

West Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education
Regular Board Meeting
December 6, 2011

Unofficial Minutes – Pending Approval on 12/20/2011

Present: Ms. Brassil, Mrs. Brassil Spinella, Ms. Katz, Mrs. Ma, Mr. Overmyer-Velazquez, Mr. Putterman, Mr. Schmitt, Superintendent List, Student Representative Ellis Boettger (Conard), Jennifer Ros (Hall)

Regular Meeting – Town Hall – Legislative Chamber

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The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

*Roll Call/Pledge of
Allegiance*

Tracey Wilson, 99 Outlook Ave., addressed the Board regarding the anticipated technology report and offered a teacher’s perspective on the changes in student’s learning and internet filtering and access with the schools.

Public Communications

Ms. Katz moved, seconded by Mr. Schmitt:

*Amendment to the
2011-2012 School
Calendar Due to the
October 29, 2011 Storm*

THAT the Board of Education Amend the 2011-2012 School Calendar

Ms. Katz reviewed the proposal to eliminate three days of the February vacation. It was explained that family initiated plans and school sponsored trips would be excused absences. Ms. Katz summarized the Board’s thought process behind the proposal. Dr. List noted the changes in the semester and quarter dates and provided a reminder about the announcement of a graduation date.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mrs. Brassil Spinella:

*Motion by Lib Brassil
Spinella, Bruce
Putterman, and Terry
Schmitt to Accept the
Revision of the Following
Board Policy*

THAT the Board of Education accept as a First Reading the following policy which was revised by the Board Policy Subcommittee:

5550: “Safe School Climate Plan – Anti-Bullying”

Mr. Schmitt provided an introduction for the proposed changes in the policies. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the policy but stated as it was a State law, the Board was required to pass it.

Board members expressed their reluctance and frustration regarding having to adopt the policy as mandated, the removal of more significant management at the school level, and concerns about

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funding and potential consequences. Clarification was made that further discussion about bullying incidences and the disciplinary actions taken would be presented at a future meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. List announced the appointment of Jeffrey Sousa as Assistant Principal at Sedgwick. She reviewed his background, qualifications and experience and welcomed him as a positive addition to the Sedgwick community. Dr. List congratulated Smith School's Robotic Team on their recent competition placement. Reminders were provided about Smith and Charter Oak's informational meetings about their Pre-Kindergarten programs and the Parent Leadership Training provided by The Bridge. Dr. List announced that the Commissioner of the State Department of Education would be visiting Conard High School to listen and learn about Conard and how it earned the rating of a 'High Performing School'. She shared her recent interaction with a group of students and provided a definition of character traits.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Tom Moore, Mr. Pat Drago, Ms. Jeri Van Leer, Dr. Laurie Keating (CELT), Dr. John Phillip (CELT) and Mr. Jeff Bajgot (CELT) were available to provide the technology presentation. Mr. Moore provided an introduction and reviewed the four questions that drove the technology blueprint. Representatives from CELT presented a video introduction to summarize the goals of the plan. Dr. Phillip reviewed the Information Technology vision and mission and commended the collaboration of the town, school district and community. He provided an overview of selected findings, the major recommendations and the framework and thought process necessary to eliminate the digital divide. He emphasized the concept of treating wireless technology as a utility servicing the entire community rather than limiting it to individual schools. The proposed next steps were described. All were available to address the questions and concerns of the Board.

Technology Blueprint

Board members commended the amount of information presented and acknowledged the enormity of developing the blueprint. Members discussed the potential of a town-wide initiative to provide wireless fibers. The increased opportunities for new learning environments and resources, redirecting any savings and benefits and addressing the needs of students were considered. Board members cautioned about the rapid changes in technology and stressed the importance of prudent decision-making with this significant financial investment. Initiating the blueprint with pilot programs was discussed. The Board agreed by consensus to accept the framework presented and move

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forward with the next steps.

Dr. Eileen Howley provided an introduction of the legislation and presentation. Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack reviewed the eight requirements as directed by the State Department of Education and summarized what actions are currently in place and what actions still require implementation. Emphasis was placed on initiatives that were already being utilized prior to the legislation. Mr. Michael Renkawitz explained the details of the work being accomplished at the middle school level. The efforts of the school counselors were recognized. All were available to address the questions and concerns of the Board.

Board discussion explored any changes in the participation rate at parent conferences and it was noted that the new tools available increase parents' access to student information and communication between home and school is improved. Concerns were raised about the increase in the number of graduation credits required and scheduling limitations and conflicts. The value of providing students with the opportunity to create time to reflect and discover was raised. Board members acknowledged some positive components of the law as well as areas of concern and stated the district would be in compliance but would work to preserve the uniqueness of West Hartford Public Schools.

Mr. Moore reviewed the history of the K-8 Summer School program and the futility in balancing the expenses and revenue. Mr. Moore noted the program was one that would continue to lose revenue. He clarified that the loss was not a reflection on leadership or the quality of the programs offered. The factors contributing to the loss of revenue and the increased costs were discussed. It was stated that the commitment to meet the needs of the most impacted students would continue and how that specific population did not have a high participation rate. Dr. List requested the guidance of the Board regarding their commitment to the program due to catalogue production deadlines. Mr. Moore, Mr. Ward and Mr. Downes were available to address the concerns and questions of the Board.

Board members expressed their appreciation to the Administration for bringing a budget item up for early discussion. The loss of opportunity for the integration of special education and regular education students during the summer months was raised.

Mr. Rick Ledwith presented the Personnel Report. He was available to answer the questions of the Board.

Secondary School Reform

*Program Review: Impact
of the Elimination of K-8
Summer School*

Personnel Report

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<p>Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Katz:</p> <p>THAT the Board of Education approve the Financial Statement for the period ending October 31, 2011</p> <p>Ms. Brassil provided an oral report of the financial statement. Mr. Ward was available to answer the questions of the Board.</p> <p>The motion passed unanimously.</p>	<p><i>Financial Statement</i></p>
<p>Ms. Katz moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:</p> <p>THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of November 22, 2011</p> <p>The motion passed unanimously.</p>	<p><i>Approval of Minutes</i></p>
<p>Ellis Boettger (Conard) and Jen Ross (Hall) both provided an update on the conclusion of Fall sports, theater performances and upcoming musical productions. Both representatives informed the Board of a Financial Planning workshop scheduled for juniors and seniors.</p>	<p><i>Report from Student Representatives</i></p>
<p>Mr. Putterman announced the following meeting dates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Next Regular Board meeting, Tuesday, December 20, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, Legislative Chamber, Room 314	<p><i>Announcement of Meeting Dates</i></p>
<p>John Joyce, 170 South Main St., addressed the Board regarding the technology presentation and the anti-bullying policy.</p>	<p><i>Comments from Visitors</i></p>
<p>Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Katz:</p> <p>That the Board adjourn at 10:17 p.m.</p> <p>The motion passed unanimously.</p>	<p><i>Adjournment</i></p>
<p>ATTEST:</p>	
<hr/> <p>Bruce Putterman, Chairperson Naogan Ma, Secretary <i>Respectfully submitted by: Ms. K. Lawrence, Clerk of the Board</i></p>	

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