

Board of Education
May 27, 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, May 27, 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, Mrs. Di Roberts, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, 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; WPS Instructional Supervisor of Secondary Curriculum, Dr. Christina Zlatin; Highcrest Elementary School Principal, Christine Mori; SDMS Principal, Tara Yusko; Melissa Mazzaferro, Language Arts Consultant – Highcrest Elementary School; Wethersfield Social and Youth Services Prevention Coordinator, Carissa Peckrul; CT Association of Schools Assistant Executive Director, Tiffany Caouette; *B. Weyland Smith Consulting, LLC*-CEO Bonnie Smith, MPH, CPH, CPS; WHS Student Representative, Anxhelika Deda; and WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Hanmer School, Makena Schlenker. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Makena Schlenker, the WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Hanmer School, led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations

A. Presentation of 2024 CABA Student Leadership Awards:

On behalf of WPS and Wethersfield Board of Education, Superintendent of WPS-Michael Emmett honored and congratulated Ava Thompson and Gisella Vargas of WHS; and Jacob

Camilliere and Joseph Cieri of SDMS as he presented them with 2024 CABA Student Leadership Awards and commented favorably of their achievements.

B. Highcrest School Presentation: UCONN CT Writing Project:

Highcrest Elementary School Principal, Christine Mori introduced the following students who participated and placed in UCONN's *CT Writing Project* contest and who shared their writing submissions to the meeting audience:

1) Santino Nolan; 2) Luciana Scheinberg; 3) Taylor Palazzo; 4) Aaliyah Torres; 5) Siaana Beri; 6) Lyan Mansour; and 7) Aiden Geddis. There were twenty-four (24) writing pieces submitted. Language Arts Consultant, Melissa Mazzaferro was also recognized and thanked for her student mentoring and leadership during the student writing process. Art Teacher, Jill Thompson was also recognized and thanked for her student mentoring and leadership with the writing illustration process. Board Comments: Mrs. Granato and Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

C. Presentation of 2025 CAS Outstanding Leadership Award:

CT Association of Schools Assistant Executive Director, Tiffany Caouette presented the 2025 CAS Outstanding Leadership Award to WPS Instructional Supervisor of Secondary Curriculum, Dr. Christina Zlatin and noted the positive recommendations made by her peers in the district. Comments: Mr. Emmett also commented favorably of Dr. Zlatin's contributions to the district.

D. Recognition of Retirees

Mr. Emmett recognized and thanked the following Wethersfield Board of Education educators/staff members as he commented on their experience and service in the district. He wished them well in their future endeavors.

Central Office:

Amanda DelMastro [HR Benefits Coordinator]
Rosanne Zdrok [Executive Secretary-Special Services]
Nadine Charette [Administrative Secretary-Special Services]

Wethersfield High School:

Jeff Moger [History Teacher]
Joanne Ricardi [Business Department Teacher/Curriculum Writer/DECA Mentor]
Phillip Bucchi [Math Teacher]
Jonna Roberge [Paraeducator]
Sue Marhefki [Supervisor-Adult Ed Program]

SDMS:

Leslie Poulos [Library Media Specialist/Teacher/Mentor]
Karen Marshall [IT Curriculum Specialist K-8]
Anne Molloy [Math Interventionist]

Charles Wright School:

Glenn Horter [Principal]
Kathy Zilahy [Grade 2 Teacher]
Richard Rouse [Custodian]

Emerson-Williams School:

Mary Lacy [Head Secretary]

Hanmer School:

Donna Weinstein [Paraeducator]

Webb School:

Anita Skelly [Paraeducator]

WPS Asst. Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli recognized and congratulated Mr. Emmett on his retirement. She favorably commented on his career in WPS as follows:

“So today we honor and celebrate the remarkable career of Superintendent Michael Emmett whose dedication and leadership have left a lasting impact on Weathersfield Public Schools. Michael began his journey in our district in 2008 as Director of Special Services bringing with him a passion for inclusion, student support and educational excellence His commitment and vision quickly elevated him to the role of assistant superintendent and in 2012 he became our superintendent: a role he is held with integrity compassion, and unwavering dedication. Michael is not only a respected administrator but also a beloved presence but among students. Whether stopping for a picture with [student] PJ dressed as his twin, getting dunked in the Emerson-Williams dunk tank at the Strawberry Fest, marching in the Memorial Day parade (I think he's one of the most popular people there), visiting students in the lunchroom, or joining a pickup basketball game at Hanmer, he has always found ways to connect with students beyond the office-reminding us all that leadership is most powerful when it's personal. As he steps into

retirement, we thank Michael for his years of service, his steady guidance, and his heart for every student, teacher, and staff member in Wethersfield. His legacy will live on in the classrooms, the hallways, and the hearts of all that he has led and inspired. Congratulations Michael. You'll be deeply missed and forever appreciated. We wish you peaceful, snowy January mornings without 3:00 a.m. texts and a big decision if you should cancel school or not. No more Saturday budget meetings. No more leaky school roofs. No emergency phone calls that always seem to happen on a Friday afternoon or a Sunday night. (I've gotten a couple.) We wish you nothing but good weather on your lanai and happy times with your family, including Sully, and, of course, your future puppy. Congratulations.”

E. Introduction/Welcome to Makena Schlenker, Kid Chairperson, Hanmer School:

BOE Chairperson, Mrs. Granato introduced and welcomed WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Hanmer School, Makena Schlenker who was seated at the dais next to her. Kid Chairperson Schlenker read aloud her winning essay that described her reasons in becoming a Kid Chairperson. She spoke of WPS 1) making recycling bins available for use in school cafeterias and educating students regarding same; 2) having more field trips and allowing student input (including fundraising) regarding field trip choices in the schools; 3) offering more options for healthier lunches; and 4) providing students with greater exposure to writing contests – state and countrywide. Board Comments: Mrs. Granato commented on the recent field trip taken by the Kid Board of Ed Chairpersons and Kid Mayors (along with their parents) with Board Members and Mayor Lesser to the CT State Capitol.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. May 13, 2025 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Mr. Laccavole MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of May 13, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

b. May 19, 2025 Board of Education Special Session Meeting (Ref. 1a)

Ms. Walters MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special Session Meeting of May 19, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

c. May 19, 2025 Board of Education Special Session Meeting (Ref. 1b)

Mrs. Di Roberts MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special Session Meeting of May 19, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Callan Carson and VOTED unanimously.

4. Public Comment

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

5. Communications

Mr. Emmett noted WPS as in the home stretch of the school year, with the last day for students as Monday, June 16th (following a minimum school day schedule). WHS Graduation Ceremony preparation work continues for the 6:00 PM graduation ceremony at Cove Park Tuesday, June 10th.

Mr. Emmett referred to tonight's meeting Agenda, noting the large number of Action Items for Board consideration. One item is the approval of the BOE operating budget, and Mr. Emmett prepared a document explaining how the funding would be allocated based on the education budget funding received from Town Council. All positions were saved, including the social work position. The important work of the AAP program will continue, and the *Agile Minds* Math Curriculum for Grades 7-12 will also continue to move forward. A part-time or contract Speech Pathologist position will be included as an additional resource for the preschool program. Other Action Items for Board consideration this evening include: 1) the recommended motion for approval of BOE meeting dates for the upcoming school year. [Adjustments to that meeting schedule could be worked on through the Policy and Planning Committee after Mr. Wihbey takes over as Superintendent on July 1st.]; 2) the recommended motion for the approval of the optional administration of the *Youth Voices Count* survey for 2025-2026 that would be, as in previous years, instrumental in providing data the district needs to secure grants; and 3) recommended motions for approval of curriculum items vetted through the Student Programs and Services Committee.

Mr. Emmett noted the honor and privilege he has had to work with everyone in Wethersfield and that he treasures the Town and students. He gave a special shout out to WHS Student

Representative, Anxhelika Deda, as he commented favorably of her accomplishments, wished her the best, and had everyone join in giving her a round of applause.

6. Action Items:

a. Recommended Motion: Approval of the 2025-2026 Operating Budget

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the Operating Budget for the 2025-2026 school year in the amount of \$67,468,339.

Discussion: Ms. Walters, Ms. Callan Carson, Mr. Laccavole, and Ms. Hernandez-Williams commented.

The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Weiner and VOTED unanimously.

b. Recommended Motion: Approval of BOE Meeting Dates - 2025-2026

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the attached proposed schedule of the regular Board of Education meetings for the 2025-2026 school year.

Discussion: Mr. Reilly, Mrs. Granato and Mr. Laccavole.

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

c. Recommended Motion: Approval of Optional Administration of the Youth Voices Count Survey for 2025-2026

B. Weyland Smith Consulting, LLC-CEO Bonnie Smith, MPH, CPH, CPS; and Wethersfield Social and Youth Services Prevention Coordinator, Carissa Peckrul gave a brief presentation and answered questions from Board members about the optional administration of the *Youth Voices Count Survey* in WPS 2025-2026.

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the administration of the *Youth Voices Count Survey* for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mr. Laccavole and Ms. Walters commented.

d. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Health 6, Health 7, Health 8

Mr. Reilly MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the elementary and SDMS new curriculum: Health 6, Health 7, Health 8. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts

and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Ms. Walters, Mrs. Granato and Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

e. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Anatomy & Physiology

Mr. Reilly MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Anatomy & Physiology. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

f. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Meteorology

Mr. Reilly MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Meteorology. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

g. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: CCSU CE TH 110: Introduction to Theatre

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: CCSU CE TH 110: Introduction to Theatre. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Weiner and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

h. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Theater and Performing Arts

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Theater and Performing Arts. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly and VOTED unanimously.

Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

i. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Shakespearean Studies

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS Course Proposal: Shakespearean Studies. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

j. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Advanced Video Production

Mr. Weiner MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Advanced Video Production. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

k. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Video Game Development

Mr. Weiner MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Video Game Development. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts and Mr. Laccavole commented.

l. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Electronic Music Production

Mr. Weiner MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Electronic Music Production. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

m. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: Conceptual Crafts

Ms. Hernandez-Williams MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS new curriculum: Conceptual Crafts. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

n. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: French 1

Ms. Hernandez-Williams MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS-SDMS new curriculum: French I. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

o. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: General Music A

Ms. Walters MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the SDMS new curriculum: General Music A. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

p. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: English-Language Arts 7

Ms. Walters MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the SDMS new curriculum: English Language Arts 7. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

q. Recommended Motion: Approval of New Curriculum: English-Language Arts 8

Mrs. Di Roberts MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the SDMS new curriculum: English Language Arts 8. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously.

r. Recommended Motion: Approval of Textbook Adoption: CCSU CE FIN 210: Personal Finance

Mrs. Di Roberts MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS Textbook Adoption: CCSU CE FIN 210: Personal Finance. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Reilly and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts and Ms. Hernandez-Williams commented.

s. Recommended Motion: Approval of Textbook Adoption: ECE UConn MUSI 1003 Popular Music & Diversity in American Society

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS Textbook Adoption: ECE UConn MUSI 1003: Popular Music & Diversity in American Society. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Weiner and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

t. Recommended Motion: Approval of Textbook Adoption: AP US Government and Politics

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the WHS Textbook Adoption: AP US Government and Politics. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously. Board Comments: Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

7. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Announcements/Information

Included in the Board member meeting packets was a memo dated May 23, 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, 05.23.25 and attachments.

b. Advisory School Building Committee Update:

Committee Chair, Mr. Weiner thanked Town Council members for approving the ed specs at yesterday evening's Town Council meeting. The approval now allows Mr. Emmett to continue

the grant application process and filing. On June 16th, Town Council will set the referendum date. The Advisory School Building Committee will meet again once the referendum date is set.

8. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

Human Resources & Personnel Committee Meeting – (05.13.25 @ 5:00 p.m.): Ms. Hernandez-Williams previously provided a report (during the BOE Regular meeting held May 13, 2025).

Community and Public Relations Committee Meeting – (05.14.25 @ 5:00 p.m.): Ms. Callan Carson reported the Committee discussed the May newsletter (the process from draft to the final version that was approved). The Committee commented on all the accolades and great activities being done in the schools. A Communications Plan – a three-year plan of all the different topics the group wishes to look at and or improve upon. The group discussed pausing a Communications Plan (a three-year plan of looking at and/or improving upon different topics the group chooses) until Mr. Wihbey starts as Superintendent in order to facilitate his input before sending said plan to the full Board. The finalized Seeds of Civility document (a reminder of code of conduct for people interacting at town/education board/parent/school meetings) was discussed and will be taken up in the fall. Said document is being sent to a couple of town council members for their input.

Board of Education Special Session Meeting – (05.19.25 @ 6:00 p.m.): Mrs. Granato reported the meeting pertained to a confidential student matter.

Student Programs & Services Committee Meeting – (05.20.25 @ 6:00 p.m.): Mrs. Di Roberts reported the Committee vetted a wide range of curricula for students to develop their technical and comprehension skills for problem solving, innovation, and creation. There were reports made from SDMS and WHS pertaining to their School Improvement Plans (which are available online). WHS Special Education Teacher, Brittany Solony; and WPS Instructional Supervisor for Special Education, Kayla Evans spoke of life skills and transition to adulthood by providing an overview of the adaptive life skills program. A student also presented on the different jobs that have been taken on for further skill development.

Mrs. Di Roberts noted that at the recent WECC meeting, the growing concern over the negative impact of cell phone use on our young people was discussed. The group explored how we as a community can support parents in reducing screen time and fostering more engaged presence/interaction with their kids. This important conversation will continue at WECC meetings in the future. It was noted at the WECC meeting that Governor Lamont continues to emphasize early childhood as a top priority with a particular focus on increasing access to child care and preschool. WECC is actively engaged in conversations to explore these incentives.

Additionally, the current PEP cohort is hosting a Family Play event on June 12th at the Wethersfield Farmers Market, and community members are encouraged to attend. PEP parent ambassadors will be forming multilingual parent influencers to participate in meetings/trainings and collaborate with parent ambassadors about family support and engagement to identify barriers to information. They will be hosting a community café for this purpose.

Finance and Operations Committee Meeting – (05.27.25 @ 6:00 p.m.): Mr. Laccavole reported the district is currently under budget by a relatively significant amount due to the excess cost money provided by the State. He thanked the legislators and Governor Lamont for that allocation.

b. Meetings Scheduled

There are no meetings scheduled at this time.

9. Public Comment

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

10. Board Comment

Mr. Laccavole expressed his appreciation for all those honored this evening: retirees, students recognized for their accomplishments, and to Mr. Emmett. He noted everyone is grateful for Mr. Emmett's dedication to WPS.

Mrs. Di Roberts commented favorably of the Webb School's student production, *Spongebob*, that she recently attended. She also commented favorably of the WHS Awards Night and AP Art Show events that she also attended.

Ms. Hernandez-Williams commented that prior to tonight's meeting, she attended the SDMS PAC meeting and learned of the field trips and Field Day events for the students. She noted

parent volunteers are needed for the SDMS Dance and the 8th Grade field trip to Lake Compounce (June 5th). She favorably of how the teams at SDMS have personalized the Step-Up Ceremonies for the students: (Turquoise Team-June 11th, Magenta Team-June 12th, and Indigo Team-June 13th). There are separate dates for the teams due to parking constraints. She encouraged SDMS parents to become involved with the group (SDMS PAC) and noted the hard work being done by the group officers.

Mr. Reilly commented favorably of the WHS Band Banquet he attended on May 16th and noted his appreciation of Mr. Emmett's attendance at the event. He also commented favorably of the WHS Awards Night Ceremony he attended on May 21st and congratulated WHS Student Representative, Anxhelika Deda for her receiving awards that evening. Additionally, he noted that he enjoyed walking with the WHS Marching Band at the Memorial Day Parade.

Ms. Callan Carson commented favorably of the UCONN PEP Program, and the UCONN PEP Graduation Ceremony event she recently attended. She was happy to hear from these new community leaders and what they are planning to do. She thanked Mr. Emmett for all his work and efforts over the years as Superintendent of Wethersfield Public Schools. She expressed congratulations to all WHS students who will be graduating and hoped for good weather for their graduation ceremony.

Mrs. Granato commented favorably of the WHS Awards Ceremony she attended. The event left her impressed by student achievement, the number of scholarships given by town residents, and the faith residents have in WPS. She recently attended the final meeting for the school year of the Keane on Kids Coalition and fundraising was discussed. The Foundation recently had a successful golf tournament fundraising event, and there is a Walk/Run event (with Laura's Garden) – 24th Annual Wethersfield Community Run on June 8th. Cove Side Carnival (fundraiser) will occur this fall. Mrs. Granato encouraged everyone to check the Keane Foundation website for details about the organization, programs, and fundraisers. Mrs. Judy Keane, Caroline Fazzina, and others working behind the scenes, were thanked for all they do to help kids in Wethersfield. <https://keanefoundation.org>

WHS Student Representative, Anxhelika Deda commented on events for WHS. She noted the Dollars for Scholars ceremony honoring students was held this evening. This Friday, the last filming of the year for WHS Blue Eagle News will be shown and the Seniors will enjoy their

class picnic. Next week, the yearbook signing and the “Senior Sunset” events will occur. Ms. Deda expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to serve the Board as WHS Student Representative and to witness the hard work Board members do to make WPS amazing. She also congratulated Mr. Emmett on his retirement and amazing career.

Mrs. Granato noted WHS Graduation is at Cove Park 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday June 10th.

11. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

12. Adjournment

Ms. Walters MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 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