

West Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education
Regular Board Meeting
February 4, 2014

Present: Mrs. Exum, Ms. Gilchrest, Mr. Putterman, Dr. Overmyer-Velazquez, Mr. Sarzen, Mr. Schmitt, Mr. Zydanowicz, Superintendent List, Student Representatives Jordan Gelber (Hall), Randa Griffin (Conard)

Regular Meeting – Town Hall – Legislative Chamber

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The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

*Roll Call/Pledge of
Allegiance/ Agenda
Revision*

Mr. Putterman shared the passing of former Board of Education and Town Council member, Madeline McKernan and expressed his condolences.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mr. Sarzen:

*Revision to the Agenda
Order*

That the Board of Education revise the agenda order to present agenda item VIII.B.1. Foundation for West Hartford Public Schools and item VI.B.1. School Safety Report following Public Communications

The motion passed unanimously.

Chelsea Smith, English/Language Arts teacher at Bristow Middle school introduced the students from the 6th Grade Bristow Advisory Program. The students spoke about their experience and perspective as participants in the group. The perspective of teachers and the goal of the program were shared.

Student Participation

There were no Public Communications.

Public Communications

Dr. List provided a reminder of the Board's previous request regarding an interest in receiving updates and learning more from various community groups and organizations such as Growing Great Schools that benefit and impact the schools and key functional areas. Lisa Green and Amy Cubbage from the Foundation for West Hartford Public Schools shared the history and background of the Foundation and its mission of providing financial support for the schools. An overview of the sources and fundraising efforts as well as the grant distribution process was presented. The various programs at individual schools and the wider initiatives benefitting all schools and the district at large were described. A reminder and invitation was provided for the annual fundraiser, 'West Hartford's Cookin' scheduled to be held

*Foundation for West
Hartford Public Schools*

on March 22, 2014.

Board members inquired about the grant proposal process and the merits considered in evaluating and distributing to the schools. Appreciation was expressed to the Foundation.

Dr. Karen List introduced Assistant Superintendent Tom Moore and Police Chief Tracey Gove. Mr. Moore summarized the progress made throughout the district since the last presentation. The delicate balance of maintaining a welcoming school atmosphere while insuring a safe and secure environment was stressed. The projects required to upgrade safety and security and the consideration regarding bidding, relevant codes and guidelines were highlighted. Emphasis was placed on incorporating new measures within the renovations planned for the new Charter Oak building. Mr. Moore shared that the work and efforts accomplished by the district has been attention-worthy and has been shared with other districts and other states. Chief Gove summarized the various scenarios encompassed i.e., active shooter and natural disasters and the related drills and training exercises were highlighted. The school safety audit checklists, ICS critical incidences and the procedural changes for First Responders were reviewed. Mr. Moore and Chief Gove were available to address the concerns and questions of the Board.

Board members expressed appreciation for the thorough presentation and expressed their confidence in the attention and preparations developed. The potential of utilizing outside expertise and related benefits and concerns were raised. Issues created as a result of an increasingly routine but tragically real nature of drills on students, parents, teachers and the larger community were raised. The increase in referrals by students about their peers and the factors contributing to the stress experienced with the teaching profession were discussed. Consideration of the technological preparedness, human resourcefulness and the cultural mindset of our society were emphasized.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mr. Sarzen:

THAT the Board of Education receive the Capital Improvement Plan (CI) for 2014-2015 and begin the process of reviewing for final approval and adoption at the February 26, 2014 Board of Education meeting

Mr. Chip Ward summarized the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and

School Safety Report

*Presentation of the
Capital Improvement
Plan for 2014-2015*

its function. Mr. Ward reviewed the accomplishments from last year and the expectations for the upcoming year. Mr. Moore, Mr. Palmer and Mr. Ward were available to address the concerns of the Board.

Board discussion reviewed the priorities, allocations and the process of detecting issues on the radar. Concerns were raised about the science labs and the administration acknowledged the need for cost estimates, ideas and the strategic planning involved and stated that labs would be included in the 2015 CIP. Advocacy from school principals and feedback received from students, teachers and principals was discussed. Due to repairs at both high schools, the Summer School will be held at Sedgwick.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Gilchrest:

THAT the Board of Education review and revise as appropriate the proposed annual Board meeting schedule and adopt a final meeting calendar for the 2014-2015 school year.

Board members noted the timing change for the annual Board Awards.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. List provided an update on proposals considered by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAK) to increase the flexibility regarding the teacher evaluation program. She highlighted the details of the changes, the school years that would be impacted and the positive progress of West Hartford's compliance. Dr. List shared the impressive recognition received by several district coaches and the nomination of a Hall High senior as a candidate for the U.S. Presidential Scholar Award. Upcoming events at Bugbee, The Bridge, The Institute of Living and a fundraiser for Growing Great Schools at the Bushnell were shared.

Dr. List provided the context for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics as determined as required for success after high school. Background on the State's requested NCLB waiver and the terms required. Dr. Nancy DePalma reviewed the skill set that is demanded of students beyond high school and in preparation for a college experience or in pursuit of a specialized trade and certification. A historical perspective of the origin of a shared standard of excellence was explained. Ms. Kerry Jones and Mr. Paul

*Adoption of the Annual
Board Meeting Schedule
for 2014-2015*

Superintendent's Report

*Common Core State
Standard Updates*

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Vicinus provided the key shifts and areas of focus for both English Language Arts and Mathematics and reviewed examples. The on-going professional development model and the individual, building-based and town-wide collaborative components were described. The progress across grade levels in both subject areas and the emphasis on student preparation for global success was summarized. All were available to address the questions and concerns of the Board.

Board members expressed some frustration and concern regarding the stress on teachers struggling to make the work and changes meaningful and unique and trusting the district is on the proper track. The passion of teachers for the understanding and implementation as well as the stress associated with their evaluation based on the student performance results were emphasized. The importance of improving communication between school and parents and the efforts currently employed were reviewed. The reality that students have been learning the Common Core for over a year, the continuously improving and impressive quality of the work of teachers and students, and the desire to challenge comfort zones were addressed. Accolades were given to Dr. List and previously, Eileen Howley, for their leadership and vision regarding the foresight and planning of the Common Core framework and support was expressed for its goals and the expertise of the Administration.

Ms. Gilchrest moved, seconded by Mr. Sarzen:

Financial Report

THAT the Board of Education approve the Financial Report for the period ending December 31, 2013

Ms. Gilchrest provided an oral presentation of the Financial Report. Mr. Chip Ward was available to answer the questions of the Board.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Gilchrest:

Approval of Minutes

THAT the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 7, 2014

The motion passed unanimously.

Jordan Gelber (Hall) reported on the lack of support from students and staff regarding increasing the length of period times, consideration of a change to the school mascot, upcoming cheerleading competition

*Report from Student
Board Representatives*

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and other successful events were shared.

Randa Griffin (Conard) reported on the *Mr. Conard* event, the upcoming Student Council dance, the start of second semester and tryouts for the Spring production.

Mr. Putterman announced the following meeting dates:

1. Wednesday, February 26, 2014, 6:00 p.m., Board Awards at King Philip Middle School, followed by BOE meeting, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Legislative Chamber, room 314, *Adoption of the CIP*
2. Tuesday, March 4, 2014, 5:30 p.m., Board Workshop, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, room 400 followed by BOE meeting at 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Legislative Chamber, room 314, *Presentation of the Superintendent's Budget for 2014-2015*

John Joyce, 170 S. Main St., addressed the Board regarding student perspectives on the Common Core.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mrs. Exum:

That the Board adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Bruce Putterman, Chairperson Tammy Exum, Secretary
Respectfully submitted by: Ms. K. Lawrence, Clerk of the Board

*Announcement of
Meeting Dates*

Comments from Visitors

Adjournment

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