

**TORRINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
June 3, 2009**

**CALL TO ORDER** - The meeting was called to order by Mr. Lyons at 6: 10 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mr. Broverman, Mr. Cavagnero (arrived @ 6:16 p.m.),  
Miss Laus, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Mattiello, Mr. Nargi,  
Mrs. Raymond, Prof. Royals (arrived @ 6:11 p.m.),  
Mr. Rubino, Dr. Campbell, Ms. Haynes, Miss Cavagnero  
( arrived @ 6:40 p.m., left @ 7:55 p.m.), Mr. Wright  
(arrived @ 6:55 p.m., left @ 7:55 p.m.)

Absent: Mr. Oliver, Mayor Bingham, Mr. Robinson

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Mr. Rubino moved and Mrs. Raymond supported a motion to approve tonight's agenda as amended. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.*

Mr. Lyons requested holding off the celebration piece of the agenda until after the Executive Session.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Miss Laus moved and Mr. Rubino supported a motion to approve the regular Board meeting minutes on May 6, 2009. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with the exception of Mr. Lyons who abstained.*

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

*Mr. Broverman moved and Mrs. Raymond supported a motion to go into Executive Session at 6:11 p.m. regarding contract negotiations inviting in Dr. Campbell, Ms. Haynes, and Mr. Joslyn. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.*

*Mr. Lyons moved and Miss Laus supported a motion to come out of Executive Session. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.*

## **CELEBRATIONS**

### **Recognition of Retirees**

Karen Bentley, Jacqueline Bonaguide, Barbara Julian, Nancy Katz, Lisabeth Milewski, Doreen Page, Mark Purcell, Darlene Stannard, Joann Stefurak, and Robert Toth were recognized as the Retiree Class of 2009.

### **Recognition of Retiring Student Board Members**

Amanda Cavagnero, Kevin Robinson, and Patrick Wright were recognized as retiring Student Board members.

## **INFORMATION SHARING SESSION**

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Campbell commended the THS Seniors for their participation in Multi-cultural Day, and their exceptional behavior at the Villa Rosa on the night of the Prom. She also thanked and commended Nancy Haynes for her exceptional service to the administration and to the Board.

Mr. Cavagnero also recognized and commended Ms. Haynes for her many accomplishments on behalf of the Board of Education.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

*Miss Laus moved and Mr. Broverman supported a motion to approve tonight's consent agenda as amended. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.*

1. Resignations/Appointments

Nancy Haynes, Business Manager-DW, resigned eff 6/30/09

2. Contract Addenda

Robert Brunetti, Student Council Advisor-HS, eff 2009-2010

Brian Nass, Student Council Advisor-HS, eff 2009-2010

Deborah Manasse, Student Transition Leader-HS, eff 2009-2010

Joseph Minutillo, Student Transition Leader-HS, eff 2009-2010

Newell Porch, Athletics Director-HS, eff 2009-2010

Eric Mahar, Asst. Athletics Director-MS, eff 2009-2010

Andrew Marchland, Instructional Area Leader, Technology- HS,  
eff 2009-2010

Patricia Strawson, Instructional Area Leader, Math-HS, eff 2009-2010

Mary McVerry, Instructional Area Leader, English-HS, eff 2009-2010

Holly Simpson, Instructional Area Leader, Science-HS, eff 2009-2010

Patrick Richardson, Instructional Area Leader, Social Studies-HS,  
eff 2009-2010

3. Coaching Resignations/Appointments

Eric Gamari, Head Boys' Basketball-HS, eff 2009-2010 Winter Sports Season

Mr. Broverman noted a typographical error which was corrected.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **8.1 Adjustment of 2009-2010 Budget**

Mr. Cavagnero stated that the Board will first discuss budget adjustments in the wake of the 1.3 million dollar budget cut from the City through the Board of Finance.

Dr. Campbell discussed that administration has 2 plans to bring forward tonight, one on which they worked with the administrators in the district. The administrators met with the executive team on the Friday after the BOF meeting and these were the recommended reductions to the Board's budget. These are not in a priority order, but start with those things that are farthest away from students.

