

**HARTFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting – February 21, 2017**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Hartford Board of Education (hereinafter “Board”) met on Tuesday, February 21, 2017. The meeting was held at the Journalism and Media Magnet Academy, 150 Tower Avenue, Hartford, CT 06112.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**

Mr. Wareing called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. There was a quorum present.

<u>Present:</u> Richard Wareing, Chair Tiffany Glanville, Vice-Chair Craig Stallings, Secretary Robert Cotto, Jr. Juan M. Hernandez Kimberly D. Oliver Karen T. Taylor Michael Brescia	<u>Absent:</u> Julio Flores
Superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez	
Student Representative, Alexa Marotta Student Representative, Giovanni Jones	

**III. Oath of Office – Kimberly D. Oliver**

Ms. Oliver was sworn in to office by corporation counsel.

**IV. Election - Juan M. Hernandez**

Mr. Wareing made a motion; and Mr. Stallings seconded, to elect Mr. Juan M. Hernandez to the Board of Education.

**VOTE**

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Cotto, Flores

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**V. Oath of Office- Juan M. Hernandez**

Mr. Hernandez was sworn in to office by corporation counsel.

**VI. Public Participation**

1. Shellye Davis, president of the paraprofessional union, was concerned over hearing that schools are closing only in the north end of Hartford, and that this will cause overcrowding classrooms. They reject this and the underlying racial animus. If the schools in the north end

are not up to par, our job is to improve them. She asked the board not to place the consequences of years of neglect on the children and community of the north end.

2. Hyacinth Yennie, spoke on not being surprised at the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) report. She spoke on HPHS Green Technology's budget, and that the school does not need a building manager, they would prefer to have a computer technician or a custodian.
3. Tracy Carter, paraprofessional at HPHS, came to give thanks for fixing the HPHS computer problem. She now wanted to speak about health and safety issues. She stated she asked for a classroom to be clean, and was told the custodian was on vacation. She feels that does not have anything to do with student safety and them being in a clean environment.
4. Dr. Benjamin Foster, representing NAACP, came to speak because he was inundated with calls from people concerned with schools closing in the north end of Hartford. He asked that parity and equity be considered, especially in economically challenged communities, as it sends a disturbing message when schools are closed. He also suggested naming schools from Hartford individuals, such as Charles Chuck Stone, HPHS Graduate, who became a famous journalist, or Leslie Payne, Pulitzer Prize winner, in the spirit of cultural efficacy.
5. Levey Kardulis, spoke on the State report having happened under the chairman's watch, and that he felt that he needed to resign. He congratulated the new board members, but stated he felt that all members needed to be elected, not appointed. He does not see teachers reflective of their students, and that we need more black and brown teachers.
6. Jake Fournier, commented on being disturbed by the OCA report. He hopes that prevention is stressed, not just the reporting piece. He wrote an editorial letter to the Hartford Courant and read the letter, which indicated his support of Tim Sullivan as the next Superintendent.
7. Janice Fleming-Butler, Founder, Voices of Women of Color, commended the acting superintendent for acting so swiftly after the OCA report came out. They see this, the OCA Report, as a much broader problem, not just the fault of an individual. She asked that the board continue to engage the community, and even though the problem started before them, it has to stop with them.
8. Alyssa Peterson, stated that it has been 20 years since the State voted to take over Hartford Public Schools, and after many years of oversight and 1 billion dollars later, many Hartford students are still not reading at grade level. She spoke on the OCA report, and that the problem is bigger than just Hartford. She asked that the board request a review by the US Attorney of the State of Connecticut.
9. Councilwoman rJo Winch, chair of the Labor, Education and Workforce development for the City of Hartford. She stated it was her opinion that the policies on bullying usually favors the bully. The councilwoman asked the board, when the bullying policies fail parents, what are they to do. How long are they expected to wait before taking matters into their own hands, and then they get in trouble? She also addressed the tardiness policy, as it is her understanding that a tardy is arriving at school late, and is not an absence.
10. Councilperson, Larry Deutsch, spoke on the OCA report, and asked where the accountability was for those that failed to report, as that was not clear in the action plan. He posed questions like denying severance pay, filing complaints with the CT bar association, ethics commission, State Attorney's Office, Department of Children and Families, to name a few.

## **VII. Reports**

1. Report of the Chair

Mr. Wareing reported that he and the Board leadership met with Sarah Eagan from the Office of the Child Advocate, and the meeting was productive. He stated that they are committed to bringing about real change.

## 2. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez welcomed members of the Board and community, and thanked Principal Epps for his leadership of the school and for hosting us this evening.

The Superintendent proceeded with the following:

### **OCA Report**

The administration recently received a report from the Office of the Child Advocate regarding compliance of Hartford Public Schools related to the mandated reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. The superintendent gave the history of the report:

- This review by the Office of the Child Advocate was initiated in April 2016 by Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin after a former Hartford Principal and Administrator was arrested last spring for inappropriate conduct in contacting a minor female.
- The Report of the Office of the Child Advocate identified serious failings in the district's procedures, practices and culture regarding mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect, lack of systems to investigate and follow up on complaints against staff, and inappropriate conduct of staff in particular toward students with disabilities.
- We have been working with the Office of the Child Advocate to review the findings and recommendations and to develop a draft Action Plan to address the problems swiftly and decisively.
- The draft Action Plan is being presented to the Hartford Board of Education this evening for consideration and action.
- This draft Action Plan is available in English and Spanish on the district website.

### **GPA**

Several concerns were raised at the last board meeting on the topic of GPA calculation, and the superintendent wanted to give the following update: School Counselors and others have noticed a difference in the numerical value of the GPA (depending on the type of transcript as well as when the transcript was printed). As a result, an investigation was launched and the following was discovered:

- During July/August 2016, the PowerSchool calculation for GPA was switched from the numerical values reflected in policy regulation R-6146 to the numerical values in policy 6140. This switch was not applied to all areas of PowerSchool that house GPA calculation, resulting in a lower GPA on some transcripts for some students.
- Any transcript printed in September 2016 or after reflected a lower GPA, causing School Counselors, Principals, students, and parents to become concerned.
- Previous graduates have NOT been impacted by this error. This error only impacts the class of 2017.
- Class Rank and the Weighted GPA have NOT been impacted by this error.
- Unweighted GPA HAS been impacted by this error.

The following steps are being followed to correct these errors:

- Converted all calculations in PowerSchool to the correct calculation
- Central Office PowerSchool Team and members of the Department of College and Career Readiness will collaborate with the Central Office Communication Team to

develop a Communication Plan to ensure all parents and families are informed of the error and the steps taken to correct it.

- A School Messenger call was made (in Spanish and English) to all parents and families with students in grades 9 – 12.
- Provide a Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling lesson plan on the topic of GPA calculations to ensure that School Counselors and school based staff clearly and comprehensively communicate the accurate GPA calculation to students during large group counseling sessions. The lesson plan was emailed to School Counselors on 1/27/17.
- Encourage principals to host a parent information night to ensure all parents are informed of the GPA calculation.

### **Community Budget Forums**

The FY2017-2018 budget process has been modified to include expanded engagement of all stakeholders. Many voices and perspectives are needed and the input and deep involvement of our school community is required as we work together to make our schools better, support our students' success and strengthen our communities. Your participation and input is invaluable.

Please attend one of a series of three community budget forums. The third session will be held on Wednesday, March 1 at 6:00PM at Hartford Public High School.

### 3. Committee Reports

- Policy Committee

Ms. Taylor reported that the committee was continuing work on the school closing policy, physical restraint and seclusion policy and the volunteer policy, as well as making sure, in light of the OCA report, that policies are in place and are effective.

- School Choice and Facilities Committee

Ms. Glanville stated that the committee is working on student transfer and school choice policies.

## **VIII. Business Agenda**

1. Consideration of and Action to accept the Report of the Office of the Child Advocate and to adopt the draft Action Plan as a working document. (Supt et al.)

That the Hartford Board of Education accepts the Report of the Office of the Child Advocate and adopts the draft Action Plan as a working document.

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez gave an overview of the action plan. She stated that no employee referenced in the report currently work for the Hartford Public Schools.

Mr. Stallings discussed financial implications, and what the process would look like, as far as actions going through committee first.

Ms. Taylor questioned how we, in a time of limited resources, make sure the culture is changed. If the kids don't feel safe, how can we even begin to talk about achievement?

Mr. Cotto asked when the next update would be that included concrete actions.

Dr. Torres said within a month, and would continue with monthly updates at board meetings and on the website.

Mr. Brescia stated the action we take has to be swift and transparent. No one can be on the sidelines, and if we work together, we can make real change, and this not happen again.

Ms. Taylor also stated that this is a shameful report, but is also an opportunity for us to really address this issue, and they are all committed to making sure kids are safe in their schools and communities.

**VOTE**

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Cotto, Hernandez, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Flores

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**A. Executive Session (Discussion concerning related personnel action)**

The Board entered into executive session and were joined by Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent and Thomas Mooney, Shipman & Goodwin.

2. Approval of Contract Amendment: CBS Therapy - Additional \$223,746 (Supt et al.)

CBS Therapy was contracted in the amount of \$651,014 in June of 2016 for 7.0 FTE positions. In February, the number of speech and language pathologists contracted was increased to 11.6 FTE positions.

That the Hartford Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to execute the amended contract with CBS Therapy for the term ending June 30, 2017, for the additional \$223,746.

**VOTE**

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Cotto, Hernandez, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Flores

3. First Reading: Graduation Requirements Policy (Policy Committee)

That the Hartford Board of Education accepts the first reading of the Graduation Requirements Policy.

No vote was required at this time

**B. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Wareing made a motion to accept all items listed under consent agenda; Mr. Brescia seconded.

**VOTE**

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Brescia, Cotto, Hernandez, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: Stallings

Abstained: 0

Absent: Flores

Motion to take consent agenda as one item passed.

4. Acting Administrative Appointment (Supt et al.)

That the Hartford Board of Education approves the Superintendent's recommendation to appoint June Cahill to the position of Acting Principal at Kennelly Elementary School, effective February 1, 2017.

5. Approval of Revised Educational Specifications – Weaver High School (Supt et al.)

When initially conceived, the Weaver High School renovation was envisioned to include three academic themes consisting of High School, Inc., Tourism and Hospitality and S.T.E.A.M. In the spring of 2016, it was decided that the themes should be revised to High School, Inc., Journalism and Media and the R.J. Kinsella Magnet High School.

The State Office of School Construction Grants requires that the change in program, which directs the design of the project, be documented with revised Educational Specifications. At this time the revised Educational Specifications require the approval of the Hartford Board of Education in order for the state plan approval process to move forward.

That the Hartford Board of Education accepts and approves the revised Educational Specifications for the renovation of Weaver High School and authorizes submission of the documents to the Office of School Construction Grants for purposes of updating the project record.

Concern raised over square footage preference being given to Kinsella Magnet school. Dr. Colon-Rivas stated they have had meetings with the Weaver Steering Committee and discussed the seats at each school within Weaver. Kinsella is projected to have 400 seats, Journalism and Media Academy and High School Inc. to have 250 seats each. The total would be 900 seats for the Weaver Campus.

Discussion over what the current enrollment is, and Dr. Colon-Rivas will provide the enrollment trend over the last 5 years.

Ms. Taylor stated the community is concerned over Weaver itself, and Kinsella Magnet taking over the school.

Mr. Stallings echoed those sentiments, and added that he believes the community does not fully understand what is happening and this is not what they expect.

Discussion over what we are doing to reverse the negative enrollment trend.

Discussion over having one comprehensive Weaver High School, and what that would look like. The education specifications should address this and that is what the community wants to know.

Dr. Carol Birks, Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Leadership and on the Weaver Steering Committee, stated that said committee was comprised of administration of all 3 schools, their School Governance Council (SGC) Chairs, Central Office Staff and community stakeholders. There are sub-committees within that, where other community members are invited for input, and they then report back to the Weaver Steering Committee, to then report to the superintendent who would report to the Board. They are also planning on holding community forums, and invite input from the community on what the design structure should look like and on leveraging resources.

Discussion over the kitchen equipment that was at the Lincoln Culinary location.

6. Withdrawal of Grant Application – R.J. Kinsella Magnet High School (Supt et al.)

When initially conceived, the R.J. Kinsella Magnet High School would be provided its own facility. As no suitable and acceptable site was located for such a facility, the program will now become one of the academic themes housed in the renovated Weaver High School facility.

The State Office of School Construction Grants requires that the grant application for the freestanding Kinsella High School facility be withdrawn in order for the enhanced magnet school grant reimbursement to apply to the Weaver project.

That the Hartford Board of Education withdraws the application for a school construction grant for the Kinsella Magnet High School, State project number TMP-064-VQRQ, as the facilities need will be met by including Kinsella as a component of the Weaver High School project, State project number 064-0307 RNV.

7. Approval of Alliance Grant Projects and Submittal of Expenditures (Supt et al.)

The State Department of Administrative Services, Division of Construction Services, and Office of School Construction Grants & Review requires that the Board of Education certify that the attached school projects, as identified in the Alliance Grant have been completed.

That the Hartford Board of Education accepts the projects as listed, as complete. Furthermore, that the Board of Education approves the submittal of all expenditures to the Office of School Construction Grants & Review.

VOTE

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Cotto, Hernandez, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Flores

**C. Executive Session (Contract Non-Renewal and Discussion of the case: A., by his Parent and Next Friend Mr. A, and Mr. A vs. Hartford Board of Education and New Britain Board of Education)**

The Board entered into executive session and were joined by Julia Wilde and Lori Mizerak from Corporation Counsel.

8. Contract Termination due to Non-Renewal (Supt. et al)

That the Hartford Board of Education adopts the findings of fact and recommendation of the Board subcommittee and authorizes the non-renewal of the employment contract of the non-tenured teacher identified on Exhibit A.

VOTE

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Cotto, Hernandez, Oliver, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Flores

**VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.