

Pending BOE Approval

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: January 22, 2018
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: Lecture Hall, Watertown High School

Members Present: Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Mr. Victor Vicenzi
Ms. Cheryl Albino
Ms. Cindy Eastman

Members Absent: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

Others Present: Dr. Bridget Carnemolla – Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Thomas DiStasio – Business Manager
Paola Dante – Student Council Representative

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

B. Moment of Silence – In remembrance of Ms. Elaine (Pennarola) Cyr

Dr. Carnemolla – Thank you. Last week we lost a former friend and colleague in the Watertown Public Schools, a paraprofessional for 28 years with us, who was known and revered by many and worked in many of our schools over the time of her 28 years. After a long fight with a brain tumor, Elaine Pennarola Cyr passed last week. I would like to observe a moment of silence for her.

And also, unfortunately, just before this meeting this evening, I was notified, and have not had a moment to put something out to the district, that we have had another person who worked with us for many, many years...Ms. June Legge, who was a teacher, athletic director and worked with us here for 37 years, and she has passed away. I have no other details at this time, but I wanted to let everyone know and also observe a moment of silence for her as well.

C. Salute to the Flag**D. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson****E. Minutes**

Agenda Item:	E.1
Subject:	Minutes of the January 08, 2018 Regular Board of Education Meeting
Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Makowski
Text of the Motion:	I move that the board approve of the minutes of the January 08, 2018 regular board of education minutes as presented.
Discussion:	None
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	Ms. Albino
Vote:	Motion Passes

F. Report from Student Council Representative – Paola Dante

John Trumbull honored the life of Dr. King by holding an assembly where the school gathered together to sing songs of hope, peace and tolerance. A luncheon was held for Mrs. Anne Gibbons on Sunday for being Oakville's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7330's Teach of the Year. Students were challenged to reach 10,000 "gotchas" this month by being ready, responsible and respectful. If they do reach their goal, they will receive an extra special school-wide reward. Also, the 2018 auction will be held at the historic Princeton Building on Friday, February 9th, from 6:30 – 9:30 p.m., which is hosted by the PTO.

Polk's PTO has been busy. Last Thursday, January 18th, the PTO organized the Magic of FIVE a Day: a Nutrition Assembly Program which excited students about nutrition by using magic, comedy, and audience participation. Polk's winter concert will be held on Tuesday, January 30th while the play, The Lion King, will be on Friday, February 23rd.

Our weekly glance at **Judson** shows that students are planning and consulting with their advisor, Mrs. Marquardt, to participate in the Invention Convention. Fourth graders saw the movie Wonder in order to make comparisons between the novel and film.

The entire **Swift** staff and student body also recently attended an exclusive showing of the movie Wonder, with follow up activities in the works. The critically acclaimed film had themes that matched with Swift's initiatives of kindness, empathy, acceptance and determination.

Upcoming events include: a full school presentation by the Anti-Defamation League on January 23rd, 8th graders visiting the high school from January 23 -24, and the Swift Invitational Tourney from January 27th-28th.

Moving on to the High School, we'd like to share that the Link Crew hosted another successful Cocoa & Cramming session for Freshmen last Tuesday, January 16th. This annual event connects the upperclassmen with the freshmen who prepare for midterms together. Our robotics team will hold their annual Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, January 21st from 8:00-12:00 at the Oakville YMCA. At this point in time, over 63% of the senior class has been accepted into college. For extra support, counselors host month scholarship workshops that are open to all students. Litchfield Bancorp has helped us facilitate literacy courses for multiple grades through our SSP advisory program. We also had a representative from Thomaston Savings Bank come in and talk to students who are interested in the banking field. Another date to remember is Thursday, January 25th, which is the Junior Parent night and that starts at 6:00 p.m. Lastly, we are thankful for the support of Det. Ferrucci from the Watertown Police Department, who spoke and interacted with our Forensics classes.

G. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

1. Appointments – (Information Only)

Mr. Thomas DiStasio to the position of Business Manager for Watertown Public Schools, effective January 16, 2018 at a salary of \$110,000.00 for the 2018-2019 contract year.

2. Transfers – (Information Only)

None

3. Resignations – (Information Only)

None

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Carnemolla – Thank you. I would like to take a moment and introduce and recognize our new business manager who is here with us evening, who obviously doesn't have his placard yet, but Tom DiStasio started with us last Tuesday and has been with us about a week. As you know, the plane is flying at a high speed and he has jumped right in. He has been a great help already and I can't even say enough about that right now so I will stick to introducing Tom. Tom is a certified public accountant and he is coming to us with a career primarily in auditing with Blum Shapiro and with different facets with the state, UCONN Health Center. He certainly stood out in our pool of candidates as not only very knowledgeable, but professional and committed to the work at hand. This is a venture for him to be a business manager but, as I have often said since we interviewed Tom, he knows the back end of the budget, and he is learning how to build the front end with me, but having done the auditing that he does, he is well versed in what a budget looks like and the funding. Welcome, Tom,

and thank you very much for the amount of work you have already jumped with two feet into, because as you know, we had a budget and finance committee meeting tonight before this board meeting and at the very next board meeting I will be presenting the budget for 18/19, so clearly this is a crucial point in the budget development and I am glad you are here. We have a field trip for the Robotics Team on the agenda tonight. This is an event, as you know, that depending on how well they are doing, and that there is a fundraiser for the Robotics Team also for their continued success. I want to again congratulate Ann Marie Gibbons from John Trumbull Primary school, who as you heard, was named the VFW Teacher of the Year. We are always proud of all of our teachers, certainly, but it is very exciting when someone else recognizes them. Ann has done a fantastic job as the Library Media Specialist at John Trumbull and that has been a transformation of her role, as for years she served as a grade 2 teacher. So, thank you again and congratulations to Ann.

H. Item of Discussion – 2018 – 2018 School Calendar

Dr. Carnemolla – As you know, we put a committee together to plan for the school calendar for the following year. There are many facets of input for the school calendar, first of which is the regional calendar that comes to us from the Litchfield County Region as it's built, which the state expects us to do and we also get feedback from the teachers, administrators and bring it back here to discuss. Some of it is non-negotiable to some degree but there are a few changes to the calendar this year. We continue on starting the school year the week before Labor Day and with professional developments in advance of students arriving. We have a little change to the conferences, because of the way that Veteran's Day falls and the timing, so they are a little bit earlier this year with having them be October 30th as the start of them. I want to point out that there is no perfect way to do conferences. No matter how we schedule them, there will be one resulting issue or another. I know that one of the concerns often is that you have a student at more than one of the schools. Because of the times that evening conferences are, that would make it difficult for you. On the other hand, we have to do those on half days. So if we split them up and held all five schools on different days, we would have to have five different half days. So the balance there is that we would have parents looking for child care on five half days and we would lose five half days of school versus running the conferences in the district on the same day, so it is a catch 22 that we are trying to balance out the needs of the school and the needs of the parents. In the end, our feedback has been that as difficult as it may be for parents to go to a conference at more than one school, they would rather have to do that then try to find child care on different days. We looked into the possibility to changing what we did for Veteran's Day this year, because as you know, we have been talking about having school on Veteran's Day and bringing the Veterans in to work with students and do what we do much of now on Veteran's Day, which many other districts have now done. This year, based on the feedback that we got from our local Veterans, we decided to leave it as is and leave it as Veteran's Day observed on Monday, November 12th. The main reason for that is the feedback that I got from Veterans is that when Veteran's Day is actually Veteran's Day, not an observed day, they would be mostly busy with other parades and commitments that they have, so our idea for trying to bring them in at this point, they were unable to work with us. So we decided to leave it as it was and work with them and continue the programs we have with them. Couple of things to note about choosing the professional development days, we try to do as much as we can with professional development in the beginning of the year as possible because we are working with teachers on what their needs are for the school year and moving forward, so obviously, we want to frontload days at the beginning of the year because at the end of the year

you are already doing things in preparation for the coming school year. We also try to change which days they are on, so that is why you see some on Monday, Tuesday, Friday...throughout the year, trying to balance them out while trying to keep parent needs in mind. If you notice, October 5th is a Friday, we ran our full day PD that day because Monday is Columbus Day and since they are already off on Monday, it makes more sense from an instructional standpoint not to interrupt the week and if parents wanted to do something, they have an elongated weekend. There is not too much more here that is of note, the rest is what we have done every year.

