

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2018 – 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Vice-Chairperson, Richard Hawley, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro, Farley Santos, Amy Spallino, Emanuela Palmares

Also Present: Sal Pascarella, Kelly Truchsess, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Frederick Karrat read a formal statement for the record to the public and fellow Board of Education members stating:
On November 7, 2017, Danbury voters elected four democrats to serve on the Board of Education. It is of grave concern that on Tuesday, January 9th, the day before a regular meeting of the Board of Education, the Mayor of Danbury usurped the authority of the board, and undermined the will of Danbury electors, by appointing a republican to fill a democratic vacancy. Let it be known that the democratic caucus of the Board of Education does not officially recognized the mayor's authority to take this action. As such, we are in the process of exploring legal remedies to rectify this unprecedented action, and restore the will of the voters.
- Gene Eriquez - Mr. Eriquez stated that by filling the democratic vacancy the mayor has circumvented the will of voters and perhaps the laws of state of Connecticut. Connecticut General Statute 10-219 requires that the remaining Board of Education members develop a plan to fill the vacancy. The statute does not permit this to be done by any municipal body or other elected officer.
- Robert Taborsak - Mr. Taborsak stated that he wished to echo what Mr. Eriquez stated. He believes from everything he has read, it is the responsibility of the Board of Education to fill the open vacancy. He did not see anything in the charter that gave the Mayor the power over filling the vacancy. Mr. Taborsak is worried that around the elections the Board becomes most political. He pleaded with the Board members to forget about the politics and remember that this is all about the kids.
- Ken Gucker - Mr. Gucker stated that what upsets him the most is that when he had served on other boards in the past, it wasn't about politics, it was about being a Danburian. To watch what happened here was upsetting. To know that the Board of Ed is a non-political organization that you work together for the better of the students, to ensure that our children get a better education and this goes around that. The people of Danbury spoke at the last election. They elected a democrat to fill that seat and it was unfortunate that the Board couldn't fill that spot. It then became about politics and not about Danbury.
- Will Love - Mr. Love stated that this past November he ran for City Council as a democrat. He feels that the city of Danbury wanted a change on the Board of Ed as it has been Republican controlled for a very long time. Our students don't feel safe with ICE and immigration issues. The group that he is a part of, the Danbury Area Justice Network, has also been working to appeal to the Board to get some security for their students. He believes the Mayor overstepped his bounds.
- Kate Coetta - Ms. Coetta expressed her concern over the opposition of the Board Of Education's appointment by the Mayor. When the city had the election, they decisively elected four democrats to the Board. It is her understanding that vacancies are supposed to be appointed by the Board or Board Chairman, but typically upon the recommendation of the party which holds that seat. She was very stunned when she saw posts on Facebook that the Mayor decided to inject himself in the process without any precedent for doing so and then appoint an individual from the opposing party. She is even more stunned on the silence of the topic. What we are sitting here discussing is the spirit of fairness. What are we showing our kids with this behavior? Where is the effort to cultivate an environment of respect? A place where whether we like each other or not, whether we like the same things, we at least agree to the same rules and to hold ourselves accountable to those rules. This is an opportunity to teach our kids a valuable lesson.

- Martha Rhodes - Dr. Rhodes stated that she comes from a long line of educators. She knows what teachers are about. She also knows what they are not about, which is politics. This travesty of what was supposed to be a free and fair election of member to the Danbury Board of education is exactly that, politics as usual. The people elected a democrat to take a seat which has literally been gifted to a republican. She urged the Board to consider the ramifications of blindly accepting a member who is representing what should be considered an abuse of power by Mayor Boughton.
- Julie Kushner - Ms. Kushner stated that she has three children who went through the Danbury schools. She has a great appreciation for the system and the education her children have received but she thinks the schools could be better. The people voted for change. One of the things that was so clear was the change in the Board of Education. What is so stunning was that a republican member who ran for office and failed to achieve that was appointed the democratic spot on the Board. Ms. Kushner stated that this was not personal to Ms. Palmares. It is about the principle of what other have spoken about tonight. It was about the idea that when people vote for change, that has to be respected. Ms. Kushner also stated that she is concerned that the schools are not living up to the potential that we have in Danbury.
- Sidney Almeida - Mr. Almeida stated that he was angry and ashamed at partisan games on the Board of Education which should be a non-partisan Board. Mr. Almeida stated that a democrat won the seat and democrat should be seated.
- James Root - Mr. Root stated that he cannot accept the action item tonight to elect the new officers and requested that it be delayed. He protests any election of new officers tonight.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Hawley moved, seconded by R. Jannelli, that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 18-01 through 18-04, as recommended:

A. MINUTES

11/21/17 Board Meeting
 12/6/17 Special Board Meeting, Interview Candidates
 12/6/17 Board Meeting, Annual Meeting
 12/13/17 Special Board Meeting

R. Hawley moved, seconded by P. Johnston, that the 12/6/17 Annual Meeting Minutes [18-03(pg.10)] be amended with the following corrections:

Page 1 - Chairperson - David Metrena nominated Patrick Johnston.

Page 3 - Secretary - First "In favor of" should state Kathleen Molinaro. Second "In favor of" should state Richard Hawley.

Abstained: Emanuela Palmares.

B. DONATION

Accept \$1,550 donation from area businesses and persons through AIS parent to go towards the Nature's Classroom Scholarship Fund. Also an AIS parent donated \$843.84 for the cost of two buses for the trip.

Motion passed at 7:27 pm

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL)

AIS Magnet School

- Mr. Christopher Roche, New Principal at AIS started with acknowledging his staff and school.
- Looking to improve SBAC scores.
- Move students forward.
- Team, inspire, honest, communication, trust, support, students comes first, no excuses, mutual respect, Tier 1 Curriculum, intervene early and often, small group instruction is key.
- International Day of Peace Celebration.
- AIS Start Citizens.
- Gardening Program.

- Writing Celebration.
- Small group differential instruction.
- Parent involvement.
- Bridges of Peace and Hope Club. A very popular club made up of 4th and 5th graders. 29 students. 4 adult supervisors. Encourages students to come up with projects of their own. Usually something local and global. Most recently students made scarves with fabric from Savers and donated them to Dorothy Day.
- Gaga Pit game that students love. Students wrote and created a book all about the Gaga Pit and gifted it to a school in Zambia, Africa. With the help of the PTO and others, a community member then went to the school and assisted in building the Gaga Pit for the school.
- Trout raising and release at West Lake Reservoir. 200+ trout last year.
- School play with 4th and 5th grade students.
- PBIS - Positive Behavior Intervention and Support. Tickets given for positive behavior. Tickets are put in raffle boxes. The more tickets you get, the higher the likelihood you will win something of value.
- Super bus riders program, part of the PBIS program.
- Working with the bus app on informing parents via text on delays.
- Community time at AIS.
- Structured recess. Games are played. PE teachers lined the fields. Staff interacts with students.
- WCSU Theater Arts students worked with 3rd graders.
- Student leadership team. Meetings are held in Board Meeting style, with action items and agenda items to follow.
- CT Invention Convention.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS: Luana Barcelos: A lot of staff and students shared their holiday spirit this year. There were ugly sweaters and holiday outfits. Staff and students took it very seriously. Over 25 boxes were sent to Military troops stationed in Iraq for the Veterans Project. The boxes were filled with supplies that the troops said they were in need of. The rebranding of the Hatters logo is complete.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Election of Board of Education Officers

Chairperson

MOTION: Richard Hawley, Vice Chair, asked for nominations from the floor for the Office of Chairperson:

- K. Molinaro nominated F. Karrat, seconded by R. Jannelli
- D. Metrena nominated P. Johnston, seconded by R. Hawley

Mr. Hawley asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. Being no other nominations, the nominations were closed.

In favor of: P. Johnston
 R. Chaelski
 R. Hawley
 P. Johnston
 D. Metrena
 E. Palmares
 A. Spallino

In favor of: F. Karrat
 G. Cooper
 R. Jannelli
 F. Karrat
 K. Molinaro
 F. Santos

With 6 votes, Patrick Johnston was elected Chairperson at 7:57 pm.

Vice Chairperson

MOTION:

Patrick Johnston, Chairperson-Elect, asked for nominations from the floor for the Office of Vice Chairperson.

- K. Molinaro nominated G. Cooper, seconded by F. Santos
- R. Hawley nominated D. Metrena, seconded by R. Chaleski

Mr. Johnston asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. Being no other nominations, the nominations were closed.

In favor of: D. Metrena
R. Chaelski
R. Hawley
P. Johnston
D. Metrena
E. Palmares
A. Spallino

In favor of: G. Cooper
G. Cooper
R. Jannelli
F. Karrat
K. Molinaro
F. Santos

With 6 votes, David Metrena was elected Vice Chairperson at 7:59 pm.

Secretary

MOTION:

Patrick Johnston, Chairperson-Elect, asked for nominations from the floor for the Office of Secretary.

- G. Cooper nominated K. Molinaro, seconded by F. Karrat
- A. Spallino nominated R. Chaleski, seconded by R. Hawley

Mr. Johnston asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. Being no other nominations, the nominations were closed.

In favor of: R. Chaleski
R. Chaelski
R. Hawley
P. Johnston
D. Metrena
E. Palmares
A. Spallino

In favor of: K. Molinaro
G. Cooper
R. Jannelli
F. Karrat
K. Molinaro
F. Santos

With 6 votes, Rachel Chaleski was elected Secretary at 8:03 pm.

A. Danbury High School Complex Project

MOTION: P. Johnston moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education authorizes the Chairperson of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools to approve the final plans, contract specifications, and cost estimate for the Danbury High School Furniture, Fixtures, Equipment and Technology - Phase 6 of the Additions and Alterations with Safety Improvements at the Danbury High School Complex project, and sign the SCG-042 form and submit it to the State of Connecticut for approval.

R. Hawley asked any update if there was an update from sites and facilities. K. Molinaro stated that everything was on track and that this was the last phase. Phase 6 of 6, the FFE package. With this motion, it will go to the state. They anticipate no problems. They are very involved with the staff and Principal for guidance and selections, as well as the architect. R. Jannelli asked if it would be possible to do a walk through again for the new Board members.

Motion passed at 8:06 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. 2018-2019 School Budget

Dr. Pascarella stated that he expects that he will have a full budget presentation ready for the meeting on January 24th. There are some goals to achieve and some challenges with a limited budget. The district will be requesting money for enrollment improvements that they are expecting. There are some facilities that we have to be concerned about. There are new modules that will be needed at Westside Middle School. There are three schools needing some differentiated staffing to their nurses and support staff. A study is being done on the district's transportation. One was done last year, we are trying to do another one this year. J. Martino is working with STA. We are hoping not to add any more buses. We should have more specificity in the next few weeks.

B. ECS/Priority Update

Dr. Pascarella stated that there is a budget formula that if implemented, we will be rewarded for areas that we have been lobbying for such as free and reduced lunch, our bilingual students and our SPED students. They will be waited so Danbury does stand to receive more funds. We have lost \$350,000 in the Priority budget and we don't expect that to be returned to us. We are trying to transition that into our operational budget.

C. Teacher Focus Group Update

Dr. Pascarella stated that he received a lot of interesting information with the survey that was done with the focus group. A lot of issues that came up in the survey was structured time during the day and how to implement out a schedule and the challenges that present them in terms of trying to deal with students and have a pacing of our curriculum so our kids are moving through it. 20 to 22 people in that group and they are internalizing it and working on that to see what we can do to make it better. Dr. Sal has worked with the Union and spoken to them about it. Through some of the recommendations, we can move some resources around. Ideas are being validated. Some moves we can do now. Some requires budget reallocation. Overall he found the takeaway to be very beneficial.

D. Family Resource Center Update

Dr. Anne Mead gave some updates to the Family Resource Center. Due to budget cuts, the FRC at South Street School was closed. They were however able to split the families at SSS between Morris Street and Osborne Street.

E. Nellie Mae Grant Update

- Dr. Mead applied to the Nellie Mae Grant in December 2017. There was a very quick turn around, two weeks in fact. The grant is to look at educational disparities in New England for educational equity. A \$295,000 has been awarded. Dr. Mead handed out a paper detailing brief information on what this grant is and that it is a research study.
- R. Jannelli asked what will happen at the end of 14 months of the research study. Dr. Mead stated that she will come up with recommendation for Nellie Mae and that she believes there is a chance they might propose more funding and to encourage the district to apply again for more implementation money.

- G. Cooper asked which center was closed and how the staff was affected by the closing. K. Thompson stated there was another open position due to a resignation so they held off on filling that and offered said position to the person from the closed center, but the employee declined the spot.
- Dr. Sal offered congratulations to Dr. Mead's hard work and has bought a real respect to the community and believes that her work is why Nellie Mae has come knocking at our door.
- Dr. Meade also mentioned that kindergarten registration is starting and the FRC is ready. Registration will begin Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 8 AM. Packages and posters have been sent out to various churches, libraries, salons, barber shops, laundromats and other locations.
- FRC is located on Osborne Street and Dr. Mead invited the new Board members to come see it. It is a facility for families new to the community, in tough times or registering new students. Families can register for school, sign up for free or reduced lunch, sign up for ELP. Bilingual testing, sites and facilities and Family Learning Center are all located there. It is called a "one stop shop". Also have night hours.
- Dr. Mead spoke about Summer Learning. What do students need to do to be successful in Danbury? WSMSA did a community breakfast this past year and one of the School Counselors there, Dana Perez, and Dr. Mead got together and decided to pull together and combined a summer group with PPS staff and now Parks and Rec has joined. Dr. Mead's assistant has been working on a booklet that will be available online to provide information on what is available to students in the summer.
- On March 24, 2018, the Danbury Sports Dome has donated their space to DPS and to all service providers for a Community Resource Fair. Kindergarten registration, soccer signup, football signup, learning activities. Dr. Pascarella also offered the schools as space so parents aren't having to travel, as long as it's during the day when our programs are open. We would like to cohabitate and make it convenient for families.
- K. Thompson stated that she had the pleasure of joining Dr. Mead at a meeting in Hartford to discuss the FACE Center and was very proud at how she has built the center and applauded her hard work.

DISCUSSION

Board Committee Lists/PTO Liaison

- R. Hawley stated that everyone is signed up except E. Palmares. If anyone has a strong interest in a committee, to please just ask.
- G. Cooper said P. Johnston cannot be on the Superintendent Evaluation Committee. K. Molinaro volunteered.
- G. Cooper asked to set up a meeting for January 16th at 6pm for Superintendent Evaluation Committee at BBAC.
- E. Palmares stated she was interested on sitting on the Community Relations Committee, K. Molinaro offered to give up her seat.
- F. Karrat stated he was interested on sitting on the Sites and Facilities Committee to replace P. Johnston.
- R. Chaleski was added on to Magnet School Trustees Committee.
- K. Thompson asked for two Board members for the Negotiations Non-Teaching Committee. R. Jannelli and E. Palmares volunteered.
- R. Chaleski and K. Molinaro were also added to the Operations, Sites and Facilities and Board Building Committee.
- K. Molinaro mentioned that if a Board member asks for information, they have the right to be given the information, and the right has to be given to all.
- PTO assignments are as follows:
 - DHS: R Chaleski, A. Spallino
 - ACE: G. Cooper
 - BVMS: E. Palmares
 - RPMS: K. Molinaro
 - AIS: D. Metrena, R. Chaleski
 - Ellsworth: K. Molinaro
 - GP: F. Karrat
 - Hayestown: R. Hawley
 - KS: D. Metrena
 - MRP: K. Molinaro
 - MS: R. Janelli, E. Palmares
 - PAS: R. Jannelli
 - PEM: R. Jannelli
 - SHR: F. Santos, R. Hawley

- SSS: G. Cooper
- STR: A. Spallino
- WSMSA: P. Johnston
- G. Cooper asked for a workshop for the new Board members to understand the roles and responsibilities as Board members. Dr. Sal stated that normally we have an orientation for the new members. The Tuesday after Martin Luther King Jr. Day is being looked at. G. Cooper would like this to be in addition to the orientation. A date of February 28, 2018 at 5:45 pm was decided on.
- Dr. Pascarella asked the Board members that if there are any specific topics he would like the members for him to discuss, to please get him a note so he can plan an agenda for the workshop.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

P. Johnston thanked the Board and previous officers. He also thanked the public who came out and commented at tonight’s meeting.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

K. Molinaro updated the Board that just before the holidays there was a conversation on an issue at Ellsworth where there was a concern with an area where no grass was growing and glass was found coming up from the dirt. An investigation was done and it is from vandalism. The city is on it and there are no toxins, no punctures. The city will be putting down a synthetic surface covering about 16,500 square feet.

G. Cooper reminded the Board that New Hope Baptist Church will be holding their annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration on January 15, 2018.

A. Spallino asked if she can just go next PTO meeting, Dr. Sal said we will send updated list to Principals.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: K.Molinaro moved, seconded by F. Santos, that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing negotiations and litigation pertaining to the labor contract between the Danbury Board of Education and CSEA Local 2001 (Paraeducators and Tutors) union. The meeting went into executive session at 8:54 pm.

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro, Farley Santos, Amy Spallino, Emanuela Palmares

Also Present: Sal Pascaella, Kelly Truchsess, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson, from Administration

The Chair called the Executive Session to order at 8:55 pm and turned the meeting over to K. Thompson. K. Thompson updated the board on negotiations and litigation to labor contract and personnel matter.

PUBLIC SESSION

F. Santos moved, seconded by R. Jannelli, that the Board of Education return to Public Session. The motion passed at 9:32 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

F. Santos moved, seconded by R. Jannelli, that the Board of Education adjourns its Meeting of January 10, 2018 and the meeting adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Rachel Chaleski, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)