

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: January 27, 2020
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: Lecture Hall, Watertown High School

Members Present: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Ms. Diane Bristol
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa
Mr. Jason Malagutti

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Rydell Harrison –Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager
Mr. Jordan Arnold – Student Council Representative

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

B. Salute to the Flag

C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

D. Minutes

Agenda Item: D.1
Subject: Minutes of the January 13, 2020 Regular Board of
Education Meeting

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

Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the minutes from the January 13 th , 2020 regular Board of Education meeting, the amended version.
Discussion:	Ms. Wilk – In the minutes, the Board of Education policy number is listed as 5720 and should be 5120.
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	Ms. Rosa
Vote:	Motion passed

E. Report from Student Council Representative – Jordan Arnold

Mr. Arnold - Mrs. Meka, from **John Trumbull Primary School**, reports that they are working on showing good reading behavior. Students are using the strategy of self-correcting their mistakes that don't look right, don't sound right or don't make sense. They have also introduced a new incentive program for supporting bus behavior. The students are excited to be able to earn fireflies for modeling the 3Rs on the school bus.

Ms. Scully, from **Judson**, reports that the school staff recently participated in a dress down day to raise funds to support security officer, Chip Schofield, who is battling neuroendocrine cancer. Students interested in participating in the Invention Convention are busy planning and consulting with their advisor, fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Marquardt.

Ms. Galik, from **Polk**, reports that the students are thrilled to have earned their 2nd school wide incentive for filling the Polk perks bucket. The gym was turned into a winter wonderland and students engaged in a fun and competitive snowball “fight” tournament. This was an excellent opportunity to reinforce skills like good sportsmanship and teamwork, while also recognizing students’ efforts to follow school wide and classroom expectations. The students are incredibly motivated to fill the bucket and see what will come next.

Polk is introducing a new program that’s called Mood Meter. The Mood Meter is strongly tied to learning to accurately recognize and labeling their emotions.

Ms. Lurz, from **Swift**, reports that swift is once again supporting their Leo Club. Leo Club is a part of the Lions club organization and last week several lions went to swift for an official induction of their newest Leos. The Leo Club of Swift’s next project is a St. Valentine’s fundraiser to help build community at Swift, with the proceeds going to a cause that the members will choose themselves. Swift’s Unified Sports team will have their first official “game” on Thursday, January 28th at swift during half time of the Swift basketball game that afternoon. Five of the Team members participated in a local conference this past Thursday in Newtown, dedicated to helping them learn how the teams work together and to help them build team spirit.

Swift 8th Grader Landon Laferriere was the first place winner of the local Patriots pen essay from Water-Oak VFW Post 5157. Landon was placed third in District 5, will receive a \$100 award and will be honored at the Oakville VFW Post on Davis Street.

Ms. Parlato, from **Watertown High School**, reports that midterm examinations have begun, which also brings the end of the first semester of classes. Midterms will continue through Thursday, January 30th and the second semester will begin on Friday, January 31st.

Sophomore Emalyn Osborne received second place in the whole state for the Voice of Democracy audio contest, sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Emalyn responded to the question, "What Makes America Great?"

The winter sports season is in full swing, with all of our teams enjoying success in their games, meets, matches, and competitions.

F. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

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

None

2. **Transfers– (Information Only)**

None

3. **Resignations – (Information Only)**

None

4. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Harrison – Good evening Board members, as you can see in your agenda, we have no appointments for tonight, which is unusual for us. I want to give a preview for next week. I will be talking about the Superintendents recommended budget for the 2020-2021 school year and I will also be giving a midyear update on our strategic plan and our district improvement plan. Tonight you heard at our Curriculum and Instruction meeting and again tonight, some of the work that is related to our district improvement plan, and tonight we will particularly focus on our community partnerships. I am very proud of the partnerships with the Y and Sun, Moon & Stars and how much they benefit our students and how our students can grow when we capitalize on the talent and resources that are a part of our community. I am also excited to talk about, in broader terms, in two weeks, as we are thinking about our focus on families and community partners, it is easy to think about our partnerships with community agencies and groups like the VFW, Lions Club or the Rotary as icing on the cake, but I see them as a central component to who we are as a community and what our students can achieve. I am excited to share some of the work we have already done and will do to strengthen those partnerships and leverage that for the benefit of our students. I will be sending some information home to our students and staff to let them know that if they don't have anything else to do, two weeks from tonight at the board meeting to come join us, to hear that update or they can stream live on You Tube. Also, Insurance has been a big topic of discussion for us as a district in the past, and I will ask Mr. DiStasio to update that.

Mr. DiStasio – We met with our insurance broker and talked about the renewal for next year (2020-2021) and based on the claims history and the evaluation of the fixed costs proposals

by Cigna for next year, the fixed cost of our insurance plan is expected to remain the same for next year with no increase. However, the projected claims, the recommended percentage increase is 2% overall, which doesn't necessarily translate to 2% in our overall budget, that is the overall cost of the plan. All things considered, looking back over the years at our catastrophic claims, things have looked pretty good that last few years, things are looking like a pretty favorable renewal for next year.

G. Presentation – YMCA Update – Family Survey Results

Mr. Jim O'Rourke, Chief Executive Officer from the YMCA, will update the board on family survey responses, enrollment, additional program opportunities, partnerships with National YMCA and with Post University.

To see the entire presentation, please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIf9pwrH64gbrzGfmV4dtSw>

H. Presentation - 2020-2021 Watertown High School Program of Studies

Dr. Parlato - The program of studies has several purposes that includes: to develop and continue strong core curriculum requirements, address legislative mandates, and provide interesting and varied elective courses. An important point is that elective does not mean optional; elective means to have choices. Some legislative changes starting with the class of 2023 include that all students must earn 1.0 credit of Health Education, they must earn 25 credits to earn their high school diploma and middle school students who take high school courses in middle school (Algebra I, Spanish I, or French I) earn high school credit for those courses taken in middle school. Some history points to show you are that with the class of 2015, 22 credits were required for graduation and have changed over the years to all the way of to the class of 2020 requiring 26 credits to graduate at Watertown High School. In that same timeframe, Watertown High School lost 6.4 FTE positions across the content areas.

Mandated course changes now include Health & Wellness II and we will need another PE/Health teacher to cover all of the course sections. This teacher would be dual certified to teach in both areas. This course would include things like expansion of health and wellness topics including mindfulness, stress management, healthy life balance, substance use avoidance, understanding of common illness, and disease prevention.

New course choices will include Foods I and Baking and Pastry Arts I. This course will need the addition of one Family & Consumer teacher. We have a very beautiful and underutilized space for this course. We also have cleared the room with the fire marshal, building inspector and state fire marshal. One thing to note is that the only thing we can't do in this room is fry anything or produce grease. We are excited to offer possibilities to explore in these courses. Other courses that will be offered with no addition to staff are Horticulture and Music Technology. Horticulture will be the study of plant care, both indoor and outdoor. We have a greenhouse that is attached to a classroom in the science wing and is another area that is underutilized. They will also have laboratory experience with this course. Next is Music

Technology. That is using digital equipment and digital production to create their own composition, beats and soundscapes.

We have been fortunate to be accepted to the Advanced Placement Capstone Diploma Program. That means we get to offer two more AP courses; one is AP seminar and that is in year one and then in the second year you offer AP research. It is very rigorous and a very carefully planned research project picked by the student and would run side by side with the capstone project the student would complete. In the end, you can either get a capstone certificate or a capstone diploma. This is an effort to expand the offerings for students that need intellectual expansions and can take on rigorous coursework. Next we are working on a dual program with Post University. The courses with Post start with Introduction to Computing and it provides them with specific instruction with computer programs such as Word, Windows, spreadsheets and presentation software. At the end of the course, they will have earned three college credits. The second course is College Writing and that will be combined with English III honors. While they are taking English II honors, the teacher will weave through the curriculum from Post and they will earn the Post credits at the end of the course. This gives them even more opportunity to get college credits at a discounted rate (\$300). Along with these courses, our UCONN Early College Experience will be added to Advanced Placement Literature and with that, students will have the opportunity to earn 4 UCONN credits for \$200 by earning a C in the course. It does need to be approved by UCONN.

We will be offering some classes for support. They are Academic Reading and Academic Math. Looking at students that are coming in middle school and seeing where their deficits are in either reading or math and then taking that class in 9th grade is intended to help them make progress and reduce the gap in their knowledge and skill. We are piloting math this year and looking at their scores in math testing in 9th and 10th grades and giving them the extra help that they may need.

A change to our school procedure may include it would look at our passing average. Currently at Watertown High School, the passing grade is a 70. If you look at the average passing grade at our surrounding schools in our region and in our DRG, only two schools have a 70 and most have either a 60 or 65. (There was a slide put up for showing all of the scores to the mentioned schools. A slide also shows what the College Board looks for in their high school GPA grading) The college board considers a passing grade to be 65. We are not in alignment with the national grading scale; this may tell us we are a little bit off. It is important to think of the graduation rate. The state expects a 94% graduation rate. Fewer of our kids are graduating because of our 70 passing grade where other schools are graduating more with a 60 passing grade. In 2019, Watertown High School had a 90.9% graduation rate with 19 students not graduating. If 8 more graduated, with us aligning us with similar towns, we could have a graduation rate of 95%. The hypothesis is that if we aligned with our DRG and surrounding towns, we may graduate more students, as reported by the state, which increases our district performance index, which then increases the way we perceive our district.

I. Presentation – Project Puzzle Piece

Ms. Christine Faressa, Founder of “Sun, Moon, and Stars,” along with Watertown High School capstone and volunteer students will present Project Puzzle Piece, a joint collaboration with Watertown Public Schools which will culminate with a ceremony on Autism Awareness Day on April 1st.

To see the entire presentation, please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIf9pwrH64gbrzGfmV4dtSw>

J. Quarterly Budget Summary – (Information Only)

Mr. DiStasio – This is the quarter 2 budget status for 2019-2020 and I am just showing the budget categories once again for you as a visual representation as a piece of the entire budget. Starting with salaries and benefits, we are projecting a savings of \$157,000 or .44% savings on that line item. The savings have resulted from resignations, a retirement and an ongoing administrative vacancy. There has been an administrative vacancy throughout the year, as one opens and it is filled internally, then another one will open and it results in some savings. We have had a resignation of a school nurse, a school psychologist and a central office secretary. That results in savings over time and we have also has 7 instances where of people taking unpaid extended leave.

On the purchased services line, we are looking at a projected deficit of 3.92% which amounts to \$76,000. The reason for that deficit is that we pay for nurse coverage out of this line and over the course of the last year, we have had three instances where a nurse has been on extended leave and needed coverage, and then again, the resignation. Over a period of time, we have seen an increase of the expenditures of this line.

On Utilities we are looking at a projected savings of 5.51% and it is pending the potential use of funding to cover the local cost component of the state safety and security grant which we have been approved for. We will evaluate that more as the year progresses.

On the contracted services line, we are projecting deficit of \$373,000 which is 7.13% of that line. The primary reason for that is the increases that we have seen in the tuition and transportation cost associated with out of district placements. There are a couple of things to look at. When we look at our out of district placements for the year, there are a total of 39. Last year we had a total of 36. The primary driver of this, despite the fact that there have only been a few more placements, is that the costs associated with those placements is significantly higher when compared to last year. Since the start of the school year, we have had three students outplaced from being in district and then being outplaced to a facility and then another moving into town who already has an out placement and it becomes our responsibility to maintain that outplacement based on that students needs and cover the costs associated with that student. As changes with outplacements happen, we can expect to see changes fluctuate. We are in position to cover these deficits a few ways; one way being to shift finding from the general fund to IDEA grant. We would take special education funding that we had previously budgeted for the general fund and shift it to the special grants fund. We generally have that flexibility because we know that these costs can be fairly volatile and with result to some of these changes we do know that we can see a deficit on this line, and being that case, we leave ourselves the flexibility to move the funds. Another thing is the excess cost reimbursement, where it is a reimbursement from the state for high costs associated with students with special needs. They calculate the

excess cost reimbursement based on a data filing we do twice a year, the state will evaluate a list of students whose special needs costs exceeds 4 ½ times the per pupil expenditure of the district. If there is one particular student where the tuition and transportation costs associated with that student exceed 4.5 times our expenditure, the state reimburses us for a percentage of that. So as we see these costs increase, we can anticipate our excess costs reimbursement will also increase. If you look towards the bottom of your budget summary sheet, you will see we has budgeted \$800,000 in excess cost reimbursement for the year, and as of now, based on the December filing, we are anticipating \$906,000 which is \$106,000 more than what we had budgeted. We plan to use that to cover this deficit. Additionally, I also want to point out that we are proposing a transfer from the salaries and benefits line to cover this deficit. As the year goes on, we will continue to monitor these projections and outplacements, and evaluate the need for additional budget line item transfers if they become necessary. One thing to note, these projections reference a remainder of the year, assuming every outplacement stays as it is right now, including the transportation costs. They are billed on a day by day basis. There is a chance they could change. Another thing I want to reference is the excess cost reimbursement. There is a December and March filing. Since the December filing, there have been more outplacements, so in March I would anticipate the reimbursement will go up beyond the \$906,000 that they put forth based on the December filing. That is potential offset to apply to this deficit, should we need to. In the salaries and benefits line, I referenced \$150,000 that we are looking at right now. As the year goes on, we may experience longer instances of unpaid leave that is not factored into our current projections as it hasn't happened yet. From past experience, there is potential for more to show up on that line. Those are a couple of things that we want to keep our eyes on as the year moves forward. Mr. Brown and I will be having monthly meetings to discuss these outplacements and to follow up on adjustments that need to be made. A member from the Office of Student Services will attend a PPT for each of these outplaced students ongoing throughout the year, so if there are any changes or budget impact, we will be able to see it on the front end and evaluate. I also want to make sure we have tried to put programing in place in district wherever possible. Right now there are 12 students participating in in district programs who would otherwise require outplacement. We have 39 outplacements with high costs; if you added 12 to that, it would be much higher. This effort to keep students in district wherever we can is something that is beneficial to keeping this increases to a minimum where we can. We recognize the opportunity, as well, to share costs wherever we can with ride shares, so if another district has an outplacement at a certain facility where we also have an outplacement, we can work with that district to have one transportation arrangement so we split the cost associated with it.

Moving onto supplies and equipment, there is not much to say. This line is about 2% of our overall budget, is the only one that is discretionary and we budget it every year with regards to what our students and staff really need. At this time, we have a savings of about \$1700 and we project that we will spend the bulk of this line.

We are still aligning our resources according to the overall budget as originally out together. I will move on to our proposed budget transfer; we are proposing a transfer of \$150,000 from salaries and benefits to contracted services in order to cover the projected deficits in student tuition and transportation costs. This amounts to .33% of the overall budget.

K. Board Policy – Second Reading

Ms. Crotty – Series 5000, Student Discipline #5120 just as a brief reminder was going to change from now allowing us to have in our discipline policies – the ability to have them apply to students who merely possess tobacco or vaping products on them. On our campuses we now have the ability to include that in our discipline policy if they have it on their person as opposed to using it. This is a second reading, are there any further questions?

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

None

M. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – Yes

We met this evening prior to the Board of Ed meeting. Dr. Parlato presented the Watertown High School program of studies for the 2020-2021 school year. Dr. Parlato and her team of administrators proposed an exciting and rigorous curriculum. Also, Ms. Fekete, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, presented a very detailed math update. Ms. Fekete dug into the district's concerns and has a plan on how to move forward.

Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair –Yes

I am hoping to have the approval on the vote for policy #5120.

Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – Yes

We have some upcoming dates that we mentioned at our last meeting that I just want to remind everyone about. This Thursday, the 30th, we will have a Budget and Finance subcommittee meeting where we will discuss the upcoming budget. On February 10th, Dr. Harrison will present the budget to the Board of Education and at that time we have discussions and on the 24th, we will make a decision to approve the budget and move it forward to the town or if we have any recommended changes.

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

Last Friday we had a meeting with Greenskies along with the principals of Polk & Judson and we discussed the issue at Judson with the solar array. They agreed to try to adjust the wave as much as possible within the limits that they have and it will take about a week. We will probably have another meeting in about a week to review the situation. It is not going to be easy, there is a lot of ground rock underneath that site. We all agreed on what they would try to do. It sounds like they are going to work with us and we will review it in about a week after it is adjusted. We then went on to see the Swift site which is also pretty rocky. I was surprised that they flattened that side out really well, and they know what we expect, so there will not be any pretentious situations at going on there. We also discussed the fencing. It was a very productive meeting. As

far as the municipal center is concerned, the big stuff is really done and they are getting into the little stuff like painting. There a lot of system checks going on and they are running the boilers. They are moving along.

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

N. Communications - Secretary

None

O. Report from the Board Chair

Ms. Crotty – No report

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

Agenda Item: P.1
Subject: Consideration to Approve the Board of Education Policy #5120 – Second Reading

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rinaldi

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the changes to Student Discipline Policy 5120 as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: P.2
Subject: Consideration to Approve of the Budget Line Item Transfer

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rosa

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of a line item transfer of \$150,000 from Salaries and Benefits to Contracted Services, as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: P.3

Subject: Consideration to Approve of the Proposed 2020-2021 Program of Studies for Watertown High School

Motion Presented By: Ms. Rinaldi

Motion Seconded By: Ms. Eastman

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the 2020-2021 Watertown High School Program of Studies as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: P.4

Subject: Consideration of the Approval of an Out of State Field Trip to Springfield, Massachusetts

Motion Presented By: Mr. Lambert

Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of an out of state field trip to Springfield, Massachusetts from March 20, 2020 through March 22, 2020 for approximately twenty-eight student members of the Watertown High School FIRST Robotics Teams to participate in the New England District Championship Competition as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None
Vote: Motion passed

Q. Future agenda Items and Board Members' Comments

None

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

None

S. Adjournment

Agenda Item: S.1
Subject: To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By: Mr. Makowski
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Bristol

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board