

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
August 21, 2013

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Secretary Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert (arrived at 8:05 PM), Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. French Mr. Desaulniers

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper, Communications Officer Ms. Markey, Director Mrs. Banks

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski, general public, staff; administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Sewall called the August 21, 2013, Special Board of Education regular business meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board and the public joined Dr. Sewall in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

June 11, 2013, special Business meeting (held in place of June 12, 2013, regular meeting) (Ref. 1)

June 26, 2013, Workshop meeting (Ref. 2)

July 18, 2013, retreat (vote record) (Ref. 3)

Dr. Sewall noted the following correction to the July 18, 2013, retreat vote record: Ms. Tinker was absent for the vote to adopt the District 11 MOU and should not be included in the vote tally. The minutes for June 11, 2013, and June 26, 2013, were accepted as submitted, and the vote record for July 18, 2013, with the single correction as noted, was accepted.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Kim Desaulniers, Windham, spoke about the bus stop on Brick Top Road and voiced her concerns with it not being a safe place for children to wait for the bus. She said that there are no sidewalks, students will be walking on the road in the dark, and the bus times are unreliable. She said that she doesn't understand what the problem is and why the bus can't drive up Laurel Lane as it would be much safer for the children. She explained that the bus company has hung up on her and told her to call the Board of Education. At tonight's meeting, she was asked to give her number to Mr. Greene for assistance with the issue.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, asked about the decision to remove the faculty preference from the Magnet School operations plan. She asked why faculty preference could be removed from the plan without state approval but to put it back in the plan, it would take until next year for approval. She said that she was concerned that the Commissioner's Network was on the agenda and she has not heard anything about it. She also said that she hopes the Board has engaged in due diligence regarding purchasing the financial software as there are usually additional costs to implement software such as licensing fees, vendor fees, and

ongoing maintenance. She said that she doesn't feel that enough has been done to inform the public regarding this big change in the Town.

Dr. Adamowski said that the operations plan developed by staff included staff preference; however, a number of alterations to the plan were made by the Board prior to its submittal for approval. The plan was revised and submitted to State Department of Education and was ultimately approved. He explained that the State would not entertain a revision to the plan until the school has been in operation for at least a year. Ms. Tinker said her motion was to remove it from the operations plan prior to its submittal and she never intended to change the plan once it was submitted.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, spoke about the need to enter into an agreement with St. Joseph's Parish for Natchaug staff, families and possibly those who will be working on the roof to use the church's parking lot. She also said that the one fundamental thing to teach our children is to teach them to read. She said that she is concerned that we aren't moving forward fast enough with reading and she is sad about the test scores.

Ms. Ortiz said professional development for literacy is continuing and there are new reading textbooks for fourth and fifth grades.

Mr. French said he met with the St. Joseph-St. Mary's Board of Education regarding transportation and informed Ms. Ortiz that an agreement with the Parish needs to be re-negotiated regarding parking at the church. Ms. Ortiz has had conversations with Father LaPointe who is supportive of the school district using the church's parking lot as long as guidelines are followed.

Jeanne Cormier, Willimantic, is concerned that she cannot sell her house because no one with children wants to purchase it due to the school system.

Lynette Gryk, Windham, said that she is anxious to hear what the subcommittee has to say about her request to find transportation for Windham students attending NFA in the fall. She understands that there is a bus that transports students to Norwich Tech. She asked the Board to help connect students going to NFA with transportation.

Tom Drewry, Willimantic resident and WHS teacher, attended tonight's meeting because the Turnaround Committee's Plan and status of the Commissioner's Network application for the Middle School was on the agenda; however, he said that there are no voting members in attendance. He said that this is the first update of the plan following his resignation from the Turnaround Committee and his simultaneous resignation as vice president of the WFT. He said that his resignations were in the wake of the illegal use of the committee's autonomy by the Special Master and the State Commissioner of Education. Mr. Drewry also said that it had become clear to him that the network was little more than a mechanism for extorting highly debatable reform measures from the State's poorest districts; a tool for setting schools in competition against each other, and it also became clear to him that the State Union was not willing to advocate with appropriate vigor for either faithful administration of the Commissioner's Network legislation or for a change in political conditions. He said that a final draft of the turnaround plan has emerged from this highly compromised process, and he has heard that the details of the plan matter little when it has been repeatedly said that an average of over a million dollars per school has been distributed through the network. He said that he has reason to believe that there are several hundred fewer thousand dollars earmarked for Windham. Mr. Drewry believes that we must retain the right to implement the best plan for our students. The cornerstone of the plan drafted by the committee with unanimous support by its local members was the random distribution of students in small learning communities, and committee members deliberately rejected the practice of school choice. He said that poor districts are victimized by school choice which tends to isolate a fortunate subgroup of students for greater opportunity but in the process relegates others to schools with further concentrated poverty and social problems and even slighter opportunities for success. Mr. Drewry said that the initial impact of choice imposed on our high school which must now include regional choices demanded by the Commissioner can now be assessed. He said that the CAPT scores are disturbing, and the extreme discrepancy in scores between the academies should give long pause over the

direction that the district has been steered. Any revision of the Turnaround Plan must come before the Board and he asked members to be vigilant in this matter in protecting the interest of our students by local educators and parents not as dictated by outside agents.

Tony Fantoli, Willimantic, said that the test scores were extremely disturbing. He said that in spite of the money being spent, the test scores aren't improving, and if parents don't stress the importance of education, students aren't going to learn. He believes that the way teachers are teaching needs to be changed. He asked what improvements have been made for the \$750,000 spent over two years. He said it is time to step back and get back to basics; and even though radical changes are being made, students aren't learning and the core problem needs to be figured out first. Mr. Fantoli said that the education system affects property taxes and values. We should be able to tell how each teacher did teaching the students and how well teachers are doing should go hand in hand with their raises. He sees no reason for teacher preference but instead believes that there should be neighborhood preference so that Windham gets the benefit and people paying the bills are given preference. He said that even though some say that neighborhood preference wasn't brought up, it has been mentioned many times over time.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Update on Commissioner's Network

Ms. Ortiz reported that the Commissioner's Network application has been approved by the Commissioner and it will go before the State Board of Education on September 4, 2013, for final approval.

Opening of School

Ms. Ortiz reported that convocation for staff this morning went well. Staff members are ready for students to begin the school year on Monday. Middle School times have changed to a start time of 7:15 AM and dismissal time of 2:15 PM.

Time Collaborative

Ms. Ortiz reported that the district is moving forward with the TIME collaborative initiative which will support student learning at Sweeney School and the Middle School.

QVCC Students

Ms. Ortiz reported that the thirteen and fourteen year-old students who attended the QVCC pre-calculus program over the summer did very well and obtained college credits. QVCC plans to expand the program.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Ms. Tinker reported that Board of Education has on its agenda tonight action items for the approval of the MUNIS agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding for unified financial operations with the Town. She also reported that she is researching what other schools do regarding staff preference for students. Ms. Ortiz offered to support researching other schools.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Lambert is attending tonight's Town Board of Finance meeting and will report later in the meeting.

Executive Committee

Dr. Sewall said there is no report.

Ad hoc Transportation Policy Committee

Mr. French reported that the committee discussed transportation for Windham students who will be attending NFA. At this time, there is a bus that goes to Norwich Tech that has available seats. There was much discussion regarding providing transportation to NFA. Mr. French said this would only be available if there were students attending Norwich Tech and only as long as there is room on the bus; therefore, it would have to be very clear that it would be temporary with central pick up points. Mr. French said that it could be done legally but there would have to be a written agreement to make it clear to parents that it is temporary. Some Board members felt that parents applied to the lottery knowing that transportation would not be provided and some parents didn't apply because there was no transportation available, while others felt that if there were available seats, students should be transported. Ms. Ortiz said that a grandmother withdrew her grandchild from NFA because she could not find transportation for the student. Some members felt that if transportation were available for next year, the possibility could be made clear to parents when applications were submitted at that time.

(Mrs. Lambert arrived.)

Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education add approval to provide bus transportation to Norwich Free Academy to the agenda.

Aye: Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers

Nay: No one

Abstained: Mrs. Lambert

The motion passes.

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education approve providing transportation to Windham students attending Norwich Free Academy on the bus going to Norwich Tech as long as seats are available.

Aye: Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers

Nay: Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Dr. Switchenko

Abstained: Mrs. Lambert

The motion fails.

Mr. French suggested amending his motion to include the student who withdrew because of lack of transportation to NFA and increasing the number of students attending NFA by one. There was no second. Mr. French withdrew the motion.

Mr. French thanked Ms. Markey, Mr. Greene and Dr. Gasper for their work to send out letters about temporary bus passes for students. Ms. Ortiz said that students will receive permanent picture IDs when school pictures are taken in the fall.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that the Town's Board of Finance unanimously approved going forward with the High School roof project which will be voted on at a Town Meeting on September 3. The committee is working on the timeline for Phase I to go to referendum in November. She also reported that the Town is aware of some water damage at Natchaug School. There will be a Facilities Master Plan Forum at Windham Middle School on September 24th at 6 PM.

The Board will hold a special meeting to complete the annual retreat on August 29th from 2 to 8 PM at the Facilities Conference Room at Eastern Connecticut State University. The Board is appreciative that Eastern

Connecticut State University President Dr. Nuñez is providing dinner at the retreat. The main topic is school-by-school and student demographic analysis of CMT and CAPT scores.

ACTION ITEMS

Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and Board of Education for unified financial services, a unified financial office and a unified financial director (Ref. 4)

The following was brought forward for approval to the full Board by the Finance and Audit Committee: The Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Education and the Town of Windham for the unification of a finance office and financial director that will provide for a more efficient and effective financial and business office operation. Dr. Sewall questioned *Item 6, Equipment, Software* because until this purchase is approved at a Town meeting, payment cannot be made from the fund balance. He was concerned that the Board of Education would be responsible. Ms. Tinker explained that everyone is going forward in good faith.

Unanimously approved

MUNIS Agreement (Ref. 5)

The following was brought forward for approval to the full Board by the Finance and Audit Committee: The agreement with Tyler Technologies, Inc. for the purchase of the MUNIS Financial Information System which is to be a shared application with the Town of Windham. The total maximum expense for the Board of Education, including software, hardware, services, and Year One maintenance is \$239,572.20, which represents the 60% BOE portion of cost with the balance being the responsibility of the Town. However, the Board of Finance has verbally indicated they will pay for the balance of the cost for the software and therefore the Board of Education commitment is likely to be annual maintenance after Year One which would be \$56,400 per year was brought forward by the Finance and Audit Committee to the full Board. Ms. Tinker and Mr. Kent informed the Board that the escalation cost has been negotiated down; therefore, there is a reduction in the escalation cost.

Unanimously approved

Restraint and Seclusion of Persons at Risk Policy (Ref. 6)

Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education approve the revised Restraint and Seclusion of Persons at Risk policy 5144.1. This is the second reading of the policy. The policy remains unchanged since its first reading at the June 11, 2013, Board meeting.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Approval of Appointments

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the following appointments including the addendum distributed at tonight's meeting:

1. Lauren Anderson to the position of .70 Art Teacher at Sweeney School effective August 21, 2013.
Replacement
2. Stephen Barbour to the position of Grade 6 Dual Language Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. New
3. Jaclyn Berger to the position of Guidance Counselor at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
4. David Eichorn to the position of Grade 5 Teacher at Natchaug School effective August 21, 2013.
Replacement

5. Jessica Higham to the position of Dual Language Teacher at North Windham School effective August 21, 2013. New
6. Antoinette Kirk to the position of Kindergarten Teacher at Natchaug School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
7. Tamara Brierley to the position of Grade 5 Teacher at North Windham School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
8. William Langton IV to the position of Grade 5 Teacher at North Windham School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
9. John Ouellette to the position of Tech Ed Teacher at Windham High School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
10. Harrison Stuppler to the position of Music Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
11. Nicole Lareau to the position of Guidance Counselor one year appointment at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
12. Makaila McKinley to the position of Preschool Teacher at WECC Prospect Street effective August 21, 2013. .5 Replacement/ .5 New
13. Amanda Witham to the position of Read 180 Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
14. Michael Brennan to the position of Technology Education Teacher at Windham Middle School effective date TBD. Replacement
15. Robert Kallajian to the position of Assistant Principal at North Windham School effective August 19, 2013. Replacement
16. Lee Ann Packer to the position of Interim Director of Special Services effective August 1, 2013. Replacement
17. Neal O'Keefe to the position of Social Worker at Windham High School effective August 21, 2013. New

Addendum

18. Michael Thomson to the position of Grade 6 Reading/Language Arts Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
19. Paula Ruffo to the position of Reading Intervention Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
20. Jennifer Bessenaire to the position of Reading Teacher at Natchaug Elementary School effective August 21, 2013. Replacement
21. Glenn Reid to the position of Physics Teacher at Windham High School effective August 22, 2013. Replacement
22. Dr. Henry Haye to the position of Math Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 23, 2013. Replacement
23. Katherine Barry to the position of Music Teacher (Strings) at Windham Middle School effective August 26, 2013. Replacement

As previously requested by Dr. Sewall, Ms. Ortiz provided a summary of the number of retirements, resignations, and first year teachers.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Special Master's Report

Dr. Adamowski congratulated the Board of Education, Town Council, Ms. Tinker and Mr. Donahue, who spearheaded the establishment of a joint finance office, for their successful efforts. Combining the financial workings of the District and Town will create a long-term savings and set a new standard for collaboration between the Board of Education and the Town. Dr. Adamowski reported that on September 4, 2013, the Commissioner's recommended approval of the one-year plan for the Windham Middle School's Commissioner's Network application will go forward to the State Board of Education for approval. He also reported that the Path Academy, which is a charter school, will open in Windham for the 2014-15 school year. Dr. Adamowski will facilitate discussion between the District and the Path Academy. An affiliation with the Path Academy would benefit Windham because it would contribute to the total graduate rate for Windham. Dr Adamowski will also arrange for workshop sessions regarding local charters as this new concept would be a valuable tool for the Windham school district in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board meeting adjourn at 9:15 P.M.
The motion is unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary