

Board of Education
January 23, 2024

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-C0gYVVxmD5ilfFTnsQ>

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session Tuesday, January 23, 2024 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, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, Mr. Reilly, Ms. Walters, Mr. Weiner, Vice Chairperson Laccavole; and Chairperson Granato. Also present were: WPS Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; WPS Business Manager, Matt Kozaka; WPS Director of Security & Residency, Michael Baribault; Webb Elementary School, Principal Ken Craig; Charles Wright School Principal, Glenn Horter; Webb Elementary School Curriculum Specialist, Andrea Kuhn; WHS School Psychologist, Pam Harrison; BIPOC Affinity Group members: Pamela Jones, Doris Duggins, Shawhara Banks, Maryam Hazrati Zaer, and Kayla Cruz; Wethersfield Family and Early Childhood Coordinator, Kim Bobin; Wethersfield Social, Youth & Senior Services Assistant Director, Erica Texeira; *B. Weyland Smith Consulting, LLC* CEO Bonnie Smith, MPH, CPH, CPS; and Atty. Patrick J. McHale; and WHS Co-Student Representative, Mary Dunn. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Student presenters from Webb Elementary School led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations

Webb Elementary School Student Presentation:

Webb Elementary School Curriculum Specialist, Andrea (Annie) Kuhn; introduced Webb Elementary School students, Nicholas S., Karina P., and Matthew K. who then made a presentation pertaining to the school’s Media Specialist and her maker-space and digital citizenship activities (as well as Nutmeg Book Clubs) that are taking place in the Media Center of Webb School to promote reading. Media Specialist, Leilani Arnau was present and was

introduced as the new Elementary Media Technical Associate at Webb School (as of October 2023). Board Comments: Ms. Walters, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, and Mrs. Granato commented. Mr. Emmett also commented.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. January 9, 2024 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Mr. Carey MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of January 9, 2024, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

4. Public Comment

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

5. Communications

Mr. Emmett mentioned the Wethersfield Police Athletic League will have its community kickoff event on February 2, 2024 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Pitkin Community Center and noted WPS is very happy to partner in this process. The event includes a video game trailer, food, music, games and giveaways. Information about this event went out to parents via *ParentSquare*, and the information will again be sent out two (2) more times before the event.

The Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce will be holding its annual State of the Town Breakfast on Wednesday, January 31st at the Keeney Center. Registration begins at 7:45 a.m. and breakfast is at 8:00 a.m. Guest speakers include: Wethersfield Mayor, Ken Lesser; Town Manager, Fred Presley; Wethersfield Police Chief, Raphael Medina; Economic Development Improvement Commission, Joya Zach; and Superintendent of WPS, Michael Emmett.

Mr. Emmett indicated the district continues to monitor the ESS data, and that the latest information from CCHD is that illness numbers are beginning to decline. He also noted there are no concentrations of illness and that attendance rates in the schools are at an increase (1/2%) when compared to this time (January) last year. In the month of December (2023) the district schools were 3% better in terms of overall attendance compared to December 2022.

Mr. Emmett noted that the Ad Hoc Building Committee has a meeting scheduled on January 29th in order to visit the recently built Pleasant Valley School in South Windsor and to hear from Dr.

Kate Carter, Superintendent of South Windsor Public Schools. Dr. Carter will talk about the process of building a new school.

Mr. Emmett informed everyone that he (and his fellow school superintendents) will be monitoring the weather tomorrow morning regarding snow days, and changes regarding the school day schedule (closures/delays) would be conveyed to the public around 5:45 a.m. He reminded everyone that snow day decisions are rooted in the safety of students and staff.

6. Action Items

a. Recommended Motion: Approval of Recommended Policy Updates

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the recommended policy updates from Series 5000-Students (pertaining to High School Graduation Requirements; Policy to Improve Completion Rates of the FAFSA; Suicide Prevention and Intervention).

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

7. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Announcements/Information

Chairperson Granato reviewed the items in Board Members' packets and reminded Committee Chairpersons/Board members to review their calendars with scheduled dates and times pertaining to upcoming meetings and note changes to committee meetings. She advised Board members to verify their attendance at Committee Meetings with the Committee's Chairpersons, the Administrative Chairperson, Mr. Emmett, and Executive Secretary-Dio Markopoulos. The use of email by Board members for communicating meeting attendance and ensuring a quorum for committee meetings was encouraged.

