

Board of Education

September 8, 2009

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, September 8, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. in the Silas Deane Middle School Auditorium, 551 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Mrs. DeAngelo, Mrs. Hodges, Ms. Malec, Mrs. Massaro, Mr. Rodriguez, Mrs. Stanziale and Mr. Stanziale. Also present were: Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Kohlhagen; Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Negroni; Director of Special Services, Mr. Emmett; Director of Human Resources and Operations and Business Services, Mr. Drezek; Director of Maintenance and Operations, Mr. Bushey; Wethersfield High School Principal, Mr. Moore; Instructional Supervisor, K-8 Social Studies, K-12 Art & Music, 7-8 World Language, Mrs. Gray; Highcrest Elementary School Principal, Mrs. Harvey, District staff, students and several residents.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Rodriguez led the Board and public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. August 25, 2009 Regular Board of Education Meeting

Mr. Stanziale MOVED the approval of the minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting of August 25, 2009, as presented. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Massaro and VOTED unanimously with Mrs. DeAngelo abstaining.

3. Public Comment

Don Jensen, Garden Street, shared the location of tonight's meeting is incorrect on the District's website.

Matt DeAngelo, 16 Dennison Ridge, shared his views regarding the Presidential Address that was broadcast today. He stated he did not find it political. He shared that conflicting messages had been received from District administration regarding how the viewing of the Address was to be handled and should have been made clearer.

Sue Fennelly, 57 Country Club Road, shared her opinions regarding the Presidential Address and thanked administration for helping the students of Wethersfield view the President's speech. She acknowledged the efforts of the Young Democrats who worked to help find a compromise with administration for viewing the speech.

Casey Lilley, 100 Boulter Road, shared his positive experience working with Mr. Kohlhagen regarding whether or not to allow students to view the President's speech and thanked the Board and Superintendent. He stated he has been disappointed with the reaction from his fellow residents regarding the speech.

4. Communications

Mr. Kohlhagen publicly thanked Mr. Lilley for his leadership and his representation of the Wethersfield High School student body.

Mr. Kohlhagen shared the process that the District underwent following the many phone calls and emails regarding the President's speech. He explained this was never a censorship issue and administration was looking for an opportunity to be respectful of both sides as the opinion of all community members is valued.

Mr. Kohlhagen stated that school districts throughout the county have been caught in the middle of this national issue.

Mr. Kohlhagen stated it had been the intent to record and post President Obama's speech on the website for instructional use but it also became clear it was important for some to view his remarks live as this was an important historical event. The District's initial plan was reworked to provide an opportunity to view the speech in a way to be respectful of all individuals in Wethersfield.

Mr. Kohlhagen noted previous Presidents have addressed students. There was never any intent for the District's decision to become the impetus for additional ill feelings but to keep the integrity of the school day and respect all points of view.

Mr. Kohlhagen stated administration will continue the conversation as it is important to understand different points of view and he hopes students found meaning in the President's remarks. Mr. Kohlhagen concluded that it is the intent of the District to always do what is right for our students.

Mr. Kohlhagen reported the District is off to a wonderful start to the school year. He extended best wishes to all students and staff for a successful school year and thanked the entire staff, Administrators and teachers for all of their hard work to ensure for a smooth opening.

Mrs. Gray shared with the Board and public an exciting new grant opportunity for the History Department which will be funded by the Teaching American History Grant from the United States Department of Education.

Mrs. Gray explained the overall basis of this grant will be used to increase the foundational history knowledge of our teachers and integrate literacy into the curriculum. Teachers were surveyed to determine their strengths and weaknesses. The grant will be used to increase the integration of literacy in lessons, increase the use of online learning modules, build partnerships with the Reading and History Departments at Central Connecticut State University and the Connecticut Historical Museum, focus on learning communities, participate in the Summer Institute Program, use of artifact kits and allow teachers to apply for mini grants to continue their work in the classroom.

Mrs. Gray stated this is a wonderful three year opportunity for our teachers.

In response to Mr. Stanziale, Mrs. Gray stated Wethersfield will participate in this \$965,000 grant program but not be the direct recipient of funds.

Mrs. Harvey announced that Highcrest Elementary School is celebrating its 40th year anniversary and shared many of the activities that will take place to commemorate this event. She reported on the ribbon cutting ceremony held to celebrate the new playscape and thanked everyone involved in making it become a reality.

Mrs. Harvey distributed an historical article written about Highcrest.

She acknowledged the members of the 40th Anniversary Committee and thanked them for their efforts.

Mrs. Harvey reported a float is being created for the September 27 parade and staff, students, parents and alumni will be marching.

There will be activities each month and a donation will be made to a local charity. Anniversary bracelets are being sold and an end of the year barbeque will be held.

Dr. Negroni reported Wethersfield is the recipient of a \$31,100 grant from the Choice Program to be used to ensure the academic and social success of our Choice students

attending Wethersfield Public Schools. The programs to be offered will help both students and parents become more involved in the Wethersfield community. The grant funds will be used for teachers, transportation and instructional supplies and the program's curriculum will be based on Old Wethersfield.

Mr. Kohlhagen noted that the number of Choice students attending Wethersfield Schools has increased from 15 to 45 over the past three years and that these students have been very successful.

5. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Final Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2008-09

Mr. Drezek reviewed the Final Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2008-09 with the Board. He reported \$46.00 has been returned to the Town's general fund. Once approved by Town Council, the Board of Education will contribute \$432,308 to the newly created Health Care Reserve Fund for Town and Board of Education.

Mr. Drezek stated the document before the Board this evening is the format the Board is used to seeing; he is working with the MUNIS system to improve financial reporting to the Board. In response to Mrs. DeAngelo, Mr. Drezek explained the deficit in the overtime account is not reflective of any particular instance but a culmination of overtime throughout the year. The deficit in this account will be directly offset by surpluses in other personnel accounts.

Mr. Kohlhagen stated the District continues to work towards minimizing overtime.

In response to Mrs. DeAngelo, Mr. Kohlhagen reported that staff has been trained on the Federal and local guidelines regarding the handling of an H1N1 outbreak and we continue to post all updated information on our website. Our custodians, school nurses and administrative staff have been well trained. All information will be turnkeyed to staff at upcoming staff meetings.

Mrs. Stanziale noted the Pupil Services, Legal Services and Technical Services accounts were all under funded.

Mr. Drezek explained using the MUNIS system to track expenditures and transfers will allow object accounts to be broken out into specifics and provide more detailed reporting for the Board.

Mr. Drezek explained the Non-Reimbursable Pupil Transportation account combines both regular and special education transportation costs. Transportation needs change throughout the year, after the budget has been set and adjustments are made based on need and budget.

The year end closeout did not include any inappropriate spending.

In response to Mrs. Stanziale, Mr. Drezek stated he became a full time employee of the Wethersfield School System on March 2.

In response to Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Emmett explained the District is reimbursed excess cost money for out of district pupil tuition.

Mr. Kohlhagen thanked Mr. Drezek for his efforts in assuming the role as Business Manager.

Mr. Kohlhagen explained the District had been operating under a budget freeze that had been lifted in late spring making it possible to purchase needed materials and added that staff and students have the necessary materials for a successful school year.

b. Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

Chairperson Hodges requested the Board move to agenda item 5.c. and return to item 5.b if time permits once executive session is completed.

c. Announcements/Information

There was no discussion.

6. Board of Education

a. Meetings Scheduled

Chairperson Hodges announced the following meetings are scheduled: Early Readiness Council and CREC Council.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Board Comments

In response to Mrs. DeAngelo, Mr. Kohlhagen reported a survey of the District's schools revealed that attendance today was at or better than on an average day.

Mr. Stanziale suggested Policy and Planning review and develop a guideline to use in the future if the current President or a future President chooses to address school age students.

Mrs. Massaro publicly acknowledged Mrs. Bazzano and Ms. Wood for their hardwork at the High School.

Chairperson Hodges thanked the parents involved in developing the document in preventing the use of drugs and alcohol. She stated she hopes the community will read it.

Mr. Emmett stated the Community of Concern has been working for over a year and the brochure is a culmination of their efforts.

Mr. Kohlhagen acknowledged Mrs. Standish and Mrs. Ambrogio for their efforts in developing the document.

Chairperson Hodges stated she is still in need of student volunteers at the Cornfest.

Chairperson Hodges stated she enjoyed the ribbon cutting ceremony held at Highcrest.

Chairperson Hodges shared she had the opportunity to watch President Obama's speech with high school students this afternoon.

9. Proposed for Executive Session

Mr. Stanziale MOVED to leave public session and enter executive session at 8:45 p.m. for the purpose of Discussion of Exempt Documents Pertaining to Contracts and Personnel Matters. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Rodriguez and VOTED unanimously.

Present for executive session were: Mrs. Hodges, Mrs. DeAngelo, Ms. Malec, Mrs. Massaro, Mr. Rodriguez, Mrs. Stanziale and Mr. Stanziale.

Mr. Stanziale MOVED to leave executive session and enter public session at 9:50 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. DeAngelo and VOTED unanimously.

Mr. Stanziale MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Massaro and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Montinieri, Vice-Chairperson - Secretary