

**Watertown Board of Education  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** January 13, 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  
Mr. Jason Malagutti

**Members Absent:** Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

**Others Present:** Dr. Rydell Harrison –Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager

**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 December 9, 2019 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 December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 regular Board of Education meeting as presented by Ms. Davidson.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: Ms. Rinaldi

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: D.2

Subject: Minutes of the December 4, 2019 Special Board of Education Meeting

Motion Presented By: Mr. Lambert

Motion Seconded By: Ms. Wilk

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the minutes from the December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Special Board of Education meeting as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: Ms. Rinaldi

Vote: Motion passed

## E. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

### 1. Appointments – (Information Only)

Ms. Gabrielle Anello to the position of long-term building substitute for Polk Elementary School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, at a rate of \$100.00 per day.

Ms. Amy Braica to the position of long-term substitute music teacher at Watertown High School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, at a rate of \$85.00 per day for the first ten days, and on the eleventh day the rate will change to \$251.70, Step 3 of the WEA Contract of \$46,717.00 prorated.

Ms. Kara Cheney to the position of building substitute for Polk Elementary School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, at a rate of \$100.00 per day.

Ms. Danielle Ervin to the position of Girls' Freshmen Basketball Coach at Watertown High

School, effective for the 2019 winter season, being paid a contractual stipend amount of \$2,517.00 payable at the end of the season.

Ms. Emily Freundt to the position of long-term substitute second grade teacher at John Trumbull Primary School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year. She will be paid the building substitute rate of \$100.00 per day for the first ten days, and on the eleventh day the rate will change to \$251.70, Step 3 of the WEA Contract of \$46,717.00 prorated.

Ms. Kacey Jarjura to the position of School Psychologist at Swift Middle School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, being paid a contractual salary amount of \$59,559.00 (prorated), Step 6, MA 6<sup>th</sup> year degree, per the Watertown Education Association.

Mr. Devin Lynch to the position of Boys' Swimming Assistant Coach at Watertown High School, effective for the 2019 winter season. He will be paid a contractual stipend amount of \$1,920.00, payable at the end of the season.

Mr. Sokol Mamudi to the position of long-term building substitute at Polk Elementary School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, at a rate of \$100.00 per day.

Mr. Matthew Paylor to the position of Assistant Principal at John Trumbull Primary School, effective February 10, 2020, at a contractual salary amount of \$113,325.00, Step 1 of the Watertown Administrators' Association Contract.

Ms. Erica Polanco to the position of building substitute for John Trumbull Primary School, effective for the 2019-2020 school year, at a rate of \$100.00 per day.

2. **Transfers– (Information Only)**

None

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

None

4. **Superintendent's Report**

**Dr. Harrison** – Good evening board members and community and Happy New Year. It seems like we are well into the new year and we have had a great start to the new year. I am excited that our folks have come back refreshed and ready to jump right in and get to work. We have had some administrators that have been sick and I know that Ms. Lerz is unable to be here tonight, and while she is back at work, she is still very much under the weather.

Tonight you see a number of appointments for your consideration and some that I want to point out; we are excited to have Kacey Jarjura joining us as our new school phycologist at Swift Middle School. It was not a position we anticipated on hiring, but we had someone leave, but she will be a great addition to our support team at Swift. Thanks to Mr. Brown and his team for going through the interview process and bringing us some great candidates in those psychologists positions. Also you will see that we have listed that we are bringing in

Matt Paylor as the Assistant Principal at John Trumbull effective February 10<sup>th</sup> and we are very excited to have him. Everyone recognizes what he is bringing to the table just with his excitement and his energy and will be a great addition to our admin council and to our staff and students at John Trumbull.

