

# DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2011- 7:00 PM  
Administrative Center - 63 Beaver Brook Road

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## *A G E N D A*

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Present: G. Cooper, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, S. LeRoy, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak  
Drs. S. Pascarella, W. Glass, Ms. J. Emmett, Mr. E. Longo and Ms. K. Thompson  
from Administration

Absent: E. Alberts, R. Austin-James, M. Fazio, K. Gailliard, K. Molinaro

### CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Irving Fox, called the meeting to order at 6:55 p.m. and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### RECOGNITIONS

- DHS Robotics Team, Joanna Hull, Emily McWilliams, Nick Passaro, Yuriy Slabicky, Max Sweikert and Matt Ziegler won the Team Excellence Trophy at Vex Competition and were invited to the Vex World Championship in Orlando, Florida and the Board of Education congratulates the team. The Board commends DHS teacher, Eric Savoyski, the parents and the team.
- DHS Film & Video Production student finalists, Gina Atanasoff and Cristina Siguenza, won in the Connecticut DMV Teen Safe Driving Video Contest titled "Be Aware." Chairman Fox congratulates the students for their achievement and also Mr. Greg Scalzo, the supporting teacher.
- DHS finalists in the Connecticut DMV Teen Safe Driving Video Contest titled "Distracted" are Alex Ferrante, Michael Duncan, Louis Cerone, Chris Medieros, Anthony Hanna, Carmine Dominicus and John Carreiro. The Board of Education offers its congratulations to the finalists.
- DHS teacher, Sterling Miller, was selected to participate in the first Google Teacher Academy (50 selected worldwide). The Board of Education congratulates Mr. Miller for his achievement.

As Chairman of the Community Relations Committee, R. Jannelli would like to see updates of the accomplishments and awards of all the students in the district presented at a Board meeting. He cites articles from the newspapers showcasing the accomplishments of other students in the district. He also recommends that, in addition to the accomplishments and the awards, perhaps Dr. Glass and Dr. Pascarella can ask the principals to come forth with teachers to present to the Board some of the functions going on in their schools. He would like to see another day, such as Read Across America, where volunteers would visit schools and encourage the reading program.

Dr. Pascarella read a letter from Congressman Murphy nominating Danbury High School to be considered to participate in the 2012 National Memorial Day Parade in Washington.

Chairman Fox commented that this is a sample of what marks the achievement of our 10,000 students and approximately 1,000 employees and recognizes everyone for a job well done.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Kathy Snow, parent of two elementary students, has a cost-saving idea to share. She would like to remove the doors from the hallways into the bathrooms at Rogers Park Middle School. She feels this will help reduce the amount of graffiti on the walls, reduce the damage done in the bathrooms, reduce children hanging out in there, reducing potential bullying, and allowing students who need to use the facilities to go in there.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION -** R. Jannelli moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education approve the items on the Consent Calendar, as recommended:

**A. MINUTES**

Special Board Meeting Minutes (Exp)  
Board of Education Meeting Minutes

**B. PERSONNEL**

Accept Leave of Absence: Christine Miller, Lisa Capone,  
Pamela McGlynn, Susana Enriquez  
Accept Resignations: Laura Ansel, Maria Melo, Luis Fernandes,  
Almerinda Palhete-Fernandes

Authorize the Superintendent to send notices of non-renewal to faculty identified on list provided to Board Members.

**The motion carried at 7:18 p.m.**

**EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE** – No representative

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Danbury High School - None

Alternative Center: Vanessa Grant reports March 10 is the last day of CAPT testing and they have had great attendance and participation. The second semester is off to a good start.

Ninth graders are doing practice tests, sophomores are testing, and juniors and seniors who need to retake the CAPT are working on their alternative assessments, which is a sample CAPT test, put together by math teacher, Anthony Hellman, with old CAPT questions. The seniors who need to retake portions of the CAPT in order to graduate are also retaking them.

**PRESENTATION**

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Dr. Pascarella introduces some guests from WCSU representing the Intro to Education class, who are here to observe the meeting.

### A. School Governance Council

We have three schools that have qualified for the opportunity to have a council, ACE, DHS and Stadley Rough. Dr. Pascarella has attended a number of workshops, and we are ready to start putting together a protocol on the selection process, on operating procedures, and also a training module. We hope to be ready in September. The council will be made up of five teachers and seven parents. When the selection is completed, the group selects two representatives from the community at large, and they will begin advising the principal. The principal is part of the Governance Council. Each parent will receive a notice and have an opportunity to nominate either themselves or another person. Chairman Fox asks if we expect there to be any material costs to run an election for this council, and if so, does that fall on the district to bear the costs. Dr. Glass said that the real costs are nothing more than copying, and we are doing it digitally getting information electronically through School Messenger. He said it is critical to get the right composition of people on the councils. Dr. Pascarella said that as part of the training, there will be regulations and protocols on ethics, behavior, etc. We have some funds coming through the Literacy Center and Anne Mead for leadership training. Anyone is eligible to run as long as they have child in that school. R. Jannelli's concern is that these schools are on the list for perpetuity. He asks what is being done to amend the legislation. Dr. Glass reports that at the legislative meeting, that issue was raised to the people that service our area. Stadley Rough is a good example. Their performance outscored the threshold, but they were put on the list because of the previous year's performance. There was no consideration given for the growth that they had demonstrated. He stated the legislators recognize that this is another unfunded mandate, and they recognize that once a school is identified, you cannot get off the list, and once you are identified, no one else can be identified. They recognize there are major problems with this, and a lot of people are at work trying to change the legislation. I. Fox asks about a timetable, and Dr. Pascarella stated that by November 11, we have to have it in place, and he would like to start working on this in the spring. R. Jannelli's concern is that the schools will still have the stigmata of being a failure even if they turn it around. He is happy that there is something in the works to change this. J. Scozzafava said he has a concern and wants the elections to be fair and equitable. Dr. Pascarella said everyone has the opportunity to participate either by running or nominating. He explained the process to the Board. I. Fox asks if there is guidance to the principals. Dr. Pascarella said that the state has taken the schools that have gone through it and used them as an example. I. Fox is concerned that the principals might be soliciting people to organize the election process. Dr. Pascarella said it is an open process; they have to be elected. I. Fox states we need to ensure that it is fair. J. Scozzafava agrees. R. Taborsak reminds the Board members that they are to be removed from this. S. Leroy is confident that as long as everyone follows the guidelines put forth by the State of Connecticut, it will be fair and equitable. R. Jannelli has a concern as to how we will communicate this to the parents of those schools as well as other parents in the district so that they are aware of what is happening. Dr. Pascarella said that protocols will be shared with the Board.

### B. Update Pembroke School Roof Repair

E. Longo reported that we are awaiting word from the City with regard to insurance coverage for either a full replacement of the roof or major repairs to the existing structure. To date, he has heard nothing, but he will reach out to Mr. Iadarola by the end of the week. Dr. Pascarella said with all the rain we had, it held up very well, and he thanks the City for their hard work. S. LeRoy reported she received phone calls from parents who had children with allergies in one of the rooms that were affected. She asks if air tests were conducted in those classrooms that seemed to be more severely

affected. Dr. Pascarella said the group is a very reputable group, and he reports that the initial results were too good, and felt to be invalid, so more tests were ordered, and we are awaiting those results, which will be shared as soon as they come in.

### C. Legislative Meeting

Dr. Pascarella reports that we are moving our agenda forward. Proposals from the Governor include the transfer of the vocational schools to the regional districts. There are four schools that will be transferred. There are two opportunities; they can go to Ed Connection or to Danbury, in our case. We have a lot of questions, but there is not great clarity on it other than we have been promised by George Coleman, the acting Commissioner, to receive more information. S. LeRoy asks if we get HATS under our jurisdiction, will the state be giving us any money to run it. Dr. Pascarella said that the state has not funded the vocational center for the past four years appropriately. S. LeRoy read in an article that the personnel that are currently employed will remain State of Connecticut employees while the new employees will be our employees, if we were to get it. She also asks if it has to stay a technical school. Dr. Pascarella said right now we do not have all the answers but we will seek clarify from the State. Dr. Pascarella is also keeping an eye on the phasing in of the kindergarten age as of September 1. He states that if it passes, we need some opportunities for our youngsters who are out of school for a longer period of time. Most of the cities would like to see the State provide some funds that would assist us in servicing students so they are engaged during that time. The other thing that may affect us is the Bureau of School Facilities, which presently operates out of the State Department of Education. It may move into a state agency, so the Commission of Education's Office would no longer be in charge of approving specs for education, utilization of buildings. It will move completely onto another site.

### D. City/School IT Collaboration

Dr. Glass wants to bring this to the Board's attention. There is no action required. He wants to keep the Board in the loop early on. We have been meeting with the City's Finance Director, David St. Hilaire, and a team from Computer Integrated Services as well as CISCO. He continues to say that, years ago, there was a consideration given to blending the information technology services so that the Board of Education team and the City team would come together. We spoke with the Mayor six months ago and he suggested that we look at this again. We have been collaborating with CIS and CISCO, and we have asked them to look at our infrastructure, look at our staffing, look at our growth, and to look at our sustainability. They are doing the same thing for the City. They will come back and make a series of recommendations on whether to merge the two or not. Once that happens, we will bring it to the Board. I. Fox asks if we can investigate looking at IT sharing between school districts which have the same operating structure and same technology structure. He feels all of that is much more similar than what the City has with the schools. Dr. Glass states that Mr. St. Hilaire reports that on the City side, they have a lot to learn from the Board of Ed. We are ahead of the City in terms of how we built our infrastructure. The City has done good work as well. The one cost-saving situation may be with our telephone system. Both of us have antiquated phone systems, and the team said there might be a way to save money on the phones, but it is a very complicated scenario, but we are looking into it. We also looked at blending with Brookfield, and there is not a lot out there that has come forward. Dr. Glass continued to say that each district's infrastructure design is so different even though we are doing the same kind of work, and it changes constantly, and it would be difficult to align the systems. Dr. Pascarella said that one of the legislative initiatives is to look at regionalization so there may be some forced issues as well.

### E. Middle School Attire

Dr. Glass reports that the two middle school principals got together and discussed the idea of taking both schools' colors, in terms of shirts, and any youngster from either school can wear any color shirt that was in the color pattern of either school. Everyone would wear khaki bottoms. If there were an insignia on a shirt, it would be, for example, two flags each representing a middle school. A survey of the parents showed 66% in favor of the uniform policy. A concern is whether all parents can afford the uniforms. There will be a small scholarship put aside for students who could not afford the uniforms. Another concern is whether or not a student will be suspended if he/she does not wear the uniform. Mr. Robbs said he would not discipline by suspension but would investigate the issue. Dr. Glass states that two-thirds of the parents voted in favor of the uniforms and that is a very good sign, but we also have not had the other third weigh in, so we don't know if there is a population that is strongly opposed to wearing school uniforms. S. LeRoy is a proponent of school uniforms. She states it would level the playing field. She is in favor of having these uniforms across the district. She feels parents would be surprised at how much money they would save by going in this direction. R. Taborsak asks if the survey was taken in both middle schools, and Dr. Glass responded that it was. Dr. Glass said there have been some school systems that have implemented a uniform policy, but when students have not adhered to it, they come out with disproportionate disciplinary consequences, and that is what we want to stay away from. R. Jannelli said the survey was discussed a couple of meetings ago. He asked the question at that time as to whether this would be mandatory or voluntary and was given the answer that it would be voluntary. Dr. Pascarella said it will not get his support if it is mandatory. He agrees with S. LeRoy that it would level the playing field, but he has no desire to start a policy that will put students out of the building because they are not wearing uniform colors, and he further states that by law, we have no right to require what the students wear, unless there is gang affiliation. G. Cooper comments it was done many years ago for a different reason, and it was not put into effect at that time. She continues to say that if we put this type of restriction on our young people, we need to be sure that the staff dresses appropriately. S. LeRoy said she agrees with the last part of what G. Cooper said, especially at DHS. S. LeRoy feels that the policy could be instituted without having to suspend students if they do not participate. Dr. Pascarella reiterates that a student who attends a public school that is dressed appropriately and decently and has no affiliation to a gang has a right to come through the doors. R. Taborsak stated that the Board is not at the point where it is going to vote on this, and feels there are more important things to be discussed. He also states that it is up to the principal of the school to address their staff if they are not appropriately dressed. G. Cooper asks that since RPMS and BVMS have done the survey, have there been any problem with how the students are dressing. Dr. Pascarella responded by saying that parents brought it up, and he does not know if it is an economic reason. Dr. Glass talked about two things that were discussed: (1) it gives a sense of pride and ownership and unity to the school when the entire population of students tend to look the same in terms of their attire; and (2) that a number of parents did bring up the idea that they cannot keep up with their neighbors in terms of dressing standards. I. Fox commented on the reality of the survey, which would indicate that we are going to have one-third to one-half of the students who are not dressed in the appropriate colors, and he asks how that promotes the spirit of unity. He feels that there might be some benefits in a theoretical world, but he is not in favor of the dress code. He asks Dr. Glass to respond to the practicality of this. Dr. Glass and Dr. Pascarella have discussed this very issue, and they are very concerned about inappropriate disciplinary consequences. Dr. Pascarella feels it should be put together by building a rationale, bringing it to the Board, and we will go from there. S. LeRoy said if it is not mandated, it will not

work. Dr. Glass noted that the talk has been around the idea of piloting this with the sixth grade class. They also polled the fifth grade parents, so the response came from the Grade 5 through 7 group, not 6 through 8. S. LeRoy asked about piloting with the STEM Academy. Dr. Glass responded that the reason it never went any further is there was concern that it would show that this is somehow an elitist group of students, and the feeling was that as soon as you put the students in a uniform, the students get singled out, and as we talked to the students, they were not interested.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **DISCUSSIONS**

TDEC Update: Dr. Glass reports very good news. The State was very complementary to us when we presented the plan. The good news is that Dr. Wasta, who is the lead rep from the State to the school systems, came back and said that we do not have to report back to them on as many indicators as have been identified. We have three things on which to report, (1) attendance, (2) curriculum development efforts, and (3) degree to which the teachers are affected by the new curriculum. The latter is a tough one. There were originally 37 things to report on, and they narrowed it down to 3. R. Taborsak said he attended the meeting, and they wanted a focus, but they were very concerned about the establishment of benchmarks and deadlines.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **A. STEM Applications due by March 21, 2011**

R. Jannelli said more students want to participate in the STEM and asks if there is a criteria for maintaining a grade average in order to stay in the Academy. Dr. Glass reports there is no criteria to get in other than interest. In addition to offering students and families another option for a small learning academy, it creates greater parity between the two middle schools.

#### **B. Kindergarten Registration Schedule**

I. Fox asks why we do not have a common registration date. Dr. Glass responded it is partly due to the idiosyncratic nature of the calendars of the individual buildings. It is now the first week of April. He said the second piece is the need for interpreters, and we do not have enough on one given day, but we will for the week. We will see how it works, but the parents he has spoken with are feeling a comfort level.

### **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

April 6<sup>th</sup> Board Workshop – Building Utilization – Chairman Fox states that a document is being drafted, and the Board should receive it within the week thanks to the efforts of Dr. Glass and Kim Thompson. Dr. Pascarella told the Board that Governor Malloy is speaking in Danbury on April 6 as well. I. Fox comments that on April 5 there will be a community conversation on 21<sup>st</sup> Century high school learning. That is also the date of the Mayor's budget address. I. Fox participated in Read Across America Day and visited King Street schools and he thanks Anne Riddle, the NEA Rep, who coordinated the event.

### **BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

Sites and Facilities: J. Scozzafava has not had the committee meeting but asks Mr. Longo if he approached the City on the fields that are in much need of repair. He feels we need to start now. Mr. Longo responded saying that our athletic director secured a price proposal depending on the level

of repair required, the quality of the material to be used, and the ballpark estimate is between \$450,000 to \$550,000. He forwarded a copy of the proposal to the City on March 8. Along with that, Dr. Pascarella said we need a committee meeting because the City is considering replacing windows at DHS. Dr. Pascarella also mentions that there is a DHS play coming up, and the PA system needs to be repaired, and we have to get some numbers in place to discuss the replacement of that system.

Community Relations: R. Jannelli said he is actively working with the community. There is another project they would like to do with the Adopt-A-School and get members of the community involved in that. In addition, R. Jannelli reached out to the people who did the survey at the high school to get information with regard to the scores and how to get more information out the parents to participate with young people. Dr. Pascarella said he met with 85 to 90 people who are the providers of the early childhood program. Eileen Costello and Anne Mead put this together and many of our kindergarten teachers were there and met with these providers, and they talked about the kindergarten survey, registration, etc. It was a nice outreach into the community.

Finance: R. Jannelli reports that in the next couple of weeks he will get together with M. Fazio to start looking at some of the items pending from last year. We will more likely do it after the Mayor's meeting. I. Fox suggests putting it on the calendar as soon as possible. J. Scozzafava said we do go through a process, but in his experience, there will be very few changes, and once the Mayor presents his budget, he feels we need to work on how we are going to handle what we get. Dr. Pascarella suggests a meeting on April 6 at 5:30 p.m. S. LeRoy asks if Mr. Longo prepared different budgets based on different allotments. It has been done before, and the Board agreed it would not be a good idea.

Operations/Policy: R. Taborsak has a scheduled meeting for Wednesday, March 16, and 7 p.m. He reports that the committee started out with an agenda that was focusing on electronic participation among Board members and social networking, but other things have come up, and some policies have to be revised because of the State requirements, so there is a five-step agenda. Members of the committee got the packet today, but the problem is that two members of the committee have not been able to attend some of the meetings. He would like the Board members to read the packet and make marginal notes so that the Committee can get right to it at the meeting.

Superintendent Evaluation – No report

City-Wide PTO: The meeting was held March 7. R. Taborsak, R. Jannelli and I. Fox attended. R. Taborsak said it was interesting. He was impressed with the leadership of the PTO. He would be happy to attend the meetings if needed.

District Development - No report

TDEC - No report

DSABC: R. Jannelli reports that a meeting was held today and they did a lot of housekeeping, revising, modifying bylaws, term limits, job descriptions, etc.

Education Connection - No report

Magnet School Trustees: G. Cooper was not able to attend due to a last minute work constriction. Dr. Pascarella said discussion involved the lottery, they reaffirmed the tuition, surcharge is on what we charged last year, and there was discussion about conducting a meeting with the school principals and with Helena Nitowski as students start transitioning out of our school and into their districts.

Oral Health Initiative - No report

School Based Health: G. Cooper asks if the State requires us to review our affirmative action program, and if so, what is the last day for the review. Also, she would like to know when the Board is expected to receive information concerning our dropout rate. I. Fox deferred this to Dr. Pascarella,

and he said he will look into it and discuss it at the next Board meeting.

**MOTION:** G. Cooper moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session. **The motion carried at 8:33p.m.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Present: G. Cooper, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, S. LeRoy, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak  
Drs. S. Pascarella, W. Glass, Mr. E. Longo and Ms. Kim Thompson from  
Administration.

Absent: E. Alberts, R. Austin-James, M. Fazio, K. Gailliard, K. Molinaro

The Board discussed two topics:

- (1) update on status and strategy for collective bargaining negotiations, and
- (2) receipt of service of process in action against the Board of Education.

**MOTION:** R. Jannelli moved, seconded by R. Taborsak to return to Public Session. **The motion carried at 9:13 p.m.**

**PUBLIC SESSION**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** S. LeRoy moved, seconded by J. Scozzafava that the Board of Education adjourn its March 9, 2011 meeting. **The motion carried at 9:15 p.m.**

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Kathleen M. Molinaro, Secretary