

Board of Education  
April 8, 2025

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-C0gYVVxmD5iIfFTnsQ>

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 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, Mr. Reilly, Ms. Walters, Mr. Weiner, Vice Chair Laccavole, and Chairperson Granato. **Also present were:** WPS Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; WPS Director of Special Education, John Karzar; WPS Director of Security & Residency, Michael Baribault; and Highcrest School Kid BOE Chair, Naiya Quazi

Members of the public were also present.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Naiya Quazi, the WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Highcrest School, led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations**

**A. Introduction/Welcome to Naiya Quazi, Kid Chairperson, Highcrest School:**

BOE Chairperson, Mrs. Granato introduced and welcomed WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Highcrest School, Naiya Quazi who was seated at the dais next to Board Chair, Mrs. Granato. Kid Chairperson Quazi read aloud her winning essay that described herself and her reasons in becoming a Kid Chairperson. She spoke of fostering a safe creative and inclusive learning environment in WPS by: 1) creating mechanisms, such as peer groups, for allowing student/staff voices to be heard in school and the broader community; 2) multicultural days as opportunities for the expression and sharing of culture; and 3) having diverse books in the school library to learn more about disability, race, and gender.

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

#### **a. March 25, 2025 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting**

Mr. Weiner MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of March 25, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

### **4. Public Comment**

Meghan Glanovski, 24 Morrison Avenue, advocated for greater awareness, acceptance, and inclusion of neurodiverse children (children with autism, ADHD, and other developmental differences) in our schools. She urged this board to prioritize meaningful diversity/neurodiversity training for all town staff, educators, program leaders, and administrators. She noted the importance of creating a culture of seeking to understand individuals before disciplining them as being essential and requested the creation of additional inclusive policies to form that compassionate culture and benefit everyone.

Jennifer Currie, 162 Straddle Hill, advocated (as a parent and a school educator) for five (5) school security personnel (one for each of the five elementary schools) rather than having three (3) as proposed in the Board of Education's 2025-2026 budget. She commented on a recent incident at an elementary school where a second grader would not comply with directives from recess aides to cease with using physical force, etc. A certified staff member was also called to assist, but the student would not comply. The school Principal was unavailable. She noted that the response to a situation, as stated herein, could be better handled or prevented with an experienced school security member who is trained in de-escalating situations and is on site at all times during the day. She commented on having one security staff member on site all day, each school day as important for developing the student relationship to help with custodial parent, DCF, and other challenging situations that can occur during the school day. Ms. Currie noted she is looking forward to seeing the data Mayor Lesser is receiving about local elementary schools and their security matters. She reiterated her support of five (5) school security personnel with one (1) member of that team placed in each of the five (5) elementary schools.

### **5. Communications**

Mr. Emmett indicated that Jeffrey Wihbey was selected Superintendent of WPS during the Executive Session portion of the Board of Education Meeting held March 25, 2025. Mr. Emmett

noted he and Mr. Wihbey have communicated many times and will continue to do so for a seamless transition process. Mr. Wihbey is currently Superintendent of Schools for CT Region 17.

Mr. Emmett noted WPS Personnel Department is currently operating without a Human Resource Manager and that the WPS Business Manager is currently on leave. Mr. Wihbey met with Central Office staff today to discuss the future organizational vision for WPS Central Office.

Mr. Emmett also noted that WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli will be leaving the district on June 30<sup>th</sup> to become the Executive Director of Odyssey Charter School in Manchester. He thanked Mrs. Dastoli for all that she has done in WPS and congratulated her on her new position.

Mr. Emmett referred to the Meeting Agenda for this evening and noted the Board will consider a motion for the cancellation of the Board of Education's meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>. This meeting conflicts with the WHS Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony occurring the same evening.

Mr. Emmett noted the Board will have an Action Item on the April 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting Agenda for the 2025-2026 schedule of Board of Education regular meetings. He also mentioned that WPS has Spring Recess from April 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, and will be closed on Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Emmett reminded everyone of the town-wide budget hearing on April 21<sup>st</sup>. He will give an overview of the BOE approved budget and Wethersfield Town Manager, Frederick Presley will present the town budget to Wethersfield Town Council. The community will have the opportunity to provide input at that hearing. There is a meeting (not a public hearing) on May 1<sup>st</sup> with BOE and Town Council to look at line items and answer questions among those members in attendance. The BOE budget allocation is to be provided from Town Council by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Emmett noted retirements are occurring and staffing is being reviewed for next year. Employment opportunities are being posted pending funding, and the development of hiring pools is occurring.

Mr. Emmett provided an update on the elementary school building project. He indicated Ed Specs for the elementary school project are being worked on with TSKP and Downes Construction. Hanmer School is being used as the foundation/framework of the process. 3,000 sq. ft. is being shaved off to meet space standards. A grant application necessary for this project calls for class size data previously compiled and presented by the administration, as well as

enrollment study data from NESDAC. A referendum is also needed to have the project on a priority list with the State of Connecticut.

## **6. Action Items**

### **a. Recommended Motion: Approval of the Cancellation of June 10, 2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting**

Ms. Walters MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education cancel the Board of Education regular meeting scheduled for June 10, 2025. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

## **7. Reports/Discussion Items**

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

Included in the Board member meeting packets was a memo dated April 4, 2025 to Wethersfield Board of Education from Michael T. Emmett, Superintendent of Schools regarding Announcements and Information that contained the Board of Education Sub-Committee Schedule, 04.04.25 and Dates to Remember- April 2025.

### **b. First Read: Revised Policy 1400, School Security and Safety**

**Shipman & Goodwin LLP.**

### **c. First Read: Revised Policy 1600, Policy Regarding Visitors and Observations in School** **Shipman & Goodwin LLP.**

#### **First Read of Policies:**

Mr. Laccavole reported on the following are updates prepared by Shipman & Goodwin, LLP to the mandated policies noted. Policy 1400's update pertains to the update and submission of our district security and safety plan, which is currently being updated for submission to the state. Policy 1600's revision pertains to immigration enforcement activity in schools, specifically which individuals in our school district are designated to deal with or interact with an immigration authority should they appear in person. He noted Board Members can address questions about the updates to him, Ms. Callan Carson, Mrs. Granato, and Mr. Reilly.

## **8. Board of Education**

### **a. Meetings Held**

Policy and Planning Committee Meeting – (04.02.25): Mr. Laccavole reported the Committee discussed revisions to Policy numbers 1400 and 1600 (refer to hereinabove: 7.

Reports/Discussion Items b. First Read: Revised Policy 1400, School Security and Safety Shipman & Goodwin LLP.; and c. First Read: Revised Policy 1600, Policy Regarding Visitors and Observations in School Shipman & Goodwin LLP.). The Committee also discussed the implementation of an animal policy, which would be new for the district. The idea resulted from a proposal made by an elementary school PTO who asked for a therapy dog. Currently, there is no policy in place for therapy dogs, facility therapy dogs, or service animals. Animal policies for schools located in three (3) districts outside of Wethersfield were reviewed as a guide in how the district would craft a policy. Work on that policy continues.

**b. Meetings Scheduled**

Finance and Operations Committee Meeting – (04.22.25 @ 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. Carey requested adding the standing agenda item be created under “Reports/Discussion Items” to add “Building Committee” in order to ensure Mr. Weiner can report and there can be discussion on that topic, rather having him comment on the Building Committee during Board Comment when having a discussion is not allowed. He explained that an opportunity would be created for the board to have discussion with the chair of the building committee and for the town to hear what's going on in a discussion format. He commented that the process of selecting Jeff Wihbey as WPS Superintendent of Schools was a rigorous process like it was when Mr. Emmett was selected. He noted Mr. Wihbey’s diverse background as a school principal, school superintendent, and being involved with curriculum, will help the district move forward.

Mrs. Di Roberts spoke of the Charles Wright PTO meeting she recently attended. Ticket sales close April 18<sup>th</sup> for Charles Wright School Night on May 12<sup>th</sup> at Dunkin Donuts Park to see the Yard Goats baseball game. Deedee Mahoney will be recognized as Charles Wright School’s Educator of the Game that evening. Coinciding with Arbor Day on April 26<sup>th</sup>, the Charles Wright School PTO will host “Beautification Day” from 9:00-11:00 a.m. and mulch is being donated for the school property. The musical, Frozen will be performed by Charles Wright School students enrolled in the Keane After School Program at 2:00 p.m. There is also an evening performance of Frozen on Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. from the Keane After School

Program students of Charles Wright School. Tickets for the performance are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

Mrs. Di Roberts mentioned that April 28th to May 2nd is screen free week in WPS. During that time, Charles Wright School PTO will hold a second Scholastic Book Fair.

Mrs. Di Roberts commented favorably of the Human Library event she attended on March 29<sup>th</sup> and looks forward to the Wethersfield Historical Society hosting that event again in the future.

Mrs. Di Roberts noted May 10th is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Walk for Val scholarship fundraising event in honor of 2008 WHS graduate, Vallerie Perrault, who passed away on October 9, 2022 from a rare form of cancer. Val loved the outdoors and had an adventurous spirit, and the money raised will provide a scholarship for a senior who exemplifies Val's spirit. Contact Val's mom, Andrea Perrault at 860-721-4741, or Mrs. Russo at WHS for more information about the event.

Mr. Weiner concurred with Mr. Carey that "Building Committee" should be a standing item on Board of Education Meeting regular Agendas going forward. He indicated the Building Committee has been busy with several meetings. The Committee has adopted the full master plan as recommendations to both BOE and Town Council. The Committee will have a meeting tomorrow in Town Council Chambers to go over preliminary (not final) cost information from TSKP and Downs Construction for the master plan, and public attendance is encouraged. Mr. Weiner noted that he will be giving a presentation to the BOE during the May 13<sup>th</sup> meeting and that TSKP will also present all information regarding the master plan, including Ed Specs. This officially adopted plan will then be sent to Town Council for a June date for the referendum question to be voted on. He commented favorably of the Pancake Breakfast event he and his family attended last Saturday at Hanmer School and noted the event was held in conjunction with Hanmer PTO and Wethersfield Dad's Club. He expressed gratitude to everyone who participated in and attended the event.

Ms. Callan Carson thanked the Building Committee and all others who have been working very hard on all the information involved. She commented favorably of the Capstone Project presentations made by WHS junior class students and how much she enjoyed being a community volunteer alongside teachers during the presentations. She mentioned her pride in the student presenters. She noted WPS students can partake in Walk/Bike to School on May 7<sup>th</sup>. She thanked WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli

for her willingness to talk, email, and provide information and for all the hard work she completed in the district. She expressed to Mrs. Dastoli best wishes for enjoyment in the new job.

Ms. Walters also commented favorably about the capstone project and described some of the student work/expectations involved in the process. She gave a shout out to WHS English Teacher, Kristen Mucinskas, who brought the capstone program to WPS for the junior class students. She is excited to participate in the WHS Career Fair scheduled on Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. Some WHS graduates who work at the same company she does will return with her to WHS to speak with students at the fair about internship ideas and professional experience. In terms of the Search Committee for selection of the next Principal for Charles Wright School, she commented favorably of last Friday's first round of interviews, noting the process as rigorous and exciting. She noted the group is looking forward to the next round of interviews.

Mrs. Granato commented favorably of the first meeting of the Committee for the search for a new principal of Charles Wright School, thanked Ms. Walters for partaking in that session, and noted there are some wonderful candidates. She mentioned her pride with WHS juniors who are completing their capstone projects and commented favorably of said projects. She also noted that beginning the next school year, SDMS Grade 8 students will also complete and present projects to help prepare for the capstone project expectation at WHS. Mrs. Granato mentioned that prior to the Board of Education 7:00 p.m. meeting on May 13<sup>th</sup>, there will be a meet and greet at 6:00 p.m. with the newly-selected Superintendent of WPS, Jeffrey Wihbey.

#### **11. Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

#### **12. Adjournment**

Mr. Carey MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Matt Laccavole, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary