

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
February 11, 2015

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Desaulniers, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Kalajian, Mr. French, Dr. Sewall, Mr. Quamme

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Montalvo, Dr. Gomez

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia; Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper; Assistant Superintendent Dr. Conner; Directors Mr. Johnson, Ms. Beghetto and Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Kathy Oyola and Nathan Cusson

OTHERS PRESENT: general public; staff; administrators; news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mrs. Lambert called the February 11, 2015, Board of Education Workshop meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. French led the Board and the public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education approve the January 14, 2015, business meeting minutes (Ref. 1).

Motion is unanimously approved.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Reports

Student Recognition (prior to Public Dialogue)

Windham Middle School VEX Robotics Team

Dr. Garcia and Board members recognized Windham Middle School VEX robotics team members, Dylan Werth, Matthew Morin, Alex Merced and Robinson Camacho Rosado, for placing first in the 4th Annual All Middle School Tournament and qualifying for the Southern New England Regional Tournament which will decide the qualifiers for attending the Worlds Competition in 2015. The students demonstrated their project and were presented with congratulatory certificates. The team turned this year's earned trophies over to the Middle School and Mr. Olkowski. Mr. Olkowski recognized parents, Mr. and Mrs. Werth, for their support, as well as the Team's advisor, Ms. Lemire. Mr. Werth thanked Ms. Begin for helping the students with their engineering notebook which must be maintained and is judged. He also thanked Mansfield Middle School for being such a great support to the Windham team.

Windham Middle School Participation in Math Counts Competition

Dr. Garcia and Board members recognized Windham Middle School students, Steve Martin Sanchez-Rosales, Paige Aubrey Young, Timothy Brian Hill, Isiah Jebri Lovell, Justin Robert Graubaum, and Isabelle Daenerys Halpine Perez for their participation in the Math Counts Competition at the Coast Guard Academy. Advisor Ms. Siegelstein, as well as Ms. Auster who could not attend the meeting, were both thanked for their efforts and having students participate after not participating in the Math Counts Competition for the past fifteen years. Students' parents were recognized for their support, as well as Dr. Gasper and Ms. Hafiz, who sponsored participating students.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Susan Collins, Windham, parent, grandparent and past Board of Education member for twenty-eight years, spoke about the High School saying that it is at its best right now; the hallways are quiet and students are engaged. Mrs. Collins said that she is impressed with the dedication and commitment shown by teachers at the High School and said that this is a reflection on the administration. She said that the decrease in the number of arrests and a decrease in discipline issues are something to be proud of and people seem to forget to speak about the successes. She said that unfounded statements shed a bad light on the school and it is important to get the facts straight before speaking. She told Board members that they should walk through the halls at the High School and see this for themselves.

Al Korczunski, Willimantic, has four sons attending school in Windham and supports what is happening in the Windham Public Schools. He said that if he had listened to what people said and read newspaper reports when he moved here in 2005, he would not have put his children in Windham Public Schools but their experience has been nothing but exceptional. He said that he was disappointed when he heard things about arrests escalating at the High School. He said that he's spent time at the High School at events and concerts and has seen students showing a great deal of respect and admiration for the High School and Middle School principals. Mr. Korczunski said that he is very involved in the School Governance Council and the Booster Club and has read about all of the initiatives and sees a lot of effort being made. He said that when irresponsible comments are made, people have to pay attention and that is why he attended the Board meeting so that he could voice his support for the teachers, the staff and for the Principal, Ms. Dorothy Potter.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, parent, said that it isn't necessary to have early dismissals between January and March and feels parent conferences are badly timed. She also said that she believes that it is problematic for teachers to have professional development during the school day because when students have substitutes, they lose learning time. She said that the Middle School was built for grades five through eight but she has not heard that moving fifth grade back to the Middle School is going to be revisited. She said that she was shocked to see things reported on for two days in the newspaper that weren't on the agenda. She said that if there is an issue, things shouldn't be added during Board comments; they should be added to the agenda with proper notification and not as a result of rumors.

Jerry Phillips, Willimantic resident for eighteen years and parent, said that budget season is coming upon the town and it is the most important thing for the community and school district. He said that the Special Master put the district deeper in the hole. Connecticut is a wealthy state; however, Windham is a poor town. He said that the Superintendent and Board of Education should be applauded for their efforts to get out and talk about the budget. He asked if there is anything that people can do. He said that it is time to start being positive about the schools because in the past there has been so much negativity. Mr. Phillips said that what he's heard about the High School and Middle School today has been very good and complaining doesn't bring results. He said that everyone needs to be hopeful and speak about Windham schools in a positive way. He said that the Chronicle only reports on the negative because that's what sells newspapers. Mr. Phillips said that he knows that there are problems but people have to think differently in order to get different results.

Mrs. Lambert welcomed Dr. Conner, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning and Leadership, to his first official Board of Education meeting.

Dr. Garcia invited everyone to attend the upcoming budget workshops and community forums that are being held.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS (Order of the agenda resumes)

Windham Public Schools' Winter Newsletter

Dr. Garcia said that the first edition of the Windham Public Schools' quarterly newsletter will be distributed and will also be available on the district website. She thanked Ms. Markey for her work on the newsletter.

Status of Barrows' Lottery

Dr. Garcia reported that applications for the Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy lottery closed on January 30. Information will be cross checked and verified prior to the lottery taking place.

Superintendent's Entry Plan Report

Dr. Garcia reviewed the Entry Plan, its purpose, the phases of the plan, next steps and specific actions of the plan.

District Instructional Plan

Dr. Conner provided an overview of the collaboration taking place with the Leadership and Learning Center regarding the phases of the design and development of the curriculum. He reviewed the curriculum mapping process and the benefits of instructional coaching and data teams.

High School Discipline Data

An overview of discipline at the High School was provided by Dr. Garcia and Dr. Gasper. Data indicates that Windham High School has seen a marked decline in discipline problems, referrals, suspensions, expulsions and arrests thus far this year. Reasons for improvement were outlined, as well as challenges and recommendations for the future. Data was shared that indicated the decline in the number of discipline issues for the 2014-2015 school year.

Gifted and Talented Protocols and Procedures

Dr. Garcia reviewed a proposal for procedures to identify gifted and talented students which will be part of the district's strategic plan. This proposal is in compliance with IDEA and the Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines and will allow students the opportunity to accelerate and expand their creativity.

High School Proposed Schedule for Next Year

Ms. Potter presented the proposal to change the schedule next year at the High School from the current five-period trimester schedule to a seven-period semester schedule. This will allow students the opportunity to participate in more electives. Pros and cons of this schedule change were highlighted.

Pre-K Compañeros Program

Ms. Lapuk and Ms. Caraganis reported on the Pre-K Compañeros Program and its expansion with the possibility of using classrooms at Barrows. This would allow Sweeney and Windham Center's preschool classrooms to return to Kramer. Dr. Garcia is waiting for a response from the State regarding using the classrooms at Barrows.

Throughout the Superintendent's reports, there was discussion and questions were answered.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance and Audit Committee

Mr. French reported that the committee met this evening and reviewed the second quarter financials. In order to address the projected deficit due to special education costs, there was discussion about implementing a soft budget freeze this month and then a hard budget freeze in the coming months. In order to more fully understand how the budget is developed, Mr. French invited community and Board members to attend the three budget workshops that are planned. He said that he believes the Windham school system is moving in the right direction. He asked that the Board approve the budget transfers reviewed tonight by the committee.

Motion of Mr. Desaulniers, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education add to the agenda the recommended approval of budget transfers as presented.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Mr. French also reported that Mr. Johnson suggested looking at reinvesting some of the money from the retirement fund to get a better return on the dollar and to review self-insuring Workers' Compensation.

Motion of Mr. Desaulniers, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education add to the agenda the recommendation that Mr. Johnson follow up with the proposals to look at getting a better return on the retirement fund and to review self-insurance for Workers' Compensation.

Motion is unanimously approved.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mr. Kalajian reported that the committee is moving forward with the timetable to take the High School renovation project to referendum, and agrees with Mr. French that the district is moving forward in the right direction.

Mrs. Lambert reported that she attended the committee meeting for the wells and the RFQ for the North Windham well was approved and has been put out bid. Also applications have been submitted to the Department of Health for the first two wells and the sites will be looked at once the ground is clear of snow.

Ad Hoc Policy Committee

Mrs. Osoba said that the committee will meet on February 19th.

Executive Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that due to the weather on past Mondays, the committee has not met. She said that the committee will look at the town's ethics policy which the attorney is reviewing. Also the committee will look at how members work together as a board and getting some training.

ACTION ITEMS

Professional Development Proposal for Math Curriculum Design and Coaching (Ref. 2)

Motion of Mr. Kalajian, seconded by Mr. Quamme, that the Board of Education approve the Leadership and Learning Center's Professional Development Proposal for Math Curriculum Design and Coaching. Dr. Garcia explained that the Leadership and Learning Center staff will provide support with math.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Professional Development Proposal for ELA Curriculum Design (Ref. 3)

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve the Leadership and Learning Center’s Professional Development Proposal for ELA Curriculum Design and Coaching. Dr. Garcia explained that the Leadership and Learning Center staff will provide support with ELA.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Target Field Trip Grant Sponsored by Target to Windham High School (Ref. 4)

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mrs. Osuba, that the Board of Education approve the Target Field Trip Grant, sponsored by Target, in the amount of \$500 to Windham High School. Windham High School has received the check in the amount of \$500 which will cover the cost of Windham High School students to attend three shows at the Hartford Stage.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Personnel (Ref. 6)

Motion of Mr. Kalajian, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education accept the following resignations:

Resignations

- Janette Rosa, Secretary at Windham Middle School effective February 4, 2015.
- Janette Rivera, Head Start Aide at Commerce Drive effective February 6, 2015.
- Anne Cronin, Speech/Language Pathologist at Windham High School effective January 2, 2015.
- Michelle Garcia, Teacher at Windham High School effective January 20, 2015.
- Louise Gauthier, Teacher at Windham Center School effective January 20, 2015.
- Ivelisse Gonzalez, Head Start Aide at Commerce Drive effective January 6, 2015.
- Todd Cunha, Talent Development Director at Central Office effective February 13, 2015.

Mrs. Lambert wished Mr. Cunha well in his new position in the Windsor school district.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Budget Transfers (added to the agenda)

The Board unanimously approved the recommendation from the Finance and Audit Committee to approve the budget transfers as submitted and to direct Mr. Johnson to explore proposals to reinvest some of the money from the retirement fund to get a better return on the dollar and to self-insure workers’ compensation.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Kalajian commented that the Board has been trying hard for clarity and openness. Regarding the subject of discipline at the High School, he said that the Board wanted the public to know the details rather than the rumors and Mrs. Osuba made the request of the Superintendent for that information. He thanked the Superintendent for the thorough report and Mrs. Osuba for her request.

Dr. Sewall asked how many snow days there have been so far this year. Dr. Garcia said there have been five days; however, Windham Center has three additional days to make up due to closing school because of the well issue.

Mrs. Lambert congratulated the track team members, which Mrs. Osuba’s sons and Nathan Cusson, for the events that they participated in and won in the ECC small division. She thanked the staff for the presentations made at tonight’s meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education enter into executive session for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to personnel matters at 9:29 PM.

Motion is unanimously approved.

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. Montalvo, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Kalajian, Dr. Gomez, Mr. French, Dr. Sewall

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia

Mrs. Lambert reconvened regular session at 9:40 PM. No action was taken by the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 9:41 P.M.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Tracy Lambert, Chair