

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 2011- 7:00 PM
Administrative Center – 63 Beaver Brook Road

Present: R. Austin-James (7:30 pm), G. Cooper, M. Fazio (7:08 pm),
I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Molinaro, S. Podhajski-Leroy, D. Metrena,
R. Taborsak, Drs. Glass and Pascarella and J. Emmett, E. Longo
and K. Thompson from Administration.

Absent: E. Alberts and K. Gailliard

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Irving Fox, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rich Holmes, teacher at Danbury High School spoke about needing someone that is vested in Danbury and there is no need to search in another state or city; the school is divided and we need someone who can bring the school together.

Sheila Sundaram was concerned about Dr. Rossi's resignation and the lack of longevity of principals at DHS. She is calling for the parents to be involved and to have input in determining the selection criteria for the new principal; review and approval of a preliminary list of candidates, with access to all their credentials and qualification and review and approve the final list of candidates. She hopes that the Superintendent and the Board will accept the help.

Sandra Chorvey told the Board that the S.O.S. has 501 tax exempt status and they are operating a Booster Club for Freshman sports and want to be known at "Hatter's Booster Club". Freshman sports needs to be reinstated. There are 23 job openings, you made cuts but we still have 23 jobs to be filled. Somewhere in that budget you have to find money for Freshman sports.

Cindy Garnett said they are a dedicated group of parents every day hustling to raise the funds for Freshman Sports; we are doing a fantastic job and are at the \$25,000 mark right now. I am asking for partnership and cooperation as it is too big a program to let go at the wayside. We had 400 people at the Spaghetti fund raiser dinner. \$70,000 can be found somewhere. We need to work together.

Billie Anderson said he is glad we started this Freshman program. It is an important part of school and we are working hard. We have been fundraising and we will raise the \$75,000+ dollars; it is important to keep the kids focused. We will achieve those goals.

Sheri Gross said she has a daughter entering into Shelter Rock's third grade and is concerned about 28-29 students per teacher in 3 classrooms. She does not want to be switching schools. She asked the

Board if we are going to bring aides in so no one will be falling behind. Although she is concerned about the space issue, she stated that there is a great staff at that school.

Anita Serpa-Smith told the Board that she is saddened to say her daughter was at Shelter Rock until the 4th grade as is now at Immaculate. She stated that she has a 5 year old that she wants to enroll at Shelter Rock, but is concerned about the space issue. Danbury has been very good to me and there is a lot to offer; it is imperative for our children for the Board to work on the space issues.

Tom Saadi, member of the Common Council, told the Board that Shelter Rock is a great neighborhood school; very much a community school. He said he lives across the street from the school. The principal and staff go over and beyond. I know that you are dealing with limited funds. The Board can't do everything, maybe we can listen to ideas and comments of parents. In regard to Dr. Rossi, I hope that going forward the Board and those involved with the search will conduct it with open communications and in that way we can bridge the gap of many miscommunications that occur.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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

MINUTES

Special Board of Education Meeting 6/29/11
2020 Task Force Meeting 7/13/11

PERSONNEL

Accept Leaves of Absence: Yuliet Borges Kathryn Festa
 Sarah Place Linda Foege

Accept Resignations: Robert Rossi Benjamin Panzarino
 Angelo Rodriguez Greg Scalzo

DONATION

Accept a donation from the Fairfield County Community Foundation on behalf of Fred & Joan Weisman in the amount of \$4,000 to support the extended day enrichment portion of Ellsworth Avenue School's summer program.

Ms. Cooper had a question on where the \$4,000 would be spent. Ms. Anne Meade responded that it would be for the extended day enrichment summer program at Ellsworth.

2011-2012 School Calendar

That the Board of Education revise the 2011-2012 School Calendar to reflect January 2, 2012 as a Holiday with Schools and Offices closed.

The motion carried at 7:22 pm.

ACTION ITEMS

Custodian, Maintenance and Drivers, UE Local 222, C.I.L.U.Local 35 Contract for 2011-2012

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education ratify the Custodian, Maintenance and Drivers, UE Local 222, C.I.L.U.-Local 35 Contract for 2011-2012

The motion carried at 7:23 pm.

Danbury Paraeducators, CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 Contract for 2011-2012

MOTION - R. Jannelli moved, seconded by M. Fazio that the Board of Education ratify the Danbury Paraeducators, CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 Contract for 2011-2012

The motion carried at 7:24 pm.

DISCUSSIONS

Shelter Rock School Enrollment Update: Presentation – Dr. Glass

The Superintendent said that tonight he would like to discuss the Shelter Rock School enrollment and space challenges that face the district in the Fall. He turned the discussion over to Dr. Glass who gave a power point presentation entitled *Space Challenges for the FY 2011-2012*. Dr. Glass spoke about and showed slides of the three-year enrollment increase in 2008-2010, citing that the enrollment steadily increased and is now at 10,381 students. He then gave the Board the enrollment projections stating that K-5 should remain at 5,220, 6-8 grades will increase by approximately 70 students and 9-12 grades should remain at approximately 2,890. He spoke about the annual 39% student mobility rate; class size targets and with grade three being the greatest challenge. He explained a slide that showed “cutting below the cuts that were made last year” which included the very important, top priority and mission critical to the Board. There were excerpts from the budget presentation and Dr. Glass called the Board’s attention to what was done then; moratorium on technology equipment, delay graduation requirements, reallocate existing staff and resources, continue to aggressively pursue cost containment. He then spoke about the pros and cons at the elementary level for Art and Music space, alternative use of existing space, sister schools; universal and half-day kindergarten. He stated that administration will continue to monitor enrollments throughout the summer, where there is already a concern, such as Shelter Rock, administration will freeze permissive transfers, not allow receiving choice school, and new registrations will be assigned to a sister school – these efforts will be the short term considerations. The long term considerations will be to conduct a redistricting study where there is significant overcrowding and make recommendations to the Board by its first meeting in September; with the 20/20 Task Force Committee, and explore the use of MRI as a third middle school or a new K-5 school.

Mr. Fox thanked both Dr. Glass and Dr. Pascarella. He stated that he is disappointed in the position we are in when two years ago we started looking at this. His expectation was that we would have had a redistricting analysis by this Fall. I am skeptical on reaction time we have now. Another 10 students in every section – we should have not come to this point. We should have tackled this several months ago and cannot wait for new numbers on October 1st – people are going to continue to move around – we need to get this done as soon as possible we can't wait until the numbers come out. (audience applauded Mr. Fox's comments)

Mr. Jannelli asked why we couldn't have pocket redistricting and full scale redistricting. Is STEM at MR being scraped? Dr. Pascarella said we are sensitive to parents and we have somewhat of a plan of movement of students. 20/20 is looking at something beyond MRI – looking at commercial properties. We did not think that enrollment was going to be such an issue. Mr. Jannelli went on to say that the City doesn't have money for the Board's current needs; they can't go out and purchase property for another school. I thought that we had a plan that MRI was to become the STEM academy. Mr. Jannelli said time for concepts are over it is time for action. Every time the 20/20 Task Force Committee gets together, it is a different story with different challenges. Dr. Pascarella stated that the 20/20 Committee has nothing to do with redistricting.

Mr. Taborsak encourages everyone in this audience and everyone seeing this video to attend the next 20/20 Committee meeting on August 8th at 6:00 PM at Beaver Brook Administration Center and let the members know how you feel. We all get mobilized after the fact. All we can do now is go to all the meetings; be informed and pick up the ball and go forward. Mr. Fox stated that over the last 20/20 meetings there has been a lot of back and forth. These two processes are separate. The 20/20 Committee is to figure out the strategic plan which requires a referendum and it is a long term proposition. The focus of this discussion is the Board's job with the space that we do have now and how do we use that space within the operating funds we have. That is totally in our jurisdiction. This is a tactical decision that has to be made by administration. Mr. Fox stated what is going to happen in 30 days is our focus. Ms. Molinaro said we got lulled into a sense of security because Head Start promised to move out and they had numerous problems and now we are faced with we don't know where to place our students. I would like to see the pocket districting of one or two schools immediately. Ms. Cooper said going back 2 ½ years ago one of the recommendations was the committee to take the time to look at redistricting but that is **not** one of the recommendations that came out of that committee – I know that we can't change that now. We have not redistricted in 16 years. I always said we needed to look at redistricting – we have to make some constructive recommendations for the Superintendent to move forward. Dr. Pascarella said what I am hearing is the October 1 date is too far out – we will have something the first meeting in September. We will have to relocate students to other schools. I have spoken to the parochial school principals and they have some space that we could rent, so that is in my back pocket.

The Board called on Julia Horne, principal at Shelter Rock School, and she said she does agree with freezing some of the out of districts, but her biggest concern is 2012-2013 school year. Those students going into grade 1 in 2012-2013 is the crucial piece at Shelter Rock. (audience applauded). Mr. Fox thanked her for all the hard work she has done at the school and her support.

Mr. Fox asked Dr. Glass if he could post his Space Challenges for the FY 2011-2012 presentation on our home page so the public can see it. He responded that he would.

Mr. Jannelli asked Dr. Glass to give the Board, at its first meeting in September, two scenario proposals or studies of the redistricting or pocket redistricting study and also a full redistricting model in the event that the pocket does not solve the problem. Dr. Pascarella said we have to look at the schools and see who shows up. We also have to balance civil rights. Mr. Jannelli said what he is looking for is first pocket then full redistricting. Mr. Fox thanked the Shelter Rock parents and Mr. Saadi for attending tonight. Dr. Pascarella also thanked the parents and Julia Horne.

Freshman Sports Program Update

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that all the money that is raised will be given to the school and that he will give an accounting for what we have for the Freshmen Program. He said he spoke to the Athletic Director and he is willing to wait for us to make that decision. If don't have enough funds for the Fall, then we have to wait until Winter. Ms. LeRoy asked how does the money from the Booster Club and Adopt a School get mixed. A person from the audience said it never got mixed. Dr. Pascarella said we set up the account Adopt a School and Mr. Longo said according to Ann Meade, there is \$100 in the account. Mr. Longo also said that since the Booster Club has federal recognition then at some future date they will have to make a donation to the school district. Mr. Fox stated if they continue to fund raise his concern is that this is going to be a recurring item; as we go forward this will have to be a continual effort as the seasons change. A one-time effort is doable, over the long term it will be difficult, but I hope that it is successful. Mr. Longo stated any fundraising activities are collected on a generic level not specific to a program otherwise we will run into Title 9 concerns; it will be for Freshman sports. Mr. Fox asked if you have a leader of the group that can be contacted regarding the Booster Club. Mr. Jannelli said to the leaders he wants them to know now that they are incorporated there is a tax return to be filed and there are severe penalties if you do not do it. Dr. Pascarella asked how am I going to get the progress in 2 ½ weeks, we need some formal process and asked that they call his office on Thursday. Mr. Fox thanked the group and said that the Board appreciates their efforts for such a short period of time. He stated that he attended the dinner and it was very successful.

15 minute recess at 9:00 pm)

Selection process for DHS Principal Position

Mr. Fox stated that earlier this evening we accepted Dr. Rossi's resignation. Dr. Pascarella said this happened quite suddenly and is problematic. Dr. Glass and I have discussed this with the Cabinet and we feel stability is the key. We need to be concerned about the needs of the kids, not the needs of the adults. I would like to propose to the Board that we have Gary Boccaccio serve as an interim for a 2 year assignment. If we were to select Gary, at the end of two years he will not be working for Danbury any longer and he will be gone and not be the principal. We would hire an assistant principal in his place. A two year assignment is quite different when you count up the number of principals we have, someone who knows the kids and staff. I ask you to consider him. Dr. Glass stated that we put so many new initiatives in place at the high school – and they need time to mature and this is not a time to add new thinking now or the year after. We have 220 people in that building. Gary is highly respected by the staff. It is a good time to go back to a well known commodity to

bring stability. It is the right person at the right time. Ms. Thompson agrees with the Superintendent's recommendation for a 2 year assignment as it is going to take time to find the right person and conduct that search. Ms. Molinaro said she feels that it is a very good choice and asks that the Board take its time in selecting its next principal. We don't know the climate of that building and we need to do an investigation into why we have had so many principals in such a short time. There is something wrong with the climate and we need to know what the problems are before we hire another person; we don't want to set them up to fail and I think we should discuss this in Executive Session. Mr. Taborsak said he can't think about giving an interim a 2 year assignment. I have no problem with an interim, but then you need to extend it but saying flat out for 2 years. He is an excellent person, why not make it 3 years; are we going to be picking a principal or not. Dr. Pascarella said this very unusual and there are many issues there. I feel 2 years is the stability we need and the person we are interested in is going to retire and that will give us the time for an audit. Mr. Fazio said he goes along with Ms. Molinaro it buys us sufficient amount of time to uncover some issues that we may be overlooking. Mr. Fox added is there any precedent of time for interims lasting longer than a year – I cannot tell you. You are faced with a little different problem. Ms. Cooper said she does not have a problem with Mr. Boccaccio and have the greatest respect for him, but I also think we have a job that needs to be filled and I would support for it for 1 year; we have a process in place for hiring a new principal and I think we should start it. I don't have a problem with parents being on the Committee. I will support Mr. Boccaccio for 1 year and will look for a new principal. I will not support anyone in that position for 2 years. This should have been discussed in Executive Session before bringing it out to the public like this. Ms. Leroy said this is a good choice and I think he should be in for 2 years; I think it will take us that long and if we don't fix what is wrong with that school I can promise you we will have a repeat of the last two principals. Ms. Thompson said the decision to hire Gary as a one year interim would impact your decision on selling the assistant principalship position because that assistant principal would need to also be interim. Mr. Fox asked how much time a normal search would take. Ms. Thompson said in some positions on average it would take you several months to see what criteria we are looking for; we will need a three tier process which would take a month to coordinate. Dr. Pascarella said we need to bring in a consultant so we could have a good assessment of the school. Ms. Molinaro asked if a consultant would have the same rights as the Board would have. Ms. Thompson said there is a Freedom of Information Act; the consultant would be able to get the same information that you would get. Ms. Molinaro said if we do have that type of audit, I want them to be able to get the same information. Ms. Austin-James said if you are going to a 2 year assignment then you are limiting yourself. If you find the person for the job, you may lose that person. It is going to tie our hands in either direction – and there is a time limit they have to adhere to, you could lose that person that may be successful at the high school. Dr. Pascarella said if the Board would agree to the 2 years, we can then hire the consultant. If it is a mid-year selection, it won't work. Mr. Fox said not to exceed two years –once you get longer than that it is a dangerous precedent; the whole process on how we selected principals would be undermined. Ms. Cooper wants to know what cut Dr. Rossi down to 2 years. Could we ask a principal to stay a minimum of 3-5 years? Mr. Fox said what Ms. Cooper is proposing is subjected to collective bargaining. Dr. Pascarella said we could get a verbal agreement but not a signed one. Mr. Fox said he would like to set up an Ad Hoc Committee and asked for 3 Board members to volunteer to be on the Committee. Ms. Molinaro, Ms. Cooper and Mr. Jannelli volunteered. Mr. Fox appointed Mr. Jannelli as Chairperson. The Committee is established to find out the culture or climate that exist the high school. Dr. Pascarella said he doesn't think he or the Board should do the surveys, we need someone with expertise. Mr. Fox said the Superintendent can determine what the parameters are.

Mr. Fox asked for a consensus of the Board that the principal interim position at Danbury High School should not exceed 2 years. He then asked each individual Board member to state their desire:

- R. Austin-James - time frame should be as needed
- S. Leroy, K. Molinaro, D. Metrena, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, M. Fazio - 2 years
- R. Taborsak - 1 year or more if needed
- G. Cooper - 1 year

E. Alberts and K. Gailliard were not at the Board meeting.

Mr. Fox then said the consensus is for a 2 year interim principalship

Dr. Sal thanked the Board for their support and will discuss the 2 year assignment with Mr. Boccaccio.

Ms. Leroy left the meeting at 9:55 pm.

Selection process for Director of Sites & Facilities Position

Dr. Pascarella said there are many facets to talk about for this position and the recruitment. I will open up to any questions you may have. This position reports directly to Elio Longo. Mr. Longo stated that Mr. Rodriguez will be leaving the district on August 12th and we have a large number of projects to address. Mr. Taborsak asked if you are recommending an interim for this position; Mr. Longo depends on how long the Committee takes to review the applicants. My recommendation is to get a permanent person. Ms. Thompson said as of Monday we already have 20 applicants. Meriden has had 90 applicants and they are paying more money. It will take some time to put the Committee together. Mr. Jannelli asked ask if we can go to the City and if they can take over for us and has that been done. There always has been conversation on consolidating services. It may be possible to ask them and if they say no, at least we made the overture. Are there any reasons why it would not be done. Dr. Pascarella said he had discussed this with Mr. Iadarola. Mr. Iadarola said he would have to hire someone to do it. My assumption is that would be a no. Mr. Fox said he personally had a conversation with the Mayor and he would leave it to Mr. Iadarola about the work load.

Mr. Fazio said in one of the budget sessions that position was going to be eliminated. Mr. Iadarola should come to a Board meeting and discuss why the City would not want to do this. I would like to hear what the Mayor and Mr. Iadarola would say. I would be more comfortable to move more slowly on this. Mr. Taborsak said it is a very important position. He doesn't want to wait to go through layers at City Hall to get things done. Ms. Molinaro reminded the Board that we have a landlord-tenant relationship with the City. They are our landlords and I don't want the landlord to prioritize what needs to be done; I know we would not be a priority. It is an important job and we should keep it in-house. Mr. Fox said the Sites and Facilities Committee should discuss this. Ms. Molinaro asked as Chairperson of that Committee can she speak to the Mayor and Mr. Iadarola directly and then make a recommendation. Mr. Fox said she should convene the meeting first and then have a formal recommendation to the Board. Mr. Fazio said I should look at this and talk to the Mayor. Does it

need to be as in-depth or involved as it has been? Should the level of the position be different, possibly lower?

Ms. Austin-James asked Mr. Longo if there was a supervisor under Angelo. The response was that we do have a foreman who could not be engaged with supervision, discipline and evaluations. He is a working foreman that coordinates the jobs to be done.

Ms. Molinaro said she will call Rick Palanzo as she thinks he should also be involved and Mr. Iadarola and invite them to the Sites and Facilities meeting.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Board of Education Retreat, August 20th at 9:00 am (changed to 10:00 am)

Mr. Fox said the Retreat is still scheduled for August 20th at 10:00 am rather than at 9:00 am. Ms. Austin-James and Ms. Cooper cannot make it. Ms. Cooper asked if there were other dates on Saturday that could be selected, or why can't we have it in the evening during the week from 6:00 pm or 7:00 pm and finish at 9:00 pm? Mr. Fox said there are 8 people who could make the Retreat. He stated that we may want to use Nick Caruso as a facilitator to discuss goals, Board self-evaluation, etc. and he will make sure we make progress. Ms. Cooper said there are things that I need to ask. Mr. Fox said we are not going to get everything accomplished in one meeting and he suggested that we do this over more than one session, probably have multiple sessions.

3 minute recess at 10:22 pm)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: G. Cooper moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters/negotiations.

The motion carried at 10:22 pm.

Present: R. Austin-James, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Molinaro, D. Metrena, R. Taborsak, Dr. Pascarella and E. Longo and K. Thompson from Administration.

Absent: E. Alberts, K. Gailliard and S. Leroy

Mr. Fox asked Ms. Thompson for an update on personnel matters.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education return to Public Session.

The motion carried at 10:45 pm.

Mr. Fox asked the Board members to fill out a self-assessment worksheet.

ADJOURNMENT

M. Fazio moved, seconded by R. Austin-James that the Board of Education adjourn its Special Board Meeting and the meeting adjourned at 10:47 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(meeting videotaped)