A couple things that I wanted to provide an update on; we continue to work on our priority items from our strategic plan: #watertowncares, #watertownlearns, #watertownleads. I will be providing a pretty comprehensive update of our district improvement plan at our February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. I am excited to update the community on #watertowncares and the work we have been doing around social and emotional learning, particularly with the RULER program, and then to share some of our early successes with the K-2 behavior program that was put in place at John Trumbull. We will also be able to talk about that program has really helped us as a district save on costs related to outplacement. I also want to highlight our work around secondary math. Over the last several weeks, Ms. Fekete and I have been working closely with our administrators and math specialists and teachers to develop and implement a detailed improvement plan to address our secondary math. We wanted the approach to focus on three areas: stakeholder input, evidence and research based strategy, and data driven. So, in leading up to the budget season, where we are making some specific and strategic decisions around math for next year, and looking at curriculum resources, we wanted to make sure we got a lot of input from stakeholders. We are using the TregoEd tools that we learning this fall to gather that info from the different stakeholder groups. Last week we had an opportunity to work with all of our high school math teachers to get a lot of input from them using the situational appraisal process and then repeated that same process with students from the Student Advisory Council. That was fantastic to hear their input on strategies that they believe would be most impactful for them in the classroom and would move their math instruction forward. What we heard was a lot of tie ins between student ideas and teacher ideas. It was great to see that they were on the same page. We will repeat that process again tomorrow with Admin Council and get input from them and then working with the middle school math teachers later this week. One thing that I try to keep in mind as go through this process and how we make decisions to do things...1. With our strategic plan...one thing we said we need is for the answers for some of the challenges we have in the district are right here in the district. So moving forward and making decisions without that stakeholder voice is not something I believe is the right thing to do, so I am excited that people have been so forthcoming with sharing information. The other thing comes from one of our students, Evan Davidson, who said, "Don't make student decisions without having students at the table." It is great to have this group of students with the Superintendent's Advisory Council in place, because we can bounce ideas off of them. Ms. Fekete will attest to how brilliant they are; I have been singing their praises now for over a year, so she is proof that I was not just making it up. We also wanted to be research and evidence based, so looking at potential primary resources, we looked for some that addressed the areas of concern that are raised during these conversations, but also resources that can move our instruction to the next level and align with standards using instructional practices that we know are sound with math to make sure there is a clear continuum of instruction across all of the math course. We also want to be as data driven as possible. At the secondary level, we have had some good data to pull on with the implantation of IReady, but to date that has stopped at 8<sup>th</sup> grade, so we have been able to work with curriculum associates and they have agreed to provide our town with some additional IReady licenses, particularly dedicated to high school students. That will benefit the math intervention program that we launched

earlier this year. I will share a more in depth update, including specific data, at our curriculum and instruction meeting later on this month.

The last piece that I want to share an update on is the work with our technology and getting us back on board continues to go on. We are at the point of having all of our labs up and running, teacher have their computers back and we are very close to normal. That is a big feat, and a lot of that credit goes to our IT department. Just another thank you for the patience of our teachers and staff for being able to endure this process. It has gone on for a long time and at this point we are at the last stages of cleaning out old files that some teachers had on their hard drives and that is a slow process. We anticipate it taking a bit longer, but what has to happen on a day to day basis for teaching and learning, we are back to normal. My original plan was to do the District Improvement Plan update later this month, but looking at the agenda, that agenda is pretty packed and I didn't want to have some of those other areas to feel rushed, so we will shift that just a little bit and do it in conjunction with the budget update.

#### **F. Presentation – Coleen Murphy – Town Mag**

Watertown High School Alumni Colleen Murphy, founder and creator of townmag.co will present the mission and goals of Town Mag to the board this evening.

To view the entire presentation, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24Zrx8hd8wU>

#### **G. Board Policy – First Reading**

Ms. Wilk – We received a policy update from Shipman & Goodwin with some minor changes to Policy #5720 Student Discipline. These changes are due to laws changing in Connecticut. On page five, under number fifteen, you will see where it used to say unlawful possession, it now just says possession. So, basically, even if the law allows underage possession, the law allows Boards of Education to make it illegal to even be in possession of tobacco or vaping products on our campuses. We don't have to necessarily catch them smoking to take disciplinary action. Now we are adding the word possession to our discipline policy.

#### **H. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)**

None

#### **I. Committee Reports:**

**Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No**  
**Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair –Yes**

Update is above in Item G

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

As we know, budget season is upon us and we have a couple of key dates coming up. There is a

Budget and Finance Committee meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 in the Lecture Hall where we will discuss the budget and objectives for 2020-2021. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Harrison will present his recommended budget to the Board of Education and then we will review the budget. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Ed is scheduled to vote on whether to adopt the budget or request any changes to the Superintendent's budget.

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

We have been receiving complaints about the visual impact of the Judson Elementary School ground mounted solar array installation by Titan Energy or Green Skies Renewable Energy Company. The Board of Education received presentations and literature from this company that showed the proposed solar array layouts for Judson School along with pictorial examples of other school projects that they have completed. All these examples were superimposed aerial views and actual aerial pictures of finished projects for us to consider as examples of what we were to expect from this company. Based on this information, along with solar output and electricity savings we voted to except this project based on all the information provided to us. As Chairman of the Facilities and Operations Committee, I decided to visit the site yesterday in order to report to this board my findings to verify the complaints of residents that were upset with the visual impact of the solar array installation. Upon viewing this installation from the ball field, one notices that the right side panels are installed fairly level and parallel to the building roof line. But the center of the array to the extreme left side looks like a rising, out of control, ocean wave with each panel slanting in different directions rising much higher above the screening fence. This was not what anyone expected to see and looks unprofessional and not to the standards that this Board of Education expected from a company that says that they are the "leading commercial industrial and municipal Solar installer in the U.S." This morning I called our Facilities Manager Ray Ceniccola and questioned him on this Solar installation. Ray noted that he's been following the project and had the same issues with the visual impact. He has been talking with the installers and questioned why they didn't dig out the high ground levels on the left side in order to make the entire site parallel and lessen the impact visually above the screening fence. After more deliberation the installers said that they would bring our concerns and complaints back to their management for consideration. I had asked him to please keep our Superintendent informed of the outcome of our request for a quick resolution to this issue. We now have to stay on top of this project and in my opinion we should schedule Green Skies in for a meeting. Keep in mind they have the Swift Middle School project started and WHS next. The outcome of this installation will set the standard for our next two projects. As far as the municipal center, all of the trades are there. They are on the downside of the project; carpet squares are going down, normal things that happen towards the end of the project...so I think we are almost seeing the end of this...it is exciting.

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

##### **J. Communications - Secretary**

**None**

##### **K. Report from the Board Chair**

**Ms. Crotty** – On 12/10, I met with the Charter Revision Commission as the representative of the Board of Ed, joined by Dr. Harrison, to share that the Board of Education did not have any recommendations or changes to the charter as it relates to the Board of Education. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, I was pleased to a part of the project “Puzzle Piece” painting party at the high school where we have students that are painting Autism Awareness puzzle pieces that they have made in woodshop. These will eventually become something that is in all of the store fronts in April. Project Puzzle Piece is through the high school and the Town of Watertown and each business that is purchasing them will have their own uniquely painted puzzle piece to represent their business. The art work is all being done by our students. When we talk about community, this one project that Sun, Moon & Stars has brought to us really speaks to all of those things...we are bringing Autism Awareness, we are working with our students, capstone, art students, the town, the Superintendent’s office is involved, teachers. It really is a wonderful thing and we also had a meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> in regards to where we are on the project. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, I had a meeting with the Superintendent and Mr. DiStasio for a budget check in my regular Thursday meeting with the Superintendent, and then today, I had a follow up meeting with Dr. Harrison. Tomorrow, I am looking forward to attending the Polk concert. I have not had the opportunity this entire school year, having been incapacitated in September, October, and part of November, I missed so many beginning of school events that I really love, so I am looking forward to getting back into the swing of things and seeing all of the great things that the students are doing. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, I have the Juvenile Review Board where we will hear a couple of cases that have been sent to us and I am hoping to make the Swift concert on the 16<sup>th</sup>. We will end the month with another Project Puzzle Piece meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### **L. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent**

Agenda Item:	L.1
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval of Gifts
Motion Presented By:	Ms. Eastman
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Malagutti
Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the Board accept these generous gifts as presented and that letters of appreciation be sent to the donors.
Discussion:	The following gifts were presented: Exxon Mobil Corporation, Princeton, NJ donated a check in the amount of \$500.00 to John Trumbull Primary School for science and math supplies & Ingersoll Automotive Group of Danbury, CT donated fifteen (15) Chromebooks to Watertown High School, valued at \$3000.00.
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None

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

**Mr. Makowski** – Requested an update from the Food Service Department.

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

None

**O. Adjournment**

Agenda Item:	O.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 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson  
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk  
Secretary of the Board