b. Equity Strategies Presentation

WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; and BIPOC Affinity Group members: Pamela Jones, Doris Duggins, Shawhara Banks, Maryam Hazrati Zaer, and Kayla Cruz; made a presentation pertaining to the work being done in Wethersfield by the BIPOC Affinity Group. Mrs. Dastoli provided an overview of the equity strategies being utilized in WPS. Pamela Jones commented on the history of the BIPOC Affinity Groups in WPS. Maryam Hazrati Zaer commented on her experience in being part of this group. Doris Duggins commented on the priority of work being done at BIPOC meetings, as well as

BIPOC group members attending/presenting at meetings/conferences. WHS 2019 Graduate, Kayla Cruz commented on her experience in being part of this group. UConn PEP Program Alum, Shawhara Banks commented on her experience in being part of this group. Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mr. Carey, Mr. Laccavole, Ms. Walters, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, and Mrs. Di Roberts commented.

c. Wethersfield Youth Voices Count Survey Results Presentation

Wethersfield Social, Youth & Senior Services Assistant Director, Erica Texeira commented on the Wethersfield *Youth Voices Count* survey process/implementation in October 2023 at SDMS and WHS. She introduced Bonnie Smith, MPH, CPH, CPS of B. Weyland Smith Consulting who then gave a presentation about the results from the 2023 Wethersfield *Youth Voices Count Survey*. Board Comments: Ms. Walters and Mrs. Granato commented. Mr. Emmett also commented.

8. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

Community & Public Relations Committee (01.10.24): Ms. Callan Carson reported that Mr. Telke and Mr. Santos of WPS IT Department explained the WPS website by each section and noted the various contributors to the website. There is a link on the WPS website for those who wish to provide feedback to the district regarding the WPS website. Social media resources that are also used to disseminate information regarding WHS were also discussed during the meeting.

Board of Education / Town Council Joint Communications Committee (01.11.24): Mr. Carey reported that he, along with Mrs. Granato, Mr. Emmett, and two (2) Town Council members sit down and meet together to discuss matters from the Town and Board of Education ends of the budget. It was noted during the meeting that the Town is forming a Building Committee to oversee the HVAC system upgrades at SDMS and any other projects as they arise.

Student Programs & Services Committee (01.16.24) – *Canceled*

CREC Council (01.17.24): Mrs. Granato reported the meeting began with welcoming comments to the new CREC councilors, as the municipal elections brought new representatives to the 35-town membership group. CREC Executive Director, Greg Florio commented on the upcoming legislative session and how CREC continues to work for State funding for the magnet

schools. The goal is to have the state pay for magnet school tuition rather than having CREC participating towns pay for same, as member towns can have a strained relationship due to the magnet school tuition impact on town education budgets. The CABA Legislative Breakfast will be held on February 15th at the CT Legislative Office Building. The event is an opportunity to speak to our municipal representatives about the many issues facing the CT school systems. Mrs. Granato is a member of CREC's Early Childhood Committee and noted her attendance at the committee meeting held via Zoom on January 10th through Zoom. There was a presentation about CREC's work on the Hartford Head Start Program. The Committee also had an opportunity to attend the opening of the new Head Start building, the Swift Factory Building that was recently renovated into a beautiful early childhood facility. Additional information regarding CREC finances and meetings can be found at the CREC website: <https://crec.org/about/index.php>

WPS Elementary Ad Hoc Building Sub Committee (01.18.24): Mrs. Granato noted the subcommittee was formed to start the process of getting input from the community for our elementary school building project. She noted that after the failed referendum, feedback indicated residents did not have enough information on the details of the original building project and that citizens wanted more opportunities to have input into the next plan for the elementary schools. The objective from the meeting was to highlight two to three (2-3) plans from five (5) plans that have been discussed in committee and to discuss, as a group, ways to get more people involved and improve communication and obtain the needed input. Facilities and communication committees will be working to send out a survey to get more people involved and obtain more ideas on the table for a plan for our elementary schools. Refer to the following website for more information: <https://wps.wethersfield.me/wps-renovation-project>

Board of Education Special Session Meeting (01.19.24): Mrs. Granato reported that the meeting pertained to a confidential student matter.

Human Resources Committee (01.22.24): Ms. Hernandez-Williams noted the Committee learned that the district is in a good place with regard to filling staff absences, and she thanked the teachers for stepping in when needed. The committee is focusing on ways to appreciate staff members districtwide.

Finance & Operations Committee (01.23.24): Mr. Laccavole reported the Committee learned that the excess cost reimbursement from the State is going to be 70% instead of 88%. He noted that the Board budget is currently at a \$50K surplus, and a 70% reimbursement would change that surplus into a \$350K deficit. He suggested all reach out to our legislators. The Board of Education Budget Workshops will be held on the following Saturdays, February 3rd and 10th, in the Stillman Building at 9:00 a.m. There has been some preliminary discussion with Town Council members about what the Board will be asking for from Town Council regarding the BOE budget, and the BOE anticipates the tough discussions regarding the budget.

b. Meetings Scheduled

Facilities & Maintenance Committee (01.24.24 @ 6:00 p.m.); WPS Elementary Ad Hoc Building Sub Committee (01.25.24 @ 6:00 p.m.) Student Programs & Services Committee (01.29.24 @ 6:00 p.m.); Student Programs & Services Committee (01.30.24 @ 6:00 p.m.) Policy & Planning Committee (02.05.24 @ 6:00 p.m.); Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative (WECC) (02.12.24 @ 4:30 p.m.)

9. Public Comment

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

10. Board Comment

Mrs. Di Roberts noted that the Charles Wright School PTO will have its first meeting of the year tomorrow evening at 7:00 p.m. Charles Wright School has reported to the Board that in the month of January, the school is concentrating on their student assessment mid-year assessments. This involves testing students and analyzing data in order to make needed changes for promoting continued student growth. Teachers have had two professional development sessions (after school): Student-Centered Discipline and assessment data revelations. The focus for this month at Charles Wright School is awareness of self and others.

Mr. Reilly noted his attendance at the WHS PTO meeting on January 17th. WHS held its 8th Grade Family Night on January 18th. WHS Safe Grad payments were due January 19th. The presentation by Kristen on the Capstone Project requirement (which had been on a hiatus during covid) for WHS Juniors was discussed. It was noted that this requirement supports the WHS Strategic Plan and was recommended in the NEASC Report. Ms. Walters inquired and Mrs.

Dastoli indicated that the Friday report will mention outreach to the public/BOE regarding assistance with Capstone.

Mr. Weiner noted that he received notes from Hanmer School's recent PTO meeting. There is excitement about the upcoming student practices/performance of the play, Nemo. A play with a Greek theme performed by Hanmer 6 Graders is also being looked at. Students were excited about the Kid Mayor and Kid Board Chair presentation and essay contest challenge from Mayor Lesser and Board Chair Granato. Upcoming events include: a trivia night event at Heirloom Market this Thursday, a Yard Goats baseball game night on April 26th, and "Hanmer's Got Talent" (date to be determined).

Ms. Hernandez-Williams reported that she had the opportunity to organize and attend SDMS' first student-run Bingo Night on Friday, January 19th and that the evening was fun and well attended (about 35 families). She thanked everyone for attending the planning meetings for the event. Funds raised will towards a civic project of making goodie bags for the homeless population.

Mr. Laccavole mentioned the *Youth Voices Count* survey data presentation made during tonight's meeting and noted that he wanted to share some information that preceded some of the information mentioned in tonight's data presentation. He learned that a parent at SDMS commented favorably on the welcoming experience students and their families had at Emerson Williams School concerning sexual identification/sexual orientation of students and wanted to share that positive information.

Ms. Walters noted that she was looking forward to attending her first PTO Meeting at Webb School as a BOE member and that Webb School is looking forward to their bingo event Friday evening. Ms. Walters commented favorably of the presentation made by Webb School students this evening. She also commented that Penny Wars will kick off soon at the school.

WHS Student Co-Representative, Mary Dunn reported WHS had its the last day of midterm exams today and that 2nd semester begins tomorrow. Capstone project proposals from WHS junior class students were submitted January 8th. Last Thursday evening, WHS hosted its annual 8th Grade Night for 8th Grade students and their families to tour WHS, obtain information about

clubs and sports teams. WHS Boys Basketball and WHS Girls Basketball teams both won their last two (2) games. WHS Boys Hockey won its game last Saturday. The WHS Dance Team placed 1st in “Pom,” 3rd in “Jazz,” and achieve overall highest score at competition. WHS Spring sports teams are preparing their seasons with informational meetings and creating practices.

11. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

12. Proposed for Executive Session

Mrs. Granato MOVED to leave public session and enter into an Executive Session at approximately 8:30 p.m. for: **a. Discussing Attorney-Client Communications**. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Weiner and VOTED unanimously.

Present for executive session:

M. Callan Carson, C. Carey, J. Di Roberts; C. Hernandez-Williams,
B. Granato, M. Laccavole, J. Reilly, E. Walters, J. Weiner

Administrators: None; **Others:** Atty. McHale

Mr. Carey MOVED to leave executive session and re-enter public session at 9:12 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Walters and VOTED unanimously.

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education amend the agenda to add an item which is in consideration of anticipated action on the Superintendent’s employment agreement. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

Mrs. Granato MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education offer the employment agreement discussed in executive session with Mr. Emmett and to authorize Board Chair to sign the agreement on behalf of Wethersfield Board of Education. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Carey MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Laccavole, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary