

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: March 9, 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. Moment of Silence – In remembrance of Jonathan Sales**

Dr. Harrison – Good evening everyone. I wanted to take a moment to share some words about one of our dear teachers, Jonathan Sales, who passed away recently. Jonathan Stephen Sales 26, of Stratford, Connecticut passed away peacefully surrounded by his wife and family on Monday, February 24th, 2020 at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. He was born on August 11th, 1993 in Danbury to mother Loree D’Amato and father Stephen Sales. He got married to his beautiful wife Alyssa Griffin just under 3 months before his passing and we were all able to share in that moment in the new story after they got married at the hospital. Jonathan was a devoted teacher that shared his love for science with all of his students at Swift Middle School for the last 4 years. When you went into his class, you could just feel the electricity

of how much he loved his content, how much his students loved him, and how energized they were about learning about science. He enjoyed reading, video games, spending time with his cats and anything science. Most of all he loved spending time with his loving wife and family. He is survived by his wife Alyssa Griffin, father Stephen Sales and wife Lisa, mother Loree D’Amato and husband Chris, sister Nicole Sales, grandfather Kenneth, mother-in-law Maura, father-in-law John, as well as countless friends and family. Jonathan has asked that memorial contributions be sent to the Connecticut Children’s Foundation or Make A Wish Foundation in lieu of flowers. Our entire community is welcomed to join family and friends for a celebration of Jonathan’s life on March 14th, 2020 at the Woodbury Middle School cafeteria, in Woodbury Connecticut, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

In reembrace of Jonathan Sales, we ask for a moment of silence.

C. Salute to the Flag

D. “God Bless America” – Swift Middle School Select Choir

E. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

F. Minutes

Agenda Item:	F.1
Subject:	Minutes of the February 24, 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 February 24th, 2020 regular Board of Education meeting as presented by Ms. Davidson.
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
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Abstained:	None
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Vote:	Motion passed
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G. Recognition of Music Students – “Music in our Schools” Month

The Watertown Board of Education would like to recognize and congratulate the following students who were accepted into music festivals for the 2019-2020 school year. They were selected through an audition process and represent some of the most motivated and talented students in the area:

Northern Regional Middle School Music Festival:

- Sabrina Moffa - Soprano

Northern Regional High School Music Festival:

- Jesse Kaye – Bb Clarinet
- Noah Ryan – Bass Clarinet and Tenor (both band and choir)
- Bonnie DiAngelis – Alto
- Jessica Liano – Soprano
- Ruth Fomo – Soprano

Northern Regional All State Music Festival:

- Bonnie DiAngelis – Alto
- Jessica Liano – Soprano
- Noah Ryan – Tenor

H. Musical Performance

Students from Watertown High School, will perform the musical “GREASE” this evening. Thank you to the Grease production staff: Mr. Reese as Director/Choreographer, Watertown High School teacher, Joseph Hahn as orchestra director, Swift Middle School teacher, Anne DeMichiel as vocal director, and former Watertown High School teacher Joanne Chenkus as the producer.

To see the performance, please visit:

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

I. Report from Student Council Representative – Jordan Arnold

Mr. Arnold – Mrs. Meka, from **John Trumbull Primary School**, reports that over the past week, teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators have ridden school busses and vans to support our PBIS program. While riding the bus we are reviewing the 3Rs (Ready, Responsible, and Respectful) to help students manage their behavior and increase positive interactions.

Ms. Scully, from **Judson**, reports that the Invention Convention was held of February 25, 2020. Six inventions will be moving forward to the state competition at UCONN.

On March 2nd, the State Representative Poletta read to 4th graders as part of Read Across America Day! In addition, students wore their pajamas to school and made donations totaling

\$220 to Project Night Night. The student council conducted a fundraiser to support the Neuroendocrine Research Foundation in support of Security Officer Chip. A big thank you goes to all the Judson families and staff for their generous donations totaling \$1,400.

Ms. Galik, from **Polk**, reports that last week 7 amazingly creative Polk students wowed judges with their creations for the Intervention Convention. Intervention Convention invites students to create a gadget that solves a problem or makes a job easier to do. Fifth grader, Lahndon Flamengo and Samantha Grimes will be moving forward in the competition and will present their inventions at the Connecticut Invention Convention. Lahndon invited a holder for students' water bottles that will prevent them from falling off desks and Sammie created a special coat that can be worn by babies in car seats.

On March 2nd, Polk held a school-wide read-a-thon and pajama day to kick off Read Across America week. The generous students and their families raised \$350 for Project Night Night, which provides special care packages for homeless children.

Ms. Lerz, from **Swift**, reports that their school community has been deeply touched by the outpouring of support they have gotten from their colleagues, families and community members after the recent death of 7th grade science teacher, Jonathan Sales. At Swift, they celebrated the impact Jonathan made on the community through a variety of activities including a "Salute to Sales" day, a wall of memories, a tree planting in the spring and they will also dedicate the annual 3 on 3 basketball tournament in April in Jonathan's honor.

Ms. Parlato, from **Watertown High School**, reports that the boys' basketball team is currently in their first round of states against Haddam Killingworth. On Thursday of this week, there will be an anti-defamation workshop for the sophomore class. The spring pep rally is planned for Friday, March 13 to celebrate all of the upcoming sports and club activities. The Watertown High School Project Graduation is sponsoring Pasta Night at Mangia on Monday March 30th from 4pm-7pm. Tickets are \$13 for pasta, salad, meatballs, dessert, and soft drinks. Dr. Parlato was recently appointed to the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards, which is a state-wide committee that reports directly to the state Board of Education. Dr. Parlato was selected to represent the Connecticut Association of Schools, and other members of the Council are appointed by the Governor, the state legislature, and the state Board of Education. The purpose of the Council is to advise the State Department of Education in the development and revision of professional standards that guide the practice and work of all administrators in our state.

J. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

1. Appointments – (Information Only)

None

2. Transfers– (Information Only)

Ms. Catherine Ochs from the position of Accounts Payable Clerk for Watertown Public Schools, to Payroll/Human Resource Specialist for Watertown Public Schools.

3. Resignations – (Information Only)

Ms. Dominique Antico from the position of Paraprofessional at Watertown High Schools, effective March 1, 2020 for personal reasons.

Ms. Kathleen Scully from the position of Principal at Judson Elementary School, effective March 31, 2020, for the purpose of retirement. Ms. Scully has worked for Watertown Public Schools for thirty-eight years.

4. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Harrison – Good evening everyone. You will see that we have one transfer on our agenda tonight and two resignations. You will see on your agenda that Kathleen Scully, the principal at Judson Elementary School, has announced that she will be retiring at the end of this month after 38 years of service in Watertown. She began teaching when she was five years old...and I just want to say it has been an absolute pleasure working with Ms. Scully since I have been here, and as a Superintendent, it is great to work with people who are smart, willing to try new things, are supportive of the work, and also people you can learn from, so I appreciate all of the moments that I have been able to work with Kathy and be a part of the Judson community. I wore my Judson Star tee shirt over the weekend and I thought about what a loss it will be to the community and district. I want you to also to know that I have been talking to the cabinet about next steps as far as that position and putting an interim in place until we are able to hire full time. I sent an email to all of our Judson families and staff asking for input on the next principal for Judson and I will keep you posted on that position.

Ms. Crotty – I just wanted to say thank you to Mrs. Scully. It has been a lot of years; I know everybody at this table has had children or grandchildren that have been nurtured and taught by you. Our founding principal at John Trumbull Primary School; I hope that you will come back when we recognize our retirees at the end of the school year so that we can properly do justice to the 38 years that you have given to Watertown Public Schools. I want to thank you for service.

Dr. Harrison – Ms. Scully will continue her work at CERC and specifically focusing on students with special needs and supporting districts in that work.

Today, I want to give an update on Covid-19 and things that we are doing in our district based on guidance we are receiving from the Torrington Department of Health, which is our area health department and also the Governor and the State Department of Education. Just today, I received 15 or 16 emails just about the Corona virus from different agencies and it is a lot to keep up with, so I just want to take the time to give you a sense of where we are. Of course we have a lot of focus around the district on prevention and making sure general information is shared. We have thinking about prevention from non-pharmaceutical interventions so making sure we are deep cleaning and sanitizing our surfaces; the state gave some different guidelines over the last couple of days around the types of cleaning products that we can use to make sure we can sanitize and disinfect surfaces. As an example, tonight before our state game, the custodian staff sanitized all of the bleachers in preparation. So in addition to just simple things like hand washing, and hand washing protocols in the elementary schools, social distancing and ways to prevent germs from spreading. These are just good habits to have always, especially during Flu season, which we are still in the middle of. We have gone

ahead and ordered additional cleaning products including sanitizing wipes that are made available to our teachers so they can go ahead and use them to sanitize their desks throughout the day. We have also focused on being prepared in the event that there are school closures in the future. I want to thank all of our district leaders and cabinet members who have been spending a lot of time laying out some plans that will follow through and review with our administrators in the morning. When we looked at our school safety and security plans and also the processes around the continuity of education; so in the event that schools are required to close, that is a decision that I would make in conjunction with our local health department, and if so, we have two options; we can close altogether and make up the days at the end of the school year and the state has also given us some options for distance learning using digital tools in order to continue learning at home. We have been doing some preliminary work around making sure we have devices available for families that may need them and doing some early assessments on what we think the need would be and availability of Wi-Fi access to our families at home. I will be sending something out more formally tomorrow laying out that plan and also getting more specific information from families. As we go through this process, one of the things we recognize is providing time for our teachers in doing preparation work, and we have been watching carefully how our colleagues around the state have been handling this, and they have provided their teachers with some release time, either at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day to do some planning. We are also considering some of those options as well. I have met with the para's union today to talk about some potential plans and I will meet with the teacher's union later this week to really work on working out some of those logistics as well. There has been a lot of information coming from the state in checklists, updated checklists, and sometimes the morning checklist has changed by the afternoon, and so it is definitely a fluid situation, but I appreciate our administrators that taking recommendations from me and our local state agencies and also to our parents for putting their trust in our hands and I will be sharing additional information with parents tomorrow. There were two updates that came from the state today and then this evening there was a conference call with superintendents across the state, first responders from each town, the Governor and the Governor's heads of departments and agencies to again provide us with the most updated information so that we could plan and prepare. When it comes to upcoming field trips, local or out of state....we actually have an out of country field trip planned and we are meeting to discuss that later this week...we are taking recommendations from the state but also looking at the state department website with many of the companies that we contract with for travel...if the state department or the Governor declares a state of emergency and bans travel, students will be refunded, but beyond the financial piece, obviously we are looking at safety first. With every situation, I will be making a decision on a case by case basis and informing the school administrator and also making parents aware.

K. Presentation – Technology Update

Mr. Jeff Turner, Director of Technology, will present an overview of Apptegy-Thrillshare, the digital website & app Watertown Public School uses for marketing and school communication.

To see the entire presentation, please visit:

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

L. Items of Discussion

Watertown High School Graduation Date

Ms. Crotty – As the board is aware, legislation passed last year allowing boards to set a graduation date in the later months particularly for districts that have to book outside facilities. In our district, we were asked to try to take advantage of that and let parents know early when graduation is. We have had a lot of questions regarding this.

Dr. Harrison – There is a lot of good discussion at the high school with the leadership team and administrators looking at the change in legislation that allows us to set the date. So the recommendation is to have the board approve setting the graduation date at June 17, 2020. That being said, we also know that there is still a lot of communication coming to us related to how the Covid-19 virus could potentially impact our calendar for the school year if we have any extended school closings or anything related to that thinking long term. My recommendation at that time would be to come back and say we approved this date for graduation but I would recommend we reconsider a change in that date.

Ms. Crotty – If we were to go ahead and approve the recommendation, knowing that it might change, how do we make sure that families that have siblings or families in say California that might book a plane ticket, or have grandparents may come from far away, then now take action because we have set the date?

Dr. Harrison – I am trying to send home communication to our families on updates to Covid-19, for instance I will be sending one tomorrow, so in sending any information related to the proposed date for graduation, I would include the proposed caveat that in the event that we have significant calendar changes, that we would want to consider that as well. The purpose of this date, as you mentioned is to, plan ahead, and I think that for a long time we had to wait so long in order to set the graduation and it was difficult to plan and so this gives us a little more flexibility, but there is not a state requirement that we have to have a graduation set by a certain date, it could just be something that we just say let's table and make that decision a little further down the line.

Ms. Crotty – Yes, and then if we set the date, Project graduation will hire in all of their vendors for the night as well.

Dr. Harrison – We also talked about the date. The challenge is looking at our teachers' contract. There is a number of days that teachers are required to work and setting graduation beyond those contracted days would have them come in past their contracted days. If we go earlier, to the Friday before, and yes, we did talk about the logistics of having it on a Friday, particularly with Project Graduation, travel, volunteers, etc...the challenge for making it earlier for the

graduating seniors, the exams need to be moved up and what that created for us was a challenge where you have mixed groups of students with seniors and underclassmen, do those exams happen with the underclassmen window of exams or the senior window of exams? If that is the recommendation, then I would want to go back and look at the schedules. The provision allows for graduation seniors to have less than 180 days, but not underclassmen. So I would like to do some more research on this, look at it all again, and come back. So I am going to change my recommendation to table this discussion for now.

Wellness Advisory Council

Ms. Crotty – As a reminder, we have a policy regarding wellness, Policy 51-55, which goes over the rules and guidelines related to wellness. As you can see, it includes having a Board of Education member and I am recommending Mr. Jason Malagutti to serve as the representative for the board. I thank you for offering your services to us.

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

None

N. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No
Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair –No
Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – Yes

The Budget Road Show continues; tomorrow we are at Judson and Polk and Dr. Harrison will be presenting the budget to those PTOs and it is at 7:00 p.m. From there, on March 17th, Dr. Harrison will present to the Town Council, and our public hearing with is set for April 22nd at Swift in the auditorium, and then our referendum which is tentatively set for May 26th.

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

As far as John Trumbull security, the public can anticipate our additional security updates being completed by the end of this month. As far as the municipal center, the Interim Town Manager is now looking at each and every change order for approval.

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

O. Communications - Secretary

Ms. Wilk – Yes Madam Chair, we did receive a card that says, “Dear Board of Education Chair Leslie Crotty and Board of Education members, we are very grateful for your kindness last week as we dealt with the loss of our dear friend, Jonathan Sales. The bagel and muffin baskets was

very thoughtful and much appreciated at this sad time and most difficult time, your support has been comforting to us. We appreciate it, Ms. Marylu Lerz.”

P. Report from the Board Chair

None

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

Agenda Item: Q.1
 Subject: Consideration of the Approval of Watertown High School Graduation Date

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

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board table that date for further study.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
 Abstained: None
 Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: Q.2
 Subject: Consideration to Approve of the Appointment of Board of Education Member to the Wellness Advisory Council

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

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of appointing Board Member Jason Malagutti to the Wellness Advisory Council, effective immediately.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None
 Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: Q.3
Subject: Consideration of the Approval of an Out of State Field Trip to Detroit, Michigan

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

Text of the Motion: Madam Chair, I move that the Board approve of the field trip to Detroit, Michigan for approximately twenty-five Watertown High School student members of the FIRST Robotics Team and the required chaperones from April 28 through May 3, 2020 to participate in the World Championships.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion passed

R. Future agenda Items and Board Members' Comments

None

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

None

T. Executive Session (8:44 p.m.)

Agenda Item: T.1
Subject: To go into Executive Session

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

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of an Attorney-Client Privileged Communication regarding technology. Attending the Executive Session will be Jason Malagutti, Cindy

Eastman, Josephine Rosa, Rydell Harrison, Leslie Crotty,
Tom Lambert, Janelle Wilk, Cathie Rinaldi, Diane Bristol,
Jeff Turner, and myself, Rob Makowski.

Discussion: None
Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

U. Regular Session (9:28)

V. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board