

**Windsor Locks Board of Education
58 South Elm Street
Windsor Locks, CT 06096**

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
December 12, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Members Present:	K. Christianson, D. Gragnolati, L. Cutler, A. Osorio, and G. Guyette
Members Absent:	None
Administrators:	S. Parkhurst, R. Stacy, V. Breda, R. Bissonnette, K. Krupa, J. Robinson, G. Testani, M. Briggs, M. Warner, C. Domler, M. Parrette, G. Weigert, and A. Goodwin
Student Representatives:	A. Guyette
Students:	None
Staff:	P. Sibila, T. Jones, M. Lopes, J. Long, J. Thompson, H. Williams, and others
Others:	R. Anderson and others participating on Zoom
Press:	None

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Ms. Kylee Christianson called the Regular Meeting to Order at 6:00 p.m. held at the Windsor Locks High School Media Center and via Zoom.

A. Roll Call for Quorum

All Board Members were present.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood up and pledged allegiance to the flag.

II. Board of Education and Superintendent Communications

Board Member Mr. Greg Guyette reported he along with Ms. Osorio attended the CABE Convention on Saturday. He attended three events and he enjoyed the topics. He also attended Board training. It was a good learning experience as a new Board Member. On Tuesday, he attended the Windsor Locks Middle School Wildcat Advisory Meeting. Unfortunately, it was not well attended. He feels this is a great way for parents and families to learn about the middle school in a nontraditional way. He attended the Board of Finance Meeting with Mr. Parkhurst, Ms. Osorio and Mr. Gragnolati. He felt it was well received and the district has been invited to next month's meeting. He also attended the fundraiser held at Raising Cane's in Enfield. He thanked Mr. Warner and Ms. Domler for advertising the event so families were aware of the event and were able to attend.

Board Member Ms. Alba Osorio commented about attending the CABE Conference and attended a presentation entitled, "Art of Listening". It was very useful as a Board Member. She attended the concert held last night it was wonderful!

Chairwoman Ms. Christianson also commented about the CABE Conference she attended the Friday sessions. She learned about FOI (Freedom of Information) and it was a great learning experience.

Mr. Shawn Parkhurst, Superintendent of Schools, addressed the Board. She welcomed the newest Student Representative, Miss Abigail Guyette. He mentioned winter sports have begun along with all of the holiday events throughout the district. The calendar is filling up quickly. He welcomed Ms. Val Breda of the Business Office, filling in for the Business Manager to assist during the budget presentation. He attended the Annual Holiday Lions Party, it was very celebratory! He thanked Melissa and Matt of the WLTA for their ongoing conversations about the budget; it is never an easy process.

It was **MOVED** (Osorio) and **SECONDED** (Gragnolati) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education move Agenda Item IX. Old Business to be discussed before Agenda Item VIII. Superintendent's Proposed FY 25-26 Budget Presentation.

III. Student Board Representative(s) Report

Miss Abigail Guyette, Student Representative, addressed the Board. She commented winter sports has started, and juniors are having their post-graduation meetings in guidance. In all schools on Friday, December 13, 2024 is CCMC PJ Day. The high school is hoping to reach their goal. Play rehearsal is beginning. She also read a letter from a volleyball athlete thanking the Board for the opportunity to play. There are 17 members of the team and their records was 3 wins and 3 losses.

IV. Public Audience (only Agenda Items)

None.

V. Approval of Minutes

- **November 14, 2024 Regular Meeting**
- **November 27, 2024 Special Meeting**

It was **MOVED** (Cutler) and **SECONDED** (Osorio) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education approves the minutes of November 14, 2024 Regular Meeting and the minutes of November 27, 2024 Special Meeting the as presented.

VI. Human Resources Report

A. Resignation

Mr. Robert Stacy, Director of Human Resources, addressed the Board. He indicated he had one resignation. Alexis Nuhn, a Special Education Teacher at North Street School, will be resigning effective December 20, 2024. Alexis has served the students of Windsor Locks for the past 4 months.

It was **MOVED** (Guyette) and **SECONDED** (Cutler) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education accepts the resignation on the date noted and offer our appreciation for their service to the Windsor Locks Public Schools..

B. Exit Interview Report and Presentation

Mr. Stacy began his report on exit interviews by giving an overview of the 2024 responses. He indicated IAW Public Act 23-159 all Boards of Education are required to adopt a policy on exit surveys. Windsor locks adopted the policy in February of 2024. The questions in the exit survey were developed to gather information in compliance with Public Act 23-149. He explained the survey process which is all staff who voluntarily separate service are provide with a link for a survey monkey Employee Exit Survey. The survey gathers demographic information as well as responses to selected indicators, primary reasons for leaving and open ended comments. Surveys were sent to all staff leaving as of February, approximately sixty individuals.

He discussed in detail the results from the surveys that were returned. He discussed the next steps the district can take to address to assist with retention of employees including ongoing check-in, mentoring and feedback between supervisors and employees; create a forum for new teachers to interact, learn, engage and grow; support teachers who are new to Windsor Locks, not just new to teaching; and survey new hires mid-year. He commented also changing the survey document in the future to implement new strategies to increase the response rate and review with leadership to seek feedback.

A brief discussion was held.

C. Adjustment to Daily Substitute Rate

Mr. Stacy explained that substitute teachers in Windsor Locks have routinely been paid a daily rate that is roughly equivalent to just above minimum wage. The current rate is \$120 per day. Effective January 1, 2025, the minimum wage in CT is mandated to increase from \$15.69 per hour to \$16.35 per hour, an increase of 4.21%. For a 7:10 minute work day this equates to \$117.18 per day. The minimum wage increased from \$15.00 per hour to \$15.69, a 4.6% increase, on January 1, 2024. Another increase January 1, 2026 is expected. There are currently in the budget one building substitute each at high school and middle school and two each at North Street School and South Elementary School. The district has vacancies continually, as the positions are hard to fill at the daily rate offered. Daily absences average much higher than the number of substitutes at each school, and with the lack of substitutes teachers are required to give up their preparation period to cover classes and/or for classes to be combined on some days. This creates an impact on the educational opportunities for students, as well as a cost to the district for paying teachers the contractual hourly rate to cover classes.

He indicated he has reached out to districts across the State to research daily rates. Thirty-seven districts responded. Many others use Kelly Educational Services, and their rates are proportionately higher as districts pay anywhere from 35% to 42% mark up on the daily rate substitutes receive.

- Average Daily Rate \$134
- Mean Daily Rate \$135
- Range \$115 to \$200 (Enfield)

He recommended that the Board approve an increase in the daily rate for Substitute Teachers to \$150 per day.

A brief discussion was held.

It was **MOVED** (Cutler) and **SECONDED** (Gragnolati) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education approves the recommended adjustment in substitute teacher compensation effective January 1, 2025

VII. Finance Report

A. FY Update and Line Item Transfer

Mr. Shawn Parkhurst discussed briefly the Finance Report update on the FY25 Budget, which Board Members had in their packet for review.

B. Budget Line-Item Transfers

- Budget Transfer 2025-7: Transfer from SES Teacher / Interventionist (010.SS.213.1000.111.195) to Paraeducator (010.DS.214.1200.112.260). \$15,958.00.

It was **MOVED** (Guyette) and **SECONDED** (Osorio) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education accepts the (1) budget transfer request(s), control number(s) 2025-7, for the Finance Department to execute in December 2024.

VIII. Old Business

- **Policy 5145.12 - Search and Seizure Revision**

- Vape Status Update

Dr. Rebecca Bissonnette, Principal of Windsor Locks High School and Ms. Kristen Krupa, Assistant Principal of Windsor Locks High School addressed the Board. They gave an update to the Board on vaping status at the high school. They noted that in 2024-2025 there have been 13 students suspended to date comparing those numbers to the past three years, 21 students in 2023-2024; 33 students in 2022-2023; and, 27 students in 2021-2022. The school has used vape detectors, student searches, bathroom monitors, limited number of students in restrooms based upon number of stalls, regular sweeps of bathroom ceiling tiles, increase police presences in the hallways and closed certain restrooms when monitors are not available and vape alerts are excessive. They explained the next steps to be taken such as, wands have been ordered and delivered and be used beginning of the year after winter break. Communication to families about the new wands and usage. Random drug sniffing dogs into the building. Proactive approaches to prevent students from vaping/drugs in and out of school and continue with disciplinary consequences such as, suspension, arrests and expulsion.

A brief discussion was held.

- **NEASC Accreditation Three-Year Report - Growth Area**

- Continue the work to implement the vision of the graduate
- Development of a district-wide curriculum cycle

Dr. Bissonnette and Ms. Krupa discussed the three-year report since the NEASC accreditation. During that accreditation the district met many standards including, safe environment; vision, mission and core values; school improvement plan; intervention; and building grounds. The standard that was not met was common curriculum format. The next steps the district is doing is developing a common curriculum template, SRBI team and process, and vision of the graduate/pathways. The three-year report commendations are as follows: safe school climate coordinator, addition of curriculum directors, completion of common curriculum templates, math and ELA interventionists, structured SRBI process; use of flex blocks; and student led conferences. They discussed their next steps for the six year report, including continue to work with vision of the graduate and develop a district wide curriculum review cycle.

A brief discussion was held.

IX. Superintendent's Proposed FY25-26 Budget Presentation

Mr. Parkhurst commented that through the collaborative work of the entire Leadership Team and respective staff at the building level, the Initial FY25-26 Budget is presented for the Board to review, have a discussion, and possible vote. He noted that all live budget line item documents will be available on the website on Friday, December 13, 2024. The first two slides described what the responsibilities of the Board of Education according to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-220 duties of Boards of Education and what responsibilities are of the Superintendent of Schools. The Board responsibilities included providing adequate instruction, equitable allocation of resources, proper maintenance of facilities and safe setting. The Superintendent is to design a fiscally responsible budget, ensure equitable and developmentally appropriate educational experiences between schools, fulfil statutory obligations and to allow for advancement toward the district and school three-year vision. He spoke about the budget process and the staff and community forum feedback. He discussed the goals of this budget which include working in collaboration with the Board of Finance to address Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR), meet inflationary costs, maintain fixed salary and contractual obligations and fill the gap created in the absence of alternative funding and use the Dream Big survey results to revise and rebrand programming to meet the needs of students and families.

He discussed the medical insurance being reinstated to the budget of \$2,5 Million dollars and the proposed increase for next year of \$992,500, contractual salary increases of \$1,176,596 along with the minimum wage increase of \$10,000. He also spoke about inflationary costs, including the increase of utility costs of \$204,768 and a State of Connecticut mandated indoor quality testing which would cost about \$19,805.

A brief discussion was held.

He began discussing goals of this budget filling the gap created in the absence of alternative funding and use the Dream Big survey results to revise and rebrand programming to meet the needs of students and families. He is recommending restructure of special education delivery, a savings of \$268,824 and relocation of RISE Program to Central Office space, a savings of \$112,974. He gave the Board an overview of the reductions/reallocations, which included reallocation of the special education delivery as follows: elimination of six special education coordinators to provide direct service to students; reallocate one coordinator of alternative services to one coordinator of secondary pupil services, new one coordinator of elementary pupil services, new pupil services administrative assistant and one registered behavioral technician at Pine Meadow Academy. A reallocation of special education flex program staffing to general education teacher to registered behavior technician. There are potentially five staff reductions/eliminations due to the reduction and reallocation of the special education delivery. He also discussed the relocation of the RISE Transition Academy. The Finance Office would move to the Town Hall, the Superintendent and Human Resources would move into existing finance office suite, RISE moves to existing main Central Office area and Food Service would move to a space in Windsor Locks High School.

A discussion was held.

Mr. Parkhurst explained new budget items in his proposed budget. Those items were: Pathway Expansion; expansion of on-line course software; Windsor Locks Middle School Summer/Boot Camp transition program; expansion of Science of Reading curriculum, Human Resource software; increased daily substitution rate; two high school hall duty staff; one middle school building substitute; two elementary library/media aide; middle school Junior National Honor Society; and, high school extra curricula dance team. He discussed the costs of the new budget items and how either grant funding or use of the non-lapsing account will fund some of those items.

Mr. Parkhurst described the school readiness Pre-K programming challenge. He noted the changes in the Early Start CT Grant language and requirements. North Street School program is now, due to the length of the program, in the grant definition, considered a quarter day program. Due to the new grant language, this reduces the grant funding that North Street School can apply for in Round 1 of the grant process, resulting in a deficit of \$86,681 to run the two classrooms that provides instruction for up to 48 students. In December, the district applied for the current Early Start CT Grant at the reduced allocation amount. Round 2 application is a competitive grant when available to reduce the deficit. In the event, the district does not get the Round 2 competitive grant, the district has two options: eliminate the two school readiness Pre-K program or find funding source for the \$86,681 deficit.

Mr. Parkhurst is proposing a budget for FY 2025-2026 of \$39,107,550.38 or a \$5,056,364.34 increase or 14.85% increase over last year's adopted budget. However, if the Town decides, as it has in the past, to fund the insurance lines of \$2.5 Million dollars plus the proposed increase of \$992,500.00 that would decrease the proposed budget for FY 2024-2026 to \$35,615,050.38 or a \$1,563,864.34 increase or 4.59% increase over last year's adopted budget.

Additionally, Mr. Parkhurst spoke about the capital requests which are Grade 3 and Grade 8 Chromebook replacement cycle, which include clamshell cases to extend the use and life of the units. The request is \$61,712.20. Additional projects discussed were updating the previous study and cost for the aging and safety concerns of the high school track and football field, at no cost. The total estimate for this project is \$6,218,400. Additional alternate projects would be bleacher replacement and new concession building. The total cost for all of the proposed projects for the track and football field is \$8,025,300.

Mr. Parkhurst discussed the timeline for the next budget meetings in the month of January and noted the approval has to be done by January 23, 2025 so the budget will be delivered to the Town by February 1, 2025. The Board of Education Budget Presentation to the Board of

Finance is scheduled for February 11, 2025.

A lengthy discussion was held.

Chairwoman Ms. Christianson opened the discussion up to the public for public input. She noted each person is limited to three minutes.

Ms. Melissa Lopes addressed the Board. She thanked the leadership team and understands the decisions that have to be made are difficult ones. She is concerned about the deep cuts that are being made in the proposed budget. The loss of teachers/support staff of about 9 positions will have a direct impact on students. Special education coordinators develop IEPs, but do not in the proposed model. This could decrease the achievement of students despite the current gains.

Ms. Jennifer Long, Art Teacher for North Street School and South Elementary School, addressed the Board. She is responsible for teaching at both schools. The Library Media Specialist is also a shared service between the two schools, which has made it extremely difficult. She is fully aware of budgetary constraints; however, the elimination of those positions last year has made an impact on this year. She noted the visual arts in the elementary school have been underfunded. She said it is not about her, but about the students to have a good education and that includes the visual arts.

Ms. Robin Anderson via Zoom addressed the Board. She understands the hard decisions that have to be made by the Board. As a teacher at Pine Meadow Academy, she is concerned with the changes that are being proposed. Currently, Pine Meadow Academy is finally running smoothly and has a good flow and changing the staff may not be the best for the students at Pine Meadow Academy.

Ms. Jennifer Thompson and Ms. Hillary Williams, Special Education Coordinators in the high school and middle school, addressed the Board. Ms. Thompson commented that she has been serving the students of Windsor Locks for the last twenty-eight years. She is asking the Board to consider the roles of the Special Education Coordinators before they accept the proposed budget. Special Education Coordinators are the backbone of the special education giving direct services in three areas: plan, delivery and assessment. They are involved in case management including IEPs, formal evaluations, and compliance. They recognize the hard decisions, challenges the budget, and would hope the Board recognizes the services students need and do not decide to save money over the students.

Ms. Adrianna _____, a behavioral analyst for the district, addressed the Board. She noted they currently have a great team and she would hope they do not lose some of their team due to the budget concerns.

A brief discussion was held.

X. Board and Superintendent Comment

None.

XI. Public Audience (General)

None.

XII. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (Gragnotati) and **SECONDED** (Guyette) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Education adjourn the Regular Meeting of December 12, 2024 at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary