

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
January 9, 2013

BOARD PRESENT: Secretary Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Chair Dr. Sewall is in attendance by means of electronic equipment (FaceTime) and his physical presence is excused per policy 9313

BOARD ABSENT: Vice-chair Mrs. Collins

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Ms. England, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, 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

Mrs. Osuba called the January 9, 2013, Board of Education business meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

MINUTES

Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education approve the December 12, 2012, regular business meeting minutes.

On the motion: Aye: Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Dr. Switchenko, Dr. Sewall
Abstention: Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo
The motion passes.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, spoke about the situation at Natchaug and said that it is unacceptable. Students are confined to one room for the majority of the day and teachers have no place for planning or breaks because specials are held in classrooms. Also since fifth grade students are now part of the elementary schools, they can no longer participate in the Technology Student Association. Ms. Gallucci questioned how the Board of Finance could approve the appropriation for the STEM magnet school last fall and not approve the Natchaug request. She also questioned the enrollment projections used for the Facilities Master Plan, especially for the High School. She said that there was no enrollment projection for the Middle School and finds the enrollment projections flawed. She also said that there are staff members at the Middle School who have resigned and are not being replaced. She said it is very difficult for Middle School staff to share rooms and resources with Natchaug. She also said that when some students finish their testing, which is done on computers, they play computer games and it is very disruptive to other students. Ms. Gallucci

asked what the Broad resident has access to within our district and if she attends executive sessions. Ms. Gallucci said that she has the Gale report from March 12, 2012, and still nothing has been done about it. Ms. Gallucci also asked about the elevators at the Middle School which are not working and said that there are cracked floor tiles in the fifth grade corridor. These are safety concerns. Ms. Gallucci also had questions regarding compliance with the SIG grant, which encourages continuity, due to all of the staffing changes including that of the principal.

Ms. Ortiz responded with the following: administration is aware that having Natchaug placed at the Middle School is not the best situation and tonight's presentation will address proposals to determine how to continue to move forward with Natchaug; High School enrollment projections used were for each academy; staff at the Middle School have all been replaced; and one elevator at the Middle School has been repaired and a part is on order for the second elevator. The company that installed the elevators no longer exists, and a recommendation has been made that the elevators may need to be replaced. Regarding the question about the Broad resident, Ms. Ramos is a State Department of Education employee. Ms. Ortiz explained that the SIG grant is not based on staffing.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, spoke about moving the young children out of the Kramer building. She said that there are ten doors to enter the building making it difficult to keep the building secure. She said that Kramer is not a bad building and the adults should stay. At a meeting she attended with Windham State Representatives and State Senator, they talked about regionalizing schools. Mrs. DeVivo said that it would be a good idea to check with other school districts about placing Windham's preschool students elsewhere.

Ms. Ortiz responded that there is a Small Schools Committee looking at regionalizing schools with under 1000 students, combining small districts into larger districts.

Jerry Phillips, Willimantic, who is a SGC co-chair, is speaking as a parent at tonight's meeting. He said that since his children have attended Natchaug, the school has undergone a lot of crises. He said that Mr. Wihbey added stability to the school; and when Natchaug received the SIG grant, there was a significant sense of energy and direction and an increase in morale in the school. The climate there was improving. With the move to the Middle School, however, two steps were taken backward. With the loss of the principal, there is instability again. He said that children need to see a regular authority figure on a day-to-day basis. Mr. Phillips said that space at the Middle School is a factor as students of that age need to get outside, and it is not a congenial environment for children. He said that it is a stop gap measure for one year but it would be totally unfair for Natchaug to remain there for another year. It is an unprofessional environment for teachers as well.

Anna Crawford, Willimantic, applauded the Board for addressing the school facilities. She encouraged everyone to read the executive summaries of the buildings that are on the district website. Ms. Crawford said that the Natchaug roof is a concern, and the executive summary for Natchaug outlines the number of repairs that are needed at the building, as well. If the building is continued to be used for ten years, major repairs will be necessary. She said that we need to look at what it would take to make the repairs and then maintain the building. She asked if funds could be incorporated in the ten-year plan to take care of and maintain Natchaug if the roof is replaced. Ms. Crawford again encouraged everyone to read the executive summaries as they provide information on the condition of our schools.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Ortiz reported that the University Region Superintendents' Association Awards ceremony, which was postponed in November due to the weather, was held at RHAM High School last night. Middle School students, Oralee Collazo and Alenni Rosado DeJesus, and High School seniors, Rachel Coley and Casey Dieter-Leeds, represented Windham Public Schools and were recognized for their accomplishments and presented with awards.

School Security

Ms. Ortiz reported that buildings have been assessed for security and principals have submitted lists of areas that need to be corrected. She said that Mr. French spoke with Mr. Vertefeuille which prompted the installation of panic buttons in the schools. Ms. Ortiz thanked Mr. Vertefeuille, Absolute Alarm, for providing the schools with the panic buttons and also for installing them at no cost to the district. All of the doors leading into the Kramer building are now locked and people must be buzzed in through the main entrance, where they sign in and receive a visitor's pass. Many of the district's building security issues have already been rectified. On December 17, the administrative team sent home a letter to parents and families regarding school security. The lock-down process has been reviewed and schools will be having drills. Ms. Ortiz met with the Willimantic Police and they will support the schools during these drills. Ms. Ortiz now has a contact with the State Police for support at Windham Center and North Windham schools. A district emergency response document was started in 2008 but was not finalized. This document will be reviewed with administrators, finalized, and put into place.

Second Quarter Financial Report

This will be reported on during the subcommittee report.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Ms. Tinker reported that the committee reviewed the second quarter financial report. Additional information on transportation and out-of-district special education tuition needs to be gathered, as well as the review of grant expenditures. The Excess Cost Sharing (ECS) reimbursement amount from the State has not yet been received. Budget transfers are necessary due to the transportation deficit.

Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education approve the addition of budget transfers to the agenda.

On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the budget transfers as outlined in a document dated January 9, 2013, titled Windham Public Schools Budget Transfers as of 12/2/12.

On the motion: Aye: Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Dr. Switchenko, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo

Abstention: Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Sewall

The motion passes.

Ms. Tinker reported that an updated quarterly report will be given at the next meeting and at that time a vote will be taken. At the committee meeting, members spoke about the budget process and asked the Superintendent to develop a budget with a 1.5% increase; however, due to a reduction previously paid for bonding, the increase will basically be .5%. It is the hope that the increase will be the same as the Town's budget increase. Regarding the audit, a working draft should be completed by the end of January for review. An extension to the end of February has been filed to give Town committees time to review and approve.

School Planning and Design Committee

The Facilities Master Plan is an action item on the agenda.

Executive Committee

Mrs. Osuba reported that the Committee has not met.

Ad hoc Transportation Policy Committee

Mr. French commended Mr. Nelson for the work he has put into developing the transportation policy. A committee meeting will be scheduled shortly for its review.

ACTION ITEMS

Facilities Master Plan (Ref. 2)

Mrs. Lambert reported that the School Planning and Design Committee has met regularly regarding the Facilities Master Plan (FMP) with Bob Roach from Friar Associates. When the plan was presented to the Board of Finance in October, members requested that more detailed information, including the incorporation of the Natchaug roof into the FMP, be provided to them. The Natchaug roof has now been placed into the scope of the FMP. At tonight's meeting, Mr. Roach reviewed two versions of facilities master plan proposals. The work is the same in both proposals but is broken into different phases. Version I has the work divided into two phases while Version II has the work divided into three phases. Each version has two options; Option 1, which is the preferred option of the committee, includes replacement of the Natchaug roof, while Option 2 abandons the Natchaug building. A number of other options were reviewed and discussed by the committee; however, these options did not seem to be cost effective or feasible to pursue. The existing condition surveys on the schools are completed and final program and cost estimates will be added into the reports. The Committee worked to identify the needs of each school building taking into consideration enrollment projections, potential options for school choice, and overall physical characteristics of each building. The schematic plan was designed to meet the criteria to qualify for the maximum reimbursement from the State. Throughout the presentation, there was discussion and questions were answered.

Motion of Ms. Tinker, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve Version II, Option #1 (Replace the roof at Natchaug), of the ten-year Facilities Master Plan.

On the motion:

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

Nay: Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers

The motion passes.

Approval of appointments

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

1. Thomas Russo to the position of Interim Principal at Natchaug Elementary School effective January 2, 2013, length of term to be determined. Replacement
2. Wayne Donaldson to the position of Director of Building and Grounds at Central Office effective January 14, 2013. Replacement

Ms. Ortiz introduced Mr. Donaldson, newly appointed Director of Building and Grounds. He thanked the Board and provided members with some background information.

On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.

Special Master's Report

Dr. Adamowski commended the members of the School Planning and Design Committee for their contributions to develop a well thought out ten-year Facilities Master Plan for the district. He said that now the focus will be on how to get the work outlined accomplished. Dr. Adamowski reviewed this year's allocation plan for Windham that comes with State supervision and support. The largest item funded is

professional development and includes payment to providers and payment of stipends for teacher participation. Funds are also included for the training of Magnet School staff by the Connecticut Science Center in the discovery method of teaching. There is money for implementation of the Strategic Operating Plan which will be used almost exclusively for the NWEA Assessment System. The System will be purchased for two years. Four Windham schools were eligible to be trained under the State PBIS grant last year and there was a half-time onsite coordinator in place provided by SERC. That person is now the Assistant Principal of North Windham School and SERC has been unable to fill the position; therefore, the funds are not being used at this time. There is a small amount of money for school starter costs which has been used by the STEM and Humanities academies and may be used at the Middle School. There is funding for the second installment of the FMP which will bring the process to completion. Funding is included for half of the Teach for America cost to the district. School Governance Council training, which includes a process coach for each governance council, is also included. Funding is included for employment incentives to attract the best people to Windham. The Sweeney School redesign is a place holder for funding at this time. There is funding to be used for Magnet School promotion materials that are being developed to explain and promote the program. Establishment of a Montessori school in the district is a consideration with Windham Center School lending itself to the program because it is a small school and does not have expansion possibilities. CREC was contracted to do a feasibility study of the school which will be provided to the Board later in the year as a workshop topic. Creating a Montessori school at Windham Center School will take six years with costs covered by the Special Master's budget. There is a small training and development budget for leadership in the district, as well as funding for district technology for new people, and a recruitment budget with EASTCONN which is mostly used for advertisement. Obtaining GPS systems for all buses and monitoring of routes once the transportation policy is in place will provide the district with the most efficient routes as possible.

Dr. Adamowski also reported on the Commissioner's Network. The lowest 5% of schools in the State in terms of student performance are eligible for consideration to be included in the Commissioner's Network. Dr. Adamowski said that the Middle School qualifies and it would be an incredible opportunity for the school because it would mean about one million dollars per year of additional support, which would allow for a more robust redesign of the school. The Superintendent has filed a letter of interest and intent with the State, and Dr. Adamowski said that he will do his best to ensure that Windham Middle School is included in the Network.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board enter into executive session at 9:08 PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to bargaining unit negotiations.

On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENED

Mrs. Osuba reconvened regular session at 9:10 PM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Adamo, that the Board add the discussion of confidential attorney client communication to the agenda for executive session.

On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.

Motion by Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board return to executive session at 9:11 PM for the discussion of confidential attorney client communication, as well as bargaining unit negotiations.

On the motion: Motion is unanimously approved.

BOARD PRESENT: Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Chair Dr. Sewall is in attendance by means of electronic equipment (FaceTime) and his physical presence is excused per policy 9313

ADMINISTRATION

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

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENED

Mrs. Osuba reconvened regular session at 9:38 PM.

Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Adamo, that the Board add the ratification of the tentative agreement between the Windham Board of Education and the Windham Administrative Support Personnel 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 Administrative Support Personnel.

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