

WATERBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES ~ REGULAR MEETING

Monday, September 28, 2009 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, O'Leary, Stango, Sweeney, Theriault, and White.

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent Snead, Assistant Superintendent Sequeira, Chief Operating Officer Paul Guidone, Director of Personnel Ron Frost, School Business Administrator Paul Mazzaccaro, Attorney Maurice Mosley (6:39), and Education Liaison Mary Ann Marold.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

President Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:30 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: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Harvey.

HARVEY: Here

CLERK: Commissioner Laccone.

LACCONO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner O'Leary.

O'LEARY: 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 O'Leary, it was voted unanimously to receive and place on file the following communications:

1. Communication received September 16, 2009 from Olga Ciarlo Ferrara regarding naming of the new school in the north end.
2. Copy of communication dated September 16, 2009 from Mayor Jarjura to Olga Ciarlo Ferrara regarding naming of the new school in the north end.
3. Copy of communication dated September 23, 2009 from Civil Service certifying Jason Peterson for the position of Maintainer I.

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

PUBLIC ADDRESSES THE BOARD:

Upon a motion by Commissioner Sweeney and duly seconded by Commissioner O'Leary, it was voted unanimously to suspend the regular order of business to allow the public to address the Board at 6:32 p.m.

HAYES: Motion made and seconded. All speakers are encouraged to submit prepared written statements to the Commissioners. Comments shall be limited to a maximum of three minutes. The Chairman will disallow a speaker from continuing to speak if slanderous or defamatory remarks are made. There will be no responses this evening to any questions or concerns raised; they will be referred to the Administration for review and response.

Bryan Baker, 275 Peach Orchard Road, had the following comments: Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Superintendent Snead. I came down here tonight as I was here at the last Building Committee meeting a couple of weeks ago to hear the fate of Duggan School. I was very happy to see the Building Committee today vote in favor of restoring Duggan School instead of tearing it down and starting over. My opinion, the decision was relatively simple and I encourage the entire Board to support the Building Committee's decision. The renovation of the school is currently tagged at an additional 6.5 million dollars. Yes it is a tough cost . . . and I wish the City did not have to face it. However, a complete reconstruction, according to the architects, would cost 10.3 million more than the original price tag, a difference of 3.8 million. It would also delay the opening of the school from September of 2011 to September 2012. For those reasons it just seemed obvious to me that continuing with the renovation even though it may be a decision that the City wishes it hadn't made three years ago, where we are now it is the way to go. I understand the concerns that were raised at the previous Building Committee meeting, and again tonight, about the fact that costs may go up. However it is my understanding that even when the school system has undergone new construction there have been overages. The concern about the 6.5 million figure is probably greater, and rightfully so, than the concern about the 10.3 million dollar figure for a new construction. However, I cannot see in any way that anyone could look at the two figures and say, I trust this one, but I don't trust this one, when they're from the

same source. If the 6.5 million is likely to go up, the 10.3 million is also likely to go up, as well. Since we don't know what the future will hold we have to make the decisions with the best interest of the students and the information presented to us. I think the Building Committee has done that, I think the renovation will help restore the Brooklyn neighborhood, and I applaud the Committee's decision to hopefully save the City money. It would be unfortunate if the renovation did get much more expensive, but then again, we don't know what would happen with a new construction either, that could just as easily get much more expensive. And if the architects do have that high degree of confidence I feel the Building Committee has made the right decision, and I encourage the entire Board to support them.

Thomas Morse, Sr., 36 Greystone Road, had the following comments: There was an incident earlier today which I had my family in the car regarding a school bus on North Main Street. I think you all know who I am, I'm on the Human Rights Commission myself, and I was kind of appalled at what happened. Kids were throwing things outside the bus on North Main Street. They came from the South Street School (State Street) on Griggs Street there, I believe the name of it, and I did follow the bus driver, I did talk to the bus driver, and they brought the kids back to the school. The police was notified about the incident but when we got to the school I talked to the Vice Principal of the school, he said that he's gonna make a full report and all that. But the bus driver did leave; the police did not come at the time and all that. I was kind of appalled that the bus did leave. Maybe he had to do his run, or her run, but I think the bus driver should have stayed there and talked to the kids that were on the bus. I want this Board to be aware of the incident that happened today, you know I don't make complaints or anything like that and a lot of you do know me that's on this Board and you do know my personality and all that that if there's a reason why I'm up here, there's a good reason because they were throwing things at cars that was heading up North Main Street, hitting windshields and all that and one of those pencils could have gone inside one of those cars and maybe caused an accident. So I want this Board to even let me know what the results of this is, too, I would appreciate it very much. Thank you.

Heather Green, 227 Robins Street, had the following comments: And I'm actually here because I am concerned about parental involvement in schools and I wanted to find out if there is actually a definition for it. And if there isn't, there should be. And parents and educators both should be able to know what that is because when you go into a school and a principal tells you you're not an involved parent, I don't think parental involvement consists of having to be at every school meeting because there are a lot of parents who work lots of hours. I have a neighbor who works 78 hours plus a week to put food on the table for her children and she's still involved with their work, their homework, things like that, and I think that still constitutes parental involvement. So that's all. Thank you.

Anthony Williams, 25 Waterville Street, had the following comments: I'm just here right now for my kids, you know like they have special needs, and there's a lot of things that I see in the school system that really needs to be addressed as far as the teachers that's teaching the kids, they have no care whatsoever. Like this morning, you know, I had an incident with a teacher myself. I'm bringing my son on the bus and they're supposed to be strapping the kids in, you know, my son is six years old, they have kids running all around the bus, and whatever, so I go to the school and my son has problems also, he has ADHD and you know if a teacher can't help a kid, you know, to help him know what he's doing right or wrong, what are they teaching for? You know, I went in the classroom and the teachers yelling at my son to sit down, you know like SIT DOWN

NOW. I'm like, you know, okay, what is this? You're not supposed to talk to a student like that, right? I mean, you know, this is something that really needs to be addressed cause some teachers they don't belong in the classroom, they don't have, you know, good personalities with kids, you know, that's all I have to say. I really hope that, you know, you guys really please we need to get the school together, we need to get the schools together, you know, because the kids are our future. I just hope that, you know, what everybody says here something really needs to get done. Thank you for your time.

Lisa Lessard, 905 Pearl Lake Road, had the following comments: The reason we're here tonight, we have somebody that talked about parent involvement. I think it would be a good thing if we actually spelled it out for the parents what parent involvement is all about because they want to engage and be part of their children's education. They want to engage and collaborate with the school system and the School Board. We did have a meeting a couple of weeks back from Connecticut Parent Power and 40 to 50 parents showed up. We are hoping they will start showing their faces at the School Board with local issues, concerns, good, bad, or indifferent. I, myself, want to thank Mr. Sned for a certain aspect for my daughter's education this week. I am extremely grateful so good things do come out of this school system. Parent involvement is really, really something we want, something we need. All our parents need, all our children need. We can't do it alone, meaning the parents, and the school system surely can't do it alone without us parents. So homework yes gets done with our help. I know people like Heather said, that are working one, two or three jobs just to keep food on the table with all their kids. Basically they only have 45 minutes to see their kids at night but they spend quality time with them and they might teach them in different ways, but they try to teach them what they can learn. We, this gentleman back here, was at one of our meetings, he came tonight, and I give my hats off to him, because he came and he made his face shown. We are trying to do that with more parents, to collaborate with the school system so they feel welcome within all our schools and they feel welcome here at the School Board. I don't know if you're aware of this, but we heard from every parent, the local school boards, basically, are like the best kept secret. Most parents, from what I found out, don't have cable - 13, 16 or 96, they have satellite. They get what they get for information through the newspaper, through Mike Puffer's column. Believe it or not we're trying to get more parents involved, more parents educated, more parents informed for the betterment of all our children. For you as well as for us, so we all can be on the same page, together, standing as one, united cause nobody could do this alone. Parents can do it, school systems could do it, together we can make it happen. So once again I just want to thank Dr. Sned for the certain circumstance that's really nobody else's business but I deeply appreciate it and so does my daughter and I just want to say the School Board is a welcoming place for all parents within the City to come with your issues, your concerns – good, bad, or indifferent, they will listen, they will help if can, words are great, words are fine, following through and action means more and that's what we need to see. You can promise us the moon but until you see that moon it's hard to believe. So thank you, God bless, you have a nice night, and for the betterment of all our children in Waterbury let's start working – parents and school system together so we can collaborate to have better education for all our students – special ed and public. Thank you.

Upon a motion by Commissioner O'Leary and duly seconded by Commissioner Stango, it was voted unanimously to return to the regular order of business at 6:45 p.m.

HAYES: Motion made and seconded. Any discussion? Hearing none - all in favor, opposed, motion passes unanimously.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Snead read and distributed the following report:

Last Friday I met with State Education officials and the 15 other urban superintendents as part of the Commissioner's Accountability and District Partnership Initiative to share with colleagues key areas of work we have undertaken in Waterbury. I brought with me a brief explanation of some of the new strategies we have found successful here in Waterbury and would like to expand.

Last Thursday and Friday administrators attended a Change Academy workshop presented by ACES. During the workshop, participants collaborated in teams to convince a fictional school district to adopt a new educational concept. Along the way, the teams discovered what works and what does not work in trying to convince large numbers of people to adopt new strategies.

The Channel 16 bulletin board has been repaired and is now back up and running.

The Annual Title I meeting for parents whose children are eligible for services will be held tomorrow evening from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at Maloney School. Light dinner and refreshments will be served at 6:15 p.m. Kris Keidel, Celia Piccochi, Dr. Louis Padua, and Barbara Carrington-Lawlor are scheduled to give presentations. Department supervisors will also speak briefly.

There will be an early dismissal this Wednesday for teacher collaboration time.

On Thursday I will be meeting with Commissioner McQuillan in Hartford from 1 – 4 p.m. regarding the Race To the Top grant initiative.

There was a nice article in today's newspaper about a Wilby graduate, Sonny Olomi, who has become a successful businessman here in Waterbury. The article was in the business section of the newspaper.

Though the Legislature returned to session last week there is still no action on budget implementation and the school construction bill. They are expected to come back into session this week. We have received information on how the stimulus portion of the City's ECS allotment will be handled. As expected, there will be cumbersome financial reporting requirements associated with this matter.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: Thank you Dr. Snead. Just to be brief, we don't necessarily respond to the speakers, but I would like to thank the new faces. Ms. Lessard has been here before, anybody would know that, but I would encourage other parents out there to come forward. If there are meetings to be held, if you want to notify us, I try to adjust my schedule and others on this Board to meet . . . parents concerned, that's where I started. That's where everybody should get started as far as the involvement. After, what you do at home to support your kids. But, again, those who may be watching, you're welcome to come down to speak to us, but if there are any parent groups, we really haven't heard a lot from any for a number of years now, if there

are any that are getting together and they want to meet with Board members, or anyone from our Central Office, on occasion, could meet with groups and special concerns. Anyways, that was my comments. Again, it's always nice to see others. I acknowledge Chris Chauncey is here, who is one of those crazy enough to try to run and get on this Board. So, I welcome Chris here and appreciate all the years of service you gave to the City as well.

I have a Consent Calendar. Is there anyone wishing to remove any of the items?

President Hayes proceeded to read the list of Consent Calendar items.

8. CONSENT CALENDAR

Upon a motion by Commissioner O'Leary and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to approve the Consent Calendar, items 8.1 through 8.6, as listed:

- 8.1 With the approval of the Committee of the Whole, the Superintendent of Schools recommends approval of the Waterbury Transition learning Center Program in partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College and Post University.
- 8.2 With the approval of the Committee on Finance, the Superintendent of Schools recommends approval of a Professional Services Agreement with Cooperative Educational Services to provide services as required by the Connecticut Department of Education Reading First Grant.
- 8.3 With the approval of the Committee on Grants, the Superintendent of Schools recommends approval to apply for ACES Technical Assistance Grants for the following schools: Bunker Hill, Carrington, Sprague, Crosby, and Wilby.
- 8.4 With the approval of the Committee on School Personnel, the Superintendent of Schools recommends approval of the job specifications for and positions of "ARRA Non-public Literacy Facilitator (K-12)" and "ARRA Non-public Mathematics Coach (K-12)".
- 8.5 Motion to approve permission be granted to the following for use of school facilities school organizations and/or City Departments.
- 8.6 Motion to approve that permission be granted to the following for use of school facilities by outside organizations/waiver requests.

HAYES: Motion has been made and seconded. All in favor, opposed, motion passed unanimously.

10. COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM

- 10.1 **Upon a motion by Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt and duly seconded by Commissioner White, it was voted unanimously to approve the following curriculums:**

- Dance Curriculum
- Jazz/Rock Orchestra Curriculum
- Piano Lab Curriculum
- Photography Curriculum

HAYES: Motion is made and seconded.

HARVEY: Originally I asked for this item to be removed from the Consent Calendar. I had some questions concerning the Dance Curriculum. Having had time to read it, I'm okay with it, for now, so I will vote in favor of the curriculum.

HAYES: Anyone else? Hearing none – all in favor, opposed, motion passed unanimously.

11. SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTIFICATION TO THE BOARD

Upon a motion by Commissioner O'Leary and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to receive and place on file items 11.1 through 11.6, Superintendent's Notification to the Board, as listed:

11.1 Athletic resignations effective immediately:
Brown, Lindsay – Cheerleading Coach, WMS.

11.2 Athletic appointments effective immediately:
Acevedo, Paul – Soccer Coach, WSMS.
Armstrong, Tracy – Interim JV Soccer Coach, CHS.
Bulls, Rondell – Cross Country Coach, WSMS.
Rasheed, Ayeisha – Volleyball Coach, WMS.

11.3 New teacher hires:

58	Gerwien, Ashley	NEMS	Science – 8	BA	1	9/8/09
59	Frazer, Dawn	WAMS	Science	MA	1	9/14/09

11.4 Resignations:
Bradshaw, Carl – CHS ROTC Teacher, effective 9/3/09.
Pennington, Sean – WAMS Chemistry, effective 10/9/09.
Stemmer, Sonya – WAMS Theater Arts, effective 07/14/09.

11.5 Retirements:
Lionello, Daniel Jr. – WMS Art, change of effective date from January 4, 2010 to January 1, 2010.

11.6 Leave of absence requests:
Boisvert, Amy – Generali grade 3, requesting an unpaid childrearing leave of absence from September 21, 2009 through December 23, 2009.

HAYES: All in favor, opposed. Is there any New Business?

HARVEY: I'm not sure if this is New Business or Old Business. The Naming Committee, I'm hoping that we can get together to finalize procedures for the Naming Committee in light of the fact that we received another recommendation for the naming of a school.

WHITE: inaudible.

HAYES: Anyone else under New Business? Commissioner Harvey.

HARVEY: I attended, I had the pleasure of attending the WOW Forum that was held Saturday at Walsh School and before I forget it, Paul Guidone, is there someway we can get someone to look at the grounds on Walsh School, particularly in front of the school, the grass is growing and the hedges need to be clipped, so that it looks like, okay, thank you very much. The WOW Forum I thought was very, very good and I can't stress the importance of making sure that if those of you who were not in attendance to see this on Channel 16. A lot of things came out of this forum, Ed Flynn moderated, but the issues that were addressed – health, education, environment, community, and I sense that there will be other meetings. But one of the points that was made in regards to our students is, in regards to their health and the rules that we have in place. And there was an example that was given of a student that was acting out, broke the rules, but when we went deeper, we found out that there was a health issue, the student, an eighth grade student had a toothache and the parent could not afford dental health. So the, I think it was DCYF stepped in, had the student go to see a dentist. That problem was taken care of. Then they found out that this student also had a problem with their eyesight. So, once these two issues were taken care of, the behavior problems disappeared. So we, perhaps, need to look at our rules to see if they're too stringent or if we're looking at possibly other things that are impacting the way a student behaves. So, I would implore you to look at this forum, it lasted a good three to four hours and I sense that we'll have to meet again. So, thank you President Hayes.

HAYES: Anyone else under New Business?

THERIAULT: I would like to speak to that. Certainly we as principals and teachers have to do everything that we can to identify the needs of students in pre-k, in kindergarten, and very early and before they start to really get going. That's why we have kindergarten screening and pre-kindergarten screening to address some of the health issues. And I really think that the school system in the City of Waterbury does an excellent job in identifying those students and also to provide for their needs. It's an unfortunate situation when someone has a toothache, but I really think the correct procedure is to raise your hand and say you have a toothache and go to the nurse, not to disrupt the class, but maybe the child didn't know the procedure. When a child has trouble reading or can't see, usually an eye exam is given to a child at least once a year. In fact the teachers, years ago, used to give that eye exam. I don't know quite how it's handled right now, but I would suspect that an eye exam of some kind is probably provided for the kids. When we have minor infractions of the rules and regulations with regard to discipline, those rules and regulations provide for some latitude for, for some interpretation, for some discretion. However, when we have major violation of the rules, such as assault of teachers, assault of other students, the rules are quite explicit and firm and, quite honestly, I'd hate to go back to the war stories cause you'll fall asleep on me President Hayes...

HAYES: I'm hanging on every word.

THERIAULT: You're hanging on every word – great. We've been on the same page recently, I noticed, we're coming along. Maybe when we get to the 10 year mark, we'll be there. But I really think that with regard to the discipline code, there's absolutely nothing wrong with the discipline code that I could see. Certainly, we need to be most diligent and careful in not suspending students that need not be suspended. But our discipline code is like a pair of stretch socks, one size fits all, and on major, major violation of rules and regulations one size fits all. It's not a rule that can be interpreted one way in one school and another way in another. It's not a rule that can be interpreted, and I know we need to take the nature of the child in effect, but there are some rules and regulations that are so explicit that you can take that into consideration, but when a major violation calls for a suspension that has to be done. So, if we're gonna change the rules and we're going to water the rules down and we're gonna suspend students at one school, and another school we're not gonna suspend them for serious offenses, I think we're looking for inconsistency and a lot of trouble. I think the students in most of the schools in Waterbury and the parents are looking for someone who is firm, fair, and consistent. And I think the discipline rules are perfect just the way they are. Thank you.

HAYES: Anyone else? Commissioner Harvey.

HARVEY: I think this, Commissioner Theriault, addresses the very issue that the WOW Forum wanted to look at and it looked at considering other extenuating circumstances. You have a rule, you have a policy in place, but policies can be modified. And I think that the Forum which consisted of community leaders, the Mayor, State Representative Larry Butler, myself, Alderman Petteway, and various other community leaders and DCYF, I think the message that they were trying to get across is perhaps other, we need to look at the discipline policy because the feeling out in the street is that it goes against the minority student and it doesn't consider the background, the family, the other considerations. So I would hope that we would at least look at that and to consider some of the suggestions that came from this Forum. Thank you.

STANGO: I was also at attendance as a, not as a participant but as a witness, as an observer through the WOW convocation. It was quite lengthy and a lot of things were covered. I didn't hear the part about the toothache, I think I left at that point Commissioner Harvey, but I was there for very moving stories from Dr. Joyner and also stories from Principal Brown. Also stories from, there was a lady there, a nice lady from DCF. And they gave moving stories about situations where certain students should not have been suspended, perhaps. It's my feeling, and we'll see as we progress, that a principal's job is, at this present time, to enforce the Discipline Code as written. I've been around many different schools at many different times and I know a number of principals and they find ways to work within the code, to work within the framework to work things out. And I think for the most part it does work. However, there is a Discipline Committee meeting tomorrow that I intend to attend because I sit on that Committee and speaking for only one member of that Committee, I think that we're always open for any input that comes down. I know there's an agenda that has been established, but I think if someone is there and wishes to express certain situations, I think that they would be very receptive to hear it.

D'ANGELO: I'd like to thank Dr. Snead. Over the weekend, I received a couple of phone calls about an incident at one of our middle schools. I emailed Dr. Snead and he conducted an investigation today for which we have the report in our packet. There's a couple of things in there, President Hayes, that leave me with a few more questions than answers and I was wondering if maybe for our next meeting, we could have some clarification of those two issues. Number one, as you'll see from the Principal's memo to Dr. Snead, paragraph number two, it says "the incident in question took place Thursday, September 10". And then if you read a little further down it says "at some point later the student was suspended" On the next page, which is from Mr. Mosley, it says "on or about September 10 the incident occurred". And then further down it says at some point "ultimately the student was disciplined". Number one, my question is it occurred on September 10 and ultimately the student was disciplined, what is the time frame between the act and the punishment in that case because it doesn't clearly state that. My second question is, I said in my email because I heard that the student called the teacher a specific expletive. If you will turn your attention to the principal's memo again, the end of the first paragraph says, "Mr. Blank questioned several other students but no one heard student "x" call the teacher" the expletive. My question is, if my email was just written on Sunday and said the student called the teacher an expletive, how during the investigation between September 10 and this morning could that administrator have questioned other students about the expletive unless in fact the teacher told the administrator that I was called an expletive? It's not possible that the principal could have known on September 10, or a couple of days after, that I was going to leave an email yesterday asking that question, it's not possible. So I'd like to know how the administrator knew to ask those questions. That's all I have, but I'd like, if we could get that answer for our next meeting, please.

And finally, I think when the Discipline Committee meets, we need to have a zero tolerance for disruptions of class like this one and a zero tolerance for attempted assault on a teacher or student. In my opinion, it has to be a zero tolerance, there's no excuse. And I respect Commissioner Harvey but whether it's health, whether it's special ed, whatever the circumstance, we have to have a zero tolerance for that kind of behavior inside the classroom.

SWEENEY: First of all, I attended the Forum on Saturday morning, I was babysitting, and, unfortunately, my granddaughter decided to be very verbal and tried to outtalk Ed Flynn, so I had to leave. So, I did get a follow-up report from Commissioner Stango later on but I did miss the better part of that Forum. Unfortunately, I also received this weekend a call regarding an assault on a staff member and what's most disturbing to me is that the, first of all there was no discipline, the child was returned back to the classroom. But the response that the staff member received when questioning why the child was not, was returned to the classroom without any consequence, two things that I have heard in the past and that I thought we had cleared up, one being that the Board has passed some new policy that doesn't allow us to discipline. We have passed no new policy. The discipline code was rewritten to bring it in-line with the State and to align the codes with the State codes to make reporting more clearer. That is the last modification to the Discipline Code. The consequence for assault on a staff member is a suspension followed by a referral to this Board for an expulsion, that's what's in the policy, and we all have a copy of it, it's in there. The other response was that the district needs to keep its suspensions down so, therefore, we cannot suspend. And I will say again, as I have said many times in the past, that the object of lowering the suspension rate is to head off the behavior that becomes the suspension, it is not to stop

suspending students to put down the numbers. And again, this came up last year, those two points came up last year and they are here again at the beginning of the school year. So Dr. Snead, I think that every school, every principal, needs to sit down with their whole staff, and you, and you need to reiterate again that we don't stop suspending simply to keep the numbers down. That we do not put it on the head of this Board that we have somehow changed the policy when we have not, that we apply the policy as it is written, fairly across the board with the exceptions for the 504's and PPT's as written by law. And they need to hear it from you Dr. Snead, the principals and the staff need to hear it from their leader.

SUPERINTENDENT: Is that all schools or just that one?

SWEENEY: I think you need to tell them all. I think it needs to be ...

HAYES: I know as Commissioner Stango said, there is a Discipline Committee, maybe we invite them at our next Workshop or the one after that, and just throw this whole, because I think it gets a little dangerous when we get calls from individuals who tell us things are going on and whether it's an assault or something else, that's what we pay our administrators to do is to get involved in that and to do those kind of reports. I think that when we make these accusations without any basis other than someone who's not willing to step forward and put their name to it, now there may be reasons why people don't want to step forward and put their names to it as well, but the fact of the matter is, we just sort of gave a backhand accusation to a certain staff and school, well actually we're talking two schools here in some of this discussion we've had without any really first-hand knowledge. When there was an incident at Walsh School I did take, when all those things were going on, I did take the time, as a matter of fact Chris Chauncey was still there, during the summer, to find out, and there's so much more to the stories than what we necessarily hear from everybody. I think we get a little, we can get ourselves in trouble if we just believe everything that we hear coming from certain individuals who may have other reasons. And the most troubling part is when we investigate it and we find another story, how do we determine what's happening? And again, I don't want to have it painted like we have a couple of schools that there's all these problems but a lot of times, in particular, again having discussion with Chris Chauncey and some of the things that had been accused of by certain people about certain people, she had no ax to grind, I think it was her last day, she was on her way out and I think I got the truth from her and you know what I found out, the truth was not what we were hearing. And I think that's where it gets dangerous for us. Somehow we have to trust our administrators, we put them in that place, that they're doing the things at the same time when you hear those types of things sort of in general, I think now it would be time to get the Discipline Committee. As far as Walsh School, I checked with Carrie, we're not scheduled to go there until February, but maybe if they want to have some kind of report based on the forum. Unfortunately, I couldn't attend that forum, they know why, it's personal I don't want to explain it, but I think what we need to do is find out what's going on with the Comer Project, as you mentioned Dr. Joyner, because that's been ongoing and we haven't been there since the beginning of last school year. So it would be nice to find out what's going on there and find out just what was gathered from the forum.

HARVEY: President Hayes, if I may, I have asked them to compile minutes related to the forum so I will follow-up with Principal Brown as to when those minutes can be available and distribute them to the Board of Education members.

D'ANGELO: I understand where you're coming from and, believe me, I know there are two sides to every story. I know Commissioner Harvey was agreeing with you adamantly while you were saying that, but just like the gentleman that spoke tonight about his son being yelled at. You know, I know Commissioner Harvey met with him and she's going to look into it, I'm sure, and that's the right thing to do. I think what Commissioner Sweeney and I are saying is, or at least what I'm saying, is it's always, in my case, it's always one or two schools – it's one elementary school and one middle school that I hear the same thing about every single week. And I just can't believe that it's not going on. I think we have a couple of principals, and I think it's one or two or three, no more than that, that for some reason think they're gonna score points with Central Office by not suspending students for offenses that are suspendable. And I think Commissioner Sweeney's point that either this Board or Dr. Snead, somehow we need to send a message that this Board expects students that commit suspendable offenses to be suspended. And that's not out there. There's a misconception that Dr. Snead or this Board wants suspensions down. We would love suspensions down but not because we're not suspending, we want suspensions down because PBS and other things are working. And I think that's what Commissioner Sweeney's talking about and you know, I appreciate what you're saying, but the message is out there that we want suspensions down. I don't know where they're getting it, but they're getting it.

HAYES: Well like I said, we'll have the Discipline Committee here. Commissioner Stango, if you're meeting with them tomorrow, find out when or how soon they can meet with us at a Workshop. Maybe you can forward some of these concerns that have been addressed. I've heard the same, like I said, it's just so hard to get your hands around it because, I agree, some of the kids that don't have the support at home, don't have the structure, they need it in school because they don't get it anyplace else. I believe that we put this Discipline Policy in place for the right reasons. The thing is sometimes you get some extenuating circumstances where maybe sending that kid home is not in that kid's best interest which is sort of what I gathered from that incident that I was looking into. I believe our administrators have some, we have to give them some leeway because, in that case, I think the kid would have been sent to a homeless shelter, okay, without getting any further than that. So, that was the choice they faced and then you got all of the other social agencies involved and, ultimately, I believe that child was taken away from the family. So, in a particular instance like that, that's like as crazy as you can get, you're gonna send that kid home he's gonna be a lot worse off and, unfortunately, we have too many of those problems. I do think that if we all feel and we've heard these and we need to have the Discipline Committee let us know, let them know that we've heard these rumblings and we don't want to be taking credit for suspension numbers coming down if, in fact, it's only to have them come down.

STANGO: I agree with you President Hayes, I also agree with Commissioner Sweeney. The rules and regs, the discipline code that we have to live by actually comes through the State, all the codes, and the Committee spent a lot of time doing that, had to be changed to match our codes to the State codes. So, Commissioner Sweeney is absolutely right there. And President Hayes, you're absolutely right, when you say there are extenuating circumstances. It's like the deeper you look into it, not only do you see two sides of every story; you see five sides of the story. Everyone has a different interpretation of what happened. It always boils down to he said, she said. But it's like peeling the onion, you always find more, as you get deeper, it spreads out and there's more information that comes to be. But the thing is that this Board has to remember, and we have to remember, is the fact that at some point the student crosses

the line, at some point he has to be removed. At some point the end has to come no matter what the background is and that's what we have to look at and try to coincide all these different things. I will bring that tomorrow to the Committee.

HAYES: That's the most difficult. The thing for me, again, who had five kids graduate and go through the system, the question was always when they saw that behavior, what impact it had on them, I think that's why some people are afraid to even put their kids in our schools because they know that there's some of that behavior going on and you know the way I taught is I tell my kids that was wrong but, like I said, sometimes there's a mixed message and they don't, especially younger kids, they don't understand sometimes that kid goes out and then the kid comes back and they know if they ever did it, they were coming home to me and their mother. But I don't disagree with anything Commissioner Sweeney said, all I was talking about is that when we hear these things about assaults, now we're getting a little specific, the idea, I'm concerned about the idea that maybe we're not suspending kids simply because we want to make our numbers look better. That concerns me and I think we need to address that. All I'm saying is that individual Board members, when someone comes to us and claims there was an assault, they got to back it up themselves somehow or we got to, at least, make them feel comfortable to come forward with that information so it can be addressed. Like I said, I've been caught in that a few times where I believed what somebody said and I found out differently. So sometimes we have to reserve our conclusions, but the fact is there is a feeling out there that we're not suspending kids as we should simply to get our numbers better and I don't think that's the intent that this Board ever had.

SWEENEY: And I would agree with you that when there's extenuating circumstances, we need to look at that, but I don't think there is any staff member that we have who if a principal came to them and said there are extenuating circumstances here and here they are and this is why we're not gonna do that, that that staff member would not agree with that. My concern here is that that's not what's being told to staff members, and it's not the first time that we heard it, and I don't get an awful lot of phone calls and it's not that often that I come to this Board and tell you that someone has called me and I believe their story because if I believe it it's because I have good faith in the information that I got. But if a principal came to a teacher and said we're not gonna suspend this child because this is going on at home or because this child doesn't have a home to go to, there isn't a teacher that would dispute that and argue with that. But to be told that the Board has changed the policy, that suspensions are to be kept down by not suspending, that's wrong. That's wrong. And don't try to cover it by saying there's extenuating circumstances.

HAYES: We need to find that out.

SUPERINTENDENT: I'd just like to say in this forum, publically, but after the meeting if you could let me know which school that was so I could address it, I'd appreciate it.

O'LEARY: For the new kid on the block so to speak, is it my understanding that personnel are approaching you two but wishing to remain anonymous on their complaint?

D'ANGELO: I got a call over the weekend from a parent and from a teacher.

O'LEARY: Who want to remain anonymous?

D'ANGELO: Well I asked them if I could ask Dr. Snead about the issue and they said you can but don't use our name, yes. Commissioner O'Leary, just so you know, about a year ago I got a similar complaint from a similar teacher at the same school. I brought it to Dr. Snead, the principal gave a response very similar to this one, and the next day went to every teacher in that building and asked which teacher called me. That's why the teachers, in some cases, want to remain anonymous because they're fearful of retribution. If something comes to our attention and it's factual like it was a year ago, it shouldn't matter to the principal which teacher called the Board member. There's no reason for that information whatsoever, in my opinion.

O'LEARY: As long as it's based on factual information, not someone's personal agenda. Many times when people wish to remain anonymous, they wish to remain anonymous because their intentions aren't exactly as clear as you might, you'd hope that they would be. So, I would perceive with caution here anytime someone doesn't want to put their name to something, especially a school teacher who has not only other administrators to complain to, not only the union, I question that, I really do. And I think when a teacher calls a School Board Commissioner to complain about the way something was handled in their school and then we have the School Superintendent launch an investigation which includes a written report from the school principal and the school attorney, all in the same day, from an anonymous source, it seems to me like we're wasting a lot of time and we ought to get down to teaching and administrating instead of paying a lot of time to a lot of nonsense. That's enough for me.

HAYES: Spoken from someone who's done a few investigations in his life.

THERIAULT: I don't want to seem insensitive to the issue having taught many, many years and been a principal many, many years at an inner-city school where my students had plenty of big time problems. There were times that rather than suspend the child, I'd give them an in-house suspension and sometimes I'd even take them down to the Boys' Club afterward and pay for the Boys' Club so that he could continue on at the Boys' Club. But the very root of the whole thing and the pathology of the whole thing was to find out why they're cutting up in the first place so in that score I agree with Commissioner Harvey, we need to do that and we need to do that more often and earlier. But I can tell you in terms of special circumstances, when the nun belted me across the face when I was in the eighth grade and I went home and I showed my mother what the nun did to me, I got a belt on the other side of my face. But I'm not condoning that, but what I'm saying is there are special circumstances, but I think we need to certainly be compassionate about the kids and their situation and the environments that they come from. We need to bring them along and we need to help them every step of the way. And when we can practice discretion and leniency, there absolutely is a time for that. But if we are too lenient and we are too compassionate, then we come across as being weak. And if you are compassionate and understanding over every single thing that happens in an inner-city school sooner or later those kids are going to take you over and your building and your staff. So I understand, I think there's a fine line between the understanding and the compassion and the discipline. You don't throw the book at the kid every single time and you don't throw the book at the kid the first time he has some problems. But sometimes when there are major problems and there are major profanities that are expressed within the classroom, that's gone over the line. Kids have to learn to be adults and they have to learn that there's a certain decorum within society that they have to go by. I'm not saying they have to

know that all in pre-k or kindergarten or even fourth grade, but these are things that you have to learn. Things like “please”, “thank you”, “you’re welcome”, “sit in your seat”, “be quiet”, so the other kids could learn. Things like that. I don’t say you suspend a kid for talking and chewing gum and so forth, but when you have a serious assault, especially of a teacher, you know you have to sit down and you got to really look at that and if that occurs time and time again, that student certainly needs to be referred possibly for evaluation in special education. So, that’s the extent of our pathology, and it’s an ongoing thing, it doesn’t occur just once, it occurs many, many times. And we have many students that are in our schools that are in crisis, that are in severe, severe problems, and we need to reach out, have a helping hand, have an olive branch, so to speak. We can’t lose them, we have to reach down, they can’t slip between the cracks because if they do, they’re gonna become a burden to us in our society. So, we certainly need to help them. But we also have another mission and responsibility to the other children that are in that classroom that have an opportunity to learn unfettered from all these interferences. So, that’s why we have special ed in the first place.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:28 p.m.

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