

Connecticut State Board of Education
AD HOC Committee on J.M. Wright Technical High School
Meeting of December 22, 2009
1:00 p.m.
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown

Members in Attendance:

Beverly R. Bobroske, State Board of Education; Mark McQuillan, Commissioner of Education; Patricia Ciccone, Interim Superintendent of the CTHSS; Ceferino Lugo, Assistant Superintendent, CTHSS; Robert Lombardi, Assistant Superintendent, CTHSS; Rick Tanasi, President, State Vocational Federation of Teachers (SVFT); Richard Cavallaro, Principal, H. C. Wilcox Technical High School and President of the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA); Brian Mahoney, Chief Financial Officer, State Department of Education; Theresa Hopkins-Staten, State Board of Education; Bruce Ellefsen, Chief Fiscal Management, State Department of Education; James Chasse, Education Consultant, CTHSS; Peter Cerruto, Chief of Engineering, CTHSS; Ray Mencio, Unit Coordinator for Trades, CTHSS; Al Richmond, Consultant, CTHSS; Jack Condlin, President and CEO, Stamford Chamber of Commerce; Al Sanseverino, J.M. Wright Tech Advisory Committee; Michael Fedele, Lt. Governor, State of Connecticut

Note: Joshua Starr and David Levinson were absent from the meeting because they did not receive an invitation to the meeting.

Mrs. Bobroske called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner McQuillan extended the offer of Chairmanship to Mr. Condlin on behalf of the State Board of Education. Mr. Condlin accepted.

1. – 2. Welcome and Introductions

Mrs. Bobroske welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Lt. Governor for attending. Introductions of the members were made.

3. Review of the Charge

Mr. Condlin stated that the goal of the Ad Hoc Committee is to develop a plan for J.M. Wright Technical High School in Stamford and make it a flagship technical school in Connecticut. All acknowledged that it is important to note that J.M. Wright Technical High School is not closed, but suspended for 2 years.

Commissioner McQuillan reviewed the Board charge. Mr. Condlin stated that perhaps a phrase on page 3 of the Connecticut State Board of Education Resolution (X.A.), under "Analysis of Options" #1; "beyond a reasonable doubt" (handout) should be changed. Ms. Bobroske suggested it be replaced to read, "within reason".

Commissioner McQuillan indicated that the Ad Hoc Committee's agenda should be aggressive and move as quickly as possible to address the justification of expenditures to refurbish/rebuild JM Wright in accordance with an established the threshold of students.

To establish the feasibility of attracting 450-500 students who want to attend JM Wright, an analysis of enrollment would have to be completed. The objective would be to demonstrate that we will have a certifiable number of students interested in J.M. Wright. Our hope for that study would be a justification for opening JM Wright as a

“classic” technical high school rather than a middle college high school, but we continue to see Norwalk Community College as a great resource to help us get back on track.

Commissioner McQuillan and Lt. Governor Fedele stated that the Committee’s timeline regarding design and staffing should follow once the type of school is determined. It was acknowledged that leadership for J. M. Wright was critical to its success, and a careful search would be undertaken.

Commissioner McQuillan also stated that we need to have legislative commitment to funding for J. M. Wright. He noted that the \$90 million in bonded funds has not been released. Discussion regarding timelines took place. Ms. Ciccone stated once we get a clearer picture of the appropriate trades for J.M. Wright, we could establish a phase-in approach to design and build. Mr. Sanseverino asked for a list of all trade technology programs offered throughout the technical high school system. Ms. Ciccone and staff will provide that information for the next meeting.

4. Brief Overview of J.M. Wright Tech’s Status

Interim Superintendent Ciccone provided a briefing on the current status of J.M. Wright. Assets, while in need of repair, are being cared for; including both inside and outside of the building. Only the first floor is being used by security staff that is on the premises around the clock for building and grounds safety. Using only one floor is an attempt to minimize the amount of heat used. Many assets, such as computers, supplies, resources, books, etc. have been inventoried and sent to other CTHSS schools in need of them. Henry Abbott Technical High School in Danbury received the majority of J.M. Wright’s students and, therefore, received most of the moveable inventory. A Rack body truck, pick-up truck, snow blowers, etc. were also dispersed to schools with those equipment needs. Blue buses have been worked on as time and costs permit and are being dispersed for use at other schools as well. The CTHSS has maintained a relationship with the Stamford Parks and Recreation Department staff who are also watching over the area (Scalzi Park is adjacent to J.M. Wright). They are taking care of removing leaves, plowing, etc., and the city of Stamford is utilizing the back parking lot for evening Continuing Education classes which is helpful to all showing “signs of life”, around J.M. Wright. CTHSS C.O. staff will continue to monitor building costs for any possible reductions. Mr. Tanasi added that in addition to the handling of state assets, the suspension of JM Wright included a good plan for transitioning students and teachers.

5. Discussion

A brief discussion followed, regarding the need to have cooperation from local communities and to work with Stamford Superintendent and school district to guide future technical high school students. The members discussed the need to change the image of the school and the technical high school mission in southwestern CT.

6. Future Meeting Dates: Finalize Calendar

A proposed meeting schedule was proposed - at present all meetings are scheduled to take place on Mondays at the Connecticut Technical High School System Central Office in Middletown at 1:30 p.m. in conference room MCR-2.

January 11, 2010 – 1:30 p.m.

January 25

February 8

February 22
March 8
March 22
April 5
April 19
May 3
May 17
June 7

7. Other Matters

Ms. Ciccone stated that while we are waiting for a spring walk-through at J.M. Wright, the Committee could view two videos that show the interior and exterior of the building. Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked if the two videos might be placed on-line. Mr. Lombardi is looking into this possibility.

Future proposed meetings will begin at 1:30 p.m. on Mondays, two times a month. Everyone was asked to check their calendars and block the meetings in. We will work on moving the meetings back to start at 1:00 p.m. and strive for 2 hour meetings or less. Ms. Hopkins-Staten suggested conference call access to the meetings be made available as well.

Mr. Condlin stated he would bring more recent market study information to the next meeting and Commissioner McQuillan stated he would have an update on the identification of an enrollment study group.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Next meeting, January 11, 2010, 1:30 p.m., CTHSS Central Office, MCR-2

Minutes approved at the January 25, 2010 meeting