

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**  
**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019- 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper,  
Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares  
and Ralph Pietrafesa  
Absent: Frederick Karrat and Amy Spallino  
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Kelly Truchsess, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro,  
Kim Thompson and Kishore Solanki, Interim Director of Finance

**RECOGNITIONS**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Erin Daly, President of NEA Danbury and also a third-grade teacher apologized to the Board saying that she gets nervous when public speaking, so she brought a few of her friends with her tonight (there were more than 100 NEA teachers in the audience). She has just returned from a joyous ribbon-cutting celebration of the new Pembroke Playground; all that good came from working together with citizens, corporations, parents, Board members, and even students. This Playground was the brainchild of a teacher who saw a need that wasn't being met by our City. In actuality, took the stalwart determination of one special education teacher that believed that all of our students deserve a playground that is accessible for all children. Leigh Viviano, a special education teacher of the Danbury Public Schools for 9 years invested in our community through her hard work and commitment to our students to make this playground a reality. She left her teaching position to teach in a district where she can earn more as a single Mom to provide for her family. She left like so many others have left to seek employment in a district where efforts are valued and respected as a professional. Leigh's departure was surely Danbury's great loss. There are many other teachers who are leaving Danbury for similar reasons. We're no longer an attractive district. Our teachers can't continue at this rate of decline so tonight, on the eve of our mediation session for a brand new negotiated contract, we want you to know that our commitment to this district can only be sustained as long as you are willing to commit to us and to value us by providing us a fair wage increase and maintain our health insurance benefits. To value, respect and trust in us as veteran teachers and leaders. When you invest in us, you're investing in our community. If we as a community refuse to invest in our teachers, we are revealing to our students how very little we value them. We're saying that it's not worth keeping the best teachers to educate them. The Board knows this, and they know that the way to improve strength and build prosperity within a community is through strong public education. The Board has already agreed to invest in administration. You've shown that through agreeing to more than fair wages for administration and by continuing to bolster administrative positions. Teachers are the boots on the ground. We're the people doing the important work. Actually, educating our children. We deserve equal investment. We deserve a fair contract. An investment in teachers' benefits. We've heard the issues with ECS formula and how the City points the finger back to the State but at the end of the day, it's our Board in our City that has the duty. A duty to fill the financial void and work on long term investment in our kids. Our teachers with good hearts and a passion for public education isn't enough to keep us here anymore. We need you to invest in us.

Invest in the high-quality teachers that stand before you in this room. Let's not lose another teacher like Leigh Viviano. Public school teachers deserve a fair contract. (applause)

Pamela O'Neill told the Board that she is a 5<sup>th</sup> teacher at Morris Street School. I know that we are about to go into negotiations. I've been involved in the contract for many years. I'm here tonight to ask that you be kind to us. We, teachers, are stretched beyond our limits. We don't have anything more left inside of us to give you. The folks who administer our professional development again seemingly solely based on data collection lost sight of what it is the educators actually do. In reality, teachers figure out what it is their students need. Whatever it is to help them reach their potential. Every day we enter our classrooms ready to help our students learn how to become healthy and productive citizens in the world. That takes commitment and dedication beyond anything else I have ever chosen to do in my life. I have an impassioned plea that must be heard. Our brains are wrenched, our bodies are exhausted and our hearts are broken. That damage has been done because we are not given the respect and the trust that we deserve. What I am asking you tonight is to prove that you understand that, you appreciate what it is we try to do each and every day, but please do not try to prove you understand the intensity of our work with lip service. Do not placate us with mere platitudes instead show us with action. If our district can afford to give some of its employees' time to do their jobs, with decent salary increases and good health benefits, then surely our district can do the same for the people who actually work with the children. (applause)

Sterling Miller told the Board that it takes a lot of work for what we are doing. I would eat lunch with my colleagues, and we would talk about lessons, now I sometimes see them in the hallway eating an apple because there's no time to stop and eat lunch. We are working so hard all day. Many of you have seen me earlier today and you've seen teachers earlier today. It's not just this day all the time. We're all stretched thin. We can't take how thin we are being stretched. Please think about what you're doing to support us. I've been going for 12 hours. (applause)

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, thanked everyone for coming out this evening.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by David Metrena that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-120 through 19-123, as recommended:

### **MINUTES**

9-9-19 Finance Committee Meeting  
9-11-19 Sites & Facilities Committee Meeting  
9-11-19 Board Meeting  
9-18-19 Ad hoc Committee Meeting

### **DONATION**

The New American Dream Foundation (TNADF) secured an \$11,250 donation from Linde and the RobyDodd Charitable Foundation presented to Western CT Regional Adult Education and Continuing Education (WERACE) to help serve more members by providing financial support to offset some of the costs of their ESL Instruction and Citizenship classes.

