

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES**  
**March 22, 2010**  
**Regular Board Meeting**

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education began at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven on March 22, 2010. The meeting was called to order by Howard Horvath, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was then moved to Carrigan School due to the large number of people who attended.

The meeting at Carrigan began at 7:15 and opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS  
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman  
T. Sean Maher, Vice Chairman  
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer  
Dorinda Borer  
M. Toni Paine  
Robert Saley

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Andrew DePalma  
Mark Palmieri  
Patrick Egolum

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Anne Druzolowski  
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Mayor John M. Picard

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:**

Gypsy Garcia  
Eric Pang  
Brandon Patterson

Please rise for **the pledge of allegiance.**

Good evening. I would like to take a moment to preface our public session with a few comments.

1. Because we've got so many people in attendance, many who have indicated they'd like to speak, we are going to call on each person from the speaker's list in order to make your comments.
2. The board intends to listen to what you have to say and go back and use it to help guide us as the budget process continues to move forward. And it is a *process*. It began when we, the BOE, submitted our budget to the Mayor. The Mayor, in turn, submitted his proposed budget to the City Council where they will continue to work on it. A public hearing on the overall city budget will be held at 6pm, March 31st right here at Carrigan MS. That is an important meeting and we hope to see you all here again on that date to show your support to help insure our students receive a quality education in West Haven. The City will adopt an Operating Budget no later than May 6<sup>th</sup>. The BOE will then meet to adopt a FINAL Operating Budget by the end of May or early June. So as you can see, we are still relatively early in the budget process and there are still a lot of unknowns.
3. This, however, we all know – it is a difficult economic time. Many towns and cities across the state are struggling with the same difficult decisions. So please know that we are committed to doing the very best we can with the funds that are ultimately given us.

The meeting was turned over to Superintendent Cavallaro who said it is very early in the process. We submitted our proposed budget to the Mayor and most of you know the reason we are here tonight is because our budget has been cut. We are here tonight to fight for every dollar that can be fought for and to hear your input because it is very important to us. We will do our best to offer a quality education in this town. One item I want to mention tonight is that over the weekend I was given some questions by the PTA and after the public session tonight I will answer those questions instead of giving my normal report. Unfortunately at that time there will be no time for give and take but I will certainly be glad to answer any questions after the meeting or via email at any other time. I want to answer all the questions you have and get out as much information as possible to you as this makes it easier for us to make sure where those dollars are going in regard to the budget.

## **B. Public Session**

Howard Horvath said the first to present will be David Hall followed by Rosemary O'Brien

David Hall, 78 Ocean Avenue thanked the Board, members of the City Council, Mayor and everybody here tonight for the opportunity to speak and turned to Rosemary O'Brien.

Rosemary O'Brien, 116 Cherry Lane read a statement which follows on the next page.

Members of the Board of Education and Citizens of West Haven:

I stand before you not on my own, but on behalf of a group of parents whose children attend Mackrille Elementary School. Dave Hall and myself, Rosemary O'Brien, are part of a group of parents concerned about our children's future. Rather than act on misinformation, we have done our best to inform ourselves. We are very concerned about what we see and hear with regard to the closing and redistricting of some schools. So tonight, we are here to be heard by you, our elected officials. We have put our trust in you to work on behalf of our children, but that does not seem to be the case.

We have heard about the plan to close two schools while combining all of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders of the City into one school and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders into another. While this might be a valid plan, it requires further thought and planning if it is to be handled correctly. This move, if it is true, is being considered without much forethought, with very little planning, and at too rapid a pace for our children not to mention for our City. My 4<sup>th</sup> grader has been looking forward to his 5<sup>th</sup> grade year when he was going to be the big kid at Mackrille with all of its privileges. To take that away from him without prior warning is simply wrong. If he entered the 4<sup>th</sup> grade with that expectation, it would be a different matter. We ask that you wait one year so that plans may be reviewed and evaluated rather than making such an abrupt move.

Another concern of ours is the massive layoff of our newest teachers. Our teachers are directly involved in our children's education. Rather than deplete our schools of such talented individuals, we suggest you look at the administration. How many coordinators, administrators and consultants can we terminate instead? To begin with, we suggest our superintendent, Neil Cavallaro, forego the raise he is requesting in the new budget. Many of us have had to forego raises in order to keep our jobs during these difficult economic times. Why shouldn't Mr. Cavallaro? Many of us have also taken on more responsibility. It only seems fair that some of the coordinators and administrators at the Blake Building do the same. And if teachers still need to be laid off, you should consider a merit-based program combined with tenure and seniority rather than simply laying off the newest hires.

One of the parents who posted on the blog we instituted signed him or herself as "I survived the West Haven School System." It made me question why a child should have to simply "survive"

The next speaker was Sandra Lorusso, 75 Tuthill Street actually came tonight to say thank you to Mrs. Paine who spent all day yesterday helping her work on a fund raiser for Carrigan and through her efforts we were able to raise almost \$250 today for our kids. Some of the things other board member have done for the children of this city follows. Mr. Saley used to perch himself in a tree night after night on a zip line during holiday

festivities ready to swoop down and scare the children. Mr. Palmieri who received a call about the need for book bags for underprivileged children was one of the first people to come to Carrigan with cases of book bags. These are your neighbors and friends and they are your elected officials. As a former member of this board I realize what a difficult job they have in front of them. I also realize they are at the mercy of those that make the decisions. They can only do what they can do with the money that is allocated to them. These are good people who will do the very best for our children because they care about them.

Kristen Latta, 76 Laurel Street stated she has been a West Haven resident her whole life 31 years. She is a nurse and nurses like teachers chose the profession simply because they are compassionate for others. Tonight 54 of these compassionate human beings will be given notice that they will no longer be doing what they love. Not only will our teacher suffer our children endure the consequences of over crowded classrooms, changing schools four times before they reach college and being bussed across town. My daughter is a student at Bailey. She said she was scared. She attended Mackrille School last year. How can we reach such achievement with two elementary schools closing and the loss of 54 of our compassionate human beings our teachers. Save our schools, save our system and save our children.

Rosemary Russo, 115 Pheasant Rd. stated the facts:

Molloy is the only in the district to make AYP

Molloy is second in the district for students meeting state goals across all subjects only surpassed by Mackrille. Molloy 72.6% and Mackrille is 75.8%

Molloy has been ranked #10 in ConnCAN's top 10 list for Connecticut public schools  
Molloy's 5<sup>th</sup> graders for the past two years have scored 100% on the writing portion of the CMT

Molly and Thompson have the highest % of minority students in the district at 74% followed by Forest at 73%

Molloy does not have a new addition consisting of classrooms, gymnasium, music and art rooms, a library media center, cafeteria or state of the art computer room.

Molloy was slated for said addition for the 2006/2007 year but was put aside by the new administration of Mayor John Picard

Molloy's enrollment has declined in recent years

Molloy's children have already been bussed across town to the three schools in West Shore.

April 1<sup>st</sup> 1985 new housing policy 5117A was to take effect. This policy states that any housing development, apartment complex, or condominium project built after the effective date shall be subject to review by the West Haven Board of Education prior to occupancy so that the proper shill of attendance for it resident children may be clearly determined. The review and school designation shall be accomplished in order to preclude adverse conditions from occurring, such as overcrowding and/or racial imbalance in any school. It shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent and his staff to maintain continuous communication with City Planners and Zoning Commission to ascertain up to date details of housing growth and development. Reports will be made annually to the Board on new housing and its impact on the schools for the first meeting

in October, January, April and July. These are the facts that can not be disputed. People in the 7<sup>th</sup> District Molloy's district have not been treated fairly. Children from Molloy have been pulled away from their neighborhood school resulting in a drastic decrease in our enrollment. New Housing Policy #5117A has been ignored resulting in Molloy not receiving any new students and our new addition was pulled out from under us. Now the plan is to get rid of Molloy. This is not right. Molloy staff and students have proven they are ready to beat all odds and are a success story. How can you reward success in this manner? Please do not continue this pattern. Do not close Molloy; do not let this Board's legacy be that they closed an achieving, successful, school. The teachers and students of Molloy have closed the achievement gap are you really going to reward their hard work by taking their school away. What would Doug Reeves think? He addressed all the teachers and paras in the city and wasn't his message about closing the achievement gap. I think he would be appalled.

Marilyn Halligan, 220 Richmond Avenue asked the Superintendent and Board to explore and exhaust all other possibilities to meet the budget deficit without closing schools and eliminating positions. You can only spend what you have in a budget and of course there are times when you will find yourself short by the millions of dollars we are finding right now how that can have happened. Under your current plan my entire household is facing the possibility of layoffs. We can not close our house like your proposal of closing schools. We will have to tighten our belts and make changes to our current way of life to meet our financial obligations. Your directive of all non-discretionary spending of meeting prior approval should be the way to operate on a daily basis. Closing schools will be a disservice to our students. To increase class size to the maximum will guarantee that some students will be lost in our system. Restructuring and redistricting our schools within a three month period is not feasible for it to be successful. I propose that this board bargain in good faith with the union to explore other options such as the possibility of an unpaid furlough or to analyze the cost associated with giving our top tiered teachers some incentive to entice retirement. Why were 40 teachers and paras hired for this current school year if our enrollment was down by 1,000 plus students? This decline did not just happen in the past 6 months so why did you hire all of us. Why did you create additional administrator and coordinator positions if the enrollment was down? Consider the impact on the City of West Haven as a whole with the intended layoffs. That is another 54 plus families who will not have the financial means to support our local businesses or buy homes in this City. Think of these 54 talented teachers as people rather than just positions. How can we sit by and watch these teachers possibly fall in to financial ruin that will have repercussions for years to come because this board chose to spend beyond its means. Reconsider your proposal of layoffs and school closings. Where would we be today if it wasn't for our teachers who taught us how to read and write?

Alyssa Krinsky, 18 Southforest Circle is a student at WHHS and is disgusted that 54 of our great teachers are being threatened with a pink slip. Our city has a population of approximately 52,000 people and spans about 10.6 miles we have three fire chiefs and only need one. This money could be going to the Board of Education. Why not take the retirement rate from the double dippers that are not only retired from the West Haven School System but also receive salaries from other school systems. We should rethink

our options and consider redistributing funds that are being wasted so we can save our teacher's jobs. We are losing two of our newest and best music teachers. I am graduating this year and plan to attend SCSU for secondary education. I had planned on teaching in the West Haven School System but I ask you this am I wasting my time following the footsteps of some of the great teachers whose jobs are at risk due to carelessly spent funds. We are all educated here so use that intelligence to come up with a smarter plan and save our schools.

Marty Northam, 47 Shingle Hill Rd. He is a taxpayer, grandfather of four children in the system, the husband of a teacher, father of a teacher and he is a substitute teacher. He knows this is a hard time so I hope everyone here is on your side trying to get some money. He asked everyone what they could do to help the board save money because you won't get your entire budget. This is what he found. The heat in buildings is overbearing. The first thing you do is open a window every morning. The radiators have no controls on them. You can hundred of thousands of dollars on heating bills alone.

One \$100,000 consultant equals three new teachers. Enough said

Overtime – there are people making over \$100,000 a year because of overtime. When is the last time a teacher in this system made \$100,000 – Never. When is the last time you were paid for overtime – Never.

Retirement packages are expensive so how about a mini one. Give the 29 year teacher the extra 1 year to make the magic 30. Etc. There are a lot of ways to cut the budget.

I am going down to fight for the budget on the 31<sup>st</sup> and hope you all will be there.

Moving kids all around is not the answer fix the school that is broken.

The CMT's are rapidly becoming irrelevant. No Child Left Behind Law is being changed completely. Math and English CMT's will be changed there will be more history and science. The CMT's you are working on now will not even be applicable. Kids from Equator come in June and in March they take the CMT's and are expected to pass – this can't happen. You are changing the system on tests that will be thrown out. Sit back a year and figure it out we can't lose 54 good teachers. If you are going to lay off 5% of the teachers I want to see 5% of the administrators and janitors go. One administrator at \$100,000 = 3 new teachers. Save our schools.

Patti Fusco, 311 Shingle Hill Rd. is here as President of the West Haven Federation of Teachers and School Nurses. Very sad to see the names of so many of our young energetic teachers who have worked so hard and many of whom have written the new curriculum we are using along with the CSA's and Pre and Post Tests. I'm sad that we are doing this again; we are facing an education crisis again. I have taught here for 21 years and there have been very few years when we haven't been facing a crisis. We need to make the public and City understand that education is important. That will raise all of us up in our lives. I made sure my children have received degrees beyond what I have because I want my children to have better than what I have. As a teacher that is what I have strived for. I have strived to have the children in my classes make them educated so that they can live at a better level than their parents. We have to value education. You put your money where your priorities are. For many years the priority has not been education. Last year we had no increase. This year we are getting a little over a million

dollars that is like nothing compared to what we need. We have given back we have extended our contract and are not getting a raise next year so there is nothing to give back as far as teachers are concerned. We give every day in our classrooms and our homes and on the weekends we don't just work 6 hours. I'm not sure that closing two schools in the answer. Last year we closed Stiles and this year we are talking about closing two schools what are we going to do close three next year. You can't keep closing schools. Look at what the alternatives are. Molloy the best school in the district and you want to close it. It doesn't make sense. Something isn't working here. Close one of the schools where things aren't working. I don't envy you I hope we can work collaboratively to come up with a plan to save as many of our teachers as we can to work with our veterans.

Eledis Gonzalez, 5 Greta Street brought her daughter up to the podium with her to speak. She is ten years old and attends Molloy School. She is concerned about closing the schools and the layoffs of the teachers. She thinks it is a great school with a great principal and great teachers. Her daughter said if you close the school I don't know where else to go because I like it here. She is concerned about her future – where she will go and where they will locate all those kids. It won't be the same. You will have overcrowded classroom with all the changes.

Joseph Vecellio 27 Eagle Place is the grandparent of five children attending West Haven public schools. He congratulated the teachers, principal, parents and children of Molloy for achieving.

You talk about layoffs – where are they going to come from you are starting from the bottom and working up. Let's start from the top and work down. Let's put our children first and not politics. It is a give and take situation but our children are the ones who are left behind. We must stand together. We have a meeting March 31<sup>st</sup> and I suggest that the board not have it here but to rent out Yale Bowl because that is how many people are going to come. Save our schools and save our children.

Karla Vozzi, 55 Robin Rd. We had school closings in the early 80's and a few years later we had a population burst and there were no schools to accommodate the overcrowding. Annexes had to be put on school properties to accommodate our children. What does that say about education. It can happen again. We all want what is best for our children after all they are our future. Closing schools and moving children all over town is not right; it is the wrong plan. We need to band together as a community; all of us in West Haven and fight to keep our schools the way they are.

Lou Persiani, 104 Martin Street stated he would not reiterate what was previously said but does want to say that we need to put politics aside in this matter. We need to start having better communication amount each board member and in conjunction with City Council. If trust can't be built between City Council and Board of Ed we will never get rid of the problems we are facing. I find it odd that it comes so quickly from last year to this year and so drastic that 2 schools would be closed and so many teachers would be laid off. That we paid for professional development for these teachers and they are to be



sent away. I want to know that the kids come first and we are not dollar driven. I don't think you are necessarily to blame but you are the beginning of the new future for us in town; it has to start somewhere. If you embrace each other and put aside political differences, communicate with each other hopefully you can get on the same page and move forward together. We will go with you; we elected you guys and we need you so please do what is right. We would still be here even if there wasn't a real estate crash and job market loss we would be facing what we are facing and that makes me almost dizzy so please be a part of our future our kid's future.

Robert Guthrie, 37 Spruce Peak Lane stated he can't help but think we are here tonight because of the budget we presented last year. You were working with the City and received a budget with no increase yet that caused no reduction in staff but an increase in a few positions. I hope by now you have gone over your records and identified any programs or staff funded by grants and/or stimulus money. If those funds are gone perhaps the continued value of the programs and staff must be addressed before you continue funding them. Another item is early retirement incentives that would benefit the district and retiree. I would ask the board to lobby our legislature to change either the State or Municipal Fiscal Year. At present you prepare a budget based on what you think you may get for next year; you then receive State notification of what you will receive. Imagine if the state fiscal year was July to June and your budget was January to December – you would know how much money was coming from the state before you did your budget. This is a concept boards and municipalities should both support. I would ask this board to submit a resolution to CABA for statewide consideration. This might also be the right time because of legislative elections coming this November. Legislators will be looking to bring something back to their districts and they will not be able to bring back any money this year.

This board would have the distinction of closing the most schools during their terms in office. This happened before and we had modular building which were to be temporary but lasted many years until the mold and water made them uninhabitable. It might be shortsighted to close schools not knowing what the future will look like.

I'm sure we all agree that smaller classrooms and smaller buildings are the best educational environment. I would hope you have a five or ten year strategic plan for enrollment and your buildings. Why not do it gradually between a combination of outgoing classes move 5<sup>th</sup> graders out and no new students and your kindergarten would come in. In your plan you need to know the number of students involved in the magnet programs. If the magnet program funding is changed and these students come back where to do you put them. Remember it will be the City's general fund not the Board of Ed's who will receive money for the sale of property so you will not reap the financial benefit from the sale of those items. Are you prepared for a developer to put up housing and in most cases more housing means more students have you thought about that.

I would hope this board would not disrupt the educational process by putting the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in one building and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in another building. What about continuity,

community and growth. You don't promote this by changing buildings four times in a child's education.

If you vote to pink slip staff members I hope you add an item to your agenda to approve a hiring freeze effective today for the remainder of the school year unless the position has direct educational contact. If you can give out 54 slips you shouldn't be hiring anyone else. The reason you are here is for the children who need your support. Collective board of education members will make a difference good or bad in the life of a child for years to come.

Tom Eckels, 83 Hickory Street stated he knows the board has a difficult job and a difficult road ahead. We talked about the quality of education and not wanting to close the schools and we are all in agreement about that. Many municipalities are saying that they are going to do less with less and West Haven has always been challenged to do more with less so I challenge you again to do the same. I challenge the City Council to find a way to give more money to the BOE. This is the same cry we hear year after year.

It is the quality of education that is the future of West Haven that we are nurturing at this point in time. I have three kids who have gone through this system and have done very well for themselves and they got their education through the City of West Haven again, they stepped up to the plate can we do the same.

Anthony Lanci, 168 Highland Street has two questions you spend all this money putting in a model school and then you are going to close it. You have Thompson and Molloy schools which are two out of three schools on this side of town. Why are you closing them. Isn't education for our children more important than anything else. City officials ride around in cars and waste our dollars let them buy their own car I have to buy mine.

Enrique Hernandez, 75 Claudia Dr., Apt. 337 a fifth grader at Molloy School is 10 years old and is very upset that Molloy and Thompson Schools are threatened to be closed and all 54 teachers are threatened to be laid off. We are ranked #2 out of all the West Haven Public Schools and we have the best teachers and principal in the world. Please save our schools, teachers and students.

Stanley Heller, 11 Norwalk Street has been teaching 40 years in the West Haven School System. He wants to warn us about common sense. Common sense says times are tough we have to cut back. The economy is in bad shape let's cut back so let's divide and conquer. Close that school, take away that teacher's benefit, get rid of the old one's, furlough for a day, cut back on benefits – pensions no we can't cut back there. Look at the polo-economic effect of that. The federal government is spending money on stimulus funding to try and get things going but the state is the opposite cut, cut, cut. Programs are being cut. The amount being cut is the amount of the stimulus so we stay stuck in this great recession. It may make common sense but it doesn't make economic sense. We need to spend more until we get out of this period of stagnation. We have a problem because the money is at the federal level and last year they marshaled 13 trillion dollars for Wall Street but when it comes to schools we hear a different story. The President said

there will be a freeze except for a couple of billion bucks which the states will be in competition for. They have to talk about how they will close public schools and turn them over to companies that will run them for profit; charter schools. They will have to think of ways to deal with non-performing schools. We need a different approach at the federal level. Fight – tonight do not vote to layoff a single teacher as that will send a message to the city and federal government. He asked the BOE to join in the effort to support a demonstration in Washington DC on April 10<sup>th</sup> seeking a new direction and commitment of money for the needs of the schools. No layoffs – Save the Schools.

Robert King, 26 Burwell Rd. Closing schools and laying off teachers will short term raise money for the budget however long term it is not a solution. If you close schools you will drop property values, less property value; less taxes. You will have a state crisis in your budget and the dollars you get will be less. If you lay off teachers as opposed to consultants you will end up paying the unemployment insurance, possibly welfare and medical expenses along with various other social programs for people out of work. You don't have this problem with consultants and their salary is a great deal higher. You will save more money by laying off less people by laying off consultants.

I am the Vice-President of the Forest School PTA so I know all the teachers there and they do a fantastic job. His son had a great deal of difficulty and then came to Forest and now looks forward to school and is excited about learning and is excelling where he was not before. Don't lay these teachers off.

Nancy DeChello, 55 Main Street spoke on behalf of her daughter who is currently a fourth grade student at Washington School. Her daughter started a petition to keep the students at Washington for the year 2010/2011. She has her heart set on being the big kid at Washington and all the perks that come with it. The time to go to Carrigan should be for the school year of 2011/2012 in sixth grade. Our teachers do not deserve a pink slip; they should be given a standing ovation for the work they do for us. We are very blessed with our teachers please let them stay.

Karyn Doherty, 28 Woodvale Rd is a parent at Pagels School. I understand we have a paid staff position for grants. Guilford obtained a \$90,000 grant for building an energy upgrade – is this a grant we applied for? Is this position actively attempting to obtain grants to better our system. Could you provide us statistics regarding the success rate in types of grants we have secured also attempts made for grants and not received. It can't change our budget now but if we made the attempt it definitely would have made an impact. If we are paying someone, I believe a department, to work on the grants for the system it would be to our benefit to pursue these opportunities. If the department is not working to capacity it needs to be addressed. The government is not handing out any more money and we the taxpayer can't keep paying higher taxes. What effect does the percent of subgroups in each school play in the outcome of CMT scores. Word has that it does make an impact so is not a true indication of the school's capability. Pagel's has a high population of subgroups – how does it affect the school's ratings. I don't begrudge these kids an equal opportunity and the teachers work extremely hard with challenges the general public can not imagine but don't give false statistics if we are not on the same

playing field. We don't want children's education suffering from rash decisions. Every child deserves the same quality education. Use resources such as volunteers and mentors from local colleges. Don't eliminate talented teachers and keep those that are buying their time. A good look should be taken regarding streamlining the workforce at the Blake Building. We are top heavy and need to eliminate consultants all together, reduce assistants, directors and coordinators; cuts should be across the board, stop wasting paper, charge a small fee for athletic events, require a parking permit fee per student, serve cold lunch a couple of days each week, petition the government for monies from casino revenue to be divided equally among schools, request the government for money to be into education, parking lights out from 11:00 PM to 5:00 AM, reduce special field trip money from education, decrease by 50% use of subs for in-service, reduce by 50% cost of out of county travel for employee professional development immediately. Finally work together our children are our future and we will need them like they need us now.

Eleanor Slomba, 18 Fourth Avenue talked about the good experience her family has had at Thompson School. Her son is at 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Thompson scheduled to go into his crowning year at the elementary level. He received speech therapy in Kindergarten that allowed him to pronounce his name correctly and improve his social skills. He received the screenings for vision which revealed the need for glasses and was corrected early. Important referrals were received in the later grades for outside services that have measurably helped our family. We worked closely with the teachers and principal and they knew exactly what we needed. Her son was paired with a student with special challenges in order to have a mentorship role and it helped both students academically and socially. Her child was promoted last year up into third grade. Thompson is a hidden jewel. Do you think parents who find a good experience in a small nurturing school are going to brag about it too much? No, maybe we haven't bragged about it enough. Things happening there need to continue to happen. You need to keep the school. Thompson is a bargain. The money saved by putting it on the chopping block and executing the decision that I hope no one has already made will result in a bigger price tag down the road. These kids will lose that very special nurturing culture that has been created over at Thompson. If this city loses that those kids will be at risk. My youngest would be coming in without his big brother in the same school which he has been expecting and my eight year old would be facing the possibility of going to a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> combined school which is simply unacceptable and would put him at risk.

Robert Vets, 83 Beatrice Drive appreciated everyone's comments. He questioned the need for seven million dollars for raises; you should forgo raises. He has worked for Bilco in West Haven and there have been no raises for years in order to not lay people off. If there are no raises perhaps it will save some money to save some teachers. The City Council has a difficult task ahead of them to keep the City in tact and to not close schools. We all pay a fire tax but not a school tax. We should look into different options. Students should not be moved from every elementary school in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade they should be kept in the same schools to be with their classmates.

Tracy Morrissey, 305Country Hill Drive wanted to comment on a few things. It takes 9 votes by the council to change one line item on the budget. We will do whatever it takes

to find money but they will not be able to find six in a half million dollars. The City Council has taken many measures to collect back taxes. We have tried to get the boot signed and we want to put money towards education not the debt. This is a one time revenue at this point which could get us over the hump. These are drastic measures we are taking very quickly that are going to change our children's future.

I'm extremely upset to hear that 54 teachers are going to be laid off tonight. We will do whatever it takes to try and find that money for those teachers. Two years ago the City Council stepped up to the plate and found \$500,000.00. Unfortunately when the Mayor presented his budget he didn't decide to cut anything on the City side so it is all being done on the board of education side. We have to cut clearly across the board not just the bottom; it has to be across the board. Our budget is not as large as the BOE but we are willing to take a look. We are looking at positions that aren't filled to eliminate them. We need to do something we can't keep spending this money. People can no longer afford the taxes in this town. We are losing good people. We need to prioritize where our money is being spent and education is very easy to cut.

Our budget is on line I welcome any of you to look at it. Please come to the meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup>. We are here to hear your suggestions. We want to work with you. We need to do this for our children so please come, take your time, look over the budget and we want to hear what you have to say.

City Council Members have been meeting with the Board of Ed (myself, Ed O'Brien and Nancy Rossi) Communication lines must be kept open we have attended many PTA meetings and heard your concerns. We would like to keep those meetings going on a weekly basis and find where we can make these changes. Closing schools is not the solution.

Cheryl Santos, 46 Hillside Avenue stated her children are on her mind. She is outraged by the changes the board is proposing. Moving our children out of our community and bussing them across town is not an option. Many of us do not want our children subject to the dangers of riding school busses. We also do not want our children in the neighborhood that they are unfamiliar with. I purchased my home because of the schools that my kids would attend. What the BOE is proposing by moving our children will jeopardize the safety and standards that I have worked so hard to find for my family.

We cannot afford to lose our teachers. Teachers are vehicles for services. How can West Haven provide an adequate education to our children without providing the services they need. Statistics may show a decline in the number of children we serve the needs of those children are not showing a decline. We already have children that are not being serviced including those that do not speak English, require alternate learning models, have emotional or behavioral issues, and those that require additional stimulation and challenges. Children do better in small classrooms. We are finally seeing class size drop in West Haven and if we want to improve our success we should continue to make class size smaller not bigger. Closing schools means bigger classrooms. A considerable

amount was spent on training staff and cutting teachers already trained will undermine this effort.

The citizens of West Haven realize there is a budget crisis however we refuse to let our children bear the burden of years of poor planning and mismanagement from the City. The City of West Haven needs a plan. The concerned people of West Haven demand that the board of education make a detailed review of the superintendent's budget. The board's recommendation should be made public for voters to review. We supported board members by voting for you and now we need you to support us by listening to our concerns and making decisions not only on finances but based on the well being of our children.

Lynne Farrell said she was asked to come by a few of the teachers in the school system where she was principal for 30 years. When she as a member of the State Board of Education was able to see Thompson School and Molloy School in particular being way up there in their test scores she was so proud of the teachers and students. She know it is very difficult. She not only sits on the Connecticut State Board of Education but I am an elected Alderman where I live. During the past few weeks I have been listening to the same situation. Please look hard under every leaf and rock and try and find the money to keep these two schools open. Not only because of the students and parents who need those schools open but also because of the value they bring to West Haven. You have one of the top schools in the state that you are thinking of closing. Please do something else. Find the money I know it can be done because I sit on two boards that are looking for money. Keep the teachers where they are because they work very hard.

Richard Dizo, 32 Elizabeth Street said his son is in Pre-K at Seth Haley. He received help from the West Haven Schools and has progressed so much its unbelievable. He is 4 years old and is probably going into kindergarten next year which is concerning because of everything I have been hearing. My family and I moved here five years ago from Norwich who had the same problems West Haven does. They closed down two elementary schools and within six years their budget did not change and the enrollment of students in Norwalk decreased as well. The drop out rate did increase by 38% in six years after they closed those schools. I am asking for my child's sake and the sake of every child and the future children of West Haven to please keep these schools open.

Nancy Rossi 12 Robin Road said this is a bittersweet night for Molloy School and me as a councilwoman. I look at a wonderful achievement from a wonderful school, with wonderful teachers, administration and children. With one hand you give it and the other you take it away. I sent a list to Mr. Cavallaro this morning of different things I would like to look at as the Finance Chair and bring to my committee on the BOE budget. I know the State Statute says we can't tell you how to spend your money but it doesn't say we can't look into it before we give it to you. I'm not saying there is no room for cuts there is always room for cuts. The Police Dept. took serious cuts and there are a couple of positions that were eliminated and there is not that much money. It scares me about the BOE budget when I see the same amount in a column and it is exactly the same to the dollar three years across. That scares me because I want to know how much that line

item was looked into and were there invoices. I am requesting all the invoices. In fact we had a member of the public demand that we FOI where the stimulus money went because the taxpayers would like to know. They want some sort of an accountability. Mr. Cavallaro has been one of the most cooperative FOI people and I don't even have to FOI I sent it as a regular councilwoman finance chair and I do believe he will comply with all of the answers because he told me he would.

She and her committee member and council members will work diligently to take every dollar and do what we can with it. She urges the BOE to go back and look at your budget now. Look at consultants and look at line items I pointed out several; how raises were calculated and make sure all the numbers agree. Because I am a parent I know first hand how much children mean to a parent and their education is the absolute best gift we can give them.

Cheryl DeChello said she is proud to be a West Haven citizen and wants to continue to be proud. I trust that every one of you up there are great people and I know that you will do what is right for our children. I would love to walk my child to school in my neighborhood. I want to be able to see everything at all my children's schools. I have five children. If I have to have one at Carrigan, one at Bailey and one at Seth Haley I'm not going to be that involved mother who is able to see their play, read to them, bring them treats. These are things I need to do as a mom. I know that you want the same for your child and I trust the great people of West Haven in this great city will do what is best for our children so please Save Our Schools – Save Our Teachers. I have been through every school in West Haven except Pagels and Carrigan and all these teachers have been nothing but wonderful to my children and I have children of all ages. I have a special needs child, a high achiever child in TAG, another just coming into first grade and all the West Haven teachers have been there for everything for everyone of my children and I can't thank you enough and I want to be proud to be here in West Haven so please help save our schools and work this out. I know we don't have the money but I will fund raise and do anything I can please Save Our Schools and Teachers.

Annie Alvarez, 79 Claudia Drive spoke on behalf of Molloy School. Her daughter is in kindergarten. I own a condo in West Haven and was planning on selling it to buy a house near her daughter's school. Now I don't think I will stay in West Haven because of that. There are a lot of people who want to buy a house and now they don't have a school to send their kids to. Molloy is one of the greatest schools it is the second best in West Haven. I don't think it is fair that the kids are going to go to another school. We are not going to lose just two schools we are going to lose a lot of people in West Haven and a lot of tax money. Think about this.

Bob Davis, 36 Clark Street is a student at SCSU and his question to the board is what we are going to accomplish by closing schools. The main ideal of having a community is so that we all can educate our children. It is about bringing the children together so we can understand the diverse needs in the classroom and that is one thing that Thompson School addresses. He mentioned a proverb – we will water the thorn for the sake of the rose. These school districts in West Haven water our children to be nurtured and become great.

How can we have a West Haven tradition without our children being raised in this school system. I feel that any money used to help these schools stay alive and keep our teachers in the school system needs to be found. Students have already created a bond with their teachers and the community so to break up that community is to break up the West Haven tradition and that can not be allowed.

Victor Jones a student at University of New Haven asked if nothing did happen after closing down the school would you be willing to open it back up.

Savannah Lopez, 25 Saddle Drive made a speech about Molly School. Parents the kids need to learn about whatever they need to learn; the country, the states, the dates, so why would they close down the school. Just leave the schools there; kids need to learn.

The board gave thanks. Howard Horvath thanked everyone for coming and speaking out. Be assured that we have heard you and will be working diligently on all the comments and suggestions. There will be an AV portion next so we will take a few minutes and come back.

Public Session closed at 8:50 PM

## **C. REPORTS**

### **C.1. Administration**

Neil Cavallaro said it is our job to present a balanced budget and we will do our best. I think it is important to go over some of the questions we have received. The questions are attached to the end of the minutes and Superintendent Cavallaro's response follow the list.

#### **C.1. a. Status of Schools**

#### **C.1.b. Student Representatives**

There were no reports by the student reps during this meeting

#### **C.1. c. Board**

Howie Horvath said the Musical Production Seussical was phenomenal. He complimented Sean and Margi for their expertise; it was like a Broadway Show. Eric Pang, our student rep did a great job with his part

Dorinda said that Founder's Day was wonderful. It was great to acknowledge the people who give so unselfishly to the children.

Howie Horvath thanked the PTA for the long hours they put into Founder's Day to make it such a huge success.



Howie Horvath thanked the PTA for compiling the questions used at tonight's meeting.

#### **C.1. d. Committees**

Rob Saley, Chair of the Facilities Committee, would like to hold a committee meeting at 6:00 PM on Monday, April 5, 2010. Joseph Yacano, Mike McGrath and Ken Carney are to be invited to this meeting. Letters will be sent by the board secretary. Tracy Morrissey from City Council will be copied. One item to be discussed will be the abundance of heat in the various schools and the five year capital plan

Dorinda Borer said the PTA Meetings have been on-going and very informative. They discussed the methodology of how to get rid of excess paperwork.

