AMENDED MINUTES
WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION
June 25, 2018
Regular Board Meeting
Board Meeting Room

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on June 25, 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 by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE: Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer
Lauren A. Aceto
James W. Morrissey
Karen Pacelli
Rosa Richardson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: *Patrick Leigh
*Patricia Libero

*Although absent from the meeting a board member’s vote by telephone showing the time they called in and the time they disconnected is acceptable. For Item #18-44 both Patrick Leigh and Patricia Libero voted by telephone. Pat Libero was on speaker phone at 6:14 PM and Patrick Leigh was on speaker phone at 6:08 PM. Both Patrick and Pat disconnected after Item #18-44 was approved at 6:28 PM. The meeting ended at 6:30 PM.

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

B. Public Portion of Meeting
Chairwoman Russo asked three times if anyone would like to address the board. There were no speakers.

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools
Superintendent Cavallaro stated the summer projects are underway and most are the Alliance Grant Projects which the board approved back in October or November. These projects include the intercom systems at Carrigan, Washington and Forest. There is a new auditorium curtain for Carrigan and the biggest project is the boiler project at Savin Rock School and we have paving going on and some other minor projects. We are looking at the stadium lighting if we can tie it in and get some efficiencies that was an approved project, but when it goes out to bid it must fall within the allotted amount; if it doesn’t we will have to rely on some incentives through the U.I. or move the money. These projects have to be completed and the paperwork submitted by October 1st. These projects will be going out to bid.
Ken Carney will bring the team the first meeting in September to give the board an update on the high school project. This meeting will take place the day after Labor Day. Superintendent Cavallaro had asked him about the status of the window and door project at Carrigan that was part of the bonding package last week. Superintendent Cavallaro believes it passed but he is not sure of the status of them actually selling the bonds. This went to the council in March so the timing to get it done this summer will not be happening. This is something that is out of our control.

We have several new hires proposed tonight and as of today we have 2 SPED job openings, 4 elementary positions and we are doing some interviews this week and we received word of a science resignation at Bailey. We are in pretty good shape as of now.

C.1.b. Student Representatives

C.1.c. Board
Jim Morrissey went to the Bailey Graduation and it was a very good time. He believes every board member was in attendance. It was a nice night and Mr. Bohan did a nice job. Jim congratulated all the students who are going on to high school next year. He also attended the Savin Rock Flag Day Ceremony on June 14th and Taryn Driend the principal and the staff did a great job. The kids all had little American Flags and it was a very well run event and a very nice time. He was invited back the next day to the Graduation Ceremony for the 4th graders who were moving on to Carrigan School.

Rosemary Russo asked for a motion for a short recess as Patrick Leigh was calling in because he couldn’t be here tonight and wanted to vote by phone. Superintendent Cavallaro said we have the same situation with Pat Libero. We will call her at the right time for the vote. Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion for a short recess to touch base with Patrick. Jim Morrissey made the motion and Karen Pacelli seconded the motion. All board members were in favor. A short recess was taken. Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to resume the meeting. Rosa Richardson made the motion Karen Pacelli seconded the motion. All board members were in favor. Patrick was on speaker phone. The meeting resumed with board reports. Patrick had nothing to add for board reports. Rosa Richardson congratulated all the graduates from elementary to the high school and wished them well. Karen Pacelli attended both graduations and they were both very nice and she congratulated all the graduates. Bob Guthrie attended the Top Twenty Breakfast, the Bailey Spring Concert, CABE’S Collective Bargaining Workshop and the Savin Rock School Flag Day Ceremony. It is good to see the school district still acknowledge Flag Day because there was no recognition of it otherwise in the city so it is nice to see the school system continue with this. The Bailey Night of Recognition and the West Haven High School Graduation both went well. Superintendent Cavallaro said he really needs to publicly thank the police department, maintenance crew, and the security team they all really did a great job with the parking. It could not have gone any better and it was due to a lot of planning and this includes administration here and at the high school. Given the construction it really went very well and we need to acknowledge those people. Thank you. Lauren attended the Bailey Graduation and it was a beautiful ceremony and she was impressed by the representation of teachers who came to support the kids which is always nice. Sue Walker also attended the Bailey Night of Recognition as it is actually called and it was a very nice ceremony and the students were very well behaved. The students who spoke were excellent speakers. The high school graduation was also very nice. Sue also attended the student production Cold Feet which was written and directed by our graduating Board of Ed Student Representative David O’Brien. David and the students involved did an excellent job. It is amazing what they can do and all on their own. Chairwoman Russo congratulated all the students who graduated and all the students who were promoted for all their hard work and their performance this year. Rosemary also thanked all the teachers, paras, department heads, administrators and everybody for working together
and having a great year. During the meeting where we talked about the scores everything is going up and looking good and I want to thank you for the time you put in with our children. Thank you very much.

C.1.d. Committee
Rosemary Russo thanked Stefania Larry for her presentation during the Early Childhood Committee Meeting; it was really good. The thing she really liked about it is that she doesn’t think a lot of people realize that if you go back some years there weren’t that many pre-school programs and we didn’t have full day kindergarten and it is really important and she is glad we have someone like Stefania watching over the little kids because this is their first experience with school and we need to be sure it is a good experience and she thinks in her hands it is. The presentation is up on the website if anyone would like to look at it; it is very informative and well done. Thank you for the time. Thank you.

D.1. Approval of Minutes
D.1.a. The West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting was held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, June 4, 2018 at 6:00 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Lauren Aceto seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
D.1.a. Minutes are approved

D.1.b. The West Haven Board of Education Early Childhood Committee Meeting was held in the Board of Education Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, June 4, 2018 at 5:15 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a. & D.1.b. inclusive
Karen Pacelli made the motion
Susan Walker seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
D.1.b. Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

D.3. New Hire: (Certified)

18-36 Kaitlyn Schuessler, 115 Fairview Avenue, Stratford, CT 06614
Music Teacher – Washington and Mackrille Schools
Salary: $41,232 (Step 1 BS)
Effective: August 23, 2018

18-37 Blakeley Cole, 98 Tomlinson Road, Seymour, CT 06483
Math Teacher, Grade 8 – Bailey
Salary: $51,515 (Step 3 BS + 30)
Effective: August 23, 2018
Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve items 18-36 – 18-42 inclusive
Bob Guthrie made the motion
Rosa Richardson seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
No board member was opposed
Items 18-36 – 18-42 inclusive are approved
Chairwoman Russo congratulated the new hires. Applause followed.

D.4. New Business

18-43 Approval of the following eleven teachers as team leaders at Bailey for the 2018-2019 school year: Greg Heudorfer, Deanna Pucillo, Richard Hemming, Cindi Anastasio, Kristen Batille, Dina Jones, Christina Nastri, James Mastriano, Jacqueline Miconi, Joseph Pisano and Kelly Flynn

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 18-43
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Lauren Aceto seconded the motion
Discussion: All board members were in favor
Item 18-43 is approved

18-44 Three Year Contract for Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Patrick Leigh and Pat Libero were holding on the phone to cast their vote.
Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 18-44
Patrick Leigh made the motion
Rosa Richardson seconded the motion
Discussion: Jim Morrissey asked what was negotiated into the contract and what was taken out of the contract and to give us a little background. Chairwoman said the buy-out clause was taken out of the contract which potentially could have cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars. Reimbursement was also taken out of the contract if the superintendent decided to go on and get his PhD or any other higher education. He also took a two year freeze and on the third year would receive a 1% increase. That is basically it in a nutshell. Jim Morrissey was led to believe that the contracts would have been staggered. We just approved Matt Cavallaro’s contract for three years and the Assistant Superintendent’s for one year and it would have been wise and prudent to have the Superintendent’s contract extended for two years. This way we would have a buffer for each year so they wouldn’t run into each other. Jim Morrissey is not against Mr. Cavallaro he has done a good job and Jim has been on the board the last five years but feels a two year contract would have been wise and prudent in his opinion. He also has reservations that the board attorney who also does a wonderful job, Attorney Dugas and his law firm negotiated on behalf of this board and the problem is that he also possibly communicates by phone on a day to day basis with our Superintendent and to me that is possibly a conflict of interest. Jim feels and has expressed this before that we should have had an outside attorney represent this board; he is our board attorney and he understands this but on day to day operations he is also in conversation with our Superintendent and the law firm also handles expulsions and contracts with our teachers and paras and things of that nature so he feels uncomfortable. He has sat on this board for five years and has seen what teachers, paras, and custodians have given up over the years and we are not in great financial shape at this time and he personally would like to see no raise for three years. This is his personal opinion and has nothing to do with the Superintendent personally but we are in tough times and have seen teachers take pay freezes, contracts have been opened up, and he doesn’t feel comfortable giving a pay increase on the third year. He wishes we had an outside counsel labor attorney that could look at this contract with us. He is not an expert and thinks we could have gotten more insight from a person that is not involved with the superintendent on a day to day basis. Those are his concerns at this time. Thank you. Chairwoman Russo understands what Mr. Morrissey is saying about the three years and thinks that this is a fair contract with two years getting zero and on the third year getting 1%. Chairwoman Russo feels Neil has done well by the City as far as finances and the MARB and the Mayor have both praised his for getting us through these tough times so in that respect she thinks it was a fair contract. Chairman Russo negotiated it with Bob Guthrie and Floyd and we talked a lot and tried different things and some things Neil gave in on. Jim reiterated that he thought it was a conflict of interest to have the board attorney who is our board attorney but who is also on a regular basis with the superintendent and Jim feels we should have an outside counsel negotiate the contract and I am asking for this in the future once the contracts are up for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Finance Director that we have an outside counsel versed in labor negotiations employee contracts to handle negotiations on behalf of this board. Chairwoman Russo said so noted and she doesn’t think that is an unreasonable request. This has been noted and Chairwoman Russo hears what he has said. Jim Morrissey thanked Chairwoman Russo.
Rosa Richardson moved to call for a vote. Chairwoman Russo said we are not ready yet. This is a really important vote and she wants everybody to be able to say what they want to say if they have something to say. Patrick Leigh had trouble hearing what Jim Morrissey’s concerns were and asked for the high level output of what he said. Chairwoman Russo said his concern was that the third year the Superintendent receives a 1% increase and he was also concerned that the board’s attorney also has a relationship with the Superintendent. OK thank you. Jim Morrissey said the attorney does a wonderful job and this is no reflection on him and I want to make this perfectly clear but I feel there is a conflict. Chairwoman Russo also said when contract time comes up again Jim suggested that we need to have a different attorney that there isn’t one that serves both masters. Patrick said understood thank you. Patrick
thinks Neil did an awesome job over the last couple of years while I have been on the board especially
with the financial situation the city has been in. He is a great leader and has so much experience and has
been in as Superintendent 10 years and as an administrator for many years before that so he is glad to
have him at the helm in this time of need. Patrick thinks it would have been a hard transition to get
someone else in especially with the transition in political power that the city just went through also; Neil
I think you are doing a great job. Superintendent Cavallaro thanked Patrick and thanks his for taking the
time to call in. Chairwoman Russo said she would like to add a few points. We all know the state of the
city’s finances. The MARB is still threatening Tier 4 status. Mayor Rossi has released her 5 year plan
and frankly it does not bode well for the Board of Ed with just a .8 increase each year for the next 5
years. The BOE has historically had a balanced budget and this does have a lot to do with the
Superintendent’s and Finance Director’s ability to make the numbers work. Yes, our workforce is
smaller due to attrition, but not layoffs. This year’s budget was challenging because we never knew
until late in the game exactly what we would be getting. There were contingency plans that insured that
our children would still receive the services they needed. As Chairwoman of this Board I worry about
our children and the services that they absolutely must have. I like that I am able to call Neil and ask
him what if questions and that he has the answers for my what ifs. Believe me I ask a lot of questions,
and whether it is during the work day or I send an email at night or over the weekend, Superintendent
Cavallaro has always responded promptly, actually very promptly. You might say that this is his job
and that we pay him very well to do this job and I will say to you that is true but in the world of
superintendent’s salaries his salary does not fall in the high salary range. I will also say that in this time
of economic uncertainty in our city we need someone who knows the numbers, has contingencies but
more importantly knows the needs of our very diverse population. Superintendent Cavallaro and I have
certainly had our disagreements and I am guessing that we will probably disagree again, and that is ok.
The important thing is that we have the conversations, we figure it out and we work together for the
children of West Haven. Superintendent Cavallaro thanked Chairwoman Russo. Board member Jim
Morrissey wanted to make one more comment. His comments were not directed at the Superintendent
per say and he was not here tonight to terminate the contract he wanted to make that point perfectly
clear. It is just that he had disagreements over the contract itself. Chairwoman Russo understands and
respects Jim for saying that. Jim wants to make sure that everybody is this room knows that also
because he thinks there might have been miscommunication and I want to make that point perfectly
clear. Chairwoman Russo said that we understand that you think he is doing a good job. Thank you Jim.
Chairwoman Russo said we are going to do a roll call vote.
A roll call vote was taken as either In favor -Yes or Not In Favor - No
Lauren Aceto - Yes
Susan Walker - Yes
Bob Guthrie - Yes
Karen Pacelli - Yes
Rosa Richardson - Yes
Jim Morrissey - No
*Pat Libero – Yes (Vote by telephone)
*Patrick Leigh – Yes (Vote by telephone)
Rosemary Russo - Yes
Eight board members voted Yes
One board member was opposed and voted No
No one abstained
The vote was 8 to 1
Motion passes
Item 18-44 is approved. Chairwoman Russo congratulated Superintendent Cavallaro and applause
ensued. Superintendent Cavallaro thanked everyone.
Chairwoman Russo said the rest is informational.
Board Member Sue Walker said we have two retirements who are members of the clerical/secretarial staff. Gail Burns has been in the system forever and her retirement should be acknowledged. Linda Buccieri was at the high school during her last appointment and there were many other appointments prior to that over the years. Both of their retirements should be acknowledged. Chairwoman Russo thanked Susan for doing this and congratulated Gail and Linda and wished them a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Karen Pacelli seconded the motion
The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary