

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
January 8, 2014

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Lambert, Vice-chair Mr. Desaulniers, Secretary Mr. Montalvo, Dr. Sewall, Mr. French, Mr. Quamme, Ms. Tinker, Mrs. Osuba, Dr. Gomez

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ortiz did not attend due to illness, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper, Directors Mrs. Banks, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Cunha, Communications Officer Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Nicole Moore

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski, Analyst for District Support and Supervision Eldrin Deas, general public, staff, administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Lambert called the January 8, 2014, Board of Education regular business meeting to order at 7:07 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mrs. Osuba led the Board and the public in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The December 11, 2013, business meeting minutes (Ref. 1); and the December 18, 2013, workshop meeting minutes (Ref. 1A) were accepted as submitted.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that she has submitted questions regarding the local charter school and she was upset because they have not been answered. She would like to know on what basis the Board of Education supports the application for the local charter school. Ms. Gallucci said that she is confused about the process and feels that it is backwards since there is no application available to be seen. She asked for the names of people who are on the founding Board. Ms. Gallucci also said that there was not a quorum at the workshop Board meeting when the proposal was presented. She said that the materials presented by Ms. Haynes were about a bilingual school yet she is talking about having a dual language school. Ms. Gallucci also said that the research is minimal on dual language and Montessori schools being combined and questioned the studies quoted by Ms. Haynes during the presentation. She said that Dr. Adamowski and Ms. Haynes brought TFA to Windham; however, the charter school can't be staffed with TFA teachers because dual language and Montessori certifications are needed. Ms. Gallucci also asked who paid for Ms. Haynes' visit to the school in Washington, D.C., and who the pro bono backers and consultants are that she spoke about. Ms. Gallucci also commented that even though taxpayer money would be used for the school, there is no taxpayer oversight into the process. She also addressed Norwich Free Academy and said that there is an escalation clause built into NFA's tuition but each year Windham barely makes the minimum budget requirement. Ms. Gallucci said that the endless appropriations required through public and town meetings

falsely represent the district's expenditures and obligations and this money is being taken out of the BOE budget and out of the control of the Board of Education which is breaking the law and should be stopped.

Mrs. Lambert said that she has forwarded the questions to Ms. Haynes and the Board of Education will see the application on January 24, 2014.

Kim Charron, North Windham, spoke about Norwich Free Academy and said that she has asked for the tuition amount for Windham students attending E O Smith since December and still hasn't received the information. She said that the difference for tuition at NFA and the cost per student at Windham is not that much. She believes that the students still need the option of NFA and only giving this option two years is not enough time. Ms. Charron said that if the NFA option does not continue, she and three other parents are thinking about moving out of town. She asked if Windham would be willing to pay the amount paid per Windham student and have parents pay the difference so that their children could attend NFA.

Dennis Cronin, Willimantic, read a November 24, 2013, op ed piece from the Hartford Courant by Jason Rojas regarding Sheff v. O'Neill as it relates to East Hartford students and their attendance at magnet schools. Mr. Cronin suggested that the Board get together with other communities that are facing the same issues and legislate for regionalization. He asked if the Board might spend some time talking with legislators regarding structural changes.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Exchange Program to Spain

In Ms. Ortiz's absence, Dr. Gasper provided the introduction for Mr. Harris's presentation regarding the proposal for the Art and Humanities Study Abroad Family Exchange Program in Madrid, Spain. Mr. Harris introduced Dr. Mark Foster who has been working with Windham to develop the exchange program. The program would be open to Arts and Humanities students in good academic standing who are currently in at least Spanish 2/3. The time frame for the program was reviewed and there was discussion regarding funding. Mr. Harris and Dr. Foster answered questions.

Dr. Gasper thanked Ms. Krach for chairing the District Curriculum Committee and the twenty-six teachers who have volunteered to serve on that committee. He also thanked Mr. Cunha who will chair the Professional Development Committee and the twenty teachers who will serve on that committee.

Ms. Markey reported that Governor Malloy visited Windham High School today. He met briefly with administrators, toured the building and then participated in two classes. She reported that his visit was very successful.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Mr. French reported that the Town Council voted to move expenditures for musical instruments and the Literacy How program to a Town meeting for approval on January 21 at 6 PM. Once approved by the Windham Board of Finance, the request for additional funding to complete work at Natchaug will be sent to a Town meeting for approval. Mr. French asked that the Board add to the agenda the Board's approval to support a modification to the Town's resolution to increase funding to finish work at Natchaug School contingent on Board of Finance approval followed by Town approval.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education add to the agenda the approval to support additional funding to the Town's Resolution 2585 for Natchaug School. (Action Item C)

The motion is unanimously approved.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Tinker reported that the committee is focusing on the High School renovation project. Once the proposal is ready, it will be brought forward to the full Board for approval.

Executive Committee

Mrs. Lambert said that the committee has not met but a meeting will be scheduled shortly.

Ad Hoc Policy Committee

Mrs. Osuba reported that she has contacted CAFE to gather information about updating Board policies. She said that the committee will meet soon as there is much work to be done; especially the review of policies that are affected by changes in legislation.

ACTION ITEMS

Continuation of discussion and possible action regarding Norwich Free Academy

Due to a cost analysis created, Mr. French reported that the Finance and Audit committee felt that it is too costly to the district to continue sending students to Norwich Free Academy. There was much discussion. Students who are presently attending NFA, however, will continue to attend until they graduate or withdraw from the school.

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve ceasing sending new students to Norwich Free Academy and approve continuing to send present students to Norwich Free Academy until they stop attending or they graduate.

Aye: Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Montalvo, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. Quamme, Ms. Tinker, Mrs. Osuba, Dr. Sewall, Mr. French

Nay: No one

Abstained: Dr. Gomez

The motion passes.

Approval of Appointments

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Montalvo, that the Board of Education approve the following appointments:

1. Robin Strom, to the position of Eighth Grade Mathematics Teacher at Windham Middle School effective December 19, 2013. New Position.
2. Shannon Robinson, to the position of School Social Worker at Sweeney School effective January 7, 2014. Replacement

Dr. Gasper explained that funding for the new eighth grade mathematics teacher position at Windham Middle School will be through the Commissioner's Network.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Support of Town Resolution 2585 (addition to the agenda)

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Ms. Tinker, that the Board of Education approve support of the addition of funding to the Town's Resolution 2585 for Natchaug School which is contingent on Board of Finance approval followed by Town approval.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Board comments

Dr. Gomez asked for clarification regarding responding to e-mails as they pertain to Freedom of Information. Mrs. Lambert will contact CAFE for information and Mrs. Osuba will also provide Freedom of Information material.

Mr. Montalvo asked about the status of the I Pads for new members. Mrs. Lambert said that they have been ordered and should arrive by the end of the month.

Mrs. Lambert provided an update on the status of the Superintendent Search. The January 22, 2014, workshop meeting will begin at 6:30 PM and interviews of the firms will be tentatively scheduled to take place that evening.

Special Master's Report

Dr. Adamowski reported that he has requested to meet with the Board's executive committee to discuss the State's assistance with the superintendent search process. Dr. Adamowski clarified that the agreement to send students to Norwich Free Academy (NFA) was developed by him under his statutory authority in response to a request from a relatively large group of parents who asked to meet with him to discuss their desire to have this option provided to Windham students entering ninth grade. He said that he intends to respect the Board's decision to not continue this option. He spoke about the Windham exchange program which is one of many initiatives that will occur to strengthen the Arts and Humanities program at the High School. When Barrows was designed and built, it was intended to include preschool which would serve as the entry point for the magnet school. However, a recent Supreme Court decision that districts do not have to pay tuition to a magnet school program if that district does not offer the program to its students. This greatly affects the funding of a preschool program at the magnet school since most districts don't offer preschool. Options for the use of the state-of-the-art preschool rooms at Barrows will need to be decided. Dr. Adamowski also spoke about the upcoming budget process and the variables involved that will affect next year's budget. He reported that progress is underway to develop a transitional alternative high school program, and the goal is to pilot this program during the third trimester of the 2013-14 school year. For 2014-15, a portion of Special master funds will be earmarked to assist with funding this program.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion by Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board meeting adjourn at 8:57 P.M.
The motion is unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

Juan Montalvo, Secretary