#### **D.1. Approval of Minutes**

##### **D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Meeting held March 1, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Blake Bldg. (Enclosure)**

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.

M. Toni Paine made a motion to approve the Board of Education minutes D.1.a.

Sean Maher seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members present voted in favor

No one was opposed

Motion Carries - Minutes are approved

#### **D.2. Resignations: (Certified)**

##### **10-15 Derrick Lewis, Assistant Boy's Track and Field Coach - WHHS Effective: March 1, 2010 Reason: Personal**

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-15.

Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-15.

Sean Maher seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members present voted in favor

No one was opposed

Motion Carries – D.2. Resignations Certified item 10-15 is approved

##### **10-16 Desmond Lymon, Boy's Basketball Coach – Carrigan Effective: March 8, 2010 Reason: Personal**

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-16.  
Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-16.  
M. Toni Paine seconded the motion  
Discussion: None  
All board members present voted in favor  
No one was opposed  
Motion Carries – D.2. Resignations Certified item 10-16 is approved

**10-17 Eric Brisart, Special Ed Teacher – Pagels**  
Effective: End of the 2009/2010 school year  
Reason: Personal

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-17.  
Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-17.  
M. Toni Paine seconded the motion  
Discussion: None  
All board members present voted in favor  
No one was opposed  
Motion Carries – D.2. Resignations Certified item 10-17 is approved

**10-18 Joanne Zuk, Cross Country Coach – WHHS**  
Effective: March 16, 2010  
Reason: Personal

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-18.  
Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.2. Resignations Certified 10-18.  
Sean Maher seconded the motion  
Discussion: Dorinda Borer questioned the fact that personal was the reason given for a number of resignations. This is the employee's reason given in their submitted letters.  
All board members present voted in favor  
No one was opposed  
Motion Carries – D.2. Resignations Certified item 10-18 is approved

**D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)**

**D.4. Leave of Absence: (Non-Certified)**

**D.5. New Hire: (Certified)**

**D.6. New Hire: (Non-Certified)**

**D.7. New Business**

**10-19 Approval of West Haven Department of Education School Calendar  
2010 – 2011**

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.7. New Business item 10-19.

Dorinda Borer made a motion to approve D.7. New Business 10-19.

Eric Murillo seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members present voted in favor

No one was opposed

Motion Carries – D.7. New Business item 10-19 is approved

#### **D.7. New Business**

##### **10-20 Non-Renewals of Non-Tenured Teachers for the 2010 - 2011 School Year.**

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.7. New Business item 10-20.

With deep regret M. Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.7. New Business 10-20.

Rob Saley seconded the motion

Discussion: Howie said we do this with a heavy heart especially considering what our teachers have done for our students.

All board members present voted in favor

No one was opposed

Motion Carries – D.7. New Business item 10-20 is approved

#### **F. Informational:**

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Rob Saley made a motion to adjourn the meeting

Eric Murillo the motion

All members were in favor

The meeting ended at 9:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary

The following pages will have the parent questions that Superintendent Cavallaro answered during the audio visual presentation.

# PARENT QUESTIONS

- Is Special Education Tuition costs reimbursed?  
If it is reimbursed... How much is reimbursed?  
Where does that money go?
- If teacher layoffs will only save 2.1 million  
Where will the other 3.4 million come from?

- There is a proposal which seems like a great way to keep all our teachers and we want you to do it. If the whole School system took a furlough of 5 days spread out and staggered it would generate a savings of one million dollars. Is that accurate? If yes, doing it as soon as possible could save teachers jobs so why not do it?
- Why did Stimulus money go to things that demand future expenditures when the money isn't guaranteed every year?

Why won't you offer retirement packages?

With all the cuts that seem to be needed shouldn't Administrators, Consultants and Blake Building Employees be reduced?

Shouldn't a ratio be in place that for every teacher one of these categories should be reduced?

Isn't professional development paid for by grants? Why did we pay to develop staff we can't keep in the system?

Can Stiles school be used in planning the future of our school system? If no then why?



Extra Page – Nothing Missing

In planning our future are you looking at possible scenarios by taking into account the preschool population whether private or public, the possibility that the State may affect the migration of our students to New Haven and they return to our school district and the effects that redistricting could make on parents decisions to send their kids to private school and instead they return to the public school system?

Are any of our School system staff retiring and then being used as a consultant? We are not looking for names. Just want to see if this is taking place with our school funding?

- Has centralized kindergarten been discussed and the need for all day kindergarten? If so what is your opinion and how will the needs of the kids that need full day be addressed?

- The following questions refer to the proposed idea of closing Thompson and Molloy and redistricting the students, and changing the middle school format to have all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in one of them and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in the other.
  - » How did you determine which schools to close?
  - » How will those kids be redistricted?
  - » What is going to happen with Thompson School and the costs or losses that are incurred as far as the renovations that haven't been depreciated and the uninstalled boiler system?
  - » How will you mitigate those losses?
  - » Is it true that with "No child left behind laws" that moving a student from an achieving school to a failing school could bring litigation? If true how will Molloy students be handled to ensure their continued success and not create litigation for the School system?
  - » Have you studied other school systems that are using your proposed plan? Which school systems are they? How long and how well are they doing?
  - » Is special needs being addressed in this new plan? How so?
  - » What are the costs of buses now and what will they be under this new plan?
  - » What are the proposed class sizes? Please try to look ahead and give numbers for the next three years.
  - » What are the costs of unemployment under this plan?
  - » If in the event we would be facing an overcrowded situation and would need to move fifth grade out of our elementary schools, was there any discussion of moving fifth into the existing middle schools?

Superintendent Cavallaro's response to the above questions.