**Abstention:** Richard Jannelli

**Motion carried at 7:14 pm.**

Ms. Chaleski read the donation listed above and a representative from New American Dream Foundation (TNADF) together with Emanuela Palmares presented an oversized copy of the \$11,250 donation check to Dr. Pascarella. (applause)

**EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE** - None

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES** – None

**PRESENTATION** -None

**ACTION ITEMS**

June 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants)

MOTION: Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education accept the June 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants)

During the month of June 2019, the District expended \$18,438,261 resulting in a fiscal year-to-date expenditure value of \$129,265,469 which represents 97.75% of the General Fund total budget.

**Motion carried at 7:15 pm.**

Equity Policy

MOTION: Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Kate Conetta that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption the Equity Policy

**Motion carried at 7:16 pm.**

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Enrollment Update

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that we will be sending our official October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment numbers to the State. The numbers change every day. Some elementary school's grades are lower and in others some grade levels are higher. We currently have three times the number of students we expected. At the next Board meeting we will have the official number. I want to thank the Reception Center and staff for all their efforts in processing all the new students.

School Lotteries/OCR

Dr. Pascarella said Civil Rights does a study of our racial balance. If we approach 15% of the variance then we are out of compliance. The district average for minority is the variance we are committed to having. When we approach 15%, we have to start talking about how we can decrease it. If we get to 25% past the variance, then we have to take action. Right now, there are 2 schools that we are looking at.

Kevin Walston told the Board the two schools are AIS with 17% and Westside which is getting close but still under. We need to address the racial balance in both of these schools. We also have to be sure that all our schools are not above 15%. If any of them are, the district is required to put in place a plan and that is why we put OCR alongside the school lotteries.

Kate Conetta asked about the lottery system and how that particular model was chosen. Was it voted on or an established system? The Superintendent said the Board did vote on it and also it is the same as the AIS established system.

Rachel Chaleski asked a question about OCR. The Superintendent stated that he called the Magnet School office at the State asking what the standard is. The OCR reports have a different way of counting. We had a policy when OCR wasn't in the picture.

Response from the Commissioner of Education for appropriation request

The Superintendent said he sent a letter to the Commissioner for additional funds. He received a response to his letter. We are going to talk to the legislature to see if there is something they can do. If we don't get the appropriation that we asked for, it will have a serious impact on us. We will be working with them to see if there are any areas that we could investigate for funding.

Dr. Pascarella said last year we received \$2.5 million from the City, plus the Matrix. We have \$500,000 coming to us. We don't have a savings account. The City pays all Title I salaries. We don't have the Priority Grant money – it goes to the City. If they ask where the \$2.7 million is, I will say we have never gotten what we asked for. Teachers have been trying to close the gap and there is evidence on how that is working. The only extra money at the end is the City has given us \$600,000. We knew last year that was not enough money. I'm going to ask for \$1.2-1.5 million.

Patrick Johnston thanked all the teachers that attended the meeting tonight. He also thanked everyone that attended the ribbon cutting at the Pembroke Playground today, it was terrific.

**DISCUSSION**

NEASC Visit, November 17-20, 2019

Dan Donovan, Principal at Danbury High School distributed a hard copy of his slide presentation. He told the DHS re-accreditation process is a 10-year cycle involving 18 people visiting the school. In the future, this re-accreditation will be every 5 years. There are three phases: *Phase 1*: A self-study that has already been completed – faculty-driven reflection during the 2018 school year, input from faculty, parents, students, community members, tells the story of how well the school meets the 7 accreditation standards. *Phase 2*: is a 4-day visit will be starting on Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>: assesses how well DHS meets the standards. *Phase 3*: Follow-up action plan, Commission report to drive conversations regarding improvement, DHS administrators prepare reports on progress based on recommendations (we have 2 years to do this follow up). The reasons for doing this re-accreditation is commitment to research-based standards of practice, improve knowledge of policies, programs, and practices, identify strengths and needs and inform school improvement plan. The Steering Committee has listed seven DHS accreditation standards below:

- |                                                |                               |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Core Values, Beliefs and learning expectations | Curriculum                    |
| Instruction                                    | Assessment for learning       |
| School culture and leadership                  | School resources for learning |
| Community resources for learning               |                               |

Mr. Donovan said the Board members are invited to the Panel Presentation on Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>. The Board Chair, Patrick Johnston, will say a few words about the makeup and vision of the Board. Some Board members will be asked to participate in a group interview with visiting members of the committee. I will have more information at the next Board meeting. Sunday session will be approximately 2:00-5:00 pm, with an hour-long reception. We should receive a detailed report of the visit about six months later.

Board members had several questions regarding turnaround times to come up with whatever needs to be addressed and fixed, will the lack of funding come up, would it better to do it more frequently than every 10 years, cost to the district, is this a mandatory, if we don't do it does that mean DHS would not be a credited high school, home schooling students, etc. Mr. Donovan answered the questions stating that the lack of funding will play a role, the accreditation process will be changed to every 5 years and

that it is mandatory, and the home school students also have to go through an on-line process. He added that this committee visit is at a substantial cost to the district – we are paying for 18 people in a hotel for 3 days. He also said everyone is frustrated about the lack of funding – that and building maintenance will be looked at.

Mr. Donovan said he does not have an exact time yet but as soon as the schedule is finalized, which should be by the next Board, he will be able to give you the Board definite times. Dr. Pascarella has a copy of the self-study. It went into the portal, so it is just a filing with all the edits. Taking a look at it will give you the knowledge of what the self-study was talking about against those indicators. This is not for public consumption.

The Chairman of the committee will give us a brief rundown on Wednesday of what they found with highlights of what's going on at probably 2:20-2:30 pm at the high school when the school day is over. The whole staff will come into the auditorium and we will be presented with a half-hour version of what they believe is going to happen and what they see. This is quick report. The real detailed report that comes to us probably about 6 months later will be in much greater detail. It is not open to the public it is just for the staff.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Donovan for the slide presentation and the review of the upcoming NEASC Re-Accreditation Process.

Ms. Palmares wanted to give a shout out to the DHS students who helped with the New American Dream Foundation awards last Saturday. She said the students, did a wonderful job with the interpretation of Hamilton. They brought down the house, absolutely beautiful, so incredibly proud, especially how much your department has grown over the past years.

### **INFORMATION**

- Interscholar Food Service Agreement with St. Peter's School and Head Start Food Service Agreement
- Director of Finance Interviews October 4 & 7 (Board Liaisons Amy Spallino & Gladys Cooper)

### **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

#### **BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

The Chairperson said there will be a Special Board Meeting on Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Also, the Board Workshop will be on Wednesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 pm.

Gladys Cooper said she attended Parent Teachers at ACE on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. She said there was a great turnout, 25-30 parents. The Principal, John Webber, did an excellent job welcoming the parents and the students. They said the Raptor System is working well. Parents were there that evening to speak to their children's teachers and guidance counselors.

Richard Jannelli told the Board that a New York state parent was at the ribbon-cutting for the Pembroke Playground with their child who was in a wheelchair and a fourth-grade student at Pembroke. The parents wrote a book so that the kids would understand his issues. The child was able to roll onto the padding and roll up to use the facilities. We actually had the ability to watch a child using the playground. I have the book. We as a Board can be proud. We are the only one in the State with a playground like this. I thank you for your support. If anyone wants to see the book, I will be happy to pass it out.

David Metrena asked the Chairperson why we deviated from the way the Board handles the Interview Committee. He questioned the protocol. Kim Thompson said we had too many volunteers. We separated the party lines and put the names in a hat. Ms. Patton, a staff member, select two observers. Mr. Metrena said he thought the Board Chairperson had the final say.

The Chairperson said we can readdress this. I don't know what to do when you need two and you get seven. Mr. Metrena said anytime the Board does anything it is through the Chair whether we are following the process or not. Mr. Jannelli was the Chair and he should have been consulted. Mr. Johnston said he didn't know that.

Mr. Jannelli said the two Board members should write down our recommendation of quality and aspects they should look at and we would take into account our opinions. With the two Board people's opinions and then look at the Board as a whole, would not put a burden on them.

Gladys Cooper said if you don't think I am capable of sitting on that Committee then tell me. There is an outline of the questions we can use. You are on this Board and you can have the right to a decision. If there is anything else you want we should have a discussion.

Ralph Pietrefsa said that he agrees with Gladys. He said he has been on Interview Committees previously and there is an outline of questions that the Board takes into consideration.

Kim Thompson said we put all the panelists together beforehand. They get the draft first. There is a writing prompt. She went on to explain how the committee works.

Gladys Cooper asked when is the lottery for the AIS? Ms. Chaleski replied, elementary school is January 1 and middle school is February 1.

Rachel Chaleski told the Board that in Fred Karrat's absence she would like to update the Board on the Ad Hoc Committee. The committee met last week to review CABA's audit of the bylaws as they pertain to professionalization of the Board. We reviewed half of the 108 pages and will continue to review through the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee we meet again on October 2<sup>nd</sup> a 6:00 pm. All of our members received the 108 pages of the audit. In lieu of our Board retreat the Committee will coordinate a workshop on Roles and Responsibilities in January after the election. The next Ad hoc Committee meeting will be held on October 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, that the Board of Education adjourn its September 25, 2019 Board meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.

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Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)