

Weston Public Schools
Board of Education Meeting
Weston Town Library
August 23, 2010

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Jerome Belair, Superintendent
Ellen Uzenoff	Thomas Scarice, Assistant Superintendent
Richard Bochinski	Lois Pernice, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Les Wolf	JoAnn Keating, Ed.D., Director of Finance & Ops.
Dana Levin	Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Sonya Stack	
Denise Harvey	

III. RESUME PUBLIC SESSION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. RECOGNITION - None

V. ITEMS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Matters Pertaining to Personnel

1. Resignations

MOTION: Moved that the Weston Board of Education accept the resignation of Kathryn Cioffi, Weston Intermediate School .44 Computer teacher, effective June 30, 2010. Motion by Mrs. Levin, 2nd by Mr. Wolf, all in favor. (7-0)

MOTION: Moved that the Weston Board of Education accept the resignation of Erin Beale, 1.0 Weston Middle School Mathematics teacher, effective July 30, 2010. Motion by Mrs. Stack, 2nd by Mrs. Harvey, all in favor. (7-0)

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approve the minutes of: Executive and Regular Session July 26, 2010 and Special Meeting August 4, 2010 and Special Meeting August 19, 2010. Motion by Mr. Bochinski, 2nd by Mrs. Stack, all in favor for the July 26, 2010 and August 19, 2010 meeting (7-0); 6 in favor and 1 abstain for the August 4, 2010 meeting (6-0-1).

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Schaefer thanked members of the public for attending this evening. Mr. Schaefer reviewed the Board policy regarding meeting conduct, emphasizing no un-civil or boisterous conduct will be permitted; the Board chairman shall exclude further remarks from a speaker who becomes boisterous and may instruct such person to leave the premises. No oral presentation shall include charges or complaints against any employee of the Board of Education, regardless of whether or not the employee is identified in the presentation by name or by another reference. All charges or complaints against the employee shall be

submitted to the Board in accordance with the provisions of the Board of Education policy. Also, prior to public comment I would like to make a few comments which I will ask the press to publish. Since our last monthly Board meeting when we voted on compensation for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and Director of Finance and Operations, there has been much reaction, both in public meetings and written word. While everyone is entitled to express their opinion, doing so in an uncivil and disrespectful manner is uncalled for and should not continue. Treating each other with decency should be standard decorum regardless of our differences of opinion. We need to set a good example for the youth of our community by modeling positive behavior. With that, we would like to start with the first public comment of the evening.

Harvey Bellin
Maple Street

Can we please have public comment after the Old Business and Board Motion; it might be a more appropriate order. Is that agreeable to the Board?

Mr. Schaefer stated the agenda has already been set and the Board would like to hear comments prior to voting to see if there is an additional thought process involved for the Board to make a decision.

Bob Machson
White Birch Road

As someone who loves the U.S. Constitution, to suggest (and I hope I am not the first offender) we should not have boisterous or unruly discussion – sometimes democracy is filled with boisterous and unruly discussion and the first amendment protects even the unruly and bad behavior and the impolitic type of speech. I understand what Harvey said and agree with him although I don't know why he changed his mind. It is fairly apparent, however, that what you feel right now reflects the hours of discussion before the Board of Finance, all the public letters, the outcry from the community. If nothing would have convinced you in the past month to change your minds, I can't believe any statement that would be made right now would do so. It seems once again the Board is missing another opportunity to engage the community. I have no idea what your decision is now or if you changed your mind, in which case I would congratulate you for a good move or you may have come up with further reasoning for not changing your mind, which frankly we often hear. At the Board of Selectman meeting, unfortunately, only 2 of you spoke. Les was the only one who gave a substantive defense of what the Board did, other than you Phil who did the same. I heard nobody else on the Board of Education give a meaningful defense of what happened and I would like to know, because frankly you might convince me that your position is correct and mine is incorrect. But, once again, making the public speak before they have any idea what you've done really undermines the purpose of community dialogue; it is not dialogue when we stand here and talk about something we don't know about. The only opportunity the public had to engage with the Board of Education was a Board of Selectman meeting and we still

cannot engage in any dialogue. Phil, frankly, to say something now, when I'm barred from saying anything and under the rules you just announced if I did argue with you quite frankly I would probably be considered boisterous and removed from the meeting. I think you are making a mistake. I think you should tell us what you have done, defend it one way or another and then permit us an opportunity to speak on it.

Mr. Schaefer: You will hear all Board members speak at length coming up after public comment. We owe that to the Town and we will do that.

Margaret Wirtenberg

Wilson Road

When you first voted on this issue, I remember thinking wait a minute. There was no point in commenting as there were very few of us there. And the vote had already been taken. This time, when I saw the agenda, I thought, good, people can comment because the vote can be taken after public comment.

Woody Bliss

Grays Farm Road

I am particularly disturbed by the method of operation by the Board of Education which is unique among the boards and commissions of the Town. That is you relegate public comment to the beginning of your meeting whereas all other boards and commissions allow interactive public comment throughout the meeting. There may be people who have opinions or expertise on topics that want to participate. We've heard a lot the last few weeks about transparency or the lack thereof and I think you putting it as one item at the beginning of the meeting reinforces the lack of transparency and perhaps secretive nature of the Board of Education. The Board should give serious consideration to doing what other boards and commissions do (and they are all volunteers as well) that is, they want comment during the meeting on a topic and if it is managed right, it is not disruptive to the process.

Frank Ballone

Curiosity Lane

Let me start by telling you my work experience because I think it has relevance to your Board. Many years ago, I was appointed Chief Information Officer in one of the many businesses for a large conglomerate. When I took the job, I knew the tenure for the CIO was something less than 2 years, on average. New to the job, I quickly made decisions on how it would operate. First, I knew I always had to keep my eye on the goal. I quickly learned what was important and what we could defer and what we could do without. I had to make a number of hard and sometimes gut-wrenching decisions to ensure that I achieved the goal. At the same time, I made sure that my costs were below my peer group within the company and more importantly, below the average for my industry. I did this job for over 15 years. I tell you this story because I really believe you are off-track in both areas. Recent decisions made by this Board regarding salary actions have angered people in this town at unprecedented levels. I, like many others, was

pleased to see Mr. Belair and Dr. Keating forego their pay increases last year. We all cheered the action back then but somehow the raises showed up this year. I am troubled. This suggests we were either misled, lied to or even worse. Members of this Board made assumptions and more importantly decisions without understanding the implications. If you compare Weston's public sector jobs to those in the private sectors, I think you will find at least a 30% premium when you look at total compensation. That includes salary, employment costs and healthcare costs. When we were hit by the financial crisis in 2008, it became clear then that we had to begin thinking in new terms. It is no longer business as usual. You can't pick up a newspaper today or listen to a commentator and not hear about the looming crisis of unfunded public debt. At a time when private sector employees are receiving no increases, having their company's 401K contributions cut to zero, seeing their medical costs increase, and in some cases working shorter hours and reduced pay, you in your infinite wisdom see a different world – one of entitlement. I am at a loss of words to explain my discomfort with this team's actions. The cost of Weston's school system is already too high. The salary increases you have already approved, and the ones I fear you will approve for the upcoming contract, will only make this situation even worse. I understand that we need good schools; in part to maintain our housing value. But with all your oversight and your ever-increasing spending levels do we really have better schools than comparable towns? Do we really have higher house prices? No. What we really have is higher taxes. As I understand it, Weston has the highest cost per pupil in the State. With that distinction, can we at least claim that we have the best educated children in the State? I have seen too much anecdotal data and read too many articles in the Weston Forum to suggest we do not. As I said in my letter to you of August 3, your actions, which continue to increase our recurring costs, in this case, salary and post-employment costs, are detrimental to the total educational system we all want to protect for our children and I fear may very well result in teacher lay-offs. If this does occur, it is something you could have prevented by simply practicing fiscal restraint. Take a minute, look at the damage you are doing to the ongoing cost structure of the educational system and to the public trust which is rapidly eroding as evidenced by the number of articles in the Weston Forum as of late. Then ask yourself this question – is this something I want to happen on my watch?

Don _____
Eleven O'Clock Road

I have lived in Town 43 years and have seen a lot of disagreements and conflicts. Obviously, you are all very aware on the Board of the displeasure that a great many people in the Town have over the actions you have taken. I was at the Selectman's meeting and was surprised to hear the 3 members that I remember being there rationalizing this decision which they already knew was unpopular and trying to justify a stance which they need to re-examine. One person said that education is the only thing in the Town of Weston. I moved into town 43 years ago, didn't have any children and didn't have any children for over 15 years. Clearly, there was something else that brought me to Weston. I would like you to

re-examine this decision and realize that a great deal of the basis for it was based on some precedents that were taken several years ago, but that was then and this is now. The time is vastly, vastly different. I may not look like it, but I go back long enough so that I can remember the tail end of the depression and I will tell you in the 70 years since then, this is the closest most of you have ever come to experiencing something like that. You need to rethink that decision and I hope you would do so.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Board Motion RE: Compensation

MOTION: Whereas the Board has reconsidered its votes on July 26, 2010 to provide salary increases for the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Director of Finance and Operations and takes seriously the concerns raised by some residents of Weston, and

Whereas the Board understands the difficult economic conditions affecting the Town and its residents, and

Whereas the Board also recognizes that providing salary and benefits that attract and retain highly-qualified district leaders serves an important public interest for all of Weston by ensuring that the Weston Public Schools continue to provide a high-quality education, and the votes taken on July 26 were intended to promote that public interest, and

Whereas the increase provided to the Superintendent by the Board's vote on July 26 was part of a longstanding plan to increase the Superintendent's salary to be closer to the average of superintendent salaries in Weston's District Reference Group (DRG), and

Now therefore, it is MOVED that:

The Board apologizes for the legitimate concerns it caused the community by approving these increases at this time,

and it is further MOVED that:

The Board reaffirms its prior votes in light of the promises it made thereby in good faith to these important and valued employees.

Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, 2nd by Mrs. Stack. Mr. Schaefer asked the Board for discussion.

Mr. Bochinski:

This has been a long and deliberative process. I want to thank all the Board members for their candor in lengthy meetings that were intense at times, with some disagreements, but always civil. Most important, everyone had the district's best interests at heart.

Our attempt to be fair to employees that we respect and highly value led, to what we thought, was a rational conclusion for the well being of the district. But we overshot the mark in an attempt to create some parity with comparable districts. On reflection, some of these increases should have been modified.

In light of that, I have returned to my opinion expressed at our July 26 executive session when I suggested an alternative structure to the increases. An alternative that got very little support at the time. Therefore, I would like to propose an amendment to the main motion. It is very simple. The amendment replaces the last section beginning with “The Board Reaffirms” with the following:

“The Board amends its action on July 26, 2010 concerning the Superintendent’s salary by rescinding the salary increase that was approved that day and by providing in its place an increase of 4% effective July 1, 2010, and it authorizes its Chairperson to execute a revised contract with the Superintendent incorporating this amendment to its previous vote on July 26, 2010”. Motion by Mr. Bochinski, 2nd by Mrs. Harvey.

Mrs. Harvey:

I would like to echo Dick’s comment about thanking the members of the Board and the administration for a great deal of candor and civility and I want them to know how much I appreciate that. I also want to thank the public for their input over the past month. These remarks are personal, and do not imply any criticism of my fellow Board members and, except as expressly noted below, are not intended as a reflection of my views of the performance of any member of the administration. I greatly respect my colleagues’ views, but I disagree with those who would leave “as is” the previously approved raises for our central office administrators.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, all people make mistakes, but only those who are wise learn from their mistakes. My mistake, in this instance, was not voting with my original inclination. Notwithstanding the reservations that I expressed to my colleagues prior to the earlier vote about the magnitude of the raises in light of current economic conditions and an anticipated difficult budget process this year, I decided at the time to support what was a longstanding plan of the prior Board that the gap, in particular, between Mr. Belair’s salary and the average salary of DRG A superintendents should be narrowed.

As a publicly elected official, I am accountable to the community, which has high expectations for the school system as well as for the management of its costs. Critical to the fulfillment of the Board’s statutory duty to maintain good schools is the recruitment and retention of a first-rate leadership team. We are fortunate to have a team that is cohesive, dedicated and passionate about what it does, and one that has provided stability to a system that has

seen turnover at the top in a relatively brief period of time. It also has worked very hard the past couple of years to implement significant cost saving, reduction and avoidance measures and to present responsible budgets to the community.

As I have said on other occasions, as we work together to maintain the strength of the school system, we need to keep an open dialogue with the community and the other Town boards, and be responsive to community concerns. In this instance, taking into account all the factors that bear on this decision, I am in favor of awarding salary increases for this year to our central office administrators, but also believe that we must be conservative in light of prevailing economic conditions and reasonable economic forecasts. This leads me to the conclusion that a more modest raise (in addition to the 2% already required by contract) is more appropriate than the raise previously approved by the Board. However, in the spirit of compromise, as we move beyond the July 26, 2010 motion with respect to Mr. Belair, I have seconded this motion.

I agree with my colleagues that the salary gaps need to be narrowed for us to be reasonably competitive in our DRG. To accomplish that, as a middle position between my conclusion above and the original motion, I would also support a phased-in approach, although I also have concerns with that. Regardless of the outcome of this vote, and the outcome of the original motion, I recommend that going forward a compensation committee of the Board, (which is certainly common in other sectors, and in our case could be the Executive Committee), examine compensation options annually for central office administrators with a plan to bring recommendations to the full Board each spring for their respective contracts for the following fiscal year.

Finally, and this goes to the comments already made by the folks in the front row, I would like the community to know that I have asked the Communications Committee (of which I am a member) to review at one of our upcoming meetings our public comment process and that of other school districts in light of some of the comments we have received from the community this year, and to determine whether it would like to make a recommendation for change to the full Board.

Thank you to all those in attendance and watching on TV for your time.

Mr. Schaefer spoke to the amended motion. We voted a month ago on the salary increases. Certainly, the Board has spent over 5-6 hours in Executive Session and countless hours at home. This is my personal opinion – I am not speaking as a board chair. We voted for these motions and our intent was proper, our analysis at the time was proper, but again I think reflection is helpful. Sometimes you make a decision to change something and sometimes you don't. Since we did vote these increases in, what my thought was, due to the reaction and ponderings over the last month, to amend and defer over a

few years the increases so we are basically not going back on our word to the administrators. Either way, these people are absolutely directly responsible for having a budget of 0% at 1.64 with no substantive cuts in program and no increases in class sizes. They treat it like it's their own business and take their job quite personally. We want this team in place for the foreseeable future. In my mind, taking anything back from them and saying we will talk to you later after voting over a month ago I find problematic. At the same time, I find problematic leaving everything in place. It's a middle position I'm personally taking which I don't believe I have Board support on. That is fine – that's why there are 7 of us. We work things through and do it in a civil, respectful way. In terms of walking back the salaries with a finite number – Mr. Bochinski, you recommend we amend for the superintendent. I do have a problem with that because we already voted 7.5% a month ago and I'm not sure amending that by deferring a portion of that salary over a couple of years I have a problem with.

Mr. Bochinski:

Rules of meeting would tell us, and I believe we have had counsel on it, that rescinding a motion at the next regular meeting is perfectly appropriate. I think the Board has heard too much from me last Thursday about why I mind deferring compensation – I am extremely reluctant to do that. We evaluate our key employees on an annual basis and at that time decide on compensation and not go through a year with a future promise. I think we had very flawed judgment the past year and I would not want to see us go down that road again.

Mr. Wolf:

I would concur with Mr. Bochinski's comment regarding deferrals – it continues whatever is going on, for better or worse.

Mr. Schaefer:

It is not a good concept – I was trying to find a middle ground for this year. I could argue it on both sides – the public and Board. I did say at the Selectman's meeting that what we did was a done deal. And it pretty much is. You open up potential legal issues, which is something the Board would need to consider. As all of you know, the study of law and systems is a lot of gray and this is a gray area.

Mr. Schaefer: All in favor of the amended motion: Mr. Bochinski, Mrs. Harvey. All opposed: Mr. Wolf, Mrs. Levin, Mrs. Stack, Mrs. Uzenoff, Mr. Schaefer. (2-5)Mr. Schaefer returned to the original motion and asked for Board comment.

Mrs. Stack:

We've spent a tremendous amount of time reflecting on and discussing our decision of July 26, both as a Board and as individuals. We have rethought our decision.

Some have suggested that we view public comment as an intrusion, or an irritation. That is simply not the case. We are willing to listen to those we represent. Particularly for me as a new Board member, public comment is how we find out, from some of you fairly regularly, what's on your minds. We welcome that. And make no mistake, public comment is not limited to our monthly meetings. It extends to the grocery store parking lot, and sidelines on the ballfields, baseball, lax, football, and to our emails and phones, wherever we happen to be.

There was a very cerebral process behind this decision. Discussions about bringing the superintendent closer to the average of his DRG A counterparts began years ago. The history of what was said, the facts behind the decision and what has been relied upon cannot be discounted.

As a new Board member, I was informed right away, together with Denise, that this was on the horizon and that we would take heat. We knew we were inheriting this and that it would be a difficult and unpopular decision. But this decision was not cloaked in deception and there was no deliberate misrepresentation at any time.

Criticism of the Board's decision is an emotional response. We know people are angry. We are aware of the economic strain hitting us all. We are taxpayers too. And we are not invalidating how people feel but statements that the Board is not considering the economic climate underscore the fact that conclusions are based on inaccurate and incomplete information. The criticism reflects a partially informed public perception.

People have asked me ~ what do you find most interesting about being on the Board of Ed? It is the depth and breadth of what is covered. You simply cannot fathom what is done within our school system, until you have sat in on committee meetings, read the reports, read the weekly updates from the superintendent ... you cannot otherwise completely grasp the tireless dedication and commitment of these individuals, who are taking Weston schools to the next level and continually raising the bar.

Looking at the decision to give salary increases, and the facts it was based on, the decision itself is fair and wise. That's why I voted for it on July 26. It's the circumstances that make it bad. We know the economy is in dire straits. We cannot ignore the economy. But look at compensation in any organization. It's a tool, an incentive for performance, to get employees to

perform, retain talented employees and set a standard for potential employees down the road.

We need to ask ourselves: if we posted this job at its current salary level without a reasonable increase, would we get qualified candidates, highly qualified candidates, internally or externally, to apply?

Whether the economy tanks or recovers, if there's a certain threshold that we need to meet, to attract or retain qualified candidates, we need to figure out how to get our compensation to that threshold.

Part of what has made this difficult for me is that I was not part of the prior Board that made this decision. So as a point of principle, it is not my promise to keep. When I was elected to the school board, I jumped into a pot, eagerly. Not knowing how high the heat was about to be cranked up. But here I sit with my fellow Board members in this pot.

I find in this process a strong analogy to parenting, my other full time job. Will I second guess decisions made day to day? Perhaps. Will I always be assured of the outcome? No. Will I be perfect? Heck no. But I will take the best information available and make the best decision possible.

We need to think about the integrity of the decision itself. Not just this decision, but every future decision this Board makes. And equally important is the integrity of the decision-making process. This is a great opportunity for the Board to improve communication and the process.

There has been much discussion about trust and confidence, between the Board and the community. Between this Board and the other two Boards in town. But what about the trust between the Board of Education and the superintendent? And the other administrators? The people we have hired to lead Weston schools to the next level.

We are not focusing on the well-being of one or 3 or 5 individuals. We are working for the greater good of preserving our school system, the quality of which drives our property values. We want to ensure continuity of leadership. We want to stay competitive with attracting talent to: lead; motivate; and save money.

Lastly, this decision, in light of the public outrage and in the face of the mood of the community, reaffirms what we expect out of our superintendent as a leader. We will pay you to lead, and hold you to it. We have high expectations, which we have seen the superintendent sets for himself, and his staff. To decide otherwise and amend our action, who ultimately pays the price? The kids.

Mr. Wolf

Before I comment on the motion, I would like to look at the proposed increases in terms of actual dollars and the impact on the mill rate and ultimately, the taxpayers. I fully well realize that the proposed increase has raised legitimate concerns among the community. There is no question about that. We have been discussing community input for the 5 hours that Mr. Schaefer mentioned. We have our own counsel in terms of what we think is right and wrong. However this comes out, people in this room and people watching should and must know that this is not an arbitrary or capricious decision. Although people may disagree with it, I think many of us feel our conclusions, while made well-reasoned and openly, in our judgment, are the best for the long term benefit of the system. However, let's talk about the dollar increases. For point of reference, reducing the increase in half results in a 3.75% increase for the Superintendent, a 2% increase for the Assistant Superintendent and a 2% increase for the Director of Finance and Operations. Cutting the proposed increase one half will save \$14,500. The concern that the community has expressed, which is a valid concern, needs to be mitigated by the knowledge that what we are talking about of levels of increases I think the community would support – maybe ½ of that which is currently on the table, is reasonable and that the savings would be \$14,500. It is not a huge number for the benefit I feel to the system by keeping our good faith with the commitment we have made. I know the Board acted in good faith on a prior commitment which unfortunately triggered, in some instances with some people in our community, a situation that resulted in crass political opportunism. There was very little come-back to the Board asking to discuss this, talk about what was being done, what was the logic. We know the percentage is high, obviously you must have thought about it. What is it you would say so that I can understand? Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Some people, I think, made political hay out of this situation – a situation that is very meaningful to the school system for the current year and the future. It has triggered commitments from prior selectmen about arbitrated union settlements – they were not involved, they did not attend the proceedings and given their knowledge, based as First Selectmen for many years, know the arbitration process and should know that second guessing an arbitrated settlement from a position of ignorance is a fool's error. It was inflammatory and gave misleading information. The settlement's average was 2% for the arbitrated settlement – not 7.5%. While everyone agreed that performance is not the issue – everyone has said the administration is doing an outstanding job. However, rewarding performance, based on a promise, is a very important issue and should not be reneged. In terms of the savings practices this management team has instilled has resulted in substantial benefit to the taxpayers. We have documented savings in excess of \$2 million due to initiatives. You can say some of it is their job and they damn well should have done it. Some of it was creative, innovative, and the administration took a risk asking for money from the Board to achieve these things when there was no certainty that it would actually come to pass. That spirit needs to be nurtured and supported; it does not happen

by itself. As a Board member for many years, I can honestly say this is the best management team Weston has ever had. We need to do that which is necessary to keep that team in place. Honoring the commitment, in my opinion, is a necessity and further, we need to look beyond this year. Decisions made now have a long-lasting impact. From a personal perspective of I knew then what I know now (and we have all said this in our lives) things would have been done differently. But we are where we are and the best alternative is to support this motion.

Mrs. Levin

I would like to thank the public for coming here tonight. We appreciate hearing from you very much. Just a point of information that was alluded to before, not all Board members were present at the Board of Selectman meeting a couple of weeks ago which might be because you cannot make a meeting at a last minute's notice. As far as the member of the public who said not every member of the Board is available – we can be reached by phone or email at any time along the way. I would also like to thank the Board of Education for all their hard work and long hours of deliberation. Based on our original motion back in June that was passed, we did not vote 7-0 lightly. We had hours of discussion on this motion and since that date we have had many more hours of discussion. At this point, I do not want to discuss the merit of the motion passing and I think we are well beyond that. We have provided plenty of information as to why we voted that way that evening. My colleagues on the Board have already said whether they are for or against keeping the numbers intact – comments have been well-considered and well-spoken. The numbers are so small – to divide over all of Weston (maybe \$3 per person) is what is at stake here vs. the \$4 million the administrative team has saved our town (in taxes we are not paying). They are the most hard working, dedicated team; they treat our school system as though it is their own, it is their children – they take a very personal ownership. You can feel that whenever you speak to our administrators. You just need to walk in the door and you can hear that – the passion they have for our school system. So they take what they do very seriously and they do an excellent job at it. We should be applauding them for all they have done and done it creatively. They are always thinking what can we do? How can we make it better? You will see later tonight we are returning money from last fiscal year to the town and you will see we are already saving money this fiscal year because we do not need to hire a Kindergarten teacher we had anticipated hiring. They are always looking at our financial well-being as a town. For me, there is another issue at stake and this is one that is personal. I voted in this room in June on a motion and when I give my vote, it is my word. It is my promise to the town as well as a promise to the person whose salary it is. We deliberated long and hard before we voted. That is my word and I don't take that lightly. For me to go back on my word – I have not received any new material since that time to make me say this is something we didn't anticipate. That is not how I do things. I believe perhaps a hand shake and a promise are as good as a legal document, signed by witnesses & notaries. I never use the word I promise to anybody unless I am 100% sure I can deliver it. No one ever said joining this Board was going to be easy – this past month has shown this is a far from easy Board to be on. We make decisions every day –

some are more difficult than others, some less popular than others. But we always make them in good faith and we are always mindful of our constituents and we always base them on the best information. We also need to be mindful we are setting an example to the children we serve. We need them to learn by seeing us in action and to me, part of that is demonstrating the importance of keeping one's word and the acting with the ethical behavior they rely on us to teach them.

Mrs. Uzenoff

I have been engaged in many in-depth conversations, both with friends and fellow community members, over the last several weeks. I truly believe each conversation has strengthened my understanding and resolve to be responsible in my decision making. Most people have been passionate, concerned and interested in having a two way conversation. Most people have been respectful, but there have been some who have tried to intimidate and bully their way through conversations, and that is not OK. Having said that, reasonable people can agree to disagree.

There has been much misinformation, and mistruths in the discussions, repeated in newspaper articles and letters, and in emails that have circulated in this time period. There has been much comparison of the town and the schools in matters of business. Some comparison is valid, and some is not. A Board of Education is not able to function exactly like the town, we have specific obligations that bind us and guide us.

The Board of Education's primary legal responsibilities are to set policy for the district, and to hire a Superintendent who will lead the system in its visions and to its' goals. Appropriate compensation for the Superintendent, who is leading the system in dynamic and ground breaking change, is mandatory. We alone, as the Board of Education, have the responsibility for addressing this, from the ground up, and from the top down.

Contrary to some misstatements, the Superintendent's compensation is discussed on a yearly basis, and over each of the last four years, has been an issue of concern for two Boards of Education. Once again, the process for this compensation adjustment has been in discussion for several years. I believe that there is never a "good" time to make an adjustment for some people. It is however, one to which this Board has committed itself. Last year, we discussed and planned to execute it, but it was definitely not the right opportunity. We committed to completing this process this year. We were committed to being transparent in regards to the need and the intent. There has not been any adjustment to the salary of the Superintendent since the 2006-2007 school year, over 4 years.

We said this is what we needed to do. It was a commitment from the Board to the Superintendent and the system.

I believe that everyone, town government, parents, and community, have praised our budget process for being understandable, transparent and responsible. Nothing has changed, contrary to some opinion.

Equally disturbing have been the comments that the Board would be punished for its' actions regarding compensation, in the next budget season for 2011-2012. I would challenge everyone to treat the process with respect and open mindedness, and that the budget be judged on its own merit.

I believe that integrity and honesty are part of this process and everything I do on the Board. I believe that the health of this district, and ultimately of this town, revolves around our actions, and our responsible management of this system. With all due respect, I strongly support this motion as presented.

Mr. Bochinski:

My vote on the main motion only reflects a vote against the last sentence which I cannot join, but certainly the other parts and the concern for the town and the expression of apology – I would like everyone to know I do join that, I just can't join the last section on reaffirming.

Mrs. Harvey:

Thank you for pointing that out – my vote is the same.

Mr. Schaefer:

In concurrence and agreement with Mr. Bochinski and Mrs. Harvey, I agree with your comments. Myself personally, all the language I totally agree with, as I deferred myself earlier but not bringing the numbers back to a finite number because we did vote on it and made a commitment. Personally, I would have a problem renegeing on our vote and what we said we would do. I again, feel that while it is not a terrific concept to follow in the future, I still feel for this year to try and find a middle ground and defer a portion of the salary increases for our top administrators over a few years. Perhaps, again, if we knew then what we know now, we would have done that, but we didn't. Again, everybody is entitled to their personal opinion.

With that, if there are no other Board comments...all in favor of our main motion, please say yah – Mrs. Uzenoff, Mr. Wolf, Mrs. Levin and Mrs. Stack. All opposed: Mr. Schaefer, Mr. Bochinski, Mrs. Harvey. The motion passes (4-3).

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Opening of School Report

Mr. Belair provided an overview of what has occurred in the district leading up to the opening of the 2010-2011 school year. Staff training in advanced courses, Responsive Classroom Training and Inquiry Workshop, new curriculum in K-5 Language Arts, 6-8 FaCS and TAG. We are anticipating the middle school roof to be complete by the end of September, 2 boilers are being replaced and there is a new fitness room at the Middle School. A new

boiler is being installed at Hurlbutt as well as the performance of much preventive maintenance. All emergency systems have been checked. The maintenance and technology staff have been extremely busy – computer labs have been upgraded and the wireless network is ready to go. The district is embarking on a Strategic Plan process, which will begin early in fall. We have hired District Community Partners to review our Special Education services. We hope to have recommendations for the budget process. First Student has purchased all new equipment, including security cameras. The buses are safe and parents are encouraged to call the central office with any transportation problems/concerns and speak with Dr. Keating or Mr. Lustberg. I want to assure our students and parents that traveling by bus is extremely safe. We have worked very closely with First Student, our bus contractor, to ensure that all drivers are qualified, criminal background checks, and Motor Vehicle background checks are up to date. 18 of our 20 drivers from last year will be returning. Dr. Keating, in her Transportation Report, will share some opportunities for parents and students to meet their new drivers and it is important for parents, when there is a bus concern, in particular, regarding their child, that they contact the school administration immediately and if there are any concerns around any bus company employees they are to contact Dr. Keating’s office immediately.

2. Enrollment Update

Mr. Belair provided an update – there is a difference of only 3 additional students since the July meeting. There is no need to revise the staffing plan and the contingency teacher is still in place.

3. Staffing Update

Mr. Brey spoke briefly about the hiring process; each candidate provides a demonstration lesson and meets with Mr. Belair for the final approval. Long term subs have been hired and go through the same standards as teachers. Mr. Brey provided general background on the incoming teachers. Currently there are two openings due to resignations – a Math teacher at the middle school and Computer teacher at the intermediate school.

4. Transportation Update

Dr. Keating provided an update regarding the move to a Tier 2 system from a Tier 3 system, discussed riding time and the increase in ridership. Dr. Keating reiterated what parents need to do regarding complaints, and discussed driver behavior. With our new contract comes a “laundry” list of what needs to be reviewed. Fingerprints will be taken; motor vehicle violations are reported immediately to the bus company. Parents are invited to meet their child’s bus driver if there are concerns.

Mrs. Levin suggested a reporting procedure be put in place to address issues such as a broken down or late bus. Mr. Schaefer asked if the video and audio cameras will be available within the first quarter. Dr. Keating stated the 45-passenger buses were shipped today and it is anticipated the remainder will be

ready by September 30th. There is a 30 day turnaround. Cameras will be in both the front and back and there will be a GPS monitoring system as well. A discussion ensued regarding Board of Education and First Student procedures, as well as traffic patterns.

5. High School Class Size Report

Mr. Belair reviewed the high school class size report and spoke specifically to AP course enrollment, French 5 and Health. A discussion ensued regarding virtual classes, AP Chemistry, AP Biology and AP Physics, all of which will be discussed in Curriculum Committee meetings this year.

6. End of Year Fiscal Report

Dr. Keating reviewed the end of year fiscal report and spoke to the transfers of \$5,000 or more as detailed in the report and the return of \$252,606 to the Town.

MOTION: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approve the final Financial Report for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2010. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, 2nd by Mr. Wolf, all in favor. (7-0)

7. Deposit Account Resolution

MOTION: I hereby certify to Fairfield County Bank that, at a meeting of the Weston Board of Education organized under the laws of the State of Connecticut duly called and held on August 23, 2010, the following resolution was adopted: Resolved that: the Bank be designated as a depository of this board and that funds of this business deposited in the said Bank be subject to withdrawal upon checks, notes, drafts, bills of exchange, acceptances, undertakings or other orders for the payment of money when signed on behalf of this board by two of the following:

Hurlbutt Elementary School-
School Account, Hurlbutt
Hurlbutt Memorial Fund

Joanna Genovese, Principal
**Doreen O’Leary, Assistant Principal*
Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.

Weston Intermediate School-
School Account

Patricia Falber, Principal
Jason Bluestien, Assistant Principal
Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.

Weston Middle School-
School Account, Trust Fund

Kenneth Craw, Principal
Michael Bernardi, Assistant Principal
Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.

Weston High School-
School Account, Trust Fund

Lisa Wolak, Principal
Daniel Doak, Assistant Principal

Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.

Weston High School-
Athletic Fund

*Lisa Wolak, Principal
Mark Berkowitz, Athletic Director
Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.*

School Lunch Program

*Ann Adriani, Accounts Payable
Jo-Ann Keating, Dir. Of Finance & Ops.*

The Bank is hereby authorized to pay any such orders and also to receive the same for credit of or in payment from the payee or any other holder even if drawn to the individual order of any signing officer or tendered in payment of his individual obligation. The foregoing powers and authority will continue until written notice of revocation has been delivered to the Bank.

**Revisions since July 20, 2009 Resolution.*

Motion by Mr. Bochinski, 2nd by Mr. Wolf, all in favor (7-0).

8. Technology Equipment Lease Resolution

MOTION: Moved that the Superintendent of Schools may enter into a four (4) year lease agreement with TD Equipment Finance, Inc. for the purchase of technology equipment as presented in the district's operating budget. The Board of Education will fund the lease payments from its annual operating budget appropriation.

Motion by Mrs. Levin, 2nd by Mr. Bochinski, all in favor. (7-0)

9. Board of Education Policy/Regulations Review

Mr. Brey presented Policy 5131.2, Video and Audio Recording on School Buses for a first reading. Policy is based on the CAFE policy and other school district samples. Recordings are now kept for 30 days. A discussion will be held during the next Policy Committee meeting regarding an appeal process. The policy will be presented for a 2nd reading at the September Board of Education meeting.

X. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- 1. Next Regular Board Meeting:** September 20, 2010
- 2. Education Jobs Fund (Ed Jobs) Program Update:** We learned on Thursday, August 19, that Weston would be receiving \$55,463 from the Education Jobs Fund Program. I shared this information with the Board of Education Finance Committee on Friday and recommended that these funds be used to support the Social Worker position and that the Board of Education not access the funds from the Youth Services Internal Fund as had been agreed to by both the Board of Finance and Board of Selectman. That special Town fund could be used for another pressing Town need. It is my recommendation this evening to utilize those funds, since they can only be used by the local education agency and not

by the Town, to support educational services. I would like to communicate with both the First Selectman and the Board of Finance Chair indicating that the Education Jobs Fund be utilized for the Social Worker position and that the funds coming from the Town not be used.

3. Any Other Matters: RE: Stacy Lore

I received a letter from State's Attorney Cohen, that Stacy Lore would be appearing in court on September 2nd. Working closely with Board Counsel we have contacted State's Attorney Cohen and requested that a condition of parole be that Ms. Lore make restitution for her misrepresentation of credentials and services to the Weston Public Schools. This information will be shared at the September 2 hearing. In addition, I want to assure the Board and members of the community that we have a very thorough background check process in place for all contracted services. This was put into practice from the Human Resource Department during the 2009-10 school year and Mr. Brey, Human Resource Director, oversees this process.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **Curriculum Committee:** First meeting date to be determined.
2. **Facilities/Plant Operations Committee:** A tour of the middle school took place today – the skylights are a great addition. Tour of facilities will be open to the public on a Saturday morning during the Fall.
3. **Finance Committee:** Met last week and reviewed the final financial report – talked about technology and the Jobs Fund Program Next meeting Friday, September 17 at 8 a.m. in Dr. Keating's office.
4. **Policy Committee:** Discussed the audio/video policy – the next meeting will take place September 15 at 8 a.m. in the Central Office Conference Room. We will be reviewing the complaint policy at that time.
5. **Communications Committee:** First meeting September 7, 2010.
6. **Negotiations Committee:** Negotiations with the Weston Administrator Association continue.
7. **CES:** Nothing to report.
8. **Weston Education Foundation:** Nothing to report.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Bochinski, 2nd by Mrs. Stack, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Brighindi
Board Clerk

Approved by the Board of Education:

Chairman

DRAFT

Secretary