

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
February 8, 2012

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Adamo, Dr. Switchenko, Mrs. Lambert (arrived at 7:05 PM), Ms. Tinker, Mr. Desaulniers

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. French

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Katelynn Person

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Sewall called the February 8, 2012, Regular Board of Education meeting, to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Dr. Sewall asked for a moment of silence in memory of Superintendent Ortiz's brother, Miguel Ortiz, who passed away on Tuesday morning. Ms. Ortiz has traveled to Puerto Rico for the funeral and is absent from tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that she is concerned with the fate of the preschool. She indicated that during the many evaluations of district programs over the past ten years, the preschool has always been commended for its high quality. She said that it is imperative that we support preschool and maintain the excellent preschool staff that we have. She also commented on the teaching of world language offerings and said that it would be a missed opportunity not to include parents in this discussion.

Erika Haynes, Willimantic, said that education does not start or stop in the district. She explained that the SIFT committee recommended advocacy as the primary key to move education forward. She asked that everyone be active advocates for the district and represent Windham at the State legislature as there are more things that need to be done at the State level. She called attention to planned Windham parent network activities which will further promote advocacy and engagement. She also said that the Governor's initiatives would clearly benefit our district. Ms. Haynes concluded by saying that gifted children have been left behind in the district and she would appreciate the return of the gifted program in Windham. (Mrs. Lambert arrived.)

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report (Ref. 1)

Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones reported in the Superintendent's absence. She announced with pleasure that two Windham High School students, Elizabeth Peralta and Miguel Navarro, were honored during the Connecticut Scholastic Arts Competition at the University of Hartford. Miguel Navarro received

the Gold Key in the Jewelry category and Elizabeth Peralta received Honorable Mention, also in the Jewelry category. Both students were congratulated.

Grade Configuration Report

Ms. Barker-Jones reviewed a slide showing the new grade configuration for Windham schools beginning in the 2012-2013 school year: North Windham and Windham Center schools will house kindergarten through grade five; Natchaug and Sweeney schools will house pre-kindergarten through grade five; Windham Middle School will house grades six through eight; and Windham High School will house grades nine through twelve.

Teach for America

Ms. Barker-Jones explained that Teach for America (TFA) is a national corps of recent top college graduates in all academic majors who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools. TFA has been in existence since 1990, with placement of teachers in Connecticut since 2006 in the following towns: New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport and Stamford. Admission to the TFA corp is highly selective and members are carefully recruited. Teachers in the program go through intensive training and are provided with ongoing support. Ms. Barker-Jones said that Windham is excited to have the opportunity to partner with TFA which will begin in the fall of 2012. Mr. Stover provided the background information that brought the program to Windham. He explained that a community meeting was organized by Ms. Haynes to provide an overview of the program and explain how it would benefit education in Windham. Bilal Khan, a 2001 Windham High School graduate and a TFA teacher, spoke about his experiences over the past six years. Ms. Haynes explained the timeline and future plans to bring the partnership to fruition. Additional community conversations will take place between April and June; fundraising efforts in the community will occur beginning in March; and networking will continue with TFA alumni from Windham (the class of 2001 alone has six Windham graduates who are TFA alumni). Ms. Haynes said that work with community businesses is planned to provide support for TFA teachers coming to Windham and eventually provide support to all first-year teachers in Windham. The presentation concluded with Mrs. Banks providing an overview of the number of possible teaching positions to be filled for the 2012-2013 school year.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Committee chair Ms. Tinker reported that the committee met in January. The next meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2012. A meeting was also held with Board of Finance and Town representatives in an effort to coordinate all the budgets. Ms. Tinker reported that the Superintendent is in the process of developing a budget that will be very open and transparent which will be presented to the Audit and Finance Committee, then to the full Board, and finally to the Town.

School Planning and Design Committee

Committee chair Mrs. Lambert reported that the committee met and finalized the RFP for the ten-year facilities plan. The committee also worked on the School Accountability Policy which will be finalized and brought forward to the full Board. The next committee meeting is scheduled for the first Wednesday in March.

Executive Committee

Committee chair Dr. Sewall reported that the committee met and reviewed a proposed plan for the reorganization of the District office. The plan is still under development; however, there is a pressing need for a communications officer. The Superintendent will develop a job description and the position will be

posted. The administrative structures for the middle and high schools, compatible with the re-designs of both buildings, were also reviewed.

Mrs. Collins announced that the Middle School boys' basketball team is in the final playoffs for the championship which is impressive since there has been no team for the past two years. The financial support of Mrs. DeVivo and the fundraising efforts of the Booster Club were acknowledged as greatly benefitting the existence of the sports program at the Middle School.

Action Items

Appointments

Dr. Sewall said that Items A and B are required for action by statute and the motion can be assumed.

Motion to approve the following appointments as presented:

1. Candice Brown to the position of Grade 3 Teacher at Sweeney School, effective January 9, 2012, replacement position.
2. Arthur Ellis to the position of Science Teacher at Windham High School effective February 1, 2012, replacement position.
3. Augusta Gilberti to the position of Special Education Coordinator at Elementary Schools effective February 1, 2012, replacement position.
4. Fatima Pireson to the position of ESOL Teacher at Windham High School effective January 23, 2012, replacement position.
5. Michelle Garcia, to the position of ESOL Teacher at Windham High School effective January 23, 2012, replacement position.

There was no discussion.

Unanimously approved.

Healthy Food Certification Statement (Ref. 2)

Motion to approve the continued participation of Windham Public Schools in the Healthy Food Certification program from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013, certifying that all food items sold to students will meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. There was no discussion.

Unanimously approved.

Board of Education Policy 5114 – Students Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process (Ref. 3)

Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the revised Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process policy 5114. This is the second reading. There was no discussion.

Unanimously approved.

Expulsion Hearing Officer (Ref. 4)

Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Ms. Tinker, that the Board of Education approve the appointment of Attorney Elisa Bartlett, Rape & Bartlett LLC, as the expulsion hearing officer for the Windham Public Schools. There was no discussion.

Approved: 6-2

Aye: Dr. Sewall, Mrs. Osuba, Ms. Tinker, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Desaulniers

Nay: Mrs. Collins, Mr. Adamo

Grade Configuration of Schools (Ref. 5)

Motion of Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the grade configuration of schools beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. This information was presented by Ms.

Barker-Jones earlier in the meeting under Superintendent's reports. Mrs. Collins asked about overcrowding in the schools and Ms. Barker-Jones explained that Ms. Ortiz has been meeting with the elementary school principals and there will be adequate space because students are returning to their home schools.

Unanimously approved.

School Accountability Policy – First Reading (Ref. 6)

The first reading of the School Accountability Policy was tabled until the March 14, 2012, meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

Board of Education minutes for the following meetings were approved as submitted:

January 11, 2012, Board of Education meeting (Ref. 7)

January 25, 2012, Workshop Board of Education meeting (Ref. 8)

Unanimously approved.

Special Master's Report

Dr. Adamowski began his report by addressing a funding concern expressed by Ms. Tinker regarding reorganization. He explained that his responsibility is to ensure that the district develop capacity to raise student achievement and sustain it over time. He indicated that the 30/70% budget split will create the parameters for reorganization with 70% of the budget assigned to schools and classrooms and 30% used for central services. He, along with the Executive Committee, agreed that it is a priority to fill the position of communications officer. Currently unfilled positions in central office will fund that position. However, in the 2012-13 budget, funding for positions will have to fit into the 30% parameter allocated. In order to address priorities and obtain the highest level capacity available, some positions may be eliminated, some may be combined and others may be added. Moving towards a 75/25% split, which is average for high performing school districts, is the long-term goal.

Dr. Adamowski also provided a report on Serving Gifted Students in Windham Schools. He reported that State Statute 10-76 d requires districts to identify the numbers of students in grades 3-8 with exceptional learning or outstanding talent in the creative arts; however, districts do not have to serve these students. In the past, Windham has been negligent in identifying students; however, this has been corrected as of this year. Dr. Adamowski reviewed the threshold for eligibility of students and the number of Windham students who are eligible this year. He reviewed potential program designs for grades three to five; grades six to eight; and grades nine to twelve. He also reviewed potential operating costs for the 2012-13 school year which include teacher salaries, training costs for teachers, materials and AP test fees. Dr. Adamowski answered Board members' questions.

Dr. Adamowski spoke about the role of school governance councils and strengthening that role in the schools. He reported that a meeting was held to explore the possibility of training councils with assistance from the Leadership of Greater Hartford, an organization that has trained councils in many districts. The district's policy on School Governance Councils may have to be revisited to clarify certain aspects of the policy and review how councils address parent involvement and levels of responsibility. Since this is capacity building and development work as it essentially develops parent leaders, it lends itself to funding that is available through the Special Master which includes professional development for teachers and parents in this area. Dr. Adamowski concluded that more information on this will be forthcoming in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 8:02 P.M.

Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary