

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017 – 7:00 PM

Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro, Ralph Pietrafesa and Holly Robinson

Absent: Eileen Alberts and Richard Jannelli

Also Present: Drs. Glass, Pascarella, J. Martino and K. Truchsess from Administration

Absent: K. Thompson

RECOGNITIONS

WCSU award to DPS “School District Partner of the Year”, Dr. Catherine O’Callaghan

Dr. O’Callaghan told the Board that this is the first District Partnership Award. It was unanimous that the first honor award should be presented to Danbury Public Schools. Undergraduate students do their field work in Danbury. The staff is so generous in giving of their talent and time. We are grateful to Dr. Glass and Superintendent Pascarella for all they have done to help our program succeed. She presented the 2017 District Partnership Award plaque to Chairperson Ralph Pietrafesa.

Robotics Team 2017 Vex Robotics Southern New England Champions

Before the Board meeting commenced, Richard Hawley asked that the members of the Robotics Team who were present to introduced themselves and tell what college or university they will be attending in the fall. A few members, who will be sophomores and juniors, will be going back to Danbury High to finish their high school education. Almost all the students will be furthering their education in Engineering. The Board applauded the students. Once the Board Meeting started, the students demonstrated for the Board and the audience, what the two robots they brought with them could do. A very interesting demonstration followed. Eric Savoyski spoke about how many hours the kids have put in developing the robots and how they all worked together. They had a common goal and wanted to win the title of Champions for Southern New England. Mr. Savoyski went on to say that there were 20% females on the team and he hoped next year he could get more females interested. There were several females on the team that will be pursuing engineering in the fall at various universities. Dr. Pascarella said without the parents support, this would not work. He thanked Mr. Savoyski for all his efforts, hard work and his dedicated hours for the benefit of the students and the program.

Broadview Middle School Awards

Principal, Edie Thomas, introduced her Broadview Middle School students to the Board.

Broadview 2017 Challenge of Educational Citizenship Award – Charlie Wilmer

Ms. Thomas said she is really impressed with Charlie Wilmer. He worked with special needs students at BVMS. He embodies greatness. Remember his face, you will see him again and again.

Broadview student, Caroline D’Angelo won the Statewide Martin Luther King Essay Contest

Ms. Thomas said Caroline is a sixth grader. We are very proud of her writing ability. Mayor Boughton visited her today and she was given an award for her essay.

Broadview student, Megan Quinn, one of ten finalists of the CT Great Teacher Essay Contest

Ms. Thomas said Megan is a sixth grader at BVMS. She was one of ten finalists. Her essay was about her favorite teacher, Noreen Bach. Ms. Thomas introduced Ms. Bach to the Board. Ms. Thomas then concluded by saying you will be seeing these students again and thanked the Board for recognizing them this evening. She said that without the parents, this would not have been possible. Mr. Pietrafesa asked the parents of these students to stand up. He then asked Ms. Thomas if she could supply the Board with the essays.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Adam Horosky – Apex Fun Run - my wife and I raised over \$50,000 for your schools with this program. To give you a little background, we are in the community. Our daughter goes to Mill Ridge. We present to the students a two week leadership program. We want to teach your kids to be awesome. If you have any question for me or my wife, we would be glad to answer them. We love the program. We hope that the information gets out to all the schools. We want to work with your schools on this Apex Fun Run Program.

Laurie Esposito – Told the Board that she has worked for Danbury Public Schools for 17 years. Being a Special Education teacher is a rewarding job. We work hard alongside our teachers. We help them reach their goals and keep them safe. We build relationships. I would like the Board to recognize Ms. Cooper; she attended a function at my school and she and Mr. Taborsak went out of their way to personally thank me for the job I was doing. Tonight I just want to recognize the para professionals.

Kevin Haddad – 4th teacher at King Street Intermediate. He distributed a statement concerning Apex Fun Run stating that it is a ‘for profit’ fundraising company that has partnered with several schools in our district including King Street, AIS, Stadley Rough and Shelter Rock. When I heard they were coming to my school I looked them up on line and learned there were quite a list of complaints about them. They interrupted my class for 20 minutes a day as we were preparing for the SBAC testing. I spoke to several teachers who felt similarly and were disheartened by a message of sticking to our time of daily activities and being told “NO” to activities they felt were valuable. But Apex could come in and do things to disrupt the day and have fun with our kids, get them all riled up, (chants, handing out prizes) and making me the bad guy in settling them back down. When Apex talks about full benefit, it is because they keep 50% of the total raised. I urge the Board to work with the PTO to consider if this is the best way to fund raise. It exploits children to raise funds. There are alternatives.

Debbie Isaacson – Danbury resident who will be finishing a 27 year long relationship with Danbury Schools. My youngest child is graduating on Monday. I am grateful for your statement of March 22 regarding immigrant families in Danbury. I am here to ask for some definition and clarity. I assume that we can agree that students learn best in safe and secure environments. In February, Governor Malloy asked communities not to give ICE agents access for schools. In March there were news articles indicating that families in Danbury were not signing up for lunch assistance because they are afraid of what the application information would lead to. Please consider issuing a clearly worded statement to keep immigration officials out of Danbury Public Schools. I have been asked to let you know that Action Together Connecticut of Northern Fairfield County supports a revised statement. They have 600 members.

Students Stephanie Lopez, Nelson Neira and Najely Clavijo spoke to the Board about immigration issues in our schools and their concerns for students that were not born in the United States. Stephanie

said she was born in Peru and was lucky to have a green card. More needs to be done. They said some parents are afraid to send their kids to school and they are also afraid to fill out any papers. They asked for more security.

Anne Riddle, a staff member at Mill Ridge Primary, said the students that just spoke expressed their feelings very well. Early in the year I spoke to Dr. Pascarella about the immigration issue. We have vulnerable families in our district. We would like to show greater support for our families who are not documented or have families. There are several resources available and NEA has published many articles. Governor Malloy also has resources available. Students have a right to attend safe schools.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Hawley moved, seconded by P. Johnston, that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 17-77 through 17-81, as recommended:

MINUTES

5/15/17 Finance Committee Meeting
5/24/17 Board Meeting
6/1/17 Special Meeting (Exp)
6/1/17 Special Meeting (Exp)

PERSONNEL REPORT

Accept Leave of Absence: Christine Liner-Robles Deborah Urban

Accept Resignations: Laura Bald Bonnie Caton Kacey Daubenspeck
Sean Doolittle Jana John Robert Key
Sasunka Peterson Ian Ratchford Christopher Sanchez
Rene Santos Mei Carla Springael Katharine Terbush
Timothy Uhl Maria DosSantos Leonardo
Dallas Moore (Coach Only)

Accept Retirements: Patricia Jackson, 22 years Mary Anne Siciliano, 13+ years

New Hires: See Exhibit 17-81

Motion passed at 7:40 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL)

Danbury High School

Dan Donovan, Principal of Danbury High School, gave the Board a slide presentation.

Student enrollment: DHS has 2,974 students. Asian 210; African-American 258; Hispanic 1,281; Multi-Racial 66 and White 1,159.

Preparing our students for college and career: 698 students will graduate this year. 81% applied to over 24 different colleges and universities; 1,256 AP classes taken by almost 25% of students; \$200,000 in scholarships given out as part of DHS Award Program.

Celebrating academic achievements: 74 ESL Students earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher; 8 students participating in the Teaching Fellows Program with WCSU; 98% of CNA Students passed the state exam.

DHS community impact: 500 student athletes participated in the Safe Walk to raise money for Danbury Women's Shelter; prom dress scholarships, ALS Awareness Fundraiser (\$10,000), Bone Marrow Drive, Blood Drive, CoDA Festival.

Student awards: Brookfield Craft Center Regional Show, Women's Clubs of Greater Fairfield County Art Show, Connecticut Music Educators' Association, to name a few.

Athletic accomplishments: Many athletic awards and accomplishments, covering volleyball, basketball, softball, Lacrosse, golf, high fitness performance, cross country, indoor and outdoor, girls cheerleading and wrestling.

Mr. Donovan finished his presentation by presenting the Board with a couple of slides showing the construction that is currently in process. He then invited the Board of the DHS graduation on June 19th at 5:00 pm and asked that they meet in the DHS Main Gym by 4:30 pm.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS: The BOG Officers for the 2017-2018 school year are:
Monique Delima, President
Samantha Mortara, Vice President
Cameron Slingerland, Secretary
Luana Barcelos, Treasurer

Danbury High School

Monique Delima told the Board that graduation will be on Monday, June 19th at 5:00 pm and said they are invited and can contact Mr. Clarke if they have any questions or special needs. She also said the last day of classes for seniors was Monday and the senior class trip was held on Tuesday. Everyone is excited to take the next step whether it's a college career or the military. The underclass men are all excited to move up as well. DHS will be having two award ceremonies and are giving away just under \$200,000 to senior class, not including what some students personally earned from their colleges and institutions. Since this is our last Board of Ed meeting, we just like to thank the Board for giving us the opportunity to inform you about our school and wish you the best of luck in the coming years. We would also like to recommend attending Board meetings once a month instead of twice. Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Board meetings this year and represent the study body at DHS. With graduation approaching, it is now our responsibility to pass our roles to the BOG officers for the next school year; two of us will be returning next year, me and Samantha Mortara. I would like to introduce you to two new members: Cameron Slingerland will be secretary and Luana Barcelos will be treasurer.

PRESENTATION - None

ACTION ITEMS

2017-2018 Tuition Rates

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education accept the 2017-2018 Tuition Rates:

ACE	\$23,349
Danbury High	\$15,566
Middle School	\$12,862
Grades 1-5	\$12,487
Kindergarten (all day)	\$12,862

Motion carried at 8:06 pm.

Sodexo Amended Agreement and Summer Lunch Program

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to sign the Amended Agreement and Summer Lunch Program Agreement with Sodexo

Motion carried at 8:07 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Budget Update

Dr. Pascarella said by July 1st, or the end of June, we may have a budget. Today we were told that it would be mid-July or possibly September. Money-wise we are starting to hire people. We have jobs open at the high school. Next week we could finalize our budget. Right now we assume we are getting \$2 million more. The only leverage will be the Alliance Grant. We can set a number and then in the summer we can see when the Alliance Grant comes in. We may have to convene a Board Meeting to make a decision.

Michael Ferguson said the Governor signed this morning the 25 credit for the incoming class and it is going to keep it there. It will be okay due to all the courses we have at DHS. The present 6th grade will have to meet that requirement. We will never go back under 25 credits. He has not signed the mandate on the regional calendar. He has scaled back a little bit on professional development. This is the first session in the last several years that some of the mandates have been scaled back. Their idea is if we don’t give them more money what are some other ways in which we can help? The fiscal year is July 1st. There is no budget yet. Democrats have put out ideas that can be discussed at the table. I am not on the Budget Committee. If there is no budget by July 1st, Governor Malloy will run the show. The Chairperson said he appreciates the work Mr. Ferguson does on our behalf in Hartford.

Facilities Update

Mr. Martino said he will send everyone an e-mail with an update on the facilities.

Summer Work

Grant to assist in getting work done in the schools this summer. Architect is the same that did the design at the high school. Tennis courts are in serious shape. If this grant is approved the City will add some money to it and we would be able to fix them. Shelter Rock will get all new carpeting. We are talking to the module company. At Sacred Heart we are in our 3-4 year and will be using the second floor.

Elementary Principal Search Update

Dr. Pascarella said all three open Elementary Principal positions have been filled:

Dr. Jamel Gibson	Shelter Rock School
Ms. Carmen Vargas-Guerara	South Street School
Mr. Christopher Roche	AIS Magnet School

Apex Fun Run Program

A discussion ensued about the Apex Program. A Board member said parents were pleased with the program. Some schools implemented it. We have to look at it and be sure there are no interruptions. The Chairperson said the main question the PTO had was that it was done in the middle of testing. We will have to see the logistics of it. Dr. Pascarella said he heard nothing but positive feedback. They are getting stuff in schools that we can't provide. Ms. Robinson said it raises a ton of money and much better than picking our gifts from a catalogue. The school is getting 50%. Maybe we should look at the running of laps. David Metrena said maybe the Program should start at the end of the day. He said both of his children were part of it and they loved it. He never saw anything that was shady about the Program.

DISCUSSION - None

INFORMATION

DECO News - Dr. Pascarella said this was on the agenda just for information.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Pietrafesa mentioned the following graduation dates:

ACE	June 15 th	at WCSU at the old student center
Broadview	June 16	12:00
Rogers Park	June 16	4:00
Westside	June 16	7:00
*DHS	June 19	5:00

*Danbury High School graduation will be on Monday, June 19 at 5:00 pm with a rain date of June 20th. Parking is reserved. Mr. Hawley said if the Board wished, they could park on his street since he lives very close to DHS. The Chairperson also told the Board that he had received a few cards from retirees thanking the Board for their support.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Mr. Johnston said that he chaperoned the "moving up ceremony" and dance at Westside Middle School. It was a Hollywood theme and the Art Department did a Hollywood sign that lite up. There was a DJ and it went off unbelievably well. The kids were awesome and extremely well behaved. They had a wonderful time and they are looking forward to high school. K. Truchsess said there was an adult graduation ceremony last night and 55 students graduated.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

G. Cooper moved, seconded by P. Johnston, that the Board of Education adjourn its meeting of June 14, 2017 and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(meeting was videotaped)