

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
June 11, 2014

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

BOARD ABSENT: Dr. Gomez

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper, Directors Mrs. Banks, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Cunha, Communications Officer Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

OTHERS PRESENT: Analyst for District Support and Supervision Eldrin Deas, general public, staff, administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Lambert called the June 11, 2014, Board of Education regular business meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mrs. Lambert asked for a moment of silence for Mr. and Mrs. Holland who recently died in a tragic car accident.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The May 14, 2014, Board of Education meeting minutes were accepted as submitted.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Recognitions

Elks' Essay Contest

Representatives from the Willimantic Elks Lodge presented the following students with certificates and savings bonds for receiving recognition in this year's national Elks' essay contest: Drug Awareness Category: Timothy Hill, Josue Madera, Kylie Rivera, and Placido Alicea; and Americanism Category 5/6 grade: Daniella Machaughten, Marissa Wysopal, and Natalie Nilsson; and Americanism Category 7/8 grade: Dylan Barcona, Tayia Brown, and Aaron Spicer.

Mirrors and Windows Literary and Art Magazine

Windham High School students, Thalia Rivera, Chief Editor, and Luzmary Nunez, Artistic Director, presented Board members with copies of *Mirrors and Windows*, Windham High School's Literary and Art Magazine. This year's publication was dedicated to Superintendent Ortiz.

LEAD Connecticut

Ms. Ortiz recognized Ms. Mishriky, Ms. Potter and Mr. Olkowski for their participation during the past year in LEAD Connecticut, a leadership workshop program.

Relay Graduate School of Education

Ms. Ortiz announced that Mr. Olkowski recently graduated from the National Principals' Academy Fellowship of the Relay Graduate School of Education. This training consisted of over 120 hours of modules and participation at the twenty-six day summer institute and at four weekend sessions held throughout the school year. Mr. Olkowski thanked the Board of Education for allowing him the opportunity to participate in this program.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Dorothy Potter, WHS Administrator, spoke about budget cuts at the High School and the effect of per pupil expenditure. She said that this can be fixed by working collaboratively to come up with solutions to change the way that high school programming is funded. She publicly thanked Dr. Gasper and Mr. Johnson for working closely with the High School regarding its budget. Ms. Potter said that six administrator positions have been cut to 3.6. She said that the High School should be the flag ship of the district and strongly feels that everyone must work together to offer as many opportunities at the High School for students as possible so that students receive the type of experiences that they need.

Duan-Duan Liu, WHS teacher, said that she was disappointed and shocked when she learned that AP Chemistry will not be offered next year. She voiced her concerns that once a course is cut, it will not be brought back in the following years. She pleaded with the Board to re-consider the important issue of offering AP Chemistry to students.

Pamela Cavanagh, WHS teacher, said that with only six science teachers, the capacity to offer AP classes is not available and only core courses can be offered. Electives which motivate students' interest in the different sciences are not being offered, and she asked the Board to consider the importance of science which helps students become career and college ready.

Melanie Godbout, WHS teacher, said that the diminished education budget will affect English Language Arts. Enrollment is down; however, the number of students served need strong literacy support, and the support offered at the High School does not meet the State Department of Education guidelines due to the loss of paraprofessional and tutor positions. There is an increase of 6.5 students per section in English classes over the previous year. She asked that the Board help to ensure that Windham does not go below the budget that already exists.

Lorraine McDevitt, Willimantic, said that she attended the lovely farewell party for Ms. Ortiz which was wonderfully attended and is saddened that she is leaving but is happy that she had the opportunity to know the Superintendent. Mrs. McDevitt said that she and others who attended the function were appalled that some of the Board members who voted against retaining Ms. Ortiz attended the function, which she feels was in bad taste. Mrs. McDevitt also said that Ms. Potter, who is dynamic and powerful, has a passion for the High School and is a phenomenal choice to be its principal. She said that her taxes are going up to ensure that the schools remain teaching institutions. She is disappointed that enrollment is going down at the High School and said that the numbers will continue to drop if the Board doesn't maintain the level of education that the children deserve. She said that when students graduate, many have 30 credits toward college due to AP courses they've already taken. Mrs. McDevitt said that she is a strong advocate for the school system and if children don't continue to have what they have today, she will do everything in her power to ensure that none of the Board members sit on the Board again.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, said that she has talked with four parents who are not sending their students to the High School next year but got too upset to continue speaking with other parents. She said that exit interviews should be held in eighth grade to find out why students are leaving the district. She

suggested having someone who is respected and has lived in the community for many years communicate with parents and attend school meetings to talk about positive things happening at the High School. People don't know about the AP courses because no one is telling them about these offerings.

Neal Sherman, WHS teacher and resident, said that a diversity of courses needs to be offered at the High School even though enrollment is decreasing and this cannot be accomplished by reducing the number of teachers. He said that teachers are overburdened and cannot prepare well for the courses they teach. He said that students are not prepared when they enter the High School. The spring NWEA Math assessment showed improvement compared to fall assessment but there is still much work to do. Mr. Sherman said that by reducing class sizes and offering students more individual attention, the necessary interventions can be provided.

Morgan Scanlon, WHS student, said that what is happening to Mr. Potts is not fair and she does not want to see him leave the High School. She said that he has helped her and it will be stressful for Mr. Sinclair to manage all of the classes. She said that Mr. Potts is her favorite teacher.

Kira Smith, WHS, said that Mr. Potts is an amazing teacher and cares about the students and wants to see them succeed. She said that it is hard to think that he won't be at the High School next year.

David Fenn, Windham, said that the design for per pupil expenditure does not help build programs and does not give administrators the freedom they need to make dynamic decisions. He said that as a K-12 system, programs such as music should not run in isolation but in a continuum. Mr. Fenn also said that Mr. Potts should not be moved to the elementary schools from the High School. He was brought here because Mr. Sinclair could not do it all. He said that he will not give 80 million dollars for a new High School. Mr. Fenn said that there is hope and there is a solution but it takes work.

James Flores, Willimantic, said that two Board members said that if the Superintendent is fired, things will get better. Mr. Flores said that things got worse with the Special Master and he failed the community. He said that the budget was cut and teachers were fired and then \$750,000 from the State was added. Mr. Flores said that he heard that the new superintendent is going to make more than the master was paid. Mr. Flores also said that three Board members did not vote on the budget and no one is making telephone calls for the budget. He said that people are angry that programs have been cut and someone needs to communicate with the community.

Sylvia Daleb, Windham, said that she took chorus with Mr. Potts and it was a great class. Her love for singing was reawakened as a result of his encouragement. Without him, there will be no annual trip and no PRISMS concert because Mr. Sinclair cannot do it alone. She said that hopefully the Board can find it in the budget to allow him to stay at the High School.

Daniel Daleb, Windham, said that he voiced his opinion in 2010 and it is tough to see the program cut because once something is cut, it generally doesn't come back.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that when Dr. Adamowski had the money follow the child, she immediately objected to per pupil expenditures. She said that the flyer for Our Piece of the Pie was written in a style that was an embarrassment; they are not educators and this should not be called a school. She said that she cannot believe that basic academics like Chemistry and English and having music in school have to be defended. In other towns, if less than 10% of the voters come out to vote, the budget automatically passes and this should be the case in Windham to prevent the endless ritual of going to the polls time after time to try to get the budget passed. She also said that NFA and Parish Hill should be cut from the budget as these costs are unfair to Windham students and taxpayers. She also said that the lottery for NFA was a sham. Ms. Gallucci said that money was recently invested in musical instruments for the High School, but the storage is not adequate for them. Ms. Gallucci said that the renovation of Windham High School must be done and proper storage of these instruments should be a priority. She brought up testimony from a past education commissioner in New York and spoke about things to be looked at to judge a good school. Some of the things that hamper learning are the turnover of staff and high numbers of untrained teachers.

Appropriate school facilities and proper instructional materials are also important. She said that Windham High School does not meet any of these guidelines.

Michael Hua, Willimantic, said that Mr. Potts is an amazing teacher and he does not want to see him leave the High School. He said that he is proud of Mr. Potts' efforts and would like to see him stay at the High School to help students succeed. He said that music is an amazing field and is his passion. He asked the Board to please keep Mr. Potts at the High School.

Becky Grillo, Windham, said that she served on the Middle School building committee and her focus was on the special education room. She asked where funding was coming from to change that room into a fitness center. Ms. Grillo said that if the class is relocated to the home economics room, the room is not designed for special education students and it is not near the nurses' office. She said that she is advocating for the most vulnerable population because they can't speak up. She asked who was consulted about the move and asked that it be looked at very carefully.

Sylvia Verastegui, Windham, said that her children attend Windham Public Schools and she works there. She said that they do not agree with moving Mr. Potts and want him to stay at that High School where he has done an amazing job providing students with many opportunities that they wouldn't have had. Ms. Vertefeuille said that Windham has to invest in the future and asked the Board to keep Mr. Potts at the High School.

Henry Crane, Willimantic, said that he voted no for the budget and advocated for a \$450,000 cut. He said that the budget wasn't presented to the people who vote on the budget. The voters need to believe in the budget. He said that the voters feel that they've been excluded from the process and when Dr. Adamowski came, the second opportunity for comments at the end of the meeting was eliminated. He said the taxpayers believe in education for students. He said that he didn't know about the students in AP classes because the budget is not marketed. If he had known, it might have made him rethink his vote.

Dawn Brolin, Windham, asked how many Board members could pick out Mr. Potts in the room. She said that the students are passionate about their music and take the program beyond the High School. She said that the AHA program has been totally left behind at the High School. Ms. Brolin said that the Town approved the purchase of instruments and uniforms and by eliminating Mr. Potts' position, the Board is saying that it is not important. She said that there is no way Mr. Sinclair can do it all.

Emily Brolin, Windham, said that she was interested in drama and had never played an instrument before she attended the High School. However, Mr. Sinclair taught her to play the trombone. She said that both teachers stay after school to help students. New instruments have been purchased for the program. She said that people want Mr. Potts to stay at the High School.

Tom White, Windham, Board of Finance member, thanked Ms. Ortiz for what she's done and said he never believed that she was the problem in the school system and she should not be blamed for what Dr. Adamowski did. He said that he and his wife met at Windham High School and they were both in band. He asked the Board to relook at having only one music teacher at the High School. He said that he was horrified when the Board of Finance was asked for money to purchase instruments because the instruments were used for over twenty years but the request was supported. He said that now a person is being cut from the Music Department, and he doesn't know how only one person can run the department. He is very happy that Ms. Potter is becoming principal. When the budget was cut, the Board of Finance believed that there were only going to be administrative level cuts and not to cut any student programs. Mr. White said that the money follows the child does not have to be continued and the voters elected the Board of Education to do the best job they can do.

Mrs. Lambert said that of the \$250,000 cut, administrator positions have been cut and \$45,000 will be cut from non-student support. She said that some grants have not been secured and transportation costs are going up. Due to cost increases and expenses, a 3% increase is considered a cut in the budget. She

announced that voting will take place at the Middle School and not at the Elks Lodge for Tuesday's referendum.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Truancy Update

Tom Cronin, Director of Education at EASTCONN; Tom Skewes, Coordinator of Security and Investigation at EASTCONN; and Carlos Colon, Bilingual Truancy and Residency Investigator at EASTCONN, reported on residency and truancy for Windham Public Schools. They reported that the 4-tier attendance intervention pyramid, which began in September 2013, was implemented with each school to provide a more consistent approach to truancy. Each tier was explained beginning with Tier One (0-9 total absences); Tier Two (10-17 total absences "warning signs"); Tier Three (18 or more total absences "chronic"); and Tier Four (Truancy/Severely Chronic). Referral data for Windham High School, Windham Middle School, and the elementary schools was shared. They have investigated several residency issues. Reducing the number of chronic absences has been key and feedback from staff has been positive. Work continues to have more parent involvement, as well as contact with the court system and DCF to enforce the law. Questions were answered.

Madrid, Spain Student International Exchange Program

Ms. Brunet, Ms. Krach, Ms. Potter and Dr. Foster reported on the exchange program which follows the Strategic Operating Plan's goal 6, strategy 3. A connection has been established with a school in Madrid and students from Madrid will spend two weeks from October 17 to November 1, 2014, with host families in Windham. Windham students will travel to Madrid in March 2015. Dr. Foster explained the three phases of the program: preparation, academic engagement and student exchange. The timeline was reviewed for summer and fall 2014, winter 2014/2015, and spring 2015. In preparation for the exchange, Windham students will be responsible for an academic project throughout the school year. Research and study will take place in Windham and research goals will take place onsite in Madrid. To offset costs and travel expenses, fundraising will be a major piece of the program. Program participation criteria were reviewed, and students from both academies will be eligible to participate in the host family and/or travel components. Robin Williams, Sara McCue, Amanda Rohr and Lindsey Hepple are serving on the planning committee. There was discussion, and Ms. Brunet, Ms. Krach and Dr. Foster answered questions.

