A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on October 1, 2018 in the Board Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order at 6:05PM by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Lauren Aceto

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Brendan Carew
Sumedha Chowdhury
Julia Walker

Chairwoman Russo turned the meeting over to Superintendent Cavallaro before beginning public session. Superintendent Cavallaro said we have a very special announcement tonight which is something we have been working on and hoped it was going to happen. We received the official word today from the U.S. Department of Education. In Superintendent Cavallaro’s 10 plus years as Superintendent this is one of the proudest moments that he has had. It is a very special honor that was bestowed upon one of our schools. Superintendent Cavallaro turned the meeting over to Dr. Druzolowski who oversees curriculum instruction and has worked with Tom Hunt. Dr. Druzolowski showed a video of the U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos who stated, “I’m pleased to celebrate with you as your school is named a National Blue Ribbon School. We recognize and honor your important work in preparing students for successful careers
and meaningful lives.” She looks forward to meeting the honorees in Washington D.C. in November to celebrate their recognition and learn from their experiences.

Congratulations on your students’ accomplishments and for your extraordinary commitment to meeting their unique needs. Forest School is one of the 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Dr. Druzolowski said we don’t select ourselves to go forward we are selected by the State Department of Education based on test scores. They look at overall performance, educational gap closing which is the huge one, and they have promise for people who have improved quite a bit. Forest School was chosen for educational gap closing for its data for 2016/2017. They saw data that said we were instructing all kids not just some kids and that has been our goal for the past 10 years. All kids will benefit from instruction not just a top group, a middle group, or a lower group; everyone. When we presented this to the school they were very excited and crying because you can imagine all of the work they have done and they stayed the course. This is due to every teacher, paraprofessional, custodian, nurse and lunch aide. Everybody in that building has contributed to the success of what is going on.

Mr. Tom Hunt, Principal of Forest School will be going to Washington. Tom said it was a very long process. We learned of our eligibility early last year and began working on the procedure to apply towards it and it was a year-long process. Because we really didn’t know that we would get it until we got it so we were sworn to secrecy. Today he and Dr. Druzolowski watched the live release from Washington this afternoon and in a half an hour he went back to school and put together a quick assembly for the kids and they viewed exactly what you viewed tonight and they got to see their school’s name on the video screen in our gymnasium. This is something we got because we show up every day and do what we like to do and it is geared towards all kids. The new state accountability report really takes into account all children now; it is not just the proficient child and above, it is all children. His EL learners and his Special Education Resource Children and his Tier 3 Instructional Children and remedial kids are showing huge amounts of growth and are finally being recognized as learners. He is honored to be nationally recognized and very humbled at the same time. We will continue to go to our building and do what we do day in and day out. What we do is strongly supported by the administration. The PD offerings and the workshops that teachers go to, the training that they get and carrying out the strategies that they learn at the training to execute their class lessons are really invaluable and we need to maintain that on a consistent basis. All those pieces to the puzzle got us to where we are today. Thank you very much. This was the lead story in the New Haven Register. Journalist, Mark Zaretsky stated. Applause.

Dr. Druzolowski said 8,800 schools have been recognized in the past 36 years. This year we had four in Connecticut five if you count the non public which is a small school in Simsbury St. Mary’s. We have an elementary school in New Canaan which has different demographics and we have ours and the University of Hartford Magnet School and Killingworth High School. This was a pleasant surprise to everybody and they all worked very hard. The leadership is a really big piece of it. Our friend here, Tom Hunt, follows every pathway and every map that we put out and we thank you so much; it is a pleasure working with you. Applause.
Chairwoman Russo said we are all beyond proud and the work you accomplished is really unbelievable. She knows how hard that is and knows the population at Forest and to get this honor is really something. She thanked Tom Hunt, Superintendent Cavallaro, Dr. Druzolowski, the teachers, the paras, nurses, the custodians everyone contributed and you all should be very proud. We are so proud of you. Thank you again. Applause.

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Chairwoman Russo opened up public session and asked three times if anyone would like to address the board this evening. There were no speakers.

REPORTS
C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro said this is one of his proudest moments and is proud of Anne and her team and Tom and the team over at Forest. You don’t do these things to get honored but it is certainly nice when people notice and when you start to show results and all the hard work you have put in starts to pay off. We will showcase Forest and honor the teachers, paras, nurses, the custodians because it is a team effort. Forest is a happy place, everyone is very welcoming, it is an inviting place, a very clean place and a good place to learn and it starts with my good friend Tom so again thank you for all you do it really is a pleasure working with you.

Superintendent Cavallaro thanked Dana and the high school students. This is the first meeting and we will do this once a month which is great. Unfortunately we are limiting every school to 15 minutes and it is difficult to showcase only a few of their clubs. The high school has the festival coming up at the end of the month and it is a great way to showcase all of the clubs, activities and other good things going on at WHHS. It was nice to have the kids talk about how they feel about the programs.

Superintendent Cavallaro said we had a really good week last week and the teacher’s contract was approved by both the City Council overwhelmingly and at the MARB subcommittee meeting on Thursday we received a lot of nice compliments. It was really a pleasure working with the teacher’s group and at the end of the day we thought it was a very fair contract.

Matt Cavallaro gave a budget update and said we finished last year just under $100,000.00 under budget so we had a very successful year. We talk about Special Education and Transportation at all our meetings and with the excess cost we were able to stay pretty close to the budget figure. We had a small over run in the Special Ed Transportation because of the needs of children it can change day to day. The good thing about that is it is bid every year and this year we had our bids for the next fiscal year in August and we had a new company come in that really underbid some of the runs and we expect to see some savings. We had a great year in Workman’s Comp and hopefully this will continue. The HAS did what we thought it would do but there weren’t huge savings because we had to pay out 50% of the deductible to get the membership into the plan.
which is standard. This really did stabilize the claims and we were able to live within the means of the budget and it was basically the same amount as we budgeted the prior year which is pretty much unheard of. We think this plan will only get better over time and more membership we get enrolled. Matt asked if there were any questions. Bob Guthrie asked how the relationship was with the new finance director for the city compared to previous administrations. Matt has met him a couple of times and had some brief conversations with him and he seems like a good guy and Matt is looking forward to working with him and hopes they have a great working relationship like we have had with the ones in the past. Neil senses that he is looking to modernize the office and he thinks as time goes by we will be doing more with the office upstairs and getting on the same page and making sure everybody is utilizing the software which both the city and the BOE pay for. Chairwoman Russo thanked Matt.

Joe Lucibello, Director of Pupil Services said Rosa Richardson asked that we review some of this information at the last board meeting and Dr. Stefania Larry will help with the presentation. He passed out two sheets of paper an Out of District Tuition Sheet and our current Self Contained Classrooms in District which has the number of teachers, paras, med techs, nurses and the number of students. These numbers are of today and in the PreK Rooms it is an ongoing up and down number but the numbers in the Self Contained Labs have gone up this year a little bit which puts a little strain on our resources. We were able to hire some additional paras which have helped and hiring more teachers has helped tremendously. Dr. Larry will explain a couple of rooms and give examples of the students that would be in some of these particular rooms. Superintendent Cavallaro said Joe did a really nice job of putting the numbers together and I really wanted you to have an idea of what some of the classes look like and some of the needs of these children. On the surface everything looks very expensive however when you see the services that we are providing and the number of kids we are offering these services to it becomes more meaningful to you as a board.

Dr. Larry said a self contained classroom you may also hear it called a learning lab is a classroom consisting of students just with disabilities. It is a classroom with a very low teacher student ratio to meet the needs of our students and it consists of students with various disabilities. Students in our self contained classrooms or learning labs do spend time with their typical peers and that is determined by their planning and placement team consisting of their parents or guardians, clinicians in the building, the building principal and the teachers and they decide what is best for that student to transition with non disabled peers. In West Haven we are fortunate to have a variety of learning lab placements. We are very individualized in our approach. We have self contained classrooms for students that are medically fragile. Many of our students in our medically fragile rooms are non ambulatory so they have wheel chairs and they may use walkers, standers to transition in the building. Many of our students in the medically fragile classrooms have nurses assigned to them for feeding purposes as they may have a G Tube and also for respiratory purposes and some carry oxygen and all their medical equipment. We also have in district Autism Specific Labs for students who have the diagnosis of Autism and Autism is a spectrum so there is a range of how a student may present. We have students with autism who are in our traditional education classrooms but the
students in our autism learning labs primarily have limited communication and many are nonverbal and require other means of communication whether it be low tech options, just simple picture ques or other visuals and some have high tech communication systems where they may use assistive tech and they may have an IPad for their communication needs. Students in our autism programs traditionally have difficulty with personal social skills so there is a lot of direct teaching and personal social skills for our little guys in our pre-school and this could be basic functional play. Many have difficulty playing with common household toys so it is direct instruction on even how to use a train on a track. We have developmental learning labs and students in those classrooms have a range of disabilities. Some have cognitive impairments and some are visually impaired. We have two students this year that with a cortical vision impairment that have lost most of their vision and are on the braille track. We have students in our developmental learning labs that present with some behavioral needs and concerns. Behavior in an elementary setting can look a variety of ways it can be general non compliance, property destruction, aggression at times so luckily we have experts in the building that help with programming for our students that have behavioral type needs. Students are placed in a lab after we have exhausted every action within our regular education setting over a period of time where we use intervention and determine what is best for the student. We work with the clinicians in the building, the experts in the building, and if it is a cognitive delay or some other type of impairment we can use our resources within the regular education room prior to going to a lab placement. There are students who transition back from the lab to a regular education environment. Students in our regular education class do experience some delays and they are serviced by the special education staff in the building. Some students just require that push-im support or that co-teaching model and some students need that resource support where they are pulled from the classroom to work on skills and then we have our learning lab placements which is based on student need and individualized.

Joe Lucibello said on the Self Contained Report you notice Carrigan has two more rooms than Bailey because in the medical room and the high needs room we didn’t want to have students transition too many times so we decided to keep them more of a 5-8 so they do not go to Bailey they stay at Carrigan. Those rooms tend to have more students because you are talking about four grades as opposed to two. Stefania said as Joe said with our preschool classrooms they generally start low in September because we receive students as they transition from the birth to three programs to us when they turn three. Questions were asked by board members and responded to.

C.1.b. Student Representatives’ Report
The BOE vs. City Council Food Drive for WHEAT is being kicked off today and will run until November 19. Please bring in non-perishable food items. The full report can be found on the last page of the minutes.

C.1.c. Board
Jim Morrissey said it is a great idea to bring our schools in and showcase the great things that our students do during our board meetings. He knows it is only for 15 minutes but is sure the board will be happy to give you more time if possible to showcase the schools
throughout the whole year. Jim thanked Dana for the good job she did and stated it is nice to see all the great things going on at our high school and all of our schools. People should learn more about this instead of the negative things. Jim congratulated Forest School and echoed the statements of other board members great job Mr. Hunt, Neil, Anne and all the teachers, paras and whole staff at Forest School. This is a great honor and you should be proud.

Rosa Richardson said it is nights like tonight that make her very proud to serve this community. Thank you.

Karen Pacelli commended Forest School but also wanted to thank the students too because it was their hard work also, the teachers of course but it is also the students. Pat Libero said they had reading day at Mackrille and Miss Connecticut showed up and she is adorable. The kids were excited and it was a really nice day and they always do a nice job there. Pat read to kindergarten children and it was fun. Congrats to Forest that is really exciting. It is nice to hear good news for us. Pat loved that West Haven High came here tonight and share what they are doing because she thinks they always get a bad rap and she is happy there are lots of good things to celebrate. She is glad we are the lead story on the New Haven Register so thank you.

Sue Walker congratulated Mr. Hunt, the teachers, staff and students at Forest that is fantastic. A couple of years ago Forest received a School of Distinction Award so you have wonderful things going on and I congratulate you. Sue thanked the high school for coming. It gave her a blast from the past. For four years she coached the high school cheerleaders. Great things are going on there and at every school in West Haven and the world should know about it so congratulations to all of you.

Chairwoman Russo said this was really a fun meeting. The Cheerleaders starting it off really made it; she wishes they could start all the meetings off. There are a lot of things happening in West Haven Public Schools and she doesn’t think people realize what we have going on. As Chairman of the Board Rosemary tries to make it known to City Council and to other people who will listen that we are doing great. We are always in budget, test scores are good, our teachers are the best and that was a big sacrifice for them to make and they did it and have done it before. I hope they don’t have to continue to do it. Rosemary said to City Council that she really hopes the day will come when we don’t have to beg for every penny that we get. She enjoys having the schools come in and looks forward to the others coming. Congratulations to Forest it goes without saying. She went to a PTA Council Meeting and she just wants to urge the board members to please join the PTA of your adopted school as they need the membership and we need to support them. It would be nice to become more involved with the PTA’s because they are a driving force in our schools. They are a small group of people who work really hard to enrich the lives of our children.

C.1.d. Committee

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. The West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting was held in the Board’s Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, September 17, 2018 at 6:00 PM.
Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes D.1.a.,
Karen Pacelli made the motion to approve the minutes
Rosa Richardson seconded the motion
Discussion: Bob Guthrie abstained as he was not present during the last board meeting.
All board members were in favor
Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

D.3. New Hire: (Certified)

18-82 Molly Funk, 858 Freeman Avenue, Stratford, CT 06614
Part-Time Speech Position – Forest and Carrigan Intermediate School
Salary: $30.00 per hour
Effective: September 14, 2018

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve New Hire item 18-82
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
Discussion: Superintendent Cavallaro said that this position is in addition to a full time
person at each school. Rosemary asked how many hours for part time is it 19 ½ hours or
less. Joe Lucibello said we are doing two days right now and the teachers already in the
schools will let us know if they require any more but he doesn’t anticipate it going above
15. It is one day at one school and two days that will be split because she is working in
Milford also.
All board members were in favor
Item 18-82 is approved

D.4. New Business

18-83 2019 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Competitive Grant

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 18-83
Dr. Druzolowski said this is a competitive grant that we are applying for and it is limited
to $50,000 to ensure homeless children are identified and go to school and get the support
that they need to stay in school and thrive.
Bob Guthrie made the motion
Rosa Richardson seconded the motion
All board members were in favor
Item 18-83 is approved

F. Informational

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn
The motion was made by Rosa Richardson
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
The meeting adjourned at 7:03 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary
1. There is an early dismissal on Wednesday for professional development
2. Assemblies for the beginning of the year were held this past week.
3. Students from the West Haven High School Band volunteered at the Apple Festival this past weekend.
4. Congrats to football team for their win on Friday
5. PSATs on Oct. 10th for 9th-11th graders. Seniors will have Senior Day. The school will have a special schedule for that day.
6. Pep rally and Homecoming is on Oct. 19th
7. Senior class speeches Oct. 4th and elections on Oct. 5th
8. SATs are this Saturday (Oct. 6th)
9. ACTs are on Oct. 27th
10. Parent Visiting Day is October 22nd. No school for students. Parents can visit from 9am to 12pm and then in the evening from 6:00pm to 8:30 pm
11. No school Monday the 8th for Columbus Day