

Board of Education

April 14, 2015

Chairperson DeAngelo requested Board Members to turn off cell phones.

This meeting was videotaped and can be seen on the  
Wethersfield Board of Education website.

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, April 14, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Mr. Carey, Mr. Cascio, Mr. Forrest, Mrs. Latina, Ms. McDougall, Ms. Moon, Mr. Morris, Vice Chairperson Paradise, and Chairperson DeAngelo. Also present were: Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources & Finance, Timothy Howes; Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Sally Dastoli; Wethersfield High School Principal, Thomas Moore; Webb School Principal, Michael Verderame; and Wethersfield High School Student Representative, David Scales.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Scales led the Board and public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Student/Staff Recognition/Presentations**

There were no Student/Staff Recognition/Presentations made during this meeting.

**3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

**a. March 24, 2015 Regular Board of Education Meeting**

Mrs. DeAngelo made the following corrections:

Page 1, Paragraph 1, Line 3: Delete the name “Mr. Carey” before “Mr. Cascio”

Page 2, Paragraph 2, Line 4: “batting case” is to read “batting cage”

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 9: Insert “that was in the Finance subcommittee” after the word “Project.”

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 10: “Finance” is to read “Communication” and “this subcommittee’s” is to read “the Building Committee’s”

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 14: “Room” is to read “Roof”

Mr. Cascio MOVED to approve the minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting of March 24, 2015, as corrected. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Forrest and VOTED unanimously, with Mr. Carey abstaining.

#### **4. Public Comment**

Regina Vaughan, 59 Whippoorwill Way, Vice President of the Secretarial/Paraprofessional Union CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 CTW indicated the Union is sponsoring a T-Shirt fundraising sale in support of *Autism Speaks*®. District Staff members who have purchased the T-Shirts will be wearing those T-Shirts on April 29, 2015, to commemorate “Light It up Blue Day.” (World Autism Awareness day is held annually on April 2.)

The following individuals spoke in opposition to WHS Class of 2015 Graduation being held on Saturday, June 20, 2015 and requested the date change to Friday, June 19, 2015:

Laura Morris, 389 Prospect Street  
Janet Vassel, 44 Rutledge Road  
Amanda Clark (WHS 2015 Student Council President), 15 Hawthorn Way  
Donna Messenger, 87 Clovercrest Road  
John Miller, 45 Highland Street  
Karen Lewis, 280 Prospect Street  
Rita Dikegoros (Chairperson of the Safe Graduation Party Committee), 16 Bay Roc Road  
Rob Melillo, 118 Cricket Circle  
Rebecca Stefano, 11 Ciderbrook Drive  
Frank Barone, 18 Bunce Road  
Michael Dikegoros (Vice President of WHS Spanish National Honor Society), 16 Bay Roc Road

Donna Messenger, 87 Clovercrest Road, spoke of ELL program eligibility for students and bus transportation to summer school.

Martin Malicki, 79 Southwell Road, spoke unfavorably regarding the amount of hours District Teachers have spent away from their classrooms during the school day for meetings/training and asked the Board/Administration to hold meaningful discussions with Teachers regarding a reduction of hours in that regard in the future. He also discussed existence of State mandate [pursuant to CT Gen Stat § 10-14n (2013)] and/or existence of Board policy pertaining to SBAC as a requisite test.

Mia Caulfield, 120 Main Street, spoke unfavorably regarding large class sizes. She inquired of the Board/Administration what number constitutes a large class size. She read a feedback statement from a District Teacher who unfavorably commented on large class size and its effects on instruction.

Paul LaPierre, 66 Brookside Circle, spoke unfavorably of SBAC testing for Teachers and students alike. He commented further on Board and State policy regarding SBAC testing.

## **5. Communications**

Mr. Emmett thanked everyone for attending this meeting and voicing their concerns. He apologized for not better communicating the information and noted he was under the impression that vendors had not been specifically booked for Friday, June 19. He noted Administration will take a look at altering the graduation date to a weekday and will return to the drawing board with WHS Principal, Thomas Moore, to come up with a plan to bring to the Board. Mr. Emmett mentioned he takes great pride in the traditions of Wethersfield having participated in many graduation ceremonies at the Cove. Mr. Emmett explained his responsibilities in providing a graduation venue that is safe and with ample parking. He also explained the complexities regarding having Wethersfield Cove as the venue during the years of the WHS Renovation Project. He noted, at this time, there is not a viable alternative in the event the ceremony cannot be held at the Cove. He mentioned that the ultimate goal in the future is to have WHS graduation ceremonies at the Cove.

Mr. Emmett indicated the District remains in the testing window at the elementary and middle schools for SBAC and that the window opens at WHS in mid-April. He serves on the Assessment and Accountability Committee for the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which is looking at the possibility for next year of not requiring a SBAC type of test in 11<sup>th</sup> Grade. He noted he is required by law to provide a high stakes assessment despite the non-existence of a Board Policy at this time relating to the SBAC testing. He does not anticipate seeing results from SBAC pilot testing. However, SBAC test results are anticipated to arrive in July and provided to parents in August.

Mr. Emmett mentioned the Board Budget is moving forward with 3.31% increase as of now. There is a focus on staffing, K-6 new Math program (passed unanimously by the Board), and increased vigor in the K-8 curriculum going forward.

Mr. Emmett invited the individual who spoke of ELL this evening to contact him to discuss the matter further.

Mr. Emmett noted there is no hard or fast rule regarding the number of students in a class and that high quality instruction is the focus of a classroom. Mr. Emmett indicated physical space and/or budget constraints can impact the number of classrooms offered in each grade.

## **6. Reports/Discussion Items**

### **a. Announcements/Information**

Chairperson DeAngelo reviewed the items in Board Members' packets and reminded Committee Chairpersons/Board members to review scheduled meeting dates and times with their calendars. She advised Board members to verify their attendance at Committee Meetings with the Committee's Chairpersons, the Administrative Chairperson, and Mr. Emmett.

Mrs. Latina excused herself from interrupting this portion of the meeting due to members of the audience were exiting the meeting. She indicated the Board was not consulted regarding the selection of the graduation date. She thanked the public for expressing their concerns. Chairperson DeAngelo mentioned that the issue would be discussed at the end of tonight's meeting.

## **7. Board of Education**

### **a. Meetings Held**

Chairperson DeAngelo announced the following meetings: Memorial Day Parade Committee: Mr. Cascio reported the winner of the essay contest for Grade 8 SDMS students has been selected and will be notified by the Parks & Recreation Department. Policy and Planning Committee: Mrs. Paradise reported progress has been made working on the 1000 Series. She noted that Mrs. Daigle presented an updated Bullying and Safe School Climate Policy, that the Safe School Climate Survey was discussed, and that the Committee is also seeking clarification on some other matters. Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative –WECC: Mr. Forrest reported State Representative Russ Morrin was present to discuss cuts to the Governor's proposed budget regarding the WECC and how to get those cuts put back into the proposed budget. School Projects Building Committee: Mr. Emmett reported change orders and expenditures were discussed. There was also discussion about contractors involved in the WHS Renovation Project scheduling abatement (possibly this weekend) of a dumpster at WHS. Finance and Information Management Committee: Mr. Carey reported that financials of the District from December 2014 to March 2015 were discussed and that spending is on track. The Pupil Tuition Line item, the cost of the new K-6 Math program (payment options), contract with

Access Transportation and Kelly Services (with no increases requested of both companies), the annual audit, and upcoming contract negotiations (Nurses, Custodians) were also discussed. Board Comments: Ms. McDougall commented.

#### **b. Meetings Scheduled**

Chairperson DeAngelo announced the following meetings are scheduled: CREC Council, Shared Services Committee, Joint Town Council/Board of Education - Budget Hearing, Student Program and Services Committee, and School Projects Building Committee.

#### **8. Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

#### **9. Public Comments**

Guiseppe Bruno, 220 Windmill Hill, inquired as to whom on the Board knew prior to tonight's meeting of the decision regarding the date of graduation

Scott Clark, 15 Hawthorn Way, noted the excuse of a poor communication in relating the graduation date is no excuse due to the frequency of messages he receives from *School Messenger* regarding snow days. He inquired as to whom on the Board voted in favor of a Saturday morning graduation.

Rita Dikegoros, Chairperson of the Safe Graduation Party Committee, 16 Bay Roc Road, submitted for the record an unofficial "Petition to hold graduation on Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>." She mentioned the petition has fifty-six (56) signatures. She requested the Board/Administration to work something out with this matter while noting the issue as important to the graduates' families.

Amanda Clark, 15 Hawthorn Way, explained that despite the perils experienced during the WHS Class of 2013 Graduation Ceremony, she and Mrs. Dikegoros are confident that a venue plan can be achieved.

Gianna Bielenda, 41 Fox Hill Road, thanked Administration and Staff for their hard work in planning the upcoming graduation ceremony. She commented favorably of the Cove Ceremony tradition continuing. She mentioned that money and time spent on the Safe Graduation Party would go to waste if fewer people attended.

Michael Dikegoros, 16 Bay Roc Road, thanked Mrs. Latina as well as Administration and the Board for their compassion and understanding of the desire to change the date of the upcoming graduation ceremony. He suggested that the ceremony itself be restructured to allow students to speak earlier in the ceremony.

#### **10. Board Comments**

Mrs. Latina inquired as to which Board members knew of the graduation Saturday, June 20, 2015 graduation date being set and suggested that someone from the Board should be present during the meeting establishing the graduation date.

Mr. Cascio indicated he learned of the graduation date from a member of the public (a parent of a student of WHS Class of 2015) and that the date was decided by Administration. He noted that according to CT Gen Stat § 10-161, the Board of Education has the ability to establish graduation dates.

Mr. Cascio then put forward for discussion a Motion regarding June 19, 2015 as the graduation date, mindful of tonight's parent feedback regarding the Safe Graduation event date.

Ms. McDougall cautioned that establishing a firm graduation date at this time may limit options. She inquired and Mrs. Dikegoros, Chairperson of the Safe Graduation Party Committee, indicated the contract with the vendors for the event is for the last day of school.

Mrs. DeAngelo reminded the public that during the Board Comment section of the meeting, the public is not provided the opportunity to speak.

Mrs. Paradise indicated the communication piece regarding the notification of graduation date is lacking on the Board's part and that communication needs to be fixed. She concurs, mindful of possible weather complexities, with Mr. Cascio in holding graduation on June 19, 2015. She thanked parents for contacting today her regarding this matter.

Ms. Moon indicated she understands the effort in planning the Safe Graduation event but hesitates to move forward with changing the graduation date at this time until more information is provided by the Administration. She noted the Administration has agreed to revisit the matter.

Ms. McDougall suggested the Board incorporate the following language in a Motion regarding graduation date “strongly recommend to the Superintendent... and report back to the Board.”

Mr. Forrest asked for a Call to Question to get the matter on the Agenda.

Mrs. DeAngelo called the Question to add the item on the Agenda for Discussion.

Mrs. DeAngelo MOVED to *add to the following motion* to the Agenda for the Meeting of the Board of Education, Tuesday, April 14, 2015: Motion Regarding WHS Class of 2015 Graduation Ceremony. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously. **Board Comments**: Mr. Cascio, Ms. McDougall, Mrs. DeAngelo, Mrs. Paradise, Ms. Moon and Mr. Forrest commented (see above).

Mr. Cascio MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education, pursuant to CT Gen Stat §10-16l, strongly recommend of the Administration to schedule WHS Class of 2015 Graduation Ceremony for Friday, June 19, 2015. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Forrest.

**Discussion:**

**Mrs. DeAngelo stated that Mr. Emmett charged the Board with making the decision.**

Mr. Morris indicated his support of the Motion due to the occurrence of the party directly after graduation and the tradition of having the graduation ceremony at the Cove. He reminded everyone of the complexities that will be experienced in the event the ceremony needs to be moved and/or if there is inclement weather. He noted his support of Mr. Emmett and in the process Mr. Emmett made in the decision. He also noted that Mr. Emmett should not be held out to dry due to a decision that he made in the best interests of the WHS Class of 2015 students, their families, and friends.

Ms. Moon mentioned she is in support of the Board recommending to Mr. Emmett the June 19, 2015 date for graduation and not directing him to schedule that date.

Mr. Forrest concurred with the comments made by the Board in support of the June 19, 2015 graduation date, mindful of the significant inconvenience if inclement weather arises. He commented favorably regarding Mr. Emmett’s handling of this matter and concurs with Ms. Moon on the language of recommending verses directing a change in the graduation date.

Chairperson DeAngelo thanked Mr. Cascio for the language in the Motion and Mrs. Latina for stating the correct statute for that Motion. She also thanked the public for voicing their concerns this evening.

The motion was VOTED unanimously. **Board Comments:** Mr. Morris, Ms. Moon and Mr. Forrest commented. Mr. Emmett also commented. (refer to **Discussion** above)

David Scales commented favorably of the public commenting this evening on graduation ceremony and the Safe Graduation event. He noted, concurring with Mr. Morris, that feelings and the decision making process should both be understood even if not agreed with. He also stressed that moving forward should be done in an objective and reasonable manner.

Ms. McDougall mentioned she appreciates the public appearing this evening. She thanked fellow Board members and the Administration for all the necessary and important work they do that the public may not realize. She spoke of the difficulty in having neighbors, friends and colleagues express very strong opinions when you're a volunteer and doing the best you think you can for your town. She mentioned her appreciation of the willingness everyone has to reconsider the decision regarding the graduation date. She hopes the improved willingness over the last few years of Board members working together continues.

Mrs. Latina thanked Mr. Emmett for listening to the parents and Board members this evening, as this meeting was not an easy meeting. She noted that Mr. Emmett does a good job and thanked him.

Chairperson DeAngelo entertained a Motion to enter into Executive session for the purpose of Discussion/Possible Action on Proposed Pension Agreement.

Mr. Carey MOVED to leave public session and enter executive session at 8:55 p.m. for the purpose of Discussion/Possible Action on Proposed Pension Agreement. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Forrest and VOTED unanimously.



Present for executive session: Mr. Carey, Mr. Cascio, Mr. Forrest, Mrs. Latina, Ms. McDougall, Ms. Moon, Mr. Morris, Mrs. Paradise and Chairperson DeAngelo. Others: Mr. Emmett, Mr. Howes.

Mr. Carey MOVED to leave executive session and re-enter public session at 9:15 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Cascio and VOTED unanimously.

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the proposed Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Wethersfield, The Wethersfield Board of Education and CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 CTW Custodian and Maintenance, with regard to the Town. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Morris and VOTED unanimously.

Mr. Carey MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Morris and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Elaine Steinmiller-Paradise, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary