

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019- 7:00 PM

Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, P. Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

Dr. Pascarella called up Colonel Michael Port who will be leaving Danbury High School to go on active duty. Col. Port's replacements will be a Colonel from California and Chief Master Sergeant Jack Malone who graduated from DHS in 1994.

ROLL CALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa, Amy Spallino, Richard Jannelli

Absent: David Metrena

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Joe Martino, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

RECOGNITIONS

Schools of Distinction:

Academy for International Studies, Ellsworth Avenue, Great Plain, Hayestown Avenue, Mill Ridge Primary, Morris Street and Shelter Rock. Dr. Pascarella thanked the members of the schools. There were two districts in Connecticut that achieved status of seven schools, Danbury and Greenwich. Danbury works extra hard and gets a lot out of not much that is given.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Christina Hefele - Ms. Hefele has two children at DHS. She understands that the City has allocated funds of \$2 million for the track at DHS. She feels that it was unfortunate that the track was not replaced sooner, as the conditions of the deteriorating track were brought to the City Council more than four years ago. As of result of the track conditions, the DHS Athletic Department and School Administration have been forced to cancel their home track meets this year due to the risk of injury to the students. That also means that the O'Grady Relays (a 39-year tradition) and track meets have been moved to other schools. This is a loss of revenue for the school athletic program and an increase in transportation costs. In addition, the Special Olympics held at DHS and the middle school programs may have to find other locations as well. She asks that the Board fully support the funding of the project and commit to having the work begin immediately after graduation. An online petition to support the track funding received 650 signatures in less than 24 hours.
- Mayor Mark D. Boughton - Mayor Boughton addressed the track issue. The City was aware that the track was starting to fail but this was also during the final planning stages of executing the new wing at DHS. The City had to make a prioritized choice at the time. The thought was to finish the new wing first and then turn to the track. The bid's assessment was much more work than just replacing material on the track. A survey is being conducted now to basically smooth out all the low spots on the track. The money is already programed to go to the track. It is a tight window to finish for the next season because it takes 45 to 60 days to cure. The hope is to get it done so it can cure in the winter and be finalized in the spring. It was also decided that the colors will not be orange and blue because the UV ruins it.

- Lori Woodruff- AIS will be holding its first musical production; Theater Magnets Presents Twinderella. Ms. Woodruff gave a few tickets to the Board members for next week's play. The play will be held on April 3rd, 4th and 5th. All were invited to attend.
- Tracey Kelley- Danbury Prospect Charter School. Ms. Kelly and her team congratulated the schools of distinction.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-47 through 19-50, as recommended:

MINUTES

3/6/19 Board Workshop

3/6/19 Special Board Meeting

3/13/19 Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting

3/13/19 Board Meeting

R. Jannelli abstained.

Motion passed at 7:24 pm

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS Executive Board of Governors: Alyssa Scappaticci

- SATs were held on March 27, 2019. School-wide schedule changes were successful in accommodating the 740 test-takers.
- School Fair and Spring Conference were a success. Incoming freshman were informed about the variety of clubs, sports and specialized classes within DHS.
- Elections for student government will take place in April and May.
- DHS Board of Governors held a survey in which students could choose the design of the brand new mascot. Now in the process of picking out his outfit.
- DHS production of "Godspell" will be held on April 4th, 5th and 6th.
- DHS acting class will put on a production of "The Laramie Project" on May 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the new Black Box Theater.
- Graduation is set for June 19, 2019.
- Music Honor Society will be holding a coffeehouse in the Black Box Theater on April 11th from 7 - 9 pm. It will be a night of vocal, instrumental and poetic performances. All are welcome to attend.
- National Honor Society has begun planning for Mr. DHS, a hilarious pageant that will raise money for the "Smile Train", an international children's charity that aids children in receiving cleft surgery. Mr. DHS will be held on May 3rd in the auditorium.
- Peer Leadership has begin to recruit Juniors for next year's Peer Leadership classes.
- Nearly 500 student athletes are now participating in Spring sports such as softball, baseball, tennis and outdoor track.
- Winter sports banquet took place on March 22, 2019 where students were awarded for their hard work.

PRESENTATION

State Budget Update: Ryan Bingham, Government Affairs Associate/Lobbyist

- Mr. Bingham is the DPS district representative in Hartford.
- There are two budget bills to be on the watch for. HB 7148 (budget bill, spending package) and HB 7150 (Governor's education bill).

- Dr. Pascarella and J. Martino submitted testimony on both of these bills.
- Non-educational two-year budget numbers went down \$93,511.00.
- ECS base was relatively flat at a reduction of \$3,557.00.
- Alliance Grant had the biggest increase, of \$2.4 million and \$4.8 million for the following year.
- Teacher Retirement System (TRS, HB 7148) Contribution request which is now that each municipality will be responsible for 25% of the normal cost. This is the non-unfunded liability part of the TRS. City of Danbury is not a part of the distressed municipality, which pays 5%. If passed, next year the contribution will be \$479,299. 2021 will be \$989,798 dollars. The third year and moving forward will be \$1.5 million. HB 7148 is in appropriations committee. Deadline is May 3, 2019. Decision expected to be made by then.
- Finance committee deadline is May 2, 2019.
- Does appear that there will be change to the budget. More so on the revenue side of the budget.
- There will be updates from Mr. Bingham, J. Martino and Dr. Pascarella. This is an ongoing process but a good start and certainly better starting point for the city than in previous years.
- G. Cooper requested an attachment with a number to particular bills so she could understand the bills with numbers.
- Mr. Bingham presented a document with bills that have already been acted on with a deadline on April 1, 2019. Mr. Bingham will edit the document to show the numbers for the Board. It will be tagged with fiscal notes for better understanding. The new document will be provided within next three weeks.
- The bills started with 250 bills and now narrowed down to 45 with maybe 20 or 30 on the way.
- Mr. Bingham would like to work collaboratively with the Board to deliver a cohesive message to the delegation in Hartford and greater legislature in leadership.
- R. Jannelli inquired about the increase for the Alliance Grant. For the 2020 State budget year, the revenue to the City will be \$11.8 million which is a net increase of \$2.4 million. 2021 budget year revenue will be \$14.2 million with \$4.8 million net increase.
- Dr. Pascarella inquired what would happen if we drop below the medium to become a distressed municipality? We would have to move into the distressed column to be the eligible for the 5% TRS.
- There are nine criteria to meet the distressed municipalities: per capita income, % of poverty in population, unemployment rate, % change in population, % change in employment, % change in per capita income, % of house stock for older homes, % population with high school degree and higher, Per Capita Adjusted Equalized Net Grand list.
- All those criteria are weighted to establish a distressed community. Danbury has never been designated as a distressed community. This is great for the local economy but not for the budget.
- E. Palmares inquired on how some of the bills have very broad names such as HB 850 concerning public schools. What does that mean? Mr. Bingham will send actual document that has link to the bill for further information.
- E. Palmares inquired if any bills are red flags? Mr. Bingham said several.
- Mr. Bingham stated that May 9, 2019 is Danbury Day at the State Capitol from . 11 am to 1 pm. Legislature will be meeting more often and having regular sessions. Will be a good time to showcase our work on that night.
- The theme will be “A Night at the Opera” in honor of famous Danburian, Maryanne Anderson.
- Encouraged those who attend to wear hats since we are the Hat City.
- J. Martino stated there is a bill about styrofoam trays in Connecticut schools. While it’s a great bill for the environment it will be a \$125,000 increase for disposable trays. This bill is not in the educational committee but in the environmental committee.
- Dr. Pascarella spoke of the Classroom Safety Bill. This bill states that staff will leave during class for team meetings. If staff leave classes for these meetings, that will require more substitutes. This bill also calls for a number of assessments.

