

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
April 13, 2016

BOARD PRESENT: Vice-chair Dr. Sewall, Secretary Dr. Gomez, Mr. Kalajian, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Montalvo, Mr. French, Mr. Quamme, Mr. Flores-Alvarez

BOARD ABSENT: Chair Mrs. Osuba

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia, Interim Assistant Superintendent Mr. Chaffin, Interim Assistant Superintendent Dr. Hebert, Directors: Ms. Beghetto, Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: None

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

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-chair Dr. Sewall called the April 13, 2016 Board of Education meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLIEGIANCE

Mr. Kalajian led the Board and the Public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

February 24, 2016 workshop meeting (Ref. 1)

March 2, 2016 special meeting (Ref. 1A)

March 9, 2016 business meeting (Ref. 1B)

March 23, 2106 workshop meeting (Ref. 1C)

April 5, 2016 special meeting (Ref.1D)

Mrs. Lambert noted that in the minutes of the February 24, 2016 meeting, her congratulations were for the track team for winning in their conference.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Kalajian that the Board of Education approve the February 24, 2016 workshop meeting (Ref. 1), as corrected and the March 2, 2016 special meeting (Ref. 1A), March 9, 2016 business meeting (Ref. 1B), March 23, 2106 workshop meeting (Ref. 1C), April 5, 2016 special meeting (Ref. 1D) as submitted.

Motion is unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ben Van Rheen, Willimantic, asked if the State would be able to fund a STEM kindergarten at the Academy. He also questioned whether, due to the state budget cutbacks, the District would have to return monies if the provisions of the grant were not met.

Nicole Bay, teacher, addressed the issue of staff preference for placement at Barrows STEM Academy. She stated that had she known that the board policy was going to be changed to restrict staff to a one-time opportunity to apply for preference, she would not have utilized it for her daughter's kindergarten. She asked the Board to take into consideration her longevity as an employee of the District as they considered her request to be grandfathered with respect to the new policy. She also pointed out that the 2015-2020 Plan states that the staff should be advised of any policy changes that would impact them.

Catina Caban-Owens, social worker, brought three teams of students from Eastern State College who have been working in the District. One team worked on a career day for 3rd and 4th graders, the second team implemented an anti-bullying and caring ambassador program to the 5th Grade. Another group worked on the task force to prevent child abuse and neglect. The group will be hosting "A Time to Play" on April 30 from noon to 3pm at Memorial Park and they encouraged Board members to attend.

Mary Gallucci, parent, informed the Board that the anniversary of Shakespeare's death would be celebrated this year and she would like to see students in the District have an opportunity to take advantage of events that are being held to commemorate this anniversary at UCONN. She said that offering students an opportunity to participate in cultural events is vital to their educational experience. Ms. Gallucci spoke to the budget and reiterated the High School SGC's position that the language classes are too large, the ECO program needs to be better explained and that it is important to have more transparency with regard to the planning for the high school to become a STEM school. She further commented that the high school search process is not effective and, perhaps, a collaborative model needs to be employed.

Ryan Garvie, Willimantic, is a volunteer in many programs in the Town. He reported that the local youth sports groups had prepared their advertising and then found out they could not use District facilities. He requested that when a change in policy is made, all local groups be informed.

Mary Lou Smith, former teacher, spoke in support of Nicole Bay's request that the policy regarding staff preference have a grandfather clause. She also read a letter from another parent in Ms. Bay's class who supported Ms. Bay's position.

Al Korczynski, Willimantic, stated that the Board of Finance is working with a Board of Education budget that is a concession. He spoke about public perception of the process and how the process failed. He encouraged a dialogue between the Board and the members of the schools' SCGs as he felt that people still had many questions. He also addressed the issue of staff preference and said the staff works hard and deserves every courtesy. Mr. Korczynski also indicated that he would work hard to have the budget passed.

Nickie Kelsin, parent, spoke in support of Ms. Bay's position regarding staff preference. She stated that Ms. Bay's team should be commended and that it would be best to allow Ms. Bay's daughter to attend the same school. Her opinion is that it is important to use the staff preference policy as a retention tool for good teachers.

Bill Powers, Windham Center, commended Ms. Caban-Owens' program for their work that they are doing in the schools. He went on to say that the Board needs to work in a cohesive way so that the budget can be passed. He spoke of his relationship with many of the Board

members and asked them to come together and, if they did, the community would come out in support of the budget.

Kelly, Windham, also spoke in support of Ms. Bay and said the District cannot afford to lose another good teacher.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Reports

High School Music Department Brings Back Awards

The Windham High School Band, Jazz Band and Orchestra recently traveled to the Worldstrides Music Festival in Philadelphia, PA and received a bronze and two silver medals. Competing against 6 top bands, the Windham High music department performed beautifully and represented Windham Public Schools well.

High School Chess Club to Compete for First Time

For the first time, the Windham High School chess club is competing in a tournament on April 29 at Ellis Tech. Club Advisor, Tom Campo, is bringing students Samuel Halbert, Stephen Heredia, Kelvin Lorenzo, Miguel O'Connor, Leamsi Prieto and Tyler Szabo to compete in the event.

Windham High School Winter Athletic Accomplishments

Windham High School's winter sports teams celebrated their accomplishments at a recent event. The boys' basketball, boys' indoor track, and wrestling teams were ECC divisional champions. The wrestling team was also named class S state champions. Student athlete wrestlers Anthony Flores, Julio Flores Alejandro Garcia, Cullan Contos, and Seiji Aruaga were named All State. Alexander Korczynski was named boys' indoor track All State. Coach Patrick Risley and Assistant Coach Michael Haggerty were named Class S divisional coaches of the year.

Windham Middle School Correspondence with President Obama

As part of a performance task in teacher, Hailey McClure's, reading language arts class, Windham Middle School's Hill City Students wrote letters to President Obama and recently received a response. After conducting research on the juvenile justice system in the United States, 48 sixth graders wrote letters to the President that summarized their research and included a recommendation for how the President could change the system. President Obama responded with a thoughtful letter.

Connecticut Roadway Safety Poster Contest Winners

Natchaug School had two winners in the CT Roadway Safety Poster Contest. Dayeishla Martinez Salgado won honorable mention in the Grade 2-4 category and Ismael Ingles won first place in that same category. Both students were honored on April 7 at the 2016 Work Zone Safety Press Conference. Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman and DOT Commissioner James Redeker were in attendance at the conference to offer their congratulations. At the next meeting of the Board, the Windham Fire Chief will present the awards to the District winners.

Windham Public School Selected to Present at CAFE Conference

Windham Public Schools has been selected to present at the 2016 CABE/CAPSS convention on November 18-19, 2016. The theme of this year's conference is "Children First: Opening Opportunities for All." Superintendent Garcia will be joined by QVCC and Electric Boat representatives as they discuss ways in which the Windham Early College Opportunity program has strengthened community partnership and created pathways for students to higher education and careers.

Parent and Community University

The second Parent and Community University was held on April 9, 2016. Over 90 people registered to participate, 68 of them being parents or community members. Additionally, 58 children attended and were led through a day of activities. Thank you to everyone who either supported or participated in the sessions. The next session is scheduled for November 5, 2016.

TEALS

The District is investigating the possibility of offering the TEALS program at Windham High School. This program is sponsored by Microsoft Corporation through their community outreach initiative. The main purpose of the program is to develop collaborative classrooms to ensure computer science courses are available to all high school students. Through the collaboration with Microsoft, Windham High School could add an Introduction to Computer Science class to its program of studies. The course would be co-taught by a current high school teacher and industry volunteers. The teacher and volunteers would attend professional development to learn the curriculum, identify the resources, and ensure content area knowledge. This program is in the information gathering stage but, if selected, Windham would be the first district in Connecticut to participate in this program.

Spanish for Educators

The ELL/ESOL and World Languages departments are currently providing Spanish for Educators classes to 50 teachers in the District. There are four classes to accommodate teacher schedules. More teachers are interested in participating. A special thank you to Karen Lapuk for working on this program and to the instructor, Arnaldo Rivera.

Diversity Awareness Training

The District is committed to supporting teachers in developing an understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity. In this way, teachers will be prepared to fully engage, challenge and support every student, every day, in every classroom. Training in diversity awareness was held at the beginning of April and was attended by 22 staff members and a member of the Board of Education. The training was funded through a two-year grant. Those who took part in the experience will have the opportunity to continue with their training and become Diversity Awareness facilitators in the District.

Algebra Camp

The District will be offering another Algebra Camp program this summer. This invitation-only class is for rising 8th grade students who might have difficulty accessing the content of Algebra 1 without support. At this time, we anticipate inviting approximately 160 students to participate.

Summer School Plan Update

Dr. Garcia summarized the summer school plan. Leadership training is in discussion. Mrs. Lambert asked how this plan might impact students participating in other summer programs and was informed that the schedule would accommodate the needs of students who have other obligations.

Pupil Services Proposal

The Pupil Services department is proposing to add two classes to the Camino Alto Program for 2016-2017. There are currently students at WMS who could continue in the high school. Additionally, the WMS program can be further developed to assist students with chronic absenteeism due to medically documented anxiety as well as allowing for the school to place students without moving to costly outplacements. There is discussion regarding a new District program for the elementary schools with a focus on autism. Adding this class would save on out of district placement tuition. The challenge is find room in one of the buildings to house the program. Dr. Garcia thanked Ms. Packer for her work on this programming.

Tuition Increase – Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy

Based on information from the State, it is possible that the District might receive less in STEM tuition reimbursement. Since its inception, the Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy tuition has remained the same. Last year, sending schools were informed of the possibility of increasing tuition. Sending schools will receive a preliminary letter by April 15, 2017 and a final letter by May 15, 2016, as required by statute.

Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy Lottery

This year's lottery was delayed due to uncertainty in magnet school funding from the State. As such, while all classroom seats will be made available during the lottery, seats offered to applicants from districts outside of Windham are provisional until a final determination on funding is given by the State. The lottery will take place Wednesday, April 27.

OCR Review

On May 2, 2016, representatives from the CT State Department of Education will be doing a random civil rights review at Windham High School. Public schools that receive state and federal funding are subject to random reviews. The review will be conducted in two parts. The first is a review of policies and programs and the second part is a facility review which will occur in June, 2016. All materials that have been requested for the visit have been collected and have been delivered to the team for review prior to the event. This is a scheduled review and is not being conducted as a result of a complaint.

NEASC Update

On April 5, 2015, the District received the final Windham high School NEASC report. The next Board Workshop will cover NEASC. Dr. Garcia reviewed the timeline which will be followed and which is in compliance with the instructions provided. The high school received many commendations as well as recommendations. An important commendation from the NEASC Committee pertains to class size. According to the report, the high school has class size that

supports students' learning and engagement. Dr. Gomez requested that the NEASC report be sent to the Board prior to the standard timeframe for Board packets to be delivered. Dr. Garcia indicated that the report would be provided to Board members on April 14.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance and Audit Committee

Dr. Sewall reported that the Finance and Audit Committee has not met since the budget has gone to the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance has made preliminary decisions after public hearings. He advised that, if the budget were to be the same as last year, there would still be an increase in taxes due to the State's revision of the auto tax. He encouraged everyone to check on the assessment of their property so they could determine the impact of an increase in the mill rate would have on their taxes. The town budget as of the last Board of Finance meeting would result in an increase of 1.77. Mr. French said that there is an imbalance due to the calculation of Pilot funds. Mrs. Lambert expressed her concern regarding the loss of grant funding and stated that the Board needs to prepare for the eventuality of even less grants.

There was a discussion regarding the Board of Finance's proposal to provide pull-out funds of \$377,000 for one-time expenses. The Board requested a more detailed breakdown of the expenses impacted by the pull-out. Dr. Sewall said that ECS and Alliance monies are not to be cut for Windham according to an article in the *Hartford Courant*. Mr. Kalajian agreed that, over time, as many programs and expenses should be moved away from grants. He stated that it is important but needs to be done gradually. Mr. French stated that he is not confident in the State's ability to provide funding.

School Planning and Design Committee

Mr. Kalajian reported that the School Planning and Design Committee has done a huge amount of planning and work that has laid the groundwork for a plan to ensure the buildings work well with the curriculum. There are circumstances that may result in the evaluation of the plan going forward. The high school is under a renovate like new plan. The building was built for a much larger population which is advantageous as the planning moves forward. There is a potential to have 75% or more of the renovations paid by bond monies.

There is a suggestion that the committee consider more options, such as regionalization, magnet status, and partnering with other districts. A group will be convened to include the community, Board members, Town Council members, and an outside facilitator. A community forum is planned to be held sometime in May. He encouraged anyone with questions to come to the School Planning and Design Committee meetings.

Mr. Kalajian also reported that the four wells are complete and will be tied into the water supply shortly.

Policy Committee

Mr. Alvarez-Flores reported that the committee will meet on the last Thursday of the month. Mr. Montalvo requested that the recent policies be forwarded to him as a new member of the committee. Mr. Alvarez-Flores said that the meeting time has been changed to 6pm.

Executive Committee

Dr. Sewall reported that the committee would be meeting on April 14 at 5:30pm in the Superintendent's office.

ACTION ITEMS

Windham Middle School Low Performing Schools Bond Fund Grant Application (Ref.2)

Windham High School Low Performing Schools Bond Fund Grant Application (Ref. 3)

Natchaug Low Performing Schools Bond Fund Grant Application (Ref. 4)

Motion of Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education approve the submission of the Low Performing Schools Bond Fund Grant Applications for Windham Middle School, Windham High School and Natchaug School.

Ms. Lambert said these were formerly schools under the Alliance Grant. Dr. Sewall said this is a one-time opportunity.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Personnel Recommendations (Ref. 5)

Motion of Mr. Kalajian, seconded by Dr. Gomez that the Board of Education approve the following appointments and accept the following resignations as recommended:

APPOINTMENTS

- Lismary Alvarado, to the position of Paraprofessional at Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective February 29, 2016, salary \$12.29 per hour. Replacement.
- Sylvia Villsenor to the position of Paraprofessional at Windham Middle School effective March 14, 2016, salary \$12.29 per hour. Replacement.
- Melissa McLaren to the position of K-5 ESOL Teacher at North Windham School effective February 7, 2016, salary \$44,412. Replacement.
- Katelyn Werner to the position of Grade 7 Math Teacher at Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective March 28, 2016, salary \$44,412. Replacement.
- James Alvarez to the position of Custodian at Windham Middle School effective April 4, 2016, salary \$13.50 per hour. Replacement.

RESIGNATIONS

- Thanh Nguyen, Principal at Windham Middle School effective April 26, 2016.
- Lauren Quinn, Music Teacher at Windham Middle School effective June 10, 2016.
- Wendy Dowling, Secretary III at Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective April 28, 2016.
- Shawn Gilblair, Tutor at Windham High School effective April 8, 2016.
- Bozena Kowalczyk, Tutor at Windham High School effective April 15, 2016.
- Lucia Mercurio, RLA – Grade 7 Teacher at Windham Middle School effective June 10, 2016.
- Mari Shooks, Nurse at Windham Center School effective July 31, 2016, for the purpose of retirement.
- Amanda Argazzi, Reading Teacher at Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective June 15, 2016.
- Joshua Marsh, ELA Teacher at Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective June 30, 2016.
- Allison Griswold, Biology Teacher at Windham High School effective June 10, 2016.

- Maren Sussman, Math Coach at Natchaug School effective June 30, 2016.

Ms. Lambert commented that losing so many teachers from Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy is a great loss and that Mari Shooks retirement would have a great impact.

Mr. Montalvo observed that there were a great many staff members leaving and asked if exit interviews were performed. Dr. Garcia affirmed that exit interviews were performed and that there were many reasons for staff leaving the District. Dr. Gomez mentioned that this has been a long-standing problem and he would be interested in seeing last year's numbers. Mr. Kalajian said it would be interesting to see a comparison to other professions. Dr. Sewall mentioned that many young people leave the district to be in metropolitan areas. Dr. Gomez said that even though this is not a new conversation, it is time to take a serious look at the information. Ms. Lambert stated that there is also an issue with high turnover rate of management staff. Mr. French said that perhaps the Town Council would consider some sort of incentive program for teachers to live in the Windham community.

Motion is unanimously approved.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Montalvo said that policies are put in place to help people and create order and endorsed having Ms. Bay's grandfather request be approved.

Mr. Quamme commented regarding the TEALS program. He said that he understood the value of a program such as this and that, if it had been available when he was in high school, it would have been a great help in many of the courses he is taking in college. Dr. Garcia agreed with Mr. Quamme and said that there was great value in having someone from Microsoft assist with the co-teaching of the classes. Dr. Sewall said that an effort should be made to recruit women into the classes.

Ms. Lambert was concerned about any policy change that would discourage the community from utilizing the District facilities. She inquired as to whether this was new policy or an existing policy that was just now being enforced. Dr. Garcia said that the use of facilities process is not a new policy.

Mr. French inquired as to whether the Board had a response from the attorney regarding the alleged illegal meeting. Dr. Garcia said a reply was received and sent to Ms. Osoba. The Board requested that the letter be sent to the entire Board. Dr. Garcia indicated it would be sent on April 14. Mr. French also stated that there were concerns that the Compañeros Program at Barrows was not within the grant parameters. Dr. Garcia said that the State is aware of the use of the classrooms for the Compañeros program and that the utilization was properly documented. The issue arose due to the fact that there are no sending schools for the STEM Pre-K program as State funding is not provided. Dr. Sewall said that the grant compliance documents are very clear.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion of Ms. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education enter into executive session at 8:57PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to personnel matters and contract negotiations.

Motion is unanimously approved.

BOARD PRESENT: Vice-chair Dr. Sewall, Secretary Dr. Gomez, Mr. Kalajian, Mrs. Lambert,
Mr. Montalvo, Mr. French, Mr. Quamme, Mr. Flores-Alvarez

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia, Director Ms. Beghetto.

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENES

Vice Chair, Dr. Sewall reconvened regular session at 10:03PM

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Ms. Lambert, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 10:04PM.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jaime Gomez, Secretary