The Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Guthrie at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**
- Raymond Collins
- Joseph Esposito
- Robert Guthrie
- Anne Hefferman
- Sandy Lorusso
- Paul Messina
- John Carrano
- Ursula Reilly

**BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:**
- M. Toni Paine

**ADMINISTRATOR'S PRESENT:**
- Superintendent Paul Tortora
- Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro

**PUBLIC PORTION 7:10 pm**

Chairman Guthrie asked if anyone wished to address the Board.

Good Evening, Ray Collins, 7 Apple Tree Terrace. I sit here as a parent of a sixth grade, 12 year old and as a parent I would like to say thank you to Ursula Reilly, Sandy Lorusso, and Joe Esposito for their time, their dedication and for their energy given to this Board. They leave it a better place then they found it. As a Board Member I would like to say I am very proud to have served with you, as to what I think, is the best Board to ever have come out of this system. Thank you

Chairman Guthrie asked if anyone else wished to address the Board.

Mrs. Rossi, 12 Robin Road. As you know I have made several requests under freedom of information and the Superintendent has always done his best to comply with this. However, there was a situation recently back in June I requested the incident report. I believe that all of you here in the past have received this report, which is the big thick incident report. I was told by Paul Tortora it would take a little time to get together. I told Paul that was fine I would be away in July. I re-requested the report in September, because I had received partial information. Recently I called up Ron Stancil because Paul had asked me to go to the High School to get the report. I said fine. If that’s what you want. I called the High School and made an appointment. I spoke to Mr. Stancil directly he told me no there was no problem. I went down there at seven o’clock in the morning to find out he didn’t have any idea what I was looking for. He had the letter and he knew of the report but didn’t know what report I was actually looking for. Now I don’t mind being patient. I understand that four days, that is what is supposed to be allowed before you get a response for a freedom of information request. It is not a lot of time and the request may take some time and I understand how busy people are. However this seemed like a nasty little prank that I didn’t appreciate. I explained it was the report he had already given out. If had any questions, why didn’t he ask me over the phone, I would have clarified or he could have called Paul Tortora. By three o’clock that afternoon I get a call on my answering machine. Oh you can come back now. Your report is there. I really don’t think this was fair to me. I have asked and actually this is the one thing Paul did respond to, I have already made the one trip down there at seven o’clock in the morning. If he could forward the report to the Blake Building. That way I could review it there. My other thing under freedom of information and I don’t know why. And this was before Paul was Superintendent. I had requested any fees paid to other attorney’s under freedom of information, I had requested any settlements paid, any payments for due process attorney fees. I never received this. (Held up copy of purchase order) The only reason I know of this particular settlement in which the West Haven Board of Ed challenged a parents request to outplace a student, it was
taken to a due process hearing and the West Haven Board of Education lost. West Haven Board of Ed has paid it own attorney fees. Plus the West Haven Board of Ed paid Jennifer Laviano Attorney fees. I found this out. Because the case is published on the internet. I think it’s unfair and I hope now that Paul is Superintendent that this doesn’t happen again. But when you make a request for all settlement and all attorney bills; you should be given all settlement and attorney bills. Yet this was never given to me, never in any of my request. And I had many letters on this particular commentary in 2002. As all of you well know who are sitting here. The other thing I would like to bring to light, since I have the bill, is the way the bill should be. This is the way attorney bill should look. Your bills unfortunately don’t look like this. Your bills group everything together as I have said before. Like this bill, you have no idea what attorney you are talking to, how long; see how they put three and four and five lines together. Now I know if Jennifer Laviano has the capability as a small firm. A larger firm should have the capability of doing the same thing. How can anyone check or cross reference a bill if you don’t know who talk to who and for how long. I don’t see how the billing can possibly be checked. Unless there is something behind the scene that I don’t know about.

Community Service, all of you remember passing that. The ones that were here. Part of the handbook, you’re not getting your diploma until you do community service. I complained about it that night. I told you I would check up on it, and I did. Well what I complained about was not the idea of community service, but the idea of holding up even one students diploma because he or she did not comply with it. Now everyone assured me that first of all, that all school systems were doing this, which I found out wasn’t true. But anyway that it would be checked, and monitored. Well I went ahead and spoke to Ron Stancel, this was another report that I did request. That he did have. he gave me ball park figures, but out of some eleven hundred students, some being freshman, some being sophomores, but the two grades being effected by this new rule, 29 did some hours of community service, 29 out of eleven hundred. With those kinds of number you will be able to hold graduation in a phone booth. Now my problem is, again I say that leaves one more layer of subjectivity. How are you going to judge who gets a diploma? Is it going to be hard line? Ok you did not do your community service. I understand that these kids have two years to go. The sophomores, my concern is, no one is monitoring these students. The answer I received was it is in the handbook. That helps the parents how? I mean I don’t now what teenagers Ron Stancel is talking about, the handbook to a sophomore is not the most important piece of information the students bring home to their parents. Now when are you going to inform these parents their kids are not going to graduate? Truly not going to graduate. That this Student has to do community service, in May? Now this Student has to run around and try to do community service while finishing up all other requirements at the same time. Or are you going to wait and just have a bunch of empty seats? Who is going to get to graduate and who will not? If I happen to know someone will I be able to graduate, but the student next to them doesn’t know anyone, so they won’t. This is what bothers me with community service. I always said if you wanted to put in community service give it to the person who does it extra. Unfortunately it didn’t happen that way.

My other question as always is the expulsions. I sat and read some tonight. The student who pulled the fire alarm received 180 days. The student who was alleged armed robbery and maybe I read it quick and missed something, but that student did not receive 180 days. Again I am very, very concerned about equity and fairness. I’m not saying that pulling the fire alarm is great and everyone should do it. False alarms are very disruptive. The problem is why does one student get 180 days and the other student does not. How does this affect their schooling and everything else? It needs to be re-looked at, it needs to be revisited, and the rules need to be changed. Are you going too prosecute all off campus events? Or just prosecute some? Who is going to make this decision?

Good luck to those of you who are leaving. You won’t have to listen to me anymore. So there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you.

Chairman Guthrie asked if anyone else wished to address the Board.

Mary Moninger –Elia, I live at Templeton Street, and I serve as President of Federation of Teachers and School Nurses. It is from that capacity I realize it is the last board meeting for several of the members and I just wanted to come acknowledge that and give them thanks for the work that they have done. Joe we have not
worked with you as long. But certainly Ursula and Sandy have been board members for a number of years. We want to thank you for the thoughtful and effective way you have worked as Board Members and the Board as a whole. Since the mix will be changing. I think we have learned to get above some of the issues and work together. I hope this will continue with the next Board. Again Thank You

Chairman Guthrie asked if anyone else wished to address the Board.

George Monahan, 376 Center Street. As you Board Members know I have been coming to the Meeting now for a little over two years now. Although I may not have always agreed with certain Board Members actions or their decision. I’m sure that is the way it is in life. When many kinds of decisions are made. I will be challenge soon with the same duties that those of you have now. I looking forward to opportunity I’m not naïve, to realize to think that some of my decisions will also be questioned as well. Having said that, I do want to applaud and Thank Sandy Lorusso, Ursula Reilly and Joe Esposito for getting involved and serving the system. The Town the City owes you gratitude and I owe you gratitude for doing that as a parent of students in the system. I wish you well. I only hope I can serve the Board in an equal fashion.

Chairman Guthrie asked three times if anyone else wished to address the Board, No one spoke so the public session closed at 7:10pm

REPORTS

C.1. Status of Schools
Mr. Tortora
First I would certainly like to acknowledge Ursula, Sandy and Joe. You have a lot to be proud of. The Board and District has made a great amount of progress. You were a great part of that. So, I do thank you, compliment you and express certainly all our appreciation from the students. That’s what it is all about, students you’ve been there always for the students. So my compliments and appreciation and with that said Mr. Chairman, just couple of items. There is a major push on right now over ECS on the State level. Actually 170 million dollar increase. We don’t know as of yet whether or not it’s going to pass, ECS effects a district like West Haven in a big way. So there is some good news. So that there are some new proposals up there to bump up the ECS. Which would bring us back to at least where we were or better. So let’s keep our fingers crossed. The other item I would like to share with the Board this evening. I received notification from the new commissioner and some very good words. I am meeting with the staff of Mackrille School tomorrow. I want to make sure the Board is aware of this. That Mackrille School has been nominated as a Blue Ribbon School. There are only four in the state of Connecticut on a annual basis. It means we go to Washington DC and we actually compete on a National Level. This is a first for West Haven having a Blue Ribbon School. It just doesn’t get better then that. It’s unofficial now. I’m waiting for the official document. But I did receive a call. I did want to share with the board. You should know. You should be the first to know.

Mr. Cavallaro
First of all I would like to wish Sandy, Ursula and Joe well. Even though you won’t be Board Members, certainly we look forward to working with you. Although it will be in a different capacity. And again thank you for all your support. Our doors are always open I’m sure I can speak for Paul. If you ever need anything or if you have any concerns. We will certainly go out of our way if we can help you. Second there is a letter from me. Urging support for the trip to Natures Classroom for Carrigan. As I stated in my letter. All of you have supported this trip in the past. Tom Hunt is here tonight representing Carrigan, if you have any questions. I hope all of you dress warm for the football game tomorrow night and Hopefully, we will have another state championship by the end of the week.
Board Reports (Continued)

Anne Heffernan reported Toni Paine’s mother passed away on November 30, 2003.

Chairman Guthrie thanked the theater workshop for putting on a wonderful performance. They have certainly managed to rejuvenate the program over the last couple of years. In particular the last two years. Looking forward to the spring production.

The football team, the Board enjoyed Thanksgiving Days game, we would like to see the same weather, and we had on Thanksgiving. We wish the football well tomorrow night.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES 7:15

D.1.a. Minutes from Student Expulsion Hearing on October 27, 2003 (9:30)
D.1.b. Minutes from Student Expulsion Hearing on November 6, 2003 (12:30)
D.1.c. Minutes from Student Expulsion Hearing on November 6, 2003 (2:00)
D.1.d. Minutes from Student Expulsion Hearing on November 12, 2003 (1:00)
D.1.e. Minutes from Regular Board Meeting on November 17, 2003 at 7:00p.m.

A MOTION was made by Sandy Lorusso, SECONDED by Ursula Reilly to approve D.1 The MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

D.2. RESIGNATIONS-Certified

03-217 Stephen McCarty, Assistant Hockey Coach, at West Haven High, Effective: November 19, 2003, Reason (medical)

Mr. Carrano wishes Mr. McCarty a speedy recovery, and stated he will be missed.

Anne Heffernan also wished Mr. McCarty a quick recovery.

A MOTION was made by Ursula Reilly, SECONDED by Sandy Lorusso to approve Item D.2. As presented and SO VOTED unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS:

All recommendations and appointments are contingent upon each candidate providing proof of Connecticut Certification/Official Transcripts, verification of fingerprints, police record, Department of Children/Family and medical clearances. If the candidate fails to obtain or meet this criterion for the position for which he/she was employed by December 30, 2002, the West Haven Board of Education shall have no obligation to honor the contract and the appointment shall become null and void.

D.3. APPOINTMENTS- Certified

03-218 Daniella Buda White, 46 Glenwood Avenue, Stratford, CT 06614, Girl’s Assistant Track Coach at West Haven High School, effective March 22, 2004, Salary $2,500.00

A MOTION was made by Sandy Lorusso, SECONDED by Anne Heffernan to approve Item D.3. As presented and SO VOTED unanimously.
NEW BUSINESS

03-219   Permission for Carrigan Middle School 8th Grade Classes to go on Field trip to Nature’s Classroom in Lakeside, CT May 17, 2004 – May 21, 2003.

A MOTION was made by Paul Messina, SECONDED by Ray Collins to approve Item 03-219 as presented and SO VOTED unanimously.

03-220   Application for Federal Funds to Enhance Education through Technology FY 2003-2005 Title II – part D

A MOTION was made by Ursula Reilly, SECONDED by Joseph Esposito to approve Item 03-220 as presented and SO VOTED unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL

Mrs. Heffernan – Fund raiser, Dec 11, 2003 drop off new wrapped toys at Savin Rock Conference Center, 9:00am to 4:00 pm at Fire Truck.

Mr. Carrano- no
Mr. Messina - no
Mr. Collins - no
Mrs. Lorusso – no
Mrs. Reilly- no
Mr. Esposito – I would just like to say, It has been an honor to serve on the Board, and I would give best wishes to the new members of the Board that I see out in the audience. I wish you the best of luck.

Chairman Guthrie, two items, question for Mr. Tortora in our packet is a copy of the check for reimbursement of the broken pipe. Now will the funds be put back into the account that paid for that repair or does that go into the City general fund?

Mr. Tortora, What happens with that process Mr. Guthrie is we do a formal requisition over to City Counsel To ask to have those funds be transferred back to that account. Because it was an unbudgeted expense. We covered the expense, we will ask that it get deposited back to the account it came out of. City Counsel has been pretty generous and supportive. That is the city process, so we will be requesting it.

Chairman Guthrie, It’s a credit to this Boards diligence to stay on this contractor to actually receive $ 26,000.00 back of the $32,000.00 costs

Superintendent Tortora, I agree. I thank the Board. You stayed right on top of that. Pushed us along and it was well worth it.

Chairman Guthrie, I know everyone has said their comments, but Sandy, Ursula and Joe will be missed and your service was definitely appreciated. I hope you will continue to join us on the other side of the table on Monday nights.
A MOTION was made by Ursula Reilly, Seconded by Joseph Esposito to adjourn at 7:20 p.m. The MOTION carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose McDonnell

*These minutes are subject to the approval of the Board of Education

Paul Tortora, Superintendent