

**Connecticut State Board of Education**  
**Hartford**

**The Legislation and Policy Development Committee**  
Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 8:30 a.m.

**Committee Members**

Malia K. Sieve, Chair  
Karen Dubois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Bonnie E. Burr, Robert Trefry  
Martha Paluch Prou, and Elwood Exley, Jr.

**Minutes**

*Approved November 2, 2022*

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on June 1, 2022.

**I. Call to Order**

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order. Also present were Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Martha Paluch Prou Elwood Exley, Jr., Bonnie E. Burr, and Robert Trefry. In addition, the following individuals from CSDE were also in attendance: Michael McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; Keith Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer; and Laura Anastasio, Attorney, Legal and Governmental Affairs Office.

**Presenter:**

Laura Anastasio, Attorney, Legal and Governmental Affairs Office  
Kathleen Stowe, Chair, Greenwich Board of Education  
Karen Kowalski, Vice-Chair, Greenwich Board of Education  
Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent of the Greenwich Public Schools

**II. Preliminary Issues**

Ms. Sieve opened the meeting by noting that Item Four from the Agenda – “Review and Discussion: Remote Learning and Updated Definition of Attendance” – would be tabled but would be revisited at a subsequent meeting. Ms. Sieve asked for approval of, or any comments regarding, minutes from the Committee’s April 6, 2022, and May 4, 2022, meetings. Mr. Harris then moved, and Ms. Burr seconded approval of the April 6, 2022, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously. A minor revision in order to correct a scrivener’s error was suggested in the May 4, 2022, minutes. Dr. Dubois-Walton moved, and Mr. Exley seconded approval, as amended, of the May 4, 2022, minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. Review and Discussion: Greenwich Board of Education Status of Racial Imbalance Plan**

Attorney Anastasio introduced Dr. Jones, Superintendent of the Greenwich Public Schools, as well as Ms. Stowe and Ms. Kowalski, the respective Chair and Vice-Chair of the Greenwich Board of Education. Dr. Jones lead the presentation on the status of the Greenwich Board’s racial imbalance plan, focusing on what she said was the difficulty of transporting students from Hamilton Avenue School and New Lebanon School due to what would be long bus rides. Attorney McKeon, however, noted that Glenville School has an 11.02% minority student

population and Hamilton Avenue a 29.37% population and that according to Google Maps, the driving distance between the two schools is only nine-to-ten minutes. Similarly, it is only an eleven-minute drive from Hamilton Avenue to Cos Cob School. The Greenwich representatives nonetheless reiterated the driving times, adding that Google Maps do not take into account the number of bus stops and slow traffic. Attorney Anastasio asked why middle schools can be driven farther than elementary school students.

Mr. Exley inquired about housing developments, suggesting that that is where the disparities might lie. The Greenwich representatives disagreed. Mr. Exley asked whether the Town Planning and Zoning Board takes these racial imbalance issues into account. Superintendent Jones stated that she believes they do.

Mr. Trefry opined that some of the schools have made progress and asked the Greenwich representatives why they believe that to be the case. Dr. Jones noted that New Lebanon is a new, beautiful facility and is now a magnet school. The International School at Dundee is an International Baccalaureate school, and the Board would like to institute a similar program at a school on the western part of Greenwich.

When asked by Attorney McKeon about the schools that have an impending imbalance, Dr. Jones questioned the accuracy of the CSDE's numbers, adding that she was troubled by them. The Greenwich representatives did not offer any different numbers.

Attorney Anastasio noted that the recommended duration of school bus rides in Connecticut is an hour and that the length of the bus rides cited by Greenwich is less than that. Attorney Anastasio added that in some Hartford Sheff schools, students are on the bus for more than an hour. Mr. Exley asked about the Greenwich representatives about this. Dr. Jones responded that she is not the Superintendent in other such districts and that she does not believe that students should be on the bus that long.

Ms. Parisi asked whether New Lebanon School has a waiting list, to which the Greenwich representatives responded somewhat equivocally. Ms. Parisi further asked whether the attraction was that New Lebanon was a new building or the program at the school. Dr. Jones believes it is both.

Dr. Dubois-Walton asked where racial balancing falls on the Board's list of priorities, adding that she believes that integration is rarely the product of personal choice. Dr. Dubois-Walton noted that other districts have stated that they do not believe in the law, and their actions have reflected that. Consequently, she wanted to know what is the Greenwich Board's level of urgency? In response, Ms. Stowe, the Board Chair, stated that she had moved from New York City to Greenwich because of its diversity. She believes that the district is moving in the right direction and emphasized that this is "a priority" for the Board. Ms. Stowe added that COVID had slowed progress but that she as Board Chair personally feels it is important. Dr. Jones added that the district has been focused on healthy and happy children. The residents of Greenwich can see the diversity, and that only two schools are at issue, but that their numbers are moving in the right direction.

Ms. Sieve expressed her appreciation for the Greenwich representatives' sincerity, but she noted that the State Board is concerned that the proposed solution rests on housing

developments, which offers no guarantee of success. Ms. Sieve also observed that although the Greenwich representatives characterized the racial imbalance issue as limited to two schools, there are actually seven schools that are either racially imbalanced or approaching imbalance.

The Committee then discussed when Greenwich should return and decided upon six months. Although one year was first considered, Attorney Anastasio cited the importance of considering academic performance in the context of the racial imbalance. Ms. Stowe cited COVID as having an adverse impact, although Ms. Parisi noted that the academic performance numbers were the same pre- and post-pandemic. Ms. Stowe requested more time than six months, but Ms. Sieve stressed that the Committee is concerned about the students and wants to make sure that there is equity among the students. Mr. Norton expressed concern about Greenwich relying solely on housing development trend, adding that he does not believe that that will achieve the desired results. He indicated the need for a more creative approach.

Ms. Sieve asked the Greenwich representatives to return in six months with information about student performance and with some ideas in addition to potential housing developments.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

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