WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
March 21, 2011
Regular Board Meeting
Harriet North Room

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Harriet North Room of the City Hall, 255 Main Street, West Haven, CT on March 21, 2011. The meeting was called to order by T. Sean Maher, Vice Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sean Maher, Vice Chairman
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer
M. Toni Paine
Dorinda Borer
Mark Palmieri
Robert Saley
Cebi Waterfield
Patrick Egolum
Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman arrived at 7:25 PM

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Gypsy Garcia
Marum Majid
Brandon Patterson

Sean Maher welcomed everyone to the West Haven Board of Education regular meeting for March 7, 2011. Because there is some information that will be given in Food Service presentations that might be valuable for those who are planning on speaking he requested
a consensus of the board to see if the Food Service Presentation could take place before the Public Session. All board members present agreed to this. Sean then turned the meeting over to Superintendent Cavallaro.

C.1. Administration/Status of Schools

Alan Belchak discussed food service concerns that were raised at the last board meeting. He introduced the staff from food service that came in support of the program because they are the people on the front line who serve approximately 3,200 meals daily. He also pointed out Peter Brooks who is from Region 16 and he writes the bid that West Haven is part of. The group of town’s people gets together and publicly put it out to bid so they get the best products for the students of West Haven. He then introduced Cindy Brooks who is the Director of Seymour Public Schools and the PP&L Committee Chair for the National School Lunch Program. Later in the program Ms. Brooks spoke about the nutritional standards that are forthcoming. He then introduced Linda Hubeny who is the Director of DAS the Department of Administrative Services which controls the commodity program for the State of Connecticut.

Mr. Belchak said he would have stayed longer and addressed any of the concerns mentioned during the Public Session presentation at the last board meeting if he had been made aware of them. It seems these were growing concerns going on in the schools and when it was brought to my attention I visited the school that had the problems and I believe we did correct a lot of the problems. The problems were the texture of the chicken nuggets, the issue with the oven that caused the burned hot dog, and things like that. I met with Principal Libero and visited the cafeteria on three or four occasions and visited the classroom and questioned the children about the quality of the food and their likeness of the food.

It is a school lunch program it is not a welfare program. It is not for just free and reduced lunch students; it is for all the students. He wanted to enlighten the audience on what they do and the positive changes that will move forward. Regarding any concern that arises, that is brought to his attention, he not only acts immediately but he acts in person. A lot of these things were brought to his attention after the fact, weeks and sometimes months later. There is a direct line to the high school that everybody has. Marge and Gail act on any problem that we have on a daily basis. Marilyn handles his phone. They can all tell you that we had no major problems and if we had any problems we addressed them. Many times it is a problem where parents do not have the money for their child’s lunch and we work as quickly and efficiently as we can to get that child on the free roles and we also wipe out any previous balance that child may have had.

The Food Service Department serves 1/3rd of the RDA.

Cindy is with the National School Lunch Program which is the School Nutrition Association she is head of PP&L which means they negotiate with Congress what they are trying to do with the regulations. Cindy said Alan has given you a complete history of what it takes to operate a Food Service Program. She is also Food Service Director in
Seymour and has been in this business for 26 years. She serves in two capacities on the National Committee for the School Nutritional Association. One is the Public Policy and Legislation Committee. While in Washington she heard about the proposed new meal pattern and changes and what it will do for our program. This is what Alan was referring to. Right now it is under comment period so anyone in the audience can go on to the USDA Website and send in their comments. The changes currently will be as a Food Service Director and one who participates in the National School Lunch Program we will be required to reduce the levels of sodium gradually in our meals. If we reduced the levels of sodium in the products immediately the acceptability to the students would not be there. They would not be purchasing our lunches because they would taste like cardboard. Parents will not be required to reduce the sodium levels in what you are cooking at home. We will have to serve more of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetable and less corn will be on the menu. You will be seeing more dark green, orange and yellow vegetables. She looked at our menus and our program and toured some of our schools. When you had your deli bar you were ecstatic so I made that trip from Seymour. The staff does a wonderful job. School Food Service Directors are required to produce a meal for as little as $2.74; that is the free reimbursement rate and that is not a lot of money to provide a nutritious meal plus cover labor, benefits and paper products; whatever it takes to produce that meal we have $2.74 from the Federal Government to do this. As a parent the woman who brought forth this concern has every right to bring forth the concern. She would only hope that we all be on the offensive and not defense. We need to work together in the educational system along with parents and if you have an issue even on the national level we say go to the Food Service Director. If you don’t get any answers and are not satisfied go to the principal. From what I understand to present it at a board meeting where Mr. Belchak was unable to respond bothers me because this is a very hard working group up here and I have seen their meals. Can we do better in school food service; absolutely but these are not the lunches we all had when we were kids. We are always looking to improve them and we always want to hear from our students who are our customers and their parents. She thanked the board for allowing her the time to speak.

Questions

Dorinda asked if we should ask questions now or after public session. Howie said while Mr. Belchak is here let’s ask questions. He can always come back up after public session. Mr. Belchak said he will be more than happy to stick around.

Mark Palmieri asked if the only production kitchen in the district is in WHHS. Alan said the high school and Bailey Middle School. Mark said the cost would be $36,000.00 just to get that and another $10,000.00 for a dishwasher. Rob said for one school. Alan said that was looking at the figures quickly but he did get a quote for a stem cooker called a combine oven but seeing that some things have to roasted and cooked differently we have to have food packaged differently. It can be done but would take a lot of planning and a lot of renovations.

Rob wanted to clarify that it was $36,000.00 per unit per school. Yes that is correct. Mark said maybe we can take it out of the surplus this year. Laughter ensued.
Cebi said on the Farm Program it says we are only participating with apples is there a chance we can expand that program. Alan said I was one of the first to get in on that program and we would pick up the apples from the orchard and at this time I would like to go into more products but what happens when we buy from the DOD they are required by federal law to get us fresh farm products from the immediate growing area. Cebi said so those are locally grown fruits. Yes and they will be coming soon. The apples are through a direct farmer. Other fruits will be available through another program. Farm Fresh from USA standards apply within 500 miles. Fruits and vegetables from New Jersey are still called Farm Fresh.

Alan said he is willing to make any changes for the positive and betterment of nutritional values. Applause.

Dorinda asked if there is a possibility to expand the Deli Sandwich Program into Carrigan. Alan said we are going to try a turkey wrap but the thing is we have 700 children there and it would be almost impossible to do that. Neil said the principals are working on a program to expand time in the cafeteria for the students and if that were to happen is that a possibility. Absolutely. Then they wouldn’t have to pre-make the wraps and make them to order.

Dorinda asked if questions will continue later during the meeting. Howie said Alan said he will stick around and we will see how many more questions arise. He is sure not everyone is going to speak about this.

The board gave thanks.

B. Public Session

Public Session began at 7:55 PM

Michelle Caprio, 14 Middle Field Road said that we are here to discuss the issue of better food choices. She said Mr. Belchak and his staff were never in question. She commends them for what they do. But the issue for better food choices for all the children of West Haven does continue. She acknowledges that changes are being made to Mackrille. She has parent representation from each school in the audience to verify that changes need to be made in all schools. To assist in doing this she is putting together a wellness committee through PTA Council and she has their full support. Our Board of Ed Wellness Committee needs to be addressed. The State of Connecticut Department of Education Guidelines and mandates of the federal government indicate our policy has failed. Our Wellness Policy was adopted May 15, 2006 indicates meetings are to be held once annually but she does not have access to the minutes. It also indicates the policy will be shared with families and encourage family participation. The last time the policy was reviewed by the State Department of Education was in 2008 and failed the report card. It indicates we participated in Healthy Food Certification which provides extra funding of ten cents per lunch additional yet it claims that the Food Service is at $160,000.00 loss. No items should have high fructose corn syrup or hydrogenated oil yet
most of our items do including our grilled cheese which has both ingredients and is not acceptable by the state. As of July 2011 the guidelines will change again. If a school lunch does not have three or four components it is considered a reimbursable lunch. So on Friday when the kids have pizza, chips and milk that is in violation. Alan said that is a meal it is in three parts. There was no fruit or vegetable. The West Haven Food Service Website has a revision date of March 9, 2011 with the addition of the labels, facts etc. and that was two days after our presentation. A school is a public institution therefore all information including the meals labeling facts etc. should be public. Parents are entitled to any information they ask for through the FOI Act. We ask for a union not for a fight. We must come together for improvement, be open to suggestions and make the necessary changes to adapt for a more healthy living among our children. We are requesting that you review the ordering process and obtain healthier food and choices. Re-establish the BOE Wellness Committee and work with our newly created PTA Council Wellness Committee and make all information public for parental access.

The board gave thanks.

Christine El-Bakri, 335 Captain Thomas Blvd. stated none of the presentations made two weeks ago had anything to do against anybody here for what you do. I work in catering and in a restaurant and I know how difficult it is to do that kind of a job and I commend all of you. This has nothing to do against anyone personally at all. There have been changes made. I am happy. Fruit juices now have two or three choices. There is a larger selection of fruits: oranges, pears, apples, fruit cup, on occasion we have a banana and grapes which the kids absolutely love. She would like to see more grapes. She is sure the food is FDA approved and is not disputing that. It seems like this is the bottom of the barrel and needs to be brought up a few notches. We are asking for better quality food. Obesity is a nationwide problem and is affecting a lot of children in school today. The fruit cup is full of corn fructose syrup (sugar). The Sloppy Joes are 24% fat (she knows that some kids do like them). The soupy mac (macaroni and cheese) is full of oil. A new one needs to be looked at. Five slices of cheese is too much cheese on a grilled cheese. A new steam convection oven is needed as we are cooking with a convection oven and need a steam convection oven. Grilled cheese sandwiches are frozen 6 – 8 months and it is not in a freezer bag – is this carcinogenic? There are no nutritional facts on the boxes of spaghetti served today. A few weeks ago a gentlemen spoke and said the cheeseburgers were thrown out and they were used again at Bailey on March 7th.

She went to her PTA with her concerns and the PTA Council said to go to the Board. That is why she came before the board. Children have only a choice of what is there. She packs her son’s lunch everyday and is a lunch aide and cares about the students receiving lunch. They deserve a better nutritional lunch with better choices.

The board gave thanks.

David Matrisciano, 6 Ridge Hollow Road requested the WHHS pool be named in honor of Marisa Zyde Matrisciano. His presentation follows:
Good evening

I would like to thank the board for giving me the opportunity to speak to them. I am here to request that the pool at the high school be named in honor of Marisa Zyde Matrisiano.

It is not often that someone has such a great impact on her town and the children that reside in it. Marisa Zyde Matrisiano was one such person. Her love for children was outstanding. Over the years she touched so many lives and was often referred to as the “mother of the children.”

Starting as a young child, her love for swimming and the ocean was a big part of her life. She swam for the West Haven High School swim team with great success and her name is still on the wall as most competitive. She remained an active member of the West Haven community and was an integral part of the local pool culture.

Once she was married and had children she discovered her life’s work. She was involved in the formation of the Molloy PTA. She held many positions in PTA until her election to West Haven PTA president. Her involvement in that was consuming. She was the same for every minute of it. She worked hard and made a difference in the lives of those who knew her personally and those who knew her through her work.

I would again like to thank the Board for their time and know that any memorial plaque or sign will be paid for by the group. There will be no expense to the city.

It is the hope of many of us that Marisa should be honored and naming the pool for her would be the most appropriate.

I am submitting these petitions to the board. I hope that she will be on your agenda so the board can recognize a woman who lived a life of service and believed her goal in life was to make the world a better place.

Thank you.
Erik Brown
31 Meloy Rd
West Haven

School uniforms

Reasons I oppose the uniforms, The School administration only handed out the sheet talking about the uniform policy in English only. This may have English as a second language students and parents left out. The sheet also stated that it will affect k-6 students then 7-8 and then 9-12. Is it going to affect people going to Carrigan next year or not. It may have sent conflicting signal to parents of students going to Carrigan. They might be thinking that they maybe also included in the decision process.

I took the poll and the question was not asked bilingually or in language dominance that you promote on your school application. This may feel like parents were left out of the decision making for the uniforms. Some parents that wanted to take the poll were unable too reasons work, missed phone call, not able to use the system correctly and may not be fluent in English. I believe less the 39% of the 2224 phone calls were not answered number were 860. If you break down the numbers. This is a big percentage that were not counted. Numbers count after 2224 calls 42% are for uniforms 19% are not for uniforms and 39% did not answer the phones.

Parents came up to me with their complaints about the poll was conducted. How many students right now attend these schools? I believe it is higher then 2224 students. I know having 2 children attending Seth Haley. So how are the unrepresented going to be counted? How I believed it should have been done each student that would be affected by the uniform policy should have been counted. This would mean if a family of 4 with 2 children that are going to be affected would have 2 votes. Rather 1 per family. BOE was afraid of stacking the deck as mentioned at last meeting. BOE acknowledged that a family with more children would have a tendency to vote down the act. The BOE should have been neutral about the program rather stating past figures stating people were for the program. Reason for this I believe is manipulation to have the uniforms pass.

They had different prices for different sizes. The smaller grades were lower while 7 and up were higher cost. The cost for my son to be properly dressed because of weather, and being environmental friendly, 3 short sleeve cost $55.50, 3 long sleeve cost $61.50, 3 long pants cost 72.00 , 3 short pants cost $66, and 18.50 sweatpants. These were recommended by the presentation last meeting would total a whopping $273.50. This cost will be $47.00 or more if I had to dress my daughter too. Just for a jumper brought up to the BOE. It will cost between 29.00 to 45.50 for one. Which jumper to purchase is not clear. You may see 3 different jumpers in the classrooms. Pants for girls range from $23.50 to 32.00. Shorts range from 18.00 for smaller grades to 24.00 because of size. Skirts price around $24 to $48 between style and size. This is not the numbers handed out in the classrooms. It just stated the round about price. Not what was included in the purchase. This is so this have not will the have. Because the haves will able to purchase shorts, sweatpants, and short sleeve shirts. This would create teasing of children that aren’t able to afford these types of clothing.

This cost as more then a months rent in some places. Even you buy these items a big box it will cost you over $200 dollars. I believe it is the BOE responsibility to know
the correct cost of uniforms. They also need to come with a contract and terms with distributors. So parents are able to obtain better price on uniforms and proper colors. Because colors are known to change from manufacture. The big boxes stores don’t have uniforms readily available. You have to purchase these items online only. Even Dennis uniforms don’t have all types of uniforms available you have to do the purchase seasonally. This will leave the have nots not having.

ACLU recently won a case against a School district for them to pay for uniforms and lab fees for students. Schools now need to put uniforms and lab fee in their budget. This would lead to more cut in services. Reasons ACLU won “charging student illegal fees discriminates against lower income children and violates their constitutional right to a free education”. This is considered a fee to enter West Haven Public school system.

In Stamford they first talk publicly about the uniform policy back in August of last year and conducted a poll in February. It took them over 6 months to construct a policy and conduct a poll. In its disclaimer stated that it needed 80% distributed to be returned. While the rate of 80% in favor for the uniforms. The City of Stamford is being fair to the parents and students. This mean per student not per family as West Haven BOE conducted theirs. They are also trying to pay for the school uniforms. This is in a January 25 board meeting section 5147-R of student dress in handbook. As the poll conducted by West Haven is well below the 80% answered and well below that 80% that support the measure. This was the same rate needed to pass in Parsippany NJ. Which voted down the measure for the school uniform policy.

Molloy Garden or Community Garden

The cost for the community garden will cost approximately $20 per square foot to construct. This does not include handicap access, irrigation, fencing, security, or equipment needed for the project. Who will cover the cost? Most Grants for these type of gardens this year are expired. USDA needed grant application for Community food project in by 11/10 of last year. There was another grant That needed to be done by in March 15th 2011. How is the BOE going to pay for this. I have done research these types of gardens are known to lose money to maintain. In Burlington VT. It cost them over $40,000 to have this type of garden. Money generated was approximately $17,000 from the gardens. Losing $23,000 annually is crazy. This money can be better used. This is not purchase for equipment used.

This cost is not include maintaining the property. The city is not giving you the 1.5 million that you have requested. Their will have to be cuts. Where are the cuts going to come from? They may come from teaching, services, transportation. Last year we had one of the biggest cuts of closing of two schools. I believe the costs of the construction of these gardens will come in the hand of the taxpayers.

The Fed will increase payment of 6 cents per lunch next year. The feds also passed new laws to be in effect for schools for lunches. This is to improve school lunches and pay for equipment. I looked at some other in-state school districts it seems that they are able to get a better return on lunches then West Haven. One district is getting $2.72 for free lunches, 2.32 return on reduced lunches and .40 cent by the federal government. I don’t know what the rate is for West Haven. You pay for what you get. You pay for low prices you may get lower grade food. I think West Haven can do better then they are receiving.

The Board gave thanks.
Kevin Cox, 70 Hines Street was the next speaker and spoke about two subjects. The nutrition law did get passed. I talked to Rosa DeLauro’s office. PL11-296 and you can look that up and get the specifics on it and you need to comply with this on July 1, 2011.

He said people talked about using a business in West Haven for the uniforms. He passed a card around for a company which was previously the old Heidi’s Uniform Company. He also has talked to parents with children in New Haven Schools and has the name of a website childrenswareoutlet.com where the tops start at $4.75 and pants start at $10.00 if uniforms are going to happen.

The board gave thanks.

Laurie Hill, 22 Pagano Court has worked for Food Service 15 years. 15 years ago she would never have served her son the hot lunch but today absolutely. She knows everyone saw some of the things that were not so good on our menu but they are not on there all the time and are not back to back meals. You don’t see a sloppy Joe on a Monday and then a grilled cheese on Tuesday and a cheeseburger on Wednesday. She brought some of the other items in to show the board. She talked about the food at Savin Rock School. There is a basket filled with bananas, apple slices, pears and other fruit that is provided. Grapes the kids absolutely love them but they had two children choke and we do not want grapes at our school. Our lunch aides are elderly they panicked and had to do them Heimlich and we find this to be a hazard. We communicate with our children every single day. At the end of each wave if there is a new item being introduced we take a poll from all of our kids to see if they like or dislike it. Everyday our kids have a choice of a bagel yogurt plate, the chef salad we make with fresh vegetables provided by Alan and Marge, the new chicken box is 100% white meat with something like a McCain’s Smiley Faced Potato and kids love it, we have carrot sticks with ranch dip and there is always a variety at Savin Rock School. I’m sorry to say I don’t know why Mackrille is not doing what we are doing but we have been doing it for a long time. We have done away with all port products because our Muslim population has increased. Alan has turned all port into turkey products. In 18 months we had one meal delivered to us that both Gary Palermo and I said we are not serving this. Mr. Belchak provided all fresh food in the blink of an eye for our kids. We have come a long way and are continuing to move forward. I feel very badly that every time there is a problem with food it is from Mackrille School. I think what we are doing is good for the kids. We never have complaints we actually have compliments.

The board gave thanks.

Ronda Baston, 670 Second Avenue personally verifies that with any problems with food they have had Alan was at their door within 10 minutes. To think that a parent addressed the situation and it wasn’t handled I do not believe under any circumstances. If something might look freezer burned it gets corrected immediately. It is not right that the chicken nuggets that they don’t like are brought to you but not the white meat chicken that they do like. I don’t feel the presentation was fair. It is not just about the bad things.
Our grilled cheese sandwich has the required amount of protein, it is a low fat cheese and it is in between two pieces of whole wheat bread. If it is cooked properly at a very low temperature for a longer period of time it won’t crinkle up and look like it has been run over by a tractor. The kids love these things. The kids turn their nose up at green beans. Children will actually not take a meal if it has green beans they ask what the alternate meal is and they will take the bagel plate. If kids see a green bean or a pea in the meal they won’t get the hot meal they will take the bagel plate so we try to attract the children with what they like. We space out the serving of corn. We don’t put the things that are not so nutritionally good up against other things that are not good. The sloppy Joes at Savin Rock are a big hit and they are made from turkey. The kids love the tuna we put out on Friday. During Lent children can’t eat meat and we think of everything. I feel the presentation that was brought to you was sort of one sided and I know they are looking to better things but we have come such a long way.

The board gave thanks.

Rosemary O’Brien, 116 Cherry Lane thought it was a thorough presentation but there are a few things she takes exception to. She didn’t think Christine set out to do anything bad to anyone at all. She simple spoke about what we have all been talking about for five or six years. Her presentation pulled out the bad things and she mentioned some of the good things here and there. I don’t care if a child likes something. I do care to a degree. You have a good valid point they do have to eat the food put in front of them. Her children like cookies and chips and one like’s candy but she will not feed them this. She will not fee them anything with blue dye at all. I will not feed them something packaged six months ago no matter when the expiration date is. If you give them solid food choices that they have to choose from that is what they are going to eat. Her children and many children from many of the people she knows raise their children on good food not on chicken nuggets and hot dogs and whatever; my kids don’t go for that stuff; one of them does. If you give them good choices they will make good choices.

Mr. Belchak commented in the New Haven Register that he has not heard many complaints but many people don’t complain because they feel it falls on deaf ears when they do. They also know there are people like Christine and Michelle that will step up and speak so why do it themselves. I wrote a blog West Haven Education in Crisis which was started last year when all the reorganization started. I have been getting calls all day on emails people don’t want to post so I have been getting calls at the school. A lot of the people feel the uniform issue is a smokescreen to the food issues and I am starting to wonder about that myself but that is another issue. There are many comments about the inadequacies of the West Haven School Systems lunches on the Register Website as well. It is as simple as this. The majority of my readers would rather have the city spend tax money on healthy, nutritious food for everyone’s children and not just if they pack their lunches. I pack my child’s lunch but that doesn’t mean I don’t care about every kid in front of me. I direct theatre and I call them my kids too. Why would I worry about my own child only? I have to fight with the little one not to get the lunch sometimes but that is beside the point. People who think that everybody should just pack their lunch don’t get it. They don’t get that this is the only nutritious meal some kids will get that day.
possibly and it needs to be a good meal not one filled with 720 mg of sodium. This food issue was brought up ten years ago and a board member at that time brought this up and was admonished for stirring up controversy and making West Haven look bad. It is not controversy that makes it look bad it is the issue being discussed that makes it look bad. The kid’s nutrition is what matters. Let’s take care of our city and our children. The foods that have been changed are they going to remain or are they going to migrate back to the way soupy mac and all that other stuff. Our children deserve nothing but the best and that includes food. I want to thank Christine and Michelle for shedding light on it and the food service people should not be upset. As they said they were not attacking them in any way, shape or form. If they are so concerned about the food they serve their kids in their school they should welcome the discussion throughout all of the schools; especially elementary schools when they are still being formed and say here have a banana instead of a chip. This issue needs to be discussed and investigated and have further changes made. I do hope you will look into this.

The board gave thanks.

Margi Maher, 403 Center Street said they are producing Westies with a Heart for Japan which will be produced to help raise funds for humanitarian efforts to help our friends. This will take place on Saturday, May 7th at 7:30 in the WHHS auditorium. There is a cabaret and several teachers will be performing as well as many of our talented alums and current students. Last time we raised $3,000 for Haiti and we hope to do that and better. I hope you will all come and help us out.

Robert Aguilera, 109 Bassett Street he is a past member of the WHHS swim team who graduated in 1973. In all due respect to the Matrisciani family my objective here is to nominate that Mr. Fred DeDominico have the pool be named after him. He was the school coach from 1964 to 1978. He has many letters that have been written to request that this be done. The letters were given to the board members and will be kept with the minutes.

The board gave thanks.

Jerrod Mastey, 36 Center Street addressed the audience and asked if there were any questions to please jump in. He identified the poisons and toxins that are hidden inside our food. This is a scientific fact. There are no if, and or buts about it. Obesity is not just being large and fat it is literally where the body holds toxins. He addressed GMO’s genetically modified organisms. This is a vast topic and a scientific background and a lot of other evidence to absorb it. Studies show over 90% of people that consume GMO foods not only do they become sterile in certain situations but the second generation becomes 50/50 sterile and the third generation of rats that the study was done on become completely sterile. That means your kid’s kids will no longer produce children.
Rat poison contains good food with a little percentage of sodium fluoride which is what kills the rat. Sodium fluoride is also in our tap water. This molecule too large to go through our pores but is ingested in our mouth when we swallow. Sodium fluoride affects parts of the organs inside our brain. Sodium fluoride is also in coke and all our products; anything that is made with water. It is in our food in our pickles and in our Half and Half and many other things. On scientific charts it is called a known toxin and toxins should not be ingested into our bodies. This is a danger and should be a top priority. There are a multitude of dangerous things even like MSG. MSG scientifically known as E621 is a chemical a drug. It tricks your mind and screws up the neurological functions of the brain also screws up the attention span. There are large studies on this. If signs say no MSG in this there may still be in the ingredients autolized yeast which is something that contains MSG also. There are clever ways to hide this.

It is a scientific fact now that milk while it does have calcium in it but with the animal proteins that are involved in it can remove the calcium from your bones.

These things are scientific facts and need to be addressed. We all have people dying from cancer and disease and it is just as simple as avoiding toxins. Let’s avoid these things like we avoid cigarettes or any other dangerous substance. He passed out a few handouts.

The board gave thanks.

The next speaker was David Carr, 29 Lake Street. Mr. Carr’s comments begin on the next page.
School Uniforms

My name is David Carr. My past professional experience includes working with adjudicated youth and their families, as well as working with children and families of origin on family preservation issues. I have a masters degree in the family counseling field. I stand here as the Dad of two boys who are long residents of West Haven attending public school.

I extend my appreciation to all members of this Board who make a significant commitment of time and talent to improve our school district. Thank You.

My comments have been presented to the board in writing. I request my comments not be taken out of the context they are presented as I will quote other professionals. Comments will be available to West Haven Education in Crisis moderator if she chooses to publish them there.

After considerable review of the current research on school uniforms by searching abstracts and multiple keyword combinations it currently seems to me there is a lack of authoritative data suggesting uniforms will improve the success and behavior of children in a school setting. To date I have discovered no majority of professionals who created authoritative data to suggest otherwise.

There is a vast amount of opinion that suggests the uniforms will increase group identity, cost less than regular trendy clothes, make students more identifiable when they are in the community and help to identify intruders in a school.

Nowhere I found does it say that school uniforms will address the underlying issues that contribute to problems in a school environment. Such issues include:

**Bullying**- which remains a major high profile problem, for the segment of the students and families affected. The victim whom is afraid to report it and the instigator who is acting out his issues of insecurity and poor identity formation in an attempt to overpower a weaker peer, while creating acceptance into the bully group. Education needs to be consistent showing bullying is a developmental problem, and an indicator of underlying personal issues of insecurity and lack of acceptance. Often the bullies are victims of verbal or physical abuse themselves. A standard of group accountability can be modeled for students who observe bullying so they can have a means to join with other students to make bullying unacceptable, instead of something where the head is turned.

**Lack of Academic Competence**- as some students move through school unsuccessfully the pressure to perform becomes greater despite the lack of ability. These students soon find their place with other underachievers and the negative behavior that often accompanies them.

**Substance abuse**- Smoking, drinking, prescription drugs, street drugs are the common issues here that contribute to the apathy, low motivation and failure to succeed.
Lack of Perceived Relevance in Learning: Students can read stories that suggest high school and college may not assure them of a good job.

Lack of a Life Plan: Students who do not see themselves having a direction or opportunity to get there may choose the route of anti-social behavior which creates an undercurrent of negativity in a school community population.

Life Stage Developmental Issues: including self identity, peer inclusion or exclusion, reputation in school, emotional and physical maturity, positive or negative outlook on life, past success and failures in life,

Lack of a Stable Home Life: Issues including unemployment, underemployment, debt, marital discord, intergenerational functions, extended family problems and elder care issues all contribute to the load that some of our students are forced to carry, not by choice but by chance.

Financial Stressors: Some students families do not presently have the means to provide a standard of living that would be considered "typical for a middle class family". This situation leads to anger and frustration that is acted in in a variety of milesus, including the school community

Media Distraction: Junior and Senior high school students spend up to 7 hours a day absorbing entertainment media (games, video, music, text messaging, entertainment news of coming events). Can this create isolation?

Putting a uniform on a stressed, unhappy or frustrated child will not change these conditions. I am sure the school counselors know what I am talking about. Actively creating solutions and a new vision can make a difference over time.

One solution I propose tonight is a implementation volunteer force of parents, student teachers, qualified students and qualified community members who would join the teachers on a daily basis as hall monitors, mentors, teaching assistants and other support personnel to create a larger community of supervision and support for students in the schools where parents and teachers feel this support is most needed.

If there are problem locations of the schools prone to behavior management issues I would consider closed circuit audio and video monitoring, similar to what is used on a school bus in many communities.

If a school decides that uniforms are the way to go then the school may develop a bigger problem of deciding how to address individual rights of expression. I have not chosen to address restriction of personal freedom of expression in this commentary.

To think that having uniforms is going to eliminate issues of economic differences is wrong in my opinion. Students can still obtain other "status symbols" that show they
have access to money and embrace stereotypes. To try and prohibit that in a consumer driven media driven culture is difficult to say the least. Students can still express themselves through their shoes, music, weight, odor, walking style, communication, use of language, role models, smoking habits, glasses, socks, hats, hair style and hair color, coats, glasses, pens, backpacks, how they wear their clothes on their body, entertainment media devices, cell phones, cars, etc. Economic and cultural differences that are evident at close quarters to people that know each other are not to be covered up because they are not bad, they are just differences.

Involving families and communities creating solutions to address identify the elephant in the room is challenging, rewarding, and scary.

Our children are living in a multi-cultural world, often much more than many adults. Adults who have established their residence, their employment and their circles of friends earlier in life. As globalization of jobs continues the person who can see others based on their character, values and competence, instead of color and ethnicity, will succeed.

The educational community (which is parents and school staff) would do well to embrace this as a strength of the school system, enthusiastically continuing to work these concepts and relational issues into the curriculum to model cooperation and personal growth.

As I was researching abstracts I noticed two kinds of studies, ones that measured student and faculty perceptions, and **quantitative research** that addressed data like test scores and reported incidents. I chose not to use subjective research that was addressing perception, which is harder to measure ..........like this.

**Opponents contend that school uniforms**

Violate a student's right to freedom of expression
Are simply a Band-Aid on the issue of school violence
Make students a target for bullies from other schools
Are a financial burden for poor families
Are an unfair additional expense for parents who pay taxes for a free public education
Are difficult to enforce in public schools

Statements like this are often well intentioned personal opinions of caring people presented without measurable supporting data or research. Now for a brief review of the current research
Statements like this are often well intentioned personal opinions of caring people presented without measurable supporting data or research. Now for a brief review of the current research:

1) http://theparentsite.com/parenting/schooluniforms.asp

I quote this study by Pauline Wallin, Ph.D. a psychologist in Camp Hill, PA, and author of "Taming Your Inner Brat: A Guide for Transforming Self-defeating Behavior" (Beyond Words Publishing, 2001). "However, when researchers actually measured school attendance, achievement, number of fights and other indicators of good citizenship, the results were mixed. In some schools there was no difference between their pre-uniform days and after uniforms were introduced. In other schools things got worse. A few schools did show moderate improvements in test scores and behavior. In summary, we know that merely putting navy blue on school kids will not transform them into model students. It is more important to provide an atmosphere where rules are clear and enforced; where expectations create attainable challenges; and where parents are involved in their children's education. These will boost our children's success far more than any uniform."

2)--Read more on FamilyEducation: http://school.familyceducation.com/educational-philosophy/individuality/38675.html#	tx21GHTV6G

I quote this study by Carleton Kendrick Ed.M., LCSW -. This "reform movement" is wrong-minded at its core. It's yet another overly simplistic, very visible response to the crises gripping our public educational system. Children should be allowed and encouraged to express their individuality in school as well as the larger society. Grunge, hip-hop, gothic, J.Crew. They're all styles of dressing - each proclaiming its own subculture's codes and values. Forbidding adolescents to express themselves through clothing and hairstyles prevents a healthy transition to independence and freedom from their parents and other adults."

3)-- http://www.principalspartnership.com/schooluniforms.pdf

I quote this study dated 2/26/07 By: Dr. Karen Walker of Lebanon Valley College researchers state "Hard evidence that proves the wearing of uniforms provides a direct link to better academic achievement is not conclusive. What appears to have been overlooked in the data analysis is the effect of other programs that are often being implemented at the same time as the uniform policy and may also have a direct impact on the discipline and attendance issues."
I quote this study by DAVID L. BRUNSMA an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Missouri who finds in 2006... "Requiring students to wear uniforms is a change that affects not only students, but also school faculty and parents. Instituting a mandatory uniform policy is a change that is immediate, highly visible, and shifts the visual and environmental landscape of any school. Changing the landscape is a superficial change, but it attracts attention because of its visible nature. Instituting a uniform policy can be compared to cleaning and brightly painting a deteriorating building. On one hand it grabs our immediate attention; on the other hand, it’s only a coat of paint. That type of change attracts attention to schools and implies the presence of serious problems that necessitate drastic change... A policy that is simplistic, readily understandable, cost-free (to taxpayers) and appealing to common sense is one that is politically pleasing and, hence, finds much support." (Brunsma and Rockquemore 1998).

What is clear from the research is that school uniforms, as a policy and strategy, do not play a role in producing more parental involvement, increased preparedness, positive approaches toward learning, pro-school attitudes, a heightened feeling of school unity and safety, or positive school climates. Therefore, such a policy should not be touted as increasing the educational atmosphere at any level of schooling.

6) I quote this study in The Journal of Education Research Sept./Oct. 1998, David L. Brunsma from the University of Alabama, "the authors were forced to reject the idea that uniforms improved attendance rates, decreased behavioral problems, decreased drug use, or improved academic achievement. The authors found that pro-school attitudes from students and their peers with good academic preparedness did predict the positive behavior. They saw that wearing uniforms did not lead to improvements in proschool attitudes or increased academic preparation."

7) http://www.preventschoolviolence.org/resources_assets/CPSV%20Fact%20Sheet-6-Student%20Uniforms.pdf
I quote this study by Dr Reece L. Peterson, Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln in December, 2008: "There is insufficient scientific evidence in 2008 to endorse implementing school uniform programs as a school violence prevention strategy. Thus, the Consortium to Prevent School Violence cannot recommend that schools require student uniforms. However, some school districts may choose to do so for other reasons or as a part of dress code policies. Most of the research on school uniform policies has been survey research assessing perceptions of teachers, administrators, parents and students of the usefulness of these policies. Virtually none of these studies used direct behavioral measures (such as records of fighting and bullying at school), and most did not account for the effects of other strategies or interventions that may have been implemented concurrently."

8) http://712educators.about.com/cs/schoolviolence/a/uniforms_2.htm

I quote this study by Notre Dame's Department of Sociology produced in 1998: "Findings using 10th grade students showed that uniforms have no direct effect on "substance abuse, behavioral problems or attendance." It also claimed a negative effect on student achievements for those students considered 'pro-school'. Schools must educate students in a safe environment. Over time, education has often slipped away as the main focus of schools. What do we think the focus has become? As we have unfortunately seen, school safety is such an enormous issue that it is hard to come up with policies that truly work."

9) I quote this study by Scott Imberman & Elisabetta Gentile, 2009. completed "Dressed for Success: Do School Uniforms Improve Student Behavior, Attendance, and Achievement?", University of Houston. "Found that uniforms had little impact on student outcomes in elementary grades but provided modest improvements concentrated in female students in language scores and attendance rates in middle and high school grades."

10) I quote this study by McGloin, Alexis, Ed.D., TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, 2009. The effects of school uniforms on school climate in elementary school. "The results of the research found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' and teachers perceptions of school climate. In both respects, teachers in the district without uniforms responded more positively."

11) http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SchoolUniformsDebate/message/539

In Dressing down Houston's school uniform policies By ADOLFO SANTOS 2002 (the assistant chair over political science at the University of Houston), data presented here hints at the possibility that school uniforms may actually have a increased effect on suspension rates. It is as if students are more likely to misbehave once they are required to wear uniforms. For this reason, it is necessary for schools to evaluate their programs to determine whether the benefits outweigh the dangers."
After considerable review of the current research on school uniforms by searching abstracts and multiple keyword combinations I have come to the conclusion that there is a serious lack of authoritative data that suggests school uniforms will improve the success and behavior of children in a school setting. To date I have discovered no majority of professionals who created authoritative data to suggest otherwise. On one hand it grabs our immediate attention; on the other hand, it’s only a coat of paint. That type of change attracts attention to schools and implies the presence of serious problems that necessitate drastic change...
Lorraine Carr, 29 Lake Street stated that the phone call that went out to everybody about uniforms was misleading. If you pressed three it just kept repeating the question over and over again. When the uniform issued first came out a lot of people said yeah that is a great idea but they didn’t have all the facts and I think everybody needs to have all the facts. From what I hear now it would be up to each individual school to pay for the uniforms of the families that can not afford them. That is insane. You are taking money out of the schools that could be going to smartboards, books and teachers. Let’s do things more along the side of science and technology and have more computers in the school. Do not take any money out of our school for these uniforms I am completely against it. It is an unfair additional expense for parents who already paid taxes for a free public education why should I spend money on these school uniforms because you know I will have to spend money on clothes for after school too. I am totally against uniforms.

The board gave thanks.

Dennis Gamester, 135 May Street said in listening to all this conversation somewhere there is a trade off. You can’t have whole wheat bread and something in the bread that doesn’t work. It is like going to McDonalds and buying a Big Mac and a diet coke. I don’t know where the trade off is. You can’t give them something good and then put something in it that is not good. I don’t know if it is cost prohibitive I’m not sure. With milk the whole milk is not good for you neither is 2% or 1% somewhere; somehow, someone has to get the facts. My son eats breakfast and lunch everyday. I can’t control what he eats at the school. I leave it up to the school. I don’t understand how Savin Rock School has a program with better food than the one my son attends. How is that? Who pays for that? How does that work? He doesn’t have an answer. He doesn’t know what you give up to get something better. If you save on one end you are going to give up on the other that is the problem I have. The other problem is the uniforms.

I attended Catholic grammar school for 8 years and a private high school for four years. I wore a shirt and a tie and it didn’t do me any good. That was my fault I was a goof off in school. You have honor role students in public school and in private school; there is no difference; it is the student’s application. If the system doesn’t provide for the student and the student doesn’t grasp it someone is at fault; either the system or the student. Uniforms to me make no difference. I don’t see how it benefits a person or a child’s education.

The board gave thanks.

Mike Milano, 633 Savin Avenue owns a business in West Haven at 487 Campbell Avenue called VIO’S Sports Plus, LLC. He wanted to throw his hat into the ring if the town does go with the school uniforms. He would like to be involved in the bidding process. He has been a resident for over 40 years. He graduated from WHHS and sponsored many programs and teams in the city. He does a lot of work for schools, PTA’s sporting goods and also does it for other cities that have implemented the uniform program. He works for some of the suppliers that were already mentioned. He does in-house embroidery and screen printing and has been in business over 20 years. He wants
to sit down and make sure when we do quote we are quoting apples for apples not something on the low end compared to the high end. He would also like to sit down with the principals to get familiar with their schools and do the fitting themselves. If this goes through they may take another store front on Campbell Avenue to enhance the center a little more. He left some flyers.

The board gave thanks.

Robert Pimer, 37 Woodmont Road is here to express his opinion on the naming of the WHHS pool. His heart goes out to the Matrisciano family. His heart also goes out to his swimmers and one of his captains sits on the board. When the name of the pool came down his phone hasn’t stopped ringing from his swimmers.

He worked with Marissa Matrisciano on the PTA and the band and this board would do such an injustice to not do something for Marisa you should. She has gone above and beyond the unsung hero awards with her time and commitment. He was on a bus trip for the football game three days before she passed away. This board really needs to do something for Marisa there is no doubt about it.

Like Mr. Aguilera said a lot of people’s feelings were hurt when the pool was named after Dave Trembly including Fred DeDominico’s family and all his past swimmers. Maybe the board should let the pool stay the way it is now or if you wanted to be fancy call it the West Haven High Natatorium. My name came up and my family’s name. He has 21 years out of his 28 years as swim coach for this town now. His brothers and sister the three out of the four all graduated captains of WHHS. We do not want to see our name put on the building. This was a generous kind gesture from people in this town and my family and I appreciate it. He took half his stipend and turned it over to the girls swim team because I feel that when you take the coaching position in this town you should be there for the swimmers. He couldn’t have been more proud of the swimmers this year. He doesn’t believe a name belongs up there but if a name does go there it should be Fred DeDominico’s.

The board gave thanks.

Chrystal Fanelli, 89 Williams Street spoke on behalf of the West Haven Youth Lacrosse League. It was started in 2009 and since we began two years ago the number of children we had sign up has literally doubled. We started with three teams and we now have five teams and are anticipating six or seven next year. Those of us who run the league are concerned with the future of the grounds as Molloy School because there has been talk of turning it into a farm. We are requesting you leave a portion of it behind the school so we can still practice. We had a hard time to find a field to practice on because there are so many soccer teams and we use the high school field as often as we can but they have two track teams there and the soccer league. We have used the area behind Molloy as a backup field for the past three years. Please keep this in mind when you are making the plans for Molloy and to not take this area away from the kids.
The board gave thanks.

Nancy Rossi, Robin Road said she thought the presentation by the two ladies at the last board meeting was professional, well thought out demonstration; one of the best she has seen in over 10 years. They didn’t attack anyone and they didn’t say anything about the staff or anything like that. What they wanted was change and everybody is talking about it. It was in the newspaper. I think they did this community a great service. Mr. Belchak and his staff made a wonderful presentation and do a wonderful job. Their point was to bring up the problems that they saw in their school and they did that. What I am concerned about is that the rumor is we are going to outsource the cafeteria and all the service and I think that would be a huge mistake. We already outsourced one program and when I pulled the records that one stuck out because we were promised cost savings and maybe we will get it in the future but at first glimpse it was not a cost savings. I would like everyone to work together and give the staff support that they need and to also commend these young ladies who put themselves out there.

There has been a change on the public hearing for the Mayor’s recommended budget. The new date will be April 7, 2011. It will be a Thursday evening and will be held at WHHS at 6:00 PM and she is hoping everyone can attend. Since the March 31st date is now open she extended the date to the Board of Education to speak and listen to what people have to say. If this doesn’t work the Superintendent can have his secretary get back to her either way tomorrow by email. The time will be 6:00 PM. If a later or earlier time works better let me know. Neil asked if she was saying there will be two public hearings. No, this is just for the Board’s presentation. She will actually do it for the public hearing which will be very late because she had to change the date and she didn’t want to box us in and have us run out of available nights. We have to pass the budget it goes in by May the 5th the first Thursday in May as our charter states.

She then read from the Charter, Chapter 9 Department of Education page 12 Section 4 Budget and Purchasing. This pertained to the established form of the way the budget is presented. She would like to see a comparative for three years in the comparative it has # of positions with the salaries. This is extremely important to a numbers person. When she read the board’s address it stated there were 75 new positions this year but you can’t tell that by looking at your budget because you don’t have a three year comparative. When someone picks up your budget the only thing everyone is pretty sure of is we have one superintendent and one assistant superintendent and other than that how many teachers and principals do we have what does that line item represent. She is requesting this information this year as she has for the past three years. I will also be requesting other information as budget deliberations go on. I think it’s better to give you a head’s up so you can come prepared with the information. I think I’m trying to save the taxpayer’s money. If anyone questions how this serves the duties of her position just pick up the phone and she will explain it. She then discussed the article recently in the New Haven Register and said she was intrigued because the Register had information from February to March and when I asked for a similar request for two files I had to wait until almost the eve of the hearing months after my request in order to get it. The rules should be the same for everybody.
The board gave thanks.

Sandra La Russo, 71 Tuthill Street said there is a little controversy about the pool. When she was on the board ten years ago we honored a child who received national recognition and another student’s family then said my child receive national recognition what are you going to do for my child. It was a very difficult thing for us as a board. We took a vote at that time that in the future we weren’t going to name anything after anybody to avoid conflicts. That must have gone by the wayside. Tonight is a good example. There are a lot of people who are deserving. I think it is best not to put ourselves in those positions so the best thing you can do is leave it as the West Haven High School Pool.

The board gave thanks.

Joann Lucas, 289 Second Avenue is a life long resident of West Haven and is against the school uniforms. Children should be able to wear what they want to express their opinion as long as it is not something inappropriate for school. I also feel that for the people who don’t qualify for a free lunch but are at jobs working who in our case our salaries don’t necessarily go up but our taxes are going up and all of our other expenses are going up and now you are sticking us with another bill. Unless you are going to a two day school week who wears two pair of pants in one week (per package). Her children wear seven pair of pants a week minimum due to spills etc. The bottom line to getting kids to do good in school is to get parents involved. Parents need to come to the school and learn how to do it themselves. If the parent can’t read in English the kid can’t learn how to read in English at home. We need parents to step up and we need schools to contact parents to have them come to the school and find out what is going on. At Washington School we have many school events where the parents are invited to come in and the same parents that come also come to meetings like this. A lot of the kids that are getting in trouble and have bad grades are either bored in school or their parents don’t know what they are doing.

The board gave thanks.

John Lewis, 73 Park Avenue addressed the school uniforms. Personally he thinks it is a bad idea. How do you get out of a hole – you have to stop digging. We have to keep digging in our pockets for extra things and now uniforms. We still have to buy the other stuff so now you are putting another $600 on me $150 x 4 = $600.00 and when six months goes by they grow taller so you are looking at buying new uniforms so you are looking at about $1,200 a year. We pay our taxes and go to a public school and we should not have to do this. I don’t think another burden should be placed upon residents. Who knows taxes may be raised this year also so that will be another problem. Some say it makes everybody be the same but I disagree because the uniforms may be the same but one kid will wear Jordan’s and the other will wear Chuck Taylor’s. You will still have differences. Kids will always go with their own groups no matter what and I don’t think uniforms will change that at all.
March 21, 2011
BOE Meeting

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   March – Shawn Reis & Carly Lindgren

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The board gave thanks.

**C. REPORTS**

**C.1. Administration/Status of Schools (Continued)**

**Questions from Alan Belchak’s Presentation**

Alan Belchak was asked to come up again after public session ended. Mr. Belchak would like to hear from students to see if there was anything they would like to change or have added to the menu. He said to Christine that they are trying to make positive changes and will work together on this. It takes a while to make a change in the menu cycle because the food is already ordered but I do guarantee there will be some changes to the better. If we all come together as a group we can do this. He already instructed Marge to fax the nutritional labels to her school everyday.

Dorinda thanked Alan and his team for coming and she thanked the parents for speaking. It is a good dialog. At the end of the day parents are getting educated on what you and your team do and you are making changes so I think that is great.

Dorinda said Michelle Caprio from the PTA mentioned that the PTA Council is putting together a Health and Wellness Committee and I think that is great; the PTA Council can put together any committee they want to for progress but we have a Health and Wellness Committee. Alan Belchak said he doesn’t think they can have their own committee but they can be part of our committee. I don’t think they can have a separate Wellness Committee that is something we have to check but you could be on our committee and I’m on it and Eric and his wife are on it. Michelle said she was told by the PTA Council they could start a committee as long as we had three people to start with which we do. Neil said he doesn’t think it is a bad idea for them to have their own committee. But you would be welcome to be part of our committee. Michelle said we do want to work together. Dorinda said it is our responsibility to take the lead you guys can have a separate committee and we should be meeting and have our minutes on line. I would like to see some results come out of tonight’s meeting rather than next meeting have parents come forward with more complaints. Let’s come up with some actionable items that come out of this. One of them is we need the Health and Wellness Committee to regroup soon and have a plan of action. She also wanted an evaluation of the equipment in all the kitchens in all the schools. This is just as important as the boilers and cooling system. We need to know what is breaking down and where we really need to invest the money.

Dorinda asked if they researched bulk purchases with other districts. Yes we are together with what they call the Region 16 Bid. We are together with Seymour, Region 16, Prospect, Wolcott, Cheshire and Meriden. Dorinda asked to see the difference in prices to see how much is saved by doing this in bulk. He can show her the prices. She asked if
Alan was putting together a plan on the Child Nutrition Legislation that was passed are you putting together a plan that shows how we are going to gradually reduce our sodium, and introduce more wheat products. There is training and we will get funding for it. We will get an increase in money for the program. Alan said they don’t have finalization of the plan yet. They are increasing the meal components for those six cents so the smart thing to do is that we will go on the healthy food and fruit initiative which is great because the elementary schools are already doing it. There will be restrictions on what the PTA can do for fund raisers etc. Neil spoke about a Food Service Consulting Group that contacted him after the article in the newspaper came out. There is a cost involved but if you implement some of the savings that more than offsets the cost of the initial survey. Dorinda said the PTA Council also looked at a similar company. When she hears consultant all she sees are dollar signs. She is hoping we don’t have to go that way. She is not in favor of outsourcing. She feels any problem can be fixed in house we are a large enough organization. She would like to readdress this issue in two months. Alan said we have an open dialog and we can forge forward and make a lot of changes. We can change many of the things quickly like the sandwiches, more fruits and vegetables when it gets warmer this is all in the scenario so I will come back.

Rob Saley stated that what Christine and Michelle started was not acrimonious they were just looking for a healthier version of food. I’ll eat anything but that mac and cheese was a little rough but I know you are working on it. I’m sure you can work something out and if Savin Rock has fruits etc. perhaps all the elementary schools can have the same thing. Those sandwiches at the high school were out of this world and perhaps we can try and do this at the elementary schools. PTA parents said they will pay more for a good and healthy lunch.

Eric Murillo thanked Alan for coming it was a great presentation. He didn’t want him to think any one on the board thought that any of his employees were doing a terrible job. He thinks the parents concern was about the food that was being given to them. Yes it is nutritional food and you explain that as we are on the wellness committee together and you do explain the value of nutrition and things like that to us. I think we definitely can have improvement in what is inside the products the fillers and all this stuff that is in the food. If you continue to use MSG and fluoride and start having more child birth defects and children’s brain cells start to deteriorate you will have more expense in health issues and medical issues for the country it will not be good. He knows Alan will do a great job because he runs that cafeteria at the high school very nicely and has great food. If we can implement some of that food into the grammar schools, whether we have to make it in the high school and transport it to the grammar schools, it would be a good initiative for us.

Cebi Waterfield said she has seen three similar consulting groups coming through Bridgeport Hospital in her 22 years there and they could have saved a lot of money and the people they already had as in house experts. I would definitely recommend a panel of current in house people along with parents and administrators rather than a consulting group. The questions regarding Mr. Belchak’s presentation ended and Neil asked to have the Student Representative come up next.
C.1.b. Student Representatives

Gypsy Garcia began the presentation with Brandon Patterson following with his report and then Marum Majid concluded the presentation. The presentation follows:

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Sean said the link is on the high school website.
Neil said Judy Drenzek, Early Childhood Supervisor, will give a presentation on Kindergarten Registration. Neil said one of the initiatives when Judy came on board was to organize more thoroughly our kindergarten registration process and make it a more meaningful experience for not only the parents and students because it many cases it is the first time entering the school system but to also give the schools an opportunity to learn about the children who are coming in. He said Judy has done a good job and this is a much more welcoming program that parents and our staff will benefit from. Judy’s complete presentation is on the website.

Judy stated she is really looking forward to sharing this with everyone. It was a big process but there were a lot of people helping. It all started with The Early Childhood Council that had a vision of having a common procedure in place for all the schools and this is an outreach of not only the Board of Education but also the community, town and various agencies in the town.

The reason why we are changing the process is we want a common procedure in all the buildings. Our goal is to see that “Every child will have an equitable and positive start in their learning career.” For most children Kindergarten is their first time in a school setting.

- Registration is done in each elementary school the same way.
- Stations will be established where the children move to and get information or where they are assessed.
- The children will go home with a folder of resources, a book and backpack.

Some donations have been made by Sam’s Club, Shoprite and Blue Cross Blue Shield. The complete presentation is on the West Haven School’s Website.

Questions:
Rob Saley asked when you find that a child has a problem when he comes in for the screening what is the process. Judy said we might say maybe this child has a language problem but they do have universal screenings in the beginning of the year and they might say to the reading help where you can come in and sit in my class and observe how the child is working and get a little more information then move forward with screenings after that. Rob said so we put a little more time in on these children and continue to give them help. Rob said he thinks this is a wonderful thing this will reap a lot of rewards in the future and looks forward to seeing this.

Sean Maher thanked Judy and said this will raise what is most important is the comfort level for the transition for the students and make the parents feel that much more comfortable as well. He asked the times for registration. The times are 9 – 3 for those days posted. There is an hour in between break for the staff. We have them moving in 15 minute increments to the different station.
Dorinda asked if they have looked into Governor Molloy’s increase funding for Pre-K. There is nothing as of yet she only has received her Readiness Grant this past week. There is nothing official out there yet. Dorinda said he fully funded that line item. Judy went to the State Department just last week and they haven’t done anything with the budget.

Anne Druzolowski said even though they fully fund a line item doesn’t necessarily mean it is going to be approved by the legislature when it goes in. It could be one of those items they slash even though it is one of his pets.

Mark Palmieri asked if the times and dates will be posted again for people. Yes it will be posted again. Judy also said if a parent happens to go to a school that is not their home school they will go through the process with them and get them to their right school.

Howie Horvath asked Judy what she thinks about full day kindergarten and is value vs. half day. Politics and money aside just from an educational and personal perspective. Judy thinks it would be nice. More hands on time with students is a really good thing. We have wonderful kids in this community and we want to give them the best start and I think that starts with an early start. Cebi Waterfield has one child full day and the other half day so she can easily compare for Howie.

Neil thanked Judy she has really added life to the Early Childhood Council and it is more active now than it had been and Judy and Ann Marie actually Co-Chair the council.

The board gave thanks.

Al Barbarotta from AFB gave the board a few updates. They have addressed most of the contracts and put them back out to bid. The tradesmen are doing a great job our work order system has almost 1,000 completed work orders at this point. They are doing more work then they have ever done and are very responsive. There are some issues. Do we have enough custodians on our custodial staff? We don’t know if we have enough custodians because we never have a full complement. 26% of the time our custodians are out over a month. 21% of our work force is out on worker’s comp. That averages 30 to 35% of our custodians aren’t here everyday. Our custodial supervisor Mike McGrath spends somewhere around 25 – 40% of his time just filling in where people aren’t every day. We are not doing a great job cleaning our schools because we don’t have consistency our custodians need to come to work. We are trying to address those issues. 17 out of 38 of our custodians aren’t in the positions we want them in from day to day that is 44% so we aren’t getting consistency so we have some weaknesses there we need to address. Over all we are making some good progress. We have green cleaning implemented at this point. The energy program is an area where we will be able to affect great savings. We looked at all our facilities. We brought in an RFP to just get some numbers for the ice rink there are no commitments. We spend a lot of money managing it and it is supposed to be self sufficient but it is not. Some rinks are outsourced and some not many are still managed by school systems. We are not here to make money he said we are here to educate students. We need to make more money just to cover our costs so
we are wasting money there. If we can get a company to come in and manage that rink for a profit they will pay us and we won’t have to spend our money that we could use on our lunch program or books or teachers. We are ready to go on the street with this and we also have ready the RFP for five year capital plan. We talked about doing a needs assessment for all of our schools. We talked about having a space utilization plan so we can ask for money and systematically improve and maintain our schools; those RFP’s are ready to go out and doesn’t commit us to anything. We are just going out and seeking numbers and information so we can go out and talk about it here at the board. That is pretty much it.

Dorinda is disappointed on hearing about outsourcing the rink and asked if had been discussed before. Neil said we are losing money and we can explore this option. We must present our budget. Dorinda said before we go out to bid I would rather see what the rink ice time is and charge more for the use of the rink of people outside of West Haven. Neil stated we have three custodians there and one is out on comp so we have to bring in another sub custodian. We have more custodian in the high school than all the buildings combined.

Al said you need to look at all the facilities. Pools aren’t used during the day so why do we have a pool if not to use it. Park and Rec uses it but it comes out of our budget. The rink is a business and you need a business to manage it. The rink has lots of hidden costs like the Zamboni. It will break down next year and the cost will be $100,000. We are forced every day to manage better with less.

Howie has said we have seen on the national scene that there has been a lot of controversy and some dramatic attempts to changing the way the rules are relative to workers in Wisconsin and Ohio and other places and what I’m wondering is if people are getting a sense that this is feasible and more likely now then it ever was before for a lot of reasons. Can we sit down, I think this is what Ms. Borer is suggesting, here is where we are, this is what it is like, and this is why I think it is not working, and these are the bottom line numbers why I think it is not working. This is regarding the rink for the moment. This is what we think would make it work. That means change on your part. Are you interested in change or are you going to stand firm on the way things always were? We would have that kind of a conversation, get their input, get their feelings and their ideas about how they would think or how they would suggest it improve. See if there is some consensus around it before we go down the outsource road which as everybody knows is a real possibility especially in these times. This is just a thought for you to consider. I would be interested to hear that kind of conversation at this particular juncture. It is a different time than ever before. This is really more of a comment than a question. Al Barbarotta said he believes it is something that should be taken up with the facilities committee and we can spend some time looking at it. When you look at the facts and the history I think every year we are doing a little worse than they year before and the economy has a lot to do with it. You have to be tough and you have to change rules. I don’t want to ever fight West Haven tradition in sports. Howie stated that would be a losing battle. Al said the ice rink is sacred like the stadium but the fact of the matter is we give it away. A discussion ensued about not charging for certain things. It is
tough to do sitting in the board’s seat but an outside guy can come in and says I have to make a profit here these are the rules and you have to give some things up.

Cebi said two of her big concerns from listening to what is being said tonight. Her two biggest concerns are that you said we have to work around and can’t utilize the people we have working because work rules prohibit us from using the people we have to do the job that needs to be done. Those issues need to be addressed sooner rather than later. She does not know the legalities of contract negotiations but that is a huge problem in my opinion as a taxpayer and a parent and a citizen that those things aren’t being addressed. The other thing is that workman’s comp claims and other disability claims at the hospital where I work (we are self insured and self funded all of our disability claims) had to go through an arbitration board. You were given a certain amount of time from whenever your disability, illness, or injury occurred and had to provide documentation from your physician why you were not able to return to work for a back injury. Everything had to be recertified and I don’t know if that is something that our employees out on workman’s comp have to do. A further discussion took place. Al said he just needs more custodians to come to work everyday. West Haven does not do a good job chasing down these claims and we need to do a better job with this. I can’t clean and maintain your schools within my budget unless they come to work and help to clean. That is what we are down to why aren’t they coming in. Cebi asked if there are policies that are not in place that are having our custodians get injured in the first place. Howie asked Rob to bring this information in with a facilities meeting. Neil stated that we have some negotiation that are in the process now. This is a system that one time worked but needs to be looked at and reexamined. He doesn’t know that outsourcing is the way to go. If we can loose a couple of salaries and maybe combine something maybe it is more economical to run the rink ourselves. We are not seeing this though. A further discussion took place.

Eric said we don’t have the facts but we know what the rumors are. He would like to see the figures. The money the company gets would go to the city. Neil said he is a hockey parent and uses the rink. He can’t give a number until it is explored. We are closing the rink between now and April 23rd for school vacation there are no activities. This was always a nine month operation and last year we kept it open longer and lost more money. What we need to do is operate for the betterment of the education system.

Patrick said we have been talking about the rink losing money every year; there must be a change. We must explore ways to stop the bleeding. Eric said this should have been discussed a little more before bringing this up the same with food service. Someone stated we could go to Park Rec and see if they want to share in the rink. Howie said we will get more information before anything happens. Rob said we have discussed this back in 1992 we received money from the City Council to fix it. Eric would like to get a copy of the RFP. A further discussion took place.

The Business Network Group Mr. Grande and Mr. Tagliatela delivered a presentation and updated the board on what has been done and what they are planning on doing in the future. Presentation is on the website.
Questions

Rob Saley asked if our jobs were posted on the website. The response was they have nothing to do with the website. The only thing they do is if something is down, we don’t have access to the website that is actually outsourced. Rob asked can somebody apply online. Yes but Patti Fusco corrected them and said no the applications are there but they would have to mail them in. Rob thanked Patti.

Mark Palmieri asked Mr. Grande that as far as the ten people if you have to go outside would it cost the district any money? He rephrased the question. Your ten guys can handle any problem or has there been a problem where you had to go outside and hire someone an expert? The response was that there are a total of 15 engineers in our firm and in the event we have to go outside we would use our access to Microsoft engineers and pay for that ourselves to fix the problem so there is zero cost to you folks because it is part of what we do. If we can’t figure out the problem we have enough credentials and certifications that we are allowed through the channels to help make sure we can answer the problem.

Mark said so out of your line item budget this and everything is being handled under one flat fee; there is no overtime as you stated, holidays whatever you are at our beck and call. That is correct. It is in our interests and our incentive which is different than any other place to make it work so that I don’t have to get up at 3:00 a.m. in the morning. There have been a couple of instances where we have actually had to roll out that early to make sure power school is up and running for the next morning. This is rare because we constantly monitor the systems.

Cebi Waterfield asked if the workstations were fat clients or thin clients. Currently they are fat clients. We image them across the district. The thin client is a virtualization and has been out for a while but we have to get to a point where teachers and instructors can just turn it on and use it. Sometimes there are some configurations you have to deal with first. So you have to manually go and update desktops you can’t push out code? No we push out. There are two different components thin clients push out the actual image but we actually push out all the patches. They are all removable sectionalized for the data center at the high school. Cebi said she did IT work currently. That is nice.

Eric Murillo said you mentioned that when you need something you just go and buy it because you don’t like to keep a stock of it. Do you keep a stock of anything at all? We do for critical path switches you have three on the wall. We have certain critical areas for the network at the high school. We have four hour response from Cisco Systems the vendor we have that provides that type of switch. We do have some Apple Mac Lap Tops for the high school and a couple of work stations but 10 would be a lot.

Eric asked how you determine which vendor you are going to use to purchase products. They go through state contractors. Eric said so you have the list and that is where you are going to go? The first place we always go to if it is a spec product that we believe is the right solution we always go to the state contracts. Eric has noticed that some of the numbers and products are purchased from local vendors from around the area and are not
state contracted like Best Buy. The reason for that is if we are on a project and there is a hard drive failure and we are in the middle of moving stuff to another school and if we don’t have it on the truck we have to get it to get the system up and running. Eric asked how often this happens because he has seen a lot of charges. It happens $3,430.00 worth of the time. Eric said that is not that much and asked for a print out of this information. Yes Marylou has an email of this for all board members.

The board gave thanks.

Neil Cavallaro thanked Jeff for being so patient and waiting to make his presentation. Five out of the six elementary school principals are here tonight and he thanked them. Pat Libero had a death in her family; her sister passed away and she is unable to be here. Howie extended the board’s sympathy.

Neil passed out information on school uniforms and stated that most of these questions were raised at the last meeting. Tammy took all of the questions and concerns and did a terrific job breaking them down into four sections. This was the first time that School Messenger did a survey of this magnitude and they were pretty impressed with how we did it. He thanked Mr. Lopes for actually talking them through it. He is pretty text savvy himself. There was about 65% response which is pretty good. We took into account the number of people that voted for or against uniforms. Principals did what they could to start the discussion on school uniforms and it got kind of ahead of us and I am not going to recommend you make a decision tonight. From our beginning discussions if you wanted to make this happen we wanted you to tell us about it, tell us what you need, tell me what is good about it and what is not good about it. We started with thinking of a small pilot program and the initial results we received were pretty overwhelmingly for it at least at Forest and Mackrille originally. In this sample it wasn’t quite as overwhelming.

Companies like VIO’S Sports Plus, LLC have approached our principals like Gina Prisco and Walmart employees who are parents of children that attend Forest School came forward and said we have a uniform pricing model that we use and they talked about giving gift cards towards the purchase etc. All companies seem to be willing to work with the Board of Education. If you buy 10 uniforms maybe one will be free. There are different types of options. School policies from Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport are included in the information. Tammy contacted these districts and her notes are included. We included the pros and cons of uniforms and no uniforms. This is something we need to take our time with. Neil has talked a lot with Rob Saley about crafting the policy in a way that says we won’t use city funds or some language to that effect. Rob is Chairman of the Policy Committee and maybe he wants to have a Policy Committee Meeting. Neil thanked the principal for all the work they did and said it certainly wasn’t at the expense of more important issues. We did not neglect things. This is a catchy issue that is why there were articles in the newspaper. It is something people have strong opinions on one way or the other. The principals will do whatever the board says to do.
Rob wants to have a Policy and Facilities Meeting. He will look at everybody’s schedule and let them know about a meeting date.

Howie said we will read this information and come back to it. Neil said the principals are available. Steve Lopes, Principal of Washington came dressed in the uniform. Everyone applauded him.

Howie said when we have our next meeting we will probably invite principals and others who are interested. Dorinda said before we move on she recommends that we have PTA Council representation. Rob asked for the uniforms or facilities? Dorinda said for the policy committee you will be discussing uniforms so please invite PTA Council. OK. Howie said that will be to the Chairman’s prerogative I guess.

There were no other questions or comments so Howie said we will go to board reports.

C.1. c. Board
Dorinda Borer offered condolences to Eric Murillo over the passing of his brother on behalf of the Board. Eric thanked them.

Sean Maher commended the students and faculty who worked on the clean up at WHHS. He was there Saturday morning with many of the sports teams, the band, Volunteers, the theatre workers in particular Betsy Bruneau, Jon Capone and Chris Everone for the energies they put in. A lot was done in three hours worth of hard work and all should be commended.

Our former Student Rep for the Board has been deployed and is of to Afghanistan later this summer. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Howie thought he was going to school first. Sean said the Marines promised him he would go to school for four years.

Mark Palmieri said the K Magazine on page 2 which states keep focused on student achievement and mentions how busy boards are this time of year with budgets but our primary business is public education. So let’s keep this in mind. I commend the women who came here from the PTA Council. They followed instructions from other people but didn’t get back to Food Service. That is neither here nor there but the main thing is what one lady from Second Avenue brought up. Education starts at home with the parent’s involvement. The article on food which is in today’s paper starts at home. This woman started a program and has a book and her child eats broccoli and he doesn’t know bad foods. She feeds him spinach and greens and this comes from home just like learning to read and doing your math. You sit down with your child and teach them the right way and it is the same thing with foods. They need to learn to eat the correct way too. Parent involvement is very important. I am glad the ladies made the presentation they did. For their awareness I am glad too that you brown bag it and on Friday’s eat the pizza I guess. I would like to stay focused on our children it is very important. Thank you for your time. Howie thanked Mark.

C.1. d. Committees
CEBI stated she has not attended any committee meetings. Howie asked if she had received a list of the committees with the Chairman of each. Yes she said Marylou sent it to her.

Rob Saley said he would make sure he gets everybody scheduled for the Policy and Facilities Committee Meetings.

Dorinda said this should have been under board and not committee but on May 17th we are having an employee health fair and she thanked Neil for working with them on this. She has offered to take the lead and if we want to instill those nutritional values in our students we want our employees thinking along the same line. We have to do everything we can to make them healthy and give them preventive opportunities. This will take place at the WHHS gym from 10 to 5:00 PM to allow for different shifts and we will have a lot of good services. Howie said very good.

Eric Murillo would like a discussion in the future on how to get together for the Wellness Committee Meetings. Perhaps some members from other committees already established along with some PTA parents can work on this. Howie asked who head’s up the committee. Donna Kosiorowski and Alan Belchak, Jon Capone, myself and some other principals and PTA’s. Patti said there is a teacher on that committee also.

Sean Maher said he apologized for having to cancel the curriculum meeting tonight. A key player wasn’t able to be there and it would have been an hour sitting around asking questions without any answers. I will contact committee members during the week so we can arrange a date for a meeting.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held at City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on March 7, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Howie Horvath requested a motion to approve the minutes D.1.a
Mark Palmieri made the motion to approve the minutes D.1.a.
Eric Murillo seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in agreement
The minutes are approved.

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

11-19 Jan Doyle, Literacy Teacher – Savin Rock Community School
Effective: End of the 2010 – 2011 school year
Reason: Retirement

11-20 Arthur F. Bellucci, Music Teacher – Seth Haley School
Effective: End of the 2010 – 2011 school year
Reason: Retirement

11-21 Sharon M. Brown, Elementary Teacher - Forest School  
Effective: End of the 2010 – 2011 school year  
Reason: Retirement

11-22 Jesse J. Ralph, Math Teacher – West Haven High School  
Effective: End of the 2010 – 2011 school year  
Reason: Personal

11-23 Nidia A. Pinzon, Spanish Teacher – West Haven High School  
Effective: End of the 2010 – 2011 school year  
Reason: Personal

D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

11-24 Andrea Santamauro, Secretary – Washington  
Effective: February 14, 2011  
Reason: Personal

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

11-25 Alycia Rovinelli, Science Teacher – Bailey  
Effective: 2011 – 2012 school year  
Reason: Personal

Mark Palmieri made a motion to approve D.2. 11 – 19 through D.4. 11-25 inclusive  
Rob Saley seconded the motion  
All board members voted in favor of approving all items D.2. 11-19 through D.4. 11-25 inclusive  
Discussion: Sean Maher commended Mr. Bellucci for his many years of service as he is retiring. His commitment to the Arts is unparalleled. Neil said there are several teachers on there that will be greatly missed. Howie said he is one of my favorite all-time teachers that I have had the chance to meet.

Eric Murillo asked Neil if anything came about with the young lady under D.3. Neil said no we haven’t heard from her.

Motion to approve D.2. 11 -19 through D.4. 11-25 inclusive is approved.

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

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

11-26 Myra McCown, 149 Canton Street, West Haven, CT
3 ½ Hour Cook – Washington School
Effective: February 18, 2011
Salary: Per AFSME Contract

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.6. New Hire Non-Certified 11-26
Mark Palmieri made the motion
Rob Saley seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members were in favor
Motion passes

D.7. New Business

11-27 Request from John R. McKee, Business Teacher – WHHS to have 27 DECA students attend the DECA International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida from Friday, April 29, 2011 to Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Sean Maher made the motion to approve item D.7. item 11-27
Eric Murillo seconded the motion
Discussion: Mark Palmieri said John McKee does an excellent job with the DECA group. It is very informative for the kids and they have a great time.

Eric Murillo also vouches for that and said the kids really get excited and learn a lot about marketing and then present this information to other students in other schools. They do a great job. Howie said he has heard a lot of good things and you can see he is dedicated. He is sitting back there for another four hour marathon for him. They do a great job.
Howie asked if there were any other comments or questions. There were none.
All board members were in favor
Motion passes

11-28 Vote to thank Yale for the $50,000.00 donation to Bailey Middle School

Howie Horvath requested a motion
Patrick Egolum made the motion
Mark Palmieri seconded the motion
Discussion: Sean Maher asked if we really had to vote to send a formal thank you to Yale. He thinks it is wonderful but didn’t know if it was procedural. Neil stated they expressed an interest in coming to see the smart boards at Bailey and we would like to send a formal thank you and when Yale comes to visit Bailey we would like to have a plaque placed at Bailey thanking them for the donation.

Eric Murillo asked if you didn’t get the $50,000.00 for the smart boards would the board have purchased them. Did we have money aside for that? Neil said we were only going
to purchase 10. Eric asked what we are going to do with the funds for the ten. We are actually looking at a data warehousing system which we have not purchased yet. All board members were in favor Motion passes

F. Informational

Nothing to add under informational

Howard Horvath requested a motion to adjourn. Dorinda Borer made the motion. Eric Murillo seconded the motion. All board members were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola,
Board Secretary