

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES  
February 13, 2013

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins (arrived at 7:20 PM), Secretary Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert (arrived at 7:50 PM), Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Ms. England, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Communications Officer Ms. Markey, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski, CT SDE Priority Project Manager Ms. Gabrielle Ramos, general public, staff; administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Sewall called the February 13, 2013, Board of Education business meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Tinker led the Board and the public in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

January 9, 2013, Business meeting (Ref. 1)

January 22, 2013, Business meeting (Ref. 2)

January 23, 2013, Business meeting (Ref. 3)

February 6, 2013, Business meeting (Ref. 4)

Dr. Sewall asked for any additions or corrections. Hearing none, minutes were accepted as submitted.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, asked for the year that the preschool was first housed in the Kramer building. She also asked for the names of district administration involved in the move of the preschool to Kramer and the names of town representatives who gave permission for the use of the building by the preschool. Mrs. DeVivo said that she would like the preschool students moved from the Kramer building.

Ms. Ortiz is researching Mrs. DeVivo's request. Dr. Sewall said that now that the Town has approved the Natchaug roof, the district can move forward with renovations and remove students from Kramer as soon as possible.

Jerome Perry, Windham, School Governance Council (SGC) member for two years, spoke about the budget. He said that this year is the first time that he has seen a budget. He said that it was difficult to figure out the actual cost for the teachers because a projected average salary was used and actual salaries were not in the budget. Mr. Perry said that the SGC was asked to cut fifteen teachers from the Middle

School budget; however, it is hard to cut fifteen positions with the behavioral problems at the school. Coaches and mentors are in the budget for teachers but there is still a behavior problem in the school. He suggested that all teachers go through crisis prevention training. He said that there are problems with teacher turnover and teachers need support to deal with the behavior problems.

Ms. Ortiz responded that the total amount of money for the Commissioner's Network funding is not known and the money for Alliance district funding is across the board and not broken down. She said that the Middle School has not been asked to cut fifteen positions. Dr. Adamowski clarified that the district is using average salaries so that every teacher costs the same in the budget process and no school finds itself in an incentive position to not employ its most senior teachers. There was a discussion regarding the Middle School budget and the budget process.

(Mrs. Collins arrived.)

Mary Gallucci, Windham, said that district salaries are among the lowest in the state and this has been an ongoing problem. She indicated that the ten-year plan is an unrealistic plan to address the physical needs of buildings, and one school should not have special programming and smaller class sizes with new furniture while others lack a kitchen. SGC members are asking where the money goes that is not used when positions are vacated during this school year and not filled, such as the two security positions at the Middle School that have not been filled. Ms. Gallucci also noted that the Natchaug budget for next year is lower than it should be and she addressed the lack of seriousness regarding the School Improvement Grant. Her son is not receiving programs this year that he previously received that were funded by the grant. She said that it is an outrage the way Natchaug teachers and students are being treated this year. She expressed her concerns regarding following the required rules and regulations, which are quite stringent, for administering the NWEA tests which the district is using to base students' performance. She also said that the teacher turnover rate is accelerating at an alarming rate and it is being institutionalized by using Teach for America. Research shows this does damage to the school district and teaching force. This depresses wages in this area and keeps Windham from building a strong stable teaching force.

Dr. Sewall responded that Natchaug students are doing remarkably well this year and the efforts of the teachers and staff are appreciated for making the situation work.

Mitchell Stevens, Columbia, President of the DECA program at WHS, spoke about his DECA experiences and the skills that he will take with him to college and beyond. Shane Vertefeuille, vice president of DECA, said that he understands that the marketing and DECA program may not be offered next year but he believes that it is one of the best programs that Windham offers. He said that students attend Windham High School to participate in DECA and it is a huge after school activity that prepares students for life after high school. The program should be kept because of all its benefits to students who participate. Zachary Quamme said that he has learned a lot from DECA and it has provided him with good networking activities. He said that he will carry what he has learned from participating in DECA with him for the rest of his life. Emily Grogan said that DECA should be part of the AHA Academy at the High School and included in the Program of Studies.

Ms. Ortiz explained that DECA and Marketing will be offered next year. She suggested that students attend the next scheduling committee meeting and bring their concerns to the table. Students were commended for speaking tonight.

Elizabeth Colon, Willimantic, asked Dr. Adamowski about the per pupil expenditure amount of \$10,107 that he mentioned earlier in the meeting because the budget document she signed as a member of SGC earlier today listed \$10,500 as the per pupil expenditure. Dr. Adamowski clarified that she was correct. She said that the budget she signed was strictly for salaries and there was not enough money for supplies or athletics and still a lot of positions had to be cut. She said that last year Ms. Negrón asked Mr. Perry to sign off on the budget and then the budget was changed afterwards. She said that she wants to make sure that the

budget doesn't get changed this year. She asked who would have a say about using the funding from the Commissioner's Network and other programs.

Dr. Adamowski said that once the budget was submitted last year, no changes were made since student funded budgets enable schools to make their own budget decisions. The design team will have the final say regarding the funding from the Commissioner's Network with input from the SGC.

Kellie Prescott, Windham, member of the SGC, spoke about her concerns with the Middle School roof leaks and the possibility of a mold issue. Another concern she voiced was about the need for teacher support at the Middle School. She said that as a parent this is a huge concern because more than half of the class is disruptive and many teachers are throwing their hands up and leaving the district. She said that we need to find a way to hold onto the teachers and give them more support so that they can teach and students can learn.

Ms. Ortiz said that roofs are in need of repair and roofers have been called to look at the high school and middle school roofs. The Town Engineer is aware of these problems.

Belinda Clark, Willimantic, said that she has always been an advocate for the Windham Public Schools but is disgusted with what is going on at the Middle School. She said that there are phenomenal teachers there but there is no support for them. She said that the Board should go to the school and see what it is like. One substitute has thirty students in a class which is totally out of control and there are no hall monitors. More people need to be in the classroom especially when there is a substitute. Her granddaughter is not learning at the Middle School because the teacher is dealing with behavior issues. She said that she truly cares about the Windham Public Schools and is speaking out because someone has to. She has sat in the classrooms there and sees what is going on. She said that she knows there is a way to get money for the Middle School and give them the support that is needed. She said that she is at tonight's meeting to advocate for the students. She knows that the teachers and administrators are trying to do the best that they can.

Ms. Ortiz said she is aware of many of her concerns, and the Deputy Superintendent is working with administration to address them. The Commissioner's Network and the alliance funding will support some of the ideas that SGC members have brought forward.

Shelbie Ruppel, Willimantic, student, said that the students were making fun of the substitute teacher in the class. She tries to help the other students when she can.

James Flores, Willimantic, said that the funding for the roof was passed last night. He said that the Board of Education has to reach out to the community, and he wants to be part of the solution to try to bring the community to the table. He said we need to energize the community to pass the budget.

(Mrs. Lambert arrived.)

## REPORTS

### Superintendent's Report

#### Student Recognition

#### Windham Middle School TSA

Mr. Pilling said that the Technology Student Association (TSA) program at the Middle School has many students involved. Dylan Werth and Brenna Lynn attended tonight's meeting and brought a robot that they built from the ground up. Students so far have competed in two competitions with VEX Robotics and have done very well. They qualified to compete this Sunday in the South Eastern New England Regional Competition VEX championship which is mostly a high school competition. Mr. Pilling said that he has received support and ideas from teachers and administration at the Middle School to make the program even stronger than it is now. TSA is self-funded through fundraising and the equipment is expensive. With more money, there would be more opportunities for the students.

### Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards

Ms. Goslin said that she is pleased with the students' talent and out of four pieces submitted by Windham students to the Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards show this year, pieces submitted by Jocelyn Guerraz, Nicholas Khan, and Juan Morales received Honorable Mention out of over 2,000 pieces from throughout the State. Jocelyn and Nicholas attended tonight's meeting and showed their artistic work. Jocelyn created a pendant with a handmade chain and Nicholas designed an imaginative scene with India Ink, colored pencil and graphite. Juan designed a ring out of sterling.

### Enrollment Projections

Ms. Ortiz reviewed enrollment projections from 2013 to 2021, prepared by Don Klepper-Smith, which shows a decrease in population in the Town of Windham. Economy is not growing and this impacts new families moving into Windham creating a decline in student population. There are more families without children staying in Windham. Slides were reviewed that showed an historical overview of demographics in Connecticut and Windham; demographic projections for the northeast and Connecticut; primary drivers of future population growth; projections of future population growth in Windham; and Windham Public School enrollment history and projections. Ms. Ortiz concluded by saying that we need to involve the community to support our students so that they stay in Windham. There was some discussion.

### Reading Series Update

Ivelise Velázquez provided an overview of the pilot program for fourth and fifth grade core reading materials. Teachers conducted a pilot program for *Reading Street* and *Journeys*, and the decision was made that *Journeys* by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt would best serve the needs of Windham students and teachers. Ms. Ortiz said that the money used to purchase the materials was appropriated to the district through the Board of Finance, and she publicly thanked the Town Council and the Board of Finance for their support in this effort. There was discussion and Ms. Velázquez answered questions.

### Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Mr. Nelson reviewed the CIP which was compiled by Mr. Donaldson using last year's plan and getting input from building administrators for projects to be included in this year's plan. There was discussion regarding project priorities and the ten-year Facilities Master Plan (FMP) and questions were answered. Once approved, it will be submitted to the Town for inclusion in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan. The format is the same as used by the Town. Dr. Sewall asked that the Planning and Design Committee review the plan as it relates to the ten-year Facilities Master Plan before it is approved by the full Board.

Ms. Ortiz said that high school staff submitted a proposal based on recommendations earlier in the year for early release days during exams. The proposal was reviewed by the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and the Special Master and it was decided to move forward with it. All periods of the day and lunch for students are included. Early release exam days will take place on February 27, 28 and March 1.

### Committee Reports

#### Finance and Audit Committee

Ms. Tinker reported that the committee reviewed the challenges of developing the budget. Administration is given percentage increase goals for next year's budget but it is up to the principal with help from the School Governance Councils to develop their budgets. This year will be a challenging budget year. The goal is to bring a draft of the budget to the subcommittee on February 25 and present the budget to the Board on February 27.

Ms. Ortiz publicly thanked the Town Council and the citizens who came out to support the Natchaug roof, and she also thanked Mrs. Lambert and her committee with Robert Roach and Ms. Tinker for the hours of work that were put into this effort. Dr. Sewall also thanked Mrs. Lambert for the many hours of work and the Planning and Design Committee with Robert Roach, as well as the Town Council and the community members who turned out for last night's meeting.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Lambert attended tonight's meeting of the magnet school committee which is the building committee for the Natchaug Roof project. The committee will move forward as quickly as possible to get the students back in Natchaug as early as possible. The School Planning and Design Committee met last week to discuss the next steps of the FMP. There is the possibility of forming a new TriBoard with representatives from the Town Council, Board of Finance and Board of Education to focus on the phases of the plan. Mrs. Lambert thanked her committee members, Dr. Switchenko and Mr. Desaulniers, as well as Ms. Ortiz, Dr. Sewall and the people who came out to vote.

Executive Committee

There was no meeting.

Ad hoc Transportation Policy Committee

The first reading of the Transportation policy is on tonight's agenda.

**ACTION ITEMS**

Quarterly Financial Report (Ref. 5)

**Motion of Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education approve the quarterly financial report ending on December 31, 2012, as submitted by Mr. Nelson, Director of Finance and Operations.**

**On the motion:**

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

**Abstained: Mrs. Lambert**

**The motion passes.**

Capital Improvement Plan (Ref. 6)

Based on the Board members' recommendations, the Capital Improvement Plan will be further reviewed and the vote is tabled at this time.

Approval of appointments

**Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the following appointments:**

1. Samantha Hinebaugh to the position of Food Service Director effective January 30, 2013.  
Replacement.
2. Abby Djan to the position of ESOL Teacher at Windham High School effective February 19, 2013.  
Replacement.

Ms. Ortiz introduced Ms. Hinebaugh, newly appointed Director of Food Service. Ms. Hinebaugh provided some background information and is looking forward to continuing the success of the program.

**The motion is unanimously approved.**

First Reading of Transportation policy (Ref. 7)

The approval of this policy will take place at the February 27, 2013, Board of Education meeting. There was some discussion tonight and Ms. Tinker recommended some revisions. Any questions may be e-mailed to Mr. French prior to the next meeting.

Special Master’s Report

Dr. Adamowski spoke about the Commissioner’s Network and the inclusion of Windham Middle School into the Network. The Middle School is one of six schools to be part of the Network in the State. The first step in the process is a State audit that will take place on February 19 and 20. The purpose of this audit is to identify the root causes of low performance. A redesign team will be appointed to address the findings of the audit. The team will consist of three members appointed by the Superintendent and three members appointed by the President of the WFT. The members will consist of two teachers, two administrators or others, and two parents. A designee of the Commissioner of Education will also serve on the committee. The SGC will have input but will not be the deciding body. The Superintendent or her designee will serve as the nonvoting chair of the committee. Turnaround training will be provided to committee members. The Governor has issued his proposed budget to the legislature which calls for a \$750,000 increase for next year in Educational Costs Sharing for Windham. All districts, however, are losing transportation assistance. Withdrawal of pilot funds from towns will also affect budgets. The governor’s budget is subject to legislative review. The Montessori feasibility report from CREC has been completed and will be discussed in a future workshop session. Windham is competing for the Renzulli Academy, which is a program for academically gifted students, to be housed within the Middle School. This is an exciting possibility for the Middle School if it is chosen to be one of the three selections.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board enter into executive session at 10:10 PM for discussion with attorney of pending litigation and administrative claims and discussion of exempt documents pertaining to bargaining unit negotiations.**

**On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.**

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Secretary Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Ms. England, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENED

Dr. Sewall reconvened regular session at 9:10 PM.

**Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board add the ratification of the tentative agreement between the Windham Board of Education and the Windham Association of Administrators to the agenda.**

**On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.**

**Motion by Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board move the ratification of the tentative agreement between the Windham Board of Education and the Windham Association of Administrators.**

**On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.**

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion by Mr. French, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board meeting adjourn at 9:40 P.M.  
On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary