

# **DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016**

**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Michael Ferguson, acting Board Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Everyone was asked to sing Happy Birthday to Board member Ralph Pietrafesa which was then followed by applause.

## **ROLL CALL**

Present: Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley, Frederick Karrat, Kathleen Molinaro, Ralph Pietrafesa, Holly Robinson

Absent: Eileen Alberts, David Metrena, Patrick Johnston, Richard JAnneelli,

Also Present: Drs. Glass, Pascarella and Kim Thompson

## **RECOGNITIONS** - None

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Kathy Snow – Kathy began to introduce herself as the mother of two children, one in AIS and another at Rogers Park Middle School. She stated the reason why she was there today was to share good news about Odyssey of the Mind. The team from Rogers Park Middle School, among 158 teams scored a victory in the state finals that were held at Bristol Eastern High School They will be going to compete in the world Finals in Iowa State University next month. Kathy explained that Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational problem-solving competition for students from kindergarten through college and teams are broken down into divisions by age. The seven members of the Danbury Team were alumni from AIS that consist of three students from Danbury, two from Brookfield and two from Newtown. She thanked Dr. Sal that this news was placed on the Danbury Facebook page and is working on a press release for the paper. She informed the Board that the team also has a Facebook page that all can follow - Odessey Danbury, their journey and hopefully bring home another win.

Rachel Chaleski – Rachel stated that she was disappointed that the last minutes did not mention the three speakers, which included herself, Irving Fox and Shari Styranovski during the public participation. She asked the Board for some general transparency and collaboration regarding data and budget. She asked if they considered the percentage of siblings at other elementary schools. She then commented that according to census data, seventy seven percent of American families have more than one child. She pointed out that there were almost eleven hundred applicants in 2012 and that in January of this year it was recorded there were less than six hundred applicants and asked if by removing sibling preference would the numbers decline again and leave no incentive for families to even apply. She does not believe that removing sibling preference would be a fix for racial imbalance and would have the opposite effect making it harder for families to allow their children to attend. Rachel ended her speech with a statement that a holistic regulation should be developed collaboratively among administration, teachers, parents and board members.

Mora Juan – Mora began her speech by focusing how the Magnet school wins the State's Elementary School of the year, then why change the way it works. Mora stated that she is a strong supporter for sibling enrolment at AIS. She believes that 6 years of siblings together encourages parents' participation and builds community. She also believes that the success of the school is partially due to parent

involvement. Although all of the parents that have spoken, as well as herself are “grandfathered” and their siblings will be admitted, they speak to look out for the future AIS families. Mora states that if siblings are in two different schools then it could be very hard for working parents. This would require two morning bus pick-ups, two afternoon bus drop-offs, two concerts, two art shows, two special events, etc. creating a very difficult relationship between teachers and support staff and working parents. Mora finished her statement by pleading to not damage and destroy families, to keep siblings together and keep Danbury strong and healthy.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 16-56 through 16-60, as recommended:

Richard Hawley motioned that the minutes from the last Board be revised to add the 3 speakers during the Public participation.

**A. MINUTES**

- 3/23/16 Sites & Facilities Committee Meeting
- 3/23/16 Board Meeting
- 3/28/16 Special Board Meeting (Exp)
- 4/6/16 Superintendent Evaluation Committee Meeting

**B. PERSONNEL REPORT...**

- |                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Accept Leave of Absence: | Sherrie Blount, Sarah DosSantos   | Michelle Tremonte                                     |
| Accept Resignations:     | Brian Betesh (Coach Only)<br>Amanda Lollie<br>Shirley Rodriguez   | Jennifer Donovan<br>Jennifer Netter<br>Nicholas Tarsi |
| Accept Retirements:      | Catherine Baker, 16 years<br>Lisa Carriero, 29 years<br>Norma Fearn, 23 years<br>Ellen Shea, 17 years<br>Stan Watkins, 21 years |   |

**Motion carried at 7:14 pm**

**EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE**

Danbury High School – Carlos Vaz began by saying he is beginning to see and hear signs of spring approaching within Danbury High School. He is able to open his window and can hear the sports teams are active outside. He has seen and heard the baseball, tennis with Mrs. Boucher, Lacrosse teams practicing outside and the track team already winning events. He then began to tell a story of when he was young boy when his mother enrolled him in track. He was a fast runner but when he noticed he had to jump hurdles he began to plead with his mother to not enroll him because he didn’t think he could do it especially with his short legs. When the race began he started to run as fast as he could. When he reached the first hurdle he began to panic but noticed his mother’s hand that he held and flew over the hurdle. The next hurdle came and again his mother’s hand was there, but he hardly touched it and was able to jump over the hurdle again. He noticed his mother ran next to him the whole entire race. He heard the crowd but was not sure if it was applause or they were just laughing. He got third place. He no

longer was embarrassed to be considered short. Not only are the sports activities taking off, but also the High schools' cultural types of activities are beginning: A performance in Disney by the orchestra and concert choir students two nights ago led by Mr. Rojas of the Latino club put a great show; the school play is coming up and practices run until six pm every night; Coda, is approaching directed by Michael Obre where students display their art work. On the academic side, the counselors are registering for all their 2,000 students; Freshman orientation led by Dan Donovan and SAT's went off beautifully Sean Colley made a tremendous improvement with high participation, CAP testing went off smoothly, benchmarks are ending this week. Students might not be too happy with this but are pleased that there are no exams. He mentioned that he separated the fun stuff and the not so much fun stuff on purpose because there is always a balance between the pleasant things and unpleasant and the teachers work to get that balance done right. He said he was stunned when a student told him that the students have become more focused on grades than on learning and thought that the students are evaluated based on scores and grades and that teachers get caught up easily to circum to a charity of numbers and that teachers can't put aside the fact that these benchmarks are seventy five percent of their evaluation. Teachers have to fight to keep a balance and humanity and not let them slip into another test score. We have students that strive to do better and those are the kind that teachers just throw things at them and they will take it and run with it, others metaphorically speaking, kick and scream to finish assignments and then there are those that need someone to run alongside them. These students need that hand to help them get over the hurdle. Our Danbury High School teachers are excellent; they struggle to find ways to help these students. The numbers will not show you that; some teachers stay after school sometimes until six pm working with students and helping them. The numbers also will not show that the student who came to trust a teacher so much that when there was an abusive situation she cared to confide in the teacher and thanked the teacher for helping her get out of that situation. He claims that he is very proud of all those teachers. He thanked the Board for all that they do for the students and staff.

Dr. Pascarella praised DHS teachers and read a excerpt from the New England Association of Schools memorandum that due to the revision of the 2011 Standards, the scheduled visiting team in 2018 will be postponed till 2019.

Michael Ferguson asked that the teachers present from Danbury High School to please stand and subsequently were applauded.

#### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES** - none

#### **PRESENTATION**

Dr. Pascarella presented Anne Mead. Anne Mead distributed informational sheets about the active programs of the Danbury Family Literacy Center. Anne began to talk about the Gifted and Talented program. As a school district they are required to identify students through the Ottis Lennon test given in March to third grade students. That is the end of the district's legal responsibility. However she was asked to look into alternative programs for families within our district as well as outside our district. She mentioned they had three Programs. One is the elementary program. Looking at the most cost-effective way, they decided to do the Saturday Program and that Danbury High School would be the best place for the program. They start the process by surveying the parents and students to see what their interests were for the following year. The program is designed from that. Until now they have had everything from dance and theater to hands on Science to a typical egg drop. They have used a lot of community partners such as the Connecticut Science Center, the Bridgeport Science Museum as well as science trips. They had the main instructor come down from Mystic Aquarium. They also had a bus of students that went to Vermont to spend the day at a 550 head cattle farm to see what a working farm is. They were able to experience milking. First they learned about it then were shown the process. From there they went to two different sugar shacks. It is a very small town and they were excited to have them

there. In their Sunday paper there was an article whose title was "City people meet Country people". The children were able to talk to a farmer and even learn about economy. It was asked if farming was a profit-making business. They were told by the farmer that right now there was a surplus of milk, therefore, not very profitable.

At the middle school level the students meet after school at both Rogers Park and Broadview. Bernardo DeCastro who is at Rogers Park runs a garden program and therefore the students also learn about that garden. Both schools ask the students what they would like to learn and the teachers then take it to the next step. They are still working at the new Westside Academy to recruit staff for next year. They are thinking if that is not possible, the students who are interested in gardening can then be relocated after school to the Rogers Park Middle School. There are two more trips scheduled. One is to New Pond Farm in Redding where students will do water testing and the another, is to the New York Science Hall for the day. It is a good PD for staff as well as a good trip for the students.

Anne then spoke about the Danbury Family Literacy Center. The last time she spoke about the Center, it had become Incorporated. It is now changed to a 501c3, non-profit organization which allows donors and corporation to deduct 100% of their gifts to the center. Operationally, the Center works under the Board of Directors that meet on a monthly basis. They attend a lot of the Center's activities such as the Family University which was this past weekend. They look at three different areas as follows:

**Outreach** - based on our location. The Center is the "hub" for information in the city of Danbury. This is where most parents call or come to when they are new to the area. They have started centralizing registrations there. They have about 4,000 visitors a year and last year it registered over 4,200 calls to the literacy line. They have a column in the *Tribuna* Newspaper. There is a lot of collaboration with community organizations.

**Program** - their biggest is the seven to eight Playgroups throughout the week. Parents and children from birth to five years of age meet in a group. They have circle time, snacks and even a parent education piece embedded in every Playgroup in multiple languages. They had Family University where they served 140 plates of food to participants, a Saturday Academy which is a fee based program at Park Avenue school; Strong Start program that was funded by United Way. This is where there are a lot of parent engagement activities, parent education with support from Parent Leadership Training Institute and Children First as well as People Empowering People, teacher professional development through the Grossman Family Foundation where eighteen Kindergarten and first grade teachers took part of a six in a half hour training, and a family liaison at Ellsworth Avenue school that works very closely with the social worker, psychologists and families.

**Community Initiatives** – The Centers staff serve on Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership that focus on moving the learning curve, stopping chronic absenteeism, supports school Readiness and helping parents being educated about their role in their child's education. They have been working on a Strategic plan that is now down to three pages. They have received funding from United Way and Grossman. As far as business partnerships, they have a wonderful relationship with Praxair and Pitney Bowes. They would like to extend to other companies.

Anne then invited everyone to participate in the Walking School Bus on May 4 starting at 7:30 am and beginning with followed opening remarks from the Mayor at City Hall. Anne then turned to talking about asking the Board to read the copy she handed them in the beginning of her presentation of Allen Grossman's "Business Aligning for Students: The Promise of Collective Impact" and give some feedback of how Danbury could become more engaged in this process. This is similar to what they do now in the Danbury Family Learning Center. She also said that the other sheet she gave was a copy of

the calendar of events and on the other side of the calendar was a copy of the fundraiser event at Sky Zone on April 26.

Ralph Pietrafesa said that he liked meeting the staff and the Center. He felt that the staff really was enjoying what they were doing and that they were very enthusiastic. He said that he could feel they really wanted to be there. He thanked Anne and asked that she transmit his thanks to those who work there as well. Holly Robinson then spoke. She began to say that she met Anne two or three years ago years ago and at that point was working on getting the Danbury Family Learning Center into a 501c3 organization. She said that the Center has evolved immensely. She also wanted to take this time to thank Anne Mead. Anne Mead finished by saying that it is a group of people, staff, Sodexo, registration, and more and she thanked the Board as well.

**ACTION ITEMS** - None

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Pascarella informed everyone that there is a town subcommittee working on the budget and the initial \$5.2 requested was denied and given a \$2.2 million to work with. He went to Hartford and met with officials, Nancy Wyman and Speakers of the House. He said we're lucky to have \$900,000 restored. As of last night the town of Danbury received \$3 million less and the schools were kept on hold for now. There will be a budget meeting next Wednesday, April 20th which we will be listening in. Dr. Pascarella stated that their approach has been to work with the City in a positive way to bring resources to the City. Resource for Special Ed has been reimbursed at full level. Mark Boughton has been working diligently to see if the indirect costs can be allocated back to us. They asked for the restoration of DCS, and that happened. They also asked for the 80% of the Danbury High School addition to be reimbursed. If that happens that would be a \$1million less a year. The budget should be settled, most likely the first week in May. He mentioned that they have some ideas to cut back costs such as classroom size. Right now classrooms have 27, 28 or 29 students and this number will rise. We have to look at support in classrooms. We also will have to look at things that impact the school, not necessarily in the classroom directly. Dr. Pascarella mentioned that the real impact was the Safe budget.

They have met with the Legislative Delegation on April 7th. The Mayor Boughton, Dr. Pascarella, and Joe Martino were present. It was a very good meeting and they talked about the strategies. Bob Godfrey has been helpful in maneuvering on how things go through the legislation. The Senator has been helpful as well and when it comes to Danbury, there are no democrats and republicans, they are all working together.

They met with Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman and have asked her to be very careful that the Governor has put resources into the cities and has been kept intact and that education is forefront in the agenda. The state's philosophy is that they have given cities their allocation on NCS different then the other 150 towns and therefore meeting their obligation.

The CT School Finance Project – Katie Roy is running that and we are proud of it. That's our effort to change the law. If this goes forward and we prevail, and he doubts it, then the district is looking at some money. Maybe there is a half-way mark that they can come to. Our average is 52% of free or reduced lunch and we have schools that are 70%. We would like to see if we could have some reimbursement on ELL's. We have the second highest population in the state. 42% of our students are Hispanic, 39% are others, therefore qualify for more funds. Also, our mobility rate has gone high. If all could be put into SCCS and we can get some funds that would be beneficiary.

We do not have a single person to write grants. We have a service. The District keeps pursuing and as some can see we have acquired some. The grants are not for salaries, mostly landscape and ED. We will keep the efforts going forward. There are smaller grants that we get and then there are some substantial ones as well.

See ahead the High School Project – no comments

We had a group look into our main organization the teaching and learning piece. They did have some suggestions for some adjustments that we are looking at. We'll also have the reading audit done K-8 and have made some adjustments in terms of some support for the teachers and principals and also some division of work to put more of our efforts into the lower level. We have a high number of middle school students deficient in skills. There is a need to improve and approach it in a new direction using a team approach in language arts and reading.

## **DISCUSSION - none**

## **INFORMATION**

The last day of school is scheduled for June 9, 2016

The graduation dates are as follows:

ACE - June 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at WCSU

RPMS – June 8<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm at DHS Auditorium

WSMS – June 8<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm at DHS Auditorium

BMS – June 8<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm at DHS Auditorium

DHS – June 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at DHS Stadium

Adult Education, June 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at WCSU Performing Arts Center

Ms. Cooper asked if ACE was not doing a morning ceremony and Dr. Pascarella informed her that they were not.

## **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Mr. Ferguson announced that the Memorial Day Parade is on May 30<sup>th</sup> and Dr. Pascarella responded that they plan to be there with Anne Mead's help so they can have the wagon.

Mr. Ferguson announced that there was a request to change the June Board meetings to June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup> because of the year end graduations. It cannot be decided today. It will go to a motion at the next meeting. If this is accepted then the Retirement reception will be before June 1st.

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

Ms. Molinaro informed the Board that there was a Sites and Facilities Meeting earlier today. Antinio Iadarola brought many drawings for the new project at Danbury High School. They were very happy to hear that they were in collaboration with many teachers and administration at the High School for ideas. The most important thing right now is that the shuffle of the ground will be June 13 and the ending project will be in the 2018- 2019 school year. It will be two years for this project. The other information that they needed to know is that graduation will not be impacted this year and if everything goes as planned neither will it impact next year. They have a plan that the field will be able to be used. As long as there is collaboration between us, the plan will work.

Ms. Cooper added to let Ms. Molinaro know that she thought the meeting was excellent; the presentation was good and it was very pleasant to see all those things come together. She thanked Ms. Molinaro for putting it together.

Ms. Cooper informed everyone that the Evaluation Committee met. She wanted to thank those who participated in the meeting. She also stated that since school is closing early this year and she would like to ask the Board to look at the calendar that the Superintendent Evaluation Committee meeting for April 27 from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. May 11 will be the last evaluation meeting at 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

Mr. Pietrafesa informed that he visited Danbury High School. He watched as the students were passing to class and then spoke to Dan Donovan and talked about the Freshman academy. He said he then went to Morris Street School and spoke to the principal there. He felt a warm and comfortable environment. After he went to the Family Learning Center. They do so much in such a small place. All based on grants and funding. He invited whoever wants to come and visit the schools. They normally go on Mondays and Tuesdays. He noticed the principals' love seeing Board members at their schools.

Mr. Ferguson also praised the Family Learning Center as well as Danbury High School. He too visited the school on Monday and learned much more about the Freshman Academy and that the new addition will house most of the freshman Academy.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION:** K. Molinaro moved, seconded by H. Robinson, that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation and personnel matters.

**Motion carried at 8:09 pm.**

**Present:** Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley, Frederick Karrat, Kathleen Molinaro, Ralph Pietrafesa, Holly Robinson

**Absent:** Eileen Alberts, David Metrena, Patrick Johnston, Richard Jannelli,

**Also Present:** Drs. Glass, Pascarella and Kelly Truchsess

Michael Ferguson, Acting Board Chair, called the Executive Session to order at 8:12 pm and turned the meeting over to Kim Thompson.

### **PUBLIC SESSION**

**MOTION -** K. Molinaro moved, seconded by H. Robinson, that the Board return to Public session.

**Motion carried at 8:32 pm.**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

K. Molinaro moved, seconded by H. Robinson, that the Board of Education adjourn its April 13, 2016 meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

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Michael Ferguson, Secretary

(meeting was video recorded)