Board of Education
September 12, 2023

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, September 12, 2023 at 7:00 p.m., and the meeting was streamed from the Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Mrs. Di Roberts, Mrs. Drew, Mrs. Granato, Mr. Healy, Mr. Laccavole, Dr. Regan-Lefebvre, Mr. Reilly, Vice Chairperson - Mr. Cascio, and Chairperson Carey. Also present were: WPS Superintendent of Schools, Michael Emmett; WPS Asst. Supt. of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli; WPS Business Manager, Matthew Kozaka; WPS Network Administrator, Jim DeRagon; WPS Director of Special Education, John Karzar; SDMS Principal, Tara Yusko; SDMS Science Teacher, Dante Solano; SDMS English Teacher, Eleanor Palombizio; SDMS Student Lion Leader Representatives Matt, Sebby, and Alejandro; Wethersfield BOE candidate, Elizabeth Walters; and WHS Co-Student Representatives, Noah Torrance and Mary Dunn. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

WHS Co-Student Representatives, Noah Torrance and Mary Dunn, led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognitions/Presentations

a. SDMS Class Orientation Program

SDMS Principal, Tara Yusko introduced SDMS Second-Year Science Teacher-Crimson Team, Dante Solano who managed the 7th grade Class Orientation Program which was in session the week before school started. Mr. Solano explained the program as an opportunity for 8th Graders to grow as leaders, give themselves student voice/representation, and take some more ownership and responsibility in their school. SDMS Student Lion Leader Representatives Matt, Sebby, and Alejandro shared a couple things they enjoyed from the program.

Mr. Emmett thanked SDMS Principal, Tara Yusko; SDMS Science Teacher, Dante Solano; and SDMS English Teacher, Eleanor Palombizio for all the work they do at SDMS and for helping to create a smooth start for the 7th graders of SDMS. Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mr. Lacavolle, Mr. Casio, and Dr. Regan-Lefebvre

b. Introduction of WHS Co-Student Representatives

Mr. Emmett indicated WHS was pleased to report that there will be co-student Board of Education representatives for the 2023-2024 School year. This adoption results from noticing the challenges in relying on one, very-involved (academical/extra-curricular) WHS student representative's availability for meetings and realizing that having co-student representatives will ensure that WHS is represented at BOE regular meetings.

Noah Torrance noted he was honored to be selected as a co-student representative. He is a member of the indoor and outdoor track teams, cross country team, Pre-Med Club, and Eagle Crew member.

Mary Dunn was also honored to be selected as a co-student representative. She is involved in clubs, including art clubs and the National Art Honor Society.

3. Board Comment

Mrs. Di Roberts reminded everyone about the Facilities and Maintenance Committee Meeting on Thursday, September 14tth and noted that although there is no public comment at that meeting, attendance will allow for learning information about the school facilities. She commented favorably of Wethersfield School Parents Council's (WSPC) first meeting of the 2023-2024 school year which she recently attended. She is impressed with the number of parents who coordinate and support the many events occurring in the schools, encouraged membership in the Council, and members and parents for all they do to support students.

Mrs. Granato commented favorably of Keane Foundation's gathering that took place yesterday evening in memory of 9/11. She regards Keane Foundation President, Judy Keane as WPS Fairy Godmother, crediting her work in making the Keane-On-Kids After School programs and the Hands-On-Science programs a reality in the schools. Mrs. Granato noted she'll forever remember the Keane Foundation and yesterday evening's gathering.

Mr. Casio thanked Mrs. Di Roberts for reminding everyone about the Facilities and Maintenance Committee meeting on Thursday evening (September 14th). He expressed his excitement for BOE having new student representatives and thanked all WPS staff members and the administration for all they do in helping to make good things happen in the district.

Dr. Regan-Lefebvre noted BOE colleague, Matt Laccavole informed her that today is "National encouragement Day." As such, she gave a quick shout out to Wethersfield Shop Keepers Association for their Porch Fest event she recently enjoyed attending. Additionally, she gave a special shout out to WPS 2023 Teacher of the Year, Emily Caravella, and two WPS students who played a beautiful string trio on Main Street. Furthermore, WPS parent volunteers and PTOs were thanked for all the efforts in organizing and planning events. Dr. Regan-Lefebvre encouraged parents to join the PTOs at the schools their children attend.

Mrs. Drew commented favorably of this year's *Convocation* event and thanked Administrators and staff for making it so great. She mentioned that she liked seeing Mr. Emmett and Mr. Karzar dancing.

4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

a. August 22, 2023 Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Mr. Healy MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of August 22, 2023, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Laccavole and VOTED unanimously, with Mrs. Di Roberts and Mrs. Drew abstaining.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Communications

Mr. Emmett noted there was a tremendous start of the 2023-2024 school year that began with Convocation and added to Mrs. Drew's commentary that what was most important after he and his colleagues started the dance at *Convocation* was that students joined the fun during that moment by dancing in the isles. Additionally, the audience heard from WPS Teacher of the Year: Emily Caravella (SDMS) and WPS Para Educator of the Year: Rosanna D'Onofrio (SDMS). Student musicians from grades 4 through 12 performed a string version of Ozzy

Osbourne's "Crazy Train" and WPS Teacher of the Year, Emily Caravella was proud to have been able to play the vibraslap at that performance

Mr. Emmett was able to visit all the schools, including SMDS, WHS, and Wethersfield Transition Academy on the first day of school, and her noted there were far less issues with student transportation when compared with last year's first day of school. WPS Business Manager, Mr. Kozaka is currently working on transportation matters brought to the district's attention by parents with regard to Discovery Academy bus routes and a solution is anticipated tomorrow.

Mr. Emmett noted the increased participation in the numbers of meals served at breakfast and lunch in the elementary schools, SDMS, and WHS. He thanked the State of Connecticut, as well as WPS Business Manager, Matt Kozaka's effective management of the cafeteria fund for making this program a success in the district.

Mr. Emmett business discussed at the Facilities and Maintenance Committee meeting on Thursday, September 14th at 6:00 p.m. in the Stillman Building will include: an update from Wethersfield Director of Physical Services, Sally Katz on building projects completed over the summer; the new legislation around HVAC and air quality in schools; and *Colliers* representatives presenting their update on the facilities assessment that was done over the course of the summer. Mr. Emmett indicated the anticipated presentation of this information to the community to occur at the September 26th BOE regular meeting

Mr. Emmett noted he will be participating in a health and safety call with Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Public Health on Friday, in lieu of the third Thursday of the month meeting with the Commissioner. Updates with regard to covid, as well as other respiratory illnesses (including RSV, flu) will be provided, and more information will be provided to the district in the near future.

Mr. Emmett indicated the next round of funding for the HVAC Grant has been released by the State, and there would be a meeting on Thursday morning with Wethersfield Town Manager, Frederick Presley and Wethersfield Director of Physical Services, Sally Katz to discuss the pursuit of this grant (with emphasis on replacing the chiller at SDMS). It had been revealed at the RLE audit in February that the chiller was on its last leg.

Mr. Emmett commented on the WHS vs. Hall HS football game which was in session at the time of this meeting. This game had been postponed (due to lightning) and was rescheduled to this evening. Following tonight's game, WHS Athletic Director & Assistant Principal, Michael Maltese was to provide additional information regarding the football home game matchup on the schedule for Friday against Southington. It is anticipated that the Friday game will be moved to a new time over the weekend to allow players the necessary recovery time from tonight's game. Mr. Emmett noted the WHS sports teams are quickly ramping up and well in their seasons with events wrapping up.

Mr. Emmett indicated there had been multiple issues with humidity and HVAC systems at schools and at the Stillman Building due to the recent hot weather, and there would be a meeting with WPS HVAC Maintainer, Salazar to discuss the matters.

Mr. Emmett noted an adjustment to the agenda for this meeting. WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli and WPS Network Administrator, Jim DeRagon will speak on the district's process of changing the protocol around turning off access to Chromebooks overnight.

7. Action Items

There were no items.

8. Reports/Discussion Items

a. <u>Announcements/Information</u>

Chairperson Carey 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. He 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. <u>Announcements/Information</u>

WPS Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum & Instruction, Sally Dastoli and WPS Network Administrator, Jim DeRagon made a presentation regarding the district's process of

changing the protocol around turning off access to Chromebooks overnight from the hours of 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mrs. Drew, Dr. Regan-Lefebvre, Mr. Reilly, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mr. Cascio, Mr. Healy, Mr. Laccavole, and Mr. Carey. Ms. Dunn, Mr. Torrance, and Mr. Emmett also commented.

9. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative (WECC) (09.11.23 @ 4:30 p.m.): Mrs. Granato reported that the first meeting of WECC was held at the Pitkin Community Center. There were two (2) speaks who presented. Village for Families and Children Consultant, Carmen Feliciano commented on a partnership the Village has with Early Childhood Consultation Partnership, which is funded by DCF but does not report to DCF. The organization is child specific and teacher supported. Refer to this link for more information: (www.eccpct.com). Melissa Mahoney, Family Support Coordinator of the Family Enrichment Center of The Hospital of Central CT, spoke of a free program she would like to bring to Wethersfield "The Circle of Security" which teaches caregivers how to attend to their child' needs/help identify preventions from allowing kids to explore/creating a safe haven for kids. Refer to the following website for additional information regarding preschool classes/programs and other resources for children (ages birth to five): https://wps.wethersfield.me/district/early-childhood-in-wethersfield

b. Meetings Scheduled

Facilities & Maintenance Committee (09.14.23 @ 6:00 p.m.), BOE Retreat Workshop (09.19.23 @ 6:00 p.m.), CREC Council (09.20.23 @ 11:30 a.m.), Finance & Operations Committee (09.26.23 @ 6:00 p.m.)

10. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

11. Public Comment

Liz Walters of 57 Randy Lane commented on the student agreement providing flexibility to respond to data being pulled when reviewing use of Chromebook and applying Board policy; the frequency of changing said policy; and Board Policy 5780 language, stating in part, that BOE

can review and monitor, and if the students are not in compliance with the student agreement, then their access violations will lead to withdrawal.

12. <u>Proposed for Executive Session</u>

Mr. Cascio MOVED to leave public session and enter into an Executive Session at approximately 8: p.m. for: **<u>a.</u> <u>Discussion of Superintendent's Goals for 2023-2024</u>**. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Granato and VOTED unanimously.

<u>Present for executive session</u>:
C. Carey, J. Di Roberts; R. Drew, J. Cascio, B. Granato,
C. Healy, M. Laccavole, J. Regan-Lefebvre, J. Reilly;
<u>Administrators</u>: M. Emmett

Mr. Reilly MOVED to leave executive session and re-enter public session at 9:00 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Drew and VOTED unanimously.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Laccavole MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. The motion was SECONDED by Dr, Regan-Lefebvre and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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John F. Cascio, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary