

Board of Education
January 9, 2024

The regular session meeting was live streamed on COX channel 16 or Frontier channel 6101 and may also be viewed on: YouTube® Channel, “Wethersfield Government Access TV” at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfuf-C0gYVVxmD5ilFTnsQ>

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was streamed from Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Ms. Callan Carson, Mr. Carey, Mrs. Di Roberts, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, Mr. Reilly, Ms. Walters, Mr. Weiner, Vice Chairperson Laccavole; and Chairperson Granato. Also present were: WPS Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; WPS Business Manager, Matt Kozaka; WPS Director of Security & Residency, Michael Baribault; WPS K-6 Instructional Supervisor, Dawn Campbell; Hamner School Reading Consultant, Robyn Grenier; and Webb Elementary School Teacher (Grade 2), Kyrstin Giliberto. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Reilly led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations

Message from Wethersfield BOE Chair-Mrs. Granato to WPS Students Grades 5 & 6:

WPS BOE Chair, Mrs. Granato directed a challenge to WPS 5th and 6th graders. Wethersfield Town Council and Wethersfield Board of Ed are leading a contest to find Wethersfield’s kid mayor and kid chair from each School. The contest is to begin Friday January 12th at Hamner School and then on to the other elementary schools. During a school assembly in the month of January at each school, Wethersfield Mayor Ken Lesser and Mrs. Granato as BOE Chair will present the challenge with a presentation explaining the Town system of government in Wethersfield and highlighting the Town Council and the Board of Education. Mayor Lesser and BOE Chair Granato hope to inspire and challenge WPS fifth and sixth graders by having the students explain to the Mayor and Board Chair how they would run Wethersfield’s town form of government (i.e. what would they change/add) to make Wethersfield an even better community

in which to reside and attend school. Mrs. Granato thanked WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; and WPS Executive Secretary for Curriculum, Kristen Underhill for their assistance with the presentation by Mayor Lesser and Chairperson Granato that will be made in the schools

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. December 12, 2023 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Mrs. Di Roberts MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of December 12, 2023, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Weiner and VOTED unanimously, with Mr. Carey abstaining.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments made by the Public during this portion of the meeting.

5. Communications

Mr. Emmett noted WPS continues to monitor illness rates across the district during this peak season of illness and that covid test kits are available from WPS nurses if parents wish to obtain them. The CCHD has reminded everyone to continue practicing good hand hygiene as the first line of defense in keeping germs at bay.

Mr. Emmett indicated WPS has equity teams in each of the schools and that the teams came together, along with some Central Office staff for professional development with partners from the State of CT Education Resource Center (CER) to discuss efforts of diversifying our workforce. There will be three (3) additional sessions occurring during the remainder of this school year. At the next BOE meeting, more information will be learned about the district's BIPOC affinity group.

Mr. Emmett mentioned that the *Youth Voices Count* survey results have been completed and that he will be meeting with town staff and the survey consultant next week to review data that will be presented at the January 23rd BOE meeting.

The Ad Hoc Building Committee meeting is scheduled for January 18th. A date to visit Pleasant Valley Elementary School in South Windsor (to observe the school's new design) is currently in the works. Mr. Emmett will keep the BOE and the committee posted.

Mr. Emmett noted there would be a presentation from staff/members of the Curriculum Instruction Team pertaining to what the district is doing with regard to the science of reading in WPS elementary schools.

Mr. Emmett commented on the media report pertaining to an incident which occurred at WHS Monday morning (01/08/2024) and expressed appreciation to the BOE and WHS parents for their patience as the matter was being addressed. He gave a special shout out to the students who spoke up/reported to a teacher when they noticed something wasn't right. He noted the Wellness Center was helpful in this matter as well. Mr. Emmett also noted that keeping students safe is a top priority in WPS.

6. Action Items

a. Recommended Motion: Approval of Recommended Policy Updates

Mr. Laccavole noted the Committee met on December 4th to review/discuss fifteen (15) recommended policy updates [six (6) are from **Series 1000** and have to do with Community and Board Operation; seven (7) are from **Series 5000** and have to do with Students; one (1) is from **Series 6000** and pertains to Instruction; and one (1) is from **Series 9000** and concerns Bylaws.]

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the recommended policy updates. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

7. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Announcements/Information

Chairperson Granato reviewed the items in Board Members' packets and reminded Committee Chairpersons/Board members to review their calendars with scheduled dates and times pertaining to upcoming meetings and note changes to committee meetings. She advised Board members to verify their attendance at Committee Meetings with the Committee's Chairpersons, the Administrative Chairperson, Mr. Emmett, and Executive Secretary-Dio Markopoulos. The use of email by Board members for communicating meeting attendance and ensuring a quorum for committee meetings was encouraged.

b. K-3 Literacy in Wethersfield Presentation

WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; WPS K-6 Instructional Supervisor, Dawn Campbell; Hanmer School Reading Consultant, Robyn Grenier;

and Webb Elementary School Teacher (Grade 2), Kyrstin Giliberto made a presentation pertaining to updates in K-3 Literacy reading, teaching, and learning in WPS.

Board Comments: Ms. Walters, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mr. Laccavole, Mr. Carey, Ms. Callan Carson, and Mrs. Granato commented. Mr. Emmett also commented.

8. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

WPS Elementary Ad Hoc Building Sub Committee Meeting (12.14.23): Mr. Carey reported that the committee was charged with looking at the different plan scenarios that came up in the first meeting in term of how our elementary school buildings can be improved.

The plan scenarios are as follows:

1. improve all five (5) schools;
2. repair all five (5) schools;
3. change the model to three (3) K-6 schools;
4. change to having three (3) schools= K-2, 3-4, 5-6;
5. four schools only (closing Charles Wright School).

Committee members were tasked with providing positive/negative comments for each scenario and coming up with questions regarding each scenario. Discussions will continue at the next meeting. Refer to the following website for more information:

<https://wps.wethersfield.me/wps-renovation-project>

Facilities & Maintenance Committee (12.19.23): Mr. Weiner reported the committee discussed the prior referendum and the activities around a referendum such as budget, providing any other information for the public, and how the information is communicated to the public in moving forward with new elementary schools. Currently, the schools are maintained, but there are major challenges with maintenance projects due to availability of parts, aged surfaces (clean but appear not clean), surfaces in high- traffic areas. Also, it is difficult to find staff such as an HVAC technician. Masonry and roof repair projects need to be done as well. It was noted that the HVAC Chiller and Air Handler unit expense was approved by Town Council on December 18th and has not yet been received/installed.

Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative, WECC (01.08.24): Mrs. Di Roberts commented on early childhood brain development, statistics on the amount of time children spend with families

in the community, and the average return on investment for Early Childhood programs. The comments advocated the importance of early childhood education. She noted that State of CT Family Engagement Specialist, Melissa Griffith explained how the State of CT initiated *Sparkler* App works. The App helps parents with information and resources for the growth and development of their children. Wethersfield Public Library Children's Services Manager, Ellen Harzewski shared information available at Wethersfield Public Library about the "1,000 Books before Kindergarten" program. This initiative emphasizes the importance of adults reading, writing, talking, singing, and playing with their children every day and rewards children along their journey to the 1,000-book goal. More information pertaining to activities/programs/resources to support children can be found at Wethersfield Public Library or by accessing the following link: <https://www.wethersfieldlibrary.org/children>

Policy & Planning Committee (01.08.24): Mr. Laccavole reported the Committee met Monday, January 8th to review four policy recommendations from Shipman & Goodwin. The policy concerning weighted grading and calculation of grade point averages (GPAs) was tabled due to Shipman & Goodwin's input, as well as the State Education Department and/or legislature continuing to work on same. Said policy will be revisited by the Policy & Planning Committee as soon as possible. Two policies (high school graduation and FAFSA completion) will move forward to the BOE for a first reading at the next BOE meeting. The fourth policy moved from Committee concerns suicide prevention and intervention, and input from Mr. Karzar was greatly appreciated. There was consensus among the group when working on the policies. The Committee greatly appreciated the guidance and perspective provided by Mr. Emmett, Mrs. Granato, Sally Dastoli, Siobhan O'Connor, and Cindy Bryan with regard to the policies.

b. Meetings Scheduled

Community & Public Relations Committee (01.10.24) @ 6:00 p.m.; Board of Education/Town Council Joint Communications Committee (01.11.24 @ 4:00 p.m.); Student Programs & Services Committee (01.16.24 @6:00 p.m.); CREC Council (01.17.24 @11:30am) WPS Elementary Ad Hoc Building Sub Committee Meeting (01.18.24 @ 6:00 p.m.); Human Resources & Personnel Committee (01.22.24 @ 6:00 p.m.); Facilities & Maintenance Committee (01.24.24 @ 6:00 p.m.)

9. Public Comment

There were no comments made by the Public during this portion of the meeting.

10. Board Comment

Mr. Laccavole congratulated WHS Girls Swim and Dive Team for their success this past season. He credited Josh Howard's remarks in the *Rare Reminder* about the WHS Girls Swim and Dive Team's successes of an undefeated season and winning its 15th straight conference title before finishing as runner up at the State Class M Championship. He also noted the 200M freestyle relay team from WHS broke the Class M record and won the state tile for that race).

Ms. Callan Carson noted her attendance at the WSPC meeting held last week. There were discussions resulting in questions about what are district policies/how are district policies created, decided, and communicated/and where are the policies found? There will be ongoing discussions resulting from the age requirement change in kindergarten eligibility (what is the process/when do assessments occur/will more PreK seats become available). The Ad Hoc Building Committee, school maintenance, the idea of having Grade 6 removed from our district's current K-6 model, district/BOE having more communication with parents, PTO welcoming Open Choice program student families, and disseminating the welcome to Wethersfield packet to all new parents, regardless of the age of the incoming student (and what else would new parents want to see in said packet), were topics discussed at the WSPC meeting. Mrs. Granato requested that the welcome packet be shared with BOE members.

Mr. Carey informed Board members there is a new state statute requiring BOE members to attend professional development. He mentioned that that he and Ms. Walters attended a professional development session, "C Caps Conference," which was a two-day event of workshops. They also attended a professional development session "New Board Member SL Leadership Workshop".

Mr. Carey encouraged attendance at the WHS Hockey Team's annual charity game on Wednesday, January 31st, 4:00 p.m. at Newington Ice Arena. The event is being held in honor of *The Keane Foundation*, and Foundation President, Judy Keane has been notified. Players will wear 9/11 Memorial Commemorative jerseys. There will be a 50/50 raffle and raffle baskets. Proceeds will benefit *The Keane Foundation*.

Mr. Reilly noted the Career Advisory Board sent an announcement encouraging employers to sign up for the Career Fair in April and that Eversource has committed to participate in the Career Fair. He reminded everyone that Colliers noted \$2-3 million would be appropriate for

ongoing maintenance of the elementary school buildings and that the district budget is short of that amount.

11. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

12. Adjournment

Mr. Carey MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Callan Carson and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Laccavole, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary