

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on February 10, 2025 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center and via Zoom Webinars.

1. Call to Order

President Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams
Vice-President – Bianca Alexis-Sylvain
Secretary – Nathan Caron

Board Members Present: Karen Bergin
Alisha Blake
Danni Cruz (*attended virtually*)
Susan Hambey

Present for the administration: Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools

Due to Board members attending virtually, votes were taken by roll call vote.

2. Public Comment

Sarah Turner – Ms. Turner shared that she has been communicating her frustrations about the music department since the beginning of the year. She has been emailing her concerns throughout the district, and while some have been responsive, some have not been responsive. Her issue is that she is not getting a follow up. In the past, the practice has been to reiterate what the problem is that is being shared, write a list, investigate the issue, and then circle back around to the person reporting their issue. She shared that Ms. Francolino does respond with information, and that Ms. Maynard-Adams has also responded to communications. She continued that there are students who are in crisis, that have been in crisis, that she and they have been communicating about. They want a music program where they feel they are included in the process and where they feel like they are being heard. A big part of the issue is that no one is feeling heard. Students have been asked to not participate in performances as a consequence, which she had not heard of in a while, and was of the understanding that this is a restorative district. She does not think that this is anyone's problem, but that it is a lack of resources. She continued that she is asking for anyone to get back to her so that there can be some solutions and plans in place, and she does not have to be the nagging parent.

Reuben Marshall – Mr. Marshall shared that a problem with the current music program is something that is related to the amount of practice time that the students had last year. He shared that he understands that there are some budget issues, but would like to ask if there is a way to allocate funds that can be given to the high school for the music program, or for the band teacher. He believes she does not live in Connecticut and not close, so she

cannot stay after school too long. He would like to see her get paid more so she can stay after school longer. It was further shared that students do want the practice, and if there is someone who can't stay as long the practice gets cut short, and they are not allowed to stay in the room without a teacher. He believes that having more time will help all students who want to practice and can't take the instruments home, or can't play at their house. He shared that he plays the drum set and while he is able to use the equipment at school, if he participates in a sport or another program he can't practice in the room after. The room is either locked or there isn't anyone with a key. Students enjoy the time in the band room and he thinks that it would be positive for everyone and the teacher can help more students. He explained that there also was a jazz band and gospel band in previous years, but they aren't there this year.

Naphtali Marshall – Mr. Marshall shared that he is a percussionist. His main problem is one that Ms. Turner also shared this evening. He explained that there is a need for percussionists. Approximately two Fridays ago, the students decided they did not want to play because another student could not play the instrument he wanted to play because of the limitations that the teacher set. He shared that this was a culture shock, and was something that was so engrained in people that it was expected. He shared that he was asked after the game why there wasn't anyone playing on the drum set, and they were excited to see that. He shared that he and his brother brought up their concerns to the teacher, and while they said it in a polite way, it seems that despite their efforts they were not heard. They felt like it went in one ear and out the other. He shared that they also had a conversation with administrators, and while they would write things down, they were not listening or finding a compromise. He said that he felt that even though there were valid concerns from the students and what should be a certain way, the teacher said no and the administration wouldn't help. He said that it seems like when the students say what they want they get shut down.

3. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that she went to a meeting at the middle school campus. During this meeting, Principal Vamvakides showed a video of the middle school during which he spoke about growing up in New London and now being the Principal. She shared that she has been meeting with Parent Teacher Organizations at each school with the principals and leadership teams, and is looking forward to continue to do so. Ms. Maynard-Adams also shared that she has sent the agenda and schedule for the upcoming budget hearings to all Councilors and all Board of Finance members. She has encouraged them to attend the meetings. So far, she has received a response from two, and has her fingers crossed that those who are approving the funds have an interest in learning about what they will be voting on and for.

4. Approval of the Minutes

- January 27, 2025 – Business Meeting

Motion by Ms. Bergin, seconded by Ms. Alexis-Sylvain, to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2025 Business Meeting.

Motion carried, 6-0-1

Abstaining: Mr. Cruz

5. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams seconded by Ms. Bergin, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of January 27, 2025 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

A. Superintendent's Written Report

- I. Academics
- II. Student & Family Support Services
- III. Business & Finance
- IV. Operations – Includes Magnet Pathways, Athletics, Facilities & Technology

B. Action Items

- I. Adopt Policy 5142.1 – Relations with Noncustodial Parents/Guardians for its Second and Final Reading
- II. Approve Policy 1112.6 – Videotaping of Staff/Students for its Second and Final Reading
- III. Reaffirm Policy 1321 – Student Performances for its Second and Final Reading

Motion carried, 7-0

6. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

- Superintendent's Written Report – Human Resources

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to receive the Human Resources report for the record.

Ms. Maynard-Adams asked where the district is in regard to the hiring of the Principal for Nathan Hale. Ms. Pemberton, Executive Director of Talent & Human Resources shared that currently they are in the process of preparing a survey to go to the stakeholders at Nathan Hale so that they can share feedback of what they would like to see in a principal. There are a fair amount of applicants interested in the position. Ms. Pemberton continued that she expects that the interviews should begin soon. Following the process for hiring this principal position, the search for the vacant Assistant Principal role at Winthrop will begin.

Motion carried, 7-0

7. Board Comments, Questions

Ms. Hambey shared that she read the article about the budget in *The Day*, and was surprised that less than one million dollars is the expected allocation towards the budget. She added that this is not even enough for the contracts that the City approves. She also thanked the speakers for coming out this evening.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 7-0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Caron
Secretary, Board of Education