1. An adjustment to the health insurance line which is based on performance and the number of claims of \$327,337.
2. Moving students successfully between and among buildings if regular bus run is reduced by 1 bus with a savings of \$45,000.
3. The Board had decided to fund part of the literacy adoption and tie the rest to the ARA monies, but that is now gone.
4. The SPED program review will be done, but charged to the stimulus monies for a savings of \$10,000. The State informed administration that expense can be moved to the ARA funding.
5. Some food service equipment at THS will save \$15,000, a capital item.
6. Repointing of the bricks which are part of the Migeon building will not be done.
7. Certified salary adjustments for \$12,080.
8. Professional development down another \$10,000.
9. Tutors down \$2,211.
10. Middle school intramurals and sports with a savings together of a little over \$57,000.
11. Noncertified salary adjustments for about \$16,000.
12. Paras, a little shy of \$38,000.
13. Loss of a custodian at \$49,500.
14. Secretaries in the amount of \$80,529.
15. Teachers in the amount of \$276,000.
16. Administrator in the amount of \$110,739.

Those total 1.327 million dollars by which the BOE budget was reduced by the BOF. This constitutes Plan A which is a traditional way to get the number to what the BOF has allocated to the BOE.

Mr. Cavagnero asked about the number of teacher positions cut. Mr. Joslyn responded that the original plan included 9.5 certified positions. This would be an additional 6 positions. Staff cuts would also include 2 secretaries, 1 custodian, and 2 more paras.

Ms. Haynes presented Plan B to the Board which she generated after Dr. Campbell's charge to try to maintain the Board's goals. She took a look at the health insurance trends

for the past 4 years and found that over a 4 year average there was actually a 2.8 million dollar annual surplus once the claims and the fees are subtracted. So it would be her recommendation to the Board as it was to Dr. Campbell, that based on that they could afford to reduce their health insurance contribution by the entire 1.3 million dollars which would preserve all the cuts mentioned above.

Dr. Campbell strongly recommended that the Board give Plan B serious consideration.

Ms. Haynes further clarified that the City of Torrington is self insured for its health insurance, and as part of its self insured mechanism it has what is called an internal service fund for which the claims and fees are paid out. The concept is that all of the revenue related to health insurance goes into the fund and all of the expenses related to that same item, health insurance, come out of that fund. What should happen should be that all of the Board contributions that come out of its budget goes into that fund, any COBRA payments, any employee portion, and the employees pay a fair amount, 17% or 16%. The 2 largest unions pay that amount towards the cost of their health insurance. That should go into the fund as well as any investment income. Out of that fund goes any claim and self insurance mechanism, rather than paying an insurance company a premium, the fund just pays the cost of the claim, and the fund does carry insurance for anything above a certain limit. The way a fund like that should work is at the end of the year, if you have a balance, you are supposed to adjust your revenue for the next year in the form of reducing the contributions that the City and/or the Board make.

Unfortunately, Torrington doesn't work quite that way. Torrington, rather than netting out the employee premiums from the budget, that 1.3 million dollars, they charge the full amount, and they don't deposit all of the revenue, primarily the employee and the retiree cost of insurance, into that health insurance fund either. Regardless of what goes in and what goes out of that fund, a 4-year analysis does show that there has been overpayment to that fund more than the claims and fees have been for 4 years. Anthem currently is the plan administrator in the fund, even though they are also an insurer. They manage the fund on behalf of the City. That has not been competitively bid in 10 years. Ms. Haynes also recommended that her successor or the City take on perhaps bidding that out. What is currently in the budget for health insurance claims for that contribution is \$11,049,158, so a reduction in that line would make that line 9.7 million dollars. The Board's contribution of 11 million dollars reflects an 110% of the anticipated claims plus fees. The 110% is something that is a recommended mechanism for funding a self insurance plan. However, it is also recommended that you net out from there the employee contributions which can trend anywhere from 4 years ago at 1.3 million dollars to this year of 1.7 million dollars. So typically you should net those out of your costs, but that is not the way Torrington operates.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if making this cut would compromise the ability of those who are insured. Ms. Haynes responded absolutely not as the claims are still going to be paid.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if they know there will be enough money available, and Ms. Haynes responded that she would suggest that the 1.7 million dollars that comes in from employee contributions more than offsets the 1.3 million dollars that they are

recommending get removed; so those funds going into that account would more than offset how much they are recommending gets reduced.

The Board asked questions and had discussion about the loss of ARA funds for the literacy adoption program, plans for use of Title 1 funds from the literacy program, and the Board's direction to fund some portion of a literacy program.

Mr. Cavagnero suggested going through Plan A and taking off items the Board thinks are not negotiable. Mr. Nargi suggested adding back the literacy program and the middle school sports program, and then taking out from the health insurance \$1,062,000.

Mr. Broverman supported taking the literacy program off Plan A. The food service equipment was taken off Plan A on the consensus of the Board as it involves primarily installation of equipment that the school already has. The majority of the Board agreed to take middle school sports off the list. The Board also voted to take the paras and teachers off the list. The total monetary value of the cuts remaining was now \$663,123.

*Mr. Nargi moved and Mr. Lyons supported a motion to approve an educational budget of \$62,864,721 for the 2009-2010 budget. This reflects a decrease of \$663,123 in cuts and reduction taken from the health insurance fund of \$664, 213. Administration, the Board chair, and the budget committee chair will discuss the efficacy of the health insurance reduction with the City. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with the exception of Mr. Rubino, Prof. Royals, and Mr. Cavagnero who were opposed.*

Mr. Cavagnero thinks it would be a good idea to sit down with the Mayor and administration and review what the Board is planning to do to see if there is any other way of modifying or working on this before the Board goes forward.

Administration expressed concern regarding getting the budget ready by July 1st as the time was already tight in completing this.

Mr. Mattiello amended the motion adding that to determine the efficacy and desirability of the health insurance reduction, that the Board chair and budget chair join with administration to approach the Mayor and other City officials as soon as possible to report back to the Board within a week.

The motion was tabled until after public discussion.

### **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SESSION**

Wendy Traub, BOF, stated she has a lot of thoughts on what has happened tonight, but the bottom line is as long as the BOE passes a budget that is for the same amount as the BOF gave them, it is up to them how they decide what to do. But she cautioned the Board that if this goes to the Mayor's office or BOF and it doesn't fly, then obviously the BOE is back in their prior situation which is to cut 1.3 million out of the budget. She applauded the Board for coming up with a creative plan, but at the same point she believes there are a lot of issues concerning the health insurance plan. She believes a lot of the comments

made about the City and how the City finance department is run were poorly made. She believes the health insurance fund is run properly, and there have been discussions in the past about creating a rolling account whereas each department's health insurance would be kept separately much like a vehicle replacement fund, and there have been arguments about that too. She also reminded the Board that for the past 2 years, the BOF has approved a transfer of 1.8 million dollars per year from that health insurance fund into the City budget, of which the BOE is only 1 department, and the BOE does benefit from that 1.8 million dollars as every department does. So the extra money that is in that health insurance fund is determined by Alice who tells the BOF how much of it she feels they can take out of that fund safely and still be within guidelines. But perhaps those guidelines can be negotiated, and perhaps a discussion with Anthem can be had, and perhaps an agreement can be made with the Mayor. But at this point, she knows a discussion has been had in the past and the City has chosen not to go that route. She stated that the Mayor is willing to meet with the BOE on Friday, and he definitely wants to have that discussion. She understands that there is a little bit of bitterness right now, and there is a little bit of "we paid in more", but there are guidelines that have to be followed. She believes the comment that the insurance hasn't been negotiated for 10 years was a dig to the City. She doesn't want these things to become an argument between the BOE and the City. She additionally feels that this plan should have been communicated to the City.

Mr. Cavagnero commented that in the past 2 years the City and the BOF have cut the BOE's budget, 1 million dollars last year and 1.3 million dollars this year, and this was not communicated to the Chairman of the BOE.

Mrs. Traub responded that she has spoken to the BOE for 4 months now about a zero percent increase and has tried her best to communicate what the Mayor has been telling her. She found out at 4:30 p.m. that the cut was going to be what it was and she was not in the position to communicate with anyone.

Fiona Cappabianca commented that she is unsure of the process if Plan B doesn't go through, but she would like some clarification on the paras. She asked how many paras were actually going to be cut under Plan A.

Administration and the Board responded 12 total including the 5 media paras, but that had already been done. Nothing additional was cut tonight.

Fiona Cappabianca asked that the Board strongly reconsider putting the library media paras back in the budget as she feels that these media paras work with every student in every site. The kids need to learn research skills, computer technology, and they are not going to get that without the media paras.

Ms. Haynes stated that there are paras who go throughout the building, there are still those who do clerical support, there are security paras, as well as paras who are 1 on 1 in the classrooms. Mr. Joslyn explained that there are students who by IEP have a 1 on 1

para. There are other paras which support classrooms and may in the course of a day support several classrooms. There are several 1 on 1 paras, but they are not all 1 on 1.

Ms. Cappabianca responded that the paras in the classrooms, at least at the elementary level, are mostly in there because of the number of students that in the crisis intervention management, the ones they are trying to save before they get into the special ed program.

Mr. Joslyn stated there may be several students in 1 classroom who have an IEP with a para who goes in and services several in a classroom.

Ms. Cappabianca responded at the elementary and middle level all the paras are servicing troubled students, so she asked if they were saving a few bucks and then cost themselves alot more in the long run.

Mr. Cavagnero agreed that from his perspective the paras are essential for educational and security purposes.

Mr. Broverman asked about the library paras. If the library paras are cut and the librarian is not in the library, who supervises the library or is the library closed?

Mr. Joslyn stated that when the library is not being supervised by the certified library media specialist, and there is no library para, the library cannot function during the times when they are not in there. The teachers can bring their kids in, but the functions of checking out books, restocking shelves, locating materials, and those kinds of things end.

Ms. Cappabianca responded that you also have to consider the number of books that go out and the number of trips the kids are able to make to the library. There are alot of kids that do not have books at home. All of these things greatly impact test scores, especially for that subgroup of students that really need to be reached. Safety is also an issue. There have been code blues to calm kids down. There is so much more than the paras and their salaries, and she encouraged the Board to really think about the long-term effects and the accountability to the kids in Torrington.

Ms. Cappabianca also commented on the custodians. Without enough custodians, things go unkept. Her daughter has juvenile diabetes and an autoimmune problem and has been in the hospital 4 times and ill multiple times coinciding with the release of the custodian at Forbes. She did some research and the increase of kids who have been out sick has escalated much higher so that affects instruction time. If the buildings are dirty, germs are being spread.

Ms. Cappabianca also stated that every time there are budget cuts the sites take the hit. She doesn't feel that getting rid of a building level administrator is the answer. There are increased PPTs and increased discipline issues. This put increased stress not only on the principal, but also the teachers in the building. She encouraged the Board to look at things that don't affect the kids.

Ms. Cappabianca also commented that Southwest School meets the percentage to be classified as a Title 1 school. She understands that there is additional paperwork associated with it, but there also is quite a bit of additional revenue.

Dr. Campbell stated they do not get additional revenue because they are Title 1. They get the same amount of revenue regardless. They don't get stimulus money either. They could make all 7 buildings Title 1, as long as you can justify that you have enough students at free and reduced lunch rates, but you get the same amount of money. The other thing to keep in mind is that under NCLB, that building is then singled out for sanctions if it doesn't make adequate yearly progress. The more buildings you have with the possibility of sanctions, the more dangerous it is for the total funding of the BOE.

Mr. Cavagnero stated he wishes that articulate and knowledgeable people had shown up at the BOF meeting when they were evaluating the BOE's budget. The BOE is dealing with the 1.3 million dollar cut and they are trying to do the best they can with the limited resources they have.

Mr. Broverman added that letters to the editor and things to other parts of the newspaper showing the concerns of the people would be helpful also.

Joanne Brogis spoke in support of the administrators as they do directly affect instruction. She had to do at least 100 observations on teachers who are new or need some assistance with instructional strategies, and had to meet with departments repeatedly to make sure there is consistency, to resolve any teacher issues, or to share with other teachers if one teacher has a great lesson on WWII. Some part of her day is also spent on discipline, and those issues need to be dealt with so other kids can learn in a classroom. Administrators also affect the programs that are put together. She has invested in this district and this is her 30th year. She loves Torrington and her 3 children have gone to Torrington schools and have all done very well. But she believes you can't cut leadership and expect everything to function the way it has been.

Kathy Peterson spoke regarding her concerns about the budget cuts. She has big concerns about losing teachers and then having bigger class sizes. She also is concerned about losing an administrator which has a huge impact. She is concerned about the removal of the bus. Some high school kids are picked up at 6:15 a.m. to go to school at 7:25 a.m. Her children get up at 5:30 a.m. and they are picked up at 6:50 a.m. She feels other things could be cut for that \$45,000 such as cell phones, uniforms, or the late buses at the middle school.

Joe Ammirato stated that before the budget process began the Mayor had made it perfectly clear that he wanted a zero increase in this year's budget. He can't understand the comments about not being notified about the potential cut before the BOF meeting.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that it was a request at that time. The BOE has taken an oath to do what is in the very best interests of the students of Torrington, and the kids are not going to get what they need. He would like to have a zero increase in the budget, but his job is

bring forward to the City a budget that says this is the minimum that they need to give these kids and parents something to move forward with educationally. It was the Mayor's decision that it wasn't good enough and he cut it. He did what he thought he had to do and this Board did what they thought they had to do.

Mr. Ammirato continued that for 2 years the Board has refused to look into the biggest problem of the district which is out-of-control, out-of-district expenses.

Mr. Cavagnero responded that money was put into the budget for this.

Mr. Ammirato responded that he thinks that some of the comments made by both the Board members and the administrators were very disrespectful to the leaders of the City and he doesn't appreciate the way they have been made.

Mr. Cavagnero responded that he thinks Mr. Ammirato has made disrespectful comments to Board members also.

*Mr. Lyons moved and Mr. Broverman supported a motion to extend the meeting past 11 p.m. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with the exception of Miss Laus who was opposed.*

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **10.1 Adoption of Amended 2009-2010 Budget**

*Mr. Nargi moved and Mr. Lyons supported a motion to approve an educational budget of \$62,864,721 for the 2009-2010 budget. This reflects a decrease of \$663,123 in cuts and a reduction taken from the health insurance fund of \$664,213. Administration, the Board chair, and the budget committee chair will discuss the efficacy of the health insurance reduction with the City. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with the exception of Mr. Rubino, Prof. Royals, and Mr. Cavagnero who were opposed.*

### **10.2 Appoint Acting Superintendent of Schools**

*Mr. Mattiello moved and Miss Laus supported a motion to appoint Ed Arun as the Acting Superintendent of Schools effective July 1st contingent upon approval from the State Department of Education. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with the exception of Prof. Royals who was opposed.*

### **10.3 Appoint Superintendent Search Committee of the Whole**

*Mr. Mattiello moved and Mrs. Raymond supported a motion that the Board appoint itself as a Superintendent Search Committee for the search for the next superintendent in Torrington. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.*

### **COMMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Mr. Lyons reported that Diversity Day was a great event, and he is hoping that when the City does its Heritage Day this summer that the students will be participating in that day also.

Prof. Royals commented that she was present for the Awards Night and she thought it was a wonderful event with a lot of well-deserving students getting awards and the Alumni award was also a very important event that night as well.

Mr. Nargi commented that a couple of weeks or months ago, he read an article in the newspaper about the \$36,000 in approximate legal expenses paid in the O'Brien matter. He is somewhat outraged by that sum and he would like to get an actual breakdown of those numbers and their justification and what they actually did to justify the \$36,000. He thinks the Board needs to direct the administration to start looking at different legal counsel to this Board. There needs to be new vision as far as who represents this Board from a legal perspective.

Ms. Haynes stated she will give Mr. Nargi the copies of all the bills.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mr. Broverman stated that policy committee has a few loose ends, one is a policy concerning lawyers, and that should be on the agenda in July. But they need to finalize a few policies so that the administrators can have them for their summer planning. They are going to have a short meeting to approve them at 5:30 p.m. on June 17th.

Miss Laus stated there have been no grievances at this point.

Mr. Rubino stated that budget will meet next week to go over their expenditures.

Mr. Lyons stated that the school improvement committee will need to meet and he is proposing 2 days, Monday, June 22nd, or Monday, June 29th at 7 p.m. He would like to push the 22nd to allow more enough time.

Mr. Mattiello stated that tomorrow night will be the big thing for the personnel committee.

### **ITEMS FOR UPCOMING AGENDA**

Dr. Campbell stated that for June 17th, there will be an executive session to start the meeting for finishing the business for the non-bargaining folks. Then will be celebrations, and a few things on the consent agenda to discuss. Discussion items will include an update on the special education RFP. Then there will be an executive session before the action items. Action items will include the appointment of the THS principal, the standard approval of budget transfers and monthly financial report, and then the policies Mr. Broverman mentioned. The July Board meeting will be on July 15th rather than July 8th.

Mr. Mattiello stated that he would like feedback on the code of conduct.

Dr. Campbell stated she would check with the principals regarding this.

Mr. Broverman stated he would like feedback on the meeting to be held with the City.

Dr. Campbell stated that she will let the Board know when the actual meeting will be and then will give feedback possibly at the budget committee meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 p.m. All were in favor.