WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 3, 2017
Regular Board Meeting
Board’s Meeting Room

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on January 3, 2017 in the Board’s Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order by James Morrissey, Chairman of the Board of Education at 6:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE: 
James W. Morrissey, Chairman
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer
Patrick Leigh
Patricia Libero
Karen Pacelli
Mark Palmieri
Rosemary Russo

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Rosa Richardson

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
Matt Cavallaro, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor Edward M. O’Brien

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: David O’Brien

B. Public Portion of Meeting
Chairman Morrissey welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if anyone would like to address the board during public session. There were no public speakers.

REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro passed out a report from the New England School Development Council which breaks down Special Education costs, trends, outplacements and average cost. Neil stated that this is a good tool to look at and use as we go through
the budget process to help understand where we are with Special Education and the rising costs.

The city of West Haven had a $250,000.00 ECS cut. We had a meeting today with Mayor O’Brien and Finance Director Kevin McNabola; board members Rosemary Russo and Patrick Leigh also attended. We have a plan to try to put that money aside and save it. We are monitoring the budget as closely as we can. This is only the beginning and what we really have to do is use any savings we can by not filling positions and other cost saving measures. The sooner we implement it this year the better footing we will have for next year. By all accounts it doesn’t look like times are going to get any better. We are in good shape to save that money today and we will keep the board informed of any anticipated costs and/or positions. Right now we are not anticipating filling any open positions but if something comes along like a special education child that needs a para we will come to the board and ask permission to fill the job.

Pat Libero said the All Day Kindergarten was through the Alliance Grant is that correct. Yes. Is the $600,000.00 that Gayle Slossberg obtained for us for All Day Kindergarten in addition to or added on? Matt Cavallaro said after year one of the Alliance Grant it was grouped into the ECS money so yes, the money was part of the Alliance Grant but it also increased our ECS as well. Pat asked how this will impact us for All Day Kindergarten for next year. Matt doesn’t see that program going anywhere but the $600,000.00 that was for this we no longer have. Pat thanked Matt.

Superintendent Cavallaro said that during the last board meeting Bob Guthrie requested that the Superintendent and Board Chairman send out a letter so people could make some suggestions on how we could operate more efficiently. Neil has written the letter and Jim Morrissey has signed it and it will be sent out on Thursday. The board wanted to make sure that people knew they were approachable and would appreciate ideas and suggestions on how we could do things better.

Superintendent Cavallaro said Meg Kingston and Alan Dean the Regional Manager for Sodexo are here. They will explain that because of Federal Government requirements that have to do with Healthy Lunches we will have to raise our elementary lunches a nickel. This is a Federal Mandate but prior to doing so we wanted to make sure that the board knew why we were doing this. Neil introduced Alan Dean and Meg Kingston. Alan Dean said this is the first time in four years that we had to raise prices. This is not something we need to do to be financially solvent; the program is very financially solvent and is part of the Healthy Hungry Free Kids Act. In 2010 Congress authorized the Child Nutrition Act and that came to be known as the Healthy Hungry Free Kids Act which has requirements with nutrition, portion size, sodium and having all wheat in the school and things of that nature and this is a piece of this legislation. Price equity is another piece to this legislation. The USDA said in 2010 that if the school district’s paid meals (kids who do not qualify for a free and reduced meal) are too low they feel that the federal subsidy (the free and reduced meal price) our reimbursement will subsidize the cost of those meals. They wanted to make sure that this didn’t happen so they came out with a formula that came out to be $2.46 based on a complicated mathematical formula. If the school
district average weighted price which is a price we determine by looking at all the meals we serve is at or above the threshold USDA sets then we don’t have to raise the price. If it is less than that then you have to raise the price. This year the average weighted price in West Haven is $2.70 but the threshold this year is $2.78 so we are 8 cents shy. We can round down to the nearest nickel so that is $2.75 which means we are required to put through a 5 cent price increase. This is not something we have a choice in this is mandated by a USDA Regulation and this will probably happen every year going forward. The memo received today states the threshold for next year is moved from $2.78 to $2.86. Since the secondary school price is above the threshold we will just be doing the elementary school lunches. We have an audit in two weeks so they will see we have made the right move. Meg Kingston said this only affects three of the elementary schools that are on CEP. Superintendent Cavallaro said there is the possibility that more schools will actually qualify for full free and reduced lunch. Meg said yes and Carrigan is right on the threshold. You have to be at 40% but they recommend to break even that you hit 50% of the students are receiving some sort of benefits. Neil said we have seen an increase in the amount of lunches that we are giving out every day and this is a good thing and what the purpose of this is. Meg said we need to get more communication out to the three schools (Pagels, Haley and Mackrille) to see if we can make their numbers go up even higher. Chairman Morrissey said probably next year it will go up 10 cents correct. Alan said yes it will probably be 10 cents and as we go through the audit we will have a better perspective. Neil said we are at $2.50 and are going to $2.55. This will take effect immediately and Neil said he will send a letter out to inform everyone about this.

Chairman Morrissey asked where the extra nickel increase will go. Alan Dean said it doesn’t go to Sodexo it goes to the West Haven Cafeteria Fund. Any profit driven by any of these increases will go to the City of West Haven or the BOE; however the account is set up. Chairman Morrissey said this money will be reinvested and do you have an idea of how much money will be taken in. It is not a lot of money and if it is more than $25,000 Mr. Dean would be surprised. Jim said probably seven or eight thousand per school. Patrick said this is in response to the federal legislation to offset their free and reduced lunch…correct…but then we take the increase and put it in a capital plan it doesn’t really offset for an individual family right? Not for an individual family; this has nothing to do with an impact to an individual family this is just the program. It will hurt to some degree the folks who don’t qualify for free and reduced meals because they will pay an extra nickel. Meg said we have some pretty old equipment in some of the schools and it will be nice to start putting some of this money back into the needed equipment. Neil said in anticipation of the high school project we have put off a lot of purchases and expenses which hopefully we can put into the other schools. Patrick asked what the three schools were Pagels, Haley and Mackrille. Technically St. Lawrence is too but it is not going to impact. Chairman Morrissey asked if there were any other questions from the board. Alan said he would come before the board every year to let them know what the number will be.

Superintendent Cavallaro said since you already have next year’s number and we are starting the budget process, prior to adopting a final budget can we meet in the spring so
we can know a year ahead of time. Yes, we can project where we are and where we need to be for next year.

Chairman Morrissey asked what type of equipment would be needed that is so antiquated. Meg said at Carrigan we have a steamer and a kettle that is completely done and are antiques. We had to replace these because they couldn’t cook the pasta etc. and at the high school everything is on its last legs. We did put a new kettle in a couple of years ago. Neil said the initial investment Sodexo made was over $100,000.00. Alan said this was mostly to the elementary schools and Meg said the prior program was for TV dinners that just were warmed and then we went to regular cooking and we had to retrofit the ovens. Jim asked the cost of a kettle or steamer; about $30,000.00. Meg said sometimes we can get a good deal on a kettle. Chairman Morrissey said to keep your eyes and ears open (laughter ensued). Neil said this is a good thing; we have to spend the money and we are making it so it is kind of a good problem to have. Chairman Morrissey and Superintendent Cavallaro thanked Meg and Alan for coming to the meeting.

During the last meeting Matt Cavallaro stated that the ED01 had to be certified by the 31st of December and it was and we are all set. Patrick Leigh asked for a projection of where we are sitting right now for the fiscal year of 2017 total trend budget wise. Matt said we assume that we are going to need some of the excess cost money and with that money he feels like we will have a balanced budget. OK. How about Special Ed. Currently the Special Ed costs in the last projection that we gave you last meeting we were $150,000.00 less than we were last year projected total spend. Joe Lucibello said that probably by the next meeting we will have the update of the December bills because we are always a month behind so we will have another update by the next meeting for a projection. Patrick asked if there were service level agreements; you just get the bills when they come in? No, if we put a student at a school it is whatever the tuition is. No, what I am saying is you get the bill prior month right so in January you would get December’s bill. Some schools do it monthly some do it quarterly. OK. Matt said we know what the yearly tuition is for each child. The difference is if there is an increase if there is an additional child that we have to outplace during the month or a decrease if there is a child we take back during the month. That is the only change. OK.

Mayor O’Brien stated that at our meeting we are trending favorably for worker’s comp by like $600,000.00 - $700,000.00. Matt said yes, very favorably for worker’s comp at this point in time. This is an area in our budget where we have opportunities for some pretty good savings that could really help us out in the budget process. Chairman Morrissey asked if Matt thought that we would go under budget basically. Matt asked in that line item? Yes, in general as this is a big line item for worker’s comp. Matt doesn’t think it will cover all the tuition costs. Superintendent Cavallaro said we anticipated around $300,000.00 or a little less in that account. Matt said that is a good number and there is the possibility there could be even more. Mayor O’Brien said he thought it was close to $600 or $700,000.00. That is with the other cuts added in; the open position and things. Matt thinks the $300,000.00 is a pretty good number to use going forward and there is the possibility of some additional savings but he doesn’t think it will counteract the entire tuition spending; it might limit the need of the amount of excess cost that we
might need but he doesn’t think it will clear everything away. Chairman Morrissey said what you are saying is that in other accounts we will be over budget basically. Tuition…Right…and health insurance always has the possibility if there is some…which again right now is OK. Chairman Morrissey thanked Matt.

C.1.b. Student Representatives’ Report
The report is attached at the end of the minutes. Thank you.

C.1.c. Board
Mark Palmieri wished everyone a Happy New Year. Karen wished everyone a Happy New Year. Patrick Leigh thanked Neil and Matt and Kevin for holding the meeting today to go over everything on the ECS budget decrease. Pat Libero wished everyone a Happy New Year. She went to the band concert which was great as always they do a great job and they collect food and pet needs for the animals at the animal shelter. They received a ton of things. The band does a great job with everything. Pat also went to Bailey. Rosemary wished everyone a Happy New Year. Susan Walker also went to the band concert and they did an excellent job as always. Mayor O’Brien went to the WHHS chorus and band concert and they did a great job. The show that the high school did was very good and the kids were very talented. We have a great group of kids in West Haven.

Bob Guthrie went back to the budget. He would like to see the board send a letter to our legislative delegation explaining the hardship to us when they do midyear adjustments like that. Now they are going to take $250,000.00 back that was promised quite some time ago when both the board and the city set their budget. Just voice our displeasure to our legislative delegation going forward to ask them to reconsider the process. Superintendent Cavallaro said he sent a letter to CAPSS today because they put out a joint statement and they are actually looking at the impact on various districts throughout the state as well. Both Superintendent Cavallaro and Mayor O’Brien think this is a good idea. Mayor O’Brien has been voicing his displeasure all day today. Bob said sometimes it is good to create the written record of it so if someone has forgetful memories that we didn’t reach out to them we certainly did. Mayor O’Brien said we are in a group with the minimum cut of $250,000.00 along with New Haven. So the impact on West Haven is a lot greater than the other municipalities that received that cut. Bob understands that the $250,000.00 was not the worst number compared to other districts but in reality our situation is a little different than some of the districts. Neil said the $250,000.00 to a district like West Haven is a good hit. Bob said especially this time of year.

Bob Guthrie attended the Carrigan Drama Club presentation of “A Christmas Carroll” with nearly 100 kids involved in the production. Bob thanked the staff for all they do to make the program grow. The new seats look great now if we can work on that new curtain and doll up that auditorium. Neil is on it. Bob also attended the Washington Concert prior to the break and the changing of the guard. He wished Mr. Lopes and Mrs. Shirden well as the transition occurs at Washington School.

Chairman Morrissey went over what Neil said earlier about the budget and not refilling a job here and there as long as it is not critical; obviously every penny is going to be very,
very important with this current budget and future budgets. Neil said he thinks it is important that the board knows if a job is going to be filled rather than seeing it on an informational session. If we are going to fill a job we will come to you and say why we need to fill it. Chairman Morrissey thanked Neil.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on December 19, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a. Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve the minutes. Patrick Leigh seconded the motion.

Discussion: Pat Libero abstained because she was not at the previous meeting. All board members were in favor.

Minutes are approved.

Karen Pacelli had a comment. Since the budget is coming around we were wondering if there is any way to create some workshops that we can attend just to be aware of the process when creating the budget. Neil said sure just keep in mind a workshop is still an open meeting; however if a board member or two wants to come in with questions we are happy to do that. We can look at what a status quo budget is and we have an idea and we are also looking at some if scenarios we would like to give to you. Karen said we could also create a completely different one like A, B, and C if there are more. Neil said we will sit down with the principals and come up with some ideas rather than just present you a budget. That is what Karen meant. Karen said in North Haven they have three workshops and the board is there and it is not considered an open meeting; they can listen but they can’t speak. Neil said once you have a budget in your hands there is nothing that says you can’t ask me to invite a principal or two or three because we have questions and want to look at things like enrollment. We are open to any process but what we would like to do first is sit down with the principals and lay it out for them stating we think it is going to be a lean year and we just got hit now and we don’t anticipate it getting any better. That meeting will happen prior to the end of this week and there are other things in the works and some negotiations that may take place. We welcome the questions and whatever and we try to give you a blueprint to work off of along with some options this year as to where we want to go. Pat Libero said nick Caruso from CABE would come down and talk about the budget and how to go through it. He presents a good workshop on that and Jimmy would have to call him as the Chair person. He would be more than willing to come down and talk to us about the budget and what to look for. Neil said he has done some real good work with previous boards. It is no secret here we all understand that the State frankly is a mess. They are looking at a tie in the senate both parties are looking at a small majority which got smaller today with the resignation of our Representative Steve Dargan resigning. These are all things that are going to weigh into a final number. What concerns Neil is that the city has to reach a deadline and the state he believes will work well into June and we will have to be conscious of that as well and maybe work out some kind of a reserve system. We have to be prepared for a lot of
worse case scenarios this year. Mayor O’Brien agrees and the reality is that the city is like 1/3rd of the total budget and the BOE is the other part and they are cutting the city and there is really not that much more to cut on the city side; we have tried. The reality is there is not going to be a huge increase in the BOE budget next year and it is not because I don’t want to give you the money; it is just not there. This will be a very tough year and it is much better if we all work together in the beginning and go through the process together rather than me standing in front of an auditorium of unhappy teachers and parents. Neil and I agree on this and there is just not enough money coming from the State.

F. Informational

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to adjourn.
Mark Palmieri made the motion
Susan Walker seconded the motion
All board members present were in favor
The meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary

The Student Report can be found on the next page. Thank you David.
WHHS opens its doors and welcomes alumni back as part of our Annual Alumni Day on Thursday. Seniors will attend panel presentations to hear about college life from past students.

The WHHS Choral Department will be performing at the 31st Annual Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunday, January 8th at 4 pm at the Congregational Church on the Green.

The First Annual Teacher Talent/Not-so-Talent Show will be on Thursday, January 12th at 6 pm. The first act will consist of three acts: “So you think you can Lip Sync”, “So you think you can Electric Slide” and “So you think you are fit”. Mr. Schefling’s Band will perform at intermission followed by individual acts in the Second Act. The OY West Steppers will also be performing. Come and see your teachers on stage!

Auditions for the Spring Musical, Annie, will be held tomorrow, January 4th.

Sent from my iPhone