

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**  
**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019- 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Board Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

**ROLL CALL**

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

Absent: Richard Jannelli

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Kelly Truchsess, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro and  
Kishore Solanki, Interim Director of Finance

**RECOGNITIONS**

Teacher of the Year: Matthew Calvanese

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, introduced Matthew Calvanese, Teacher of the Year. The audience applauded. Dr. Pascarella congratulated Matthew. He is a fourth-grade math teacher at AIS. He is one of those teachers who brings out the best in our students. He has an excellent rapport with students and works tirelessly to make sure that he engages each child. Frank LaBanca told the Board that Matt does just about everything at the school. He told the Board of several different projects that he has taken on.

Mr. Calvaese thanked the teachers and administrators for recognizing him. He mentioned the teachers that were in the audience and thanked them for all the help they gave him through the years. He said he has been in the district for 10 years and was excited about getting this award. But, it is not only about me. It's about the teachers I have worked with. My success is because they have taught me. We worked together and I am honored, but I believe this award belongs to everyone that has shaped my career. The audience applauded Mr. Calvanese.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Melinda Scott, a teacher at Stadley Rough, wished the Board a happy new school year. As the current NEA Danbury Secretary and as former Stadley Rough PTO Recording Secretary as well as secretary for other organizations, I always read the minutes. I wanted to publicly thank Mr. Jannelli, and I am sorry he is not here tonight, for what he said at the June 26 Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Jannelli commented, "We can't go on any longer having meetings to discuss reductions to our proposed budget. We are eroding the foundation of our financial stability and we can no longer do more with less. It's time to unite the stakeholders in Danbury and next year put forth a plan to advocate from both City and State for more funding. We have needs and we must use them to support our requests."

Christina Stauble, teacher, and parent of an AIS student. Told the Board that the school is listed as the top 10% highest performing school in Connecticut. She does not feel that the technology is where it should be. The Board's minutes, when talking about the budget, said: "We can no longer do more with less." AIS has been doing that consistently. She talked about the Kindergarten teacher that was moved to another school in the district and that the Board is looking to hire some else for that position full time.

Why move a teacher that is already established. She told the Board they are chipping away at manpower and resources. She urged them to take a further look at how they are managing this school. It cannot continue at this rate. She closed by saying that she was a proud parent of AIS.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-112 through 19-116, as recommended.

#### **MINUTES**

6/25/19 Superintendent Evaluation Committee Meeting

6/26/19 Finance Committee Meeting

6/26/19 Board Meeting

#### **DONATION**

Danbury Board of Education \$35,000 donation to the Pembroke Playground Project

#### **GRANTS**

Request for Proposals - Program Enhancement Projects for Adult Education

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Purpose: To provide opportunities for the expansion and enhancement of existing educational programs and services for adults who lack the level of basic skills and literacy necessary to be effective parents, citizens, and employees.

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

### **EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **“Spotlight Your School” – King Street Campus: King Street Intermediate and King Street Primary**

Dr. Tina Hislop, Principal of King Street Intermediate School and Mr. Marc Poliquin, Interim Principal of King Street Primary presented to the Board of Education on the recent structural leadership change on campus. The presentation was done in a unique manner narrating the spotlight in attention-grabbing pictures drawn on post-it notes. Dr. Hislop started the presentation with ways in which the campus considered spotlighting the kindness initiatives, valuing student leadership and voice, and inviting the community into the school and finding ways to give back to the community. The presentation moved into their "story" depicted on post-it notes. Dr. Hislop, former principal of both schools with an assistant found herself alone as the AP took another leadership position outside the district. This turning point allowed the story to unveil that Dr. Pascarella listened to some concerns of the 7% increase of campus populations (from 788 students to 840 students) and variant needs (SPED, ELL, SEL) were a good reason to reexamine the leadership structure of the campus to have two building principals if they were able to sustain a "campus environment." The story articulated ways the two new principals' work together on campus in each building to support their schools with dedication, consistency, relationships, and focus. This comes with significant communication going beyond face to face, but electronic and "what we consider a "mobile office" the principals' drive home to collaborate, said, Mr. Marc Poliquin. The post-it notes highlighted favorite common campus traditions that continue to tie the two schools together, such as the STRIPES (safety, teamwork, respect, integrity, pride, and empathy), Hallway High-5s, Book Buddies, Tiger Citizen Awards, Weekly Robocalls, and two new recent campus additions. The two campus additions included a Staff Google Classroom, uses as a unifying communication link to all important staff materials and Talking Points, an app that will be introduced to families that will support crushing language barriers for home and school. The presentation included continued work for school improvement on campus. These goals were represented into four different buckets:

1. Teachers will set instructional practice goals to support curriculum work in the classroom
2. The teacher will communicate learning goals and provide feedback to students
3. The teachers will adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of their students
4. Staff will establish and maintain effective relationships that support a positive school climate

The principals have also redesigned the campus website and have continued with the Twitter feeds to keep the King Street campus community connected. Overall thanks were given to the Board of Education for their support and for allowing the campus to be led by two principals to give more attention to students, staff, and parents.

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Claire Moreira and Jake Goodwin, DHS representatives told the Board that before they begin with the updates from DHS, they would like to acknowledge the tragic event that happened 18 years ago today where many lives were lost and stories were finished that day. May we never forget the lives that were lost or forget to acknowledge the brave heroes from that day. This morning at school, we also had a moment of silence to honor those lives lost on 9/11, so that students could understand the significance of today.

This year has been off to a great start so far! DHS has had some renovations done such as C building having new floors installed and bathrooms being painted again and some hallways as well. This would not have been done without the help of our custodian, Mr. Anderson.

At DHS every grade matters and we are glad to say that the freshman class has transitioned beautifully into our school despite a few traffic jams in the hallways. This freshman class is one of the largest freshman classes that we have seen, and we are glad that they have been able to have a smooth transition into a new, important chapter of their lives. The freshmen class election will take place on October 5th and will decide the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the class of 2023.

Mr. Donovan also held assemblies for every grade in which he explained upcoming events, ACT and SATs and Flex. Flex enrichment was put in place last year and has worked wonders for many due to the extra time you can spend with a teacher working on something you might not have grasped completely in class or doing makeups. We have also brought back Flex Reps which are representatives from each Flex who will announce to their Flexes important announcements and events coming up for all students. We are actually meeting with these Flex Reps on Monday to discuss Spirit Week and fun competitions we will be beginning!

For Sports: Our JV Boys XC team came in 4th place at their meet on Saturday, while Varsity came in at 6th. They also had a Boy and Girl XC meet today against Greenwich, Ludlowe, and Norwalk at 4pm! Our Girls Field Hockey team has their first game tomorrow at 7:00 pm against Norwalk and our boy's varsity soccer team also has their first game on the 13th against Darien at 4:00 pm, so hopefully, it wins for our sports teams this year!

Now on to the most important week to students: Spirit Week! Our Spirit Week has been cut short to 4 days this year due to a holiday and we are now replacing Red, White, and Blue Day with Jersey Day which students voted on!

Tuesday: Jersey Day

Wednesday: Character Day

Thursday: Twin Day

Friday: School Spirit Day

To spice up Spirit Week, we will be doing fun activities during lunch waves to engage all students such as face painting and bands playing. Our most anticipated game, Homecoming game will be October 4th against Westhill. We are very excited to be able to show off our newly done track and hopefully win that night! The night after is our Homecoming Dance with the theme, a night in New York City, October 5<sup>th</sup>. We are excited to update you next month with news of our Homecoming Game and Dance. Have a nice night and thank you!

Tamara Souza, the ACE representative, thanked the Board for welcoming her back as the ACE Board of Ed Student Representative. She said it is an honor to be here and I look forward to sharing with you all that is happening this year at the Alternative Center. We began this year with an orientation day for both the returning students, as well as the 18 new students that entered our program this year. We will have 20 more prospective students visiting ACE over the next 2 weeks. At ACE we believe that much can be gained from experiential learning and have planned several outdoor trips and opportunities for students and staff to build relationships:

- Sept 26th the entire student body will go to Squantz Pond for a day of team building, circle activities, and small group relationship-building activities.
- Oct 2nd and 3rd, Kyle Trocolla will lead the Outdoor Adventure Club on a 9-mile hike in the Bull's Bridge Area on the Appalachian Trail.
- October 23rd Daniela Esposito will take students on a poetry hike to Steep Rock in Washington Connecticut.

Today at ACE we held our first schoolwide benchmark day, which was possible due to the effort, time, and planning of Daniela Esposito, Laura Blake, Joanne Tolles, Melissa Lasky, Rob Melillo, and Kyle Trocolla. Today students attended, in rooms by grade level, to benchmark tasks in an effort to collaborate between the English and Social Studies Departments, increase student buy-in, reduce testing days, and increase the number of days that students receive instruction this school year. ACE will host our first parents' night at 6 pm on September 23rd. Lastly, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of our ACE Family. May America always be above everything and God above everyone. Thank you.

The audience applauded the students' reports.

**PRESENTATION** - None

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### Equity Policy

**MOTION:** Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Joseph Britton that the Board of Education remove from the table the Equity Policy (tabled at the June 26, 2019 Board Meeting)

**Motion passed at 7:25 pm.**

**MOTION:** Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Emanuela Palmares that the Board of Education accept for first reading the Equity Policy, as recommended by the Policy Committee

**Motion passed at 7:26 pm.**

Child Nutrition Program Agreement

**MOTION:** Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education submit the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs to the CT State Department of Education

**Motion passed at 7:27 pm.**

Primary Mental Health Program Grant

**MOTION:** Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Kate Conetta that the Board of Education approve the Primary Mental Health Program Grant.

**Motion passed at 7:28 pm.**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Pascarella addressed the audience of teachers and welcomed them back. He then thanked Dr. Hislop and Marc Poliquin for a terrific presentation. He mentioned that years ago the two separate schools presented a challenge, with the PTO, curriculum, etc. I appreciate you recognizing the importance of making it one campus.

Opening School Report

The Superintendent said in talking about what is going on in the District, I have been in every building at least twice. I am so impressed by the teachers and the work they continually do. This year with the budget situation, we had to slow down a little bit. With the budget constraints, we have had some longer bus runs and larger class sizes above the goals that we would like to see them. All these things have an impact on the schools.

Budget Update

Dr. Pascarella said we are talking with the City right now. When the Board left in June our budget had three components: \$2.2 from the City, \$1.7 the Matrix Housing Development, and the \$2.7 Alliance grant that previously passed thru the City, but no longer does. All of this together put us in a position where we are going to be shy in the Special Education Department. In working with the City through the Mayor, they approved to move forward with a special appropriation of \$600,000. That was on July 1<sup>st</sup>. On August 1<sup>st</sup> we saw an unprecedented number of students which we registered and that caused an unbalance throughout the district; resource-wise space-wise and transportation. As we looked at this we had to stop doing things we had anticipated doing.

October 1<sup>st</sup> is the official enrollment date. At a Board Finance Committee meeting, we moved through to ask the City for a special appropriation above the \$600,000 for Special Education. Then we can move forward and hire the people we need. Right now it looks as though we are going to be short \$1.273, this is what we are going to be asking the City for. So it is in the City's hands.

The Superintendent then referred to Kishore Solanki, who is interim for Joe Martino, and said when speaking of the shortfall in the budget, he came into quite a situation.

Kelly Truchsess said when you are looking at the increase in enrollment it is important to recognize about 15% are those students with special needs. Depending on what level we are looking at, anywhere between the high of 40 and 60% of the students coming into our district are going to require extra services and support from our staff. When you look at the number that is one thing, but we have to look at the profile of those students.

Kara Casimiro told the Board this has definitely been an unprecedented year. She said every level of the school system felt the strain at the beginning of the school year. I did want to recognize the efforts of every department who went above and beyond to get things turned around to process not only the students but new staff. Later on, I am going to talk about teacher orientation.

Kevin Walston told the Board that the Superintendent asked him to keep a close eye on the enrollment this summer. Our principals were telling me that the classes were overcrowded and they were watching that we didn't go past the guidelines. The elementary numbers have evened out a little bit; 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades are more than we would like. Middle schools and the high school has grown beyond our expectations. The growth has been considerable. We had 500-600 families registered to attend Danbury schools this month. Dr. Mead and her group had a tremendous job registering. I'd like to thank all the staff for their work in the school opening.

Mr. Pietrafesa asked, where did the 500-600 families come from? Did they just move in this month? I am curious. Mr. Walston said they came from the Westchester area; Yonkers, White Plains, New Rochelle and some from out of the USA. He called on Anne Mead to share with the Board how her department registers children for our schools and why there was such an influx of children this year. Dr. Mead said we had new families from different parts of the country. They came from the 5 boroughs. Many of the children have special learning needs, which we quickly referred to the Special Education Department. It is affordable to live in Danbury and families can still work in New York. Even though we started early this year with Kindergarten registration, we knew that just before school opened, we would see more families registering their children. Mr. Pietrafesa asked, what do the parents have to show that they live in Danbury? Dr. Mead said we have a list on the website saying what the requirements are. If they have everything, we move them on to be registered. If they don't, we tell them they need the child's birth certificate and two forms of residency. Some are renting rooms and sharing a floor with facilities. From those families, we need a statement from their landlord, and it needs to be notarized. If living with a relative, we need to see guardian papers. The registrars are in and out of my office showing me proof. We are vetting everyone to be sure they are residents of Danbury. Parents sign an affidavit that they are living here and sleeping here 7 days a week. If we find out they do not live in Danbury, we have a right to remove the children from the school.

Emanuela Palmares said referring to what Kelly just said, 40-60% breakdown of ESL/special needs, lots of families are coming from the tri-state area, but also some from other countries. Putting those two pieces of education together, we also know that there are some families that live in New York and Stamford that hear about Danbury. At the end of the day, there are different narratives, from all news articles, on how much we have grown as a district. We need to focus as a district on our mission statement, regardless of where the students came from. It doesn't matter where they came from, whether it is from New York, Stamford, Colombia, Brazil, they are here, and they are all our kids. I know that 99% of us feel that way. We are charged by the State to educate them and provide them with whatever they need. So, I know that these are difficult times, but it is a change that we have been seeing. Our population is changing, and our curriculum needs to change to accommodate the population.

Joseph Britton asked the Superintendent to explain the special appropriate that we are getting from the Mayor. He asked how it was going to be phased in. Dr. Pascarella gave a brief explanation and then mentioned to the Board that they cannot end in a deficit.

Dr. Pascarella distributed a letter that he is going to send to Commissioner Cardona tomorrow asking for an emergency supplemental appropriation from the State in our Priority School District Grant.

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that the Education Commissioner, Miguel Cardona, is coming to Danbury to meet with us. He said they have passed new graduation requirements of 25 rather than 21. He said we have about 250 students who have less than 25. The new requirement can cost us, 9 full-time teachers. I'm going to tell him that they are really hurting us by closing doors instead of opening doors. But since they passed it, I am going to ask him for some flexibility on how we can implement this. I may come back to the Board with options for graduation requirements.

Emanuela Palmares told the Board that she has worked with Commissioner Miguel Cardona in the past on other projects in the community on Latino issues in Connecticut. She said in light of our situation, this is an opportunity to advocate for our English language learning students; it would be great for him to know the special challenges in our district.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **New Teacher Orientation and Professional Development**

Kara Casimiro told the Board that teacher orientation was August 20, 21 and 22. We had over 91 new teachers at orientation. We are always excited to welcome our teachers. The staff was originally welcomed by Central Office Supervisors and spent many hours these three days in a variety of sessions which included on how to support ESL students in the classroom; including school safety. Also, typical regular routine sessions on learning power school, star reports and an overview of our curriculum. Staff engaged in a variety of other small sessions based on department and type. Kelly Truchsess and her staff engaged in a variety of protocol on mandates and overview of processes. Ms. Truchsess was asked how many staff she welcomed this year, and she responded 35. Ms. Casimiro went on to say we had sessions for ESL, Bilingual Program overview. We also had sessions for team overviews to make sure all our first-year teachers had their initial certificates and up and running with their requirements. We had an overview of the teacher evaluation training. The teachers had an opportunity to meet their NEA representatives and had a discussion session with them as well. Overall, the feedback was positive. It was a long week, lots of information. Each year we try to review the way we package all the information. Additional feedback was getting staff their laptops. That is a challenge so as more staff retires there is always a turnover process that we get the old laptops back to refresh them for the new staff. Overall it was a great week. The next session that we planned was on August 26<sup>th</sup>, which was a split day session. This year we asked staff, principals and administrators to focus on school connectedness and building community. There is a lot of work you will see in the schools over the course of the year as the administrators will be engaged in their staff's activities. Last year, culminating in June, all our administrators were in a training model, it was based on climate training and assorted practices. In the course of the year, based on building needs and decision of the administrators, they will select certain activities to help with climate and school connectedness for their kids. We will be reporting on that to let you know how it is going over the course of the year.

## **INFORMATION**

### **BMS & RPMS trip to Quebec City, Canada, April**

Dr. Pascarella said this is on tonight for information. We have to look into this trip since it is on vacation time from school. There may be some medical needs which can be expensive. He referred to Ms. Truchsess for a reply. Ms. Truchsess told the Board that she will be meeting with the middle school administrators to review the details of the trip, including medical supports needed, so that we could ensure all students' safety. This trip will be brought back to the Board for additional information at a later date.

Gladys Cooper told the Chairperson that our young people are here, and they have school tomorrow. She thanked them for coming out to attend the first Board meeting of the school year and said they are the first group that has stayed for the meeting. The Chairperson thanked them. The Board and audience applauded.

Rachel Chaleski said she had a question. A couple of years ago we had a problem with the travel agent. What can we do to ensure that our kids will be going on the trip? The Superintendent said we are still working on that and talking to the State's Attorney office. The parents should not pay in cash. Should be paid by a credit card. We found that out at the court case. The day before the trip, the trip was canceled, and we had no recourse.

Ms. Truchsess said I know that Broadview and Rogers Park continually work on our Philadelphia and Washington, DC trip with a reputable travel agent, so that situation was a little different. We make sure we do our due diligence. Patrick Johnston spoke briefly about cancellation insurance. He said at that time there was a line drawn until you actually boarded – but it was canceled 24 hours before.

## **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

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

#### Facilities Update

Ralph Pietrafesa told the Board that they had a Sites and Facilities Committee Meeting and had an update on the Friar and Associates Capacity Study.

The Chairperson told the Board that we are doing an exploratory committee with the City to try to find some space, somewhere. So that is something I will have to look at in light of the enormous increase in student population, obviously the sooner the better.

Patrick Johnston welcomed everyone back. He spoke about 18 years ago being 9/11. He said he realizes that most of our students were too young then, but we remembered. He thanked teachers, all staff and administrators for the opening of school this year. He said we are doing everything we can to have a successful year. He spoke about schools that will have to be built – we have to get something done with another year of 600 students coming in, we don't have the room now and we won't have it in the future. I was shocked at that number of families that have moved to Danbury. My thanks to the administration for handling the influx of families with success.

Emanuella Palmares told the Board she wanted to give a shout-out to Mr. Oates' professional session at DHS with members of the Muslim community and our community. She said she would like to invite everyone to the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual American Dream Awards Gala Dinner, which is going to take place on Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm at the Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury. She said this award ceremony features three categories; Lifetime Achievement, Leadership, and Student Scholarship Awards. There are ten local students in running for five \$2,000 scholarships. She said all members of the community are invited to attend and extended the invitation to Dr. Pasarella and the Cabinet, as well.

Kate Conetta thanked all the teachers and staff for getting the school off to a new school year despite all these challenges. Everyone sitting around this table realizes the financial straits we are in to make sure there is funding for the teachers to do their jobs. It is going to take a community effort. We need to push the City and advocate at the State level. I just want to express my thanks for all the hard work you are doing. I know that you are the ones doing the heavy lifting.

Kara Casimiro said I want to make it clear for the record and minutes that we were struggling long before this group of students came to us. I want to be sure that we don't use this opportunity to politicize a group of students coming to us at this time. We have been for a long time in many budget cycles, making decisions about resources, prioritizing whether we spend money on intervention or books in the classroom. Unfortunately, these choices we should not have to make on a regular basis. We have yet to establish our regular curriculum cycle that is fully resourced. We rely on grants; we scramble for grants. I can't tell you how many grants we run around trying to write for pockets of money to keep things together to provide resources for our teachers and our students. The quality is beginning to erode as to what we are able to provide. It's not just that the additional students are coming, it just added another whole layer and took us to a different level. How many millions of dollars did we get last year? And what did we get? We are still working with the same number before the additional problem hit. Yes, the additional students represented a huge strain, but we were even short before that so there is a lot of catching up need to do. (The Board and audience applauded)

Patrick Johnston said we can advocate to the State; write letters to the governor. We are short \$34 million. If we got half the money we were supposed to get even if we didn't get it all, it would help. If enough people complain about it. We are due all of it, but I don't see any of it coming anytime soon. Our number of per-pupil spending goes down even though we didn't change the number. When students come in there is a bigger number to divide it into the dollar amount and it makes it look even lower. We don't get the money from the City or the State. They don't say here's more money because you have 600 more students. Send a letter, send an e-mail and tell them we need this. We are in dire straits and we don't have enough money to do what we have to do. Mr. Johnston said come to Broadview Middle School auditorium on October 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm to meet the candidates.

#### Policy Committee

Frederick Karatt told the Board that we had a Policy Committee meeting. One of our policies was on for first reading tonight. We are going to be attacking the CABE review of our policies one chunk at a time. We have a standing meeting once a month. The first batch of policies we are currently reviewing is the recommendations of the Board by-laws. We have given them to our Ad Hoc Committee that we have established to review. We haven't shared them yet, but I know we will be distributing the proposals to the rest of the Board just in case anyone has any comments. They will actually make way to the first reading, hopefully at the next Board meeting. We are going to review these CABE recommendations and put them out for first reading with whatever changes that we decide as a group. At that point, they will get kicked back to CABE. We will make the changes and send them back for eventual adoption. Mr. Karatt referred to Mr. Walston for his comments.

Kevin Walston said to Mr. Karatt and the Board what he just told the Board is correct. I have charged the Policy Committee to move this along. CABE has provided an audit for the district. The first series is what we call 'the zero series of the by-laws of the Board.' We will be going series-by-series. The district overall is in good shape in terms of policies that are replaced, however, there are a number of policies that have been recommended that the Board may want to review. At our last meeting, we had six or seven policies that the Cabinet had recommended to the sub-committee for consideration. It is my understanding that the sub-committee wanted to bring them to the Board, since they were visiting the by-laws, to make sure this team operates and functions as a team. I gave it to the committee and ask for their cooperation as we go along. We have a long way to go. Every other month, the plan is to have an action at every Board meeting so that we will have a first reading and a second reading simultaneously.

## Negotiations Committee

Mr. Karrat told the Board that he does not have an update on negotiations.

Rachel Chaleski told the Board that we have a Board Professional Development Ad Hoc sub-committee meeting coming up on October 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm. She said she was sorry to see that the Board's Retreat was canceled. Our sub-committee, Emanuel, Amy, Fred and I worked every month putting that together so that the Board could have their own special professional development. I am looking forward to kicking off the new school year and reviewing our own mission and purpose and our hope is that we can get that together at some point, especially since we have new Board members. Also, to just circle around to our speaker earlier, our parent and teacher speaker, I understand the challenges are tremendous, but we always endeavor to do what is best for the entire district. We are looking for a system of schools vs. a school system, but how much do we maintain or utilize the relationship with the principals to act as leaders and experts of their buildings. And how much are they allowed when it comes to staffing, assessment, grading and things like that? What is their involvement in that whole process? Are we doing enough? They are the whole backbone of their schools.

Kara Casimiro said the short answer is we can certainly do more. Over the summer, as the situation grew there were decisions made to not fill a lot of the positions as people were leaving or retiring. The decision was to redistribute the remaining resources that we had, equitably, to the best of our ability. There were a lot of pieces in play particularly our coaches. In the redistribution of our coaches, everyone lost a little. We certainly value the input of our administrators and we collaborate with them. Decisions are made for the best interest of our students across all buildings, not only one building over another.

Dr. Pascarella said in hiring, the principal has a process and control. They have a process at their building. Unless there is something unusual, their recommendation would be to hire. The Board has been recruiting and your priority is to make sure we have a diverse pool so everybody looks at everyone and when you bring folks in making sure it reflects our students and our community. The principal makes the recommendation that is what happens.

Joseph Britton said he just wanted to say one final comment – thank you to the teachers. You are really pushing hard and the energy is unbelievable. We are here to support you. It is in our job description to advocate for education. That is what we are supposing to be done. We are here for you. Keep up the morale. (applause)

Kishore Solanki, Interim Finance Director, told the audience his predecessor was 6'2", but I am 5'4". He went on to say in the last 30 days he has been in the schools. He said the day the schools opened, he went to the high school and three middle schools. At one of the middle schools, which he said he would not name, a mother was trying to get in with two kids and the third one in her arms. When I got out of the car, I helped her with her bag and held one of the kids. I opened the front door of the school with my ID badge. When we were inside, I saw her eyes. She could not speak English that well, but her eyes just gave me a sense of thanks. I think that was more than enough.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION:** Ralph Pietrafesa moved, seconded by David Metrena that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, including the search for a permanent Director of Finance.

**Motion passed at 8:30 pm.**

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper,  
Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares,  
Ralph Pietrafesa, Amy Spallino

Absent: Richard Jannelli

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Kelly Truchsess, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

The Board Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the Executive Session to order at 8:31 pm.

**PUBLIC SESSION**

**MOTION:** Frederick Karrat, moved seconded by David Metrena that the Board returns to Public Session.

**Motion carried at 8:50 pm.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Frederick Karrat moved, seconded by David Metrena that the Board of Education adjourns its September 11, 2019 Board meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

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Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(meeting videotaped)