The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on January 17, 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 6:01 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
Karen Pacelli
Rosemary Russo

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Patricia Libero
Rosa Richardson
Mark Palmieri

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

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. Georgiana Dini, 690 Jones Hill Road, West Haven, CT. Georgiana stated that she is Co-President of the Paraprofessional Union and a lifelong West Haven resident and realizes that the state, city and Board of Ed are in financial trouble. Approximately 95% of our members live in this city and are tax payers as well as your voting constituents.

Presently our union is down 13 positions from this time last year and that number does not reflect anyone out on extended leave. Most recently, a district-wide para position was filled to be utilized where most needed. That was a tough choice to make since many schools are functioning with a reduced paraprofessional staff.
A paraprofessional is an integral part of the support staff for all children. We work with them for 5 hours and 45 minutes of their instructional day. The needs of our students have become more challenging; we deal with educational, physical, emotional and psychological issues on a daily basis. Although we have been trained to de-escalate situations, we must remain vigilant at all times; but with staffing shortages this is becoming more difficult.

We understand the need to keep identified special education students in the least restricted educational setting; but this can only continue to happen with the proper amount of staffing.

We are asking you to come to our schools and visit our classrooms and learning labs to actually see what we do on a daily basis. By seeing this first hand, we hope that we can count on your support to help us get back some of these positions that are desperately needed. Thank you. Chairman Morrissey thanked her very much for her comments and asked if anyone else would like to address the board this evening.

Marilyn Halligan, 220 Richmond Avenue, West Haven, CT. As you may be aware there is some controversy regarding President Elect Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. She is anti-public education and public schools. AFT National and State has asked for us to have a call of action this Thursday January 19th. On behalf of the West Haven Federation of Teachers and School Nurses and Paraprofessionals Local 2262 we are encouraging everyone to wear blue and a sticker supporting public education. Marilyn passed out stickers and thanked the board members for their support. Chairman Morrissey thanked Marilyn and asked if anyone else would like to address the board this evening. There were no other speakers and public session closed at 6:05 PM.

REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools
Superintendent Cavallaro said the student reps are not here because it is mid-term week and they are excused from the meeting. Neil thanked the board members who helped to develop the schedule and came up with something that really met the needs of the students and faculty; everybody gave a little bit. Neil attended the second meeting that was scheduled a couple of weeks ago and he felt that everyone’s ideas were pooled to come up with something that met everyone’s needs. He thanked everyone for pushing to have those meetings; it was educational, good decisions were made as a result, and the kids are in exams this week. They are showing that Chasing the Dragon Film which you may have heard about on the news. This is the film regarding opioids and addiction. This film originated through the FBI and was shown to police chiefs and police departments across the country. Chief Karajanis and Mrs. Gardner, who is active with the Southern Connecticut Conference Principals, agree that it was a good idea so this worked out perfectly as we were able to show it this week.

Superintendent Cavallaro stated that the Spelling Bee will take place tomorrow and we hope you can be here with us. It is one of my favorite days of the year and I get to be a
game show host. It is a lot of fun and I try to keep the pressure off the kids. It is hard and they take this so seriously. He thanked Mrs. Bennett for organizing the Spelling Bee. Chairman Morrissey thanked Neil.

Dr. Druzolowski heard the Carrigan Band and said based on a challenge to increase their numbers they have done a phenomenal job but more importantly the teachers have done a great job with this group. They are just getting better every time we turn around and this grade six will be moving into grade seven so we can anticipate an increase in numbers but most importantly in schools where they don’t have music like this you give another reason for a child to want to stay in West Haven. Neil said this is an area we are trying to increase and make sure everyone has an opportunity. Eighty or more kids participated in the production of A Christmas Carroll and with Anne and Francine Coppola we were able to do some after school activities. More kids are participating and it is a real good thing for our district.

C.1.b. Student Representatives’ Report
The student reps are not here because it is mid-term week and they are excused from the meeting.

C.1.c. Board
Patrick Leigh asked Matt to give an update on the Special Ed trend so far. Matt said the paper work should be in front of him. Patrick thanked him. Matt said we are still maintaining the $155,000 less than we spent last year and it was the same last month. Patrick asked if this is based on last year’s budgeted amount. It is the actual spend. So do you anticipate another 2M over? No it would be less than that because we upped the budgeted amount about $400,000 and we are spending about $150,000 less so hopefully we are decreasing the overspend in that account. OK thank you.

Rosemary Russo congratulated the students from WHHS who were inducted in the National Honor Society. This is the first time she had to miss it and feels horrible. She just wanted to congratulate them on a good job.

Susan Walker attended the 7th Grade Concert, Band and Chorus last Thursday and if we are going to get all these kids from Carrigan she doesn’t know where they will put them on the Bailey stage. Superintendent Cavallaro said we are so happy with our numbers and we will figure it out. In Carrigan they had to break it down to intermediate, beginner, 5th grade and 6th grade and we may have to do something like that but this is a problem we welcome trying to work on. Susan said they both did an excellent job and they also had the Bailey Jazz Band playing and she loved them. They only had six rehearsals and you could not believe they did that after only six rehearsals. Dr. Druzolowski said they are planning a district wide concert with Carrigan, Bailey and WHHS in the Spring and we are looking forward to hearing that. Susan also attended the Honor Society Induction on Friday night and it is near and dear to her heart. There were a lot of wonderful children inducted; it was a wonderful ceremony.
Bob Guthrie went to Bailey’s 7th grade Band, Choral and Jazz Concert. It was a wonderful performance by the students and full house participation in support by the families.

Chairman Morrissey said unfortunately he wasn’t able to get to the National Honor Society Induction as he was out of state but does want to congratulate the students of WHHS who worked so hard to get that honor. He also thanked the paras for coming here tonight. This board is going to work very diligently during the next several months and there is no intention of trying to lay anybody off. We know the hard work that you do on behalf of our students and he thanked them for their hard work and dedication. We will accept your invitation to come into the schools and we know you do a great job. Rose Russo has told me several times about the wonderful job the paras do on behalf of our students. Unfortunately some of our board members do work during the course of the day so it is difficult for them to get there but I have a flex schedule and am sure some members may also have some time so we will get to visit different schools to see the good work that you do on the behalf of the children of our district.

Chairman Morrissey said we can work with the Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Superintendent to try and get ahead of the curve because we know it is not going to be an easy budget again and fully understand this. We are working on ways now, instead of down the road, to try and solve problems that might happen. We are trying to look for savings right now and Jim thanked Superintendent Cavallaro, Assistant Superintendent Druzolowski and Patrick Leigh the Board Finance Chair who have been working very hard. We all have been invited to the City Council meeting on Monday night to work together to see if we can come up with a plan to save money. If we get out in front of this early on and identify problems, we are better off looking at the problems right now than to wait until the end. We can work with the City Council and not be adversarial. We are all West Haven residents here and our job is to make sure that our students are taken care of properly. Chairman Morrissey thanked the people in the audience for coming tonight and encouraged them to come more often as we are the ears of our staff and are here with you not against you. We need to know more from the staff. A letter was sent out via email last week and will be sent out again tomorrow as not everyone had received it. Neil said we will also put it up on the website. Chairman Morrissey said it is our intent to work with everybody in this room and if you have any ideas don’t be afraid to pick up the phone and call us and we will try to get into the classrooms more to engage with the students and staff.

Superintendent Cavallaro said in response to Chairman Morrissey’s comments he feels we have taken a pro-active approach and are in a better position this year than we were last year with the budget. He feels confident as we have had good dialogue with the city administration and Kevin McNabola and while it is not going to be easy, there will be some tough choices, he wants to assure Chairman Morrissey and the board that we have had good discussion and dialogue so far and based on our preliminary conversations we have some ideas that we are working towards. Chairman Morrissey thanked Superintendent Cavallaro.
D.1. **Approval of Minutes**

*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 January 3, 2017 at 6:00 PM.

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.
Karen Pacelli made the motion to approve the minutes
Susan Walker seconded the motion

Discussion:
All board members were in favor.
Minutes are approved.

D.2. **Resignations: (Certified)**

**17-01 Gene Sullivan**, Girls’ Softball Coach – Bailey Middle School
Effective: January 10, 2017
Reason: Personal

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item 17-01
Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

Discussion:
All board members were in favor.
Item 17-01 is approved.

D.3. **New Hire: (Certified)**

D.4. **New Business**

**17-02 Superintendent’s Goals for the current school year**

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to approve item 17-02
Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve
Rosemary Russo seconded the motion

Discussion: Bob Guthrie said he is glad to see us get back on track; it is the right thing for the board and the right thing for the superintendent. It has been a little while since the board has formally approved goals. Hopefully this is the first of several steps. We are talking about evaluation and new goals for the next school year. CABE is a resource if you want to discuss the board and superintendent’s roles and the board can also set goals as a board separate from the superintendent. Superintendent Cavallaro said he appreciates working with Bob and Jim and coming up with the goals that are mutually agreed upon.

Chairman Morrissey thanked Mr. Guthrie who has been a veteran of this board for many, many years and has a lot of insight and he thanked him for all his help and guidance throughout the last couple of years. We will move forward and hopefully the board will have more input with their ideas as we move this process along.
All board members were in favor. Item 17-02 is approved.

F. Informational

Superintendent Cavallaro said under informational there is a position that was filled which was a food service job and this is a self-sustaining program and is not part of our operating budget. I didn’t want you to think we went back on what we said to you last week. Chairman Morrissey thanked Superintendent Cavallaro.

Karen Pacelli asked if we will be looking to fill the two retirements from the paraprofessionals under informational. Neil said at this point we are not going to fill anything especially going into the budget season. We are in the process of assessing all of the jobs and wouldn’t want to fill a job and not be able to meet a budget at the end of this year. We will leave those positions open and possibly do some reshuffling. We will do some prioritizing as to where we want to see the positions filled first; learning labs, preschool and those kinds of areas. If we need to hire someone because we are getting a severely disabled student we will come to you and let you know prior to doing the hiring. Karen asked if the two positions had the paras working in the classrooms. Joe Lucibello said the Seth Haley one was an inclusion para and the Pagels was a lab position which we will fill from within the district. We are looking at all of our numbers to see how we are going to do this. AJ Palermo will make the position at Seth Haley work from within her building right now. Karen said the IEP’s and hours are going to be met with these students. Correct. The concern is they were saying there were 13 less than last year. Neil said most of those were accounted for when the board adopted a budget and we knew how many we were eliminating at the time. Neil said you have a right to be concerned however we are only down three this year and we feel we can figure out those three from within for now. That doesn’t mean that down the road they can’t be filled if we do a little bit better financially than we thought.

Rosemary said isn’t that money already in this year’s budget we aren’t talking about next year. Midyear it is kind of hard to stop. Neil said we are taking into consideration some of the cuts we received in ECS and some of the Special Ed spending we want to be careful of so it is our goal to actually make up for most if not all of the ECS cuts that the city is facing and turn some money back and we are factoring those salaries into that amount. Rosemary understands that but hates to see our Special Ed kids and staff short because it is mid-year and it is hard once you have had someone in your room to be without that person. Neil said we are looking at where we can move people and we will keep you up to date and Karen’s point is valid. We need to make sure that all IEP’s are being met and kids are getting the service that they need and if we need to bring someone on board we will certainly do that.

Chairman Morrissey said if the board has the opportunity to go into these classrooms, especially to see where the two retirees have worked and see what effect it might have on the students then obviously if it has to be filled we will fill it. Superintendent Cavallaro understands that. Chairman Morrissey thanked the board and the public for their
comments. We will get to the classrooms and be more pro-active; thank you for coming here tonight.

Chairman Morrissey asked for a motion to adjourn.
Bob Guthrie made the motion
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
All board members present were in favor
The meeting adjourned at 6:26 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary