

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2008  
**(Unofficial until Board Approval)**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by chairman Mark Makuch at the Town Office Building.

PRESENT: Mark Makuch, Laurie Semprebon, Christine Psathas, Christina Mailhos, David Tharp, Teri Gareau, Superintendent David Harding,  
(Herb Arico arrived at 9:07 p.m.)

COMMUNICATIONS:

Superintendent shared a copy of a letter to John Mindek approving and thanking him for his scout project, a letter from Michelle Bidwell regarding the security cameras, and the Region #19 Budget Preparation Schedule. Superintendent Harding explained that he had already spoken to M. Bidwell regarding her letter and clarified and corrected certain statements within the letter. Michelle Bidwell thanked Superintendent Harding for his clarifications and the additional information.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Mark Makuch prefaced with a clarification of a time line of events that have previously taken place regarding the security camera issue.

Erica Weicenski commended the schools on the beginning of the year and especially on the transition from third to fourth grade. She also commented on the vast amount of discussion that took place at board meetings over the last few months about the use of cameras, where they were placed, and how they are used. She expressed her support for the idea and that the Board spent a lot of time on the creation of the policy.

Tim Nolan commented that the video surveillance is a good deterrent for vandalism, bullying and it allows the administration to go back and see what happened in certain situations if needed. He feels the policy addresses privacy and that it is only a small piece of the program to maintain zero tolerance and to prevent crime and vandalism.

Lieutenant Alaric Fox, Commander of the Connecticut State Police Training Academy, commented on the necessity in today's time to have the security cameras in the school systems and was surprised that the schools did not already have it in place. He commended the Superintendent for taking the steps to provide safety of the schools. He is thrilled that individuals, such as the police, have the resources to protect our children. He believes awareness is needed that things could happen here just as unfortunately as it has in other towns and states.

Barbara King was glad for the installation of the cameras and relayed a history of bullying events that took place over a two year time period and stated that had the cameras been in place at that time, the family involved would not have had to endure these events with any he said/she said business and instead they could have been proven and resolved immediately. Also had the students known they were recorded then the events may not have happened at all.

Kathy Mikel spoke of the increase in the special needs population and is happy to have the cameras with the increase of bullying and things that happen.

John Blessington says the child of a family member thought the cameras were horrible and made her feel creepy. He knows the arguments for the cameras but would like for the Board to consider how in society the cameras cover everything you do.

Marybeth Wallet commented that she wished she had the arguments presented tonight to tell her daughter the various reasons why the cameras are there before school started.

John Frassinelli commented that the cameras are there for the right reasons; to stop negative behavior from occurring. He agrees that there should not be any expectation of privacy in a common area but students should have the expectation to go to school in a safe setting.

Liz Peczuh explained how students noticed the cameras once school started and she, as well as the other teachers, explained to the students that no one is monitoring them and that the cameras are there in case an incident occurs the administrators can go back and review what happened.

Marybeth Wallet asked if the policy was on the website. She was told that it was on the new website [www.willingtonpublicschools.org](http://www.willingtonpublicschools.org) under the Board of Education link.

Deborah Sullivan, Principal of HMS presented letters and emails from parents that are in support of the cameras.

Mark Makuch stated that the Board toured the school and looked at the placement and views of the cameras to be sure the policy was being followed.

Marybeth Wallet questioned how it would be communicated to the kids.

David Harding responded with some clarification that the cameras are video only not audio. That he plans to go into the classrooms at HMS and address the issue with the students grade by grade. He also clarified that the cameras are not monitored by someone it is only for when there is an incident they can go back and fix it. They are there to assist in a lockdown situation, to prevent the weekend graffiti and vandalism to the building, and break-ins.

#### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Superintendent Harding reported on the budget update, the upcoming Parent Expo on November 1 at CES from 10-3, the new website [www.willingtonpublicschools.org](http://www.willingtonpublicschools.org) being up and running, and the mutual agreement between the towns of Tolland and Willington Public Works sharing resources and equipment. He distributed an enrollment summary from Power School and a flyer on the parent expo. He commented on the new food service director doing a nice job and that the first event of a Harvest Fest, which is a picnic lunch to be held outside at HMS, will be held on September 18, 2008.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Christina Mailhos, seconded by Laurie Semprebon to approve the placement of the cameras pending slight alterations and adjustments.

VOTE: Yes: Christina Mailhos, Laurie Semprebon, Christine Psathas,  
Mark Makuch  
Abstain: David Tharp

Motion Passes

NEW BUSINESS:

Board Members discussed the Role of Chair as being able to make motions and vote on all questions.

MOTION: by Christine Psathas, seconded by Teri Gareau to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Meeting from August 28, 2008.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

MOTION: by Christine Psathas, seconded by Christina Mailhos to approve the Facility Committee minutes of July 22, 2008.

VOTE: Yes: Christine Psathas, Christina Mailhos, Mark Makuch  
Abstain: David Tharp, Laurie Semprebon

Motion Passes

MOTION: by Laurie Semprebon, seconded by Mark Makuch to approve payment of bills and transfers.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

Superintendent Harding presented and discussed a copy of the draft of the transportation agreement between E.O. Smith and Willington Board of Education.

Board discussed the vacant .5FTE literacy coach position at CES.

Board set the dates of September 23, 2008 at 8 am for the Staff Breakfast at Center School and September 18, 2008 at 7am for the Staff Breakfast at Hall Memorial School.

Board reviewed, discussed and reassigned the subcommittee assignments.

Board reviewed the draft Board Calendar discussing addition of a fall retreat in October and keeping the meeting on November 11 as is.

Board reviewed and discussed the draft budget calendar.

MOTION: by Teri Gareau, seconded by Christina Mailhos to accept the Superintendent Goals as presented.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Marybeth Wallet respectfully requested a communication on policy or program changes such as PBS. She commented on her daughter's response to the lunch time procedures at Hall School and questioned the amount of time the children have to eat and socialize.

Laura Gilbert commented on the limited lunch time as well and that everything else was marvelous and her sixth grader is adjusting and liking it.

David Harding thanked the people who attended and spoke out about the issues and expressed his gratitude for the feedback and will follow up in regards to the communication issues.

Marybeth Wallet requested that notices be emailed and posted on the parent portal system.

Mark Makuch commented on his daughter's appreciation for the quiet control at lunch time.

MOTION: by Christine Psathas, seconded by David Tharp, to enter into executive session at 8:40 p.m. to discuss the superintendent evaluation and to invite Superintendent Harding to join.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor.

Board moved out of executive session at 8:50 p.m.

MOTION: by Christine Psathas, seconded by David Tharp to enter into executive session at 8:57p.m. to discuss parent/student issue and to invite Superintendent Harding to join.

Board moved out of executive session at 9:28 p.m.

Herb Arico handed out EastConn brochures, mentioned the ACT program is growing, Region #19 facilities committee doing more research regarding field renovations with a price tag now at 4.8 million and E.O. Smith tuition will be rising.

Mark Makuch mentioned he will be meeting with BOE chairs from Ashford, Mansfield and Region #19 on September 16, 2008.

#### BOARD COMMENTS:

Board commented that the PTA Ice Cream Social was a success, they thanked the public for coming to the meeting and mentioned the following upcoming events: September 14, 2008 the Mansfield Festival on the green, the curriculum nights for HMS on Sept. 17, 2008 and for CES on September 25, 2008.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Nichole Page  
Recording Secretary