

**Board of Education Minutes**  
May 24, 2023

**DRAFT**

A Regular Meeting - Hybrid Format of the Board of Education was held in a hybrid format on May 24, 2023, beginning at 6:30 PM in the North Stonington Education Center. Present were Mr. Burdick, Mr. Karpinski, Mrs. Mastroianni, Mr. Mendolia, Mr. Stefanowicz, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, and Mrs. Wagner. Also present were Student Ambassadors Jon Anderson and Madison Wagner, Superintendent Hopkins and Business Manager Bill Merrill.

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion to add agenda item 6.c – Student Reports made by Mrs. Mastroianni, seconded by Mrs. Wagner. Carried.

Motion to add agenda item 9.b – Goal 1 Discussion made by Mr. Stefanowicz, seconded by Dr. Towle-Weicksel. Carried.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First\*

A parent expressed her concerns regarding an incident that occurred at the elementary school.

Mr. Wayne Coats, was a former groundskeeper for a number of years in the school district. Mr. Coats indicated that he heard some conversations around the Grounds Study. Mrs. Wagner invited Mr. Coats to review the online presentation that has been posted on the website. Mrs. Wagner will provide a copy of the Grounds Study as well. Mr. Coats offered to share his knowledge and history of the grounds.

4. Chairman's Presentation

Mrs. Wagner has a presentation to share tonight. Representative Greg Howard reached out when he heard that Mrs. St. Germain was elected Principal of the Year and wanted to

present a citation from the General Assembly. Mrs. Wagner read the remarks from Representative Howard.

Marissa a senior at Wheeler High School, spoke eloquently about Mrs. St. Germain. Mrs. St. Germain extended her gratitude to the Board of Education. Mr. Hopkins added that Mrs. St. Germain will represent Connecticut in the National Principal of the Year award program sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and will compete for the national honor along with principals of the year from each of the other forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense Education Activity, Department of State Office of Overseas Schools that will happen in the fall. Congratulations Mrs. St. Germain and best of luck.

## **5. Community Relations**

### **5.a. CABE Award Recognition**

CABE award recognition – Mrs. St. Germain, each year the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education recognizes two outstanding students from the middle school across the state. This year, the teachers at Wheeler have recognized two eighth graders, Ingrid Anderson and Connor Gallagher.

## **6. Presentations**

### **6.a. Give Back Club by Rebecca Schilke and Rebecca Costello**

Mrs. Rebecca Schilke presented a brief snapchat of what the Give Back Club has been doing. Mrs. Schilke presented about the five students that traveled to Augusta Maine in March. Travis Mills, a quadruple amputee and started the Travis Mills Foundation. This event was a breakfast for veterans. Mrs. Schilke presented their experience around their trip to Maine. Ariana Paige a sophomore at Wheeler shared her personal experience regarding their trip to serve the veterans. In 2019 we started the Giving Closet and this year it has exploded and we have the community coming to shop. As of December 2022, we have given away about four thousand five hundred items. Mrs. Vaillancourt started off by thanking Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Carlson for allowing the Giving Closet to move into a bigger space. Thank you to Shannon from Fresh Start for collaborating with us, and has been able to donate thousands of items for our families. Look forward to seeing the Giving Closet grow. There is a need for 3T, 4T,

and 5T clothes for both boys and girls. A great need for leggings for women, 3XL, and sizes for 7/8 and 9/10 for kids.

#### 6.b. Reading Program by Rob Cillino

The Science of Reading program was presented by Mr. Cillino and his team. There were questions asked and answered.

Motion to approve The Into Reading Program with the supplements that the administration has asked for. This motion, made by Burdick and seconded by Mendolia, Carried.

#### 6.c. Student Reports

Ms. Madison Wagner reported that the NEASC visit went well, the team met with multiple teachers as well as visited several classrooms throughout the day and they are happy with the progress to move toward being an accredited district. Wheeler is winding down with only two and a half weeks left in the fourth quarter. Teachers are preparing students for their final assessments to showcase their work in the academic expectations, which is a big shift to how students are being assessed in areas of analysis collaboration, communication, and literacy. Parents need to keep in mind that although students don't need to study and cram for each test we still want them to practice their skills ahead of the assessments so they can independently show their mastery of them on the day of the assessment. Ms. Wagner reported that graduation plans are underway and the Senior walkthrough will be on June 13, outside. Ms. Wagner continued to report that the senior project Capstone day is June 2. Awards and Scholarships night is June 12. Testing is almost finished so all of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders have taken their SBAC testing, while 11<sup>th</sup> graders took the NGSS testing. Thank you to the IT department for a fairly seamlessly run. Because of the pandemic, this information is really important so that we can continue to address the needs of students as we work hard to close the learning gaps. Multiple sports teams have qualified for the ECC tournament including boys' golf, boy's baseball, girl's lacrosse, and girls' softball. Girls baseball, girls' softball, and boy's baseball made it to states and girl's lacrosse did as well. Wellness Day was today, I thought it went pretty well, it was pretty fun

and had a lot of options such as the walking tour of North Stonington, volleyball, kickball, nutrition courses, and smoothie making. There were lots of celebrations last month. Thanks to our PTO for helping honor our teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week. It was a great week overall and a huge shout out to parents for their help. The basket raffle was a huge hit and we also celebrated our school nurses for their work on behalf of our staff and students Thank You Mrs. Kessler for all of your work and for taking great care of us.

Mr. Jon Anderson reported on the North Stonington Elementary School thanking the PTO and Board of Education for taking the time to recognize and celebrate teachers and staff last week. We all know how hard they work and they were definitely shown some appreciation that week. We also want to thank our great families who helped to make our teacher's basket raffle a success and celebrate our school nurses. Thank you, Ali Souza, for all that she does, wipes tears and keeps our kids healthy and strong. The NEASC visit went well and it was good to hear more about the process having some visitors here helped to put some elementary minds at ease and we're really glad to be working so collaboratively with Wheeler we are looking forward to their assistance and expertise as we make this important shift. ASBAC testing is wrapping up this week, with a makeup schedule for next week we are all really proud of how our students have been working and we are looking forward to seeing some great results. Spring concerts are underway, our first graders and second graders performed two weeks ago and this past week it was our third, fourth, and fifth graders. Ms. Ellis does a great job of preparing our students and helping them to put on a great performance. This week we'll have our band concert and are still looking forward to our sixth-grade course concert. This week, our sixth graders will have their DARE graduation and we are pleased that Trooper White has been able to bring this program back to North Stonington Elementary School with the help of Trooper McCarthy. The sixth-grade promotion will be on Friday, June 16 at 9:30 a.m. We'll be in the gym and we'll be asking for no more than four people per student. Our sixth graders will be having their celebration on the 10<sup>th</sup> at the YMCA. Special thank you to all sixth-grade parents who worked so hard to make this happen at no charge to the students. Finally, field day will be on June 14<sup>th</sup> with the 15<sup>th</sup> as a rain date, more information to follow.

## 7. Reports

### 7.a. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Hopkins echoed what Ms. Wagner reported on Wellness Day, he added that a lot of planning went into the day and Ms. Kimberly Haggerty did a ton of that planning along with her co-chair Mr. Stephen Bailey. There were many other people involved in the planning or running of workshops. There were a lot of options, it was a different kind of day which is very unique and it's one of the things that makes North Stonington Schools unique. This year, Ms. Irma Wilhelm did a ton of planning because we had Central Office offerings for staff for wellness day. Ms. Alycia Clemons also was involved, she did a potting workshop, and those who took this workshop left with a basil plant. Some staff was able to have a Carotid Artery Care Scan, they will get the results in two weeks. There was also a massage therapist, which was very popular. The staff came over to get a massage and while waiting their turn, they could enjoy a cup of hot tea or a protein shake or smoothie. It was a really nice day and the central office was able to offer and partake.

### 7.b. Chairman's Report

Mrs. Wagner, we have been meeting regularly over at the Town Hall getting ready for the audit. Making sure that we're coming up with the right systems for our reports. We'll be meeting with Greg Pont to talk about some of the IT needs. There is a Triboard meeting on June 12 at 6:00 p.m. If everyone could RSVP if they can make that or not. One thing that did come up with the Finance Committee is that the Triboard meeting will be hosted by the Board of Finance so it'll recap the budgeting process but we want to start talking about how to collaborate to get the permanent school building committee back so that we can start getting some of our capital needs continuing to be funded through that fund that was taken away during the building project.

Dr. Towle-Weicksel has requested a meeting with Samantha Horrigan from the North Stonington Early Learner's program. This is a program for 6 weeks to 12 years old. They had a really awesome conversation, she has a lot of experience and has some great plans in place. She is offering before and after-school care she opens at 7 and closes at 5:30 p.m. We talked a little bit about how we can make a bus stop like we do

with Polliwogs and in the morning or in the afternoon. She gave us a pricing list and it's very affordable and I think that parents will be happy with the cost to either do the morning or afternoon once she is up and running. She will be offering things like home-ec, movement yoga, pottery, and all kinds of different options for after-school care. Other than just having kids come in and sit and have a snack and do homework, that's not what she's about. I think it would be a really awesome option without having to stress our current facility and our current staff. I think we still need to come together as a committee to really think about other ways that we could provide for the town because I think we will run into capacity issues and how we maximize that for all the people that want it.

## 8. **Facilities & Finance**

### 8.a. Accept February, March, and April Finance Reports

Motion to accept February Financials. This motion, made by Karpinski and seconded by Stefanowicz, Carried.

Motion to accept March financials. This motion, made by Mr. Karpinski and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, Carried.

Motion to accept April Financials. This motion, made by Karpinski and seconded by Stefanowicz, Carried.

### 8.b. End-of-Year Projection

We did talk about the end-of-the-year projections and there were questions on how the calculations came about. I think there was a lot of discussion and there is still a little bit of time left before we get a better idea of where we are to the approximately twenty-one thousand dollars that is projected at this point. Questions were asked and answered.

### 8.c. Non-Lapsing Account

List that Mr. Hopkins provided that still interested on purchasing. End-of-year expenditure is on top of RFP on June 7<sup>th</sup> Playground items. There is a need for an inclusive playground. inclusive Playground Equipment is adaptable equipment all children can use, including children in a wheelchair.

## 9. **Old Business**

### 9.a. Grounds RFP

Will ask the committee that did the study and will include Mr. Wayne Coats will work on that. Take a second look at the layout where we could do the soccer field first. Knowing more about cost.

9.b. Goal 1

Mr. Stefanowicz presented that he sees concerns regarding the threat around the elementary school and we might want to look at that. There are instances where people have seen negative language and some other things that are occurring and he thought that perhaps what we need to do is get a Goal 1 Committee meeting where we might take a look at some programming that we might be able to implement. Try to understand what the issue might be. We educate our parents about privacy and we can't always say what is being done; but because we don't say anything it doesn't necessarily mean that we are not doing anything. What do we do? We have to be proactive. We need to focus on communication, and I don't think they (parents) know about the chain of command.

10. Public Comment\*

None.

11. Proposed for Executive Session

Superintendent's Evaluation

NSEA Negotiations

Out of Executive Session

Motion to move into executive session made by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. Burdick.

Carried.

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:20 p.m. made by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mrs. Mastroianni.

Carried.

Respectfully submitted by  
Irma Wilhelm  
Recording Secretary to  
The Board of Education