The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven on November 16, 2009. 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  
Gerald A. Calabritto, Vice Chairman  
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer  
Patrick Egolum  
T. Robert Saley  
Howard Horvath Jr.  
M. Toni Paine  
Sean Maher

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:  
Andrew DePalma

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:  
Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Mark Palmieri welcomed everyone to the West Haven Board of Education regular meeting for November 16, 2009 and asked if anyone would like to address the board during public session.

B. Public Session

There were no speakers during public session.

C. REPORTS

C.1. Administration

Superintendent Cavallaro said that Assistant Superintendent Anne Druzolowski is still out due to the death of her father but will be back tomorrow. She has been in communication with Neil and has done work at home but has certainly been missed. We look forward to her return tomorrow and send our condolences.
David Cappetta and I have started the budget process for next year and all of the schools have the information as far as looking for requests and things of that nature. This process has begun and the information from the schools and the different departments are due back. In a couple of weeks we will start going through this and prioritize it. We are expecting another lean year so regardless of the requests we must keep this in mind.

The majority of Neil’s report regarded the last meeting on Race to the Top. Some pamphlets were passed out to board members and a discussion followed. The money that Connecticut will be eligible for will certainly help during the next three years. Connecticut is eligible for $175 million over three years – about 60 million a year.

Howie Horvath asked when the application will be put in January or June. Neil said an application will be made for January but they are really targeting Phase 2.

There is an emphasis on great teaching and administrative leaders in the selection criteria and we are pretty poised and where we need to be as far as data driven systems to support instruction, common core assessments, professional development programs etc.

Rob Saley said when he first learned about this there were three states that had legislative laws that weren’t conducive to the Race to the Top. New York was one of the states. If they don’t qualify what happens to that money? Neil said their goal is to try to get as many states funded as they can but what they want you to do is show them a willingness to make the changes that you need to make. In the Reading First Grant eventually everyone was funded but not until they demonstrated how they were going to spend the money and showed that it would be used properly and meeting all the criteria.

Howie Horvath understands that New York’s law that prohibits it being used for tenure purposes not necessarily for evaluation purposes of teachers is going to expire in June. I think they will qualify.

Howie Horvath offered to take a look at the contract that was created in New Haven and would report back and have a conversation about it. The AFT was very involved from a state level and together with their union leadership it passed by a margin of 300 something to about 90. Neil thought this would be good and did speak to our attorney who was a little involved in those negotiations and at some point we can sit down and discuss this as we get closer to March 1st. The way we set up negotiations for next year will be good for us as it will allow us time to look at those kinds of things.

A further discussion ensued.

Neil ended by stating this is our last meeting as a board and I want to thank you for your support over the last two years. We have put many things in place which will lead to better student achievement which is why we are all here. It is nice that eight of you will be returning - that makes for nice continuity and getting people up to speed is certainly not going to be an issue. We are poised to really do some good things especially if we can get this Race to the Top money. If we get involved with the teacher negotiations and
some school reform issues and things of that nature these are nice things to look forward to. Unfortunately we have one member who is not coming back and that member is Jerry. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank him for his service over the last four years and going back to 1985. We have known each other for almost 25 years through a number of different realms being involved in politics and community service and you know how much I enjoy working with you. I think your commitment to the board and students of West Haven can not be questioned. Your knowledge of the community and your feel for the political climate and the history of the number of issues that come up are second to none. You have been an advocate for many policies and programs that have been designed to help students. You always refer to my kids, my teachers, my administrators and when you refer to us as boss etc. it means a lot. You are certainly going to be missed. Your areas of expertise in budgets, negotiations, and the way I can pick up the phone and run something by you means a lot and I certainly hope to be able to continue to take advantage of that. Most importantly Jerry you have been a good friend and I want to thank you for everything. (Applause)

C.1. a. Status of Schools

C.1.b. Student Representatives

C.1. c. Board

Eric Murillo thanked Jerry Calabritto for being on the board for 20 some years and stated he has a great deal of knowledge that he has shared and finds it amazing that Jerry can remember so many things. He thanked Jerry for all his help.

Patrick Egolum stated he has learned a lot from Jerry and will still call him for his wealth of knowledge.

Howie Horvath said that now that you are leaving we will have to start bringing the book of Robert’s Rules of Order. (laughter) He wished Jerry the best of luck going forth.

Rob Saley said that two years ago he was elected Vice Chairman and felt that Jerry would make a better Vice Chairman and what I did I have no regrets about. You have done a great job.

Toni Paine agrees with what everybody said and stated it has been a pleasure working with you. It is nice to see somebody that is inspired not by the fact that they have children in the system – because you have no children in the system – but you have ALL the children in the system and this is to be admired. I congratulate you and thank you.

Sean Maher thanked Jerry for so much of what he has taught him while he has been on the board. He knows Jerry has an incredible commitment to the kids and the system and knows that just because he is not sitting behind that desk it will not end; your commitment is inspiring.
Sean also mentioned that the production of Twelfth Night takes place this Friday and Saturday at 7:30 PM at the high school. Rehearsals are taking place right now. Tickets are $10 in advance $12 at the door. The kids have been doing a really great job and it is pretty terrific.

He attended a Safety Meeting here last week and there was a great deal of discussion of how we can move forward with our safety plans and enhance what is already in place. Mrs. Gardner has already been thinking ahead as far as the high school is concerned so I think we are moving in the right direction.

He stopped by at the Teacher of the Year Dinner and stated we should be very proud of the teachers that we have that were at the dinner and the teachers that came to support the teachers that were there. It was a record crowd and really nice to see.

Howie Horvath asked for the Emergency Operation Plan for West Haven Schools and Neil said he would put one in everyone’s packet.

Mark Palmieri thanked Sean for attending the Teacher of the Year Dinner in his place as he had a previous engagement.

Mark thanked Jerry and said that four years ago he met Jerry on this board and the education Jerry gave him and the knowledge and his support not only for this board but obviously for the children of this district and the teachers – your budget meetings always amazed me – your transfers were the best. I definitely learned a lot from you. Your negotiation skills as Mr. Horvath stated and your Robert’s Rules in knowing all the ins and outs of every meeting to help clarify everything has definitely been a bonus to this board and district. Once again, more importantly, to reiterate what Mr. Cavallaro said to be able to pick up the phone and call you and be able to become friends over the past four years has really meant a lot to me. I just feel as though you are taking a sabbatical and I expect to see you back in two years. Thank you again for all your help. (Applause)

Neil stated that it has become a tradition to give the departing board members a jacket and normally what we do is put the years of service but we pay by the letter and we wouldn’t have been able to afford the jacket. (laughter) Since we are really not sure if you are coming back or not we just put board member 1985 and we left it with a question mark. Jerry was presented with the jacket. (Applause)

Jerry thanked the board for the jacket and said he thought a lot about what he was going to say tonight but will be real brief because it is a short meeting. He remembers four years ago when Mark and Eric became board members and has seen them grow into excellent, fine, committed board members. Howie you were already on the board and Rob and Patrick in two years you have come along way and Toni you have been around awhile so you are doing good.
I have had the privilege of sitting behind this desk under six of the last 11 superintendents including Neil. He thanked Marylou for the cake and Toni for the biscotti’s and Neil and his fellow board members for their kind words.

Twenty three years has been a long time but most importantly I have been associated with many individuals who give their heart and soul to the children of this district be they the lunch aide, cook, custodian, secretary, clerk, paraprofessional, nurse, teacher, administrators, Blake Building Staff, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent and last but not least my fellow colleagues on the board. It has been an honor and a privilege to be associated with you. Remember these are my parting words to you, “You make a difference to the life of a child.” With that I wish you all well. (Applause)

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Meeting held November 2, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the Blake Bldg. (Enclosure)

Toni Paine made a motion to approve the Board of Education minutes D.1.a. Rob Saley seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members present voted in favor
No one was opposed
Motion Carries - Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

09-150 Roger Erickson, Department Head Special Education - WHHS
Effective: November 17, 2009
Salary: $4,800 Stipend

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve D.5. New Hire: (Certified) 09-150 Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.5. New Hire: (Certified) 09-150 Rob Saley seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members voted in favor
Motion passes

D.6. New Hire: (Non-Certified)
D.7.  New Business:

09-151 Correspondence from David G. Russell requesting approval of the completed ESEA Federal Grant for 2009 – 2010.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve D.7. New Business 09-151
Jerry Calabritto made a motion to approve D.7. New Business: 09-151
Patrick Egolum seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members present voted in favor
Motion passes

09-152 Elementary Unit Leaders 2009-10 School Year
Linda Sampietro to fill the vacancy at Thompson School replacing Unit Leader, Tarryn Driend who was promoted to Assistant Principal of Carrigan

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve D.7. New Business: 09-152
M. Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.7. New Business: 09-152
T. Sean Maher seconded the motion
Discussion: Rob Saley wondered about the money because this position at Carrigan is based on money; are there senior rights, junior rights here?

Neil stated he anticipates some retirees within the administrative ranks should we not be funded for that particular position so it would be movement within that bargaining unit. However should we lose funding altogether and there are no retirements, in the worse case scenario you have to remember administrators are considered teachers by the State of Connecticut and they are tenured so it is a seniority thing where they would move right down the list.

There was no further discussion.
All board members present voted in favor
Motion passes

F.  Informational:

Rob Saley read an article about drop outs in the CABE Journal and what they earn. What is our drop out rate? Neil stated in 2007 it was 3 ½ % they are two year’s behind and it is about the same now. Rob said when they talked about it our state had the 11th lowest drop out rate in the nation which is pretty good. It talks about if you don’t have a high school education how much money you lose; men earn 500,000 less and women earn 400,000 less than graduates and they will remain below the poverty level. 3 ½ % is pretty good but if we could get that down to 1% it would be great. When you look at that and show them how much more they could earn it would be great for them down the line.
It also stated that nearly 37 out of 100 drop outs live in poor or nearly poor families and they just never catch up.

The board gave thanks.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jerry Calabritto made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Patrick Egolum seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The meeting ended at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary