

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

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins (arrived at 7:04 PM), Secretary Mrs. Osuba, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Adamo, Ms. Tinker, Mr. French, Mr. Desaulniers

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

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

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

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

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Sewall called the November 13, 2013, Board of Education regular business meeting to order at 7:05 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.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The October 9, 2013, business meeting minutes (Ref. 1) and the October 23, 2013, workshop meeting minutes (Ref. 1A) were accepted as submitted.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Lorraine McDevitt, Willimantic, said that the main door at the High School is kept locked and a button needs to be pushed so that someone lets you enter the building. She said that she is concerned because students will open the door to let people in if they are in the area. She asked that this be looked into. Mrs. McDevitt thanked the Board members who are leaving the Board and commended them for their many years of service. She also spoke in favor of no longer sending students to NFA and said that students who live in Windham should attend Windham High School. Mrs. McDevitt also asked the Board to take into consideration the people that they choose for Chair and Vice-chair of the Board. She said these people should not have personal agendas and should not be swayed by a political party. Their first thought should be about the children and staff in the schools and then the community who elected them to the Board. She said that she doesn't think that outside interests should be involved in deciding who will be the superintendent and people from the community should be part of the process. Mrs. McDevitt said that she is sad that Superintendent Ortiz is not staying on.

Dr. Sewall said that the decision for hiring a superintendent will be a local decision with community involvement.

Tom Drewry, Willimantic, said that in spite of his personal shortcomings he has served the students of Windham well for the past thirteen years. He said that students sustain teachers day to day and the hope and inspiration that he drew from his students for years was enough to counterbalance the conditions

surrounding him but feels now that is changing. He said that he has knowledge, experience and the habit of reflection and sincerely felt that he could articulate for those without access to Windham schools to help educate them to make informed decisions about educational policy. He said that he felt that he could help change the conditions in the institutions and environment but now thinks differently. Mr. Drewry said that the crucial moment came when the Board voted not to extend the contract of Superintendent Ortiz. He said that decision for many reconfirmed the belief that the expertise of teachers in Windham is not valuable. He said that rarely have their ideas been seen as meaningful but rather have been met with skepticism, disdain or calculated disregard, and the process of decision making has continued without evidence that their input was understood or even considered. He said that veteran teachers assert that morale among staff has never been lower. Mr. Drewry said that if there is any chance of reversing the damage done to the district over the past couple of years, the new Board of Education must take a stronger role in the course of the district's destiny and needs to include the full voice of the community by actively inviting the community into the conversation about education in Windham. He implored Board of Education members to take whatever measures are necessary to guarantee that this town has the strong representation that it deserves.

Paula Haney, South Windham, spoke to pay respect to the three Board members who are leaving the Board. She recognized Susan Collins for her service on the Board of almost three decades and said that she has made many contributions over the years. Mrs. Haney said that Mrs. Collins fought long and hard for school based health centers; she fully supported the early childhood program; she worked endless hours towards getting two new beautiful schools, the Middle School and the Magnet School, for the children of Windham; and she worked endless hours during budget season. Mrs. Haney thanked Mrs. Collins for all that she has done during her tenure on the Board.

Patrick Proctor, Windham Superintendent of Schools from 1990-2002 and Assistant Superintendent in Windham prior to 1990, said that Mrs. Collins served on the Board that hired him and she was the first Board of Education Chairperson that he worked with as superintendent of schools. Dr. Proctor said that an enormous amount of work was accomplished under Mrs. Collins's leadership. He said that she was a leader who laid the foundation for work centered around the theme of collaboration, and there was a common purpose which focused on the well-being of children and a commitment to the entire Windham community. He said that Mrs. Collins set an example by providing lots of energy, enthusiasm and hope, and she has been relentless and tireless and persevered to face the many challenges over the years. Dr. Proctor said that Mrs. Collins is a wonderful person, and is very caring, nurturing and loving and derives her energy from supporting others. He said that her children and grandchildren, and all of her friends will all agree that she is an extraordinary person and has made a lasting contribution to the entire community of Windham.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, spoke about the lunch waves at the Middle School and said that 9:37AM is much too early for the first lunches to be served. She said that other towns are already concerned about lower attrition but in Windham students are encouraged to attend school out of the district. She asked if the cost impact of sending students out of the district has been studied. Ms. Gallucci said that state run programs such as the technical high schools and the Vo Ag programs are not subject to choice and lotteries and have their own criteria set under state legislation. She said that she is troubled by pilot tests that are used to evaluate the superintendent and could potentially be used to evaluate teachers because these are experiments and cannot be held to any kind of standards. She said that the previous speaker is the type of person who runs schools well and is rooted in the community. It is not necessary to search nationally for a superintendent who will stay for a few years and then move on. Ms. Gallucci asked how the Board can determine if a question is on topic when the speaker isn't allowed to finish; and in the future she would like to know the criteria used before she is silenced. She also asked if the impact on students of high stakes testing is being documented since students are constantly being tested in Windham. She said that she appreciates the service of the Board members especially when they make decisions for the children because

they are elected for the children, for the parents and for the community. She said that she expects them to stand up as she has witnessed Mrs. Collins do for many years.

Nathan Perez Espitia, Willimantic, Middle School weatherman and president of the local chapter of TSA, spoke in support of continuing to send students to NFA. He said that NFA prepares and empowers students and the school is like a college. He said that over 100 students attended the open house recently held.

Christina Haynes, Willimantic, said that she is not against students wearing uniforms but would like to see them be more cost effective for parents. She said that if the “W” is not on the shirt, the polo top can be purchased at a local store for less money and there is no wait for it to be delivered. She also said that shirts that are ordered are not true to size.

Manny Diaz, Willimantic, who previously served on the Board with the three retiring Board of Education members, thanked them for their many years of service. He said that as a former board member, it is the commitment of board members to bring the best to children. He thanked all of the Board members and the efforts of the many people in the school system.

John McGrath, Windham, thanked Mrs. Collins, Mr. Adamo and Dr. Switchenko for their years of services on the Board. He said that when he served on the Board, he was part of a group that observed a Compañeros program in Boston and he was pleased to know that the program is still being run in the district.

Barbara McGrath, Windham, thanked the three board members who are retiring and especially thanked Mrs. Collins for her commitment, caring and passion over the many years that she has served.

Kim Charron came into the meeting late and spoke following student recognitions. She congratulated the three retiring Board members. She spoke about the possibility of suspending applications for NFA and said that students need an opportunity to go elsewhere to succeed. She said that taking this option away so soon would be a detriment to the rest of the students who want to attend NFA. She said that the difference in the cost to send students to NFA is not that much compared to having students attend schools in Windham.

Mrs. Haney presented Mrs. Collins with a bouquet of flowers. Superintendent Ortiz and Mrs. Lambert presented Mrs. Collins, Mr. Adamo and Dr. Switchenko with engraved gifts and thanked them for their service and the work they have done while serving on the Board. Superintendent Ortiz said that she was proud to serve under their tutelage.

REPORTS

Superintendent’s Report

Student recognitions

Ms. Ortiz recognized Windham High School seniors Gregory Bright, Nicole Moore and Dakota Fleming for being chosen as 2013 CHET Advance winners to receive scholarships that will help with college costs. They were participating in the Powder Puff seniors vs. juniors’ football game and did not attend tonight’s meeting.

Third grade North Windham student, Mark Despard, was recognized and congratulated for winning third place in the National Fossil Day™ 2013 Art Contest. He competed against artists nationwide and his work was judged by museums, paleontology organizations and the American Geological Institute. This is the third year in a row that Mark has been one of the top winners of this national contest.

Sarah Bowling was recognized for her community service project, Project Phoenix, which raised \$3600 to help rebuild St. Mary’s church. She organized a very successful spaghetti dinner which was held at the Synagogue and all of the funds raised were given to St. Mary’s Church.

Ms. Ortiz recognized Parents SEE (Parents Supporting Educational Excellence) participants who were in the audience. The program helps parents learn about educational issues and provides them with the skills to become future leaders in the community.

Ms. Ortiz announced that ten Windham High School STEM students will be taking a course on technology and developing 2D games at ECSU during trimester two this year.

Ms. Ortiz also announced that Middle School students won their first soccer championship. She thanked Mrs. DeVivo for her assistance to reinstate sports at the Middle School.

Students at the Middle School collected \$1016 to give to the family of a student who has been hospitalized. Middle School students are also conducting a food drive for the covenant soup kitchen.

Kim Charron spoke at this time and her comments are under the public dialogue section.

Strategic Operating Plan revisions

Ms. Ortiz explained that she took the recommendations from the Board during this summer's Board retreat and incorporated them into the plan. She will send the revisions to the Board and place them on the website.

Committee Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

Ms. Tinker reported that there are two proposed policies on tonight's agenda. She is recommending that action be taken on the Advance Delivery of Meeting Material policy but is recommending that the Magnet Schools/Enrollment Outside of Attendance Districts policy be deferred.

Ms. Ortiz said that PreK enrollment was included in the magnet school operations plan for 2014-15 however, due to a change in legislation PA 13-247; participating districts do not have to pay for enrolled preschool students. Ms. Ortiz is recommending that PreK enrollment be delayed until the State has more information.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mrs. Lambert reported that the next meeting will take place on November 18 at 6 PM to review Mr. Roach's plan regarding the High School and the Facilities Master Plan. In order to qualify for 80% of State reimbursement, the high school project has to be redesigned to move it from Phase III to Phase I. Extending the services of Friar Associates to do the work required to move the high school project into Phase I of the FMP is an action item later on this agenda. Mrs. Lambert reported that the Natchaug roof project is moving along, and she also reported that there are thirty items left to be taken care of at Barrows which will be done by the architect. Lighting will be added to the Windham Center parking lot, and there is a proposal to go forward to add lighting in the front of the High school.

Executive Committee

Dr. Sewall said that there is no report.

Executive Session

Per Dr. Sewall, executive session will take place when the attorney arrives.

ACTION ITEMS

2013-2014 School Improvement Plans (Ref. 2)

Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the School Improvement Plans as required per the Strategic Operating Plan, Goal 1, Strategy 1, Step 3. Plans for Natchaug Elementary School, North Windham Elementary School, Sweeney Elementary School, Windham Center Elementary School, Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy, Windham Middle School, Windham High School, and the Early Childhood Center are included.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Suspending applications for Norwich Free Academy (Ref. 3)

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve that applications for Norwich Free Academy be suspended until January 8, 2014, pending review of the Windham School District's continued participation in the program.

The motion is unanimously approved.

The Board convened to the Windham High School Conference Room A for the Executive Session portion of the meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education enter into executive session at 8:34 PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to bargaining unit negotiations.

The motion is unanimously approved.

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

OTHERS

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Attorney Mooney

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENES

Chair Dr. Sewall reconvened regular session at 9:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

Kelly Educational Services (Ref. 4)

Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee comprised of Finance & Operations, Human Resources and the Superintendent's office to approve Kelly Educational Services as the Substitute Provision vendor.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Contract Extension of Friar Associates (Ref. 5)

The School Planning and Design Committee recommends that the Board of Education approve acceptance of the contract extension of Friar Associates to modify the Facilities Master Plan as it pertains to the High School in Phase I of the Plan.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Bilingual Education Program grant application (Ref. 6)

Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement grant application (Ref. 7)

District Federal Consolidated grant application (Ref. 8)

Motion of Ms. Tinker, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve submission of the following grant applications: Bilingual Education Program grant application; Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement grant application; and District Federal Consolidated grant application.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Communications Policy: News Media Relations (Ref. 9)

Motion of Mr. French, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the Communications Policy: News Media Relations #1112.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Use of Social Media Policy (Ref. 10)

Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education approve the revised Use of Social Media Policy.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Magnet Schools/Enrollment Outside of Attendance Districts Policy (Ref. 11)

Motion of Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board of Education move to defer approval of the Magnet Schools/Enrollment Outside of Attendance Districts policy until the December 11, 2013, Board of Education meeting.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Approval of Appointments

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

1. Shuli Graham to the position of Speech Language Pathologist at North Windham School effective October 28, 2013. Replacement
2. Barry Kerster to the position of Literacy Facilitator at Windham Middle School effective November 4, 2013. New Position

The motion is unanimously approved.

First reading of Electronic Tablets for Board Members' Policy (Ref. 12)

Ms. Tinker updated Policy 9124 regarding electronic Board packets and to clarify ownership of tablets provided for Board of Education members. Mrs. Lambert suggested that the second reading of the policy take place at the November 20, 2013, workshop meeting. Ms. Tinker clarified that "upon election" will be removed from the policy.

First reading of Board of Education meeting dates for 2014 (Ref. 13)

Dr. Sewall recommended that the Board of Education retreat be scheduled in August. Approval of the meeting dates will take place at the December 11, 2013, Board meeting.

Special Master's Report

Dr. Adamowski thanked the three retiring Board members for their service to the district. He commended Superintendent Ortiz and Deputy Superintendent Gasper for the School Improvement Plans presented which were closely aligned with the Strategic Operating Plan. He said that there is a community group working to actively organize a Montessori school, and this concept will require a public discussion by the Board.

Dr. Sewall thanked Mrs. Collins, Mr. Adamo and Dr. Switchenko for their years of service. Superintendent Ortiz presented each of them with a certificate of appreciation.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board meeting adjourn at 9:30 P.M.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary