

Winchester Board of Education

Type of Meeting: Board Of Education Meeting Minutes – Amended 3/12/2024

Date: December 12, 2023, @ 7:00 p.m.

Location: Town Hall – Hicks Room

Jeannette Brodeur, Salvatore Lovetere, Cheryl McGlynn, Nora Mocarski, Sondra Strubhar, Renata Waldron, Shayne Deschamps, Shane Centrella, and Jonathan Morhardt

- I. Call to order: @ 7:00 pm
- II. Pledge of Allegiance:
- III. Roll call: Shane Centrella, Shayne Deschamps, Renata Waldron, Sondra Strubhar, Nora Mocarski, Melony Brady-Shanley, Cheryl McGlynn, Jeannette Brodeur, Salvatore Lovetere, Jonathan Morhardt
- IV. Discussion Possible Action: Motion to rescind election for Officers of the Winchester Board of Education held during the November 14, 2023 Board meeting, which election resulted in the appointment of the following officers:
 - Chairperson: Nora Mocarski
 - Secretary: Sondra Strubhar

Nora Mocarski read Item 3 on the agenda we heard or read our board's attorney's advice at our public special board of education meeting this past December 5 regarding the best possible path forward for our board regarding our officers' elections for the Board. On December 5, we had the attorney training on how to operate as a Board of Education. As mandated every year in the state of CT. She reminded us of the importance of decorum. We are a symbolic force at our meetings, and our conduct on the board sends a message to the community and our kids. Our behavior should be engaged in production conversation, and we work as a team.

Nora Mocarski opened the floor to discussion:

Salvatore Lovetere started the discussion with an overview of what had happened at the board meeting with elections.

He mentioned that he had the FOIA text messages from the board of education, which he read for the record.

This is why we are here tonight. In my opinion, none of the politicking should happen at the level it does at the Board of Education. That's not why we are here, but it has, and I believe having a sitting Selectman, Chair of the Democratic town committee, and the spouse of the sitting chair texting all different members trying to collude to try to make another vote is pretty regrettable.

Secondly, to his credit, Shayne Deschamps had asked Candy not to pressure him, but he was pressured and changed his vote. I find that to be regrettable as well. Salvatore then reread the texts, and this shows

that he was pressured, in my opinion. The vote change shows that he changed his vote, in my opinion, due to that pressure, and I believe that shows a lack of morals and a lack of moral courage. I would like to ask you to resign from our position. That is all I have to say tonight about this topic.

Cheryl McGlynn added to the discussion that the text messages that Candy Perez sent to those on the board she wanted to know what happened and thought it was an open vote. It was a question as to procedure. I checked the procedure, and we had done it incorrectly. I called a Point of Order, and we, as a board, unanimously agreed that we had done it wrong. We re-voted and had a different outcome. Shayne Deschamps ultimately indicated why he changed his vote, which was published in the newspaper. He changed his vote because Sondra's conduct during the 20 minutes that she was chair indicated she was not familiar enough with the procedure to be Chair. It is not an insult to her; that is a fact. She has only been on the Board for two years compared to the eight years that Nora has been on the board, which is why Nora is the appropriate Chair for this board. That is why I voted for her, not because of a party but because the most experienced person should be the Chair. There should be no texting during meetings. We should not ask a member of the Board to resign because he changed his mind. We all can change the votes. We have to operate as a board. Attacking each other personally is not productive. We need to work together on behalf of our students.

Sondra Strubhar added that we are focusing on the wrong things. ~~Outrage is about exposing improper behavior, and I am guilty of it as well. I disagreed on a second vote. I was shocked by the maneuver.~~
“And again with the outrage, the outrage is about, I don’t think there was any attacking, there was an exposing of improper behavior. And I am guilty also, Cheryl, yes, but if you look, what is interesting is if you look at the timeline, I texted Jay almost 40 minutes after the second vote, so there was no trying to influence, and I’m glad that I did because he said to preserve the ballots.” I agree that this should not be happening on this board.

Sondra explained why she decided to run for the board of education. The country was still in COVID protocol, mask mandates were still in place, and vaccine mandates for adults had been implemented. Vaccines were being approved for children 5-11, and Governor Lamont indicated he would be open to local school districts imposing vaccine mandates for students. As a parent, I left out all the incredibly important decisions being made for my child. I decided to run for the board of education on the platform of parental choice, honoring the authority of parents to determine what was best for their children.

Fast forward to November 14, our first board meeting with our newly elected members. She discussed how, immediately after the first vote, texting from a person outside the meeting began between two board members—further discussed the actions of what happened during that meeting. The integrity of the vote became an issue.

Shayne Deschamps clarified that he changed his vote based on how the meeting was conducted. Not pressure related to what Candy was texting to me. I want to apologize to the Board and the citizens of Winsted. Because of my conduct, we are currently sitting on this matter, and I would love to move forward as a Board and have the trust of the Board that something like this will not happen again.

Shane Centrella is a new member of the board, and one of the things I would like to see going forward is piggyback on something we were discussing. This is a public board, so the emphasis is on all of us holding each other accountable and being accountable for our actions. I appreciate that we have different backgrounds, opinions, and viewpoints. We do have to work together going forward, but we have to do it in a public forum and a public way.

Possible Motion: MOVED that the Board rescind the officer election held during the November 14, 2023, Board meeting, which resulted in Nora Mocarski's appointment as Chairperson and Sondra Strubhar as Secretary.

a) Possible Action: Election of Officers of the Winchester Board of Education – Moderated by Melony Brady-Shanley

1. Election of Chairperson
2. Election of Secretary

MOTION to rescind second vote

First: Jeannette Brodeur, Second: Shayne Deschamps, 4, 5 motion fails to rescind.

The vote from November 14 stands for Nora Mocarski as Chairperson and Sondra Strubhar as Secretary.

Committee Chairs will remain.

b) Possible Action: Election of Committee Chairs and Membership

- Policy Chair and Membership
 - Jeannette Brodeur, Policy Chair
 - Cheryl McGlynn
 - Renata Waldron
 - Shane Centrella
 - Shayne Deschamps
 - Nora Mocarski
 - Jonathan Morhardt
- Curriculum Chair and Membership
 - Renata Waldron, Curriculum Chair
 - Nora Mocarski
 - Jeannette Brodeur
 - Salvatore Lovetere
 - Shane Centrella
 - Shayne Deschamps
 - Jonathan Morhardt
- Finance Chair and Membership Nora, all of us.
 - Nora Mocarski, Finance Chair
 - Cheryl McGlynn
 - Renata Waldron
 - Jeannette Brodeur
 - Salvatore Lovetere
 - Sondra Strubhar

- Shane Centrella
- Shayne Deschamps
- Jonathan Morhardt

- V. Agenda Review Discussion Possible Action:
a) Board of Education Agenda: December 12, 2023

VI. Comments from the Chairman:

We have much work to do in the next few months. As a board, we need to recognize our teachers, paras, and support staff, and we know you put in 100%. We have to thank our parents and caregivers. Thank you for supporting your children in our school system.

To the students, you can make a difference in your school and our community. Be the one to make an impact.

VII. Public Comment:

The Board of Education Chairman will read the Public Comment Regulations. Three minutes are allotted to each speaker per Board Policy #1120. No BOE employee, student, or community member should be defamed within a public comment.

Renata Waldron left the meeting at 7:39 pm. Renata Waldron left the meeting at 7:40 pm due to a family emergency.

William Hudock, 292 Grantville Road, Winsted. I wanted to take a moment to thank each of you. You care about our students and our community. I may agree or disagree, but that is not important. I would say that you have rules. Follow the rules. That should not be that hard. Everything that has happened here could have been avoided had you followed the rules. I hope you can get over this, and it will be a learning exercise for all of you and our community. What you do for our community is important, and I do not want it to get lost.

- VIII. Consent Agenda Items Discussion Possible Actions:
a) Minutes of BOE Meeting –November 14, 2023

Edits are as follows:

Page 3, Nora Mocarski's name is spelled wrong under Committee Assignments

Page 5, Cheryl McGlynn - change point of order to made a point of order.

Page 7, Shayne Deschamps' name is spelled wrong

Page 7, Jonathan Morhardt's name is spelled wrong

Page 9, Jonathan Morhardt's name is spelled wrong

MOTION to accept Minutes of BOE Meeting –November 14, 2023, with edits

First: Cheryl McGlynn, Second: Jonathan Morhardt, 8, 0

b) Minutes of Special Meeting – December 5, 2023

MOTION to approve Minutes of Special Meeting – December 5, 2023

First: Sondra Strubhar, Second: Jonathan Morhardt, 6, 0, 2

IX. Gilbert Report from Board of Education Representative:
No report

X. Correspondence to the Board:
a) Letter of Resignation
Kaylie Morris

MOTION to accept with regret

First: Nora Mocarski, Second: Cheryl McGlynn, 8, 0

XI. Superintendent's Reports & Action Items Discussion Possible Action:
a) Superintendent's Report
b) Monthly Registration & Staff Vacancy Report
c) School Enrollment
d) Chronic Absences
e) Gilbert Enrollment & Grade Level Enrollment
f) Monthly Budget Summary - FY24 - Nancy O'Dea Wyrick reviewed the financials
g) Reading Waiver Information and Next Steps

Melony Brady-Shanley reviewed the Reading Waiver Information and the Next Steps.

Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S) 10-14th, as amended by Public Act (P.A.) 23-167, requires that all districts in Connecticut have an approved K-3 reading Curriculum. This Act mandates that all districts have an approved program in place by July 1, 2025. Winchester Public Schools submitted a waiver to the Connecticut State Department of Education in the spring of 2023.

Regardless of the waiver, we recognize that this is an opportunity for us to improve student engagement and move more students toward grade-level proficiency in reading.

On Friday, December 1, 2023, we received the results of our waiver. We could have received one of four results: Limited, Transitional, Partially Approved, or Approved. We received a "Transitional" waiver. This means that only parts of our current curriculum met the expectations. Our current curriculum met the requirements in the area of phonics and did not meet the requirements in phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Next Steps: Over the coming months, Winchester Public Schools' Literacy Team will investigate comprehensive programs grounded in the Science of Reading and meet all five reading

components (phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Our team will analyze, pilot, and work with grade-level teams to determine the best comprehensive program that will meet the diverse learning needs of our students while balancing that with teacher-friendly implementation.

Two primary grant-funding sources are available for the district to apply for: the ARP ESSER - Small Town Right to Read Grant and the ARPA - Right to Read Grant.

Melony Brady-Shanley wants to continue this discussion at the next Curriculum Committee meeting.

XII. Presentations: None

XIII. New Business Discussion and Possible Action:

a) After-School Proposal from Ralph Nadar

A focus group of six sixth graders will read the entire book, “You Are Your Own Best Teacher: Sparking the Curiosity, Imagination, and Intellect of Tweens!” by Dr. Claire Nadar. They will then choose and discuss ten topics from the book.

MOTION to accept MOU as written

First: Cheryl McGlynn, Second: Jeannette Brodeur

SECONDARY MOTION to move to Curriculum Committee Meeting

First: Sondra Strubhar, Second: Jonathan Morhardt, 5, 3, passes

b) Pearson Drone Competition Team Field Trip Request

MOTION to approve Pearson Drone Competition Team Field Trip

First: Cheryl McGlynn, Second: Jeannette Brodeur, U

c) Fiscal Year 2024 - ARP ESSER - Small Town Right to Read - \$ 150,000

MOTION to approve Fiscal Year 2024 - ARP ESSER - Small Town Right to Read - \$ 150,000

First: Cheryl McGlynn, Second: Shayne Deschamps, U

d) Fiscal Year 2023 - ARPA Right to Read Grant - \$51,000

MOTION to approve application for Fiscal Year 2023 - ARPA Right to Read Grant - \$51,000

First: Shayne Deschamps, Second: Cheryl McGlynn, U

e) Sole Source - West State Mechanical - \$6,270.00

MOTION to approve Sole Source - West State Mechanical - \$6,270.00

First: Salvatore Lovetere, Second: Sondra Strubhar U

XIV. Public Comment:

The Board of Education Chairman will read the Public Comment Regulations. Three minutes are allotted to each speaker per Board Policy #1120. No BOE employee, student, or community member should be defamed within a public comment.

MOTION to adjourn the meeting

First: Cheryl McGlynn, Second: Salvatore Lovetere, U

XV. Adjourn: @ 8:55 pm