

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES  
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT  
May 25, 2011

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

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Adamo

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Abbey Baldarelli, Allison Risley

OTHERS PRESENT: general public, staff, administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mr. Folan called the May 25, 2011, Board of Education meeting to order at 7:08 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. Folan asked for a moment of silence in memory of Windham Center teacher and former Teacher of the Year, Betsy Gonzalez.

Mr. Folan asked for a motion to add the recommended revision of the Windham Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Plan to the agenda as an action item.

(242)Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board of Education add the recommended revision of the Windham Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Plan to the agenda as an action item (C. Reference 4A).

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

May 11, 2011, Regular Board of Education meeting (Ref. 1)

(243)Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve the May 11, 2011, Regular Board of Education minutes, Reference 1.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

May 5, 2011, Special Board of Education meeting minutes (Ref. 1A)

(244)Motion of Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve the May 5, 2011, Special Board of Education minutes, Reference 1A.

On the motion: Aye: Mr. Folan, Mrs. Rayhall, Dr. Sewall

Nay: No one

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

The motion passes: 3-0-5

May 9, 2011, Special Board of Education meeting minutes (Ref. 1B)

(245)Motion of Mrs. Haney, seconded by Mrs. Rayhall, that the Board of Education approve the May 9, 2011, Special Board of Education minutes, Reference 1B.

On the motion: Aye: Mr. Folan, Mrs. Rayhall

Nay: No one

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

The motion passes: 2-0-6

**STUDENT PRESENTATION:** The following students were awarded certificates for winning in their category in the *Windham Reads* Spelling Bee contest that recently took place: Marlene Benitez, Zachary Niemi, Sierra Cunningham, Liemsi Prieto, Isabelle Perez, Ruben Ahoueya, Bryon Martinez, Elizabeth Halbert, Brandon Hernandez Vasquez, Mario Roque Gonzalez, Ellie Swanson, Karim Morente-Marquez, Leon Brown, Jaden Mejia, Avantay Baker, Akianys Torres, Lauren Johnson, Yaishellys Catala, Gabriela Velez, Kaitlin Covino, Anthony Ortiz, Jacob Spielvogel, and Keneishaliz Irizarry. The students were congratulated, and the Board and Ms. Ortiz thanked Mrs. DeVivo for organizing the event.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Collins commented that she and Mrs. Haney attended the Windham High School play, *The King and I*, and said that it was exceptionally well done.

Ms. Ortiz informed the Board that Mr. Koschmieder was notified that all of the families in the district have qualified to receive the summer food cards. She thanked him for all of the work that went into the application process to the State.

Mr. Folan reminded everyone that the High School and Middle School will hold a combined concert tomorrow evening.

### STUDENT COUNCIL

Abbey Baldarelli reported that the Leadership Conference at Eastern Connecticut State University is taking place tomorrow. She also reported that Student Council has been holding bake sales and will hold a car wash on June 8 to raise money for one of their classmates who is ill.

### CITIZENS/DELEGATIONS

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, spoke about the School Improvement Grant and said that she objects to the dismissal of Mr. Merlino.

Carol Coley, Columbia, expressed her concerns with removing Mr. Merlino from the Windham High School principalship.

Jenny El Shakhs, Windham High School teacher, praised Mr. Merlino and said that it would not be in the best interest of the school district to replace him.

Bill Powers, Windham High School teacher and Windham resident, spoke in support of Mr. Merlino and asked the Board to thoroughly research the possibility of keeping him as principal.

Mark Phelps, Windham, said that Mr. Merlino helped make his daughter's experience at Windham High School positive and said that he hopes there is a way to keep him as principal.

Julie Baker, Willimantic, spoke highly of Mr. Merlino and gave him credit for helping her daughter succeed.

Dara Bowling, Windham High School teacher, said that the students want Mr. Merlino to stay on as principal. She said that it is in the best interest of Windham to keep him.

Tara Risley, Willimantic, commended the Board for keeping Windham Middle School sports in the budget. She spoke in favor of Mr. Merlino as principal and said it would be a tragedy not to explore every option to keep him as principal.

Rafael Calixto, Willimantic, spoke in support of Mr. Merlino and begged the Board to reconsider and find a way to keep him as principal. He asked the Board to give Mr. Merlino the opportunity to work with the School Improvement Grant.

### SUMMARY ACTION

#### Personnel Action (Ref. 2)

(246)Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve Reference 2.

#### Resignations

- Aaron Fagan, Data Specialist/Central Office, effective June 3, 2011.
- Alba Trevino, Special Education Paraprofessional/North Windham School, effective May 16, 2011.
- Jennifer Lamberson, Guidance Counselor/Windham High School, effective June 20, 2011.

#### Appointment

- Yavier Jimenez, Custodian/Natchaug School, effective May 12, 2011. Hourly rate is \$10.00, replaces Kevin Burke who transferred.

#### Leave of absence

- Danna Irons, Grade 3 Teacher/North Windham School, childbearing/childrearing leave of absence, effective September 1, 2011, through October 7, 2011.

There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

### ACTION ITEMS

#### Nicholas Merlino Memorial Award (Ref. 3)

(247)Motion of Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education accept with deep gratitude the Nicholas Merlino Memorial Award. Mr. Folan thanked Mr. Merlino and his family for their generosity.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

#### Budget Transfers (Ref. 4)

(248)Motion of Dr. Switchenko, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the budget transfers as presented by Mr. Nelson. He included an additional transfer that was distributed at tonight's meeting. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

#### Revision of Windham Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Plan (Ref. 4A)

(249)Motion of Mr. Doyle, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the revision of the Windham Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Plan to comply with the requirements of the School Improvement Grant. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

### REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### Superintendent's Reports

##### Interdistrict Magnet School (Ref. 5)

Mr. Blain, along with Building Committee Chairman Mr. DeVivo and Mr. Benjamin from Arcadis, provided the Board with an update on the status of the Windham Inter-district Cultural Studies and Environmental Science Magnet School building project. They reported on the comprehensive study report; the project phases and timelines; and the site and design development which included design team meetings throughout the year with Windham staff members and a site visit to the Mary Hooker Environmental Science Magnet School in Hartford. They were thanked for their report.

### Community Conversation (Ref. 6)

Community Based Task Force on Educational Improvement member, Ms. Suedmeyer, with assistance from Task Force member Mr. Gomez, highlighted information gathered from the participants in the recent Community Conversation held at Windham Middle School. She reported that the following recommendations were made as a result of the event: make parent outreach a priority; charge the parent engagement advisory team (PEAT) with the task of creating “Welcoming Schools”; create a “Translation Team” to ensure Board of Education meetings, presentations, the school website and parent information are bilingual; have the School Resource Officer (SRO) full time at all levels; hold additional community conversations about Middle and High School transition; and expand the use of resources available at the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University. They were thanked for their report. Mr. Folan asked that Student Services Committee discuss these recommendations and ways to implement them.

### Announcements/Information (Ref. 7)

Included is the June 2011 district calendar. There was no discussion.

### Lighthouse Training (Ref. 8)

Dr. Switchenko reported that the Lighthouse Training which began in November has been very helpful and beneficial. The Board has been working on identifying obstacles in Windham and ways for the Board and community to work together thus gaining community support.

### First Reading of Policies (Ref. 9 and 9A)

This is the first reading of the Food Service Charging Policy (3542.43) and Educational Opportunities for Military Children Policy (5118.2). Dr. Sewall reported that both of these are new policies. Mr. Koschmieder has reviewed the Food Service Charging Policy. These will be back on the agenda at the June 8, 2011, meeting for final approval.

### Subcommittee Reports:

*Budget/Finance:* Mr. Doyle reported that the budget transfers were approved; there was a joint meeting with the Board of Finance; and there will be a Town meeting with the referendum set for the following Tuesday. He said that it is important that people support the budget and vote on June 7. Mr. Folan and Dr. Switchenko both stressed the importance of voting on June 7.

*Facilities/Maintenance:* Mrs. Rayhall reported that Joe Gardner presented a proposal to install solar panels on some town and school buildings at a cost of \$600 each providing a much greater savings in energy costs; there was an update from the Fire Marshall and a State mandate will require CO detectors in buildings; the capital improvement list was reviewed and forwarded to the Board of Finance; there was a report on the Magnet School; and vandalism at the schools was discussed.

*Program Development/Evaluation:* Ms. Packer reported that she presented information to the committee about the summer reading program. This year’s theme is *One World, Many Stories*.

*Districtwide PTO:* Mrs. Haney reported that the focus of the meeting was discussion of the plans for the June 11 Family Day event from 10 AM to 2 PM at Jillson Square. This is an opportunity for Windham schools to be showcased. She thanked Tara Risley for all she’s done to help organize the event.

*Student Services:* Mrs. Collins reported that the committee received a draft of the alternate school proposal. Members would like to find out if it is feasible to begin the plan in the fall of 2011 rather than wait until 2012. Ms. Ortiz said that the administrative team is looking into it but it will be difficult to get it in place by September.

*EASTCONN:* Mr. Adamo was not present to give a report.

*Personnel:* Dr. Switchenko reported that Mrs. Banks gave an update on next year's staffing throughout the district and members discussed a number of executive session items.

*Policy/Planning:* Dr. Sewall said that the committee will not meet in June but will hold a meeting on July 6 prior to the Board meeting.

### FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Doyle asked that the alternate school proposal be placed on next month's Board agenda. Mrs. Collins asked about the feasibility study and using University of Connecticut staff. Ms. Ortiz said that she has spoken with staff there and they are seeing if they have the capacity to perform such a study.

### CITIZENS/DELEGATIONS

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that she would like to see more transparency and asked if the top students were leaving the district.

Henry Crane, Willimantic, said that he was pleased with the number of people that voted but there still are a lot of people who don't vote. He suggested providing rides to the polls next time.

Mary Lou DeVivo, North Windham, spoke about a recent article, "Save the Children." She said that government grants are wonderful but come with many restrictions. She asked if there will be a community forum regarding the comprehensive reports. Mr. Folan said that any forums held will be set up through the State Department of Education.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

(250)Motion of Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Mrs. Haney, that the Board of Education enter into executive session at 8:46 PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to bargaining unit negotiations and personnel matters.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

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

### ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

### REGULAR SESSION RECONVENES

Chair Mr. Folan reconvened regular session at 9:47 P.M.

(251)Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board add to the agenda at this time the recommended ratification of the tentative agreement with the Windham Federation of Maintenance Workers.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

(252)Motion of Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board of Education move the ratification of the tentative agreement between the Windham Board of Education and the Windham Federation of Maintenance Workers.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

### ADJOURNMENT

(253)Motion by Mrs. Rayhall, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 9:50 P.M.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth J. Folan, Chair