

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2017 – 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – ROTC Cadets

The ROTC Cadets lead the Board and audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Pietrafesa thanked the ROTC Cadets for coming to the Board Meeting.

ROLL CALL

Present: Eileen Alberts, Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley,
Richard Jannelli, Frederick Karrat, Ralph Pietrafesa and Farley Santos

Absent: Patrick Johnston, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro and Dr. Glass

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess and Joseph Martino

RECOGNITIONS

Gladys Cooper

Gladys Cooper received the Excellence in Education recognition at the NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner on October 21 for her years of service on the Board of Education.

Mr. Pietrafesa congratulated Gladys Cooper for her 26 years on the Board. He said that when he was elected to the Board she was his teacher for the first year. He thanked her for all the help she gave him that first year and added that he appreciates her support for the children in Danbury. He presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

Mr. Santos told the Board that the Freedom Fund Dinner on October 21st was a great way to give thanks to someone who has given so much to the district. Ms. Cooper is not only recognized for her dedication to the Board but for NAACP as well.

Ms. Cooper thanked the Board for the recognition. She also said that the NAACP celebrated their Danbury's chapter 60th Anniversary.

Music Department

Ms. Jill Russell-Benner updated the Board on Model Curriculum Project (SDE); VH1 "Save the Music" Grant; Little Kids Rock Grant by Jill Russell-Benner, K-5 Music Program Facilitator, Chorus & Theatre Arts, and Broadview Middle School. She spoke about the program and the funds the department has received for instruments. She said it has been a busy year in music.

The Chairperson said that Ms. Russell-Benner spearheaded the program and it was a great thing for Danbury. Dr. Pascarella asked that she show the Board her slide presentation. Before the slide presentation, she introduced four music teachers that were in the audience. She also handed out to the

Board 2017-2018 K-12 Music Department Performance calendar. An additional handout of student participation in each of the schools.

Mary Peters invited the Board to attend a choir and orchestra performance “Spooktacular Concert” on Thursday, October 26th at Danbury High School.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: Richard Hawley moved, seconded by Michael Ferguson that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibit 17-118 through 17-119, as recommended:

MINUTES

10/11/17 Board Meeting

GRANTS

Accept \$5,000 donation to DHS Robotics Team from Best Buy Foundation c/o Cyber Grants

Motion passed at 7:22 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL)

Westside Middle School

Two students from Westside Middle School introduced themselves to the Board: Dylan Hennessy, Grade 6 and Chapal Bhausar, Grade 8. They spoke briefly how much they enjoy being at Westside. The Principal, Frank LaBanca, showed a movie of students and staff at school in the classrooms. It was an extremely lively presentation with singing and dancing down the halls and praising their school. The students thanked the Board for the opportunity to share with them how much they and the staff like Westside.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (once a month – 1st meeting)

PRESENTATION

Family & Community Engagement (FACE) by Anne Mead

Dr. Mead presented on the Family & Community Engagement Center (FACE) at [49 Osborne St](#) and that Dr. Sal, Kim Thompson, Marjorie Vargas, Rich Arce, Estella Camacho, Maritza Thompson, and herself presented about the Center at the State Department of Education Family Engagement conference on Oct. 11. The Center has become a state model for engaging family’s right from their first contact with DPS.

Richard Hawley questioned if there is a fear factor still in our Danbury families. Yes, she replied but through our effort of building confidence within the community fear factors are dissipating. Everyone knows to come to the FACE Center for whatever their needs are.

Activities currently being undertaken are ongoing Family Camp, the unconference for parents, outreach to the community and businesses, and the implementation of the district's Family, School and Community Partnership Plan. On Oct. 19th a meeting was convened for all the providers of summer learning. Dr. Pascarella attended, we listened to the needs of the community to increase programming to

ensure that all Danbury children have an opportunity to participate in summer learning to combat summer learning slide or loss. The group defined their needs for improvement and found common agendas. They will continue to convene to implement the collective impact model to combat summer learning loss.

Dr. Pascarella congratulated Anne Mead on receiving her Doctorate Degree.

ACTION ITEMS

September 2017 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)

MOTION: Richard Hawley moved, seconded by Eileen Alberts that the Board of Education accept the September 2017 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)

Mr. Martino told the Board that during the month of September 2017, the District expended \$10,213,255 resulting in a fiscal year-to-date expenditure value of \$19,021,721 which represents 14.83% of the General Fund total budget.

Motion passed at 7:43 pm.

September 2017 Operating Results Analysis (Grants/Projects)

MOTION: Richard Hawley moved, seconded by Gladys Cooper that the Board of Education accept the September 2017 Operating Results Analysis (Grant/Projects)

Mr. Martino told the Board that during the month of September 2017, the District expended \$1,647,326 resulting in a fiscal year-to-date expenditure value of \$2,672,678 which represents 20% of the Grants budget.

Motion passed at 7:44 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

October 1st Enrollment Report

Mr. Martino briefly gave the Board some statistics about the sizes of some of the grades. He said the 5th and 6th grades are smaller and there is not a big bilingual student population. He mentioned that there are big fourth grades the middle schools are flat and Danbury High is fully utilized.

Mr. Hawley asked if there were any concerns about Park Avenue. Dr. Pascarella said that the Park Avenue is maxed out. Westside is at 600 students. We are now in our 5th year lease with Sacred Heart School. Mr. Martino said that Ellsworth was built to house 330-340 not 472 that we have now. All the media rooms have been turned into classrooms at Ellsworth. King Street Primary also has big numbers. The Superintendent said there was supposed to be a second floor to Ellsworth, but that never happened. If it had, it would not be overcrowded.

Ms. Cooper asked what we can do in January to alleviate the overcrowding and not work the teachers so hard. Next year we should not talk about overcrowded conditions. At Park Avenue and Danbury High School there is no place to park. How can we make this better as far as land and overcrowding? Danbury is still growing. One family moved in with 4 middle school kids. Every year we are overcrowded and I know that we are doing our best to make it better.

Mr. Pietrafesa said one of the main problems is we just add more to the same places it just doesn't work. We go through this every year. Mr. Martino said we are getting to the end of modifiable space.

Mr. Santos said that he visited Morris Street on Friday. Near the stairway, off in a corner of the hallway, was an ESL teacher. He asked the Superintendent if the Board has been to City Hall to see if there are any buildings available that we could use. They are even teaching in the janitor's closets. We need to use our partnerships with the City to find space. Dr. Pascarella in answer to Mr. Santos questions, said we saw a couple of buildings, but nothing has come out of it. What we are thinking about doing is move out some of the programs and open up some classrooms. It will only take care of the problem short term. We may have to build another elementary school.

October 1st Free & Reduced Lunch Report

Mr. Martino said the Board will see the district is about 3½% short. Morris Street and South Street schools parents have put in applications for free and reduced lunch. Rogers Park Middle School has 72 and is a very large number for them. We need 40% free and reduced. The Superintendent said there is now a lot more flexibility as to how we spend that money.

State Budget Update

Mr. Martino said so far the City is not losing. We see some cuts in our other grants. In the Bi-lingual grant there is a reduction. We have cut enough but it is going to be extremely close.

Mr. Ferguson said there is an agreement on the table. The State Senate is speaking right now. Maybe later tonight or early tomorrow morning they are going to vote. The education formula is good for our district. He added that benefits will be phased in over 10 years. We were saved being an Alliance District. He stated that the Governor may sign it – may not sign it and it would just become law – or veto it.

Digitizing student records

Mr. Martino said that he and Ms. Truchsess have been working on the high school cumulative records which go back 50 years. Every year we had a filing cabinet of these records. It is going to take a while and into the summer to get all the records digitized. Special education records need to be kept for 7 years after the child graduates high school. Right now, more than twenty file cabinets are in the process of digitizing. It isn't a complicated process, it is a scanning process.

DISCUSSION

Hiring/Staffing Report – Kim Thompson

Kim Thompson gave a slide presentation to the Board. She wanted to tell them where we ended up with the hiring. Normally we hire approximately 125-150 certified staff. This year we hired under 80. We have 8% of turnover. Staff came in new hires. Three quarters were females and one-quarter were males. A quarter of the staff that we hired into full time had some connection to Danbury Public School. 20% have attained tenure in another district with at least 4 years in another district. 19% were minority. There was an increase in African-Americans and a decrease in Hispanics. The teacher populations reflect the student population. We are going to continue to recruit more minority. We are also looking for long term subs. We expect an 8-9% turnover next year. Mr. Hawley asked Ms. Truchsess about Special Education applicants. She said they had between 40-45 applicants.

INFORMATION

Draft - 2018-2019 School Calendar

Dr. Pascarella said the draft calendar shows school starting after Labor Day. We are going to take advantage and look at the commemorative holidays. He spoke briefly about the districts surrounding Danbury and their school calendars. With this calendar, school will end on June 13th providing there are no snow days used. This draft calendar is going to the Unions and then we will come back to the Board for a vote.

DHS trip to London, Caen, Paris, Munich, June 25-July 4, 2018

The Superintendent said they still have the assurance that they will be able to take the trip.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

CABE Convention

Mr. Martino said that he booked three spaces for Board members to attend.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Annual meeting

Mr. Pietrafesa asked at the last meeting where the Board would like to have their Annual Meeting. Everyone seemed to like having it at Westside, so that is where we will have it again this year.

The Chairperson said that he and a Board member visited a couple of schools on Monday. They went to South Street, Shelter rock ASI, Reach and Endeavor. The schools are overcrowded. The teachers are happy and vibes I get from the schools I always find rewarding.

Mr. Santos said he visited Shelter Rock, both middle schools, Hayestown, Danbury High and Morris Street Schools. They all have different challenges and most have space issues. Professionalism of the folks there I can only say they are passionate about their job. The kids love the principals. It was overwhelming that they would like to see a Board come out and visit the schools to show that we are behind them. Our presents does help. I will continue to visit the schools.

Eileen Alberts told the Board that the City of Danbury has instituted a Community Calendar. She stated that Taylor O'Brien, in the Mayor's office, is in charge of the Calendar. If you phone her she can instruct you on how to have an event added to the City's calendar.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

G. Cooper moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education adjourn its October 25, 2017 meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(meeting was videotaped)