

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
May 18, 2009
Regular Board Meeting

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven on May 18, 2009. The meeting was called to order by Mark Palmieri, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Palmieri, Chairman
Gerald A. Calabritto, Vice Chairman
Robert Saley
M. Toni Paine
Howard Horvath Jr.
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer
T. Sean Maher

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Patrick Egolum
Andrew DePalma

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

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT: Shamsi Aysha
Eric Pang

B. REPORTS

B.1. Administration

Mark Palmieri welcomed everyone to the West Haven Board of Education regular meeting for May 18, 2009. Superintendent Cavallaro stated that the normal agenda has been changed in order to honor some students from Carrigan Middle School who are here this evening under the direction of Ms. Demetra Ballas who has been a math teacher there for many years. She entered a contest at Yale University and several students were involved and we did very well. He introduced Mrs. Ballas and AJ Palermo who is the coordinator of math to come up and talk about this. AJ Palermo began by telling

everyone about MATHCOUNTS. MATHCOUNTS is a national program and Carrigan started participating in 2007. It is a national math enrichment coaching and competition program that promotes middle school mathematic achievement. The over-all goal is to increase the enthusiasm that our middle school students have for math while enhancing their achievement. I publicly want to thank Mrs. Ballas who has really been a teacher leader for the past two years when it comes to this program which is an after school program. I really appreciate everything Mrs. Ballas has done. In 2007/2008 we participated as a club just to see how many kids would be interested. This year we actually joined the competition program. The competitions happen at Yale and we were the only non New Haven school participant. Mrs. Ballas and the students involved in the competition came before the audience.

Mrs. Ballas said how proud she was of her students. There were 10 students who participated but a couple of them couldn't be here tonight. Out of 28 schools that participated we were the only West Haven school and we came in 5th. They brought the trophy they won to show the board members. Rebecca Fernandes came in #8 out of 250 students and out of the 28 schools she was #6. (Applause) She is very proud of the students; they represented Carrigan Middle School and the City of West Haven and it is so nice to see academic achievement. These kids came after school and they had other things to do but they did come and we started off with 18 students but we ended up with 10 because they had other activities like the drama club and other after school activities. She thanked the student's parents for bringing them to this meeting and she thanked the board for recognizing them and thanked the students for coming and being part of this.

Rob Saley asked if the other three students who were unable to attend tonight's meeting were girls or boys. Joking around he said how come it seems the girls are always smarter than the boys? We have to come up a little bit we guys have to try a little harder (laughter) One of the students interjected; "Actually a boy won the competition." (Laughter ensued)

Rebecca Fernandes explained a little about the competition. She stated it was a written test and whoever received the highest score from each school stayed in the competition. The students sat in the front row and the questions were in the form of an essay and you had a time limit. The first one to ring the buzzer and have the correct answer was the winner for that group.

Pins were handed out to each individual student and Patricia Fusco took several pictures of the group. The Board gave thanks and congratulated the students. The following students attended the board meeting and participated in the MATHCOUNTS Tournament:

Zaneta Nicholson, Dionna Shipman, Linda Sihaphong, Charles Mucker, Georgio Favia, Jacob Yisehak, Rebecca Fernandes. Unfortunately Monica Creegan, Hang Pham, and Kiara Negrón were participants in the tournament but were unable to attend the meeting. All students did a wonderful job.

Neil Cavallaro said that Mary Janeczek the Math Department Chair for grades 6 – 12 is also here and she should be recognized.

C. Public Portion

Chairman Palmieri asked if anyone wished to address the Board.

Marie Subacrisiano, 6 Ridge Hollow (inaudible) Rd., West Haven. On May 12th she attended the All City Arts Celebration for instrumental musicians. This was the 50th anniversary of the program. Originally it was only elementary students but in 2007 the middle and high school students were also included. The enthusiastic response given from the elementary and middle school students and parents to the WHHS Jazz Band and Brass Winds Band was overwhelming; it reinforced the student's hard work. The elementary and middle school students appeared quite impressed with the WHHS student's performance and those students who actually worked with them in rehearsal. I would like to thank Ms. Marcella, Mr. Natrillo, Mr. Lupoli, Mrs. Langello, Mr. Vessichio, and Ms. Mekeel for their hard work and I hope this tradition continues on.

The board gave thanks.

Ron Luneau, a teacher of Alternative Education at Carrigan Middle School, 6 Trumbull Street, Derby. He understands that Mrs. Patricia Libero has applied for the principal ship at WHHS and I am here to voice my support for her as an administrator. He is a veteran teacher that is new to the district and is very impressed with the district as well as our middle school. I am proud to be an employee of West Haven and of Carrigan Middle School. Mrs. Libero is very accessible to us and as a first year teacher the door is always open and I can speak with her anytime I would like. Carrigan Middle School has great morale because of her and the staff. I feel that the staff works well together. The student morale is great and the behavior in school is wonderful and I think it is a reflection of the leadership. She constantly promotes kids activities and faculty involvement. For me leadership is the key to everything and I hope you will consider her. She appreciates hard work and I think she is an old school leader who is open to new ideas. I came here to support Mrs. Libero with her endeavors.

The board gave thanks.

Rosanne Ferraro, a teacher at Carrigan, 17 Warden Circle, Cheshire. I'm also here tonight to speak in support of Patricia Libero's request to be considered for the principal of WHHS. She has worked with her at Carrigan and she is accessible, fair, and supportive of my needs as a teacher and team leader, and she is always available. Pat has a very innate sense of fairness when she is dealing with the students. She is visible all the time she is engaging in her daily encounters with the kids; they know who she is. She addresses the students with respect although not always happy with their behavior and with genuine interest. She approaches parents and guardians with an open mind. She is conscious of the dignity of others at any age and has a unique talent for bringing an escalated incident down to a manageable respectful level. Pat has served as a vice

principal at WHHS and has therefore been there. I believe she would lead the high school with firm direction. She is an advocate for the diverse rich cultures that embody the city of West Haven. She embraces every child. Our school is quite beautiful she has beautified it. She is very supportive of the arts and the athletic and academic programs. The school is very welcoming to parents. We have parents volunteering all the time; they seem to be genuinely happy to come to the school. She has enriched our school with programs that directly benefit our students and is especially aware of those students who are most at risk. She reminds us often that they are children still at 11, 12 and 13 even though some of them are huge. Pat has stated that those particular students who are remote and troublesome at times tend to be those students that need to be held figuratively closer. This seems to be her philosophy. I would miss Pat but definitely think she would be able to serve this city as the principal of WHHS.

The board gave thanks.

Sandra Lorusso, 75 Tuthill St. West Haven spoke on behalf of Ms. Libero. She works at Carrigan and although I am not a teacher I log most of the discipline for our students. I get to see her work with some of the most difficult children and it is amazing the compassion that she has for children and how she deals with them. I don't know if any of you were able to see the play this year our children were absolutely fabulous and it was very entertaining. These are some of the good things that are going on at Carrigan because of Mrs. Libero so I think when you look at your candidates you should really consider her because she is an absolute dynamic leader.

The board gave thanks.

Tracy Morrissey, 305 Country Hill Drive, West Haven came to discuss several issues tonight.

1. Stiles – I have had discussions with many teachers and parents as to why Stiles isn't working. A lot of it is that the students aren't committed to being at Stiles. They are easily able to go back to the high school if they don't want to be at Stiles; which I think is very disruptive. Children can miss maybe two, three or four classes and go over to Stiles and stay at Stiles for maybe a couple of weeks and then decide they want to go back to their friends at the high school. That is not helping the students at the high school and it is not helping Stiles. The grades are inconsistent with the numbers; you can go there and find 20 kids there or 30 kids or 15 kids. I think part of the reason why Stiles isn't working is because of the rules that you have set up there. I spoke to people from various schools as to how they deal with attendance issues and they told me they have committees set up. They have a principal, a DCF worker, a nurse, a social worker, and a police officer. After so many absences they go to the student's home. We can not allow these attendance issues to keep piling up. I think that after 20 or 30 absences the student should have to attend Stiles for a year. Come September if you want to start again and you are committed to education you can start again. You are going

to get the education at Stiles but it will not be as disruptive as going in and out of the high school. I think we need to revisit this.

I do understand the problem with bringing four teachers over; absolutely we definitely need smaller class sizes and I am very sympathetic to this point. If you can't make Stiles work on the flip side you go to the new high school. Maybe you will need the Stiles building later on.

2. The City Council would like to have a public hearing about the new high school. We have to let people know, we have to go out and talk to the constituents; there is only so much money to go around. The city is also facing the sewer plant which is a huge endeavor and is state mandated. So are we going to take that project on and take a new high school on too – I don't know how much more people can afford. I'd like to know what we are going to do next year to address the science program. I want to know what we will be doing to fix the curriculum over there and to make the classrooms smaller. We don't have the time to wait two or three years. The proposal for the new high school looks great but can we afford it. I don't think we are going to lose anything right now by putting in and seeing what we can get; we have to explore all options. Honestly I don't know how much more the taxpayer can take; talk to the people.

Everybody is thrilled with the way the auditorium at the high school turned out and it was only \$100,000 to redo that auditorium and how well we all pulled together to get this done. Maybe we need to do something like that for the science department. Get the science teachers and parents involved. Parents tell me they are working two jobs and can't afford any more taxes. I don't know where we are going to get it.

I was disheartened to hear that we pulled two million dollars off the front of the building and we are getting fined. The windows were not done too long ago why weren't those windows efficiently put in. I don't understand why they are not working. We took this money from the state which is our money too we pay taxes to the state; it is all trickling down. We need to make it more affordable.

3. The Curriculum Seminar is the other thing I want to talk about. I did have the opportunity to attend last Friday and was very impressed. They did a wonderful job. I think there is a lot of work ahead. I embraced it and thought the teachers did a great job with it and they embraced it. Now we need to get the support to the people in the front line – the teachers. I think it can work but it is going to take some time. Our curriculum needs a lot of help and I thought we were OK until now. I am seeing the results of the SAT's. I am seeing my children's friends who are struggling with the SAT's. We can't wait two or three years we need to renegotiate and pay teachers more to keep them here. We are losing great teachers. You can have the best school in the world but if the teachers are getting paid nothing they aren't going to come. Why would they want to be here? In the surrounding towns Trumbull is offering \$15,000 to \$20,000 more and that is a lot

of money to a new teacher starting out. What are we doing to address those issues? I think we need to get the money down on the front line. We want to make a school system where kids want to stay in West Haven. They don't want to stay in West Haven because they are not getting the education. We are failing them so we need as parents and board members to pull together and fight for our kids and work together to make it better. We are open to suggestions but we need to make this work. I am struggling with it and find it very frustrating that our kids are going to failing schools. As parents we are going to diligently work over the summer; we welcome the curriculum and we are meeting with Sean Maher tomorrow night to work together to try and make a difference which the test scores are going to show. Hopefully you will keep an open mind with this.

The board gave thanks.

There were no other speakers. Public portion closed at 7:25 PM.

B.1. Administration (Continued):

Neil Cavallaro said that board member Mr. Andy DePalma is not here tonight because he was admitted to the hospital yesterday as he was having some chest pains. He was hopeful to be out tomorrow because his son is graduating from the Adult Ed Program. We will keep him in our thoughts and hope he is able to make it tomorrow night. It does look like he is going to be alright but the question is when will he be released from the hospital. He will send board members an email when he receives an update.

Most of the board members have scheduled a meeting date to go over an operating budget and if you have not done so I ask that you see me tonight or give me a call tomorrow. I would like the process to move along. Anne, Dave and I are available along with all of our principals and administrators are available should you have any questions with regard to the programs. We want you to have as much information as possible before we adopt an operating budget.

The All City Concert and Art Show have grown over the last couple of years and the kid's performances go without saying but I want to put a plug in for our Arts Department. One of the things they told me for years when I was an elementary school principal in charge of the All City Concert was how much they loved working together because they don't usually get to do that. When you are an Art or Music teacher the chances are you are the only Art or Music teacher in the building. This is really a nice time of year where they get to work together and show their various types of talents. What always strikes me is how well they are able to work together. The other thing that impresses me is not only do they work well together but they do it in only three weeks. To put this concert together in just three rehearsals is very amazing. I have to give AJ a lot of credit because it is quite an undertaking to coordinate getting the middle schools and elementary schools there and working with the high school. Certainly Cassie Marcella serves as your right hand. This has grown over the last couple of years and turned into something far beyond our

expectations. We hope it continues to grow and get better. Just watching the department work together in that short amount of time is very impressive.

On another note Floyd will have the contracts to you first thing tomorrow morning.

B.1.a. Status of Schools

Dr. Anne Druzolowski said the ending of professional development. During the past two weeks we put through another 300 teachers in the basic school areas relative to understanding better what the state standards are. We have another 110 teachers left who will be starting a whole new kind of work. That is the group that will be looking at Tech Ed, Health, PE and some of the Arts. All the responses are very positive; we get evaluations when they go into their CEU's and it was an exhausting couple of weeks. All the coordinators were there. We are next going through some training so we get certification training so people are trained to do the training for all the new staff that comes in and we won't have to rely on outside sources.

B.1.b. Student Representatives

Nothing

B.1.c. Board

Sean Maher attended both the All City Band and Chorus Concerts and can't say enough about them. Just watching the students watch each other is a very important part of it. Watching the elementary students actually look at the older students in awe thinking that they could be there some day did my heart good. I also attended Bye Bye Birdie which I can't say enough about. I will be a pleasure working with those kids when they come to the high school so let's hold on to them please. It was very professionally done and kudos to Ms. Bauer and Ms. Mustakos and the rest of the crew.

I had the pleasure of going to and participating in the latest band concert at WHHS. I was so impressive to me because their musicality and professionalism has grown so much. They actually tackled a very difficult piece Erin Copeland's Lincoln Portrait and it was as good and on par with the production I heard at Yale five years ago that Walter Cronkite actually narrated. This was narrated by Brittany James at the high school and it was just terrific. Hats off to all of them.

Howie Horvath had the great pleasure of attending Bye Bye Birdie at Carrigan which was outstanding; there was great talent and commitment. I was struck by the level of enthusiasm. There was an award at the end that they gave one particular young lady and people could have been vying for this competitively and the whole crew was so excited for that young lady. It was a great show and the camaraderie and enthusiasm was great. Hats off

Toni Paine went to see Bye Bye Birdie which she thought was phenomenal. The amount of involvement by staff, parents, and students; it is a concerted effort. They are just one family. When you go in there you can just see it and feel it. It is really great, the talent

too for kids that age. The high school is really going to benefit from this. I went to the All City Chorus which was phenomenal; really excellent. I need to ask one question – was the violinist a student? No, she is a Yale student. She was just outstanding. The artwork was a nice display over at the high school. That was fun to look at.

Mark Palmieri received this the day after the last board meeting from Kurt Ogren. The Register did a piece on him. He did a 50 mile marathon for the wounded, called the Wounded Warrior Project. He completed it and his goal was to raise the awareness of the Project and raise at least \$2,500 for the Wounded Warrior Project and to complete the 50 mile race in honor of our soldiers from all 50 states. He completed the race in 8 hours 11 minutes and 23 seconds; he came in second place. On that day it was 90 degrees here on April 26th and ironically it was the same temperature in Baghdad in Iraq. He said he felt good for the first 31 miles not so good the last 19. He should be recognized for this. I don't drive 50 miles in a day never mind run it. This is quite an accomplishment and I wanted to give him kudos for this.

B.1.d. Committee

D.1. Approval of Minutes D.1.a

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Meeting

May 4, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Blake Building (enclosure)

Sean Maher made a motion to approve the Board of Education D.1.a. minutes

Jerry Calabritto seconded the motion

Discussion: Rob Saley stated he knows we had a contentious meeting that night but I do not see that reflected in the minutes. I think that was the same meeting wasn't it. Yes. The regular board secretary wasn't there so she didn't know. Mark Palmieri said Mrs. Mursko had made mention of this when getting the minutes done. I wasn't sure who was there to be honest I'm sorry. All set. Yes sir.

All remaining board members but Howie voted in favor

No one was opposed

Howard Horvath abstained as the minutes were incomplete.

Motion Carries

D.1.a. Minutes are approved

D.1.b. West Haven Board of Education Special Meeting

May 7, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Blake Building (enclosure)

Jerry Calabritto made a motion to approve the Board of Education D.1.b. minutes

Toni Paine seconded the motion

Discussion: Rob Saley stated that he would like the minutes to reflect an 8 billion dollar deficit to the state (not 8 million) as was incorrectly stated in the May 7th minutes.

(Minutes will be corrected and forwarded to Debbie Collins). All board members voted in favor.

All board members were in favor

No one was opposed
No one abstained
Motion Carries
D.1.b. Minutes are approved

D.2. Resignations: (Certified)

D.3. Resignations: (Non-Certified)

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

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

D.7. New Business:

09-38 Request approval of the Healthy Food Certification Statement that must be completed by all Connecticut public school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program during the period of July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010.

Jerry Calabritto made a motion to approve item 09-38

Toni Paine seconded the motion

Discussion: Neil Cavallaro stated we are actually not enrolling in the Healthy Food Certification which is depicted on the form in the way the box that says we are not participating is checked.

Alan Belchack said currently 50% of the state schools are taking it and 50% aren't taking it. Now the 50% that is taking it have heard that there will be less funding available. We do follow the meal pattern anyway. Rob Saley asked who else just decided not to take it – Wallingford. Alan said it really harms our Fundraising PTA's and our parent groups for the sporting activities. That is basically the main reason. We do follow very high standards in our school because of our Wellness Policy.

Howie Horvath has a question and a comment. He doesn't have the numbers in front of him but is torn. He disagrees even though there are others in support of the non-healthy approach to lunches but I understand the reasoning and logic by the PTA's. I do seem to remember that though the revenues went up the equivalent costs went up so there was no net gain to us. Alan said it is like a balance we will still take the money in whether we do it or not. It restricts you to your ala carte sales. In the elementary schools we do not serve ala carte. It is a problem at the high school when you have to serve a child from the football team and you can only give him a 3 oz. hamburger with a ½ oz. of cheese on it. We usually serve them doubles and we would not be allowed to do that because you are only allowed 18 grams of fat. It is pretty hard to find a food with less than 18 grams of fat in it.

Howie said he is not an expert on nutrition and thought we were supporting it so he didn't come prepared with anything. At the end of the day if it doesn't increase our profitability it doesn't make a lot of sense to go ahead and do that. I recognize that the PTA's want to raise money and that is the problem. Alan said we would be completely handcuffed. Every fundraiser would have to go through my office and probably 70% of them would not get approved. If kids were selling candy for the holidays the parents would have to come pick it up after school. Neil said that was a real problem for us for a few years. A further discussion continued. Howie wants to stand up against it just on the principal of the profits and health issues.

Howie Horvath voted no
All remaining board members were in favor
Item 09-38 is approved

09-39 Correspondence from Francine A. Coppola requesting the Continuation of the Program Improvement Project (PIP) Grant for FY 2010.

Toni Paine made a motion to approve 09-39
Jerry Calabritto seconded the motion
All in favor
Item 09-39 is approved

F. Informational:

Toni Paine asked that when board members receive an email is there anyway of sending them an email requesting a verification that they have received it. Yes. She would appreciate that so if you don't get a response from them you will know we either didn't read it or didn't receive it and Marylou could follow up with a phone call. Neil said we actually started that.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Jerry Calabritto made a motion to adjourn
Sean Maher seconded the motion
All members were in agreement
The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary