

**Watertown Board of Education  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** February 10, 2014  
**Meeting Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Meeting Place:** Lecture Hall, Watertown High School

**Members Present:** Mr. Guy Buzzannco, Chairman  
Mr. Eric Berthel, Vice Chair  
Mr. Ray Nardella, Secretary  
Mr. Tom Lambert  
Ms. Janelle Wilk  
Ms. Leslie Crotty  
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa  
Mr. David Guerrero  
Mr. Jim Gambardella

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Dr. Thomas McDowell, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Andrew Terzigni, Student Council Representative

- A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.
- B. Salute to the Flag
- C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Before we proceed, I would like to take a moment. It is with a sad, but very grateful heart that we mark the passing of Livingston Crowell last week. Livingston and his wife Florence have served this town in numerous ways over the past 60 years but I think their greatest impact was on the children of Watertown who were lucky enough to call Florence their teacher and Livingston their principal and their teacher for over 30 years. Mr. Crowell, or Livvi, as his staff and workers who cherished him called him, began his teaching career at Baldwin school. And in 1956, he became Judson’s first principle, a position he held until his retirement, and 1982. That was 32 years ago. Last week, when Mr. Crowell’s son Charlie posted on Facebook the news of his father’s passing, the posting received 85 comments. Mostly from former students. Teachers and others who have known him and had studied under him, and were lucky enough to have him as their principal. “Watertown has lost a treasure”, said one of them, and I

couldn't agree more. Would you please join me in a moment of silence and remembrance and thanksgiving? (Moment of silence) Thank you.

**D. Report from Student Council Representative – Andrew Terzigni**

**Andrew Terzigni** – Thank you. Winter sports are starting to wrap up, with one sport done already and the others ending in the next few weeks. The indoor track team finishes their season strong. The boys finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the NVL and the girls finished 6<sup>th</sup>. The team also sent 19 players to the Class M state championships last week. Two teams have senior nights approaching, girls' basketball on Wednesday night and boys' swimming on Thursday night. The WHS cheerleaders have been in Florida for the last week of the National High School Cheerleading Championships. Currently we have no information on their standings, but I'll keep the board updated.

Several students have approached Mr. Medic to make a formal student fan section at sporting events. These students currently go to many games and events to cheer but they hope to make a formal group to go to every sporting event.

The quarter 2 grade portal should be open tomorrow afternoon so all parents and students can view grades from the second quarter.

Juniors and Seniors at Watertown High got to experience the Truth About Hate program today. The Truth About Hate program is a moving and powerful program led by the Anti-Defamation League, it promotes a more positive and supportive school community. They hope to combat hateful behavior between students. The program will continue tomorrow with an assembly for Freshmen and Sophomores. I was at the assembly today and I can say how truly powerful it was. My brother has been a part of this assembly when it came to Watertown five years ago and he said that it was so incredibly moving and he was not kidding around. It was so powerful and such a good event!

**Mr. Buzzannc**o – Thank you Andrew for that report, we appreciate that very much.

**E. Public Participation**

**Mr. Buzzannc**o – Does anyone else wish to address the board this evening? Does anyone else wish to address the board this evening? If not, we will close this first round of public participation and move onto committee reports.

**F. Committee Reports**

**Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Mr. Ray Nardella, Chair-No**

**Policy and Labor Committee, Mr. Eric Berthel, Chair-Yes**

**Mr. Berthel** – Mr. Chairman,

**Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. Eric Berthel, Chair-No**

**Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Mr. Tom Lambert, Chair-No**

**Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Ray Nardella, Chair-No**

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**G. Communication – Mr. Nardella**

None

**H. Minutes**

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Are there any corrections or changes to the regular meeting minutes of January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014?

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Hearing none, may I have a motion to approve the minutes of the regular Board of Education minutes for January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 as submitted?

Agenda Item Number: H.1a

Subject: Minutes of the Board of Education Meeting – January 27, 2014

Motion Presented By: Mr. Nardella

Motion Seconded By: Mr. Berthel

Text of the Motion: I move that the board approve the minutes of the regular Board of Education meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, as submitted.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: Ms. Crotty

Mr. Guerrero

Vote: Motion Passes

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**I. Superintendent’s Recommendation and Report**

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

- a. Ms. Christine Halloran to the position of National Honor Society Co-Advisor at Watertown High School for the 2013-2014 school year at a contractual stipend of \$544.20, prorated and payable at the end of the season.
- b. Ms. Janet Marino to the position of Category #2, Paraprofessional at Polk Elementary School, effective February 3, 2014, for 27.5 hours per week at an hourly rate of \$13.37.
- c. Ms. Virginia Roman to the position of Category #1, Paraprofessional at John Trumbull Primary School, effective February 18, 2014, for 27.5 hours per week at an hourly rate of \$13.37.
- d. Ms. Chrystle Czczot to the position of English Language Learners Tutor at Watertown Public Schools, effective February 3, 2014 until the last day of school, for 30 hours per week at the hourly rate of \$20.00.

**2. Resignation – Information Only**

1. Mr. Michael Veronneau from the position of Varsity Football Coach at Watertown High School, effective January 23, 2014 for personal reasons.
2. Ms. Andrea Brown from the position of Paraprofessional at Watertown High School, effective January 31, 2014 for personal reasons.

**3. Superintendent's Report**

**Dr. McDowell** – Mr. Berthel has asked that I talk a little about the board manual. It is very important, not only for the administration, but for the Board of Education to have updated policies. What we have is a recommendation from the Shipman and Goodwin model policies. It is lots of work for all of us to do, especially for building an office administrators, to come up to speed but as I said in subcommittee tonight, our present policy manual has 15 sections. Technology being the last section because technology is the latest thing that we had to deal with. In the rest of the world, the series are standardized and that is what this policy manual is going to do. Also included, are the state and federal notifications and, as opposed to your current manual, which is very rainbowed, in effect, with different colors, this manual is really two colors. The white pages are policy and the green pages are regulation and then the state and federal notifications are the indices in the back. Once the board approves this policy model, this manual, we will be current with all state and federal laws. We are not right now and it is very important for us to be. So, I am looking forward to

working with the board in the policy subcommittee, and we also have decided we are going to review the present policies by March 10 and the present policies that are Watertown Board of Ed policies, which we feel are necessary to be included in the model policies. On March 10, I will have an update on that and hopefully we can have a first reading every 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### J. Report from the Chairman

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Most board members were here last week to hear the comments and suggestions expressed by six of our district parents along with the challenges that they face. What you don't know, is that one of those parents called me the very next day. She asked me what the district paid for rock salt. Because she may know of a way to save the district money in this area and let us therefore be able to put more money into resources directly to help children. After I put her in touch with the business office, I hung up thinking, we have the best moms in the state. So, before I address some of those concerns, that were brought up last week I want to thank the parents that took time out of their already stretched schedules to come here and advocate for public education for their children and for our budget. I refuse to name names, but, one of those parents that was here posted on her Facebook only a few days before, that she had just made her husband chicken parmesan out of chicken nuggets. It was a humorous way of showing just how demanding and time strapped our lives as parents are and I want to stress how grateful I am that we have hundreds of moms and dads in this town who trade sleep, decent meals, and sanity for their children's development and education.

Dr. McDowell and I have spent several hours discussing themes and the concerns that were brought out during the public discussion. I have read the minutes of that meeting several times to make sure that I have captured every issue. I heard four categories of concern and I would like to speak to them tonight.

1. There was widespread concern that our class sizes, and this is particularly and Johnson's fourth grade, are too large. As we work with the new budget, which we hope will truly pass at first referendum, and as we review incoming grade populations, at each grade level for next year, Dr. McDowell and his administrative team will do all they can to place the optimal number of students in each classroom. We can help them with their work by **working** to provide them the budget they need so I would ask that all of us who are concerned about education in this town, respectfully ask our Town Council to put this budget that the board will approve later this month, before our town voters without cutting it, without forcing reduction in teachers and staff and in other areas.
2. We heard one parent from Polk stress how children there are in particular need of help with math and reading. Principal D'Antonio, Dr. McDowell, & Janet Parlato, our Curriculum and Instruction Director, share this concern. Recognizing it last year and will be bringing math and reading interventionists into the building to work every day with the children who are struggling. That same parents also touched on the challenges children can face as they face

certain socioeconomic conditions. The support those children sometimes need has often had to come from principals and teachers with a more effective approach instead of direct involvement with a psychologist or social worker. To say that the need for social workers does not exist in our district and in our town is to deny a reality and neglected many children in crisis in our town to get the help and support they desperately need. That is why our proposed budget calls for a full-time psychologist and a districtwide social worker. These are small, but critical steps we can take to intervene when child some crisis. And then return them to the classroom better able to learn, better able to contribute, and in general, to feel good about themselves.

3. We heard a number of comments that I might classify as individual concerns. This board is pretty good about making policy and management district resources. But when it comes challenges in a specific classroom or a particular struggle by one of our students or parents, the solution is best found by a teacher or a principal working directly with a parent. Discussing the problem detail and working out a satisfactory approach. Dr. McDowell has asked their respective principals to contact the parents who spoke last week to drill down on their specific concerns and make sure they are addressed. I understand what has happened and I will would ask that of the solution hasn't been found that works for a parent I would ask them to please contact Dr. McDowell directly.
4. Lastly, we heard several concerns about the common core state standards and smarter balanced assessment Consortium test. There is a real difference in what we are teaching children now and what they will be expected to know in the future. I have seen it firsthand I have a fourth grader back at my place and because I am home before my wife is, I review his homework with him every day. Sometimes I think when my wife is just about home, she will drive around and circle the block a few times or maybe had down to Marshall's so she doesn't have to go over the homework when our son. Just so that I retain the privilege in reviewing common core curriculum with him. But that privilege has helped me appreciate that the old way was to make sure their kids could do math. The new way is to make sure that our kids understand math. That is a radical change and it can lead to breaking point levels of frustration for both children and parents. To address those concerns, Janet Parlato be hosting learning events throughout the district, particularly at PTO meetings in the next two months to help parents understand what the rationale and benefits of the common core are, what the district is doing on a grade by grade level to implement common core based curriculum, teaching methods and materials and effective and well-timed way, how our students will be well prepared and supported as we ready them for the smarter balanced test which will be child in March. And then finally, how children and parents can get support through this shift to a new curriculum. And I will give you a hint last one, it doesn't involve parents struggling alongside our children for hours on end trying to comprehend a new way of solving math problems. That is not a parent's job. If it is not coming to them it is not our job to make sure it does for our children. So we asked the parents will call or email their teachers right away and I know they will get the help they need. Lastly I want to close by asking that you keep bringing your needs, ideas, and concerns to your teachers, principals, superintendent, and this board. None of us has a monopoly on what it takes to move a district forward and help its children succeed. But by working together, and over the

long run, through successes and setbacks, we will help every child in our schools rise and achieve all that they hope to. Thank you for listening.

**K. Action Items – Items to be Approved by Consent**

None

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**L. Consideration of the Approval of Acceptance of Gifts**

Agenda Item Number: L.1  
Subject : Approval of the Acceptance of Gifts

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Nardella

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board accept a donation from the Oakville Post 7330 VFW, for \$850.00 to support the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in need of assistance to attend the yearly educational trip to Washington D.C.

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion Passes

Agenda Item Number: L.2  
Subject : Approval of the Acceptance of Gifts

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Nardella

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board gratefully accept a donation from the Ladies Auxiliary VFW 7330, for \$400.00 to support an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student in need of assistance to attend the yearly educational trip to Washington D.C.

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion Passes

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**M. Future Agenda Items and Board Members' Comments**

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Do any board members have any comments or future proposed agenda items for this evening?

**Mr. Guerrero** – Through you, Mr. Chair? I am wondering if at one of the future meetings that we can have some information on the MBR? I know last year I requested a meeting explaining the MBR, how we calculate it, and what it is going to be this year. So I am wondering if we can get some information on that?

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Certainly. Do any other board members have any comments or future agenda items at this time?

#### **N. Public Participation**

**Mr. Buzzannco** – Does anyone wish to address the board this evening? Is there anyone who wishes to address the board this evening?

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#### **O. Executive Session**

Agenda Item Number: O.1  
Subject: Enter into Executive Session

Motion Presented By: Ms. Crotty  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Berthel

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing applicants for Business Manager for the Watertown Public Schools. Attending the Executive Session will be David Guerrero, James Gambardella, Josephine Cavallo-Rosa, Tom Lambert, Guy Buzzannco, Eric Berthel, Ray Nardella, Janelle Wilk, Dr. Thomas McDowell, the candidate for the position of business manager, and myself, Leslie Crotty.

Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion Passes

**P. Regular Session** – Meeting reentered Regular Session at 9:31 p.m.

#### **Q. Adjournment**

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Agenda Item Number: Q.1  
Subject: Adjournment  
Motion Presented By: Mr. Berthel  
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Lambert  
Text of the Motion: To adjourn the meeting  
Opposed: None  
Abstained: None  
Vote: Motion Passes

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The meeting adjourned at 9:32p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Nardella  
Secretary of the Board of Education

Mindi Davidson  
Recording Secretary