Big Ideas Math Program

Ms. Hafiz, Ms. Koning, Ms. Dudek, and Mr. Martin presented material on the proposed new Middle School math program which aligns with common core standards. Ms. Hafiz explained that the Big Ideas Math Program is used in many districts and she is recommending it for the Middle School, Barrows, the New Arrivals Program, and the Dual Language Program. Ms. Koning worked to gather all of the math material located at the Middle School and found that much of it is out of date and not aligned with the common core. Mr. Martin spoke about the Math Curriculum Leadership Team made up of representatives from all of the schools in the district. The team looked at the curriculum writing process and has been working to provide a strong curriculum from prekindergarten through high school. Ms. Dudek provided highlights of the program and explained that it aligns with the common core standards. Questions were answered.

Windham High School Core Values and Beliefs

Ms. Potter reviewed the Core Values and Beliefs pertaining to the NEASC accreditation. She explained that it is a firm belief within the school community that the High School is one school and these core values

and beliefs are for the entire school. The expectations for learning will be required of all students by the time they graduate. Teachers are piloting rubrics that will go along with each expectation. Students will be required to intern in a community setting for thirty hours and elaborate on how they've made the place better. There will be a huge exhibition at the end of next year with a panel of judges. This initiative will all come together for a brand new rebirth of Windham High School in the fall.

Windham Middle School Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan Update

Ms. Ortiz reported that Mr. Olkowski, Mr. Deas, and she attended the State Board of Education meeting on June 4, 2014, when the Middle School's Commissioner's Network Turnaround Plan was presented and unanimously approved. Ms. Ortiz highlighted aspects of the plan such as strengthened requirements for students in every grade. Eighth grade students will complete a capstone project and have criteria for exiting the Middle School. The new arrivals center and expansion of the Compañeros Program to seventh grade and then to eighth grade the following year, as well as additional positions to strengthen programs, having three small learning communities, additional positions to strengthen the programs, continuing 90-minute blocks and expanding the school day from seven to eight hours.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Mr. French reported that due to the extended day at the Middle School, additional buses may be needed and this is being reviewed. He said that the committee discussed joining Buyboard, which doesn't cost the district anything except for a 2% charge when certain items are purchased. The committee would like to add it to tonight's agenda for approval.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education add the recommended approval of BuyBoard as a vendor to the agenda.

The motion is unanimously approved.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that there was a forum held last week regarding the redesign of the High School. She thanked Mrs. Osuba, Mr. French, Mr. Kalajian and Dr. Sewall for attending, as well as everyone who provided comments and asked questions. A link can be found on the website under "About WPS" where information can be found and questions submitted will be answered.

Executive Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that the committee will be meeting next week.

Ad Hoc Policy Committee

Mrs. Osuba reported that she received an e-mail requesting the committee to look at a specific policy and has asked for clarification. Once she receives the clarification, she will schedule a meeting.

Superintendent Search Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that background checks have not been completed for the candidate, and the Board will be appointing someone in the near future.

Ms. Ortiz thanked the Board for time she has spent in Windham as the Assistant Superintendent and then as the Superintendent. She said that as the Board continues to move forward, she hopes the Board will look at its process and how to best support the superintendent in determining evaluating the superintendent. She

said that she is putting together a report of the projects that remain. Ms. Ortiz said that Windham is a special place and she has enjoyed her time in Windham and leaves with pride, integrity and honesty.

ACTION ITEMS

Madrid, Spain Student Exchange Program (Ref. 2)

Motion of Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Kalajian, that the Board of Education approve the participation of Windham High School in an international student exchange program with a school in Madrid, Spain, during the 2014-2015 school years.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Big Ideas Math Program (Ref. 3)

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mrs. Osuba, that the Board of Education approve the Big Ideas Math: A Common Core Curriculum Program.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Windham High School Core Values and Beliefs (Ref. 4)

Motion of Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Mr. Quamme, that the Board of Education approve the Windham High School Core Values and Beliefs.

The motion is unanimously approved.

IDEA Grant Application (Ref. 5)

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education approve the submission of the IDEA Grant Application for the school year 2014-2015.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Approval of Appointments

1. *Appointment of Windham Public Schools' Superintendent*
Mrs. Lambert said that the Appointment of the Windham Public Schools' Superintendent is deferred to another meeting.
2. *Appointment of Dorothy Potter, to the position of Principal at Windham High School effective July 1, 2014. New Position. Dr. Sewall said that the Board never approved changing the structure at the High School. There was discussion and the following motion was made:*

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education table the approval to appoint Dorothy Potter to the position of Principal at Windham High School effective July 1, 2014, until after the Executive Session portion of tonight's meeting.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Quamme, that the Board of Education approve the following appointments (#3 through #6) along with the addendum distributed at tonight's meeting:

3. Appointment of Laura Rodriguez, to the position of General Science Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 20, 2014. New Position.
4. Appointment of Justin Rondash, to the position of Science Teacher at Windham High School effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
5. Appointment of Delixandra Bermudez, to the position of Bilingual Special Education Teacher at North Windham School effective August 20, 2014. New Position.
6. Appointment of Santiago Sanchez-Barbas, to the position of Spanish-as-a-Second Language Teacher at North Windham School effective August 20, 2014. New Position.

Addendum

7. Hailey McClure, to the position of ELA Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
8. Alexandra Lee, to the position of Math Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 20, 2014. New Position.
9. Kelly Evans, to the position of Social Science Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
10. Lilie Jane Hudson, to the position of Math Teacher at Windham Middle School effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
11. Nick Ricciardi to the position of Grade 2 Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 20, 2014. Replacement
12. Raymond Nagle to the position of Math Interventionist at Natchaug School effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
13. Chelsea Burns to the position of Grade 1 Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 20, 2014. Replacement.
14. Joshua Marsh to the position of ELA Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 20, 2014.

The motion is unanimously approved.

BuyBoard (added to the agenda earlier in the meeting)

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve BuyBoard as a vendor.

This approval is recommended by the Board's Finance and Audit Committee. BuyBoard is part of the National School Boards Association.

The motion is unanimously approved.

First reading of Late Entry Criteria & Lottery Process for Dual Language Program Policy (Ref. 6)

Ms. Brunet and Mrs. Finsmith reviewed the policy. This will be on the agenda for approval at the June 25, 2014, Board meeting. Any questions will be directed to Ms. Brunet prior to that time.

Board comments

Mrs. Lambert thanked everyone who attended the event for Superintendent Ortiz on June 5, 2014. She also thanked everyone who came to the forum on the High School redesign and provided comments. Mrs. Lambert said that she attended the four promotion ceremonies and will attend the ceremony at the Middle School tomorrow night and the High School graduation on Friday.

Mr. French said that after his walk through of the High School, he thought that there should be another option considered that doesn't cost 90 million dollars.

Mrs. Osuba said that a new high school is needed and encouraged everyone to visit a new school to see the difference. She said that students deserve the best quality education.

Mr. Desaulniers said that the problem is with the amenities in the building because the structure of the building is good.

Dr. Sewall said that the Board needs to review how budgets are put together. He said that the Board needs to figure out how to sustain the High School with a smaller enrollment because if programs are cut, the school becomes less attractive.

Ms. Ortiz said that she received a letter from the Sweeney School Governance Council stating that the Council has moved forward not to extend the school day at Sweeney at this time.

Mr. Ortiz said that North Windham School has been working on reopening its Nature Trail and would like to honor deceased teacher, Mrs. Leslie Kirschenbaum, who put the trail in place, with a memorial plaque as part of the trail.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion of Mr. Desaulniers, seconded by Mr. Montalvo, that the Board of Education enter into executive session at 11:20 PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to confidential attorney-client communications.

The motion is unanimously approved.

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

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Cunha

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENES

Chair Mrs. Lambert reconvened regular session at 11:44 P.M.

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve the appointment of Dorothy Potter, to the position of Principal at Windham High School effective July 1, 2014. New Position.

The motion is unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board meeting adjourn at 11:46 P.M.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Juan Montalvo, Secretary