

School Committee
December 5, 2005

I. Call to Order

Mr. Paolillo called the December 5, 2005 meeting of the Watertown School Committee to order at 7:10 p.m. Members present included Ms. Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Ms. Laurie McManus, Mr. John Quinn, Mr. Stephen Messina, Mr. William Oates, and Ms. Pam Piantedosi. Also present were Dr. Steven Hiersche, and Dr. Stephen Gould.

II. Recognition:

A. Retiring School Committee Members

The School Committee recognized three retiring School Committee members for which the December 5, 2005 meeting will be their last School Committee meeting. Mr. Stephen Messina served on the Watertown School Committee from 1994 – 2005. Mr. Messina held the title of Secretary from 1996 to 1999. Mr. John Quinn served on the Watertown School Committee from 1998 – 2005. Mr. Quinn held the title of Vice-Chairman from 2000 – 2005. Ms. Pam Piantedosi served on the Watertown School Committee from 2004 – 2005. Ms. Piantedosi held the title of Town Council President.

Tony Paolillo read the following statement: “John you are not just a colleague but a true friend. We both came onto the School Committee together. As two rookies we learned right away what you can and cannot do in the School Committee more often we learned what we could not do. Your dedication to the children of Watertown was unwavering. We could always count on you to bring us a dose of reality when we were discussing school matters. The teachers of this district will never have a better friend than you. You were always thinking of the teacher in the classroom because you were one of them. You were the best of the best as far as a Vice-Chairman you were a voice of reason and someone that made sure we moved the meetings along. You will be sorely missed by this School Committee and school systems and this Town. On behalf of this School Committee and the School administration and staff I want to thank you for all of your years of service to our school system. On a personal note, John, I want to thank you for being there when ever I needed you. I want to also thank you on behalf of my two daughters that have flourished in this school system because of your hard work and effort on the School Committee.

When you look up in the dictionary what a volunteer is you should find a picture of Steve Messina. He is the essence of what a volunteer is. He would give whatever it took to make the Watertown Public Schools better. It just wasn't the thousands of hours he gave on the School Committee and the money he donated but the hours that he spent on PTO's, PTU's, Town Wide raffle and auction, building the future, the march on Town hall, and on and on and on. When I met Steve many years ago he was the reason I got involved. I looked at him and I said how can I sit back and let this guy do all of this work

to make the schools better for my daughters. He was a bull dog when it came to schools. You want to start a fight with Steve say something bad about the Watertown schools. His work with the school buildings is the reason we are sitting in this beautiful lecture hall and the reason we have some of the best facilities in the area. Steve, on behalf of the School Committee and the administration and staff, thank you. Again, on a personal note on behalf of my two daughters, I want to thank you for making the WPS a better place for them to succeed.

Pam it has only been a short time but you made your presence felt. You worked so hard to make sure you knew all you could know about the WPS. You were adamant on making sure that you could add value to every discussion. Your want to make our technology better was unmatched. You pushed so we saw how inadequate our spending was on technology. You constantly kept us on balance when it came to the budget always bringing up the fact that we as a school system are just a piece of the pie. Although your dedication and fight to getting us what we needed for schools was unmatched on the council. As a friend you were always there for me to encourage and suggest and just help. Thank you Pam. You will sorely be missed on this School Committee and the Town Council. Thank you on behalf of the School Committee School administration and staff for your years of service. We will miss you Pam.”

Eileen Hsu-Balzer shared the following on Steve Messina: “I could list Steve's accomplishments, for they are many. Without Steve there would be no Fitness Center in the high school. He shepherded every one of the five schools through lengthy and complex renovations and construction. As Chairman of the Athletic Subcommittee, in his thoughtful evaluations of Superintendent candidates, and in the endless hours he has given to labor negotiations and grievance hearings, Steve has never failed to search for the answer to the question which has guided all his years of service on the School Committee: what is best for the students? Let me get right to the three points I'd like to make. Steve has always voted based on what he thought was best for the students, even when I disagreed with him, and, more importantly, even when his choices have cost him other people's friendship. I have considered his integrity in serving the students absolute.

Steve is a solution-seeker. No matter what problem you bring him, he will not be discouraged, he will not say it cannot be resolved, he will be relentless and creative, hard-working, sensitive to the parties involved and as smart as can be about what the issues are, and how to make what needs to happen, happen. Steve cares about this Town. He devoted his life to it before his election, and during his three terms on the School Committee, and I have no doubt we have not seen the last of him. Steve is a true leader. He has never sought the limelight or public praise, he works behind the scenes, he never asks anyone else to do something he won't do, and he recognizes the contributions of others freely and generously. I am so glad to have the opportunity to say this to you, Steve. As a parent, I am grateful for what you have done for my children's schools. As a citizen, I am grateful for your service to my Town. And lastly, as a fellow School Committee member, it has truly been my privilege to work together with you as one of your colleagues.”

Mr. Oates announced the passing of Mr. Lou Andrews this weekend. Mr. Andrews was a lifelong resident of Watertown and was elected as first Council President in Watertown in 1981. The School Committee offers their condolences to his family.

III. Student Advisors

Ms. Hannah Epstein and Mr. Alex Garbier reported on activities at Watertown High School. On November 17th Watertown High School held their Night of Excellence. The Sportsmanship Summit was held on November 18th and the Great Gatsby on November 18-19, 2005. Auditions are coming up for Les Miserables and on December 7th the Reparatory Theatre will perform Glass Managerie. Honor Roll breakfast was November 29th. The Watertown High School Semi Formal is this Friday evening.

IV. Public Forum

No Public Forum.

V. Presentation/Discussion

A. Watertown Education Foundation, Inc

Ms. Marie Chalmers and Ms. Lynda Messina, Co-Presidents of the Watertown Education Foundation reported on the Watertown Education Foundation. The Foundation was founded in 1992 by parents and business people to get additional funds to schools and kids in schools. The Watertown Education Foundation is a 501C3 non profit organization. Events run throughout the year include spelling bee/adult trivia, afghan program sold at Faire on the Square and throughout the year, teacher tribute program, and the annual appeal-sustaining donor program. The grant program is the biggest portion and applications are available in February. The main purpose of the grant is to help fund something not in the budget.

B. Elementary Principals' Report

Mr. Stephen Billhardt, Principal, Cunniff School, Dr. Deborah Juusela, Principal, Hosmer School and Ms. Darilyn Donovan, Principal, James Russell Lowell School reported on the goals for their schools. Stephen Billhardt reported the first round of teacher observations are done and there are three observations required throughout the year. Joint goal meetings will be conducted; art/music/reading/ELA teacher shared goals with classroom teachers. Meetings are scheduled for January 4, 11 and 18 with a budget planning process for next year.

Deborah Juusela reported goals for the Hosmer School include Differentiating Math Curriculum, every teacher has a personal goal for the year and Professional Development days will focus around this. Discussions with teachers on sharing as best practices among the classrooms is also a focus for the year. Dr. Juusela held parent meetings on expectations for children and how parents can help at home. Meetings were also held with Dr. Gould on differentiation and math curriculum goal setting. Primary focus was on bringing up MCAS scores and implementing Grade Level Outcomes.

Dari Donovan reported for the Lowell School. Focuses for the fall include: Building relationships with Students and parents, Teachers, administrators and other staff. The challenge of differentiation: Implementation of standards based and instructional system Supporting effective collaboration to improve student success. School Site Council: Getting organized and creating a focus for school improvement. The Front Steps: Arrival and Dismissal Committee. Planning for next year: Organizational structure and identifying needs. Planning and budgeting for staff, materials and educational programs for next year.

C. Athletic Advisory Committee

Ms. Elaine Paradis, Coordinator of Athletics reported on the Athletic Advisory Committee. The members of the Committee were charged with identifying, prioritizing, researching, and making recommendations for 3 focus areas: Program development, facilities, and communication. Program development includes participation, league placement, booster programs, feeder programs, and coaching expectations.

D. Coordinated Program Review

Dr. Hiersche reported that the Massachusetts Department of Education is required by federal and state law to conduct an ongoing review of public schools' implementation of regulated education programs. The Watertown Public Schools is scheduled to participate in the Coordinated Program Review during the 2005-2006 school year. The onsite portion of this review is scheduled to begin during the week of March 13, 2006.

E. School Building Assistance Audits

Dr. Hiersche reported that the accounting firm of Melanson Heath & Company, PC is conducting the School Building Assistance audits for the State. They are auditing the Cunniff, Hosmer, J.R. Lowell, Phillips, Middle School and High School building projects.

F. Preliminary Discussion of FY'07 Budget

Dr. Hiersche reported on the FY'07 Budget.

G. Personnel Report

Dr. Hiersche gave a report on personnel.

VI. Action Items

A. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the following meetings as written:

1017/05	Regular Monthly Meeting
11/1/05	Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds

B. Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds

Mr. Messina reported that the Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds met on November 1, 2005 at 6:30 p.m. Present were Mr. Paolillo, Mr. Quinn, Dr. Hiersche, Ms. Altman and Mr. Francione. Mr. Francione provided the Committee with a list he compiled of capital project needs and major maintenance issues by building for the next three to five years including cost estimates for some of the projects. Mr. Francione informed the Committee that during the rain we received from hurricane Wilma there were roof leaks in all of the buildings. He stated that some roofs leak only during high wind storms and others anytime it rains. It was the consensus of the Committee to look first at the projects with regard to safety and security. The Committee also suggested that no major expenditures be incurred until the cost to repair the Lowell School steps is known. It was also noted that the time-frame for major projects would be 5-10 years. Ms. Altman and Mr. Francione will separate out ongoing maintenance from the capital projects, will distinguish which items are safety/critical, which items are Browne School related and which items that were not done during the renovations. Mr. Francione informed the Committee that Mr. Carter, Principal, Middle School would like to change the circulation system for the Middle School and the bus drop off and pick up area for students. Mr. Francione also recommended replacement of the phone system district-wide with one system for all buildings. The Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

VII. Reports

A. Chairman's Report

Chairman Paolillo thanked the Committee for all their work and accomplishments.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Hiersche reported that the Lowell School steps proposal will go before the Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds next week and thanked the Committee for all their hard work.

C. Next Meeting

Chairman Paolillo announced that the next meeting of the Watertown School Committee is scheduled for Monday, January 9, 2006.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the December 5, 2005 meeting of the School Committee at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie J. McManus
Secretary