Board of Education
January 13, 2026

The special 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 a workshop session on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 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, Ms. DiBacco, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mrs. Drew, Mrs. Gold, Mr. Reilly, Vice Chairperson Laccavole, and Chairperson Granato. **Also present were** Superintendent of Wethersfield Public Schools, Jeff Wihbey; Assistant Superintendent of WPS, Jennifer Frese-Miller; WPS Director of Finance and Operations, Matt Kozaka; WPS Director of Special Education, John Karzar; Town of Wethersfield Physical Services Director, Sally Katz; Webb School Principal, Ken Craig; Keane on Kids School Enrichment Program Director, Caroline Fazzina; Webb School Presenters: Kyrstin Giliberto and her daughter, Sophia; Lilia Grabowski, Kiernan McMahon; WHS Student Representative, Anushka Gandhi. Members of the public were also present.

Motions to Amend Meeting Agenda:

Mrs. Granato MOVED to amend the Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Meeting Agenda to add the following item to Section **3**. **Communications**: **b. Blue Path Update – Therapy Dog Lenny**. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Laccavole and VOTED unanimously.

Mrs. Granato MOVED to amend the Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Meeting Agenda and add the following item to Section **4. Reports/Discussion Items**: **b. Advisory School Building Committee - Architect Recommendation for School Building Project (Ref. 2): 4.b.1**. **Recommended Motion**: **Approval of Advisory Building Committee recommendation to Accept Vendor**. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Laccavole and VOTED unanimously.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Assistant Superintendent of WPS, Jennifer Frese-Miller led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comment

Keane on Kids School Enrichment Program Director, Caroline Fazzina of 19 Fairmont St provided an update on the Keane for Kids After School Programs that are being held in each of the five (5) elementary schools and at SDMS. She noted availability remains in the programs and that financial assistance is available. She encouraged families to view the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Winter Brochure for more information.

https://wethersfieldct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6674/WinterSpring-2026-Brochure?bidid=

She noted the five elementary school programs include student performances as follows:

- Highcrest School – The Wiz (Mar 13-14)
- Charles Wright School – Finding Nemo Kids (Apr 24-25)
- Hanmer School – Shrek (May 1-2)
- Webb School – Annie (May 16-17)
- Emerson-Williams School –Seussical (May 8-9)

Mrs. Fazzina also noted that Mrs. Andrea Aglieco continues her work in teaching the Hands-On Science school curriculum enrichment programs in the schools this year.

Mrs. Fazzina expressed appreciation for the support from all partners and mentioned Board of Education Member, Gabby DiBacco is also helping with the student performance after school program.

3. Communications

a. Human Resources & Personnel (01.13.26): Ms. DiBacco reported the committee reviewed the high-level responsibilities and upcoming schedule for collective bargaining negotiations, clarified the role of board members in the negotiation process, discussed the connection between negotiations and the annual budget and the upcoming negotiation timeline. Upcoming negotiations will occur with the following bargaining units: Secretarial/Paraeducator/Tutor union; Wethersfield School Nurses Association, and Wethersfield School Administration Association. Committee next steps were discussed. An orientation session will be planned for committee members to review the negotiation process, including parameters and ground rules, district financial projections, comparative contract data, relevant legal requirements and timelines.

b. Blue Path Update – Therapy Dog-Lenny

A presentation was made by members of the Webb School community and Principal, Ken Craig about the Blue Path organization and Webb School's therapy dog, Lenny.

The following individuals presented: Lenny's foster family, Kyrstin Giliberto and her daughter, Sophia; Lilia Grabowski and Kiernan McMahon presented their introduction of Lenny. The introduction included names of the dog handlers and noted the positive impacts Lenny has had on the school community. Board Comments: Mr. Laccavole, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mr. Reilly, Ms. Callan Carson, and Mrs. Granato commented. Webb School Principal, Ken Craig also commented.

4. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Standards & Benchmarks for District Operations-DRG D Comparison Charts (Ref. 1)

Superintendent Wihbey referred to the Board member packet, Reference Item #1 [Standards and Benchmarks for District Operations-DRG D Comparison Charts (January 6, 2026)] noting a vision for WPS's future pathways and outlining the minimum conditions required to sustain high-quality and service operations. Superintendent Wihbey commented on the twelve benchmarks for WPS district operation and noted the data presented was obtained from CT State Department of Education (CSDE) – *Report Cards* and *Dashboards*. This information will help with budget decisions in Wethersfield school district.

Board Comments: Ms. Callan Carson and Mr. Laccavole commented.

b. Advisory School Building Committee - Architect Recommendation for School Building Project (Ref. 2)

Advisory School Building Committee Chairperson, Emily Zambrello, provided an overview of the committee vetting process for the architect recommendation to the Board and Town Council for the WPS Elementary School Building Project. Town of Wethersfield Physical Services Director, Sally Katz was also present to answer questions from BOE members.

Board Comments: Mr. Laccavole, Mrs. Drew, Mr. Reilly, Ms. Callan Carson, Mrs. Gold, and Mrs. Granato commented. Town of Wethersfield Physical Services Director, Sally Katz also commented.

b.1. Recommended Motion: Approval of Advisory School Building Committee recommendation to Accept Vendor

Mrs. Granato MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education accept the recommendation of the Advisory School Building Committee to hire TSKP Studio as architect. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Gold and VOTED unanimously.

5. <u>Board Comment</u>

Mrs. Gold commented on the WECC meeting held yesterday and noted an ad hoc committee will be formed for purposes of looking at the future vision of early childhood care and education. More information is forthcoming about how to apply to be a member of that committee. WECC, as an official Local Governance Partner (LGP) with the State. had a Shine representative at yesterday's meeting. This representative supports WECC in ensuring compliance with OEC and State guidelines in WECC LGP role. As part of this work, WECC will be conducting a town-wide needs assessment and collaborating with Data Haven to analyze and utilize community data to make a clear coherent strategy for the future of early childhood education.

Ms. Callan Carson reported that the WSPC meeting held last week was very well attended. The Council is encouraging new guests and topics at meetings on an ongoing basis. A winter walk event is being planned for February and there is an Internet Safety Night with Scott Driscoll for parents at 7PM on February 2nd at Pitkin Community Center.

Mr. Reilly reported his attendance at the PTO meeting held at Highcrest School last Thursday. He noted there are many fundraising activities planned and that he has been responding to their questions about the schedule for the upcoming school building project.

Mrs. Drew congratulated the WHS Girls Indoor Track Team members for breaking a world record this past weekend at Yale University.

Mrs. Granato explained the new model for board meetings. Tonight's meeting was the new workshop model. Each month, the Board of Education has two (2) meetings. These meetings take place on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. The workshop meeting, now held on the second Tuesday each month, begins at 6PM with one or two committees in session at Town Hall. Residents are invited to attend said committee meetings, but there is no public comment. Following the 6PM committee meeting(s), the Board of Education then meets at 7PM

with an agenda focusing on the committee meeting(s) that was/were held. The next Board of Education meeting is Tuesday, January 27th at 7PM (with a regular agenda). Mrs. Granato thanked everyone for working on this change and provided the following quote: "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old but on building the new."-*Socrates*

WHS Student Representative, Anushka Gandhi provided the following update on recent events at WHS. The College Board recognized WHS AP Honor Roll due to the increased number of students enrolled in AP courses last year. Prior to winter break, WHS Seniors organized and participated in a Christmas holiday event where students enjoyed watching movie "Home Alone," participating in arts and crafts projects, playing sports, and drinking hot cocoa. Each student was required to bring a canned good or contribute $5.00 to participate. As a result, over $400.00 cash was raised, and approximately $1,000.00 worth of canned goods was contributed to the local food bank. Students are in full study mode with midterms exams on the horizon. Seniors have also remained busy, including ordering caps and gowns for graduation. Winter sports are underway. This past weekend, several football players were named to the CIAC All-State Team and WHS Boys Soccer player, Ramo Ahmetovic, was named GametimeCT Player of the Year for his outstanding season. WHS Girls Indoor Track set a new world record in the distance medley relay. Unified sports Basketball began last week and will run through February, and Ms. Gandhi noted she is assisting with that program.

6. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business discussed.

7. Proposed for Executive Session

Mrs. Granato MOVED to end public session and enter into an Executive Session at approximately 8:12 p.m. for the purpose of **a.** School Safety Discussion.

The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

Present for executive session:

Wethersfield Board of Education Members:
M. Callan Carson, G. DiBacco, J. Di Roberts,
A. Drew, M. Gold, B. Granato, M. Laccavole, J. Reilly
Administrators: J. Wihbey; J. Frese-Miller

8. <u>Adjournment</u>

Mrs. Granato MOVED to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting at 9:00 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