Board of Education

January 14, 2014

This meeting was recorded and videotaped. The tapes are available in the Town Manager's Office.

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, January 14, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Chairperson DeAngelo, Vice Chairperson Steinmiller-Paradise, Mr. Carey, Mr. Cascio, Mr. Forrest, Mrs. Latina, Ms. McDougall, Ms. Moon, and Mr. Morris. Also present were: Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources & Finance, Timothy Howes; Director of Maintenance and Operations, Fred Bushey; Wethersfield High School Principal, Thomas Moore; Webb School Principal, Michael Verderame; and Wethersfield High School Student Representative, Sam Solberg.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Ms. McDougall 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. January 7, 2014 Special Board of Education Meeting**

Mrs. Latina indicated the meeting was not videotaped. Therefore, the corrections in the first and second sentences in Line 1 of Page 1 shall be made as follows: delete the words "and videotaped" in the first sentence, and change the words "tapes are" to "tape is" in the second sentence.

Mr. Carey MOVED to approve the minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting of January 7, 2014, as corrected. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise and VOTED unanimously, with Mr. Cascio abstaining. (Note: Mrs. Latina requested the Board comments in Item 6 subsections a. through d. to include a brief description of what was

commented on. Chairperson DeAngelo indicated that Mr. Emmett would be speaking to that issue (meeting minutes) during the Communications portion of tonight's meeting.)

**4. Public Comment**

Barbara Bellas, 21 Round Hill Road, (parent, Webb PTO and WSPC member) mentioned she is working with the District elementary schools, *The Keane Foundation*, Wethersfield Parks & Recreation, and the Central CT Health District (CCHD) to implement running clubs in each of the District elementary schools beginning this Spring 2014 (goal: working towards walking/running in the *Keane Foundation*'s 5K) and with an additional six (6) week session in the Fall of 2014 (goal: to compete in the *Mikey's Place 5K*).

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, noted members of the public do not need to be reminded of the five (5) minute time limitation for their public comment. He concurred with Mrs. Latina's comments regarding brief description in Board Members comments, commented on an article which appeared in the January 13, 2014 edition of the *Hartford Courant* entitled "Bids For Wethersfield High School Come In $5M Over Budget", questioned Building Committee oversight of this matter, and asked to have a referendum presented to the public at election time regarding this matter if more money is requested.

Alissa Pizzella, 376 Wells Road, spoke favorably and thanked the Board for her opportunity to successfully participate in and enjoy the Regional Agriscience program at Glastonbury High School that is available to Wethersfield students.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on articles which appeared in the December 10, 2013 and January 13, 2014 editions of the *Hartford Courant* entitled "State 'Report Card' Shows Wethersfield Schools Miss Goals" and "Bids For Wethersfield High School Come In $5M Over Budget". He noted the professionals for the renovation project should be held accountable to the contracted price. He encouraged the adoption of a negative budget, as utility expenses, as well as taxes are rising. He discussed test results in comparison to Wethersfield neighboring towns.

**5. Communications**

Mr. Emmett responded to Mr. Morris' inquiry of November 26, 2013 regarding content in meeting minutes with regard to detail. Despite meetings being televised, it is required by state statute to have a written form of minutes. The written form serves as a legal record of the meeting. Our attorney has advised that the minutes be written as concisely as possible. Board members have been provided the Robert's Rules in Plain English (pgs. 25-29). Mr. Emmett also checked with counsel regarding the subject of nepotism and voting. Counsel stated "that a motion made for the approval of a budget is a broad enough scope that would not create a conflict of interest." However, counsel advised that "board members with a direct interest in a member of a bargaining unit should recuse themselves on a vote for a contract ratification." A proposed calendar will be brought to the Calendar Committee on January 28, 2014, and contractor schedules for the WHS renovation project were taken into consideration in drafting the proposed calendar. He thanked Mr. Moore and the Physical Education department for adjusting the curriculum in response to the asbestos material found (refer to Mr. Emmett's January 10, 2014 letter to the Wethersfield High School Community). Abatement of the affected areas is scheduled to occur during the February 2014 vacation break. There will be a joint meeting of the Board of Education, Town Council, and Building Committee upcoming regarding the renovation project's budget overrun. Details from that meeting will be forthcoming.

Mr. Emmett is working with the renovation project's architect on a space standards waiver submission to the State. Mr. Emmett congratulated and thanked Mrs. Harvey (who recently retired) for her service as Principal of Highcrest School. Mr. James Slattery will serve as Interim Principal until a new Principal is selected. Upon finalization of the job description, an advertisement for this position vacancy will appear in *The Hartford Courant*, the *New Haven Register*, CTReap, Wethersfield Public Schools website, and EdWeek. The Highcrest School's Staff focus group regarding selection of a new Principal (Teachers and support staff at Highcrest) is scheduled for February 11, 2014, and the Parent focus group in this regard is scheduled for the PTO meeting on February 13, 2014. The Committees will meet, and the interview process will begin thereafter with the expectation of bringing a candidate before the Board for a start date of July 1, 2014. The Board Budget process is underway with the first budget workshop scheduled for Saturday, January 25, 2014, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Stillman Building. All

budget workshops are open to the public and those meeting dates will be posted on the Wethersfield Public Schools website http://www.wethersfield.k12.ct.us.

**6. Action Items**

**a. Recommended Motion: Approval of Leave of Absence for Teacher ID #904784**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve a childrearing leave of absence for ID #904784 under the provisions of Article 5.6 of the current Agreement between the Wethersfield Board of Education and the Wethersfield Federation of Teachers. This request is for the period beginning approximately May 12, 2014 and continuing through the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Cascio and VOTED unanimously.

**b. Recommended Motion: Approval of Capital Improvement Plan (FY 2014-2024)**

Ms. McDougall MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan FY 2014-2024. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Ms. McDougall commented.

**c. Recommended Motion: Approval of UCONN ECE SPAN 3178 and 3179: Spanish Composition and Conversation: Cultural topics/AP Spanish Literature and Culture**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve UCONN ECE SPAN 3178 and 3179: Spanish Composition and Conversation: Cultural topics/AP Spanish Literature and Culture. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mr. Carey, Mrs. DeAngelo, Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise, Mr. Cascio, Ms. Moon, and Mr. Forrest commented. Mr. Emmett also commented.

**d. Recommended Motion: Approval of Spanish Textbook**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve Spanish Textbook; Epoca de oro del cine mexicano, Gustavo Garcia y Rafael Aviña, 1997. (Clio) The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Moon and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. DeAngelo commented.

**e. Recommended Motion: Approval of Spanish Textbook**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve Spanish Textbook; Curso Avanzado de gramática y composición 5ta edición, 2007. (Wiley) The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Moon and VOTED unanimously.

**f. Recommended Motion: Approval of Social Studies Curriculum Grades 7 & 8**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve Grades 7 & 8 Social Studies Curriculum. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mr. Carey, Mr. Cascio, Ms. Moon, and Mrs. DeAngelo commented. Mr. Emmett also commented.

**g. Recommended Motion: Approval of AP Physics Course Modification**

Mr. Carey MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the course modification of AP Physics to AP Physics 1. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mr. Carey commented.

**7. Reports/Discussion Items**

**a. Final 2011-12 Strategic School Profile Report**

Mr. Emmett referred to the report contained in Board Members' packets. Board Comments: Ms. McDougall, Mr. Morris, and Mrs. Latina commented. Mr. Emmett responded to Board Member inquiries.

**b. Announcements/Information**

Chairperson DeAngelo reviewed the items in Board Members' packets and reminded Committee Chairpersons to review scheduled meeting dates and times with their calendars.

**8. Board of Education**

**a. Meetings Held**

Chairperson DeAngelo announced the following meetings: Community & Public Relations Committee: Mrs. Latina reported there was an enthusiastic conversation concerning the direction of the committee's goals pertaining to parent and general public communication while adhering to policy and planning guidelines. She encouraged District parents/students to utilize

the Wethersfield Public Schools website http://www.wethersfield.k12.ct.us to connect with Teachers. She noted there was discussion on how the Committee could help keep communication lines open with individual schools to learn what the issues are, to make sure concerns are dealt with, and to be the conduit to bring those matters to Board and/or Superintendent. Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative: Mr. Forrest indicated the overall theme of the meeting was to discuss the topic of preparedness of students in a productive manner prior to students entering Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs in the District. The highlights discussed were: 1) how students can obtain a strong physical education prior to their entrance into school in order to combat obesity and monitor BMI; 2) providing a centralized opportunities education oriented booklet for parent reference that would contain information pertaining to opportunities during child rearing, especially in pre-kindergarten, including daycare and other educational learning opportunities; 3) finding a comprehensive way of tracking student achievement prior to entering Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten District programs. The tracking would ensure student performance in preparation for student success thereafter; 4) holding spring and summer events to assist parents/students in keeping up with the learning momentum through the summer months. School Project Building Committee: Mr. Emmett the focus of the meeting was to discuss the financial situation regarding the renovation project. Bids were reviewed, and O&G provided a status of the project. An update regarding the space standard waiver was provided.

**b. Meetings Scheduled**

Chairperson DeAngelo announced the following meetings are scheduled: CREC Council Meeting; Special Board of Education Meeting; Finance & Information Management Committee; Special Board of Education Meeting, - Budget Workshop; and School Project Building Committee.

**9. Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

**10. Public Comments**

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, continued his commentary pertaining to articles appearing in the December 10, 2013 and January 13, 2014 editions of the *Hartford Courant* entitled "State 'Report Card' Shows Wethersfield Schools Miss Goals" and "Bids For Wethersfield High School

Come In $5M Over Budget". He spoke of the WHS graduation rate over the years in comparison to neighboring towns, the economy, state spending, job growth, and the ranking of CT in terms of retirement and financial status (credit ranking, etc.).

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, recommended that Mrs. Fortunato be relieved of her duties on the School Project Building Committee and commented on zero tolerance in schools.

**11. <u>Board Comments</u>**

Mrs. Latina inquired and Mr. Emmett indicated he does not have an approximate figure pertaining to the WHS Renovation project overrun, but believes the five million ($5,000,000) dollar figure to be low. The Board of Education, Town Council and Building Committee will be meeting to discuss the issue. She inquired and Mr. Emmett confirmed the Building Committee is a Town Council Committee formed to assist in the oversight of construction contracts.

Mrs. Steinmiller-Paradise commented on appreciation of public comments and noted the Board will continue to adhere to the five (5) minute limitation, as stated in the Wethersfield Board of Education By-Laws, for a member of the public who wishes to speak.

Ms. McDougall inquired and Mr. Emmett indicated the calendar proposed for the 2014-2015 School Year will be brought to the Board for consideration at the Tuesday, February 11, 2014 Board of Education Meeting. At Ms. McDougall's request, Mr. Emmett described the selection process in securing a new Principal for Highcrest Elementary School.

Mr. Cascio responded to concerns Board Members had pertaining to the Communication Committee's Minutes. Communication newsletters were completed in the 1990s. The Communication Newsletter ceased to exist due to the formation of a group of parents (with representation from all schools in District) who met on a monthly basis and reported information learned to each of their respective schools. At this time, District parents can obtain information from a live meeting that is televised (and with a taping of the meeting found on the website). Another form of communication is from District Principals who are now providing updates (copies in Board members' packets) of what is going on in their school. There is always room for recommendation and consideration regarding new communication methods. He noted the Building Committee members volunteer and work very hard. He challenged anyone who is not

on that Committee and/or is critical of its individual members to become a part of the Building Committee. He thanked those on that Committee.

Sam Solberg described the realization in the necessity of renovating WHS from student perspective as he spoke of program transitions and parking frustrations being addressed and student recognition of the project as moving forward. After his recent dinner meeting with WHS Class Officers and Advisors, he is optimistic in the success of ideas and strategies discussed that will promote growth and school spirit in the coming years.

Mrs. Latina inquired and Mr. Moore indicated (as discussed in the recent Parent-Teacher-Student Association Meeting) there have been ongoing circumstances preventing the solidification of plans for the WHS Class of 2014 Graduation Ceremony and its Safe Graduation Celebration (which historically has occurred on the same date as a graduation ceremony but in the evening after said ceremony). Issues regarding the date, time, place, along with addressing an inclement weather situation (due to no indoor back up) need to be further discussed with the consideration of how flexible the date for Safe Graduation Celebration can be. Facilities such as CCSU and The Bushnell Theatre are on hold and provide no flexibility with date scheduling. Research is continuing with this matter. At this time, graduation date is scheduled for June 18, 2014. Mrs. Latina thanked student, Alissa Pizzella, for sharing her positive experience in the Regional Agriscience program made available to Wethersfield students.

Chairperson DeAngelo commented favorably and thanked Mr. Moore of the communication process regarding the asbestos abatement. She noted the Class of 2014 students will be signing a beam that will be installed at WHS during the renovation, and noted students were measured today for their caps and gowns which will be worn at the WHS Class of 2014 Graduation Ceremony.

Mr. Morris MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

_____

Elaine Steinmiller-Paradise, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary