

## **WATERBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### *MINUTES ~ SPECIAL MEETING*

Monday, September 21, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Wendell Cross School, 1255 Hamilton Avenue, Waterbury, Connecticut

**PRESENT:** President Hayes, Commissioners D'Angelo, Flaherty-Merritt, Harvey, Laccone, O'Leary, Stango, Sweeney, Theriault, and White.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent Snead, Assistant Superintendents Cullinan and Sequeira, Chief Operating Officer Paul Guidone, Director of Personnel Ron Frost, School Business Administrator Paul Mazzaccaro, Attorney Maurice Mosley, Education Liaison Mary Ann Marold, and School Inspector Herbert Greengas.

### **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

President Hayes called the special meeting to order at 7:49 p.m. with a moment of silence and a prayer and Superintendent Snead led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

### **ROLL CALL**

CLERK: Commissioner D'Angelo.

D'ANGELO: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt.

FLAHERTY-MERRITT: Present.

CLERK: Commissioner Harvey.

HARVEY: Here

CLERK: Commissioner Laccone.

LACCONO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner O'Leary.

O'LEARY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Stango.

STANGO: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Sweeney.

SWEENEY: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner Theriault.

THERIAULT: Here.

CLERK: Commissioner White.

WHITE: Here.

CLERK: President Hayes.

HAYES: Here. We have a sign-up sheet, no one has signed up. Is there anyone here wishing to address the Board, is there anyone here wishing to address the Board?

**1. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

- 1.1 Upon a motion by Commissioner White and duly seconded by Commissioner Stango, it was voted, by roll call vote, to approve the submittal of a "letter of intent" to Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan to participate in the "Race to the Top" Incentive Grant Program application process.**

HAYES: Motion is made and seconded. Is there any discussion? Commissioner Stango.

STANGO: With the knowledge and trust that we can pull out if we don't like it, and my core belief that I will never accept teacher or principal evaluations or pay based on test scores, and knowing that it is our hard earned dollars that will be coming back to Waterbury, and God knows that we need it, and I feel that we must have input in the process, and I will not be shy and vote to pull out if we have to; I will be supporting the proposal.

SWEENEY: I'll back all of Commissioner Stango's comments; I think it's imperative that we're at the table, that the State understands where we stand, what we think is best for our district, what we think we can do to help other districts in the State, and what we think other districts in the State can do for us. And I think that's an important conversation to have and I think we need to agree to do that.

SUPERINTENDENT: I'd like for our two union presidents to hear, I want you to hear this, based on the conversations that went around the table, I thought that maybe I'd add a piece to this draft letter. I'll have to massage this tomorrow. But I thought maybe I'd add to the last paragraph here something to the effect, "in addition, during the discussions at our Board of Education meeting of September 21, 2009, to approve this letter, we are asking that we be allowed to bring a small representative team to the grant application planning process", or words to that effect.

SWEENEY: Could you read the letter, draft in its entirety.

SNEAD: It's addressed to Mr. Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner. "Dear Commissioner McQuillan: First and foremost, we want to thank you once again for taking the time from your demanding schedule to meet with our Board of Education on the current federal initiative "Race to the Top". Your explanation and responses to the various questions raised by our Board of Education Commissioners facilitated our decision-making in support of our participation in the grant.

Our Board of Education and Central Office staff as a whole, support participation in the grant as you propose it, including items 1-1 1, with a caveat for item 12 (Other reforms to be determined), which is currently unclear. This item needs to be further addressed and clarified with the planning teams. We also wish to inform you however, the two major unions were unanimous in their concerns relative to the merit pay concept and the establishment of charter schools. They do understand that the main idea is to create a more inclusive teacher evaluation process using more indicators than currently in use. In addition, they also are aware that other forms of school management in lieu of charters, such as "CommPACT Schools" is an option.

We stand firm in our commitment to work collaboratively with the State Department of Education in securing the "Race to the Top" grant in an effort to develop highly effective programs for our schools."

D'ANGELO: For clarification, there are two things, the part that says the Board and Central Office support, can you just read that part again please.

SNEAD: "Our Board of Education and Central Office staff as a whole, support participation in the grant as you propose it, including items 1-11, with a caveat for item 12 (Other reforms to be determined)."

D'ANGELO: So you're saying we support the grant or we support being involved in the process?

SNEAD: Support participation in the grant. Do you want me to change that to grant application process?

D'ANGELO: I guess that's what I'm asking. And the second thing Doc, if I understood the union presidents, they were more concerned that these things were already being done and we would lose cohesiveness more than, is that...

AUGELLI: Right, more than merit pay and charter schools.

D'ANGELO: Although you're not crazy about those either.

VIGNALI: I think Doctor, when you clarify that that was not going to be part of it, I think we still have to rethink our positions . . . we still do not support the intent to...

SUPERINTENDENT: Which is why I added we be allowed to bring a small team to the grant application process so those concerns would be heard during that grant application process.

VIGNALI: If it would be possible, could you e-mail a copy to Roxanne and I, so we can take a look at it.

SUPERINTENDENT: I may want to add something to it.

WHITE: I was just asking if we wanted to state what groups of people we want included in the team, not the names, just groups of people.

LACCONE: We need to vote on a letter that's already written.

SUPERINTENDENT: I have to have this into his hands Friday.

LACCONE: I understand that, but tonight we need to vote on a letter that's already written. I can't vote on a letter that's not there.

SUPERINTENDENT: On the concept with the agreement of some minor additions?

SWEENEY: I think those are conversations you can have once you have submitted the letter of intent to sit down at the table. I think that's as simple as that letter needs to be; I think it's too detailed now. It needs to be a simple letter that says we accept the invitation to sit at the table and have the conversation about the application.

SUPERINTENDENT: And bring up the idea of having representatives, a team, during that. I do have a meeting with him on Friday with 15 other superintendents and he specifically said he wanted superintendent's only. It's about the District Improvement Plans of the 15 school districts, but I will make it a point to speak to him about the desire, if this is approved. I'll give him this letter, but I will make it a point to speak to him about the desire to have a small team of individuals, so that we make sure everything is on the table in the grant application process.

GUIDONE: I think you're actually voting on the resolution. The letter was placed as a draft for information as to what was going, but your actual action is on the resolution, not the letter. I think Doc now heard what you had to say and he'll deal with the letter. So it's not a matter of voting on words in a letter, it's to act on the resolution.

HAYES: The motion says submittal of a letter of intent . . .

WHITE: I think that that is complete.

SWEENEY: I agree.

WHITE: I think the things that are contained in the letter could be brought out and put on the record there as long as they're done on the record there.

THERIAULT: I, too, also am very concerned about "other reforms to be determined". I'm very concerned about that and if the teachers and the administrators' union are not a part of this panel or committee or commission then they should, we should take meticulous notes and those notes should be available to them right away, either by email or delivered to the head of the WTA and SAW. When we talk about Charter versus CommPACT schools, we do have two CommPACT schools, I'm not aware of any Charter schools in Waterbury, did we have one at one time?

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, we did have one and I explained to the Commissioner in my conversation with him that it wasn't successful and that's why it was eliminated.

THERIAULT: Well, that's unfortunate because there are a lot of Charter schools that are very successful and ours wasn't for whatever reason. I think we need to go back and analyze why it was not successful. But I would also caution here because I see us going down a road here that we went down years ago with regard to CommPACT schools, Charter schools, and Edison schools and privatizing of education, and you know in saying that one size fits all and that really that's not the way education works. Certainly I would not ever want to see any of our schools reconstituted because in our inner-cities the principals that work the hardest and the teachers that work the hardest are those people in the inner-city and they're going through the . . . and they're going through the tough days because they really care about our parents and our families. They could transfer at a moment's notice and yet they stay there year after year after year and they do . . . Driggs School in particular, Hopeville, Kingsbury, and all the other

great schools in Waterbury. I'm not talking just about the inner-city schools, I'm talking about the great job that everyone really does here throughout Waterbury. So I just want to caution about that "other reforms to be determined". I think if those reforms are stated and we can go forward and we know what those reforms are, fine. But at the end of the day, we're still left with a question mark at the end of the day, "other reforms to be determined and outlined later", I think then we need to be very trepidatious. Thank you.

HAYES: Just for clarification sake, not getting involved in the debate, I believe from what I heard and what I had talked about at the Workshop, our role in this conversation is to not just be supportive of the whole thing but to be there to ask the questions that have been raised by our members of our unions, our employees. . . . I think that's so important for us to do that. Whether they can get there physically or not we should be representing those concerns at the table rather than have them not be heard. Anyone else?

WHITE: This is just a comment; I think the conversations that took place tonight were valid, gave some very good points, showed our faith in our Board decisions, the way they could talk, the people who presented from the, who presented another side, I think everything all put together shows that we're just going to put all our faith in Dr. Snead in his ability to bring our points to that meeting.

HAYES: Roll call.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Yeas: President Hayes, Commissioners D'Angelo, Harvey, Laccone, O'Leary, Stango, Sweeney, Theriault, and White - 9

Nays: Commissioner Flaherty-Merritt - 1

***ADJOURNMENT***

**Upon a motion by Commissioner O'Leary and duly seconded by Commissioner Sweeney, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.**

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