A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on December 3, 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 6:00 PM 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 Lauren Aceto Patrick Leigh Patricia Libero James W. Morrissey Karen Pacelli Rosa Richardson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: 

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: 

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Brendan Carew Sumedha Chowdhury Julia Walker

Before beginning public session Chairwoman Russo asked for a moment of silence for President George H.W. Bush. Thank you.

Chairwoman Russo then said we have a note of celebration and asked Neil and Anne to come forward and said we are having this for Dana because we are so proud of her and so happy for all her accomplishments and just want to let her know how much she means to us and to the West Haven Public Schools. We know it was a difficult year and you balanced everything so nicely. Chairwoman Russo asked Dana Paredes to come forward. Applause.
Superintendent Cavallaro said Dana was chosen by the Connecticut Association of Schools Assistant Principal of the Year. Over the last year, like Rose said, Dana has done double and triple duty between her data specialist job, her regular job and assuming some of the duties for Pam who was ill. Dana stepped up and did an outstanding job and I can’t think of anybody who is more worthy of the title. Dr. Anne Druzolowski said Dana makes it enjoyable to be at the high school three days out of five so if I never come back it is because I had a good time. Laughter. Dana accepted the bouquet of flowers and thanked everyone. Applause.

B. Public Portion of Meeting

Chairwoman Russo asked if anyone would like to address the board three times. There were no speakers.

REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Superintendent Cavallaro again congratulated Dana and said how highly the team talked of her and how they think of you at the high school; you certainly earned their respect. Congratulations.

A the next meeting the building project team will come before you as next month they have to present to the Department of Administrative Services our FF&E package which is the furniture, technology and equipment package. This requires both the building committee’s approval as well as the BOE’s approval so they will be here with an explanation. What they determine is needed starts at the school level when they interview the teachers and find out what they need the type of furniture and equipment. Business Network is also very involved in the process. Lab equipment, science equipment, shop equipment is all part of that package. Most of it is reimbursable but some is not so we will get you a list as soon as possible. If there are questions they are more than happy to answer any that come up. Neil said our team did a really good job the other night and he has been assured from day 1 that all of the safety skills and procedures have been put in place. Jim Twitchell did a really nice job with the parents who were there explaining and even coming to the conclusion that the building may be safer now because it is being monitored and tested now while the project is going on. There has not been abatement with school in session since last February. We have been given weekly reports which we posted on our website and Dana would call parents and let them know the testing results were negative for the week but if you want further results you can go to the website. Neil thanked Patrick and Rosemary for being at the meeting and said the state has been very involved with this project and they worked with the Department of Environmental Protection, Health Department and also with the Department of Administrative Serviced to make sure we are being closely monitored. There were surprise inspections and meetings took place where they came down and reviewed testing and results which are part of the contract. There is a good part of our budget being spent because we are phasing the old building out and the new building in on the same property.
that has to be taken into consideration as the construction project proceeds. When there are children in the building there are guidelines and plans that have to be filed and adhered to and before they approve it they have to make sure we are implementing it so that is a good part of our budget. The team will be here next week and Neil would encourage the board members to ask any questions they have. Lauren Aceto asked if we were voting in two weeks to approve the purchases. Not the purchases; you are voting to approve a plan which then goes to the Department of Administrative Services up at the State for a scope review to try to make as much as they can part of the full reimbursement of 77%. OK and are you and Dana going to have a final look at the items you will be purchasing before it comes to us. Yes we have been involved since the beginning and we continue to be involved. Dana said we did review some of the classrooms prior to Thanksgiving and when the chairs were ordered 30 chairs for every classroom were the standard but when we went through some of the classrooms that are specialty classrooms will never have 30 kids so we went through and eliminated chairs there so we are not over ordering and over spending. Superintendent Cavallaro said we will spend what we can up to the amount so if it doesn’t need it here we can put it into technology where we are trying to find a little more money.

Matt Cavallaro said it is getting close to budget time and we are starting to put things together and Matt will be working with Patrick to finalize the budget and bring it to the board members in the next few meetings.

C.1.b. Student Representatives’ Report
The report will be found at the end of the minutes.

C.1.c. Board
Jim Morrissey congratulated Dana on her well-deserved award. Jim also wanted to commend the parents who brought up the issue of asbestos at the high school. They are obviously concerned about their children and that is a great thing. Jim sat at the meetings and we had the experts come in a while back and talk about the asbestos issue and we put our trust in the people who have the qualifications and are building that high school. They assured us that the school is safe and he knows no one on this board would want to put children or staff in harm’s way if we thought there was a problem over there. We are doing a great job there and the project will be great for the city. Jim feels very strongly that the school is in fact safe as we have taken every safeguard imaginable to make sure our children and staff are safe. Jim thanked Neil and chairperson Russo and Patrick Leigh who were there the other night along with the staff and people building the high school. We put our trust in them and Jim feels very strongly that the school is safe for our students and staff. Thank you.

Rosa Richardson said as busy as the month of December gets is one of her favorite times of the year and is so looking forward to the festivities, concerts and band concerts. Rosa is looking forward to the December calendar. Thank you.

Patrick wanted to reiterate what Neil and Jim were touching on. He understands the concerns of the parents but is disappointed that this is still an issue. Over and over again
we have had experts in front of us and thank you for bringing them to the town hall meeting to reassure parents. He is trying to understand some of the issues at hand because really there doesn’t seem to be anything that exists. The testing has taken place, we have experts in the field that are performing these tests and in the end we are building a high school that will be asbestos free and a new ventilation air system put in. He really hopes that at that town hall meeting they really listened to the experts and a vote of confidence was put in place. Thank you. 

Karen Pacelli congratulated Dana and said you deserve this.

Lauren Aceto congratulated Dana.

Pat Libero congratulated Dana and said she is the liaison to the building committee and those meetings are open and anyone can come. We have had people come here to talk to us about the construction and she doesn’t understand why people didn’t reach out to them. Like him or not like him Ken Carney will answer the phone and get you what you need. He has never denied anybody any information about this project. Pat is kind of disappointed that people didn’t go that route because we are open about it and have been pretty transparent about everything. You can just show up at meetings and they will tell you what is going on. Christine has been at the building committee meetings once or twice but not a lot so she would hope that they would take advantage of these things if they are concerned or even call Dana and she will refer them to the right people. Building the high school is such a great thing to happen after all these years. We have been working on it over ten years and it is final going somewhere and she doesn’t want to see any road blocks because people don’t understand what is happening. We more than double check things and Pat is really proud of the team and she thinks it will be a great project. She can’t wait until September when the offices are open and we see activity in there and it is really moving along. It is a great thing for the city and she is really happy that we are doing it. She hopes people can accept that and if they need answers seek them out because we do have the people in place to answer questions for them.

Sue Walker congratulated Dana again for a wonderful job and she wanted to thank Carrigan for showing up tonight and telling us all about your school which was wonderful to hear. The other thing is that we sit here meeting after meeting and public session consists of nothing for most meetings and if people have concerns this is another forum for them to come and talk to us but people don’t come and talk to us. Susan only found out about that meeting because she is face book friends with one of the people but she had a conflict she couldn’t get out of. Sue is confident they are trying to do their best and people on that committee have children and they certainly would not want to endanger the lives of children and we don’t want to endanger the lives of our teachers and administrators and anybody else who goes to that building. She hopes that this continues forward; it would be great to see. She went to West Haven High School a few years after it opened at the present location and even by then parts of it were falling apart so it would be good to see a brand new beautiful school.
Chairwoman Russo said tomorrow night is the building committee meeting at 6:00 PM and people are welcome to come to that. The project team has gone above and beyond. Whenever we want to hear from them they come and talk to city council people, and they talk to private people and they were there again on Thursday night. As Chairman of the board it is really reassuring to hear a vote of confidence from all the board members. She feels we are all on the same page and she does feel the city has done its due diligence and that we have done our due diligence and feels confident. She knows that parents disagreed with that but she doesn’t know what else they expect. Parents hear from the experts that this is what it is none of us are the experts so this is where the trust comes in. The experts say there is no asbestos and they are doing the necessary testing and it is fine. She agrees with Pat Libero that this is a great thing for our city and she really wants this to be done and she doesn’t want obstacles in the way; not that we wouldn’t remedy it if there was something wrong.

C.1.d. Committee
Chairwoman Russo said at our last meeting we had our Early Childhood Committee Meeting and she thinks the most telling thing that Dr. Larry presented to us was at one point she showed us a slide of how many kids had either special needs or were ELL students or had a high incidence of poverty; the numbers are compelling and she feels that the people who teach our youngest learners are doing a great job and she has a special interest in that so she really loves hearing anything about early childhood. Superintendent Cavallaro was going to wait until they arrived at the informational portion but if you look at F.2. under informational that person was an Arabic tutor and we were really in a panic when that person was leaving the school district because with the statistics those numbers are getting up there. The good news is we have found somebody but the bad news is that we are going to start to need several more and this is something I wanted to point out to the board.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. The West Haven Board of Education Special Meeting was held in the Board’s Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, November 19, 2018 at 5:15 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes D.1.a., Rosa Richardson made the motion to make a slight change in the attendance for this meeting. Rosa asked that she be moved down to the board members in attendance area and Sue Walker be moved up to the committee member area in her place. Patrick Leigh seconded this motion. All board members were in agreement to amend the minutes as stated. Chairwoman Russo then asked for a motion to approve the amended minutes D.1.a. Karen Pacelli made the motion. Rosa Richardson seconded the motion. Discussion: All board members were in favor. Amended minutes are approved.
D.1.b. 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, November 19, 2018 at 6:00 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes D.1.b., Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes, Patrick Leigh seconded the motion. Discussion: Board member James Morrissey said he was not in attendance during the last board meeting. All other board members were in favor. Minutes are approved.

D.3. New Hire: (Certified)

D.4. New Business

Chairwoman Russo said the rest is informational which Superintendent Cavallaro has already pointed out. Chairwoman Russo then asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Rosa Richardson, Karen Pacelli seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary
BOE Student Rep Report

December 3, 2018

1. Winter Semi-Formal (The Jingle Bell Ball) Dance is on Friday, December 7th at Cielo

2. Students who have met the requirements for the National Honor Society received their applications last week.

3. We talked to the security team regarding some congestion in the halls that has since been cleared up.

4. The winter sports season started last week.

5. The Winter Band Concert is December 19th at 7:00 PM

6. The Winter Choral Concert is this Wednesday, December 5th at 7:00 PM. Hope to see some of you there!

7. The Choral Department will be singing for the Ronald McDonald House at the Trees of Hope in the Maritime Center at Long Wharf on Friday, December 7th at 12 pm

8. Some seniors will be going to see To Kill a Mockingbird on Broadway on Wednesday, December 12th.

9. UNH on-site decision is on Friday, December 7th and CCSU on-site decision day is on December 13th

10. Congrats for holding a strong win over City Hall in the food drive (126 to 45)

We also wanted to introduce a "Senior Citizen Holidays Drive." We often think about little kids during this time of the year, and senior citizens are a more forgotten group. So, the three of us and Mrs. Paredes are thinking about putting together little gift bags for the (~100) seniors at RegalCare, which is the nursing home where the nursing students do their clinical practice now. We are looking for face cloths, toiletries, sugar-free candies, fuzzy socks, booklets with crosswords or Sudoku, and gift bags. Since BOE did so well against City Hall, we are putting them up against the school administrators this time. Items are needed by the next BOE meeting because we will be delivering the gifts on December 20th.