

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020- 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Loren Daly, Joseph DaSilva, Kathryn Hodgdon, Richard Jannelli, Kathleen Molinaro, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino

Absent: n/a

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Courtney Leborious, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

RECOGNITIONS

- Veterans of Foreign Wars, Voice of Democracy Writing Contest Winners: Victoria Wulff-Andersen, Alex Halpin and Gerina Chen
 - Representatives from VFW Post 149 thanked Board members as well as K. Casimiro who gave great help promoting the program.
 - Voice of Democracy audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in regards to a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay.
 - Winners are based on writing, delivery of speech and content.
 - There is also a middle school level.
 - Each year a new theme is presented. This theme was “What Makes America Great”.
 - V. Wulff-Andersen won first place on her essay “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”.
 - Students were presented with plaques, monetary prizes and flowers.
 - State Senator, Julie Kushner, presented each student with a citation from the State of Connecticut General Assembly.
 - G. Cooper presented each student with a Certificate of Recognition from the Board of Education.
 - Members of the VFW Post 149 stated that there is a pancake breakfast fundraiser every month where proceeds go towards scholarships.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Lori Woodruff - AIS employee. Noticed that there is something about AIS Magnet School Operations Plan on tonight’s agenda. Would like to know if this is a conversation about turning magnet school into an intra-magnet school. Staff at AIS has expressed concerns about that. Many have been there since the school opened 14 years ago. They welcome Board to come and talk to staff about ideas being tossed around before any decisions are made and would appreciate open lines of communication between Board and staff members.
- Melinda Scott - Thanked Board for the conversation at the last meeting and for hearing what teachers had to say about the calendar. Encouraged Board members to make contact with liaison schools. Get into the schools and talk to parents, staff, teachers and students. Get a feel for what's

going on. Attend PTO meetings and social events. It's great to have that connection with the Board.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. Britton that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 20-01 through 20-03, as recommended:

MINUTES

1/8/20 Board Meeting

1/14/20 Sites and Facilities Committee

1/16/20 Finance Committee

Motion passed at 7:22 pm

PRESENTATION

Budget Process - Erika Haynes, Director of Community Engagement, School and State Finance Project

- Came to explain the funding cycle, where the money comes from and how the money is distributed.
- They do this across the state. E. Haynes is active in about 50 communities.
- They don't weigh in on local issues such as budget and policies.
- They don't endorse people, candidates or policies.
- Fixed costs are crowding out non-fixed costs at state budget level. This means there is less funding for education.
- Education funding makes up the largest portion of non-fixed cost among.
- Education Cost Sharing and Alliance funding is the funding for public and traditional schools.
- Danbury is getting \$3,211.00 per pupil from the state. The City of Danbury contributes \$8,970 as a municipality. \$561 from other contributions. That's \$12,742 per pupil, the lowest in the state.
- Norwalk gets \$1,920 from the state and \$14,509 from the town. Total fo \$16,989 per pupil.
- Stamford gets \$2,006 from the state and \$15,877 from the town. Total of \$18,570 per pupil.
- Why? Education is not a fundamental right under the US Constitution. Public schools fall under the state governments and are primarily funded through state and local tax dollars.
- Total spent in education dollars in Connecticut annually is \$11.1 billion. \$6.39 billion dollars comes from local sources. \$4.21 billion comes from state. \$.47 billion comes from federal.
- Danbury has significant percentage of English Learners.
- EL students, students from low income homes and students with disabilities all have an associated cost.
- There has been a decline in student enrollment over the last 10 years in Connecticut from 567,792 students to 530,612.
- Danbury is 6th largest district in the state and enrollment has gone exactly opposite from state trend with enrollment. From 10,186 students to 11,531 students.
- 18,847 students in Waterbury. 16,053 students in Stamford. 11,501 students in Norwalk.
- Connecticut's low-income, EL and special needs population have increased in the past 10 years.
- Student poverty in Danbury has increased 4% over the past 10 years.
- Low-income students has doubled since 2009 from 29% to 58%.
- One in five students in Connecticut are food insecure.
- Danbury serves higher percentage of English learners than peer districts. 26% compared to other like districts who are between 12% and 16%.
- Danbury spends less per student than peer districts and \$4,000 less than state average.
 - Stave average spends \$16,988

- Danbury spends \$ 12,828
- Bristol spends \$15,047
- Groton spends \$16,208
- Middletown spends \$17,337
- Norwalk spends \$17,616
- Stamford spends \$18,934
- Hamden spends \$18,986
- Danbury receives less funding per pupil from the State than all but two of its peer towns.
- Connecticut has more than 10 different funding formulas to divide money up between public schools. Each “type” of school has its own funding formula that is part of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) formula determines how much money the state is supposed to give each town/city to fund its public schools.
- The new ECS formula began implementation in 2019 and is part of a 10-year phase in/out schedule.
- Danbury received \$32,304,941 this year. Because of the new formula the incremental growth will be \$56,837,334 in 10 years.
- That means a kindergartener won't see full funding from the state until they are in 9th grade (10 years later).
- In the new formula, Danbury will receive \$11,525 per pupil.
- The formula consists of three “need-student” weights, which increase per-pupil state education aid.
 - Low-income students weight (.3%)
 - Concentrated poverty weight (.05%, Danbury is not one of them)
 - English Learner weight (.15%)
- The English Learner weight is new and good for Danbury.
- Weighted funding formula makes a difference in what is funded compared to what is needed.
- Base Aid Ratio looks at 70% poverty wealth factor and 30% income wealth factor. They measure what community (Danbury) can contribute with taxes. Basically looking at taxable property and if community pay those taxes.
- PIC index measures relative wealth and need of CT's towns. The higher the number the more economically distressed the community is. Danbury is not above 300 so we are not getting additional weight on this.
- Danbury is getting an additional 10.66% per year until we meet full funding.
- In Connecticut, the total number of SpED students has increased 19.5% which translates to a two percentage point increase in SpED identification over the past five years.
- Over the last five years, total per pupil spending has increased by \$1,811 while SpED spending per pupil has increased by \$78.
- SpED spending is 65% local, 29% state and 6% federal.
- State of Connecticut currently spends more than \$784.6 million annually on SpED. \$448,748,079 of which is from ECS.
- Largest source of state SpED spending is the ECS grant. 20-25% of ECS funding is attributed to SpED.
- Regardless of wealth, districts spend about the same percentage of their expenditures on SpED. However, on average, wealthier districts spend significantly more per pupil on SpED.
- SpED spending in Danbury has increased over the past five years. However, SpED spending per pupil has decreased over the past five years.
- Percentage of Danbury spending attributed to SpED has remained stable over the past five years, which is not easy to do and not the experience across the state.
- Who decides how much money is in school district budget?

- Superintendent recommends a budget to the BOE
- BOE approves a district budget
- The city governing body approves the district's budget as part of the city municipal budget
- Municipality can not contribute less the following year than they did the previous year. It has to remain steady.
- Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita represents the value of taxable property per resident. Danbury is lower than all but three of its peer towns.
- At the end of the day, have to raise property taxes to pay for this.
- Median House Income (MHI) refers to the income level earned by a given household. Danbury's MHI falls in the middle of the MHIs for its peer towns.
- The mill rate is the amount of tax payable per dollar of the assessed value of a property.
- Danbury is in the middle of peer towns for mill rates at 27 (Hamden at 47.96 and Groton at 24.17)
- There are five different formulas for magnet schools.
 - Formula depends on who operates the school (like DPS and AIS)
 - Whether magnet school was created as part of Sheff v O'Neill settlement
 - Or if it has its own funding formula
- R. Jannelli asked if Danbury has challenges in enrollment increases in addition to non-english speaking students coming in, why is the state giving us so much less? E. Haynes stated that she can not answer on behalf of the state but when she started in this role, the state had abandoned the education cost formula. That's incredibly important for a community like Danbury. They no longer took the student population into consideration. They were giving funding for education as flat funded block grants. Essentially what the city got was based on years prior. Since our numbers were increasing and we were being held to flat funding that has no relation to population, our funding went down. The state is trying to play catch up now because that dynamic is what got us here. The state can't fix it in one year or five years so it will take time.
- Dr. Pascarella asked if the legislator can abandon our ECS funding to which E. Haynes said yes, they can.
- J. DaSilva asked about the local contributions slide. Is it safe to say the towns in peer group, like Groton or Middletown, are getting similar amounts to Danbury? E. Haynes was not positive and could work with Dr. Pascarella to break down numbers for other towns and convert it into data for the Board.
- R. Jannelli asked how does E. Haynes recommend we get more money? E. Haynes stated that the state is trying to come up with funds to maintain what they have already committed to. There is just absolutely a lack of resources at the state level to appease that.
- E. Haynes said advocating never falls on deaf ears. Keep telling our stories and keep lobbying.
- K. Molinaro asked E. Haynes to explain the charter school formula.
 - There are two different formulas for charter schools
 - Formula depends on whether it's a state charter school or a local charter school
 - State charter schools receive a per-pupil amount from the state of \$11,250 per student
 - Local charter schools receive the local per student costs and an additional \$3,000 per pupil from the state
 - The proposed charter school for Danbury is a state charter school, not local.
 - Charter schools are 4% of education funding dollars. If it were wiped out, typical thinking is that money would revert back to education funding, but those dollars would be put back into state funds and the state would decide where that money would go. Could go to education but also could go to tree trimming on the Merritt Parkway, it's the state's decision.

