

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2012 – 7:00 p.m.

Administrative Center – 63 Beaver Brook Road

Present: Eileen Alberts, Shirley Chilian, Gladys Cooper, Gary Falkenthal, Annrose Flusky-Lattin, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, K. Molinaro, Sandy Steichen, Robert Taborsak, Phyllis Tranzillo; Drs. William Glass and Sal Pascarella, Ed Arum and Kim Thompson from Administration

Absent: E. Alberts

Chairperson Cooper thanked all the young people for their presence tonight.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gladys Cooper called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairperson Cooper asked K. Molinaro to do the roll call.

RECOGNITIONS

South Street School students' low energy use initiative.

Dr. Pascarella introduced Marni Schork, Principal of South Street School, and she acknowledges teacher, Tania Bonacci and Safe Harbor Interventionalist, Elena Buzaid and the students from the school. Students presented their Disney's Planet Challenge Project to the Board and the proclamation they received from Mayor Boughton. On behalf of the Board, Chairperson Cooper thanked everyone for a great job. Dr. Pascarella thanked the parents for being here.

Jill Russell Benner, of Broadview Middle School Theater Group is here with a group of students who talked about their upcoming show, *HONK, jr!*, which will take place on March 29 and 30 at 7:00 p.m. at the school. Unfortunately, Ms. Amanda DosSantos, the teacher from the Rogers Park Theater Group, was not able to be here but Jasmine Garzon, a student from the school addressed the Board and talked about their first production, *Disney's High School Musical, Jr*, which will be presented on March 28 and March 30 at 6:00 p.m. at the school. Broadview Middle School wished Rogers Park much luck on their first production.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Irving Fox is here as a concerned parent. Over the past three months, he has joined various community organizations. His concern is the lack of parent involvement, participation, and advocacy.

Barb Cirella, parent of two students is here to advocate for the high-achieving students in the district.

Sandra Cherney talks about parent involvement in association with the community. She feels that a large part of the budget increase is for salaries of teachers, and she feels it will need to be addressed publicly as to why that line item is so large. She also asked for an update of an evaluation the Board made over last summer when there was a switch in principals for DHS. She said the Board had approved and ordered an evaluation of DHS.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Hawley by that the Board of Education approve the items on the Consent Calendar, as recommended:

A. MINUTES

Board Meeting, 2/22/12

B. Operations/Policy Committee Meeting, 3/5/12

Board Workshop Meeting (Lighthouse Training), 3/7/12

Finance Committee Meeting, 3/7/12

C. PERSONNEL

Accept Leaves of Absence: Lisa Capone, Karen Lamb, Pamela McGlynn, Crystal Taft

Accept Resignations: Landon Graves, Kimberly Keiser (coach position only),
Dennis Petruzzelli, Kelly Ann Shea, Michelle Tran

D. DONATION

1. Accept donation of \$1,360.08 from Mr. Sergio Restrepo, IBM Donor,
for the Adopt-A-School Program

2. Accept donation of \$2,500 from the Danbury Ski Club to
the Danbury High School Ski Team

G. Falkenthal questioned the Minutes of the Operations/Policy Committee Meeting dated March 5 wherein a motion was made to eliminate Paragraph 2-B, when in fact, it should have read, "1.B.2."

The motion carried at 7:37p.m., except for the above comment and correction.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE

Cindy Mirochine brought copies of "A View From The Classroom," to the members of the Board and she invited the Board members to contact her if they have any questions. With regard to the CommPACT schools, a Uniserv representative visited ACE, and she shared that if this is something that the Board wishes to pursue, she will have CEA reps come in and provide more detailed information about CommPACT schools. She has also contacted the President in Bridgeport to possibly get some links to teachers at Bassick High School that is currently a CommPACT model.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES - None

PRESENTATION

CT Education Reform/Common Core (Dr. William Glass)

Dr. Glass gave a detailed PowerPoint Presentation to the Board. After the presentation, questions were asked and a discussion ensued. R. Jannelli thanked Dr. Glass for the presentation and asked how arguments and presentations are made to the State for questionable items. Dr. Pascarella said that for the administrators, he has seen an outreach like he has never seen before. He said at every step, we meet with the Commissioner and Governor. C. Mirochine said CEA is obviously advocating on teachers' behalves, and they are also encouraging their teachers to write to the Education Committee. Teachers have provided them with the information on all the areas you heard, and it is also in the packet distributed by Ms. Mirochine. Teachers

are speaking to those specific points in the bill directly and then also reaching out to legislators. Governor Malloy will be in Bethel on March 15 at 6 p.m. R. Jannelli asks if anyone from the district will be speaking on our behalf. Dr. Pascarella said it will be first come, first served. He said the problem with the bill is that there is not a lot of specificity. There are a lot of concepts out there and many things are going to be developed. Reaching out to CEA, to the principals' organizations, and to the superintendents to help craft this is something that they keep saying they want to do. S. Chillan said what we have to remember is that this is a presentation bill by the Governor. A lot of the money that we think we are going to get is siphoned off in this bill for charter schools. Dr. Pascarella said he meets once a month with the reps from the union. C. Mirochine has made a point to tell the faculty to attend the meetings and be respectful and mindful of the position and go to learn. Dr. Pascarella thanked her for that saying that. Our Danbury folks are getting the right message that we can model for our kids. K. Molinaro asked if the bill addresses attending kindergarten at Age 5 rather than Age 4-1/2 to 6. Dr. Pascarella said there is a committee that is supposed to make a recommendation to the Commissioner. He continued by saying it has been so reorganized, it has been put on the back burner. K. Molinaro asked if this is something the Board can decide for Danbury. Dr. Pascarella said we have to follow the state law.

Dr. Pascarella talked about the \$1.7 million dollars which is not in our pockets. There is charter money. Dr. Pascarella's interest in the CommPACT schools and charter schools is that we can access that, and if he can put a plan together to access those funds, he will do so. The \$1.7 million dollars, as it is coming to fruition, seems to be part of what they call conditional funding. You may receive the money based on a plan, based on evidence that you are succeeding, so it is not money in hand. The other thing we are going to hear is that it cannot supplant.

Ed Arum wants to address a question that was asked at a former meeting about the water at the schools. E. Arum has an email from the water company that states that water will begin to be tested on Friday, March 16. Water testing has not been done since 2004.

ACTION ITEMS - None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Funding Legislation (Ed Arum)

Ed Arum said in 163 pages of the bill, if it passes, non-residents attending the magnet schools will get an increase in the tuition. This means \$127,000 additional funding for the magnet school.

ESEA/CT Waiver

Dr. Pascarella referred to the information the Board members received in their packet pertaining to ESEA, formerly known as No Child Left Behind. Dr. Pascarella said his understanding is that unless a bipartisan bill comes out of the House of Representatives, Chairman Harkin and the Senate will not take up the bill. They did approve moving the reauthorization. In this packet, he shared many items that are beneficial to Danbury. Chairman Harkin will not take it up because it went right down party lines. He said they will not promote a bill to be approved at this point in the Senate. When we met with him last Friday those were the issues we brought up. The waiver did get in and it was accepted. We are in the current round of approval. Dr. Pascarella said we need to be prepared with the changes that we want to submit when necessary.

Pay to Participate Update

Dr. Pascarella convened a meeting with the Booster Club. He said a discussion ensued about what it might mean to eliminate the activities and what it might mean to continue but with pay to participate. Dr. Pascarella distributed a handout to the Board and talked about its content. A discussion ensued amongst the members. Dr. Pascarella would like to take a phone survey of the parents to see what they think and move forward.

AESOP Update (Kim Thompson)

K. Thompson reported she is continuing to remedy problems and looking at its efficiency and feels we are continuing to see a savings trend that we have been seeing since the beginning of the year. In terms of making us more efficient and cost effective, the program is continuing to work. They have been addressing the failure to have all classes covered issue, we added many more subs to the pool, and we centralized the calendar for professional development coverage. We have had limited problems with leaving things uncovered. The other success with Aesop is we have seen a notable uptake in how successful we are in challenging unemployment claims by using our system. Every week in our Cabinet meeting, we continue to look at the experience rating we have in terms of absences for positions that need to be filled. We run a chart, and it is monitored every week. We continue to see absences up on Monday, down on Wednesday and back up on Friday. We are under 10%. That has led to a vigorous initiative, particularly at the secondary level, but also at the elementary level to look at those who are showing patterns of chronic absenteeism. K. Thompson has been working with building administrators to show them how to run internal reports so they can see patterns of absences. They have been speaking with employees who show those kinds of repeated patterns of absences. At the high school, we have undertaken a similar process. Having laid the ground work with all those folks who now understand we are capable of seeing patterns, we now have started calling people here to Beaver Brook to have further conversations with them. Our goal is to raise everyone's awareness and to make everyone self-police on absenteeism.

K. Thompson wants to update the Board on the search to fill the Director of Finance and also the Director of Special Services positions. Both positions have a decent amount of applications, between 70 to 100. However, the number of people meeting our criteria in terms of certification and experience is less than five in each position. She is continuing to screen. The goal is still to try to convene the Board members into an interview panel to see if we can at least take a look at the few that look to be promising. K. Thompson said we may find ourselves in a similar situation as we had with the finance director, which is we are not really sure we have the right person. We need to start that process because we have had some applicants in there for a while. She is continuing to work with E. Arum and J. Emmet to see if we can at least get a pool of applicants that we would like to talk to and she then will report back to the Board. A clarifying question was asked if when absences are monitored, are all employees being looked at, not only the teachers, and K. Thompson confirmed this to be true.

Danbury Teacher Evaluation Committee Update

R. Taborsak said he attended the meeting and has an idea of what other school systems, such as Bethel and New Haven are doing. The State has not been much of a help in terms of advising about timelines, etc. After looking at these models, Danbury will start developing its own priorities. There are 23 people on the committee, including teachers from all levels.

DISCUSSION

Education Technology Plan, July 2012-June 2015

S. Steichen attended a meeting with Sue Rice. She spoke about some of the problems we are faced with as we did initially have grant money to invest in the technology, but there is nothing on a regular basis to help us maintain the systems. R. Taborsak said there is a necessity of a leasing program. His feeling is that we cannot function without it, and we have to get serious support. A discussion ensued among the members and Administration. S. Steichen would like to discuss this further at the next meeting.

INFORMATION

Revision to Bylaw 4-10, Committees (see Exhibit 12-61, Policy Committee Minutes)

Chairperson Cooper said this is on the Agenda for acceptance at our next meeting. She thanked G. Falkenthal for bringing up the error in the Minutes.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Cooper asked if all the Board members did all three observations with regard to expulsions. She said it is in the Bylaws that in order for a Board member to participate in an expulsion hearing, he/she would have to do three observations. She would like to bring in someone from CABA to show us the correct procedure to do an expulsion hearing in September.

We have 15 students at the high school that are expectant mothers under the Age of 17.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Community Relations- R. Jannelli, Chairperson

R. Jannelli said a meeting was held and Minutes will be forthcoming. A good part of the meeting was to orient the new members of what has happened in the past and also to come up with a blueprint of what this community relations committee would entail, and that blueprint would be used by subsequent committees for use in different aspects, such as parental involvement, contributions parents can make to the schools, outreach programs, offering internships, etc.

Finance – R. Jannelli, Chairperson

R. Jannelli reports that the Minutes of the meeting are in the packet. Another meeting will be forthcoming to further go into the information that was reviewed. There will be a City Council Budget Meeting on March 20 at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. Dr. Pascarella has a plan in place. He said there is a small panel, and basically we will take the letter that we sent over to the City and talk about what we have learned since we submitted it to them based on recent negotiations. They will then begin to ask us questions about the salaries. S. Chilian asked if it is beneficial for Board members on the Finance Committee to be there. Dr. Pascarella agreed that it would be very important for the Council to see the Board there. R. Jannelli said it is also important to be there for clarity purposes.

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a lawsuit, a discrimination case, and change in union representation.

The motion carried at 9:43 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Present: Eileen Alberts, Shirley Chilian, Gladys Cooper, Gary Falkenthal, Annrose Flusky-Lattin, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, K. Molinaro, Sandy Steichen, Robert Taborsak, Phyllis Tranzillo; Drs. William Glass and Sal Pascarella, Ed Arum and Kim Thompson from Administration

Absent: E. Alberts

K. Thompson said the Corporate Council of Danbury was served a lengthy subpoena regarding the CJEF lawsuit. She has been meeting with Les Pinter, Deputy Corporate Council, to provide all the requested documents, budgets, salaries, etc. She will continue to work with them and keep the Board informed of any developments.

K. Thompson briefed the Board of Education members in Executive Session as to the dismissal from the CHRO of a gender discrimination claim filed by an unsuccessful applicant for a custodial position. She further gave her opinion as to the likelihood of further action from the claimant.

The custodians' union has changed representation. After two very contested votes, they will now be represented by Teamsters. K. Thompson began a brief discussion of negotiating strategy with the Board of Education members going forward.

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Taborsak to return to Public Session.

The motion carried at 9:55 p.m.

PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education adjourn the March 14, 2012 meeting and the meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Richard Hawley, Secretary