

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
May 12, 2010

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mr. Folan, Vice-chair Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Adamo, Dr. Switchenko, Mr. Doyle, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Collins, Dr. Sewall, Mrs. Lambert

BOARD ABSENT: No one

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Fuller, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson
Directors Mr. Forman and Dr. Olezza, WHS Assistant Principal Mr. Merlino

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVE: Hayley Dunnack

OTHERS PRESENT: General public, staff, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mr. Folan called the May 12, 2010, Board of Education meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. in conference room one (room 223), 2nd floor, Kramer School and apologized for the delayed start of the meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Fuller led the Board and the public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Folan asked for a moment of silence in memory of retired long-time Windham teacher and baseball coach, Mr. Fred Gifford, who passed away last week.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

April 28, 2010 Regular Board of Education minutes (Ref. 1)

(212)Motion of Mr. Doyle, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the April 28, 2010, Regular Board of Education minutes, Reference 1.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

April 28, 2010, Special Board of Education meeting minutes (Ref. 1A)

(213)Motion of Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Rayhall, that the Board of Education approved the April 28, 2010, Special Board of Education minutes, Reference 1A.

On the motion: Aye: Mr. Folan, Vice-chair Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Adamo, Mrs. Collins

Nay: None

Abstained: Mr. Doyle, Dr. Switchenko, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Sewall

The motion passed: 4-0-5

Presentation of CABA Student Leadership Awards

Mr. Merlino introduced Windham High School's recipients of this year's CABA Student Leadership Awards, Hayley Dunnack and Lance Lambert. He commended the students for their leadership qualities and the quiet confidence that they exhibit making them exceptional role models at the high school. Mr. Folan thanked Hayley and Lance for all that they have done for the high school and wished them well. They were congratulated by the Board members.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Folan shared an invitation he received from North Windham School for Board members to attend a retirement celebration, and each Board member received information regarding a transportation savings incentive grant which encourages sharing service agreements between boards of education. Mr. Folan thanked everyone who helped with the budget effort and said that work will continue to get the budget passed.

STUDENT COUNCIL

Hayley Dunnack reported that the Leadership Conference is next Friday, Mr. Merlino will be the keynote speaker, and this year's theme is *citizens in action*.

CITIZENS/DELEGATIONS

Alana Tartsinis, Windham, said that the uniform policy at the middle school has been positive but she has a concern with the logo part of the uniform and its cost. She asked the Board to consider this when looking at the policy.

Lisa Adams, Windham, spoke against the uniform policy for elementary students but does agree with uniforms for middle school students. She and her husband would rather purchase outfits for their daughter to wear. She said that children should be creative and be allowed to be themselves and uniforms are not necessary in the elementary schools.

Dennis Cronin, Willimantic, said that he is hesitant to support the uniform policy. With so many paraprofessional positions cut, he would rather write a check to keep a paraprofessional position than pay for uniforms.

Lori Jeffers, Willimantic, opposed the uniform policy and spoke about the colors and the logo which adds to the cost of the shirts. She questioned the requirement of khaki pants. She also said that plain color polo shirts and sweatshirts could be purchased for less money at Wal Mart.

Kymerli Gaylor, Windham, opposed the uniform policy and said that the survey sent out was misleading and did not focus on grades K through 4. She said that many parents were not aware that the policy implementing uniforms at the elementary schools was being voted on by the Board of Education tonight and felt that the way the survey was distributed was inadequate. Ms. Gaylor said that it is the parents' responsibility to send their children to school dressed appropriately and would rather see the money put towards education rather than children's attire.

Michelle Dupuis, Windham Center, opposed the uniform policy and said that it is the parents' responsibility to make sure that children dress appropriately. She said that she supports the policy for middle school students but doesn't see the need to have it at the elementary schools.

Mary Lou DeVivo, North Windham, said that Windham Center students have library cards and walk to the Windham Free Library during the school year to use their cards. She asked if Natchaug students could also get library cards for the library in Willimantic and walk there to use them. Mr. Folan referred her to the Student Services Committee.

Bernie D'Auteuil, Willimantic, said that the dress code should be simple but the real issue is with the leadership and the arrogance of the Board. He said that the town was held hostage with the deal made. He said that administration has been built up and it needs to be cut. He also said that with the way things are, everyone should be happy that they have a job, and the administration and the Board have to get their act together. He also said that if there was another vote taken, there would not be a magnet school. He also said that the schools that are already in place need to be set up the way they are supposed to be and there needs to be more transparency.

Kymerli Gaylor, Windham, asked for clarification as to the colors and logo for the school uniforms. Mrs. Collins said that the uniform itself is decided by the principals and is not part of the policy.

SUMMARY ACTION

Personnel Action (Ref. 2)

(214)Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mrs. Rayhall, that the Board of Education approve Reference 2

Resignations

- Nicole Jaser, Grade 4 Teacher/Natchaug School effective June 30, 2010.
- Marybeth Simonelli-Tavares, English Teacher/Windham High School effective June 30, 2010.
- JoAnne Hokanson, Speech Language Pathologist/Preschool Program effective June 30, 2010 for the purpose of retirement.
- Steven Decker, AIS Technician effective June 25, 2010.

Leaves of absence

- Jennifer Geragotelis, Grade 3 Teacher/Natchaug School, family medical leave of absence beginning April 26, 2010, duration unknown.
- Danette Abitz, Nurse/St. Mary's School, medical leave of absence beginning April 28, 2010 through approximately May 20, 2010.
- Susan Garcia, Head Start Home Visitor, family medical leave of absence effective April 27, 2010, duration unknown.
- Maida Mangual, Paraprofessional/Preschool Program, medical leave of absence beginning May 7, 2010 through approximately May 24, 2010.

There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

North Windham School PTO Scholarship (Ref. 3)

(215)Motion of Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education accept with deep gratitude the North Windham School PTO Scholarship, which will be awarded annually to a graduating Windham High School senior who has attended North Windham School. Mr. Folan thanked the North Windham School PTO for providing this scholarship.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

ACTION ITEMS

Revised Operation Plan and Educational Specifications for Windham Interdistrict Magnet School (Ref. 4)

(216)Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board of Education approve the revised Operation Plan and Educational Specifications for the Windham Interdistrict Magnet School for submittal to the State Department of Education. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

School Improvement Grant (Ref. 5)

(217)Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve submission of the School Improvement Grant application. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

Approval of Policies (Ref. 6, 6A, 6B)

(218)Ref. 6: Motion of Mrs. Haney, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board of Education approve Policy 4122 Student Teachers. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

(219)Ref. 6A: Motion of Mr. Adamo, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve Policy 4131(a) (b) (c) Staff Development. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

(220)Ref. 6B: Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Adamo, that the Board of Education approve Policy 1212 and Regulations 1212 (a) (b) School Volunteers. This is the second reading of these policies and no

changes have been made to them since the first reading at the April 28, 2010, Board meeting. In response to a question from Mrs. Lambert, Ms. Fuller replied that the parent volunteer form, which is part of the regulations, is already being used.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous

Revised Uniform Policy (Ref. 7)

(221) Motion of Mrs. Collins, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve revising Uniform Policy 5132.1 to include elementary schools. Mrs. Collins explained that the uniform company will be attending the next Student Services Committee meeting on May 25 to talk about prices and donation of uniforms to be used by families that can't afford to buy them. There is also a possibility that the school PTOs will be asked to donate money to help some parents pay for uniforms. Mrs. Collins said that the majority of the parent questionnaire responses were in favor of extending the uniform policy to the elementary schools. Mr. Doyle felt that more time should be taken to involve parents and administrators at the elementary level, similar to the way it was done at the Middle School. After much discussion regarding the wording and distribution of the questionnaire, Mr. Folan took a consensus of Board members and it was agreed by all the Board members except Mrs. Collins to table the motion until a revised questionnaire could be sent out asking more specific questions regarding implementing the uniform policy in grades K – 4, the shirt cost, and the use of logos on the shirts. Ms. Fuller said there is a time issue because it is already May but parents could be re-surveyed and the results could be ready for the next Board meeting. Motion is tabled until the May 26, 2010, Board meeting.

Race to the Top (RTTT) Grant Phase II (Ref. 8)

(222) Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve acceptance of the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant Phase II Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Dr. Sewall asked if there are any changes since the first phase. Ms. Fuller said that some of the high school reform requirements have been removed; however, these are now part of legislation for the class of 2018. She said that the primary focus now is the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative which will be imposed on all schools that sign up for this grant. Mr. Folan said that with all of the information he has received from across the state through CABE, he still cannot support this grant. Mr. Adamo and Mr. Doyle also said that they cannot support participation in the grant and, at this time, there are too many unanswered questions. Ms. Fuller said that many of the initiatives in the grant will eventually be imposed on school districts. Connecticut did not receive the grant the first time and Ms. Fuller is not sure if Connecticut will get it this time.

On the motion: Aye: Dr. Switchenko, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Sewall

Nay: Mr. Folan, Vice-chair Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Adamo, Mr. Doyle

Abstained: None

The motion passed: 5-4-0

REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Pre-Kindergarten report (Ref. 9)

Ms. Beth Martin, pre-school teacher, provided the Board with information regarding the pre-school part of a large federal grant managed by Eastern Connecticut State University. The Response to Intervention (RTI), which is a new way of looking at gathering data to identify students who need support, is being used to compile a great amount of data at the pre-school level. Ms. Martin reviewed the Grant Research Data phase of the grant, which involves the gathering of data at the beginning and end of the school year. This data is then used as a tool to develop professional development and instruction plans. She also explained that on-going data is collected by teachers and coaches, known as the Teacher/Coaching Data phase and this data is used to change instruction and professional development as needed. The third phase is Program Data, which is used as part of the bi-monthly meetings held to analyze and discuss students' needs in different areas. Dr.

Switchenko commented that pre-school is where learning should begin and having this program in place is imperative to ongoing student success. He hopes that this process continues once the grant ends in two years. Ms. Martin answered questions from the Board. Mr. Folan thanked her for her report to the Board.

Special Education report (Ref. 10)

Mr. Forman presented information regarding the prevalence rates in Windham schools. He showed several charts comparing Windham to other towns indicating percent of all students with disabilities, percent of preschool participation, percent of budget used for special education, and special education cost per student. He also reviewed significant initiatives that have been undertaken such as a new early intervention process, new guidelines for identification of students with learning disabilities, the first phase of Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), and Tier II interventions in reading. Mr. Forman also compared the number of special education students decertified over time, the number of students determined eligible for special education, the hours of special education services per week, and special education prevalence rates from 2007 to the present time, showing a decrease in prevalence rates. Mr. Forman answered Board members' questions and he was thanked for his informative report.

Financial report – April 2010 (Ref. 11)

Mr. Nelson said that even though there is not an official budget freeze at this time, he has requested that principals closely watch spending and the business office is also reviewing all purchase orders that are submitted.

Announcements/Information (Ref. 12)

- Windham High School *Library Media Center Newsletter* – March & April
 - Windham Federation of Teachers' Correspondence (April 26, 2010) and Ballot (May 3, 2010)
- There were no comments.

Board of Education

Subcommittee Reports:

Magnet School: Mrs. Haney and Mrs. Collins reported that the committee met on Monday evening and updates were provided on ongoing issues. Mrs. Rayhall is helping to organize a meeting with police and fire chiefs, the architect gave a visual rendering of the school building, and Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetland commissions will be meeting tomorrow evening.

Facilities/Maintenance: Ms. Fuller reported that updates for each building were given by Mr. McGlew: security cameras are being installed at the middle school; the COGEN test has been successfully completed at WHS; the directional valve needs to be replaced for the Windham Center leach field; and light switches at WMS have been upgraded. Mr. McGlew also reported on a significant number of projects done over April vacation and some minor repairs that have been made to the Natchaug School roof. Now that the town has a bucket truck, it can be used when necessary so that this type of work no longer has to be contracted out.

Magnet School Operational: Mr. Doyle reported that revisions to the Operation Plan and Education Specifications that were approved at tonight's meeting were reviewed.

School-based Health Center: Mrs. Collins reported that the annual meeting was held. The Governor's budget had cuts to the program; however, these cuts did not materialize. There are still concerns about the budget and the future of school-based health centers.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

CITIZENS/DELEGATIONS

Michelle Dupuis, Windham, asked that the uniform policy surveys either be mailed or sent home in the Friday folders so that there is a more equitable distribution of them this time.

Dennis Cronin, Willimantic, commented that the Board and administration do a commendable job and are a very transparent entity. He said that misinformation travels throughout the town. He also said that children receive their education at home as well as at school.

Bernie D'Auteuil, Willimantic, said that the problem is in the home for students. He suggested that with the use of in-school suspension, students could be placed at the juvenile court building which is being closed. He also said that parents need to be involved and parent night should be mandatory. He said that there are many issues.

Bernice Fernandez, Willimantic, asked about tutors being available only at the elementary level and not offered at the middle school. Mr. Folan referred Ms. Fernandez to contact Ms. Fuller with her concern.

ADJOURNMENT

(223) Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Rayhall, that the Board meeting adjourn at 8:35 P.M.

On the motion: Aye, 9-0; unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

John Adamo, Secretary