

Board of Education
April 22, 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 22, 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, 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; Michael Scott, AIA of TSKP Studio LLC; WHS Student Representative, Anxhelika Deda; and Webb School Kid BOE Chair, Liam Garten. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Liam Garten, the WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Webb School, led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations

A. Introduction/Welcome to Liam Garten, Kid Chairperson, Webb School:

BOE Chairperson, Mrs. Granato introduced and welcomed WPS BOE Elementary Kid Chairperson for Webb School, Liam Garten who was seated at the dais next to her. Kid Chairperson Garten read aloud his winning essay that described himself and his reasons in becoming a Kid Chairperson. He spoke of WPS 1) offering better lunch options; 2) creating opportunities to learn more about Wethersfield (i.e. trip to mayor’s office, student planned events such as trivia with prizes); 3) finding ways to honor our first responders (fire, police, EMT, military - learn what they do; provide them with care packages; hold a student writing contest with prizes awarded; providing shadowing opportunities for students); 4) holding career

day/week in the schools; 5) promoting “Wacky Wednesdays” in the schools (i.e. teacher/classroom swapping); 6) finding no cost places where students could meet, socialize, and play under the supervision of parent or police volunteer chaperones; 7) promoting reading contests in the schools during the school year; and 8) allowing a snack exchange for parents/families to donate snacks to schools or to Wethersfield Food Pantry.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. April 8, 2025 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of April 8, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

4. Public Comment

Meghan Glanovski, 24 Morrison Avenue, explained the term “twice exceptional (2e)” for individuals who are gifted and talented with autism, and who also struggle with emotional regulation, impulsivity, and sensory overwhelm. She further advocated for greater awareness, acceptance, and inclusion of neurodiverse children (children with autism, ADHD, and other developmental differences) in our schools. She referred to the book *Uniquely Human - A Different Way of Seeing Autism* by Barry M. Prizant, Ph.D., with the quote: "Instead of seeing autistic behaviors as signs of pathology we must recognize them as strategies for coping for communication for self-regulation; When we change our perspective, we change how we support the child." During Public Comment at the Board of Education Regular Meeting on April 8th and again at this time, she urged the Board of Education 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.

5. Communications

Mr. Emmett noted his presentation at the town-wide budget hearing yesterday evening, April 21st that provided an overview of the FY 2526 BOE approved budget. Wethersfield Town Manager, Frederick Presley then presented the town budget to Wethersfield Town Council. As many as fifteen (15) community members spoke at that hearing. There is a meeting (not a public hearing)

on May 1st with BOE and Town Council to look at line items and answer questions the Town Councilors may have. Any potential impacts regarding cuts and reductions will also be discussed among those members in attendance. Mr. Emmett noted that the BOE proposed budget (4.95% increase) took into account student needs and recognition of the impacts this year with reevaluation. He also noted the latest CT Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) numbers show 5.34% as the average Board approved budget from education boards across Connecticut. Mr. Emmett noted it is vitally important to continue this budget work, along with work in preparation for the upcoming referendum, through the month of May. The BOE will need to meet again to finalize the Board budget in response to Town Council feedback. Mr. Emmett reminded Board members there are two (2) regularly scheduled meetings in May and that the June 10th meeting is cancelled due to BOE attendance at the WHS Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony. Mayor Lesser plans to schedule a meeting on May 14th to set the Wethersfield Town Budget, and the BOE budget allocation will be provided from Town Council by May 15th.

Mr. Emmett referred to this evening's Meeting Agenda (Action Item 6.c. Recommended Motion: Approval of Town of Wethersfield Resolution R2025-004) and noted same as an Action Item the Board will consider this evening. The district is working diligently with TSKP and Downes Construction for Ed Specs and space standards in preparation for the grant application submission deadline of June 30, 2025. Adoption of R2025-004 noted above is the first of multiple items that the BOE will consider in the next couple of BOE meetings. Ed Specs are planned for BOE consideration the May 13th Board meeting, and Mr. Emmett thanked Michael Scott of TSKP and Downes Construction for their work in this regard.

Mr. Emmett noted he and WPS incoming Superintendent of Schools, Jeff Wihbey have communicated many times and will continue to do so for a seamless transition process. They met with TSKP Studio and Downes Construction so that Mr. Wihbey could get a feel of what is going on with WPS and the project. Additionally, Mr. Emmett, Mr. Wihbey, Ms. Katz, and Mr. Baribault toured all five (5) elementary schools last week. WTA, WHS and SDMS will be visited next week.

Mr. Emmett mentioned that with the series of resignations and retirements in WPS. In order to develop a pool of candidates, positions are being posted as tentative, as filling them will depend on the budget allocation. Mr. Emmett will be meeting with one candidate next week in

consideration of filling one of the three (3) Math Interventionist positions at WHS. There is a Curriculum Specialist who will begin in mid-May to fill that current position vacancy.

Mr. Emmett reminded everyone of the many upcoming events taking place in WPS such as field trips, Step-Up ceremonies, spring concerts, and spring sports. He also reminded everyone that the last day of the WPS 2024-2025 school year is Monday, June 16th and that the day will operate on a minimum school day schedule.

6. Action Items

a. Recommended Motion: Approval of Revised Policy 1400: School Security and Safety

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the Revised Policy 1400: School Security and Safety. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

b. Recommended Motion: Approval of Revised Policy 1600: Visitors and Observations in Schools

Mr. Laccavole MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve the Revised Policy 1600: Visitors and Observations in Schools. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey and VOTED unanimously.

c. Recommended Motion: Approval of Town of Wethersfield Resolution R2025-004

Mr. Weiner MOVED that the Wethersfield Board of Education approve **Town of Wethersfield Resolution R2025-004**.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO APPLY FOR A GRANT

WHEREAS, the **Town of Wethersfield Board of Education (BOE)** desires to seek funding for **the design and construction of the new Highcrest Elementary School and the master plan** through a grant application with the Commission of Administrative Services;

WHEREAS, the BOE recognizes the importance of securing external funding to support **the design and construction of the new Highcrest Elementary School** and its positive impact on our students and community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Town of Wethersfield Board of Education** is hereby authorizing Board of Education to submit grant application to apply to the

Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the **design and construction of the new Highcrest Elementary School located on Highland Road in Wethersfield, Connecticut.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the BOE designate **Michael T. Emmett, Superintendent of Wethersfield Public Schools** as the authorized representative to execute and submit the grant application and all related documents on behalf of the BOE;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the BOE agrees to comply, with all terms and conditions of the grant agreement, if awarded;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the BOE will ensure that the grant funds are used in accordance with the grant agreement and applicable laws and regulations.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 22nd day of April 2025.

The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Carey.

DISCUSSION: Michael Scott, AIA of TSKP Studio LLC described the comprehensive plan that would bring parity to enrollment and classroom sizes, maintain all five (5) sites, utilize a new building to create swing space, convert Webb School back to intermediate (Grades 5-6) school, and renovate as new the three (3) remaining sites. Mr. Scott provided an overview of Phases 1 through 3 and provided details about the budget for the WPS Elementary School Building Project.

Board Comments: Mr. Carey, Ms. Walters, Ms. Hernandez-Williams, and Mr. Reilly commented.

The motion was VOTED unanimously.

7. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Announcements/Information

Included in the Board member meeting packets was a memo dated April 17, 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, 04.22.25 and attachments.

b. Advisory School Building Committee Update:

Committee Chair, Mr. Weiner commented favorably (concurring with the suggestion made by Mr. Carey at a recent BOE meeting) of **Advisory School Building Committee Update** now established as a recurring BOE regular meeting agenda item. He then pointed out a couple of key takeaways from the Committee's recent meeting. During the Town Council Meeting on Monday, May 5th, Michael Scott of TSKP Studio LLC will again make tonight's presentation to the BOE about the WPS Elementary Schools Building Project. He noted that Town Council will then understand exactly where the master plan sits with the approximate preliminary costs. Ed Specs will be considered by the Board during its regular meeting on Tuesday, May 13th. June 16th, Town Council will vote on the language of the referendum question that is to appear on the ballot. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that the original date for referendum voting (September 23rd) falls on a Jewish holiday. Therefore, the referendum voting date has been reestablished to September 16th.

8. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

Finance and Operations Committee Meeting – (04.22.25 @ 6:00 p.m.): Mr. Laccavole reported the district is currently under budget; However, excess costs continue to remain as a moving target. The district is awaiting information from the State regarding excess cost reimbursement. WPS Central Office Special Services Department is currently working on outplacement projections.

b. Meetings Scheduled

Human Resources & Personnel Committee Meeting – (05.13.25 @ 5:00 p.m.)

Student Programs & Services Committee Meeting – (05.20.25 @ 6:00 p.m.)

9. Public Comment

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

10. Board Comment

Mrs. Di Roberts reminded everyone of the Keane on Kids After School Program series of plays this season. These productions are performed by students at the elementary schools. This upcoming weekend, Charles Wright School students will perform *Frozen*. Performances are

Friday evening, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday evening. She encouraged everyone to check their calendars for the student performances soon occurring at all the other elementary schools.

Ms. Hernandez-Williams commented favorably of the SDMS PAC meeting she attended just before this BOE meeting. She explained the group is looking to fill positions of Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. There is also the need for parents to become involved with the Parent Advisory Committee. This evening was Incoming Grade 7 Night at SDMS, an event she described as one which provides a wonderful opportunity to help and support the SDMS community. She promoted the important work that Parent volunteers do to help SDMS teachers, staff, and students keep clubs, activities, and student council going. Ms. Hernandez-Williams expressed her hope that parents consider volunteering at SDMS.

Mr. Laccavole thanked Mr. Weiner for his work on the Advisory School Building Committee thus far, the timely updates being provided, and for taking on the role as Committee Chair.

Mr. Weiner referred to the WPS Elementary Schools Building project as one of the most important things the Board will ever be involved with and mentioned the opportunity to help with this project was his inspiration to become a BOE member. He referred to the Advisory School Building Committee as a great group of volunteers. He commented favorably of the professional and presentation capabilities of TSKP Architect, Michael Scott. Mr. Weiner also noted there has been positive commentary regarding transparency in the process.

Mr. Weiner commented favorably of the WPS Choir and Festival Band performances he attended a couple of weeks ago and that there are many talented musicians and singers in Wethersfield school district. He reminded everyone to purchase tickets for the Keane on Kids After School Program series of plays this season. These productions are performed by students at the elementary schools. Hanmer School students will be performing *Willy Wonka* next weekend.

Ms. Walters commented that the Board has received presentations on the overall program of Restorative Practice in WPS, including its merits and benefits, and, at this point, she would like to hear more about what the WPS Administration is doing to train WPS staff with regard to neurodiversity. She spoke of her April 8th communication to both Mr. Emmett and Mrs. Dastoli about staff training on the topic of neurodiversity. She indicated April 9th Mrs. Dastoli communicated that Mr. Emmett would provide an answer. Ms. Walters noted she looks forward to hearing back from Mr. Emmett regarding staff training on the topic of neurodiversity.

Mr. Reilly commented favorably of the Career Advisory Board's annual Career Fair held at WHS on April 10th. He described the well-attended event that included representation from fifty-five to sixty (55-60) businesses. Ms. Walters was there representing The Hartford. Mr. Laccavole and many BOE members were also present

Mrs. Granato reminded everyone to join the BOE at Wethersfield Town Hall, Town Council Chambers on Tuesday, May 13th, 6:00 p.m. to give a warm welcome the new Superintendent of Schools, Jeff Wihbey. Mrs. Granato commented about the many changes the district is heading into in so many areas and provided the following quote: "We should strive to welcome change and challenges because they are what make us grow." (H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*)

WHS Student Representative, Anxhelika Deda noted that she and Melinda Das earned recognitions from the Connecticut Student Writers Project. Melinda earned a gold award for her art piece, and Anxhelika earned a silver award for her poem. Some of her WHS peers enjoyed school-sponsored trips to Costa Rica and Italy during spring break, and Anxhelika commented favorably of the trips as opportunities to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world experiences. She noted WHS DECA members are very excited to compete in ICDC this Friday, a rehearsal for the Class of 2026 National Honor Society induction ceremony is tomorrow, and that she is involved with coordinating the final Blood Drive at WHS for this school year. She noted her enjoyment of helping to coordinate the WHS Blood Drive events over the years.

11. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

12. Adjournment

Mr. Carey MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Laccavole, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary