

WATERBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES ~ REGULAR MEETING

Monday, December 3, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.

Waterbury Arts Magnet School, 16 South Elm Street, Waterbury, Connecticut

PRESENT: President Hayes, Commissioners D'Angelo, Flaherty-Merritt, Harvey, Laccone, Pinto, Stango, Sweeney, Theriault, and White.

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent Snead, Assistant Superintendents Cullinan and Sequeira, Chief Operating Officer Paul Guidone, Director of Personnel Ron Frost, Attorney Maurice Mosley, and School Inspector Herbert Greengas.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

President Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m. with a moment of silence and a prayer and Superintendent Snead led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

CLERK: Commissioner D'Angelo.

D'ANGELO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Harvey.

HARVEY: Here

CLERK: Commissioner Laccone.

LACCONO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Pinto.

PINTO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Stango.

STANGO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Sweeney.

SWEENEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Theriault.

THERIAULT: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner White.

WHITE: Here.

CLERK: President Hayes.

HAYES: Here.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Upon a motion by Commissioner Harvey and duly seconded by Commissioner White, it was voted unanimously to receive and place on file the following communications:

1. Copy of communications from Civil Service dated November 19, 2007 to Barbara Rusin, Jessica Cheezic, Donna Verrastro, and Jolee Dinho certifying them for the position of Administrative Support Specialist I.
2. Copy of communication from Civil Service dated November 20, 2007 to Jamie D'Agostino certifying her for the position of Administrative Support Specialist I.
3. Copy of communications from Civil Service dated November 26, 2007 to Heather Christie certifying her for the position of Public Health Non-professional Aide; Richard Rinaldi for the position of Library Page, Doreen Biolo for the position of Business Analyst, and Margaret Williams for the position of Administrative Support Specialist I

HAYES: Motion made and seconded. Any discussion? All in favor, opposed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Good evening, welcome. First of all, I would like to congratulate our returning recently elected members of the Board of Education, Commissioners Pat Hayes, John Theriault, and Mary White and also to welcome our new Commissioners, Paul D'Angelo, Stephen Laccone, and Antonio Pinto. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to make strides to make Waterbury the leader of urban education in Connecticut.

As you know, this morning I called for a 90 minute delay to the school day. Although the Street Department was busy clearing the streets at 3:30 a.m. when I got the call, there was an additional concern that the sidewalks and parking lots around the schools and those used by walkers would not be safe until the temperature rose above freezing. Therefore, I chose to delay the opening.

Last Tuesday, members of the Board and the Cabinet met with our State Legislators to discuss Education related matters including:

- Education Cost Sharing Grant
- New Elementary School – North End site
- Magnet School Funding
- District effects due to the new suspension legislation
- Changes to Families With Special Needs laws and implications for schools
- Blueprint for School Readiness
- New Juvenile Review Board
- Special Education Outplacements/Due Process
- Request for support from the legislators for a Waterbury specific award of funds for after school programs

The legislators were very responsive to the concerns of the District and have agreed to look into several matters and to meet again with our Legislative Committee.

On Wednesday, the Appellate Court Session was held at Wilby High School. This was an exemplary event which was a tribute to Wilby High School, the Waterbury School System, and the City. I would like to thank Attorney Mosley for assisting in coordinating this event. And of course our Chief Operating Officer Paul Guidone in making sure everything was in order.

This past Thursday I along with other Central Office Staff attended the first statewide reading summit at the CT Grand Hotel held by Commissioner McQuillan. A number of strategies were discussed to improve reading scores, some of which have already been implemented in Waterbury. And by the way, the room was packed; there were well over 400 professionals there from all around the State of Connecticut. Also discussed was the importance of parent involvement.

Next week Cambridge Associates will conduct their district wide audit, as well as an audit of five schools required by the State under this year's ECS set-aside funding. Staff from Cambridge and the State will be here for four days.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: Just briefly, you have in front of you a draft of the committees. I would ask that if anyone else wants to get on a particular Committee or get off a particular Committee for whatever reason, let me know and we'll move on that prior to the next meeting but I am asking all the Chairs, I think I put people in place that I'd like, that could best serve us in those positions, I hope that you'd be willing to stay in those positions. I'd also like of course to welcome Commissioners Pinto, D'Angelo, and Laccone. Welcome back Commissioner White and Theriault.

THERIAULT: A little more enthusiasm there President Hayes.

HAYES: I'm glad you were listening; I just wanted to make sure the sound was working along with the camera. Now you'll see in front of you the agenda which has left to a lot of discussion prior to us going into this, I won't be able to get involved in the discussion of it so if in fact we vote on this with the information we have in front of us, a yes vote

means we go into a secluded executive session, a no vote means we do not do that and the other option may be to remove it, table it until we have some further information. For those of you who don't know the whole story behind it basically we wanted to have the outgoing members vote on the agenda from the last workshop so we had a special meeting. We were scheduled for our regular meeting and Commissioner White had informed me, and I know in the past they've done something of a self-evaluation as recommended by CAFE and I will ask her to explain that when we get into discussion on the motion.

PUBLIC ADDRESSES THE BOARD:

Upon a motion by Commissioner D'Angelo and duly seconded by Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt, it was voted unanimously to suspend the regular order of business to allow the public to address the Board at 6:57 p.m.

HAYES: Motion is made and seconded. Any discussion? All in favor, opposed.

Linn Asplund, 167 Madison Street, had the following comments: Good evening Board members. I am here are on some very important matters that I feel the public should know. So before I begin all will be said under my First Amendment rights which is freedom of speech and to address elected officials which we the people voted in and who are supposed to be working for the people. To start with we have a major problem at Gilmartin School, there's no control of the kids in that school. I have pulled my two grandkids from there for two days. And then I let them return. Then a boy on the bus told my granddaughter that she should commit suicide or he'll do it for her. The police were called in, it is also known that other parents are having similar problems with their kids getting beat up and so on with nothing much being done. It seems the kids are running the schools here in Waterbury.

Our school's maintenance is being neglected along with instructional material. It seems to be the same case that was in another city which is known as Detroit. I know what I'm going to speak about is all public information and I feel the public should be informed on who's running the Education Department. Snead bucks trend, adds executives, Superintendent Dave Snead continues to boost another of top executives to his district's payroll. The administrative growth comes at a time when some say classrooms are needed, not met, classes are too large, we still don't have enough books so every child could take one home. Bond issue money went in general fund, Detroit repairs were delayed ex-official says. Violation of strict school finance laws. Financial probe indicates harm to Detroit schools. Probe alleges district misspent school's bond issue could be affected. School officials are scrambling to clean up a mess left from the 1986 renovation program.

CLERK: Thirty seconds.

ASPLUND: And of course I could go on and on. Now the next subject Mr. Pat Hayes. Something was brought to my attention so I felt I should look into it and I was amazed at what I found. At one time you owned a home here in Waterbury with your first wife. I see you had abandoned it and it went into foreclosure and then the Secretary of Housing and Urban took it over...

CLERK: Time.

ASPLUND: on foreclosure. Now it belongs to someone else. My husband and I we've had a hard time too through layoffs and what not...

LACCONE: Point of order Mr. Chair.

HAYES: Yes, you've gone past the time. Thank you.

Reverend Ollie Gray III, 2929 East Main Street, had the following comments: Good evening Mr. President, Superintendent, I want to congratulate all the Commissioners that were elected or re-elected. I want to let you know that I'm praying for all of you that God will give you the wisdom and courage it takes to get the public educational system here in Waterbury to the place of excellence. The reason why I ran for the Board of Education was for the youth of our City. I consider myself to be a youth pastor to the entire City. I've coached and mentored young people in this City for the past 20 years and I'm very much in touch with the middle and high school students on a daily basis. We have to help our kids beat the odds which for various reasons are stacked against the majority of them. I once heard it said that it is hard to get a kid to dream when he can't fall asleep at night. In my work with the youth of Waterbury what I'm seeing more and more is a lot of kids are losing hope at younger and younger ages. By the time they reach high school the life that God intended for them to live is all but snuffed down; we've got to help them. We've have to find a way to give our young people hope. I grew up in New York and I was a kid that a lot of people said "he will never make it to 21". Well I want to tell you today that I'm 46 years old and they were wrong. I thank God for the people that he used to help me turn my life around and I'm a firm believer that you're either part of the problem or part of the solution and I want to part of the solution to help save our children who are our greatest resources in this City. I want to just make a few points tonight to everyone here and number one is we need to give our kids, help our kids develop vision for themselves. Proverbs 29.18 says that without vision people parish. And our young people are perishing at an alarming rate here in Waterbury and in this State and in this country. We need to help our young people develop a vision for their lives. We need to let them know that they're priceless originals created by God with a purpose and a destiny. And I want to ask if we could look into a practical way of developing a mentoring program for at-risk youth here in the City.

Another issue that I'm concerned about is our attendance. What are we going to do different to address the problems especially in the middle and high schools? I know that we're making an effort but I really believe we need to do more. I don't have all the answers but I want to be part of the solution. The drop-out rate; we need to address our high drop-out rate. Another issue that I want to talk about is abstinence. Some years ago we had a young lady, the Board of Education had a young lady speak in the schools on abstinence, I thought that was great, I was wondering why that stopped. I would ask if you could please have someone like a Pam Stencil to speak in our middle and high schools at least once a year about abstinence.

CLERK: Thirty seconds.

GRAY: And drugs are an issue in the lives of a lot of young people. Can we develop a drug prevention and intervention program? I have a degree in drug and alcohol counseling and I'm willing to be a part of that. And anything that I can do for anybody here I will gladly do. God bless you and thank you for giving me the time to speak today.

Upon a motion by Commissioner D'Angelo and duly seconded by Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt, it was voted unanimously to return to the regular order of business at 7:04 p.m.

HAYES: Motion made and seconded. All in favor, opposed. We now go to our regular order of business.

WHITE: **I'd like to make a motion to go into executive session for the matter of self-evaluation.** I realize we need a two-thirds vote to do that.

D'ANGELO: **Second.**

HAYES: Motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

LACCONNE: Mr. Chairman, having received the agenda last week and seeing this executive session was on the agenda I questioned the validity and the legality of us going into executive session for this purpose. I have researched and spoken to numerous attorneys and have been told that this is a violation of the FOI statutes of the State of Connecticut. Although the argument was we've done it before doesn't necessarily make it legal or correct. So I would strongly urge this Board not to enter into executive session for this purpose.

HAYES: Any other discussion?

D'ANGELO: I understand the concerns of Commissioner Laccone and just wanted to set something out there. The reason we've done it before, and this is going back to the years also that I was on the Board, we've done it I believe at least five or six times of the eight years that I was on the Board, is because we were instructed by CAGE, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, that it was not only legal but it was done throughout the State. So I just wanted to set the record straight that if we now have information that it may not be and we want to revisit it, that's fine, but I just don't want people to think we've done it without proper instruction to do so.

WHITE: I agree with Commissioner D'Angelo, we have done it in the past but we don't want to let people think that we've done something that was illegal. I did speak to Attorney Patrice McCarthy and she assured me under certain circumstances this was okay to do and that it had been done in the past and they do have a document in their file that states this is legal under FOI. But if it's the Board wish that we put this aside until we have further documentation then that's the, we use the method of voting to do that.

HAYES: We've had a motion to go into executive session. Do you want to make a motion to table this or. I'm not sure.

WHITE: We could do that or we could just vote it down. Unless you think there's a better way to do it.

D'ANGELO: I think we may want to consider a motion to table and look into the legality of it a little more. I think it's too important of an issue to vote down or to not do. I think there's some issues that we need to talk about in an evaluation of our own Board in going forward. That might be, a motion to table might be in order.

HARVEY: I just want to make sure that we follow the rules and regulations as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order as far as tabling something. We've been down this road before and we are still down this road because we have not received a decision as of yet. So I would caution against tabling and making sure that we do this the proper way.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: I share likewise sentiments. According to, if you've read through this edition of Robert's Rules it does not allow us to table it unless there is another pressing matter before us. And since there is no other pressing matter we actually cannot table this. We can vote however, we can vote no against making this decision and then those of us who voted, if it does fail, we can bring it up again at another meeting. That's an approach to the situation at this point.

WHITE: **I withdraw my motion.**

D'ANGELO: **I withdraw my second.**

STANGO: If we refer it back for more discussion this can go on forever based on our track record of looking at things to try to find out if it's legal or not. We could be finished with our term at that point. But anyway I guess we can wait a little bit. I think that that's what's gonna happen; it's gonna just drag on forever and we're supposed to look at our goals that are printed out, soon, because we're starting a new year now, a new term.

HAYES: Just, without debating the issue, I think from what I hear we feel it's important to do a self-evaluation. If we decide to vote this down it doesn't mean we can't do another self-evaluation. We might just have a clearer understanding of how we can go about doing it without risking doing something that may not be appropriate.

WHITE: I do understand that but if it's going to make it easier to withdraw the motion I will do that.

CLERK: You already did.

D'ANGELO: I guess I just have one closing comment. Obviously we all agree with Commissioner Laccone that we want to do this in a way, if we can do it, we want to do it in a way obviously that's above board and legal. My understanding was, and I could be wrong, that there was information from CAGE that said they received documentation from FOI, number one that this was entirely appropriate. So I guess that would be a question to Commissioner White through the President. And my last comment would be maybe the alternative is to go into discuss the performance of President Hayes, as the President and leader of the Board...

WHITE: That she said was and could be discussed legally.

HAYES: But I don't want to be there so that will get me out of here early.

WHIT: I would suggest though that everybody read the Leadership Guide that we received in our packet a couple of weeks ago and there are self-evaluations, the form for self-evaluation is in there and the whole idea of doing a self-evaluation, and this is primarily for the new Commissioners, is that when we have to evaluate the Superintendent, our evaluation is supposed to be based on things that we did in a self-evaluation and goals that we set and we have not done that portion. So I thought this would be a good time, the beginning of the term, to do something in the correct order to get the desired result. But I will go along with whatever the full Board decides.

HAYES: So, the motion on the table is to go into executive session.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: There is no motion; we're out of order because we're having discussion on no motion.

HAYES: Motion to adjourn is in order then.

HARVEY: I'm a little confused here, do we not have an attorney who could tell us whether or not is was legal or not legal? I'm just a little confused on that.

HAYES: At this point we're not allowed to ask our Attorney anything without going through a formal process of voting on a request for an opinion from Corporation Counsel.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: Mr. President, there is no motion on the table, that's out of order. When we get to new business, by all means do that but technically it's out of order, we cannot do that according to Robert's Rules of Order.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Sweeney and duly seconded by Commissioner D'Angelo, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:12 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Carrie A. Swain, Clerk
Board of Education

Resolutions signed by Mayor Michael J. Jarjura on December 6, 2007