

The **SPECIAL BUSINESS/POLICY MEETING** of the Board of Education West Hempstead Union Free School District was called to order in the Chestnut Street Board Room on March 31, 2009 at 7:37 p.m.

PRESENT: Ms. Lotito, who presided, and six other members of the Board: Mr. Brita, Mr. Ejnes, Mr. Kaye, Mr. Mariano, Ms. Rilling and Mr. Whelpley. Also present were Mr. Hogan, Ms. Peluso, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Girolamo and members of the staff and community.

Under **SPECIAL BUSINESS** action was taken as follows:

Docket #8-277: Upon the motion of Mr. Whelpley, seconded by Mr. Ejnes, and carried by seven, the Board approved the Settlement Agreement and Release.

Under **POLICY MEETING** discussion took place as follows:

Ms. Lotito began this portion of the meeting stating that the purpose of the Special Policy Meeting was to discuss the policy on Open/Closed Campus. She stated the issue is a divided one and last July the Board had decided to amend the policy with the option of revisiting the policy to re-evaluate it and see if the change was working. Ms. Lotito then introduced Officer Steven Lincoln from the Nassau County Police 5th Precinct to speak on the issue.

Officer Lincoln introduced himself and discussed his background: He has been a member of Problem Oriented Policing (POP) for two years; a police officer for five years and works directly with schools and polices school zones. Officer Lincoln made a short documentary film with *Inside Edition* on the topic of open/closed campuses. The film showed students from three different highs schools leaving school campuses, with many being pulled

over for violations. He also stated that drivers in the areas of school zones pay little attention to the speed limit – it is not just students making mistakes and disregarding the law. Officer Lincoln informed the Board that the NCPD does not have a position on the policy and it is a privilege, not a right, for students. We must weigh the pros and cons from the community to make an informed decision.

The Board asked Officer Lincoln and Mr. Escobar, Principal of the High School, questions after the film was completed. The following are the Board members' comments and questions, with answers in parenthesis.

Mr. Brita: Are there more accidents during the school day or at night? (No statistics. Inexperienced drivers are the problem.) On academic eligibility – He feels if they are failing any subjects, they should not be allowed out. Right now they can be failing two classes and still leave campus.

Mr. Kaye: Children get senior licenses after 20 hours of practice time and maybe the police department can lobby to increase requirements on driving time and possibly raise the driving age. Did the officer watch West Hempstead student drivers and have there been any complaints of students not being orderly? (Very little and it was after school hours.) Do students leave campus with their vehicles? (No, if parked on campus they cannot leave and there are guards. It is also grounds for suspension if they do.) He commented that students are very good about getting back to class in 40 minutes. If the campus was closed, have we made provisions for lunch tables, etc.? Is there any place for them to go? (Mr. Escobar stated they have to increase servers, tables and areas for students to go. There are not many options.)

Ms. Lotito: Questioned Mr. Escobar on how many students leave the campus at any given lunch hour. (Average of 37 per period, depends on the period.) Has there been any feedback from parents about the closed campus? (Yes, some.) Have we closed campus due to

inclement weather? (Yes.) How many students do not have a 9th period class? (Around 70, but they require parental permission to leave. It is considered a study hall period.)

Ms. Rilling: How many cars had only one student in it? (Only one. Most have several students.) Do you use unmarked cars for this? (Yes, 80% of the time.) Is there a distinction between drivers and walkers that have permission to leave? (No.) Do students without cars get into other student's cars for lunch? (Yes.) Do students call the school if they are going to be late coming back from lunch? (Sometimes.)

Mr. Ejnes: Do you just "profile" students in your stops or all drivers? (No, they were not profiled.) Were there teachers stopped? (Yes, one. 20 to 30 cars are stopped each day with warnings or summons given out – up to the officer. They do call parents.) Do students make it back to class on time? (Yes, the majority do.) Is first period attendance good and has cutting classes been lower? (Yes, both are better.) How strict is the deadline for signing up for open campus? (Very strict.)

Mr. Mariano: Does he see any gang activity during lunch hours? (No, but after school at Halls Pond there is activity and they believe it is Hempstead residents.) If students are off campus and there happens to be a shooting in the area, how do we inform students to remain off campus? (We can't. District is looking into texting students.)

Mr. Whelpley: Qualified seniors can leave for lunch right now. Is this process working? (Yes.)

Mr. Hogan: In the *Inside Edition* piece how many people were driving recklessly? (Out of 25 cars, half violated a driving law – 50% breaking the speed limit – largely due to the fact of distractions and inexperience.) Since the inception of the new policy, is the percentage of violators down? (Yes, the volume is less.) Mr. Hogan noted to the residents that only 110 out of 240 students have permission to leave on their lunch break, with parental consent.

Questions from the audience were also taken.

In conclusion, Board members suggested that we create classes to help students in their future (college admissions, applications, guidance, etc.); possibly creating a senior lounge; tighten up rules on what constitutes community service and one failing grade no privileges. Consensus of the Board is to leave the policy as is for now. When budget constraints are improved, the District can look at options for students.

Docket #8-278: Open/Closed Campus Policy – No action to be taken.

At 9:45 p.m., upon the motion of Mr. Whelpley, seconded by Mr. Ejnes, and carried by seven, the Board adjourned to Executive Session, which ended at 11:50 p.m.

Kathryn Girolamo, District Clerk