **over 55% FRL** (according to 2007-08 Strategic School Profiles).

So the majority of poor students and students of color in West Haven seem to be attending a lower performing middle school -- Carrigan.

Now when West Haven's poor students and students of color get to **West Haven High**, what are the results?

- Well to start almost **88% of White students** met the federal **Math** target on the CAPT in 2008-09 -- but about **48% of Black students** and **63% of Latino students** met the same Math target.
- In **Reading**, over **90% of White students** met the federal target -- but only about **68% of Black students** and **77% of Latino students** met the same federal target.
- **Statewide**, over **85% of White students** who graduated in 2009 entered four years earlier. While only about **66% of Black students** and **58% of Latino students** graduated in 2009 and entered four years earlier. For **poor students**, about **60%** graduated and for **ELLs** a little over **50%** graduated. **So while most White students graduate in four years in CT, about 2 in 3 Black students graduate and a little over 1 in 2 Latino students graduate in four years.**

Molloy students are receiving a solid foundation! Its poor students and students of color, the majority of Molloy's population, are receiving an excellent preparation for middle school. But the chance that West Haven Black and Latino students will succeed in middle and high school are **much less than** that of their White peers. **So what can we do about it?**

1. **Keep Molloy open and expand enrollment at Molloy and Mackrille, the two only high performing elementary schools, to include Grade 6 so more Grade 6 students can show success!** According to State school facility reports submitted by West Haven in 2007:
  - **Molloy** has a capacity for **420** students but only had **289** students in 2009-10. There seems to be room at Molloy for over **130 more students!**
  - **Mackrille** has a capacity for **625** students but enrollment in 2007 -- for this school with fewer poor students and students of color -- was **383** students (about half of its capacity). There seems to be room at Mackrille for over **240 more students!** (Please see the attachments.)
2. **Close Carrigan, a low performing school in need of improvement for three years , and make Bailey a Grade 7 and 8 school. Move all Grade 6 students to higher performing schools, beginning with Mackrille and Molloy and also include Haley, Thompson and Washington as needed** (the last three are in Year 1 as a school in need of improvement).
  - According to the Oct. 2009 State enrollment figures, there were **516 Grade 6 students** in West Haven. **Mackrille and Molloy** alone can accommodate over **370 of next year's Grade 6 students** -- **that's over half of all the West Haven Grade 6 students.** The attachment in your packet shows that Haley, Thompson and Washington alone can accommodate **over 490 more students** than those enrolled in 2006! **Washington alone can take over 200 students.** If you have three Grade 6 teams of educators, they can be distributed among Mackrille, Molloy and Washington without hiring additional staff! Remember, these three schools are in Year 1 of improvement versus Year 3 at Carrigan.

- Now according to the Oct. 2009 State enrollment figures, there were **472 Grade 7 students** and **442 Grade 8 students** in West Haven. As an aside, I would suspect that there are many *Grade 6 and Grade 7 repeaters* if the Grade 8 figure of **442 students** is closer to the "entering grade" population than **516 Grade 6 students**.
- **Bailey**, according to its State reported capacity, can accommodate **1,000 students**. So Bailey should have been able to accommodate all of the **914 Grade 7 and 8 students** that were enrolled this year! Remember, Bailey is in Year 1, not Year 3, in need of improvement. **With many more Grade 6 students achieving at high levels at the elementary schools next year, Bailey will receive any more high performing students in Grades 7 and 8 students in future years -- and there will be fewer Grade 6 repeaters!**

**Keeping Molloy open, a high performing school, and expanding Molloy, Mackrille and at least one other elementary school, with plenty of capacity to receive Grade 6 students, will result in cost savings by closing Carrigan -- and, more importantly, graduating many more West Haven students -- especially poor students, students of color and ELLs, with the academic ability to succeed at high levels and attend college!** Isn't this what West Haven parents and educators hope to achieve for their town?

**Don't reduce the equal educational opportunity that should be afforded to every West Haven citizen!** I, like the Board members, parents, educators and community members here, view the education of our students as the only hope we have for our future. Since this is a matter of urgency, I have shared my comments and the current news stories about Molloy with the Racial Justice Program of the American Civil Liberties Union. **As a CT citizen, I am asking the West Haven Board of Education to propose a solution that enhances, instead of diminishes, the equal educational opportunity for its students of color, students with disabilities and English Language Learners in high performing schools.** I should add that Molloy was just awarded a 5-year literacy grant. An amazing accomplishment and further recognition of its extraordinary effort in serving young children! Molloy should serve as a demonstration site to assist other West Haven and state educators!

Closing Molloy for fiscal reasons is unconscionable. There are other options that the West Haven can -- and should -- consider on behalf of its students' success and the fiscal viability of the town of West Haven!

If you would like to review any of these proposals further, I can be reached at anchma@earthlink.net. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and for your immediate attention to this community concern.

Sincerely,

Marcus E. Rivera