

## **WATERBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### *MINUTES ~ SPECIAL MEETING*

Thursday, June 28, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

Maloney Magnet School, 233 South Elm Street, Waterbury, Connecticut

**PRESENT:** President Stango, Commissioners Brown, D'Amelio, Flaherty-Merritt, Harkins, Harvey, Hayes, Morales, Sweeney, and Van Stone.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent Ouellette, Assistant Superintendents Cullinan and Sequeira, Chief Operating Officer Paul Guidone, Director of Personnel Ron Frost, and Attorney Maurice Mosley.

### **SILENT PRAYER**

President Stango called the special meeting to order at 7:43 p.m. with a moment of silence.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Dr. Ouellette led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

### **ROLL CALL**

CLERK: Commissioner Brown.

BROWN: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner D'Amelio.

D'AMELIO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Harkins.

HARKINS: Here.

CLERK: Vice President Harvey.

HARVEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Hayes.

HAYES: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Morales.

MORALES: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Sweeney.

SWEENEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Van Stone.

VAN STONE: Present.

CLERK: President Stango.

STANGO: Here. Is there any member of the public here tonight to address our two special meeting items?

**1. COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

- 1.1 Upon a motion by Commissioner Van Stone and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted, with Commissioner Hayes voting “no”, to approve the Department of Education’s 2012-13 Line Item Budget totaling \$159,718,491 (\$155,625,000/Board of Aldermen Adopted Budget AND \$4,093,491/Education Job Fund Program FY 2012-13).**

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?  
Commissioner Hayes.

HAYES: Just repeating what I said from the beginning – I don’t feel that this budget allows us to truly access the State money for the purposes . . . close to three million dollars for opening a new school to me doesn’t address the problem. I’m concerned that the State is not going to approve that money. I know it’s hard for us to do a budget now when we don’t know exactly what they’re gonna approve but even from my perspective, I’d prefer to have that 2.7 million figure, or round about, to hire new math, science, and reading teachers. If we’re gonna take that money from the State and address our district-wide problems, I don’t see the rationale for supporting taking 2.7 million of that and using it for what should have been our local obligation to open a new school. So I’ll be voting “no” on the entire budget but that’s the only concern that I have.

STANGO: Thank you Commissioner Hayes. Commissioner Brown.

BROWN: Just a point of clarification – as I’m looking at this, are Title I funds, No Child Left Behind Funds, and those kind of funds, are they reflected in the total or are those off of this budget?

GUIDONE: No they’re not in this budget; this is the General Fund budget. There was a separate report that the Grant’s Committee recently received, I think you might have missed that meeting . . . send you a copy of those budgets which include Title I, Title II, Magnet School Grants, and many other grants the Department receives that are not contained in this budget.

STANGO: Thank you. Any other questions? Hearing none - all in favor, opposed.

HAYES: No.

STANGO: Nine in favor, one opposed – motion carries.

**2. SUPERINTENDENT’S NOTIFICATION TO THE BOARD**

- 2.1 Upon a motion by Commissioner Hayes and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to receive and place on file the following special assignments effective July 1, 2012:**

Cullinan, Anne Marie –Chief Academic Officer, annual salary of \$150,000.  
Guidone, Paul –Chief Operating Officer & Chief of Staff, annual salary of \$150,840.  
Sequeira, Paul – Special Advisor to Superintendent, annual salary of \$138,119.

STANGO: Because of the uniqueness of these three items I'd like to open it up for anyone who has any questions. Commissioner Van Stone.

SWEENEY: The motion needs to be on the floor before we have any discussion.

STANGO: Motion has been made and seconded. We will now go to discussion. Commissioner Van Stone.

VAN STONE: Thank you, Mr. President. Sadly I was out of town last week so I didn't really, didn't get a chance to kind of take a whack at this although from my understanding you had a very lively meeting. This, I think this overall reform model put together by the Superintendent is a noble one and one I completely support and I will back you to the hilt to get this happening, I think it's something this district needs desperately and I thank you for your work putting it together. Specifically to these positions, a couple weeks prior to that when we were up at Rotella, I had a brief conversation about the pay raises for these but never really kind of fleshed it out. In the past week or so since I think this really became a hot button issue, I can't tell you how many people have come up to me concerned about the cost associated with this and I've done my level best to explain to them this is a State grant, this is something that's being paid for for these specific purposes and it seems that the bone of contention that it boils down to for most people is for these three positions and they just don't, most people just don't get it and I understand them in a large manner. I explained to them that it's my belief that these positions will have more responsibility. It is my belief that these positions will be different from what they've been doing. But the feeling out there is, and I've heard this term far often more than I am comfortable, that we're rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, I don't believe that's what we're doing. But I wanted to make it known, and I'm not telling you anything you already haven't heard, but with these assignments going forward we need to make sure that every "t" is crossed and every "i" is dotted going forward to justify the, in essence, raises for the people that are getting it. I think the people that are getting them have been here and frankly kind of underpaid for a while now, and I understand that, but the people in the City who are footing the bill, either directly or indirectly through State tax dollars, deserve to know that we aren't just rearranging the deck chairs, that there is a long-term vision that the people you're putting in place to make sure that happens will, in fact, affect that change. Like I said, I didn't really get a chance to take a whack at it last week, . . . gave me more time to talk to some more people and really hear it. People want you to succeed, they want this district to do better, but I think to many of them it's kind of seeing things that have been billed as great changes that haven't worked out and ended up costing more money anyway and many of them are reticent about spending any more money especially when many of them at home are making less money. So I just want to make sure that you and Central Office, and us as members of this Board, hold feet to the fire. This simply just can't be a dog and pony show that we do to make ourselves feel better and then it falls off our radar. I don't believe it will but we need to do our level best for the taxpayers and 18,000 kids that are floating around our buildings to make sure that this reform effort is, in fact, a reform effort and not just a different way to spend State dollars. I just want to make sure that we're all on the same page. I feel we are but I think it was important to make sure.

SUPERINTENDENT: I thank you for your remarks and I take them very seriously and I appreciate you sharing those this evening. And it is, it's difficult I think for the public to understand the concept that Central Office is very, very minimized at this point in time.

When you look at the larger school districts, not to start to compare us to the other three or four other large urban districts, you have a very, very lean Central Office now because all those positions now are going to be focused at the building-based level. And with that, I kind of took a look at some of the larger urban districts today and some of the salaries; we're very conservative compared to other districts. We are doubling the responsibilities in some areas with some of these positions and it would cost probably perhaps maybe even 2/3rds more if we were to keep some of those positions on. So we're trying to be strategic, I certainly appreciate that and I know the public has some concerns. We will, I will continue to do my best to be transparent, to communicate that message, but I think it's something; we've got to look different. The State has said you've got to do something differently, we have an accountability structure perhaps that got away from us the last couple of years with regards to some of the structures in place, my intent is to hope and hope that this new structure will bring the accountability, bring the date, bring the performance levels, with principal and teacher evaluations in place to get us where we need to be.

VAN STONE: I think you're being very kind when you say perhaps, the loss of accountability structure, I don't think it's perhaps, at all, I think we have. And I'm happy that we seem to be regaining one. I think as we get in and we hire these new building-based administrators it's very important that they have a regular seat at that table. These can't be positions that we don't hear from for six months, eight months, and then return. They need a standing engagement with us to let us know what's happening. That is one of their big roles to make sure that you know the kind of divide that is between this Board and the schools, shrinks. The divide between our schools and the Superintendent's office shrinks. And I'm gonna harp on this. I've got a couple more years here so I'm gonna make sure that we don't forget, even if we try.

SUPERINTENDENT: I appreciate that. Thank you.

BROWN: I, too, have been having a discussion with the public and one fact that Mr. Guidone shared with us, Commissioner Van Stone, was the fact that the ECS Formula, the Cost Sharing Grant from the State, really has not increased for four years. So now we're faced with trying to do more with less and the carrot of this additional grant money is an opportunity to move some of these reforms. So when I say that they're "oh, okay, we haven't had an increase". So that's one area. And the other area that seems to resignate is that we will have more accountability and I like your idea of having more interface with these leaders to really get updates and really have a working relationship with them and not just a reporting relationship. So that said, my question really is in terms of the contract with these new people, now Dr. Sequeira's will be just for one year and the other two are for how long?

SUPERINTENDENT: That's correct. I believe, do we have a contract that we set? There has been contracts in the past.

GUIDONE: These are not, these are payroll positions, these are not contractual. They go as long as the Board chooses to go . . . Dr. Sequeira is specific to a one year term. The other positions, the Leadership Directors and Director of Special Ed, and Talent Officer would be standard SAW contracts . . . is that the level of evaluation criteria is set up . . . very important to the Superintendent and the Chief Academic Officer for those positions . . . so they can be evaluated, they can be held accountable, as Jason described . . .

BROWN: And in one year will Dr. Sequeira's position be looked at to be renewed or how does that work? Will it come before us again?

GUIDONE: Right now the position description as you will recall when approved was specifically for one year. It's not saying . . . but the specific one that was approved was a one year position.

STANGO: Any other discussion? Vice President Harvey.

HARVEY: I want to thank you for adding in to the job description, Paul, per my request, that the positions are "appointed" by the Superintendent. And I appreciate that. But I will say this, I too have received calls and spoken with different folks in the community, community leaders, and they understand that we have to move, we have to put things in place, the Superintendent needs people in place, but they would like, for the next go around, that these positions are posted – bring new blood into the district, give others an opportunity, increase moral, to know what they can shoot for. From what I can gather, I had a meeting with some community leaders this weekend, they had the same questions Jason, Commissioner Brown, but the next go around I would like to see these positions posted. Thank you.

HAYES: Just to get the question that's been raised already, the next go-around, is it safe to say that since they're not in a long-term contract that basically everybody here is on a yearly review, isn't that part of your accountability? Is it an understanding . . . where's the accountability? Is it that you keep the job as long as you perform the job?

SUPERINTENDENT: Correct, based on performance and the serve at will to the Superintendent, it can be dissolved or dismissed at any point in time.

HAYES: I just want to make sure people understand that because there's gonna be accountability and some people are questioning some of this stuff. We will rely on you to hold them accountable that's why we want to give you this authority for those positions. And, they have Dr. Sequeira's name listed in there right now but the intent of this position was to help us move to change some of our curriculum levels to allow our kids to find a path to our Career Academy.

SUPERINTENDENT: That's correct.

HAYES: And I think that's really important. We don't want to just after eighth grade have a bunch of kids say I want to go there. We ought to be working with these kids through guidance right through middle school to determine which kids would be best served by going into that different learning environment. That, to me, I hope is the goal of what that position is going to be. Again, I think another part of it is to work right up through the program we have at Naugatuck Valley Community College, the GEAR Up, this seems like this is a position that should be focused on that particular, probably almost single-minded goal with working with our kids in the elementary and middle school levels to allow them to travel the course through our Career Academy with an idea and still going on to higher learning. So I'm hoping that's what our goal is for that particular position.

SUPERINTENDENT: It is.

STANGO: Any other questions before I return to Commissioner Van Stone?

VAN STONE: Just, Mr. President, one thing to follow up, and I appreciate Commissioner Brown reminding me. I, too, in the discussion was saying you know these are grant funded positions and ECS hasn't been increased. The one thing we need to remember, and I know I will and I know I'll stay on Paul about it, is that this special grant will go away. It's written for five years but the Legislature next year could say we're not appropriating funds for it and all of a sudden we need to pay all these people. And it's my hope that we do need to pay them because if we do need to pay them that means it's working. So, while, you know we, as a district, I think we're saved in many regards this year in our budget by this 4.3 million dollars that came and specifically once they changed the language for what we can use it for, and I appreciate the State making that language change, otherwise we would have been in a lot of trouble. We need to be planning down the road for when it goes away. History has shown that, you know, just like the ECS hasn't been increased in four years, either has the City side so something's gonna have to change soon. If this thing lasts five years and there's no, my feeling here is that getting this extra "ECS" money will give the State a reason not to change the ECS formula, the real ECS, so it will be a flat number for as long as this supplemental money is involved and you know if the City does not have any intention to increase the budget on that side, at some point we're gonna have some very tough decisions to make. We're gonna have another school we're opening in a couple of years with the Career Academy. We are gonna potentially have an East End school at some point. So every decision we make with every one of these positions, even if it's just in the big scheme of things, a nominal \$13,000 increase, at some point in the near future we're gonna come to a reckoning where we're gonna have to figure out what the heck we're doing. It was my concern if we didn't get this 4.3 this year, there's no increase on the City side, we would have been close to cutting programs and laying off teachers. I don't know if the district understands how close we were this year to having to probably do that. So just like we always talk about having a plan "b", "c", "d", "i", "k", we need to have some long range planning to get us through this next decade of opening new schools, improving the accountability structure in our Central Office, and hiring the best and the brightest administrators and teachers as we can because all those things will cost us money and we just need to make sure that we have a plan that will accommodate all those things without tapping the City taxpayer, which I don't think we can, and without always kind of having our fingers crossed for an extra 4.3 million dollars falling out of the sky like it did this year because that's not gonna happen each year.

STANGO: Any other questions. Okay, motion to receive and place on file has been made and discussed. Just for the record, these special assignments become effective July 1, 2012.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Upon a motion by Commissioner Hayes and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:06 p.m.**

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carrie A. Swain, Clerk  
Board of Education