

WATERBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES ~ SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
Reed School, 33 Griggs Street, Waterbury, Connecticut

PRESENT: President Stango, Commissioners Awwad, Brown, Harvey, McEntee, Sweeney, Rodriguez, J. Van Stone, and T. Van Stone.

ABSENT: Commissioner Hernandez.

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent Kathleen Ouellette, Chief Academic Officer Anne Marie Cullinan, Chief Operating Officer & Chief of Staff Paul Guidone, and Education Liaison Mary Ann Marold.

SILENT PRAYER

President Stango called the special meeting to order at 6:13 p.m. with a moment of silence.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Dr. Ouellette led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

CLERK: Commissioner Awwad

AWWAD: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Brown.

BROWN: Here.

CLERK: Vice President Harvey.

HARVEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Hernandez (absent). Commissioner McEntee.

McENTEE: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

RODRIGUEZ: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Sweeney.

SWEENEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner J. Van Stone.

J. VAN STONE: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner T. Van Stone.

T. VAN STONE: Present.

CLERK: President Stango.

STANGO: Here. Just a note, Commissioner Hernandez sends her regrets that she is unable to attend tonight.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion by Commissioner Sweeney and duly seconded by Commissioner Harvey, it was voted unanimously to convene into Executive Session at 6:14 p.m. for discussion concerning the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation, health, or dismissal of a public officer or employee.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. All in favor, opposed, motion carries.

Present: President Stango, Commissioners Awwad, Brown, Harvey, McEntee, Rodriguez, Sweeney, J. Van Stone, and T. Van Stone. Also present were Superintendent Ouellette, Anne Marie Cullinan, and Paul Guidone.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Jason Van Stone and duly seconded by Commissioner Brown, it was voted unanimously to return to the regular order of business at 6:40 p.m. with no votes taken.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. All in favor, opposed, motion carries.

1 COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERSONNEL

1.1 Upon a motion by Commissioner Harvey and duly seconded by Commissioner Jason Van Stone, it was voted, by roll call vote, to approve the appointment of Ellen D. Paolino as Principal, Walsh School, effective July 1, 2014.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. Any discussion? Superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT: Thank you Mr. President. I'm very pleased, very pleased to recommend to the Board of Education and to the public this evening the appointment of Mrs. Ellen Paolino for the position of Walsh Elementary School principalship. Again, this is a Commissioner's Network school, we've had a long search for our principal and finally she has arrived, internally in Waterbury, and we are so proud of that. Just a few credentials about Mrs. Paolino, her career began 19 years ago in Danbury Public Schools as a special education teacher. In 1997 she joined Waterbury as a special education teacher, worked at Crosby High School and North End Middle School. In August 2002 she became a teaching vice principal at North End and in 2004 a supervising vice principal at Generali. Ellen as served as the acting special education supervisor and more recently has done an outstanding job as interim principal at Rotella Interdistrict Magnet School. She has a 6th year from Sacred Heart; she's a member of the Magnet Schools of America's Steering Committee, SAW Grievance Committee, and PBIS District Committee. Her colleagues regard her as committed, reliable, and fair, dedicated to all children and their learning. So we're very enthusiastic to recommend her to this position. I would just like to say to the Board that she currently is at an awards night at Rotella and she will join us hopefully at eight o'clock to address the Board publically.

STANGO: Thank you Superintendent. Further discussion? Hearing none – roll call vote.

ROLL CALL ON ITEM #1.1:

Yeas: Commissioners Awwad, Brown, Harvey, McEntee, Rodriguez, Sweeney, J. Van Stone, T. Van Stone, and President Stango – 9

STANGO: Motion carries.

1.2 Upon a motion by Commissioner Harvey and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted, by roll call vote, to approve the appointment of Lauren F. Elias as Principal, Waterbury Arts Magnet School, effective July 1, 2014.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. Any discussion? Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT: Thank you Mr. President. I'm very pleased tonight to recommend to the Board of Education the approval of Lauren Elias for the position of Principal at Waterbury Arts Magnet School. She has certainly had a career in Waterbury over 26 years starting at Gilmartin as a first grade teacher and then Sprague Elementary School. In 2000 she became Principal of Tinker Elementary School. Credentials – she has a 6th year at Central Connecticut and she's an active member of the Connecticut Association of Schools where she serves on numerous committees including the Elementary Board of Control, the Board of Directors – two terms, the Elementary and Volunteer Recognition Program, Dance Team Champion Committee, she's also a member of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. During her tenure she has served on the PBIS Committee and has trained as a Professional Learning Community . . . member. She's truly an art enthusiast – she has casted, directed, choreographed school musicals over and over again and we certainly have been delighted in viewing those and performed in productions at Seven Angels Community Theatre. She has also served on the Board of Directors Gala Committee and performed with the Brass City Ballot. I just wanted to say as we look at change and we look at reform and we look at shortage areas we certainly are looking within the scope of Waterbury Public Schools having three high school openings and I always have to applaud a very strong leader who's within the system that would like to help out the district, professional talents, professionally grow, and is ready to step up for that challenge on behalf of the students of Waterbury and behalf of the school system. So I'm very, very proud of Lauren for taking this challenge on, I think she's a phenomenal principal, I think she'll do an outstanding job and I'm proud of her for initiating this.

STANGO: Thank you Superintendent. Further discussion? Commissioner Tom Van Stone.

T. VAN STONE: Thank you Mr. President. We're obviously in a very difficult situation with the empty offices for principal in the City. I've only been on the Board since December, I've seen too many leave, not enough come in, we've had them come in where we thought we had the candidate and the candidate either changed their mind or something got in our way. However, we have a policy that needs to be revisited where a candidate, as it states, if they have a relative, and the list of relatives is in the policy, it should be avoided hiring that person for that position. My take on this is the word "should", "should" never be in something that is giving you guidance for something like this – it's either "shall" or it should not be in the policy. So in this case we do have a

situation where the principal that we're gonna announce tonight has a brother who teaches at the same school. Now this candidate for the principal job I have no issue with, I think the credentials are there, I think we, it's a double win where we found a principal and it's a homegrown, our own person. However, I'm gonna need to say "no" tonight to this particular appointment based on if we're going to have guidelines, and that's all this is when it's not a hard-fast rule, for avoiding nepotism we need to rearrange the wording of this policy. Either we need a section with a critical job skill section that allows for leeway but an open policy that grants leeway is not a policy. So I recommend that we as a Board of Education take this up in the Policy Committee and somehow rewrite, and I do have my thoughts, rewrite this policy to give us some leeway. However, not just an open paragraph that uses the word "should". Again, that's not how you set guidelines in this type of hiring. So, again, nothing against the candidate, it's strictly policy so that's what I need to say about this so thank you Mr. President.

STANGO: Thank you Commissioner. Any further discussion? Commissioner Jason Van Stone.

J. VAN STONE: Thank you Mr. President. Very briefly, we do seem to find ourselves in a bit of a situation and I think it's unfortunate because I think Ms. Elias will be a fantastic principal at Waterbury Arts Magnet School but at the same time we do have our rules. Those rules were put into place originally for I think for good reason; I think Waterbury history sometimes shows that, whether it be through cronyism or nepotism or whatever "ism" you want to throw out there, sometimes you don't necessarily get the right people. This isn't one of those cases, this is a chance where I think we have a very good homegrown administrator that can take over this building and build on the success she's developed throughout the district and lead it into a very positive future. I think this is something that will be good for Waterbury. I think we do need to go back and look at that policy to figure out how we can avoid all the "isms" while still allowing the Superintendent to put the best people in the positions to lead this district but I think that as we sit here today we have this policy. So I wish Ms. Elias the best in this position and I only wish it could have been under circumstances were the vote could have been unanimous.

STANGO: Vice President Harvey.

HARVEY: Well I'm gonna hit it from another angle. I am one out of the group that has reservations particularly with what we know is going on at WAMS but I have been given the assurance that we have Dr. Johnson who is the ILD who will work very closely with this candidate to ensure her success. I will go along with this and I'm going along with this only because I have confidence in Dr. Johnson and her guidance. Thank you.

STANGO: Any further discussion? Commissioner McEntee.

McENTEE: Can the Superintendent address what safeguards will take place if this approval is granted, against favoritism and nepotism alike?

SUPERINTENDENT: Thank you for bringing that up Commissioner. We do have two supervising vice principals at that building and we are currently, upon Lauren's appointment this evening, we will be looking to add that third one, we have a third vice principal. So certainly supervision and evaluation will not be an issue at this building.

Ms. Elias will not be supervising or evaluating her brother at that building. Also she will certainly have an Instructional Leadership Director, Dr. Johnson, supervising the situation as well. In Mr. Ieronimo's defense, this is a very hard decision, he's been with that school since the onset, the beginning, the design, and both of them, you can tell they're related, have passion for the arts. I think they're very, very respectable professionals. I'm sure they certainly know the ethics involved and integrity involved in being a professional and I certainly will respect that. We do have that monitored with regards from Central Office with an Instructional Leadership Director as well as from the Supervising Vice Principal.

McENTEE: Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT: You're welcome.

STANGO: Commissioner Brown.

BROWN: Not to belabor the issue but just for the public the wording in the policy is not cut and dry; it's not "you shall not have relatives in the same building". There's a phrase in the policy that says "whenever possible". So we are in compliance with our current policy. But I agree with the conversation that we will have to review it to make sure that we all feel comfortable, that we're not kind of on the outskirts of a policy. So for the public though we are in compliance with our current policy as interpreted and we will be looking at it. As a Board we will be looking at the policy to make sure that it is as clear as possible moving forward. Thank you.

STANGO: Anyone else? Hearing none – roll call vote.

ROLL CALL ON ITEM #1.2:

Yeas: Commissioners Awwad, Brown, Harvey, McEntee, Rodriguez, Sweeney, and President Stango – 7

Nays: Commissioners J. Van Stone and T. Van Stone - 2

(applause)

ELIAS: I just want to say to all of you thank you very much. As you heard from Doctor I have been with the City of Waterbury for 26 years, I taught first grade at Sprague School for 12 years and have been the Principal for Tinker School for 14 years. I have a huge passion for the arts – dance, theater, and am very involved. I am very excited to take on this new challenge and to work with children that have a passion for the arts also and to foster that in them. So I thank you all very much for this opportunity and I will do the City of Waterbury proud.

1.3 Upon a motion by Commissioner Harvey and duly seconded by Commissioner Jason Van Stone, it was voted, by roll call vote, to approve the appointment of Dr. Delia I. Bello-Davila as Principal, Bucks Hill School, effective July 1, 2014.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. Discussion? Superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT: I'm very, very please tonight to recommend to the Board of Education Dr. Delia Bello-Davila for the position of Bucks Hill Principal. Dr. Bello's career began over 25 years in Puerto Rico. Upon her relocation to Connecticut she began working in the Springfield area school system and transitioned to Hartford Public Schools where she spent 20 years and she has served as a bilingual teacher, bilingual director, principal, and academic consultant and more recently she has served as a director of English-language learners. She is certainly passionate about children's education, she has incredible credentials including a Ph.D. from UConn on curriculum and instruction and she belongs to numerous professional societies including the American Educational Research Association, the National Association for Bilingual and Bicultural Education, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, just to name of few. And her colleagues describe her as a strong leader and motivator committed and reliable and always puts children first. So I'm very, very pleased to welcome her to Waterbury this evening.

STANGO: Thank you Superintendent. Further discussion? Hearing none – roll call vote.

ROLL CALL ON ITEM #1.3:

Yeas: Commissioners Awwad, Brown, Harvey, McEntee, Rodriguez, Sweeney, J. Van Stone, T. Van Stone, and President Stango.

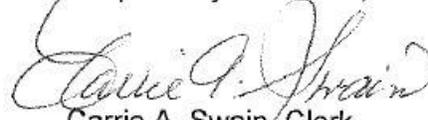
(applause)

BELLO-DAVILA: Good evening. Thank you for this . . . part of the Waterbury Public Schools. It is my plan to build a strong and diverse team of parents and teachers; they are going to help me turn this school around. In addition to that, I really wanted to ensure each one of you Board members that under my leadership local policy, state mandates, and federal laws are going to be the guide for everything that we do in the school. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Awwad and duly seconded by Commissioner Harvey it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Carrie A. Swain, Clerk
Board of Education