WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
January 9, 2012
Regular Board Meeting
Council Chambers

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Council Chambers of the City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on January 9, 2012. The meeting was called to order by Mark Palmieri, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:  
Mark Palmieri, Chairman  
M. Toni Paine, Vice Chair  
Patricia Libero, Secretary/Treasurer  
Dorinda Borer  
Betsy Davis  
Patrick Egolum  
Robert Guthrie

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:  
Eric Murillo  
Cebi Waterfield

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:  
Mayor John M. Picard

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:  
Stacie Hurley  
Marium Majid  
Abdul-Rasak Zachariah
Chairman Palmieri stated that unfortunately we had an alumni from the West Haven School District pass away this week and asked for a moment of silence for Leman Bradshaw. Chairman Palmieri thanked everyone.

Neil Cavallaro said we are here tonight to honor many of our students and asked people from the public portion session to be patient as we would like to start with the awards in order to get have the parents with their children be able to receive their awards and get in and out quickly.

The first group of students were chosen by their Art teachers to represent their school to help the Mayor with his Christmas Card. Each student chosen was given a framed picture of the Christmas card and a note from the Mayor. The following students were recognized: Yaritza Magana from Pagels, Tiana Nicole Walton from Forest, Justin Bracero from Washington, Julia Werle from Savin Rock, Chloe Hummel from Mackrille, Hunter Axelrod from Seth Haley and Amanda Sykes-Quirk from Savin Rock. Pictures were taken of the students with Mayor Picard, Superintendent Cavallaro and Board Chairman Mark Palmieri. Mayor Picard thanked all the students and stated they did a great job and we are very proud of them.

Superintendent Cavallaro stated we now will recognize all the students who scored at the above goal range for CAPT and are considered our CAPT Scholars. Neil read a letter from the Commissioner of Education that each individual student received. All seven students received their framed letter from the Commissioner and had their picture taken with Mayor Picard, Superintendent Cavallaro, Board Chairman Mark Palmieri and Pamela Gardner, Principal of West Haven High School. The following students were recognized: Carly Brereton, Brenda Calderon, John Dalton, Perrin Krala, Jessica Kuchta, Christopher Mazzacane and Abdul-Razak Zachariah.

Neil asked Mrs. Garner to speak about Abdul’s latest accomplishment; he has many and we know you are very involved with theatre and Mark Palmieri said he also sang the National Anthem and did a wonderful job.

Pam Gardner stated the following.
The United States Senate unanimously passed a resolution in 1962 creating the UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM, a national initiative to provide a yearly opportunity for talented young people with demonstrated leadership abilities to deepen their understanding of America's political processes and strengthen their resolve to pursue careers in public service.

The United States Senate Youth Program brings the highest-level officials from each branch of government together with an outstanding group of high-school students—two high school juniors or seniors from each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity—during an intensive week-long educational program held in Washington, D.C. The program is merit-based and highly competitive.

The 104 student delegates will be immersed in government activities throughout the week. Delegates will hear major policy addresses by Senators, cabinet members, officials of the Departments of State and Defense and directors of federal agencies, as well as participate in a meeting with a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. All expenses for Washington Week, including transportation, hotel and meals are covered in this prestigious opportunity.

In addition, each student receives a one-time $5,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to pursue coursework in history and political science. Now in its fiftieth year, the program has been fully funded since inception by THE HEARST FOUNDATIONS as part of their continuing commitment to preparing young people for citizenship and leadership in our participatory democracy.

Students selected for the US Senate Youth Forum possess outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to public service. These students generally rank academically in the top one percent of their states. They continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service.

I am honored and privileged tonight to present to you one of the two students representing Connecticut at the US Senate Youth Forum, junior Abdul Zachariah. Though WHHS has had finalists before, I think that Abdul is the first WHHS to achieve this honor. As you know, he is one of the Student Representatives to the Board of Education. Abdul is the consummate student athlete, playing on the soccer and tennis teams. He is currently ranked #9 in the junior class and a member of Bel Canto. He will be playing Sammy in the spring musical, The Wedding Singer. He is the son of Larry and Rahina Nabali. It is with great pleasure that I present Abdul Zachariah to tell you about the intense and very competitive selection process.
Abdul Zachariah said at the high school level students had to submit essays to Mrs. Gardner and then Mrs. Gardner and Mr. Consorte the AP Government teacher chose the top two to send to Hartford and they decided at the Capitol who they would choose to interview. On November 19th Abdul went to the Capitol and had an interview in front of a board of directors and answered questions as if I was a Senator for the State of Connecticut. They asked him questions on leadership and what he would do about education.

Pam Gardner stated that this interview process is very different in what they are looking for are students that can think on their feet and would be willing to go to Washington D.C. and actually have conversations with senators and members from the House of Representatives and are not afraid to share their thoughts with others. It is a pretty strict process and very few people make it to be finalists. Mrs. Gardner, Neil and Mark stated how proud they were of Abdul. Applause ensued and the board gave thanks.

At this point Neil said we will take a short recess and for those people who are not going to stay he wanted to thank all of the families because without them their kids would not be as successful as they are. We are very proud of all of their accomplishments and look forward to seeing a lot more down the road. Applause.

B. Public Portion
Mark Palmieri asked if anyone would like to address the board.
Andrew Miranda, 161 West Spring Street in West Haven came before the board earlier regarding a bus stop and Mr. Cavallaro asked if he was going to withdraw his complaint and he said yes I’m really considering this because it seems like everything is OK. He then received correspondence from Bertram, Moses and Devlin which he didn’t feel built bridges. Certain areas in the letter mentioned a diagnosis of Asperger’s Disorder for his son and whether this is a current diagnosis. The respondent lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to allegations contained in paragraph four and therefore leaves complainant to his proof. Mr. Miranda stated this is how money is spent to retain a lawyer to fight parents every inch of the way. He doesn’t believe he ever made an allegation but gave information from the Yale Child Study that his son had been evaluated with a working diagnosis of Asperger’s. It is not up to him to prove or disprove anything because he is not a medical professional he can only act on information provided to him. He was also seen by Dr. Boltax at Bridges in Milford who stated the diagnosis can only be confirmed through psychometric testing and his son is too young for that. He will be seven in May so testing can be accomplished when he is eight or nine. A further discussion ensued. He would like the same effort to go into his son being one of the success stories we heard about tonight. If half the money were spent in working with him rather than challenging him he wouldn’t be standing here. A further discussion continued. The board gave thanks. Mr. Palmieri stated to Mr. Miranda that they were not allowed to comment during the public portion. Mr. Miranda understands this and left his email address and cell if anyone would like to offer a response.

The next speaker was Rosemary Russo, 115 Pheasant Road in West Haven. Her presentation follows on the next page. (Thank you).
I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the administrative positions that became available in Dec. 2011. The first being the opening at Carrigan Middle School for assistant principal and the new position of Math Coordinator. I personally know and respect AJ Palermo as a person, teacher and administrator. I know she will serve the children of Carrigan Intermediate School well. I just do not understand how this position cannot be posted and all people interested are not given the opportunity to interview for it. Chairman of the Board Mark Palmieri was quoted in the Dec 7 edition of the New Haven Register as saying that the move is “no different than a president of a company making tough decisions.” I take exception to this quote because first of all the Superintendent is not the President of a company and as the leader of our schools should follow a procedure that is more equitable to all. I have attended many BOE meetings and am dismayed at the amount of resignations from experienced teachers due to financial reasons. If all employees felt that there was a fair and reasonable chance of advancement maybe we would not loose as many good people as we have. I feel that this Board should question the fact that a job that was originally posted and interviewed for could just become a lateral type of move. I would understand it more if it was temporary while all were given the chance to go through the process.

In regards to the new Math Supervisor position, even with this being posted, I question how many West Haven Public School teachers with the proper credentials were able to compete for this job and how many total candidates were interviewed?

Throughout the election we all spoke about more transparency in the Board of Education, let this be the beginning of that transparency. This Board is suppose to serve as a vehicle for checks and balances, if the citizens of West Haven wanted it to be governed by one or two people we would not have to bother with the election process.

The board gave thanks.

Mrs. Russo then read a letter from Nancy Rossi, 12 Robin Road which follows on the next page. (Thank you).
The board gave thanks. Public Session closed at 7:35 PM.

Chairman Palmieri asked if the student representatives could give their report before going on with the rest of the meeting. All board members were in agreement.
C.1.b. Student Representatives

Stacie Hurley, Marium Majid, and Abdul-Razak Zachariah were all present at this meeting and their report follows. (Thank you for the typewritten report).

BOE Student Representative Report
January 9, 2012

Congratulations to the Mock Trial Team who won the New Haven Regional in December and will now be competing in the Quarter Finals on January 17th at Hall High School of West Hartford for their Sixth State Championship.

Congratulations to the WHHS Band’s Ying Guo on her successful audition and acceptance into the Connecticut Music Educators Association’s Southern Region Festival Band. Ying will be performing in the CMEA Southern Region Music Festival on January 14th at Francis T. Maloney High School in Meriden, CT.

Eddy Lugo was recently accepted into the College to Career Pathways program, and will enter the CNA Nursing program.

The Divas and Distinguished Gentlemen will be holding a Talent show on January 27th. We hope you can come out to see the talents of our students at WHHS.

Auditions were recently held for the WHISTW spring musical, The Wedding Singer. 48 students have been cast for a role or the chorus. Our own Abdul Zachariah will be one of the leads. Congratulations and good luck to them all.

In conjunction with the West Haven Fire Department, the Peer Advocates assisted with another successful Toys for Joy toy drive, providing over 100 families with toys for the holidays. Students in the PACE program collected more than 200 pairs of socks for homeless teens.

In only 39 days, members of the WHISTW will be taking a trip to Italy. We are excited about this trip and look forward to hearing all about their experiences abroad.

The Humane Club is selling “we love animal” bracelets and the Class of 2013 is selling “Westies” bracelets.

The Cheerleaders will be heading to Florida at the end of this month to compete in the Nationals.

Congratulations to football players Tahir Manning and Ervin Philips who were named All State Honorable Mention.

The December SCC Scholar-Athletes are Kori Wilkerson and Mike Last. Kori is ranked 4th in her class with a GPA of 4.1 and was a four-year member and captain of the volleyball team. Mike is ranked 7th in his class with a GPA of 3.9 and is a four-year member and captain of the football and lacrosse teams.

Maria Case (Soccer) and Ervin Philips (Football) who were named the Fall Athletes of the Year by the westieblue.com website. If you haven’t already checked out this website, you really should. It’s all Westies, all the time and presented to you Mike Madera.

Chaired by teacher Kevin Dickson and students Mariah Michaud and Christopher Mazzacane, the School Governance Council will be looking at improving parent involvement at West Haven High School.

The School Counseling Department hosted a very successful Alumni Day on January 5th.

Midterm Exams will be held January 23 – 26, 2011.

The board gave thanks.
C. REPORTS
C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Neil said that Mr. Al Barbarotta will talk about the 5 Year Capital Plan and how we can incorporate the engineering study into the plan. Al stated he is the President and CEO of AFB and Joe Falzone, Director of Facilities in West Haven is here with him. They have been here about a year in a half and experienced a hurricane and the worst snow storm in the history of the state and dealt with all kinds of adverse situations. The report for the Capital Budget will show we have made nice progress. We are pleased with where we are. In West Haven we asked for direction from the board and superintendent as to what we might bring to the table to manage the facilities better for less money. We put together a Capital Plan which is designed to make everybody aware of the conditions of all of our buildings and what our needs are. It starts at the facilities department with us managing the building and recognizing where we need to invest money to maintain our facilities. There are multiple issues with all of the schools. He is excited that at some point West Haven will move forward with a major capital plan to do a like new renovation of the high school. We have started to access all of our buildings one at a time. We have brought in a company called Savin Engineering who took a look at three buildings at this point: Bailey, Carrigan and the Rink. They looked at everything inside, all the mechanical equipment and all of our buildings and outside needs including the roofs. They put together a report and have a book on each of the buildings. We can make these books available. We will be glad to show you the back up information we have. We want to show that every penny spent in our buildings is necessary. The audit is done by an engineering firm that brings in mechanical, electrical and structural engineers to look at every component of the building. We set a list of priorities with the Superintendent. He gave the board a copy of the report. We have presented projects to the Superintendent and he agrees with our number and approved it. The next approval comes to you the Board of Education and we don’t have a resolution prepared this is just information to get this process rolling. When the board agrees with the Superintendent and us we then need to present it to the Mayor and the City Council and hopefully at some point they will put money in place and help us address the needs we have in all the other buildings.

At some point we have to get to the high school and if we don’t get the like new renovation moving then we will have to start address it through a capital project some of the individual items like a science lab and handicap accessibility; things we were cited for in our NEASC Report as things we need to do at the high school. The report given to the board does not include the high school because they believe the like new renovation will move forward at some point. This is for the board’s review and they will come back at the next meeting. They will not move anywhere until the board says they agree with this and we are ready to present it to the Mayor and the Council. This adds up to about two million dollars in the first year and we can stretch it over five years to try and make it affordable but these are things that absolutely need to be done in each school. After the general overview Al asked if there were any questions.
Pat Libero stated you only looked at two schools and the Rink. Neil said to do the complete Engineering Study would be about $120,000 so we are breaking it up over a three year period. We did Bailey and Carrigan and we are paying for the Rink out of the Rink Budget. Over the next two years we will do the remainder of the schools and if the high school project doesn’t go forward we will have to address that as well.

Dorinda asked why the Memorandum of Agreement was coming up now since the union voted on that and so did we. Is there any controversy? No. Al wanted to give the board some of the backup and some information because there were some questions so we shared with the board the job descriptions and the organizational chart so we could provide you with all the information we thought you should have. We are meeting with the principals on Wednesday to share their job descriptions. The building managers will run the building and deal with the issues. We want the principal to go to the building manager rather than the superintendent or a board member when there is a problem. All buildings are equally clean and we are addressing all the same issues in all our buildings. We have part time cleaners who are very efficient and cost less money. Neil stated that the managers would be responsible for assigning the part time workers responsibilities as well so there is no disconnect.

Dorinda said the principals had no challenge with this they thought it was an improvement. Neil said we kind of wanted to get the principals back to the instruction rather than supervising six or seven people in the building. The building manager will address issues in the building.

Pat Libero asked if there were job descriptions so if someone is out they know what to do. Absolutely.

Bob Guthrie asked if in all cases the assistant building managers work a separate shift from the building manager. Yes they work a separate shift and this is done through collective bargaining so there is a little give and take. We made one exception at the request of the union for one particular employee that will work somewhat of a split shift. Bob said the majority are separate shift then. Yes.

Bob asked what background check is used for the outsourced people. They are required to have the same FBI check, fingerprinting, and predators search; it is an extensive background check. Bob asked what tool you use to measure the part timer’s efficiency. How do you measure the efficiency of the outsourced jobs? It starts with the reaction of the principal and staff of a building. We have a very extensive evaluation program every month with a check list of things they are supposed to do.

Mark Palmieri said he loves the job cards so that everyone is doing every job the same at every school.

Al will come to the next meeting to answer questions on the 5 Year Plan so we can move it from the board to the city. Neil stated we aren’t sure what money, if any, is available but it is our obligation since these are capital improvements that need to be made to our
buildings that we should present the plan to the city. If money is available at some point
Neil is hopeful we will receive our allotment. The board gave thanks.
Neil said we will be preparing and presenting a budget for the next fiscal year so we
thought we should give you an update on how this year is going. David Cappetta gave a
presentation and if there are any questions Matt Cavallaro is also here to answer them.

Dave sent a package to the board members with a copy of the budget and he is here to
answer any questions. Dave said the audit is moving along well and we have filed our
obligation to the state for our Board of Education piece of the audit which was due
December 31, 2011 so we are on schedule with that. We are still working with the
auditors and they put an extension in for the city side. Dave asked if there were any
questions.

Dorinda asked where we stand on Worker’s Comp. Dave said we are keeping a close eye
on all cases that are pending and we have two additional cases settled this year which are
part of the transfers and we will have to deal with the settlement.

Bob Guthrie asked if Dave could bring us up to speed for this current year and red flag
what you start to talk about as problems now before we get into next year’s budget
process. Mark said yes that is what we are planning on doing tonight. Dave said yes with
the current budget. Dave said we have to watch the tuition, the insurances, the medical,
the workman’s comp are the areas we are concerned with right now.

Neil said as a team we met with Joe Lucibello today and one concern is that we have had
a handful of students whose families moved into West Haven and we are now responsible
for paying outside Special Ed tuition. This is an area where we are concerned and if we
get close to our number we will bring it to the board immediately. It is a variable and is
out of our control and we are watching this very closely and it could be a concern down
the road.

Bob directed his comment to the Chairman and requested that the Finance
Committee have quarterly meetings to give us more accurate financial information
because the nine of us are fiscally responsible for that budget.

Mark said as we stated before you have been through plenty of budgets and tuition is
such a constant variable. Every budget meeting we have we have it budgeted for one
number and as Superintendent Cavallaro stated if four kids come in we have to deal with
this outside Special Ed tuition. Bob understands the tuition but when you start talking
comp and insurance those are the variables that we need to get a better handle on. Bob
asked for quarterly finance committee meetings or quarterly information as far as our
finances. Mark said that is fine.

Matt Cavallaro said we are fully using the grants under the Federal and State Guidelines.
We are using the grants 100%.
Dorinda would like information about the Rink (nothing elaborate) since we spent so much time talking about the changes and what we were going to save. Just a one pager on how we are doing with that. Dave said yes we can but not with Munis because they lag behind posting the actual deposits sometimes 60 to 90 days. We are working with the city to input deposits so that we can get them to print out financial statements for the rink and for the grants. Dorinda said that would be nice. Dave keeps spreadsheets. Dorinda said he shouldn’t have to. A further discussion ensued. Neil said we are cautiously optimistic that next year we will not be putting in any board money to subsidize the rink. We are optimistic that we will run in the black this year. More details will follow but we don’t anticipate subsidizing the rink any longer. Neil said Adult Education is running better than ever before and Food Service is doing much better this year. Dave said Alan has done a great job cutting costs. Dave said the killer is Worker’s Comp and tuition. Those are two numbers that change weekly and monthly.

Dorinda asked if CIRMA is doing everything they should be doing. Neil said CIRMA handles existing claims but we are phasing them out; PMA Associates took over. Dave said we have a new company PMA Associates that researches and investigates claims and the investigation is the big piece that we lacked with CIRMA. Dorinda asked if we could have Anthem or Segal or both come to a meeting and give a presentation.

Bob thought that perhaps City Council should join in also simply because of the money being spent on either side of the budget. Mark said and since they get to pick the agent of record too. Toni Paine said there could be an informational meeting. Mark said we can have a separate meeting with both the council and the board. Neil said Terri DeMatti our agent from Segal is pretty accommodating and I don’t think it would be an issue to have her come here.

Anne Druzolowski said since we have so many new people coming to the board it would be a good opportunity to have a presentation and give you an update as to where we are going. We are staying the course and we will update you on this information as well as to let you know what our direction is for next year. The budget money is money that is working for our kids and I think it is important that you clearly understand where it is all going.

C.1.c. Board

Mark said the students coming to sing the National Anthem bring their own crowd and this really brings out the enthusiasm at games. The kids really like this and the visiting parents have done an outstanding job. This is something new we have been doing at every game and would like to see the other sports teams have their kids do this. They are doing so well. I have to commend all the students that the Theatre Workshop has been sending to our games.

C.1.d. Committee

Toni Paine said the Bullying Policy Law was passed in July and our Bullying Laws were updated. Toni provided copies of our draft to the board members. We were obligated as
of January 1st to submit a draft of our policy which we did. Toni met with Carolyn Dugas who is also with Bertram and Moses and all she changed was anything that pertained to the changes that were passed in July. Our policy was quite extensive and went above and beyond so as soon as we hear from the State Toni will give a notice on what they said and then the board will meet on it.

Neil said Phase 2 of this will be looking at some of the other policies and removing them because they would conflict with that policy. One of our charges was to make it convenient for people who want to file a complaint or had a concern to be able to go to one section in the policy book and not have to search through it. That is what we are working on at this stage with Carolyn. Toni said rather than do it piecemeal we will take this and anything that pertains to the policy and change, enhance or delete them in some cases.

Dorinda asked if we had complaint logs before. Yes we did. Dorinda said then can we go back and look at complaints from the last couple of years since you have been doing a great job with the climate program. Neil said he is sure we could.

D.1. Approval of Minutes
   D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on December 19, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve D.1.a.
Bob Guthrie made the motion to approve D.1. a.
Pat Libero seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
Motion passes
Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)
D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

12-01 Lynn Williams, 10 Month Data Entry Clerk - WHHS
   Effective: February 1, 2012
   Reason:  Retirement

12-02 Donna R. Kennedy, Building Para – Seth Haley
   Effective: January 16, 2012
   Reason:  Personal

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve items 12-01 and 12-02
Toni Paine made the motion
Patrick Egolum seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All members were in favor
Items 12-01 and 12-02 are approved

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)  
D.5. New Hire: (Certified)  
D.6. New Hire: (Non-Certified)  
D.7. New Business

12-03 Request from WHHS Cheerleaders to attend the National High School Cheerleading Championships in Orlando, FL from February 10 – 14th 2012 with excused absences.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve items 12-03  
Bob Guthrie made the motion  
Pat Libero seconded the motion  
Discussion: Bob said he is sure the chaperone ratio will be complied with. Neil said yes a couple of parents who are employees of ours have already requested their personal time. Bob asked if they are self fund raising. Neil said they are self fund raising and will subsidize the rest through their own pocketbooks.  
All members were in favor  
Item 12-03 is approved

12-04 Transfers: Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Transfers

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve items 12-04  
Patrick Egolum made the motion  
Toni Paine seconded the motion  
Discussion: None  
All members were in favor  
Item 12-04 is approved

F. Informational: 

There was nothing to add.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to adjourn  
Dorinda Borer made a motion to adjourn  
Patrick Egolum seconded the motion  
All board members were in favor  
The meeting adjourned 8:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola  
Board Secretary