

Hamden Board of Education (**Please read my letter into the Minutes**)

Comments for Aug.9, 2022 meeting

Dear Chairwoman Kaplan and members of the Board:

I am writing to you regarding a couple of important issues, which I wish I could make in person, but I am unable to attend your meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 9.

First, I am an active, politically-competent member of the public, who has been involved in Hamden School issues for many years. This is not the first year that “busing” has been a problem. However, one theme over the years has been the inefficient use of the school buses. The cost of these antiquated, gas guzzling, fume-spewing, lumbering buses has become prohibitive. We need to use fewer buses and pick up more kids efficiently so that we can rein in transportation costs.

I know that the Board in the past made their own list of bus stops. In my neighborhood, there are 3 stops in a 2 block radius for the Middle School. How ridiculous is that? No wonder buses are late to schools. I believe that a committee of interested citizens could do a better job of identifying efficient bus stops than the bus company does now. It is in the bus company’s best interest to make an inefficient and expensive system. They have us over a barrel.

I would also like to have the Board contact all of our state representatives and ask if there are ways that we can use vouchers to pay private school students instead of supplying our public transportation for these extra drop-offs. I believe that a lot of those students do not use our buses and since we don’t track actual use, we have no idea of who is using this service. This private school transportation situation is unique to CT. In lots of other states, if you go to private school or even if you go to a Charter school in the same town, the parent is responsible for getting the student to school. Instead of just going along and asking for more money, it would be better if the Board of Education members thought creatively about other ways to seek funds. Applying for grants for more efficient buses, would be one step. I personally would like to spend \$600,000 on more education programs rather than on bus transportation.

Second, I would like to speak to the demeanor of the meetings. I have listened to two in the past few months and the tone of the Board members is quite disturbing. In one case, the audience was disruptive. I don’t believe that

responding to their “bad behavior” with shouting and yelling is a productive solution and it certainly leaves a significantly bad impression of the Board members. The audience and the bad actors are more anonymous than Board members. Regardless of how egregious the accusations may have been, the Board members are elected representatives of the public. People will remember your behavior and your name, not the audiences’.

The second meeting of significance was last month when the discussion of the bus finances occurred. When Board members do not understand how the funding works between the Town and the Board, it is a huge problem. Apparently, from the comments, Board members do NOT know about the finances. Accusations of how the Board did not get “funded”, how they were short-changed and how the Legislative Council is “controlling” the Board are completely untrue. Most of you do not have the experience or history to know that the Board of Education often has to come to the Legislative Council for more funds when they have unexpected expenses.

Then it was further suggested that “everyone attend Legislative Council meetings” to demand more funds and then “vote them (Council members) out.” The statements regarding the Board’s finances demonstrate the ignorance of the members and are divisive behavior which is counterproductive. I am surprised that no one from the Department such as the Superintendent would clarify the misunderstanding of the finances or the fact that good relations with the rest of the Town government is in the Board’s best interest.

The Board of Education must work with the Legislative Council members. If you start pitting yourselves against the Legislative Council, I can assure you that the results will be dreadful. Do not do that. Please keep a perspective: you represent approximately 3000 families; Legislative Council members represent all of the rest of the population.

Thank you for your time. I know this is a long letter. However, I was VERY upset by the last meeting and I felt I must publicly respond.

Elaine Dove

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August 9 Board of Education Meeting

Talwalkar, Jaideep <jaideep.talwalkar@yale.edu>

Mon 8/8/2022 11:43 PM

To: input, public <publicinput@hamden.org>

Cc: Board of Education <BoardofEducation@hamden.org>;Melissa Kaplan <makaplan6@yahoo.com>

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Public Comment for Board of Education

I will be attending the Board of Education meeting in person and will make my comments verbally. From reviewing the meeting instructions online, I believe I need to submit comments to you in advance, which is the purpose of this email. Please do not read this email aloud if doing so would prevent me from making verbal comments at the meeting.

I have had multiple conversations with students, parents, administrators, and BOE members in the past week, and I worry that the issue related to PE grades and GPA at HHS has gotten mired in unnecessary emotion and complexity. The conversation should not be about HECA, ECA, or the traditional academic pathway at HHS. It is wonderful that our town has a school that can offer such varied educational experiences for students with diverse talents and interests. Rather, the conversation is about applying PE to GPA calculation in a way that benefits all HHS students.

Some quick background – 3 semesters of PE are required to graduate HHS. Because of the way GPA is calculated at HHS, an A+ in PE is factored into the GPA the same way as a C+ in an AP class or a B in an Honors class. So for many students, PE grades bring their GPA down. This would not be an issue if it affected everyone the same way, but there are students in special pathways at HHS who do not have all their PE grades factored into their GPA because they take PE over the summer or outside of HHS. Meanwhile other students who have requested to take PE over the summer to make room in their schedules for other rigorous coursework have had those requests denied by school administrators. There is a clear inequity here.

A perceptive group of students first discovered this in early June and have been pushing to have something done about it since then. They have calculated that the drop in GPA from 3 semesters of PE is substantial – potentially enough to drop students many spots in class rank, and certainly enough to disqualify students from scholarships only available to the valedictorian and salutatorian.

There is an eloquent solution that benefits most students and harms nobody. This simple and fair solution must be implemented now to help our current students, especially those applying Early Decision to colleges this fall.

Here's the solution – Give all students who have previously taken PE for a grade the option to remove it from GPA calculation. The advantage to this solution is that there will be no negative impact on GPA for any student. Those students who previously had PE excluded from GPA calculations – those in HECA and ECA – will see no change in their GPAs. Those students with a GPA <6.0 can opt to keep PE factored into their GPA if it helps them. We don't want to bring anyone's GPA down because of an administrative change. But students with a GPA >6.0 will no longer see their GPA drop due to an A+ in PE. They will be treated more fairly with this solution. Since having every student submit their choice is administratively

complicated, the school can calculate GPAs with and without PE for each student and offer each student the higher of the two values.

This short-term solution should be implemented now to allow time for the calculations to be made. Some have expressed worry that there needs to be more time for discussion. But the students have been discussing this with school administrators for months. They have done the math and they can share it with you, as they have with me, school administrators, and least one BOE member.

This is not about HECA or ECA. It is about having PE factor into GPA in a fair way for all students at HHS. I am certain that once you see the math and the solutions proposed by our remarkable students, you will agree.

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