

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2017 – 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa, called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Danbury High School's AFJROTC Cadets.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Ralph Pietrafesa, Holly Robinson, Eileen Alberts, Michael Ferguson,  
Kathy Molinaro, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Richard Hawley,  
Frederick Karrat.  
Absent: David Metrena, Gladys Cooper  
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Dr. Glass, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess

**RECOGNITIONS**

- Christine Haddad and Curtis Darragh from Westside Middle School Academy stated that the school received a \$10,200 donation from Praxair for after school activities. Praxair employee, Laura Garza, stated that giving back to the community is part of Praxair's mission. They particularly enjoy giving back to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math programs and helping with future opportunities for our youth.
- Barry Mollengarden from Sodexo Services stated that Danbury High School participates in the Healthy High School Challenge. All ala carte snacks are tracked and points are given accordingly. Danbury ended in 57th place this year which has earned Danbury High School \$500.00 to use as they wish. Mr. Mollengarden presented the check to Principal Dan Donovan.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- Mr. Tom Agnes presented for the Board. Mr. Agnes stated that he is a recently retired teacher from Danbury High School, Danbury taxpayer and business owner. He stated that DHS has been losing teachers at what may be considered an alarming rate. He stated that surveys taken by DHS staff over the last eight years show a high level of discontent. Mr. Agnes stated that conducting periodic "climate surveys" to determine the level of morale in the building and faculty attitude on specific policies and building operations can produce extremely useful information. Both administration and teachers should sit down to compile the survey questions together and agree that the results will be considered valid. Mr. Agnes also suggested contacting businesses that have knowledge of polling mechanisms such as Microsoft, Duracell and Google.
- Mrs. Andee Nunn presented for the Board. Mrs. Nunn has been a member of the Danbury community since 1984. Mrs. Nunn taught for 20 years in the Danbury schools and was selected as Danbury Teacher of the Year in 2008. She is currently an Adjunct at WCSU. Mrs. Nunn stated that for several years she has seen very talented and experienced teachers leaving at too fast a pace. She stated that teachers feel underappreciated, unsupported and belittled. Mrs. Nunn believes that colleagues are not leaving for higher pay or challenging students and that they are upset because some administrators are overlooking efforts and dedication but rather focusing on minutia. Mrs. Nunn stated that we cannot be compared to our more affluent neighbors where test scores soar with property value. We must remember that our unique student body has the highest percentage of ESL learners as well as transient students struggling to find success. She asked the Board to pay attention to the problems occurring where we have dwindling staff retentions, unhappy staff and how that fails

our students.

- Ms. Debbie Isaacson presented for the Board. Ms. Isaacson is a parent of a student at Danbury High School. She is also a member of the Danbury Justice Network. Ms. Isaacson stated that she is concerned about the incident with a gentleman in the parking lot of the high school the past week. She perceived his behavior as harassment and would like to see a standard in place to protect the students from hate crimes and offensive language while in school. Ms. Isaacson suggested communication regarding administrative procedures and guidelines for dealing with hate crimes via a letter to parents or in the form of workshops. Ms. Isaacson looks forward to working with city officials to ensure that this incident is properly addressed and future incidents handled.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro, abstained by R. Jannelli that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 17-07 through 17-10, as recommended:

- **MINUTES**  
1/11/17 Board Meeting
- **PERSONNEL REPORT**  
Accept Leave of Absence: Alice Corte-Real Henriques  
Accept Resignations: Michael Fraser, Hunter Friary, Emmanuel Rijo,  
Bradley Rotatori, Bayrin Vargas, Karen Weissman  
Accept Retirements: Laura Wood (31+ years)  
New Hires: See Exhibit 17-08
- **DONATION**
  - a. R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education accept the donation from Praxair to Westside Middle School in the amount of \$10,000 for after-school cultural enrichment activities.
  - b. R. Hawley moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education accept the donation from Sodexo to DHS in the amount of \$500.

**Motion passed at 7:19 pm.**

## **EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE - none**

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

DHS: Monique Delima and Cameron Slingerland

ACE: none

Monique and Cameron presented the following to the Board:

- The semester has been extended one day due to the snow day and semester two classes will begin on January 27, 2017.
- Construction currently has walls going up, still going well with minimal disruptions.
- DECA participants chose to initiate a Community Service Project which will focus on empowering the student body at DHS and taking a stand against substance abuse through the Purple Project. In doing so, they have launched a Twitter campaign regarding school wide behavioral statistics in order

to motivate students to continue making good choices. Students have been wearing purple to demonstrate their stand against substance abuse. They sent a letter to multiple media outlets, in hopes of being published, addressing the stigmas that surround DHS and how they have worked to combat them.

- Currently in the process of putting up a mural that represents the attributes that DHS embodies.
- On January 26, 2017 there will be a presentation by Chris Sandy, a man who went to jail for 12 years for driving under the influence and nearly killing a man. He will be presenting to the Junior class about how substance abuse affected his life.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **Danbury High School Air Force Junior ROTC Program, Instructor-Master Sergeant Barry Brown.**

Principal Dan Donovan started the presentation by stating that Master Sergeant Brown has been doing a wonderful job running the program and he wanted to publicly recognize his hard work. Master Sergeant Brown is currently the Aerospace Science Instructor. He stated that the mission of the program is to develop citizens of character dedicated to serving their nation and community. The goal of the program is to instill values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and sense of accomplishment. The AFJROTC program began with the ROTC Vitalization Act in 1964 and began in 1967 at DHS. They have a four year curriculum in Aerospace Science, Leadership Education, Drill and Ceremony, and Health and Wellness. The program needs a minimum enrollment of 100 or 10% of the student body. They are short on that requirement right now at DHS with 80 students enrolled. Master Sergeant Brown then turned over the presentation to Deputy Commander Jason Suarez and Cadet Kernel Noah Stillman. Cadet Kernel Stillman discussed the 2016 - 2017 goals of the program and their physical training. Some of the activities and community service the cadets have participated in are drill competitions, blood drives, Memorial Day Parade, wreath placing, parent/teacher conferences, Open House, Clean Danbury Day and involvement with middle schools. Some of the trips they have taken were to D.C, the 9/11 Memorial, Intrepid Museum and a visit to the Thunderbirds. Deputy Commander Jason Suarez presented the various Drill Team activities and awards the program has received including drill meets in Bethel and UConn. He stated that requirements for Drill Team include not failing any classes, maintaining an average of 85% or higher and not missing more than three practices. Deputy Commander Suarez also presented on the Honor Guard events such as the Military Ball, Award Banquet, parades, Walk of Honor, Trick Team, AMA and model rocketry. Students have received ribbons for Color Guard, Saber Team and Silver Rope. Requirements for the Honor Guard include a 90% and above average, must not have any C's and must attend all practices. Deputy Commander Suarez stated that the average GPA of AFJROTC cadets is 2.58. 18 cadets received honor roll during Quarter one, 14 during Quarter two and 12 during Quarter three. Cadets also participate in other school programs such as football, volleyball, band and robotics to name a few. The high school graduation rate of cadets is 100%! R. Hawley asked both students if they were seniors and where they were headed next year. Cadet Kernel Stillman has been accepted to a military school in Vermont and Deputy Commander Suarez has been accepted to Central Connecticut State University and also received a call from Fordham University and will be interviewed in February for an army scholarship.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. December 2016 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)**

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education accept the December 2016 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund).

Mr. Martino stated that insurance claims are a little higher than he would like them. Seeing a higher trend than last year. About half a million higher than last year but we are only half way through the year.

**Motion passed at 7:38 pm.**

B. December 2016 Operating Results Analysis (Grants/Projects)

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education accept the December 2016 Operating Results Analysis (Grant/Projects)

Mr. Martino mentioned the cuts by ECS, reducing SIOP positions, additional reductions in supply accounts and the outstanding grant of our magnet school. R. Hawley asked if we have attempted to solicit from Praxair on a yearly basis other than the donation to WSMSA. Dr. Pascarella stated that having personal contacts at the companies is very important but that Praxair has donated a lot of their time with the youth such as clean up at buildings and that they have been good community neighbors. The issue we are having is trying to get sums of money. Dr. Pascarella met with group from Chamber looking to have them sponsor programs, but that has not produced anything as of yet. We have also reached out to Boehringer but they have their cutbacks as well and that has been unsuccessful. Dr. Pascarella stated that the corporations in town are good to us, including Pitney Bowes. Unfortunately they have their financial challenges as well. Dr. Pascarella stated that while we have been unsuccessful we will keep trying.

**Motion passed at 7:41 pm**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

A. Dental Program & Charter School Workshops

Dr. Pascarella stated he would like to have a workshop on February 8, 2017 at 6pm for the Dental Program.

B. Enrollment Study / Staffing Update

Dr. Pascarella stated he would like to have workshop on February 1, 2017 at 6pm for the Enrollment Study. Members from the City will also be invited.

C. Shelter Rock Modules Update

Dr. Pascarella stated that the classrooms opened up on January 23, 2017. The staff at the school volunteered their time and set modules up. Interim Principal Dawn Bartz did a phenomenal job with communication and helping the transition with the parents. Eight classrooms in all were moved. Dr. Pascarella recognized Mr. Martino for his leadership.

Dr. Pascarella also said that Danbury broke the 100 mark of best schools in Connecticut as number 85. A lot of that is based on assessments so our staff is doing a great job with our students.

Dr. Pascarella spoke about the recent incident in the Danbury High School parking lot and has sent information to the Board member's emails. Principal Dan Donovan has been working with staff and students and he will respond to the parent who spoke earlier in the meeting with what the high school is doing in response to that incident. There will be a joint meeting with the Chief of Police. Dr. Pascarella stated he is also looking into adding two extra cameras for that parking lot as well as an additional

Safety Advocate that was put in the parking lot at the beginning of the year.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Superintendent's 2017-2018 Proposed Budget**

Mr. Joe Martino addressed the Board and presented the 2017-2018 budget. Mr. Martino reviewed the DPS mission, belief statement and budget concerns. Mr. Martino stated that the state concerns dictate a lot of our budget. DPS continues to work closely with our elected officials to monitor the State budget process. The Alliance Grant, Priority School District Grant and City Transportation Grant have all been cut this school year. Pending cuts to the Magnet School Grant could total as much as 6.5% in the current year with additional cuts next year. The big focus will be our Alliance Grant. Danbury will receive \$8.4 million in 2017 - 2018. The Alliance Grant holds all day Kindergarten, intervention support in reading, ELL supports, evaluation training to our teachers, increasing our Bilingual teachers, math supports, additional administrative support, an Assistant Principal at Park Avenue School and Shelter Rock, Middle School Department Chairs and instructional supplies for Common Core. Mr. Martino stated that they are reviewing all current programs that are in the current grant and that the draft application for the 2017-2018 grant is due around mid-April of 2017. This application must still follow the same criteria, that the majority of all programs must be new initiatives. The State continues to review these funds quarterly. Mr. Martino stated that the Governor's budget comes out on February 8, 2017. Mr. Martino stated that K. Truchsess has been instrumental in creating a low incident school based special education program across the district. There is an ongoing study of allocation of substitute teacher resources and the impact on in-district meetings on student instructional time as well as the review of our transportation system. Mr. Martino stated that the total budget request for the 2017 - 2018 school year is \$5.9 million which is an increase of 4.72%. Mr. Martino stated that the key budget elements are enrollment growth, cuts from Alliance/ECS funding, increased personnel and insurance costs and addressing the concerns of our expanding ELL and Special Education students at all grade levels. Mr. Martino stated that the district is seeing an enrollment growth of 1-2% per year across the district. A projected growth report was done about two and a half years ago. As of this school year, we are already ahead of our 2024 projections of 11,150 students. Mr. Martino discussed the salary budget. The total full-time salaries are budgeted at \$75 million which represents an increase of \$3.3 million or 4.73%. That includes all contractual raises, anticipated retiree projection of 20 teachers at a savings of \$700,000 and funding core programs due to adjustments in state grants. The projected enrollment growth is:

- 3 elementary teachers at Park Ave School, King Street and Shelter Rock.
- 3 Special Education teachers at DHS and Pembroke.
- 4 full time teachers at DHS in Science, ESL and Math.
- 1 pre-school teacher in our Special Education program.

Mr. Martino stated that in a joint effort between the Board of Education and all collective bargaining units, we have seen many changes in our health insurance plans. The Health insurance renewal for 2017-2018 is 6.5% or \$1.5 million. This amount is based on:

- Initial annual premium increases continue to be smaller to reflect value of high deductible plan.
- Increases in premium co-share amounts for all bargaining units coming out of negotiations this year.
- Reductions in some HSA cash contributions and restructuring of other units to reduce vulnerability of payments to resigning employees.
- Some recent gains in claims history, yet we have recently seen an increase in high cost claims such as knee replacements and early infant births.

- High Deductible Plan provisions continuing to drive increase in generic prescriptions and drop in high cost ER visits.
- Higher value claims continue to drive in Worker's Compensation costs. We are seeing modest savings from close monitoring and returning employees to work when possible.

Mr. Martino stated that Service and Fees are budgeted at \$5.2 million for 2017 - 2018 which is an increase of \$122,013 or 2.39%. The largest area of increase is in our Special Education Tutors and Occupational and Physical Therapy support based on contractual increases. Right now we have approximately 220 tutors servicing one on one or two on one students. Utilities and Repairs are budgeted at \$1 million at an increase of \$5,506 or .51%. Transportation and Tuition are budgeted at \$12.7 million at an increase of \$695,888 or 5.77%. Mr. Martino stated that we are entering a new contract with Student Transport of America which includes a 3.5% increase in transportation costs. This contract includes a complete replacement of our entire busing fleet. The new fleet will run completely on propane which will save us both in fuel and CO2 emissions. The Special Education Transportation is also increasing based on contract increases and those are represented in this budget. These tuition costs are rising due to increase in tuition rates. We continue to see a decrease in our E-Rate funding for our telephone and internet services. We also have a mandated student increase participation in the state Vo-Ag program at Nonnewaug. We currently have 19 students in the program. Mr. Martino stated that our supplies are budgeted at \$4.5 million which represents a decrease of \$14,812 or .32%. Despite rising costs, the Board has not increased electrical accounts in five years due to many energy upgrades the city and Board have completed. The district is increasing resources at the classroom level by continuing to weight classroom supplies on a per student allocation. Mr. Martino stated that equipment and dues are budgeted at \$994,166 which is an increase of \$225,000. Dues and fees, Adult Education and Bilingual are budgeted at \$432,046 which represents a flat budget. Mr. Martino completed his presentation by stating that Danbury Public Schools must continue to focus on providing a high quality education for students while maintaining financial responsibility to stakeholders throughout the City. Aside from the presentation, Mr. Martino requested funding from the Board for the Head Start program for the 2017-2018 budget. It was not included in the presentation due to receiving the proposal days before the meeting.

## **INFORMATION**

### **A. Legislative Update**

Dr. Pascarella stated that the Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents (CAUS) will be meeting with the legislative leadership group. They will also be meeting with the lobbyists, including new lobbyist, Ryan Bingham, the former Mayor of Torrington. The group will be meeting on January 30, 2017 to discuss the agenda. Dr. Pascarella stated that they will be discussing several objectives. Objective one will be to fully fund the ECS (Alliance Grant) and restore \$990,000. Objective two will be to fully fund the excessive cost for special education. There is a possibility of a new funding system in the state of Connecticut that will fund special education in a different way. Right now it is just a thought and a study but the Governor is interested. Objective three will be to freeze the magnet school funding sanctions if enrollment drops below the 60/40 proportion for at least three years. Dr. Pascarella stated that we are losing enrollment at AIS, particularly from Newtown. Dr. Pascarella stated that we cannot have more than 60% of Danbury students at AIS or we can lose our funding. As of right now we have 62% of Danbury students enrolled at AIS.

B. AIS Magnet School Tuition Increase

Dr. Pascarella stated that the magnet school tuition was increased at \$1,784.00 per student.

Mr. Martino stated that per the City of Danbury Charter, the Board has to vote on the budget before February 15, 2017. The Board will need to fully approve the finance budget at the next Board meeting.

R. Hawley asked for clarification regarding the recent news release from Governor Malloy. Dr. Pascarella stated that Governor Malloy felt that the method of the school funding was unconstitutional and was appealing the court's decision.

**BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

R. Pietrefesa revisited the earlier discussed workshops.

- The Enrollment Study workshop will be held on February 1, 2017 at 6 pm.
- The Dental Workshop will be held on February 8, 2017 at 6 pm.
- The Charter School Workshop will be held on February 22, 2017 at 6 pm.

**BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

M. Ferguson stated that Mary Gregory, the Executive Director of DSABC for 11 years, has submitted her resignation. He publicly thanked her for her service to DSABC. M. Ferguson reminded the Board that the DSABC Board does the hiring and that they are in the beginning stages of that process and he will keep the Board informed on their progress.

R. Janelli congratulated R. Pietrefesa on his new position on the Board. He stated that there was a workshop held by Ted Carroll last year. Through that they had a nice roundtable discussion. He found that valuable and asked the Board to consider having that again.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** - none

**ADJOURNMENT**

P. Johnston moved, seconded by K. Molinaro, that the Board of Education adjourn its meeting of January 25, 2017 and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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Kathy Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)

