

MINUTES  
WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING

**Meeting Date:** March 26, 2012  
**Meeting Time:** 7:30 PM  
**Meeting Place:** Watertown High School, Lecture Hall

**Members Present:** Mr. Richard Mazzamaro  
Mr. Thomas Lambert, Vice Chairman  
Ms. Susan McCabe  
Atty. Sean Butterly  
Mr. Raymond Nardella  
Mr. Eric Berthel

**Others Present:** Dr. Gail Gilmore, Superintendent of School  
Dr. James Collin, Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Sage Davino, Student Council Representative  
Mr. Marc Balanda, Asst. Principal of Watertown High School  
Mr. Matthew Geary, Principal of Watertown High School  
Other interested guest

**Absent:** Mr. Richard Beland  
Mr. David Guerrero (Attended Town Council Meeting)  
Mr. Guy Buzzannco (Attended Town Council Meeting)  
Ms. Karen Clancy, (Attended Town Council Meeting)

**A. Convene Regular Meeting - 7:30 PM**

Mr. Richard Mazzamaro, Board Chair, convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

**B. Salute to the Flag**

Mr. Richard Mazzamaro, Board Chair, led the Salute to the Flag.

Mr. Richard Mazzamaro said that Executive Session has been canceled and will be rescheduled.

**C. Watertown Public Schools' Mission Statement - Mr. Eric Berthel**

The mission of the Watertown School District, with determination to be a world-class educational leader and a centerpiece of a dynamic and growing community, is to meet the diverse needs of each student – academic, artistic, athletic, emotional, ethical, social, and technological – to develop members of our community who:

- embrace life-long learning;
- are caring and responsible citizens;
- have a sense of social justice.

**D. Recognition**

The Watertown Board of Education wishes to recognize the Watertown High School's Boys' Basketball Team for their outstanding sportsmanship in being the 2011-2012 Brass Division Champions, the Naugatuck Valley League Champions and the CIAC Class M Finalists.

Dr. Gilmore – Thank you Mr. Mazzamaro and good evening Board of Education Members and, of course, our community. On behalf of the Board of Education and our entire community, we want to

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congratulate our Watertown High School Boys' Basketball Team and their outstanding coaches for achieving the title of NVL Champions and advancing to the CIAC Class M Finals. Give them a round of applause.

We also want to thank our championship Watertown High School Cheerleaders for their CIAC Class L Title which we will formerly recognize at the next Board of Education Meeting.

As I sat in the arena with my husband, I felt our town come alive with such unity and pride. Thank you for your great athleticism and high skill talents to advance to the Semi Finals. We want to acknowledge Coach Ed Sakl, III as being named the Coach of the Year. Please give Coach Sakl a round of applause.

All of our Watertown High School coaches are truly committed to our students, and we thank you all for your leadership. You truly are outstanding individuals. At this time, we would like to call our coaches and our students one by one to the podium to present you with a Certificate and a Plaque of Recognition. After this, we will take a ten minute photo intermission for families and newspapers. So Mr. Mazzamaro would you please join me in recognizing our wonderful coaches and student athletes.

The 2011-2012 Boys' Basketball Team is coached by:  
Ed Sakl, III  
Jason Hurdle  
Chris Martin  
Luigi Velardi

Our coaches, a round of applause, please.

The 2011-2012 Boys' Basketball Team is comprised of:

Thomas O'Brien,	grade 12
Alonzo Oates,	grade 12
Anthony Chacho,	grade 11
Devin D'Agostino,	grade 11
Christopher DosSantos, Jr.,	grade 11
George Gakidis,	grade 11
Edward Hill,	grade 11
Robert Lawton,	grade 11
Denis Mersim,	grade 11
Jonathan Mitchell,	grade 11
Paulo Villanueva,	grade 11
Evan Alsdorf,	grade 10
Eric Reeser,	grade 10
Matthew Yanovskiy,	grade 10
Anthony Yordon,	grade 10

Congratulations.

Sean Butterly- Mr. Chairman, I have an email from coach Ferguson that was sent from Florida. If I could read it, it's just great. Shelly was the Wilby Allstater from the early 60s who coached us when we entered the NVL, our team was the 1969 team, and Shelly was following through email with me all the time and he wrote. "I congratulate all the Watertown basketball players and their coaches. They and their fans should be immensely proud of their accomplishments. I am glad that they took the journey to be initiated some 40 years ago to another level. Give Coach Sakl and the team my best wishes for continued success. Congratulations, Shelly Ferguson." Shelly will be honored at Quassapaug this year with the old Wilby Alumni Team and if anyone from this team would like to go, I've always said, I would love him to meet our kids today and our Coach Sakl, so he's really excited about that so if you're not 400 miles away, it'll be in the Town Times, you're all invited and your unpaid guests, your come and you're an honoree, you're there. He was the man that was in the building with us when Dr. King was shot, he was the man who took us to Orange Street and all those courts around Waterbury and took the best athletes from Waterbury to our gym and really initiated us

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both in basketball and in life and to follow this team this season and last, is one of the great joys of all us basketball fans in this town and anybody who ever dribbled a ball in this town, we lived through you this week, and Chaz Oats, when they gave you the MVP at the NVL Tournament, I was just proud as heck to watch you deliver that ball inside to everybody. All of you kids, I can't even say how much a thrill our town got. So, thank you to Coach Sakl, my old first baseman when I coached freshman baseball and the rest of you guys, you're all terrific. I just wanted to mention that part from our perspective. Thank you very much.

Richard Mazzamaro – I would just like to read the plaque. In recognition of the Watertown High School Boys' Basketball Team 2011-2012 Brass Division Champions, Naugatuck Valley League Champions CIAC Class M Finalists with a 24 and 4 overall records. This plaque is presented tonight by the Watertown Board of Education, March 26, 2012.

Dr. Gilmore-If the team will please line up, we will take photos for families and newspapers. We are very proud of you and Attorney Butterly; I can't tell you how wonderful it was that you specially recognized the students this evening to say that for our boys, thank you so much.

Meeting recessed at 7:40 p.m. for pictures.

Meeting reconvened at 7:48 p.m. by Richard Mazzamaro

**E. Report from Student Council Representative – Sage Davino**

Hi, as we've just recognized them, the boys' basketball team at the high school had an amazing season, they won their quarter finals last meeting and they actually got to the finals against Waterford and that ends the winter sports this year and spring sports just began last week.

Over the weekend, we had the Susical Musical Show which I was actually in. It was a pretty big success and thank you for everyone who came to me and said I did a good job. Thank you.

Sean Butterly – Mr. Chairman, unbelievable.

Sage - This week the high school has their 27<sup>th</sup> annual awards night, actually tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium. The high school recognizes students from grades 10-12 who have an overall 90 average from their previous school year.

The Counseling Department is holding a college fair in the gym this Thursday from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Representatives from many colleges will be there to give financial aid advice, information about the academics, campus life and interesting facts about each school.

The Robotics Team this week is going to the Connecticut Regional Competition from March 29<sup>th</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> to compete against other teams in Connecticut.

Thank you.

**F. Budget Summary – (Information Only – No Action Required)**

**G. Public Participation-None**

**H. Committee Reports:**

1. Student Programs and Services – Richard Beland-Not Present-None

Raymond Nardella – I just want to mention to the Board that we are going to meet within the next two or three weeks. I think Rich is going to contact you, Sean and you are going to set up a mutual time.

Sean Butterly –Whatever is good for you and the Chairman, thank you.

2. Curriculum and Instruction Committee – Eric Berthel-None
3. Policy and Labor Committee – Guy Buzzannco-Not Present-None
4. Budget, Finance and Operations Committee – Guy Buzzannco-Not Present

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Richard Mazzamaro – Mr. Buzzannco is not present but he did ask me just to report that the Board of Education Finance Committee met jointly with the Town Council's Budget and Finance Committee on March 22, 2012. Dr. Gilmore gave a presentation of our 2012-2013 Operating Budget, and I believe the Town Council Finance Committee is meeting again this evening where they will take up the Board of Education's Budget again. So that process is ongoing.

**5. Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee – Thomas Lambert**

We had our facilities meeting tonight and discussed issues such as the Judson moisture mitigation issue, Watertown High School shelter generator output, and the Polk camera update and information will go to zoning for those cameras. We discussed various maintenance items throughout the system. Thank you.

**6. Governance and Community Engagement Committee – Eric Berthel**

The only thing Dr. Gilmore mentioned this evening was that we have our next Parent Advisory Council meeting scheduled for this Thursday, March 29 and there is no report at this time.

**I. Communications - Secretary –Eric Berthel-None**

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**Agenda Item No.  
Subject:**

**J.  
Minutes**

**Motion Presented by:  
Motion Seconded by:**

Eric Berthel  
Thomas Lambert

**Text of Motion:**

To approve the minutes of the Board of Education Meeting, March 12, 2012

**Discussion:**

Eric Berthel - Mr. Chairman, we are going to have to table the acceptance of the Minutes this evening due to the fact that there were not enough members in attendance who were actually present at that meeting to give us a majority vote.

(Motion to table the Minutes of the March 12, 2012 Board of Education Meeting at our next Board Meeting)

**Opposed:  
Abstained:  
Vote:**

None  
None  
Motion approved unanimously.

**K. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report-Dr. Gilmore**

Thank you Mr. Mazzamaro and good evening everyone. I did have the pleasure of attending the Watertown High School Susical the Musical this weekend. I wanted to congratulate the actors on stage as well as the musicians in the pit as well as the stage crew and many parents who supported this great musical. Our congratulations to all.

This Wednesday, I will attend the Music Coffee House at the Swift Café beginning at 6 p.m. The theme is Music Lasts a Lifetime and the students and alumni will perform musical styles from jazz to pop to classical.

Our Watertown High School 237 Robotics Team will be competing in the Connecticut Regionals this weekend and then on to the St. Louis Championship April 26 through the 28<sup>th</sup>, and we wish them the very best.

Our CMT and CAPT State testing has ended, and the makeup period for students who were absent during this testing period is provided this week. Thank you to our students and staff for our successful testing period. Many schools were chosen for a supplemental test to provide to the State Department of Ed with anchor and pilot results.

This Thursday we will hold our second meeting for the District Advisory Parent Council at 7 p.m. at the Swift School Library, and we do look forward to seeing many parents there to provide their voice and suggestions in advising the needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all parents to the April 2, 2012 Town Council meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Watertown High School Lecture Hall. The Town Council will be voting on the 2012-2013 Budget, and we do invite all parents, teachers and staff and community to attend and support education. Our 2012-2013 Educating Operating Budget was unanimously approved by each Board of Education Member on February 27, 2012. Tonight, we thank Mr. Buzzannco and Mrs. Clancy for attending the Town Council Finance Sub Committee Meeting. Mr. Buzzannco is our Chair for the Budget and Finance Sub Committee and is representing our Board of Education this evening with Mrs. Clancy, our Business Manager. Mrs. Clancy has provided a Budget Summary for your review as an informational update for Board of Education Members so please contact us if we can provide additional information.

1. Appointments – (Information Only)

- a.) Ms. Michelle Baim to the position of Senior Play Advisor at Watertown High School for the 2011-2012 school year at the stipend of \$1,778.00 according to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Watertown Board of Education and the Watertown Education Association.
- b.) Mr. Christopher Begnal to the position of Assistant Senior Play Advisor at Watertown High School for the 2011-2012 school year at stipend of \$889.00 according to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Watertown Board of Education and the Watertown Education Association.
- c.) Ms. Deanna Kollar to the position of Watertown High School Work Shuttle Van Driver at the salary of \$14.00 per hour, effective March 8, 2012, hours of work designated by the schedule coordinated through the Special Education Department.
- d.) Mr. Joseph Giannelli to the position of Girls' Basketball Coach at Swift Middle School for the 2011-2012 school year at a contractual stipend of \$2,358.00 according to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Watertown Board of Education and the Watertown Education Association.
- e.) Ms. Rachel LaFlamme to the position of Assistant Cheerleading Coach at Watertown High School for the 2011-2012 school year at a contractual stipend of \$2,219.00 according to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Watertown Board of Education and the Watertown Education Association.

2. Resignations – (Information Only)

- a.) Mr. Robert Moher from the position of Custodian at Polk School effective March 10, 2012 for the purpose of retirement.

4. Presentations Highlighting Best Instructional Practice

Dr. Collin, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, will introduce the next segment in our series of presentations to the Board highlighting best instructional practice.

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Dr. Gilmore - There certainly are great events and learning opportunities in our school. Tonight, we will continue with our administrator presentation at each Board of Education Meeting on a great teaching and learning best practice we would like to share with our Board of Education and our community. I would ask at this time for Dr. Collin to please present this important segment of our meeting.

Dr. Collin - It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Marc Balanda, Assistant Principal of Watertown High School, who will present the implementation of the Professional Learning Communities model at our high school.

Marc Balanda - Thank you Dr. Collin, Superintendent Dr. Gilmore and Board of Education. There is a packet I believe. Just to briefly give you an overview of what's contained in that packet, you don't have to go through it just yet. That first page is really a description, some definitions, really as to what a Professional Learning Community is as defined by Richard Dufour, who is the leading expert in Professional Learning Communities.

While this model of Professional Learning Communities didn't come to our district until approximately three years ago, the concept has been around since about 1998 when he first wrote his first position paper about this type of professional development model.

So that first page really outlines some definitions about what a Professional Learning Community is. It talks about big ideas and then I thought it would be important to share with you some samples, some stuff that has come out, it's a very, very small representation. I can provide you with binders full of things. I wanted to just give you a small sample of some of the things that we are going to talk about that really address each of the three years that we've worked on Professional Learning Communities. So you have just an idea of what we've been doing.

So the core concept behind Professional Learning Communities really is, is that it's job imbedded professional development. That is a key concept. That it has to happen during the school day, during the school year and it's focused really on three big ideas. The first idea is essential questions that we always look to answer in the Professional Learning Communities when teachers get together and work.

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The four questions are:

What do we want each student to learn?

How do we know when each student has learned it?

How will we respond when a student does not learn it? and

How will we respond when a student does learn it?

So, that's really the questions we are always looking to answer when these groups get together on a regular basis. We will detail a little bit more in a minute.

When we are working together, culture collaboration is critically important. The teachers really drive the work. I'll highlight later that the principals or the administrators do not run these meetings. That is very important. These teachers run these meetings themselves. They do provide some feedback. The administrator like Mr. Geary has provided each year a vision or a goal for Professional Learning Communities to meet and we get constant feedback in the form of feedback sheets so we can check in on progress and see how they are moving forward to really help drive increase in student achievement, and the last piece is, we are always talking about focus on results. That is the big thing. Student achievement is the most important. We need to increase that across the board. The Professional Learning Community is really based more on what students learn rather than what we are teaching. We need to figure out what they are learning and are they learning and what do we do if they don't get it and what do we do if they do. I think that fourth question is often left out. What do we do if they do get it? We always focus on what if they don't? But it's really important to differentiate for all kids, cause we want to provide that great experience for everyone.

So, the third year of implementation at the high school, it was important for really us to make sure that teachers first had common prep time. So, three years ago we made a really big scheduling move and made sure that each department had the same prep period. For example, all Science teachers have C period off this year. History teachers all have G block off this year. That was the first step. Then we took a look at that time and said we can ask them contractually to meet every other meeting of that so every other C block or every G block to really work together in small collaborative teams, broken up by course, US History I, Biology, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade English, those are who the groups are organized, and then, like I said before, Mr. Geary provides a theme for the year and we get constant feedback as we go through. On occasion, administrators are asked to

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come in, settle a conflict because when groups work really well together, sometimes there are conflicts and I have been asked on occasion actually to go into to certain PLCs and try to help disputes. All disputes, however, we really focus on how do we get the kids to really understand what we want them to know.

So, our first year, we really focused on common assessments. So teachers worked hard to develop these common assessments across disciplines. So every student that was in Biology has this common assessment. So we give them the same test. Teachers came back together, graded it, looked at the data and said what are our kids good at and what they are not so good at and what do we have to do next, next steps? That was really the focus of that first year. If they weren't good at something, they developed a strategy, talked about it amongst each other, implemented that strategy and came back again the next PLC and talked about how do we get better.

Year two was really focused on critical thinking. We identified across the board. That is one of the academic expectations we have that every teacher and every discipline actually measures. We know that critical thinking is student's ability to do that. It is critically important to their success. So teachers in these Professional Learning Communities developed critical thinking assessments, their uniform across courses all related to their content. Teachers would give those critical thinking assessments, grade them and come back together and talk about strengths and weaknesses.

Not shockingly, students have the hardest time with the highest level of cognitive demand, evaluation and synthesis. It's not really shocked anybody, but we developed strategies to help kids learn how to do that better. I think we saw some of those results when it comes to writing in our CAPT tests. While we didn't do a lot of other writing, we learned information from activities that we've implemented throughout the years, I think just a general focus on student's ability to think critically and these Professional Learning Communities the second year of implementation was really important.

Year three, which is this current year, we've worked on incorporating Best Instruction Practice. So we have had these assessments, we have these critical thinking assessments, now we want to make sure that it all fits together in one big piece. So we took our curriculum documents, all these assessments and worked them into a lesson plan template which I did include in that packet so teachers could across the board plan together. We don't often get time to do that. We often times plan independently. This gives us time to do it together. The teachers really have enjoyed this so far this year. They implement the lesson; they come back and talk about it. How did it go? How did it go in your class? It went well. What did you struggle with? I found my kids didn't do well on this. They get feedback, they talk about it. It helps them really continue to be reflective in their practice.

So that's where we are right now. Again, I could probably talk about this, well as a full day seminar on Professional Learning Communities, but I think it is important in the end to make sure you see the connections between the district mission and theory of action. In the district mission, we talk about addressing the need to meet the diversities of each student. This Professional Learning Community model directly speaks to that as well as the theory of action. The district's theory of action is a core approach to the Professional Learning Communities. We talked about using data to examine school, classroom and individual student progress through job imbedded professional development and collaboration to create interventions to increase student achievement is exactly what Professional Learning Communities are. It has been very successful to a teacher. Recently, we had a focus group with Dr. Gilmore and all the teachers that were there all said that we loved Professional Learning Communities and it is an amazing thing.

So, Thank you, I know I went fast to get under my 5 minutes, but any questions.

Dr. Gilmore-Thank you Mr. Balanda – I do want to say that teachers collaborating is truly the key to the success for our students. So, I want to thank you and the administrators for the work that you've done to make sure that our teachers have that opportunity to be reflective and to look at those practices for all of our students.

Raymond Nardella – I just want to comment. I commend this because, I am currently pursuing my masters in higher education and there are so many parallels and I think that is so important that it transcends really K through 12 and it really is holistic. I commend it, I loved it.

Dr. Collin – Dr. Gilmore, if I could just add to that as we move forward and we hear more about the PLC

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model, I encourage everyone to pay close attention to how the structure that was created at the high school and Balanda talked about scheduling, which is essential for the PLC to really function. We can't meet every other week; we can't meet every three weeks. The more routinely it meets the better. So working hard with our K8 principals and it does impact staffing and resource needs so our principals have been very creative in talking full advantage of the schedule to create this time, but we have further work to do in these areas. So, the high school has been able to make the progress it has because the schedule has allowed more frequent time. So that's something that we have to think about as we continue to implement that core approach most effectively and you will hear more about how that plays out.

Richard Mazzamaro – Is this model in other schools. I remember that this may have been started at John Trumbull maybe?

Dr. Collin - Yes, it's in every school to the degree it can be implemented with time.

Dr. Gilmore – Thank you Dr. Collin and once again, thank you Mr. Balanda, excellent work. This completes the Superintendent's Report.

**L. Report from the Chairman**

Richard Mazzamaro - The only thing I have tonight is to just let the Board know that the Town Council Finance Committee is meeting tonight and they will be discussing the Board of Ed Budget again and I believe they intend to vote on April 2, so Dr. Gilmore and myself and some other Board Members may be heading over to the Municipal Center to see the end, the Board of Ed presentation is 8:30 or so.

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**Agenda Item No.  
Subject:**

**M1.**  
1. Consideration of the Approval of the Usage of John Trumbull Primary School and Judson Elementary School for Religious Education Classes During the 2012-2013 School Year.

**Motion Presented by:  
Motion Seconded by:**

Eric Berthel  
Thomas Lambert

**Text of Motion:**

Ms. Theresa Morgado, on behalf of St. John the Evangelist Office of Religious Education, is requesting permission to use John Trumbull Primary School and Judson Elementary School for religious education classes during the 2012-2013 school year.

It is recommended that the Board approve of St. John the Evangelist Office of Religious Education to use John Trumbull Primary School and Judson School for religious education classes for the 2012-2013 school year.

**Discussion  
Opposed:  
Abstained:  
Vote:**

None  
None  
None  
Motion approved unanimously.

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**Agenda Item No.  
Subject:**

**M2.**  
Consideration of the Approval of Acceptance of Gifts

**Motion Presented by:  
Motion Seconded by:**

Eric Berthel  
Sean Butterly

**Text of Motion:**

The following donation has been made to the Music Department in the



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Watertown Public Schools in memory of Mr. Jerry L. West:

Corey B. Fraser

\$25.00

It is recommended that the Board accept this generous gift and a letter of thanks and appreciation to be sent to the donor.

**Discussion**

None

**Opposed:**

None

**Abstained:**

None

**Vote:**

Motion approved unanimously.

**N. Future Agenda Items and Board Members' Comments -None**

**O. Public Participation-None**

**P. Executive Session-Cancelled**

Personnel Matter: Superintendent's Evaluation

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**Agenda Item No.**

**Subject:**

**Q.**

Adjournment 8:10 p.m.

**Motion Presented by:**

Thomas Lambert

**Motion Seconded by:**

Sean Butterly

**Text of Motion:**

None

**Discussion**

None

**Opposed:**

None

**Abstained:**

None

**Vote:**

Motion approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Mr. Eric Berthel  
Board Secretary

By Deborah Jacobs  
Minutes Secretary