

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011- 7:00 PM
MEETING AT BROADVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

A G E N D A

Present: E. Alberts, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, I. Fox, K. Gailliard, R. Jannelli, S. LeRoy
K. Molinaro, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak; S. Pascarella, W. Glass, K. Thompson from
Administration

Absent: R. Austin-James; J. Emmett and E. Longo from Administration

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Irving Fox, called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m., and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITIONS

American Mathematics Competition Winners – Chairperson Fox introduced Phyllis Bartoli to present certificates to the following students:

Danbury High School Math Team:

The team of junior Brendan Gillotti, senior Nicholas Corso Passaro, and junior Benjamin Gillotte scored a total of 312 points. The team of senior Yuriy Slabicky, junior Michael Lau, and senior Matan Markind scored a total of 252 points. Individual winners include: senior Yuriy Slabicky scoring 94.5 points, junior Brendan Gillotti scoring 141 points, sophomore Ryan Kerr scoring 96 points, and freshman Ryan Hyatt scoring 78 points. The maximum number of points that can be scored on the AMC is 150. These students did an outstanding job as did all 193 students who participated.

Jinesh Mehta, Alexander Coco, Priyanka Altman, Rares Barbu, Kashish Singhal, Yury Slabicky, Matan Markind, and Michael Lauts were part of the DHS Math Team that competed on Wednesday at the state level. They finished the season as one of the top 10 schools in Fairfield County.

Broadview Middle School Math Team:

Liat Shenkar, Azizah Shaffeeullah, Thomas George, Sagar Mehta, Max Efrat, Evan Coco, Andrea Rivera-Luna, Rahul Malayappan, Benjamin Hellmann, Tyson Sisco. BMS math club reached Gold Level Status in the MATHCOUNTS Club Program. At least 12 students scored an 80% or better on the Ultimate Math Challenges (UMC). This is an extremely commendable accomplishment.

Rogers Park Middle School Math Team:

Anjali Pai, Michael Li, and Luke Wang, together with Julia Yu of New Milford, placed 2nd as a team at the Chapter Math Counts competition, and 7th at States.

Chairperson Fox congratulates the student winners, parents, and staff.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Several speakers addressed the Board, including two students, and spoke against the proposed budget cuts, including eliminating full day kindergarten, world languages, textbook appropriation amount, special education classes at DHS, and technology education. Others expressed their concern about the proposed uniform policy at the middle school level. Chairperson Fox thanked everyone for coming out to address the Board. He said the public schools would not be public without public input and the Board is trying to reach out to get more people to participate and express their views before decisions are made.

Chairperson Fox recognizes Troop 52 who is here to fulfill their Citizenship In The Community merit badge.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Danbury High School: Shaquilla Taylor, DHS BOG Treasurer, reports that on April 16, there will be a Shop-A-Thon fundraiser at Annie Sez on Mill Plain Road to support the DHS PTO Scholarship Fund, the DECA Chapter will be attending the International Career Development Conference in Orlando, FL, and on May 17, the ROTC Award Ceremony will be held in the DHS Auditorium at 6:00 p.m.

Rebecca Leonard, BOG Secretary, reports that DHS Productions will be hosting the play, Urinetown, From May 5 to May 7. Also on May 3, the DHS BOG will be hosting a teacher appreciation activity.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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

A. MINUTES

- Board of Education Meeting Minutes 3/23/11
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes 4/6/11
- Board Workshop (Space Utilization) Meeting Minutes 4/6/11

B. PERSONNEL

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Accept Leave of Absence: | Laura DiPaola | |
| Accept Resignations: | Hannah Cox | Robert Parkhurst |
| | Marcia Neves | Eileen Taylor |
| | Georgeann Shields (para position) | |
| Accept Retirements: | Dorothy Baker | David Valuzzo |
| | Marie-Paul Cournoyer | Marie Valuzzo |
| | Gail Sansolo | |

Chairperson Fox points out that the retirees mentioned above represent over 100 years of service to the school district, and the Board would like to recognize them and thank them for their dedication.

The motion carried unanimously at 8:03 p.m.

DISCUSSION

2011-2012 Budget

Chairperson Fox said that before we hear from the Administration, he would like to point out that back in February, the Board approved an increase of over \$4,000,000. The increase that was passed by the Board was to carry on the existing programs even though the enrollment continues to increase. The budget that was presented was a bare bones effort in the face of significant projected cost increases on the part of our health care provider and other costs. He continued by saying that salary costs were not the major driver of what the projected increases are, but whether they come from salaries or from bus contracts or from health care providers, it all means the same. Understanding that the City is in a pretty significant financial downturn as is the State, we are left with cuts both from the City and State. The State cut our priority grant funding by \$250,000, and the City has lowered our request on the City budget side down to a \$1,000, 000 increase. That leaves us with about a \$3.5 million dollar gap that we need to find assuming that the Council will pass what has been proposed.

The Superintendent, the Cabinet, and the staff have been at work understanding this might be a possibility to see what we need to do to meet the number that we are ultimately going to get. Chairperson Fox turns the floor over to R. Jannelli who is the co-chair of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee met on April 6, and there was initial discussion of those possibilities at the meeting last week.

R. Jannelli said that at the meeting they were presented with the proposed reductions and a discussion was held. R. Jannelli said that our costs, not only for the next fiscal year, but probably for the next two fiscal years, will probably be in the range of \$3.5 to \$4 million dollars on a conservative number, based on overhead costs of insurance, fuels and other contracts. In the event the City does not come out of its problem at that time, we will be back here with the same kind of cuts. He feels that what we are doing now is bandaiding for the current year, but it is more drastic going ahead.

S. Pascarella applauds everyone for being here and said that cutting programs is not what he wants to do. He said all the suggestions from last year were kept, and this year, on the district's website, there were also suggestions made, and he will explain the discretionary decisions that were made for the cuts. Because of the drastic cuts these past three years, he feels we have to look at non-mandated programs and protect our core area. S. Pascarella gave a powerpoint presentation which enumerated the proposed reductions. He thanks the teachers and administrators because they are not receiving increases next year which has helped us. The other thing that has helped us is benefits. We anticipated a 12% increase, and we are down to approximately a 5% increase. S. Pascarella also said that in an attempt to cut costs, all travel has been cut and more in-building activities have been provided for professional development. He said we are economizing more, not filling retirement positions, or filling them by hiring them back at a lower rate, and this models some of the practice in business by doing that. S. Pascarella continues to explain the reason for choosing the specific cuts. He stressed that these costs reductions are recommendations, and we will be meeting with the City Council subcommittee on April 14 to explain the impact this will have on our district.

W. Glass explained who the Cabinet members are and that they were the team who put this together. He talked about the basic skills area of reading, writing and math which are essential to an educational program, the top priorities that are non-negotiable by law, and then the areas that fall within 97.5% of where we have no ability to move. W. Glass explains what the district has been working towards in terms of being able to afford the students all they can, and the time has come where we need to look to do more with less. He clarified a statement that was made that the district had \$3 million dollars in their professional development account, when in reality it was \$130,000, cut back to \$34,000. He enumerated how the funds were spent.

He said we have tried to defer all costs to external funding sources, if possible. W. Glass continues that the bottom line is we were given an almost impossible task. He reiterates that the Cabinet did not want to make one cut that was suggested, and they have been working hard to come up with cuts that would at least allow the core programs to stay intact and those programs are outlined in the basic skills and top priority areas. These suggestions are all possibilities that the Board needs to vote on. We went from \$4.2 million to \$750,000, which is an impossible task, and we will continue to work through this process, but at the end of the year when the budget is adopted, we will not have the same school system next year that we have this year. This is a harsh reality.

Chairperson Fox comments that this is just the latest in a series of cutting that has been going on over the last few years. He would like to echo the sentiments of everyone who spoke that as the Board Chair, a taxpayer, a homeowner, and most importantly as a parent of students at almost every level starting next year, this is an unacceptable situation. The Board is trying to work with City Council and the Mayor to get every possible funding stream to the school district, but that is not the only source of funding that is affecting us. He feels the underlying problem is not just the funding at the City level, but at the State level as well.

R. Taborsak talked about the graduation requirements and the Math and English upgrade to allow the students to meet the requirements of a community college entrance. He is disappointed about the textbook budget, and he has been assured that there will be class sets. He is proud of the fact that the high school has increased its enrollment in all of the AP courses, but a lot depends on guidance, and a suggestion was made to reduce a counselor at that level. He very reluctantly makes a recommendation to the Cabinet that they look at some of the extracurricular activities to share some of the burden.

S. LeRoy piggybacks on what R. Taborsak said about extracurricular activities. She does not want to see world language and tech programs cut, and she would hate to see extracurricular activities cut, but they are not more important than academics. She asks S. Pascarella about the Curriculum Administrator for Fine and Applied Arts position. She asks if they stipend that position out, would it be possible to do the same with the Athletic Director. S. Pascarella responded that research was done on extracurricular activities, and he feels with a school with almost 62 levels of sports, it would not be possible to stipend the position. She also inquired about the three school-based health centers that are funded partially by the federal and state government. She asks about the additional nursing staff in the buildings where the centers are located. Last year there were 1.5 positions eliminated at each middle school. S. LeRoy asks if there is a state mandate for nurses at the school and asks if the Cabinet has considered outsourcing the nursing responsibilities. S. Pascarella feels that our nurses come very economically and very reasonable to us. He does not feel that we could find any outsourcing that would be a savings to us. S. LeRoy would like to enter into a discussion with the Department of Health to talk about expanding the scope of their responsibilities which might result in further cost savings to us. K. Thompson adds that part of what the nurses that we have now reduced down to 1.5 in the middle schools are doing is handling our most medically fragile students. They need to administer medications with a level of expertise that we need to have, and what the staff is telling us is that we are already at the bare minimum of what they can absorb to get their job done. S. LeRoy wants to be assured that a cost analysis has been done on per diem versus permanent full time nurses.

R. Jannelli voices his concern about the budget. He is not in favor of laying people off. He does not feel that the Danbury school system could be called a 21st Century learning institution, not when there is no money for books and not when we cannot increase our technology because we cannot afford the staff. He asks the Cabinet for a list of items with costs that are not part of a required curriculum. He suggests to start

cutting away the frills while trying to maintain the quality of the education. He feels it is very important for the parents to make the City Council aware of the impact this will have on their children. He is not in favor of cutting costs for Head Start.

M. Fazio concurs with a number of his colleagues. He would like to thank the people who came out tonight to express their opinions about the budget, but feels it is unfortunate that there were not a lot more who chose to participate. He feels it is this lack of participation that contributes to the problem. He is not an advocate to cut extracurricular activities, but he agrees with R. Taborsak and others that we need to spread this out and look at other avenues.

J. Scozzafava feels we will not receive more money from the City. He feels the State needs to look at new ways to finance our schools as Connecticut is the fourth highest state in the country for property taxes. He is not in favor of cutting the textbook budget and not in favor of cutting world languages. He wants to see the State assessing each school to see that it is funded equally and properly so that every child in this State gets the same education.

G. Cooper would like to thank everyone for coming out tonight to voice their opinion. She feels that the Board, the Cabinet, and the Finance Committee have worked very hard to bring something to the table. She feels with the cuts that have been presented, we are not giving every child a quality education.

S. Molinaro adds that every time we have cut something in our public schools, we do a disservice to our children. She would like everyone to know that this Board does not want to make cuts; they have to make cuts. She continues that the City does not have any money, the people do not want to pay more taxes, people are losing their homes, they cannot make their payments, so these are cuts that have to be made, and they will be made with very heavy hearts.

K. Gailliard said he is here to be sure that the children of Danbury get what they deserve, and we cannot fight a battle by ourselves. We need everyone to communicate to their friends to come out and voice their concerns. He said it is hard to be in a position to make cuts on services and materials he believes the children need. He implores everyone to come out in numbers to the City Council meetings and the Board of Education meetings.

Chairperson Fox closes by saying that the next step is the City Council's education subcommittee meeting on April 14 to discuss the budget proposal. He feels that this discussion was important. In prior years, we had the budget that the Board passed, and that is what the Council looked at. This year we will be more prepared when we meet with them, and there will be a coherent message as to what this \$1 million dollar increase to the Board's budget will mean in terms of the reduction in quality of the services we provide. He encourages all Board members to attend as well as all members of the public who may be interested to look at the City's website for upcoming meetings. Chairperson Fox would like to acknowledge the work of the Cabinet, S. Pascarella, the staff, and all of the employees for what they do on a day-to-day basis. He continues by saying we will all do more with less and it will continue. He is confident that we have the right people in place to lead us to where we need to go.

R. Jannelli said that the Board, in addition to trying to do the best with what we have, is reaching out to the business community in the City of Danbury as well as the parents and all our citizens. There was a meeting with several business leaders, and one of the things we are asking for is \$250,000 in donations of either a

product or money for paper. We are reaching out for in-kind services to supplement our shortfalls, and we are reaching out for financial services to supplement our shortfall. We are thinking outside of the box. He said the Board has looked at other districts to share, as other districts are in the same situation as Danbury. As G. Cooper said, the most important thing that you need to take away from this meeting is that there is a degradation in the quality of education to your child.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE – Cindy Mirochine

Cindy Mirochine comments that it is obvious that this is not a budget that anyone wants, but she hopes once things are finalized, we can work together to maximize the resources that we have. As far as state mandated governance councils that will be at Stadley Rough, ACE, and DHS, we had a teacher workshop yesterday and someone from the state association came down and provided information. They have also offered to assist once our councils are up and running. She reports that the Public Relations Chair, Melissa Lourenco, is organizing a community day to highlight teacher appreciation week in May. All Board members are going to receive a letter to participate. This event will be similar to Read Across America where they will be invited into the classroom, and the Board member will be given a teacher contact in the school.

PRESENTATION

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Community Conversation April 6th

S. Pascarella spoke about the meeting on April 6. The Board members received a report on the meeting in their packets.

Facilities Update

S. Pascarella said there has been discussion with the City about the operational budget, but on the facility side, we have had a bad year with the boilers, and the City is moving forward with about \$4.1 million dollars to replace boilers at 5 or 6 of our schools. They looked at some other energy efficiency replacement of windows and doors and the amount has risen to about \$11 million dollars. There was a recommendation to do all of that work and get some funding for it. S. Pascarella attended a meeting of the subcommittee, and they are going to first move towards the replacement of the boilers and then have the City Council consider the possibility of replacing windows at the high school and other energy efficient measures that would be cost savings down the road, thereby also creating a more safe environment for our students.

School Governance Council Update

S. Pascarella reports that there was an orientation meeting on April 12 for parents and interested faculty as well at DHS. There were approximately 50 in attendance. The next step is the elections, and following the elections, we will meet to set the stage for next year. The meeting went well. There was a suggestion to have a Candidates Night, and we are working on that piece.

Middle School Dress Code Update

S. Pascarella clarifies that we do not have a uniform dress code. There has been conversation about it, but there is no policy and no regulations at this time. R. Taborsak said there was a meeting today and the Policy Committee will have a meeting on April 27 at 5 p.m. One of the major items is the question of school uniforms, and they will invite the two principals from the middle schools for their input.

Space Utilization Update

There was a Board workshop last week for the purpose of redistricting our schools due to increased enrollment. A report was generated that gives options to the many ways we can handle the increase which is the product of the last couple of years of work. Chairperson Fox said that in the workshop, it was discussed

that even though there is no money today to implement many of these options, the planning still needs to take place for the time that it will happen. This matter is being referred to the Sites and Facilities Committee to meet as soon as is practicable so that the Committee can come back with narrowing that list down to what the Board should be taking action on.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Danbury High School Graduation

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by K. Gailliard that the Board of Education approve June 24, 2011 as Danbury High School's Graduation Date in accordance with Policy 7-310

The motion carried unanimously at 9:25 p.m.

B. RPMS and MRP Makeup Snow Day

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approve using May 27th Professional Development Day for Rogers Park Middle School and Mill Ridge Primary School to make up their school closing on March 7, 2011.

The motion carried unanimously at 9:27 p.m.

C. Board Bylaw – Electronic Communications Among Board Members

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Board Bylaw, Electronic Communications Among Board Members

M. Fazio calls the Board's attention to the language in Item 8 of the Bylaw. M. Fazio moves to remove Item 8 from the Bylaw and propose that as an amendment, we adopt it without Item 8. He further believes that the language impacts the right to free speech.

MOTION: M. Fazio moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education remove Item 8 from the Board Bylaw, Electronic Communications Among Board Members.

Discussion ensued and K. Thompson was asked to comment on the language. She said that the genesis of the actual policy is to the extent that if you have a conversation, either email or telephone or personal, is there a sufficient number for form a quorum, then the question is whether or not you are holding a Board meeting where your discussions may be subject to the sunshine laws of the State and have to be disclosed. She continues by saying that Item 8 attempts to make it clear that there are certain things outside the scope of your regular course of business that certainly are free for you to discuss, a non-meeting. That is what this paragraph, Item 8, is attempting to carve out. M. Fazio said that this particular item infringes on First Amendment rights, and if the Board votes in favor of it, he will take it further. Chairperson Fox comments

that the language does not specify whether it applies to Board meetings or outside of meetings, and he feels that as it is written, this would prohibit the budget discussion that was just held. Chairperson Fox is in agreement with M. Fazio. S. Pascarella suggests we get clarity from CABE. Chairperson Fox said it is clear in his mind, and M. Fazio feels that just because it came from CABE, it does not make it right. R. Taborsak points out that the heading of this deals with electronic communications. G. Cooper said that the fact that this was put in and presented at the Policy Committee meeting was because it started with emails back and forth between Board members. She feels if the members are going to talk, all should be up front and honest and say why this policy was put in place.

In Favor: E. Alberts, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, K. Gailliard, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Gailliard, S. Le Roy
Opposed: None
Abstained: R. Taborsak, K. Molinaro
Absent: R. Austin-James

The motion carried 9:35 p.m.

MOTION: R. Jannelli moved, seconded by M. Fazio that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Board Bylaw, Electronic Communications Among Board Members, as amended.

In Favor: E. Alberts, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, K. Gailliard, I. Fox, R. Jannelli, K. Gailliard, S. Le Roy
Opposed: None
Abstained: R. Taborsak, K. Molinaro
Absent: R. Austin-James

The motion carried 9:36 p.m.

INFORMATION

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Fox will be appearing at the City Council Meeting on education on April 14 and at the Public Hearing on April 20.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Sites and Facilities: J. Scozzafava has a meeting scheduled to discuss energy saving ideas.

Chairperson Fox said that as a reminder at the next Sites and Facilities meeting, there should be a discussion about space utilization. G. Cooper said that since the Space Utilization Committee has been disbanded, she asks if she can attend the Sites and Facilities meeting, and respectfully asks if a new member can be added to the Committee. Chairperson Fox responded that all Board members may attend, but the committee members have already been established.

Finance Committee: R. Jannelli feels that he and M. Fazio should work with the Superintendent and his staff to come up with a date to hold another Finance Committee meeting.

Operations/Policy: R. Taborsak said that, as mentioned, there will be a meeting on April 27 at 5 p.m. prior to the next scheduled Board Meeting. The topic of discussion will be school uniforms and the two middle school principals have been invited. The Committee will also be finishing up on the Title IX update by state regulations.

Superintendent Evaluation: K. Molinaro states that the Superintendent will present an update on his goals at the first Board Meeting in May.

DSABC: R. Jannelli reports that he was unable to attend today's meeting. There will be a breakfast on May 19 to honor the mentors and mentees and to discuss the success of their program.

Education Connection: R. Jannelli reports that a meeting was held last week. Interestingly enough, the other Board members were basically discussing whether to consider participating in a magnet school program in Torrington for the arts and they felt they could not do it because of their financial constraints. A lot of those schools are losing student enrollment and they are fighting the battle as to what to do with that.

Magnet School Trustees: G. Cooper reports that the next meeting will be in September.

Mayor's 2020 Task Force: S. Pascarella reports that Rosty Slabicky and the Mayor's Aide are holding a conference to invite all the members that are on the Committee. A number have left and we will talk about how they will be replaced.

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by R. Taborsak that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing negotiation strategies.

The motion carried unanimously at 9:42 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Present: E. Alberts, G. Cooper, M. Fazio, I. Fox, K. Gailliard, R. Jannelli, S. LeRoy
K. Molinaro, J. Scozzafava, R. Taborsak; S. Pascarella, W. Glass, K. Thompson from
Administration

Absent: R. Austin-James; J. Emmett and E. Longo from Administration

The Chairperson, Irving Fox, called the meeting to order at 9:54 p.m. K. Thompson updated the Board on current negotiations and on employee evaluations and supervision.

MOTION: M. Fazio moved, seconded by R. Taborsak to return to Public Session.

The motion carried at 10:00 p.m.

PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: M. Fazio moved, seconded by K. Gailliard that the Board of Education adjourn its April 13, 2011 meeting.

The motion carried unanimously at 10:02 p.m.

Kathleen M. Molinaro, Secretary