

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2019 - 7:00 PM

Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the meeting to order 7:02 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli,
Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa,

Absent: David Metrena, Rachael Chaleski and Amy Spallino

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

RECOGNITIONS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- I am Irving Fox, past Chairman of the Danbury Board and currently co-president of the King Street PTO and presently, since 2013, a City Councilman for the First Ward. I am concerned about the meeting on June 12th of the Sites and Facilities Committee. I would like to caution the Board to take into consideration the feelings of the community. I had a chance to look at the minutes and had conversations with some people afterward. I just wanted to express my concerns about some of the conclusions that were reached, and I understand that meeting may be preliminary. I know that a lot of work goes into sculpting, studying and planning. I just like to question the Board, as they take those things into consideration, the feeling of the community. Working with the Mayor and others we can find the right plan to get the right school space. Our population is increasing as we all know and need to build more classrooms. I know that we need to find room, but I think we can do that without disrupting hundreds of thousands of families. I urge Board members to look very closely and consider the resident's concerns as they formulate the plans and that a plan comes forward to the public that is appropriate. Thanks for a great school year. Being a parent of 4 children in the school district, I am very satisfied with the school. I thank the Board and the staff for their hard work.
- Juan Vasquez told the Board that he was here to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He said that his organization would like to bring a writing contest to the schools. As background information, he said the VFW has sponsored educational programs since 1947. The writing contest is for student's grades 9-12. Nationally 30,000 students participate. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. The post level is \$1,000. State Department winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. a tour of the city and receive a portion of \$154,000 of the national award. The top scholarship prize is \$30,000. The process is to record their original 3-5 minutes essay on a CD, flash drive or e-mail to the VFW post. With no music, singing, poetry or sound effects. There will be a winner for every 15 entry from each VFW Post which will advance to the District and one District winner advances to the State Department for the competition. Deadline for the entries is midnight October 31, 2019. He said he realizes that this is short notice for this year, but possibly the district can participate in the 2020-21 school year. Mr. Vasquez had a

handout describing in detail the overview, prizes, and scholarships, qualifications, and process for this contest including the deadline and judging criteria.

Dr. Pascarella asked what the theme is for the contest, Mr. Vasquez stated that it is “What Makes America Great”. The Superintendent also mentioned to Mr. Vasquez that Abbott Technical School is not under the auspices of the public-school district and that it is a State of Connecticut school, so he would have to present that to them as well.

Kara Casimiro told the Board that she will talk with Mr. Vasquez about the VFW Contest.

- Tim Seibert told the Board that he also lives in the King Street area and is formerly a PTO President. He stated that he coaches baseball, basketball, soccer and is also a member of the Rotary Club. He went on to say that he supports many of the community functions. Most of the people behind me in this audience also lives in the King Street area and I’m here speaking on their behalf. We are all pretty concerned about the agenda at the Sites and Facilities meeting. It seems there is going to be some drastic changes in the King Street campus. We have sacrificed a lot for this community. We have a close relationship with that school, and we don’t want to see that tarnished. When I read the proposal, I wondered how it came to this. We sacrifice everything to support the children and much of this is going to be dumped on our shoulders. When this city has real estate opportunities opening up, why are they not taking advantage of them? Amphenol downtown could have been converted for those kids.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-101 through 19-103, as recommended:

MINUTES

6/11/19 Special Board Meeting

6/12/19 Sites & Facilities Committee Meeting

6/12/19 Board Meeting

Motion carried at 7:15 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE – None present

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The former Student Representatives introduced the new Representatives. They also thanked the Board for an amazing year. Before introducing the new Representatives, they mentioned what colleges they plan to attend in the Fall and what their course of study will be.

The new Students Officers of BOG and Representatives from Danbury High School are for 2019-2020. Larissa Costa, President of the BOG, Claire Moreira Vice President. Jake Goodwin Secretary. Larissa Costa said unfortunately, our B.O.G Treasurer, Rebecca D’Ostilio, isn’t here due to traveling but she is here in spirit! She went on to say before we begin, I would just like to say it is an honor to be here with you all tonight and be a part of such an important aspect of our daily lives and of our fellow students. I would also like to thank you all for working hard to not only make our futures bright but also the futures of the many other students in our school system. With that being said, here are some announcements about the end of the school year for DHS!

- Senior Prom, with the unique theme of “Ice Ball” took place on May 24th at the Amber Room with hundreds in attendance. It was a fantastic time for all who came.

- Seniors Gabby D'Ostilio and Montez Osbey were awarded at the 2019 Scholar Leader Dinner on May 28th, hosted by the Fairfield County Association of Secondary School Principals. Congratulations to the two of them!
- A recognition ceremony for the 19 students who completed the 2018-2019 AP Spanish Independent Study Program for English Learners (ELs) was held the first week of June in the Black Box theatre. A big thank you to teacher Soraya Bilbao for steering students towards this accomplishment.
- The Senior Barbeque took place on June 14th and was a big hit!
- Class of 2019 has graduated! Despite less than ideal weather, Graduation took place on Wednesday, June 19th. Including ACE, nearly 700 students graduated.
- The NHS Spring Induction Ceremony took Place Thursday, May 23rd. Congratulations to the new Inductees, who were chosen for their exceptional achievements in academics and community service.
- May 28th, the Science National Honors Society Members received their long-awaited Certificates of Membership.
- June 11th, a ceremony took place in which 60 students involved in the CNA Program received their CNA pins.
- Alanna Smith, a freshman on the Girls Track and Field team, was the 400 Meter New England Champion. Her score of 55.49 seconds is an FCIAC record and a Thornton Academy facility record. She also won the State LL Championship Titles in the 100m, 200m, and as stated before, the 400m in early June.
- Emily Bogues and Shannon Quinn, DHS seniors, were selected to the CHSCA All-Star softball Game in Meriden CT on June 12th. Both Emily and Shannon also earned All-FCIAC honors this spring in helping lead the Hatters to a 13-7 record, FCIAC Playoffs, and CIAC 2nd Round. Congratulations.
- Congratulations to Javon Hernandez for making the 2019 Class LL Connecticut All-State Baseball team, voted on and selected by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association.
- Girls Outdoor Track won Connecticut Team of the Year! What an outstanding achievement! They were the third team to be named a CHSCA CT team of the year, joining our Girls Cross Country and Wrestling Teams as the best teams in their sport in CT this year.

Emanuela Palmares said all three of you young ladies have left an impression on us with the awards you have received and the things you have done. Gabby's was performance was amazing and what you gave of yourself for those three days. I am always going to remember that play. Good luck to all of you.

Ralph Pietrafesa, Chairperson of the Sites and Facilities Committee, said since this is the last meeting, I want you to know that every year we put out studies and I do agree that real estate comes up at the City Council. I do know your concerns about redistricting. We are not going to try to tarnish anything. I hate using that word tarnish. These are just studies that are being made. Sites and Facilities always kick this back to the City to look at what we can do. That was only a Committee meeting – no conclusions have been drawn. Nothing will be done until next year. It is our intention that we take everyone into consideration.

Ms. Palmares ask that all of you as representatives of King Street be a little more mindful of the overall work of the district and look at it as a holistic approach. I do understand your concerns and the culture of your community because everyone has a certain culture of living and you feel that may be in jeopardy. Culture of diversity needs to be embraced in every area. That's part of growth and has changed from twenty or thirty years ago. We're trying to look at the whole district. We are going to look at it as a realistic approach and the culture of the King Street area that you are trying to preserve. There is an overall diversity. The culture has been changed. What I have heard is that the incoming of

downtown children will tarnish that culture. Your concerns are that the culture is what you are trying to preserve. Times have changed. We all have questions on the real estate sites. We need parents like you to advocate in the right places such as City Hall for what you want. Your respect is beautiful, and everyone has a culture. Culture comes from building communities. Together we can both feel respected. We are do everything that we can to follow our mission which will be one of focusing on equity and encourage that work. We need to work together and trust that we are trying to do everything we can for our mission.

Someone in the audience asked if they could respond to Ms. Palmares comments.

Mr. Johnston's reply was unfortunately no. We can't get into a dialogue at a Board meeting. There will be meetings coming up and we can have discussions. The reason why Mr. Pietrafesa spoke is just to let everyone know that nothing has been done. This is just another outlook into seeing where we can expand. We did it with knowing that we were not doing anything yet. Mr. Pietrafesa said we figured since is the last meeting and that we won't meet again until September since you took the time to come here tonight, we appreciate that. We don't normally respond the same evening, but didn't want you to leave just making a statement to us without some kind of a response

Mr. Johnston said that Mr. Pietrafesa spoke on behalf of the Committee since we didn't want you to leave thinking that conclusions have already been made. Mr. Johnston said if you would like to wait until after the Executive Committee Meeting you can talk to me or anybody you wish to speak with. Thank you so much also for coming tonight and your comments. Mr. Pietrafesa said he will give you his e-mail address. The Chairperson stated if you want to stay tonight until after the Executive Session, we can see me then.

The Chairperson told the audience that unfortunately for us, Mr. Martino will be leaving our district. Joe, we all got together and got you a card. We are all sorry to see you go, Joe. We are going to miss you a lot. We appreciate all that you have done for us and we thank you. The Board gave him a standing ovation.

Dr. Pascarella said we are getting things done since Mr. Martino came to the district. He said that because of Joe we were able to accomplish things that we couldn't seem to do in the past. You always put our kids first. We wish you well. You are a good man and we will miss you tremendously.

Mr. Martino said leaving this district was not an easy decision. When I came to Danbury, I was a young 33-year-old and I'm a couple of years older than that now. The support level that you have given me was much appreciated. We have been through some complicated things and a lot of infrastructure projects like portables and the Board has always supported them. We have come through some complicated projects and we've done some good projects. I told Dr. Pascarella that I will stay on for the transition as long as needed since the budget is complicated. I appreciate all the support you have given me.

PRESENTATION - None

ACTION ITEMS

2019-2020 Budget

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education approve and set the School District's Budget in the amount of \$134,986,000 (2.08%) for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

Motion passed at 7:40 pm.

Mr. Martino said there are some challenges and moving forward with additional costs and we are working with the City.

A discussion ensued concerning various aspects of the budget.

Mr. Martino said there is already overcrowding in the DHS buses. The bus company is trying to consolidate its runs. When I came here, there were 65 full-size buses, now there are 85 full-size buses.

Mr. Jannelli said this the worse budget I have ever seen. This community has to stand behind the Board of Education and help us advocate for more funding. I don't really care where the money comes from whether it be a combination from the City or State, but we are not doing our children the justice that they deserve with the challenges that we have. We have a population that's increasing, and we have a lack of space. We have no wiggle room in this budget for next year. We have a maintenance budget that's not doing anything to create new programs. We cannot cut anymore. My feeling is that we have to wake up the City and come together as a community and do a better job of understanding funding and what we need. We cannot cut anymore. We can justify the areas where we need the money. I want that for the record.

May 2019 –Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grants/Projects)

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education accept the May 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grant/Projects)

Motion passed at 7:42 pm.

Mr. Martino told the Board that for the month of May the district expended \$10,719,115 resulting in a fiscal year-to-date expenditure value of \$106,439,615 which represents 80.5% of the General Fund total budget. Mr. Martino told the Board for the month of May, the district expended \$2,193,082 resulting in a fiscal year-to-date expenditure value of \$20,603,567 which represents 65.6% of the Grants budget.

Technology Lease - **TABLED**

MOTION: Emanuela Palmares moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education Table the Technology Lease.

Motion passed at 7:43 pm

Mr. Martino said he would feel better approving the Technology Lease once the funding is released. It may be modified from \$750,000 and may drop to \$450,000. The council has already approved the application. He will then bring it back to the Board for approval.

Increase in School Lunch Prices

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education approve the increase in School Lunch prices for 2019-2020

Motion passed at 7:46 pm.

Mr. Martino told the Board that the increases in the school lunch program is mandatory by the State. Mr. Jannelli asked what the criteria was for a student to receive free lunch. Mr. Martino replied that if the family is enrolled in a social program, for instance, SNAP, Husky, and other state agencies, then the student can automatically receive free lunch.

Tuition Rates

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Kate Conetta that the Board of Education approve the tuition rates for 2019-2020

Motion passed at 7:47 pm.

The Board had questions about the tuition rates for the year 2019-20: ACE \$24,049, DHS \$16,033, Grades K-5 and Middle School \$13,248. Mr. Martino said these are the rates that he would charge the district sending a student to our schools. In my tenure here, we've had only one student from another district.

Rental Fund

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education approve the following projects out of the rental fund in accordance with revised Exhibit 19-108

Motion passed at 7:48 pm.

Mr. Martino said with the exception of Pembroke playground which is a project we need to fund to make it ADA compliant, the balance of the items will be funded out of the rental account. Each item is a cost estimate for replacement.

Equity Policy - TABLED

MOTION: Fred Karrat moved, seconded by Emanuela Palmares that the Board of Education Table for first reading the Equity Policy, as recommended by the Policy Committee

Motion passed at 7:50 pm.

Mr. Karrat told the Board that he apologizes for having to table this Equity Policy tonight. The Committee needs time to have a meeting and will then review and recommend the policy for first reading. Patrick Johnston told the Board that the Equity Policy that is being tabled tonight will be on the agenda for the first or second meeting in September.

Teacher Evaluation Plan

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education approve the Teacher Evaluation Plan

Motion passed at 7:51 pm.

Revised Board of Education Meeting dates 2019-2020

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Kate Conetta that the Board of Education approve the revised Board Meeting dates for 2019-2020 (Thursday, October 10, due to Yom Kippur)

Motion passed at 7:52 pm.

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, asked for a motion from the Board to Amend the Agenda to add an Action Item

Family Resource Center Program at Morris Street School - AMENDED

MOTION: Richard Jannelli moved, seconded by Fred Karrat that the Board of Education amend the June 26, 2019 Board Agenda to add an action item for approval of the grant application for the Family Resource Center at Morris Street School.

Motion passed at 7:53 pm.

Family Resource Center Program at Morris Street School

MOTION - Richard Jannelli moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, that the Board of Education approve the submission of the application package to the State Department of Education for the renewal of a Family Resource Center Program at Morris Street School, July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

Motion passed at 7:54 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Graduation update

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that 670 students graduated on June 19th. He said he is always amazed that there are no disruptions and that the students show a lot of respect for the speakers. I've been to a lot of graduations. I am proud and in awe of our students and their respect for the whole graduation process.

Recruitment of Finance Director

Kim Thompson told the Board that we posted the Finance Director's position. We have had four applicants so far. Hopefully, we will get some additional applicants in the next couple of weeks. Since this is a cabinet member position, the interview process will be the two panels and a Board member on each panel.

Summer School

Mr. Walston told the Board that they have four sites: Ellsworth, King Street Primary, Mill Ridge Primary and Park Avenue. We have 600 in early childhood programs. We will be starting summer school on July 8th to August 1 – 8:30 to 11:30 for students and 8:00-12:00 for staff– lunch will be available. There will be 617 students in K5 elementary. There are 18 students in the accelerated program which be at high school one program for the middle school will be at Broadview from July 1st through August 1st from 8:00 to 2:30. A little different this year as classes will be from Monday through Thursday. No classes on Friday.

Ms. Truchsess told the Board that the special education summer program will start on July 1st run through August 1st. We have about 200 staff members who are meeting tomorrow. We will be receiving about 330 special education students within the program with ages ranging from 3 to 21 and we will be at the Magnet School.

Summer Projects

Mr. Martino said the projects for summer are short. We need to get to the Westside and address space there. DHS has two floors of tile to be replaced. Insurance will cover; \$97,000 came from the City of cover it.

DISCUSSION – None

INFORMATION - None

BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Mr. Johnston told the Board to have a great summer. He said graduation went off like clockwork. It was tremendous. He addressed Mr. Martino and said, “I am sorry to see you leave”.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Mr. Jannelli said that Joan Kayser had to leave high school 3-4 months before graduation and came back after 65 years to receive her diploma. That was a memorable event for this graduation.

Ms. Cooper said I would hope that we would look at Danbury as a very diverse community. I would not refer to the kids as ‘those kids.’ We should look at people as people. I want to say that I try my best not to use that type of phrase. I’ve been on the Board for 28 years and I feel we do our best for all the children in Danbury.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Kate Conetta moved, seconded by Richard Jannelli that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter regarding a grievance from D. Froehlich.

Motion carried at 8:00 pm

The Chairperson called the Executive Session to order at 8:05 pm and turned the discussion over to Kim Thompson.

Present: Joseph Britton, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli,
Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa,
Absent: David Metrena, Rachael Chaleski and Amy Spallino

A discussion ensued.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: Fred Karrat moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, to return to Public Session.
Motion carried at 10:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Fred Karrat moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, that the Board adjourn its June 26, 2019 Board Meeting and the meeting adjourned at 10:02 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(the meeting was videotaped)