- G. Cooper informed the Board that if they have any questions, please reach out to Dr. Pascarella's Administrative Assistant so E. Haynes can answer them. E. Haynes also stated that she will reach out to Board members individually to see if they have any additional questions.

ACTION ITEMS

A. December 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants)

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education accept the December 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants).

R. Jannelli stated that in the summary, for better understanding in future years, if there could be another column added or a footnote on bottom stating the additional \$1.2 million. C. Leborious said that is reflected in the budget categories. Will report that out in more detail at the next Board Meeting.

R. Jannelli inquired about the athletic claims and why that amount was higher in premiums. Dr. Pascarella stated that premiums went up across the state because of concussion injuries.

R. Jannelli inquired if the grant budget included the anticipated money coming in? C. Leborious stated that includes the anticipated money.

Motion passed at 8:28 pm

B. Child Nutrition Program Agreement

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that that the Board of Education submit the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs to the CT State Department of Education.

This is formalizing that C. Leborious is now an authorized signer.

Motion passed at 8:29 pm

C. 2020-2021 School Calendar

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. Britton that that the Board of Education approve the 2020-2021 School Calendar, in accordance with 20-06.

K. Casimiro stated the following changes to the calendar:

- That the current calendar has a removal of March 16th. Asked this Board to strike the right hand column where it states that March 16th is a Professional Development date. There will be no Professional Development on March 16th.
- TVAL was added in the fall (9/22/2020) and two 90 minute TVAL sessions have been footnoted at the bottom of the calendar. That will be available on the district PD calendar.
- A little footnote that Spring Conferences are by invitation.
- Based on earlier conversations of a regular PD calendar to address the needs we have, there will be half days with time dedicated for TVAL.

R. Chaleski questioned why we went from one hour early releases to half days. Dr. Pascarella stated that the Board told him to do what needs to be done for teachers to get in their professional development. In order to get the work done, times were increased. We had 21 days and it went down to six which was not enough time for the teachers. R. Chaleski stated that will be less instructional time next year than

this year but the goal of the calendar is to increase continuous days of instruction. Dr. Pascarella stated this schedule should give us the time the teachers need to do the work. Dr. Pascarella stated he doesn't know of any other way to do this.

J. DaSilva asked for clarification of the changes. K. Casimiro stated there were also three days added in addition to TVAL. What alternated was an early dismissal versus an early release. Different release times was problematic for childcare and planning. Got rid of one hour release and changed it to half days.

Motion passed at 8:37 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. School Climate Task Force Follow-up
 - a. Still working on some activities that were recommended. Have the after school program moved over to Reach/Endeavor. K. Truchsess stated that interviews will be conducted next week and hopefully hiring paperwork the following week.
 - b. K. Truchsess met with Danbury Youth Services to figure out a way in which to partner with them to bring those services in during the school day with parent consent. In the process of bringing in additional key folks to see how we can pilot this.
 - c. K. Truchsess recently had a meeting with Lisa Morrissey in reference to Community Care Team Model. Applied for grant last year, not successful in getting it. Resubmitting application again for next year and are hopeful to get the \$150,000 from the state to support social emotional needs of students. This is currently being done with homeless population and it is working well. Would be first in state model to work with youth (with parent consent). Noticing many students who have increased behavioral and mental health needs that goes beyond the school day. This is a way to get certain supports and services beyond the school but still to partner with the school.
 - d. Dr. Pascarella stated that mentoring has not gotten off the ground yet.
 - e. Also still working on getting middle school students together for the youth programs.
 - f. Pathways has not operated this year so there is unused space that Adult Ed is looking to use. If they can and they move, that can expand the alternative program at Reach/Endeavor. We don't want to put more students in current area but we can if we have more room. District will need to hire more support services which is not included in the budget, so that will need to be looked at again.
 - g. There are seven Safety Advocates at DHS. Growing to nine in the spring. Hoping to add another by spring next year for a total of 10.
2. Portrait of a Graduate Update
 - a. K. Walston stated that by December 2020, will be coming back to the Board for approval on a Portrait of a Graduate. Three years ago, DHS developed portrait of a graduate specific to DHS. Decided to use DHS's portrait and incorporate it in the district. Landed on six characteristics with a district vision and mission statement last year at this time. The statement sits on a banner at every school in the district. To help develop that Portrait of a Graduate, the Bar Foundation said district needs to start over. Given the size of the award, they have decided to do just that. Partnering with experts in this work. Steering Committee includes K. Walston Dr. Anne Mead, Dr. Martins from DHS and two teachers (which will expand to more teachers so it is a K-12 representation). Other committee, which was recommended by Bar Foundation, is called Portrait of a Graduate Coalition which is essentially an extended version of the Steering Committee. Tasking leaders from respective groups to go to their community and Coalition will bring feedback to the committee. Steering Committee has plans to head out to elementary schools to make sure

students, families, and community are part of the process. Portrait of a Graduate should be representative in all steps of when leaving elementary school, middle school and high school. K. Walston stated the first big meeting with the committee will be held on January 23, 2020 and he will keep the Board informed. The grant will be a little over \$200,000.

DISCUSSION

1. AIS Magnet School Operations Plan

- a. AIS is an intra-magnet school which means it includes students from surrounding towns.
- b. Danbury students with a 60/40 match as a goal.
- c. \$2.2 million a year for funding since it's a magnet school.
- d. Board still contributes \$750,000.
- e. The building was never paid for by local taxes.
- f. After 20 years, that building comes to Danbury (we are 14 years in).
- g. If we continue to operate the way we operate, we still get the same reimbursement.
- h. If we change the model, there is a process to go through.
- i. We have to look at enrollment. Elementary is not where we have the most challenges, middle schools and highschool are.
- j. Dr. Pascarella suggested to get consultants to come to Board with data they've collected on buildings and enrollment and present it to the 2020 Board.
- k. Uncomfortable to make AIS a city school because where will the \$2.2 million then come from?
- l. Osborne Street was looked at as one possibility along with putting modules at other space so City replied that AIS is space that can be used.
- m. Whatever we do, the Board has to identify the specs based on the recommendations.
- n. J. DaSilva asked even if we tried to take over AIS we'd be picking up 20 seats or so a year, as the phase in. By year two we are starting to jeopardize money because we would be out of balance. If we aren't 60/40 after two years, we lose it all.
- o. Dr. Pascarella suggests that the Board put it in the mix with everything else and have consultants look at it. The demographics have changed at this point.
- p. Dr. Pascarella will see if the consultants and City can attend the Sites and Facilities meeting on February 11, 2020 at 6pm.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- G. Cooper stated that the PTO assignments missed the month of January but is hopeful that members will attend PTO meetings in February.
- G. Cooper reminded members that they must observe three expulsion hearings before they can sit in on one. Asked K. Truchsess to see if she can coordinate some hearings at 5:30 pm.
- G. Cooper stated that a PTO Board liaison role is to attend the PTO meetings and to answer questions in a professional manner. Get information and concerns that PTO wants brought back to the Board. Those questions asked can be addressed at the next PTO session. R. Chaleski reiterated that if there is a school event, all Board members should be invited. Not just the PTO liaison for the school

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

- R. Chaleski stated that CAFE convention back in November of 2019 was valuable. Opening speaker was phenomenal. Workshop on best practices for alliance districts. Will hopefully lead to more alliance district focus work from CAFE. Handout at last meeting outlined what alliance and priority districts are. Also attended a public relations workshop. Other handouts available to members on CAFE website

- Westside Middle School Academy is seeking volunteer judges for the Science and Engineering Fair on January 30, 2020. Judging is from 7:30 to 10:00 am and visitors can view projects from 9:00 to 10:00 am. K. Pompano has Jon Neuhausel's information if anyone is interested.
- R. Jannelli stated that the Community Relations Committee had first meeting on January 22, 2020 and discussed what the purpose of the committee was and how they can communicate what's going on in the district to the outside world. Looking at different sources of media to engage the public. Minutes will be available for the next Board meeting.
- R. Chaleski stated that the Policy Committee just reviewed the Series 1000 Community Relations again from CAFE. Will meet again on February 6, 2020 at 6pm.
- G. Cooper thanked A. Spallino and R. Chaleski on orientation for new members.
- G. Cooper thanked new Board members who took extra responsibilities and all will work together to move smoothly.
- K. Conetta stated that she attended the CAFE Legislative Breakfast in Sandy Hook with A. Spallino. There was a valuable discussion about SpED costs and what different districts are doing with those costs.
- K. Conetta asked Board members to attend the Connecticut Student for a Dream panel discussion at DHS on January 30, 2020 at 6pm.
- G. Cooper will ask K. Pompano to forward email with panel discussion info to all Board members.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation against the District and legal strategy.

Motion carried at 9:30 pm.

Present: Joseph Britton
 Rachel Chaleski
 Kate Conetta
 Gladys Cooper
 Loren Daly
 Joseph DaSilva
 Kathryn Hodgdon
 Richard Jannelli
 Kathleen Molinaro
 Albert Russo
 Amy Spallino
 Dr. Sal Pascarella, Kevin Walston, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess and Courtney Leborious from Administration.

Absent: n/a

The Chair called the Executive Session to order at 9:22 pm and turned the meeting over to K. Thompson who discussed a grievance with the Board.

PUBLIC SESSION

J. DaSilva moved, seconded by K. Conetta, that the Board of Education return to Public Session. The motion passed at 9:39 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

J. DaSilva moved, seconded by R. Chaleski, that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of January 22, 2020 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)