1. One of our concerns as a school district is the rising cost of Special Education tuition. Special Ed costs per student are reimbursed after the district spends \$53,000 per student. Outside placement can cost anywhere from \$40 to \$100,000. The money goes to the City during the month of July and we work with the City to get some of that money back when possible.

2. The actual number with 54 teacher layoffs is 2.2 million dollars in salaries and 2.7 million dollars which would include benefits. Right now the teachers take the brunt tonight because before April 1<sup>st</sup> to non-renew non-tenured teachers could save us the costs involved in potential hearings down the road. We did this on the advice of our attorney. I can assure that when I present a plan to the board there will be cuts across the board in all areas including administrators.

3. Furloughs – Management can lay off any time they want. They can say there is no money we will not fill positions. Furloughs must be agreed upon with the bargaining units. We have started brief talks with our bargaining units. Although late in the school year for the budget cycle it is pretty early. Hopeful to sit with all unions and come up with a workable plan that may or may not include furloughs if we can save money in other areas. The board can not arbitrarily decide to furlough its employees.

4. We are required to spend that money and it must be spent in targeted areas. The money must be spent quickly to save and create jobs – we did this and after this year there will be no stimulus money and as of today there is no new stimulus money to allocate for salaries. We did create a few jobs; the assistant principal at Carrigan and two math coaches along with an accountant to assist with the funding. To improve student achievement - All of the other jobs directly help improve student performance. We spent this money wisely and report quarterly to make sure it being spent properly.

5. We are working diligently with the teacher's union to try and come up with something. Retirement packages are costly. Senior teachers would like to retire but with the economy being so tough many don't think they have the ability to go out and supplement their livelihood. They have earned their seniority. We have to do something that makes sense that does not keep ex-employees on our books for years. This hurts what we can give to our new employees. Teachers receive a pretty good severance package when they leave so we need to work out something where teachers give a little of that up or where the money is spread out over time or they receive something else. We are working with them to make sure it makes sense and doesn't bind the BOE many years down the road.

6. All areas including the Blake Building will be affected. We have 30 full time administrators. We are proposing eliminating 3 of them. That is 10% of our administrative salaries. We have 580 teachers and 54 of them will be affected along with non-certified and unfortunately paraprofessionals who give kids the extra help. We

don't want to lose one person but we will be fair and equitable. We will do our best not to make teachers feel the brunt of the layoffs.

7. West Haven is a Title 1 School District and we received a lot of funds in the form of federal dollars from Title 1 and a percentage of that money must go toward professional development. We have spent most of the money on professional development from Title 1 Grants. Our goal is to keep the staff in our system and even if we lose them someday to get them back. We want them all trained the same way to do what is best for our students.

8. No, Stiles is really an outdated school with limited potential. This is a personal opinion but if I had to open a school down the road I would want something better for our students. We would like to start doing some long term planning and seeing how we can improve our buildings and should we be thinking about building 21<sup>st</sup> century schools with all the things kids need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

9. All of this is being taken into consideration and we have done long term projection studies. The trend is that our population will continue to go down for the next 5 – 6 years. We lose almost 100 students a year to magnet schools in New Haven. One of the reason they leave is because of state of the art facilities.

10. We have one retired administrator being used to help write a grant who is paid for out of the grant. We hired a new full time administrator to take over at the end of this school year. The line item in the budget pertains mostly to our law firm (expulsions etc.) because there is no contract and it is an hourly based fee. We have hired back some teachers in shortage areas that are difficult to hire teachers in math, science, art classes, library science and English. Once you prove to the state you can't find anybody we are allowed to hire a retired teacher. When they are brought back they have a much reduced salary which works to our advantage and you can only do this for two years.

11. Yes but all day kindergarten will not be brought back at this time. This year it is not a secret that we are having a difficult time maintaining what we have. This will not happen in the next year or two even though I would like it to happen.

12. At this point the BOE has not seen a formal plan; we are still working out the numbers because we have to have a balanced budget.

- I picked the schools with the two lowest enrollments. By sending students to other schools they could get more of the amenities. Thompson is also the oldest school.
- No plan has been finalized but basically Molloy kids would be sent to mostly Haley and Pagels with some at Mackrille. Molloy is the smaller school and the kids can fit there. Thompson kids would go to the other schools which are larger and it would be easier to fit them into Savin Rock, Washington and Forest.
- The boiler system can be used at any time. By adding the elevator at Thompson we received state reimbursement. The building by being almost 100 years old wasn't meant to be handicap accessible.

- There would be a penalty but not one that we would have to immediately write a check for.
- No, none of the schools the kids will be sent to are failing schools yet. By 2014 all schools have to be 100% proficient in all areas. Eventually no schools will be labeled failing schools and I believe they will change the law to make schools that show progress taken off the list.
- Naugatuck, Guilford and Durham have similar plans. Other school districts are also organizing to save money. We will do the best we can to continue to provide a good education to the kids in our town but many decisions will be made based on finances. I wish this were different.
- None of the 54 teachers being laid off tonight are Special Ed. We have a rising Special Ed population and we have to meet the needs of every one of those kids. Some of those classes may be relocated and unfortunately a lot of those kids are moved around anyway to find classes that meet their needs.
- There would be no increase from our bus company. Mr. Winkle understands the crisis we are in and has offered to forego his raise. He is a wonderful guy and we receive very good service from Winkle Bus Company.
- The projection is that enrollment is declining and class sizes now are 20 to 21 and would increase to 24 or 25. There would be some exceptions throughout the district but the average would be about 24.
- Unemployment costs would be covered by the money we budgeted.
- I don't believe that 5<sup>th</sup> graders would be ready for a total middle school environment with 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Superintendent Cavallaro gave the questions some thought and worked on the answers. If you have any questions you can call my office or send me an email. He will do his best to put forward a plan that makes sense educationally and financially. We will do our best. He thanked everyone for coming and listening. He looks forward to meeting with the PTA parents again.