Ms. Rinaldi – I understand about the afternoon conferences, but the evening conferences, all schools (except Judson and Polk) have them on different nights, and it is easier for more parents to come to night conferences, and it would be hard to go to conferences at the high school and Swift or the high school and Judson. Is there a way to change that?

Dr. Carnemolla – By contract with our teachers, it designates when the half days have to be. The March conferences cannot be on different days because they have to be a half day and we don't want five different half days. We looked at the possibility of doing something different, but based on the contracts and schedule, this is the best we could do. You see in November with the evening conferences we did stagger the conferences there, but in March, by contract, we have to give a half day to the teachers for the evening conferences. So we either do them all on the same day, or we have a half day for each one. By contract, one of the evening conferences we have to have a half day for.

Ms. Rinaldi – Can't we split the ones on the 7th and the ones on the 20th?

Ms. Parlato – March 20th there are no afternoon conferences, and March 20th there is a half day for everyone and part of the contractual language is that the teachers are able to leave.

Ms. Rinaldi – I am not trying to make a big deal out of it by any means, but I know that people have made comments on how it is hard to go to both. I am not sure if there is another way to look at it....at our school we do them two weeks in a row, say on a Wednesday, and the elementary and high school have the half day, and the following week it is switched.

Dr. Carnemolla – It makes sense. But it makes more half days here to lose instruction for us. We are trying to maximize how many days they are here while giving the teachers the amount of time by contract and balance it out with a schedule that works with the parents. That is why we were able to play with the November ones and stagger them. The March ones we really can't do anything with unless we add in more half days.

Ms. Rinaldi – On March 7th, do the teachers get to leave?

Dr. Carnemolla – No, as they have to stay for conferences.

Ms. Rinaldi – All the teachers stay on March 7th and leave on March 20th? But can't we split that and half do that March 7th and half do it March 20th? They are still getting to leave on one day. Then they are not all on one night and all on one day.

Mr. Makowski – Is it in the contract...a specific date?

Dr. Carnemolla – No. It is just that one of the two have to be a half day.

Ms. Rinaldi - They would still be half days, just not all on one day and all on one night.

Dr. Carnemolla – I hear what you are saying. The reason that it is in the contract the way that it is is so that they have that time on the same day. The spirit of the language of the contract was that they were all able to leave that day because they all have to come back to work that night.

Ms. Rinaldi – I get it, but they would still get their half day. They just would not all be on the same day. But that is fine. I am just thinking of the parents.

Dr. Carnemolla – I think that as we move into next year, we can look into doing it a bit differently, but this is approved by the teachers union and the administrators union as is. SO we would have to go back to it again, and I will do that, if that is what we want to do, I'll go back, but we try to do it at this time of year, because as you know, parents wonder when the

vacations are going to be for the following year. But this is put together with the input of that committee and then finalized by me.

Ms. Rinaldi – I am not trying to be difficult, but it has come up before, especially on parent conference night, so I just thought I would ask.

I. Best Practice Presentation

Seventh-grade students from Swift Middle School will demonstrate a "Book Tasting", where they sample a variety of possible book selections that appeal to their tastes, interests, and abilities, and then discuss those reading options with their peers. Language Arts teachers use the Book Tastings as one method to encourage, support, and motivate students to read a wide range of books independently.

Ms. Gallo – Good evening. My name is Mary Beth Gallo; I am a seventh grade Language Arts teacher, team leader, and the co-coordinator of the Language Arts Department at Swift Middle School. We are very honored to be here to showcase our students as they demonstrate technique used to promote independent reading. Our students are inundated with so much technology that reading books for pleasure outside of school tends to take a back seat. We must continually search out ways to encourage all students to read independently to increase their vocabulary, their comprehension, fluency and reading stamina. Independent reading is a part of Grade 7 and in order to promote a love for reading and the development of a lifelong reader, a book tasting takes place in my classroom. Giving students a choice on what they read aligns itself to student empowerment and a feeling of importance. Empowering students sets them up for success as lifelong readers and it also develops interesting book group conversations because students are reading what they choose. In a book tasting in the classroom, students move from table to table for each course of the meal to taste various courses of the book and share their thoughts and conversations and observations which in turn allows them to elaborate on their thinking. They evaluate and rate the books as they search for the book of their liking. In the classroom they would typically spend several minutes tasting each course at six different tables made up of a variety of books, which goes from appetizer to dessert. Once the student has completed the rotation of going from table to table in the classroom, they would then look over their menu to make a final determination of the book that they would like to read. They would also complete a reflection on the "napkin" which they would turn in to me. We are fortunate to have a few of our students here tonight that will demonstrate the process and for the sake of time tonight, these students will only have their appetizers and they will work at one table and with just one book. What you will see is the students following along on their menu, but we won't go through all of the courses tonight, and we brought one book per table for the sake of time. They will examine the cover, the back of the book, skim through the first page and discuss their observations and thoughts with their peers before determining if it is the book for them. The students then rate the book. This process then helps with the assignment of the books. To see the demonstration, please go to <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/watertown-ct-board-of-education-meetings>.

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

None

K. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No
Policy and Labor Committee, Mr. Victor Vicenzi, Chair – No
Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. Thomas Lambert, Chair – Yes

Prior to this meeting tonight, we had a Budget and Finance committee meeting in which we discussed the 2017/2018 budget as well as our budget objectives for fiscal year 2018/2019.

Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Mr. Thomas Lambert, Chair – Yes

On Thursday, January 18th there was a very successful walkthrough for potential contractors that may bid on this project. A large number of contractors that were there was a very good sign. Hopefully there will be a wide range of competitive bids on this project. All bids are due in early February and we hope that we get some good competitive bids in the range that we budgeted for.

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

L. Communications – Secretary

None

M. Report from the Board Chair

Mr. Lambert – In the absence of Mrs. Crotty, I would like to report on the release of up to date information on our Superintendent search. The search is being conducted by Dr. Erardi's firm, JE Consulting. The contract costs \$5250.00. Immediately following this adjournment, a non-meeting will be conducted with the superintendent search committee and the search consultant to review and discuss the recommended superintendent candidates and upcoming interview process.

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

Agenda Item:	N.1
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval of the Proposed 2018-2019 School Year Calendar
Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Rinaldi
Text of the Motion:	Mr. Chairman, I move that the board approve of the proposed 2018-2019 school year calendar.
Discussion:	Mr. Makowski – If we approve the calendar, and if at some point it is felt at a later date that the schedule should be staggered, as Ms. Rinaldi had described, is

that something that would require it to be re-presented to the board for approval? Because we are not changing the dates, but are staggering the time that they are done?

Dr. Carnemolla – I think that it would be appropriate that if we make a change, that we can just publish the change.

Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

Agenda Item:	N.2
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval of an Out of State Field Trip to Lewiston, Maine

Motion Presented By:	Mr. Vicenzi
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion:	Mr. Chairman, I move that the board approve of the out of state field trip to Lewiston, Maine for approximately twenty six (26) Watertown High School students who are all members of the Robotics Team and six (6) chaperones from March 22 through March 24, 2018.
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

Vote:	Motion Passes
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O. Future Agenda Items and Board Members' Comments

Mr. Makowski noted how much he enjoyed the presentation from the Swift students and hope there are more programs out there to engage more students in the love of reading.

