

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2011 Administrative Center - 63 Beaver Brook Road

A G E N D A

Present: E. Alberts, R. Austin-James, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Molinaro, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak
Drs. S. Pascarella, W. Glass, Ms. J. Emmett, Mr. E. Longo, Ms. K. Thompson from Administration

Absent: S. LeRoy, K. Gailliard
Dr. R. Dylewski from Administration

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Irving Fox, called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITIONS

- A. Mayor Mark Boughton presents Danbury Education Foundation Grant Awards

Mayor Boughton congratulates the award winners and presents individual awards totaling approximately \$12,000 to the following: **Tarrywile Greenhouse Vocational Program**, by Anne Cunningham & R. Scott Weisner, DHS, in the amount of \$970; **Aprendiendo Juntos/Learning Together**, by Linda Mitten and Cristina Roth for DHS & KSP, in the amount of \$550; **Nimer Running Program**, by Mary Nimer, KSP & MRP, in the amount of \$1,500; **Orff Instruments** by Marie Williams, KSI, in the amount of \$1,025; **Bio-Eco 21**, by Jon Webber for ACE, in the amount of \$1,500; **High School Book Club** by Natalie Koehler for DHS, in the amount of \$1,432; **Hunger Games Political Freedoms at Risk**, by Laura Baxter, Donna DeMayo and Christina Taylor Riendeau, for DHS, in the amount of \$5,000.

- B. DHS Peer Leadership 2011 Spinathon raised \$9,180 to Help our Military Heroes.

Lisa Frese from DHS introduces three students, Andrew Vandergrift, Michael Pristouris, and Deyon Rosado. Casey Wright was absent. Each student spoke about how they heard about the project and how they organized the Spinathon and raised funds to help our military heroes.

Chairman Fox, on behalf of the Board, is grateful to the students for all of their efforts.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kimber Windas, KSP parent, spoke about the calendar. She is in favor of elimination the February break and the professional day in May 27. She believes that additional snow days need to be built into the calendar. She

is disheartened about standardized testing, and feels that basic science and social studies are lacking because of time taken to prepare for these tests.

Kevin Haddad, Danbury resident and KSI teacher, talks about the calendar. Currently, it states that if any days were added, we would go to June 30 and then deduct it from April vacation. His question to the Board is why put the policy on the calendar in place and now consider other options. This being the case, he feels no one should be penalized if another option is put in place at this time.

Dale Steichen talks about exam grades at DHS and how administration has told teachers to calculate the grades and passed a handout to the Board.

Sandy Steichen wants to give her three minutes of time for the Board to respond to the previous speaker. Chairman Fox reminds Mrs. Steichen that public participation is meant to address the Board.

Kathleen LaValley, Danbury resident and School Library Media Specialist, spoke about the position of Director of Information Services and Technology, which has not been filled. She believes the position is vitally important to the school district. She asks the Board to consider filling this position. She is also concerned that the budget does not allocate funding for books for school library media centers.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Jannelli moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approve the items on the Consent Calendar, as recommended:

A. MINUTES

Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 2/27/11

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes, 2/3/11

The motion carried at 8:04 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE – Cindy Mirochine

Ms. Mirochine reports that the survey which went out on Instant Alert was received by some, some received the alert twice, and some did not receive it at all. She wanted to make the Board aware of it.

She reports about two items that they were going to report on by January 31, e-learning and the PD committee. Due to snow, meetings have been postponed, but have been rescheduled.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Danbury High School: **Shaquilla Taylor, Rebecca Leonard**

Ms. Taylor reports that on February 11, DHS will have its annual Mr. DHS competition hosted by Smile Train, and on February 17, the National Art Honor Society will have inductions at the Danbury High Auditorium at 7 p.m. Ms. Leonard reports that on February 25 the ROTC military ball at the Amber Room from 6 to 10 pm. Students have finished their mid-term exams and have begun the second semester smoothly.

Alternative Center: **Vanessa Grant**

Ms. Grant reports that six students have graduated today, and that Jon Webber, a teacher at ACE, received a grant from the Danbury Education Foundation grant.

Chairman Fox thanked the students for their participation and encourages them to bring their concerns to the Board.

PRESENTATION

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. School Calendar/Weather Related Closings

Dr. Pascarella said our calendar is very definite as to how we use the snow days. He feels youngsters have been home enough. He further stated that the weather in June is problematic and at times we have had to close due to extreme heat. He would like to have a discussion and debate about this unusual year. A survey was conducted for the first time, as previously stated by Ms. Mirochine.

Dr. Glass shared the information that we received from the survey. Our tentative last day is June 15, and we have ample time to accommodate the snow days. The year started on August 26 for new staff. We can back that up; however, traditionally, we have not had a problem like this. One question posed by parents is whether students can attend school on Saturdays and Sundays. It is illegal for us to do so. The parent survey conducted produced 5,010 responses. Three questions we posed, two regarding the snow days and one regarding how the parents would like to be notified. Of the 5,010, 3,233 parents indicated that they would prefer not to have the February break for the two days and maintain the April break, 1,777 said they would prefer to come to school on the February break and not have the full April break and keep shaving off the days as necessary. The majority of parents voted to eliminate the February break and maintain the April break.

We surveyed the staff, and we received 827 responses, 618 said they would prefer to eliminate the February break, and 209 said they would prefer to take it off the April break. The overwhelming feedback from the people who have responded support the idea of the Board considering the February break as being eliminated. Dr. Glass also reported on the part of the survey which asked the parents how they preferred to be contacted. The choices were School Messaging System, which was number one. We asked them if they would prefer a phone call or text message or an email or posting on our district website. Sixty percent said they definitely would like to receive an instant message system be the vehicle, and the other three were balanced in their responses.

Also, in looking at the dates, right now we have February 17 as a half day for students due to professional development, and the 18th and 21st are closed due to Presidents Weekend. We can eliminate Presidents' Day; however, we would have to have formal recognitions in each of our schools. The idea would be to make February 17 a whole day, combined with the 18th and 21st giving us contiguous instruction. Sal said that we have already added 5 days on to the end of the year. Currently we are up to the 27th. He feels it might be somewhat problematic. J. Scozzafava said the Board made a commitment that school would run to June 30 and then, if needed, take days off the break. Again, Dr. Pascarella reiterates that this year has been unusual. He is concerned about the problems being in school the last week of June would bring and he is trying to bring this up in an effort for the Board to look at it. Dr. Pascarella's recommendation is to eliminate Thursday afternoon, Friday and Monday. Ms. Thompson stated the other argument is the issue of continuity of instruction, and this is why we are asking the Board to look at this. R. Taborsak commented that if you are interested in quality of work, you will have more taking place in the class in February than in June. He recalls when he taught on the fourth floor of DHS, and students were bringing in fans, etc. to help with the stifling heat. He feels February is a more productive time for the students. Dr. Glass reports that principals have significant concerns about continuity of instruction. He would like to reiterate what R. Taborsak said. Every year parents call about the heat index policy. Classrooms report as high as 95 degrees, and students are being shuffled into areas to avoid the heat. Chairman Fox asked if we considered reaching out to the employees to see whether they plan on coming in. Dr. Pascarella said it was considered but due to the size of the staff, we did not. R. Jannelli asks

Ms. Thompson how the teachers would be penalized if they did not attend school. Ms. Thompson said we have had discussions about this and it is difficult to say because we don't know how many people we are talking about. More discussion ensued between the Board members and the administrators about how to handle the situation. Dr. Pascarella said the risk is less to take Friday and Monday. Chairman Fox asked what the union rep had to say. Cindy Mirochine addressed the Board. She has no numbers to give the Board as to how many staff will be out. Ms. Thompson said in 1988, there was a day taken in April, and she was told that employees were docked. R. Jannelli said he is concerned about the quality of instruction time, and feels that people expect to be in school in June with April vacation.

Chairman Fox asks if anyone wants to add an Action Item to the agenda. Ms. Cooper asked what would be the consequences if we do not take action tonight. Chairman Fox said it is a mute point because there is no meeting before the Presidents' Day Weekend. Dr. Pascarella would inform parents that it is scheduled as is and we would go to the end of June since we asked their opinion. J. Scozzafava would like to make a motion to add it to the agenda.

MOTION: J. Scozzafava moved, seconded by R. Taborsak to add an Action Item to the Agenda.

The motion carried at 8:44 p.m.

MOTION: R Jannelli moved, seconded by R. Taborsak to add to the Agenda to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to reinstate Friday, February 18 and Monday, February 21 as school days.

The motion carried at 8:45 p.m. R. Jannelli opposed.

B. Legislative Update

Dr. Pascarella reports that there might be some changes in kindergarten dates. September 1 may be used as an entrance day for kindergarten students. There are a number of other bills, but right now, nothing is definite. As soon as they start getting serious about moving forward, he will bring them to the Board for their information. We have a legislative meeting on February 24, at a location to be determined.

C. Roof Snow Removal Inspections

Antonio Iadarola, the Director of Public Works, and his team have worked very hard and have done a great job removing snow and ice from the roofs of our buildings. They have hired outside contractors. The Fire Department has been wonderful about helping out. The principals are very appreciative about the help from the city, and Dr. Pascarella would like to thank the City publicly for their hard work.

Dr. Pascarella states there has been a tremendous amount of time talking about the high school assessment. He distributed a handout to the Board which will be given out with the students' report cards on February 10.

ACTION ITEMS

A. 2011-2012 Budget

ACTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded K. Molinaro by that the Board of Education adopt the Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2011-2012 budget in the amount of \$118,638,099 as recommended by the Superintendent for submission to the Mayor as required by City Charter.

R. Taborsak reports that the original amendment was made in good faith but administration made it clear that there was an ongoing process to renegotiate. I Fox would like Mr. Longo to describe the accounts and what those accounts represent.

Mr. Longo explained that Accounts 201, 202, 203 represent all health care accounts. The original budget had a placeholder of 12% for CIGNA renewal rate. Mr. Longo previously informed the Board that negotiations with CIGNA were ongoing and asked the Board to give further consideration for any future reductions. I am pleased to inform Board members this evening that since our last meeting date, we have had additional concessions made by CIGNA in the amount of \$585,064. The 12% placeholder has since been revised to 9% placeholder. We are not at the final renewal. Mr. Longo will continue to negotiation on behalf of the Board with CIGNA, and as we approach the Common Council's deadline for appropriations, we will have a final number to present as part of our final budget. Dr. Pascarella said it is a work in progress and would like to thank Ms. Thompson and all of the employees and the negotiating team for the Board. R Jannelli also said thank you for the tremendous reductions in our costs. He makes the point that of the \$4.1 million dollar increase, more than 50% of that increase is attributed to healthcare. Dr. Pascarella said we have 1,400 employees and 740-750 of them live in Danbury. This budget affects our Danbury citizens. Dr. Pascarella said this budget is moving us forward. To address the comment about open positions that have not been filled, we are evaluating the positions we have and will make a determination after the final budget meeting. I. Fox said thank you to Mr. Longo and everyone else involved for aggressively getting our administrative costs lower.

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by M. Fazio that the Board of Education amend the Superintendent's fiscal year 2011-2012 budget as follows:
(a) reduce Account 201 by \$512,152,
(b) reduce Account 202 by \$18,228,
(c) reduce Account 203 by \$54,684 for a total reduction of \$585,064, and
(d) to revise the Finance Committee adopted Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Proposed Budget to \$118,053,034.

In Favor: E. Alberts, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Molinaro, J. Scozzafava,
R. Taborsak

Absent : K. Gailliard, S. LeRoy

Abstain: R. Austin-James

The amended motion carried at 8:57 pm.

Chairman Fox said for us to make additional reductions at this time would be irresponsible. Based on all of the cuts that we have had in the past three or four years, somewhere over \$10 million dollars, these are cuts we cannot afford to make and we have an obligation to the students and to the city to move the current programs forward, if not supplement them, which we know we cannot do at this time. I. Fox is fully supportive of the Superintendent's recommendation as amended.

B. DHS Field Trip to London, England

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by Alberts that the Board of Education approve the Danbury High School Field Trip to London, England, April break 2012

The motion carried at 9:00 pm.

DISCUSSIONS

INFORMATION

BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Chairman Fox reports that he received a communication from one of the union representatives regarding Read Across America Day on March 2. It was very enjoyable last year and he is looking forward to participating again this year.

There is going to be a forum on February 24 as a follow-up to the meeting that was held at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church on the budget process. There will be state legislators in attendance as well as the Mayor and he is planning on attending. The location is to be determined.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Committee Reports

Sites and Facilities

CHAIR

J. Scozzafava

MEMBERS

E. Alberts, K. Molinaro

J. Scozzafava reports that the American Carrera Tech project was approved. There have been some problems with our roofs because they are disturbed when we work to clear them, and if there are any leaks on the roofs, we will take care of them. I. Fox attended a City Council Meeting and is very appreciative of the ad hoc committee for recommending approval and for the Council for approving it.

Community Relations

R. Jannelli

R. Austin-James, K. Gailliard

Finance

M. Fazio
R. Jannelli

S. Leroy, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak

Mr. Longo reports that Governor Malloy has announced to restore ECS education costs to all municipalities at the full contribution level. Information can be found on the CCM website at this time.

Operations/Policy

R. Taborsak

E. Alberts, G. Cooper,
K. Gailliard, K. Molinaro

R. Taborsak reports that they have not met but he is going to meet with Ms. Thompson.

Superintendent Evaluation

K. Molinaro

R. Jannelli, S. Leroy

Oral Health Initiative

E. Alberts

School Based Health

E. Alberts

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Austin-James that the Board of Education adjourn its February 9, 2011 meeting.

The motion carried at 9:05 pm.

Kathleen M. Molinaro, Secretary