- K. Truchsess spoke about the fiscal challenges and concerns with the Classroom Safety Bill. IDA, ADA, 504s and IEPs in particular. This legislation that is coming through does allow certain staff members to make the decision to remove a student from the classroom.
- If there is a student that needs a level of support, who are the staff members that will provide instruction to the rest of the class while this staff member works with the student? The Administrative staff and support team will have to stop what they're doing to assist with the removed student. This legislation will require us to employ more Behavior Analyst staff and more pupil personnel staff.
- A policy will also need to be approved by the Board Of Education by January 2020 on how we would expect a protocol for teachers to follow when they want to remove a child from the class.
- K. Truchsess stated that they are looking at an alternative site or a program if a child needs to be removed such as a separate classroom that will need to be staffed or homeschool services.
- Mr. Bingham stated that this bill is in appropriations.
- R. Chaleski inquired if any of the Cabinet members have submitted testimony regarding this bill to which K. Truschess stated yes.
- K. Truchsess stated that she belongs to the Directors Association and they submitted testimony as a group to share some of the procedural concerns that they have related to this bill in particular.
- R. Jannelli inquired about the Alliance Grant distribution. J. Martino stated that it is in the ECS funds.
- R. Jannelli inquired, on Danbury Day, if there is a recommendation as to what would be effective for those concerned about Danbury to organize or who they should speak to when they get there.
- Mr. Bingham stated that the Board should consolidate what we have make and make a document on our priorities and impact. Those priorities will be handed out to the legislators visiting. He suggested to find him, and he will introduce members to legislatures in attendance. The Board's job is to say "despite being pinched on revenue, we have done these wonderful things. Just envision how wonderful Danbury schools can be with a better budget" or to speak about a bill that is up for consideration.
- R. Jannelli is concerned that they will say "you do so well with the little that you have, why ask for more?"
- 25 credits issue at DHS is already on a document to share with the delegation and how it will negatively impact Danbury.
- Mr. Bingham will put something together for the Board to review.
- E. Palmares asked if there is a way to do an "ask" during the event? Where we can have Chairperson included in that lineup where legislatures can ask what Danbury needs. This way they can see that our delegation is taking leadership.
- Dr. Pascarella spoke of HB 1018, an opportunity to close the gap. In actuality it sounds that we are entitled to a priority grant of \$1.7 million. Kindergarten teachers, reading coaches and bilingual staff come out of that grant. If we haven't made gains in our ELA scores and chronic truancy, we will not be entitled to 50% of that money. This could be devastating to us if in fact it happens.
- Session ends June 5, 2019.

ACTION ITEMS

A. February 2019 –Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grants/Projects)

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa that the Board of Education accept the February 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grant/Projects).

Motion passed at 8:14 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Mental Health Seminar, March 7th

- K. Truchsess stated that given most recent tragedy, the district is working with PPS staff members to make sure they are available for parents, students and staff members who may be having difficulty. The team is available to deploy extra support if needed. At this point PPS building staff is handling any situations. K. Truchsess commended PPS members and administration on their tireless work, effort and going above and beyond the typical call of duty.
- Terry Budlong held a survey on April 9th and 10th of 2019 on substance use and trends and will present that to the Board. This was also done back in 2016.

B. Interagency Mental Health Meeting, April 2nd

- K. Truchsess stated that the district is going to be holding a meeting with representatives from Danbury Hospital, the city and school members on how to partner up to better to support our students. A concern that came from the last meeting was if a student needs crisis intervention care at a hospital and psychiatric care, whether or not it is focused on pediatrics.
- There will be another community forum on substance abuse, particularly on vaping and warning signs for parents. The date is TBD but looking at the week after Spring Break or first week in May. This will be facilitated by Terry Budlong of Stand Together, Make a Difference.
- R. Janelli asked what we are doing to teach students and parents about vaping. Especially how kids are now introducing drugs into the vapes? K. Truchsess stated that it is taught through health courses that students are required to take. It was also discussed at the Freshman Forum for parents.
- K. Truchsess feels that we need to continue to do more to help educate parents and they are building on that. There was a presentation on March 20, 2019 20th at the Danbury Police Department with about 70 parents in attendance. That forum will be shared with the Board.

C. CAFE Policy Audit Update

- Dr. Pascarella stated that we have policies to update. There is a service that does the audit and gives recommendations to the Board. It may take a year to get it done but then our policies will be updated. Dr. Pascarella will inform CAFE what we would like from that service so we can update policies accordingly.