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

None

Q. Dr. Joseph Erardi, Jr – Report on Results of Superintendent Survey

Dr. Erardi – Thank you. Good evening members of the Board of Education. Let me share the profile of who has applied for the position. I was very pleased that in the world of courage to apply for a superintendent position, there are 20 applications completed. They are folks that have or had Superintendents experience. I like your pool of applicants and I think the committee as we meet later on tonight, I would like to challenge them to replace someone who I think has done outstanding work with the district in Dr. Carnemolla.

The survey launched approximately three weeks ago and we had a robust response. I believe that any time there is over 200 hits on a survey, that it is a real nice indicator that the community at large cares greatly about the work that you do as a school board. What I tried to do for you was to quantify, in the simplest way, the number of hits on the conclusions that I reached. I have the raw data and the raw data is hundreds of pages. If anyone wants to look at that you are welcome to do so. But the findings were interesting, some were unique to Watertown and some were not. I don't think there would be any survey in any community that would not want a superintendent that is very smart around communication and around fiscal. That was prevalent in the great majority of responses. The expectation in the Watertown community is that you are going to hire a superintendent that has outstanding communication skills, that keeps its stakeholders together, and has a real deep understanding of fiscal balance. That was said in a lot of polite ways and many ways that were less than polite. I also thought it was important to share with you that there was chatter on distributive leadership. They want someone who leads and empowers and trusts others. They are looking for someone that has quiet confidence, is decisive and sure with their decisions.

The character traits were interesting; I don't think it will surprise you as I think this is what you'll be looking for...someone who is honest, approachable, forward thinking and friendly. I thought it was very interesting when it asks... What does Watertown do well? What do you hang your hat on and what do you do well? The great majority talked about the students, the opportunities that this school board and this community provide; they are proud of their graduate. They are proud of the K-12 experience. They also spoke in great detail about who works in Watertown. Real positive comments around staff, the dedication of the staff and they have made it positive for student success. Many comments about a community that supports students and additional comments around central office leadership. I am not here to embarrass Dr. Carnemolla, but if you want to read the raw data, it is very uncommon, because usually when there is an announcement that you are leaving, that is when all of your critical friends seem to get louder. That was not the case with this survey. It was very complementary to the present leadership in the hope that we can repeat the success that Dr. Carnemolla has had in the past 6 years in Watertown.

The challenges are not surprising either. What Dr. C and Mr. Lambert have spoken about with the budget...God bless you folks. You don't know what you don't know and the timing is very difficult, but this community really wants someone who is going to take a deep dive into fiscal and budget. The second is the retention of staff at all levels and what has to happen in Watertown to hold onto good folks. There was come conversation around the cost of

technology, how to stay in front of that cost, is it up to date, enhancing, teaching and learning, or is it trying to keep it up and running? The last two items that were worth of mentioning which is around the transition of one building to the next and the second is around the understanding district wide of your behavioral code of conduct. The last piece that has information provided that I have for you is that I have fielded numerous amounts of phone calls, electronic mail, and US post. These are folks that just wanted a better voice, or a better way and wanted me to know who they were when they had an opinion. The common thread was to please find a superintendent who is willing to be here for a very long time. That is a very difficult thing for a hiring committee because I don't think there is a candidate that will sit in front of a hiring committee and say I will be here for two years and see how it goes. The community voice was that length was important. But, the average stay of a superintendent is less than 3 ½ years. They are also hoping the new superintendent will go on a listening tour before a change tour and listen to those that want to share. The common thread was please don't come in and believe that change needs to happen immediately. Understand our district and then go forward. They want someone who is visible, clear in their decision making and someone who is dedicated to children. They don't want someone who will sit behind a desk and run the district like a fortune 500 company. I think it is important to post this on the website and let those that took the survey see the results. Overall, this is a great guide for the hiring committee and later on this evening we will talk about the questions that I suggest that you ask. The questions stem from the survey. I am pleased with the survey, I am pleased with the applicant pool, and I am excited to really get started.

R. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board