D. Teacher Recruitment Update

- K. Thompson stated that we are rolling in to the recruiting season. District typically deploy teams of administrators to go to career educator fairs at colleges such as UCONN, WCSU, Southern and Sacred Heart. The career fairs start in early April. The teams bring really nice packets of materials on Danbury, the schools and a growing list of incentives. The team does some screening and interviewing and brings it back to HR team. Some recruiting has already been done for the 2019-2020 school year in high need areas.
- Also doing some targeted recruiting in particular areas. Terrence Cunningham will be helping us again with some of the schools that he has had success with. Marnie Durkin is also working to find candidates from Delaware State.
- Legislation is trying to give us help with recruitment of minority teachers. Little over 52,000 teachers in CT, 8.5% are teachers of color. Statewide numbers are low. The State Department of Education is trying to push those numbers higher. Very modest goal of 250 educators with a goal of 30% male teachers of color. It's a small percent but it's a start. They are also trying to ease the transition of teachers who have certification in another state.
- Loan forgiveness of 10% or up to \$5000 a year for teachers of color in Connecticut. This bill is in appropriations.
- K. Thompson stated that the district will probably hire 100 teachers when all is said in done.

- Retirements are coming up, some with more than 30 years of service. A nice retirement event is held at the end of the year.
- Administrator panels are interviewing for Morris and Ellsworth. Four panels for two positions will be held next week.

E. New Financial Software Package

- J. Martino stated that the new program for school lunch will go live on July 1, 2019 and January 1, 2020 for payroll.

DISCUSSION

A. TDEC Update: Science & World Language Update

- Presented by K. Casimiro, Melissa Nadeau and Agosto Gomes.
- A. Gomes presented a course progression flow chart for World Languages. The district now provides a Spanish Heritage Speakers Class. This is equivalent to an ELA course for English speaking students. Very pleased to be able to offer this program to the Spanish speaking students of Danbury.
- It is recommended that teachers and students use on average 90% of the target language, regardless of the level.
- Integrated Performance Assessment is now part of the instructional process. Develop their own benchmarks.
- Teachers now have an action step that requires them to develop apps (performance-based assessments).
- Digital media is being used in World Language classes.
- E. Palmares asked why don't we have a Portuguese heritage initiative in our district? Why have we only chosen to provide to Spanish and not Portuguese as well? A. Gomes stated that he will speak to Dr. Pascarella and see if the numbers can be investigated to see if it's possible to create the course.
- R. Chaleski inquired about the AIS program on how they are exposed to Spanish for 6 years and then having to do Spanish 1 again in middle school and then Spanish 1 again in high school, that it isn't translating over. A. Gomes stated that when a student completes a level they are moved on to the next level. If that is not happening, he is not aware and to please inform him so it can be rectified. In terms of AIS, they are struggling a little bit to put something in place that reflects a productive program.
- A. Gomes shared a proposal scope and sequence for AIS with the Board. Moving forward within a year or two, a curriculum should be in place that they are proud about. K. Casimiro stated that a meeting is coming up in April with elementary and middle school teachers who teach World Language.
- M. Nadeau spoke about the Science programs in Danbury.
- M. Nadeau has been doing a lot of qualitative evaluation for the past year.
- Currently in K-5, the science program is building based. There is nothing specific from the district that provides guidance on how science should be rolled out. Some buildings have purchased programs and some buildings have utilized staff certified in science.
- M. Nadeau has started to develop a plan, but the budget has to be taken into consideration. NGSS require us to have students experience inquiry, have experiences and ask thought provoking questions.
- A pilot program will begin on April 9, 2019 for 5th graders at AIS, Park Ave and South Street schools. Each school will pilot a different Science content area. The goal is to assess which materials will aid our district in moving forward and will provide options for the next school year. The goal for next year is for full 3rd grade implementation of science units contingent on time allotment and budget for materials.

- Another goal is to give principals a taste in elementary and middle school science where principals are learning science experience just like students would be in the classroom. This is for the principals to have a science base so teachers in the buildings are supported.
- In middle schools, they will continue the NGSS aligned curriculum focusing on data analysis and argumentative writing as well as professional development on embedding SEPs into instruction. The decision has been made to not make any major changes in the curriculum.
- At the high school level, they will continue to expand the 3-D phenomena-based instruction as well as professional development on 3-D learning and SIOP infused strategies. Next year they will expand the curriculum to include electives that align with NGSS standards in partnership with industry partners. Also, to introduce a PLTW Engineering pathway.
- One of the HS courses includes Forensic Science. Registration for this course is already very high.
- There are 500,000 open computer science jobs currently in the US. Only 63,000 graduated with that degree last year.
- M. Nadeau has visited Belimo Industries in Danbury, a company that develops systems for HVAC. She has toured the facilities. They innovate so much they create jobs that don't exist.
- 47% of jobs we know today will change or disappear because of companies like Belimo. Due to this she would like to introduce engineering in classrooms in an effort to meet some of the demands we have in the fields of engineering.
- Absolutely imperative that we work on the K-12 Science continuum.
- M. Nadeau invited the Board on her next trip to Belimo to see what this one company in Danbury does for the community of Danbury and in the STEM field.

INFORMATION

A. 2019-2020 Revised School Calendar

- K. Walston stated that the group obtained more feedback from stakeholder groups by attending the City-Wide PTO meetings and additional feedback from parents. After a number of revisions, landed on highlights.
- Pattern for dismissal that is systemic. 18 early release days for this year, 11 for next year.
- Removed any early release days when there is already a day off that week.
- Nine continuous weeks of instruction this year, next year there will be 13 continuous weeks.
- The goal of the district is to improve family school community partnerships.
- D. Pascarella stated that they will not have conferences for elementary and middle schools during the same week because there are not enough interpreters. By doing a split week, interpreters will be better available.
- J. Martino stated that we will continue to use Canyon Creek for conferences as it is the best avenue.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that the half day for T-Eval was removed to try and keep continuity of instruction. May 26, 2020 will be a 90 min extension for teachers versus a half day for students.
- Next year proposal allowing teachers to work in classrooms for pre-opening day.
- Still working to decide what will happen with Veteran's Day. Dr. Pascarella is working with veterans. On calendar as a day off for 2019-2020 but will revisit again for the following year.
- R. Chaleski said Tuesday early releases are less systematic, they are all over the place.
- R. Chaleski understands the split elementary and middle school conferences but can we move them up a week (November 6-8 and November 12-15) so they have one more week of instruction before holiday break? K. Casimiro replied that these dates were settled because of grades and report cards being on hand for the conferences. It was a report carding issue.
- R. Chaleski stated that she foresees a problem with early dismissal days being different for middle and elementary schools during conferences.

- Dr. Pascarella suggested we try it and see what happens. We can reevaluate next year again to see what makes more sense. We owe it to the teachers and parents to make the conferences more meaningful.
- At the last Board meeting there was a suggestion of moving AP exams and that was approved and adjusted in next year's calendar.

B. CORE Visit, March 27-28

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

P. Johnston stated that an issue was alerted to the Board and it has been addressed with the Superintendent's office.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

- G. Cooper thanked the teachers and everyone that came out on March 20, 2019 for the Budget Forum. She stated that J. Martino did an excellent job presenting.
- J. Martino stated that the City Hall Budget Meeting will be on April 2, 2019.
- E. Palmares stated that April 2, 2019 will be the Light Up Blue Night to celebrate Autism Awareness at the Danbury Public Library. Police Chief Patrick Ridenhour will read Kerry Magro's "I Will Light It Up Blue" at 4pm and "Deej," a documentary about a non-speaking young man who dreams of autistic civil rights will be shown at 5pm. A panel discussion will follow the film. The event will conclude with a Light Up Blue Ceremony at 6:30 pm. The ceremony will feature speakers and musical performances.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa, that the Board of Education amend the agenda to move the Executive Session to the next meeting given the late hour.

Motion passed at 9:35 pm

ADJOURNMENT

R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa that the Board of Education adjourns its Meeting of March 27, 2019 and the meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)