

**EAST HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOOD SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
EAST HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL BOARDROOM
35 WHEELBARROW LANE
EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06513**

**MONDAY, MAY 23, 2011
6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mrs. Vineyard, Mr. Hennessey, Mr. Palladino,
and Mr. Scalesse

ABSENT: Mrs. Kluth and Mr. Pompano.

ARRIVED LATE: Mr. DeNuzzo (6:05 p.m.), Mrs. DePalma (6:14 p.m.),
and Mrs. Maisano (6:10 p.m.)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Serio, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Lathrop, Business Administrator
Mrs. Acquarulo, Director of Pupil Services

1. OPEN MEETING

Mrs. Vineyard called the Food Service Subcommittee meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Boardroom at East Haven High School.

2. Discussion of Food Service Operation

Mrs. Vineyard stated that the cafeteria worker's would like to speak first. Judy Kaminski stated that the cafeteria worker's would keep their comments short on their concerns and feeling. They are not blaming them as they like working for the Board of Ed.

Diane Celentano, who works at the High School, stated there is fear about having no one to talk to if they were outsourced. That there is no problem with the High School or Middle School's menu but the Elementary Schools need help. There is concern of the affect it would have on the employees and benefits if outsourced. They would lose everything they fought for over the

years with contract negotiations. There is concern for the children and would like the Board of Ed to consider the children before profits.

Cathy Adinolfi stated that the children should be first as she loves working with them. She believes Whitson's is a nice company but the café worker's see everyday what the children eat and throw away. Her opinion is that too much of the same foods are served in a week and the same food every Friday is not healthy. They have received small portions and unfit food to eat. The elementary schools need help.

Valerie Zurolo stated she was the lowest on the totem pole and would like to continue working for the Board of Ed and believes Whitson's is a good service and fantastic to kids.

Eleanor Wnek stated that she has worked for the Middle School café for 25 years and feels they are a close knit family. They should not let someone else run the café; it should stay with the Board of Ed as they care more about the kids.

Judy Kamienski stated that everyone was being low key and not speaking about all the issues they were there to discuss. There were concerns about the impact on their contract if the Board of Ed outsourced their services. There would be a difference with a management company and is upset about what would happen to her and the kids of the town. She suggested that the Board of Ed come and visit the cafeteria's to see what was going on.

Mr. Scalesse stated that the children should be first and wanted to know if Whitson's were in other districts and who was responsible for the menu. Mr. Lathrop stated that Whitson's are in several districts and that the menu is approved by the State following the USDA guidelines. Whitson's motto is nutrition first.

Cathy Adinolfi stated that the menu was not consistent, too much one day and not enough the next day. The dark turkey was just as bad as the meat in the nachos which are too greasy. She feels that if she speaks up to the management company about this she will be fired. Mrs. Vineyard stated they would not lose their rights to speak with the principal's, Mr. Serio or the Board of Ed members and that Whitson's would answer to the Board of Ed. Mr. Palladino stated that the principal in charge of the building could act immediately upon any complaint. They have the right to call the Superintendent and complain and would be handled no matter who signed their paychecks.

Judy Kamienski stated that Whitson's had written her up twice last year. She feels that if she discussed the matter with the Superintendent the problem would have been solved without being written up.

Mrs. Maisano asked if they could take her through a day in the café. Cathy Adinolfi stated that the turkey is delivered in pre-sliced packages and are no longer being labeled. She is concerned with not being able to get more if needed; the portion control is not always enough for the roll; too many children eating bagels and more hot vegetable choices. Rosemary Fitzgerald stated that she makes hot vegetables daily. Mrs. Maisano asked if they were supplied with the correct amount of food daily and Cathy Adinolfi stated they were and sometimes extra if needed. Mrs. Maisano wanted to know who they call if they did not get the correct menu or supplies and if they help. Cathy Adinolfi stated that they would call Debbie at Whitson's in the High School café and she tells her that it is the portion control that the government allows and nothing could be added on. Eleanor Wnek stated that the Middle School puts cheese, lettuce and tomato on their sandwiches. Cathy Adinolfi stated that K-2 and 3-5 are different and should not have the same portion of food. **Mrs. Vineyard stated that the menus would be changed to be age appropriate.** Cathy Adinolfi will call Debbie for extra of what was on the menu and is told that it is too late or there is no driver and believes the service has decreased towards the end of the school year as they are not getting what they are asking for which she believes is due to the cost. Mrs. Maisano wanted to know if Debbie goes to each school and Cathy Adinolfi stated that she has only seen her twice to drop off food. Judy Kamienski stated that there is a Manager on site at the High School and a lead in the elementary school. **Mr. Lathrop offered to give them a copy of Debbie's schedule.**

Judy Kamienski is concerned that Whitson's wants to make money and may not be able to afford to keep all of them and would cut the staff and/or their hours.

Mrs. DePalma wanted to know how many meetings were held to discuss outsourcing bids. Mrs. Vineyard stated they had 3 meetings. Judy Kamienski stated they had met 3 times to create the pamphlet on bid specifications, menus and community service. Mrs. DePalma does not believe it would benefit the café worker's if the Board decided to outsource them.

Mr. Palladino stated that he would like to discuss this with the principal's. Mr. Prato stated that there were issues in the beginning of the school year that has been resolved.

Mrs. Manginelli stated that the café worker's are great; there is a redundancy of chicken dishes and tells them what the kids throw away.

Mr. Grimm stated that for the most part the kids like the food and have no complaints. They simplified the menu from 4 choices to 2 and provide bagels but would like to look at more variety. The portions are either too much or not enough and a lot of food is wasted.

Mrs. Johnson stated that they went from 20 breakfasts to 115 and said that this is phenomenal, there is enough food and they do a great job.

Mrs. DePalma stated that she has never heard any complaints about the lunch ladies. From the beginning of the year there have been communication issues and the café was put on the back burner. The café worker's knew what they were doing but some of the principal's were new due to the reconfiguration the café worker's didn't know who to tell their concerns to.

Judy Kamienski wondered if any one of the principal's asked the café worker's in their building what this meeting was about. Mr. Prato stated that he just received the fax that day. She went to the principal with a concern and the principal never came back to tell her the solution directly.

Cathy Adinolfi had requested from Mr. Serio and the Board of Ed in an email 15 minutes more for the second girl to have more time to prepare for the next lunch and her request was approved. She was told by Debbie that this was no longer possible and that Mr. Lathrop took the 15 minutes away. Cathy stated that she tries to resolve issues on her own and was told by Debbie that if she was employed by Whitson's she would have been fired for not going through her first. Cathy stated that she has many years of service and works tirelessly for the children. Mr. Lathrop stated that he had no idea that Debbie involved him in this matter. He requested to see this in writing and Cathy stated it was verbal.

Mr. Scalesse stated that the Board of Ed would get involved if Whitson's policies were affecting the café worker's in any way.

Rosemary Fitzgerald stated that she and Eleanor make the food for the High School and Middle School and would like to see some of the food they prepare to be filtered down to the elementary schools.

Karleen Astorino stated that if they outsource the Board of Ed would lose control of the worker's. The kids would lose out as most of the worker's live and pay taxes in East Haven and genuinely care about the kids. They are afraid of losing their job and Whitson's hiring someone outside of East Haven. Mr. Palladino stated that the Board would be keeping an eye on Whitson's if they decided to start firing the staff they would be investigating the circumstances. Judy Kamienski stated that once they go from the public sector to the private sector the Board of Ed would have no say in anything. Mr. Palladino stated that the nine Board of Ed members would not renew their contract if the worker's were being fired.

Mrs. DePalma stated that they should be having more Food Service meetings. Mr. Serio stated that maybe they should set up a committee like the High School had where students had an input on the menus which made them happy. He stated that when he speaks with Whitson's about his recommendations that he gets a good response from them. He would be happy to make a list of concerns and would like to move forward for the next school year with a menu everyone feels comfortable with. The size of the roll for the Kindergarten kids is what concerns him and not how many slices of turkey. **He would like to set up a meeting in another type of forum. He suggested it could be late in the afternoon with himself, Judy Kamienski, Kristen Vineyard, John Prunier and John Gersbeck from Whitson's and also include the principals.** He knows a lot about nutrition and feels comfortable helping to resolve the issues.

Mrs. Vineyard asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

Mr. Palladino thanked the café worker's.

Mr. Lathrop stated that he would ask John Prunier and John Gersbeck from Whitson's to come back in to the meeting as he asked them to step out so the café worker's would be able to speak freely. (6:55 p.m.)

Mr. Lathrop then read the highlights of the 200 page proposal from the 2 page handout called Food Service Bid Subcommittee, Bid Summary; Whitson's dated May 24, 2011 by Anthony R. Serio, William Grimm, Jason Lathrop, Louise Siminausky, Diane Celentano, Judy Kamienski and Kristen Vineyard.

Mr. Lathrop also read to the Board of Ed members the Memo dated May 23, 2011, Food Service Outsourcing Analysis. Mr. Lathrop stated that there were 2 proposals, full outsourcing or to remain BOE employees and with Whitson's bid the Board of Ed would break even if they outsourced to them in all the

expense lines except the Food Service Fund which he is forecasting an additional 27,264 for repairs and maintenance on equipment not included in this bid.

Mrs. Maisano questioned the certification requirements of our current food service director and it was confirmed that Debbie is not certified. She would like to know why we don't currently have a food service director who has a Registered Dietician certificate. Mr. Lathrop stated that in the current contract it was not specified that we have one. John Gersbeck stated that if we wanted one now it would be of no cost to the Board of Ed. The Board of Ed discussed the sugar cone trays vs. the Styrofoam trays that we currently use. The sugar cone trays are more expensive. The Board of Ed discussed the guaranteed return if they didn't use the sugar cone trays of \$9,997 and the guaranteed return if they didn't use the sugar cone trays and if Whitson's used our truck there would also be a savings of \$31,744.

The Board of Ed discussed the writing off its existing capital investment of \$32,952 (POS) with savings of \$10,984 per year. Mrs. Maisano wanted to know how the POS was being depreciated. John Prunier stated that he brought this information with him tonight to share with the Board of Ed and that the current contract was signed before this Board of Ed was in place.

Mr. Grimm stated that they put the proposal together for the Board of Ed to vote whether they want to outsource the food service operation or not. Mr. Lathrop stated that the committee had discussed at length the proposal and everyone in the group was comfortable with it.

Mrs. Maisano and Mrs. DePalma thought that this meeting was going to be about whether or not they should outsource. **Mr. Lathrop stated that he would provide the original proposal for the committee.**

Mrs. Maisano wanted to know why the Worker's Comp was higher. Mr. Lathrop stated that it was a forecast of what they may need to pay out if anyone else is injured and that there is currently one part time person injured. He stated Worker's Comp included medical treatment, rehab and is forecasted by actual claims received. If outsourced the employees would not be able to contribute to the MERF fund as they would no longer be Board of Ed employees.

Mr. DeNuzzo stated that we forecasted \$83,000 in medical and \$33,000 in Worker's Comp and wanted to know if we outsourced would these amounts go back into the General Fund and what the difference would be. Mr. Lathrop

stated that the difference would be \$110,000 and that the Board of Ed would no longer be responsible for the café worker's medical or Worker's Comp. He believes this would be more reason to outsource. Mr. Palladino stated that the bottom line number should decide to outsource as it would cost \$110,000 less a year. Mrs. Maisano stated that she wasn't sure that she could believe these numbers were correct as some of this number is a forecast and not many forecasts have come true. Mrs. DePalma stated that she still wanted to go through the General Ledger line by line so she has no faith in the numbers either. Mr. Lathrop stated that the General Ledger through March is on the Board of Ed website. Mrs. DePalma stated that they should be supplied the General Ledger at the Board meetings and should not have to go the website.

Mrs. Maisano wanted to know what happens to the employee that is on Worker's Comp once they are a Whitson's employee. Mr. Lathrop stated that it was a contractual interpretation and would be something the attorney could answer. The café worker's lawyer was there and responded that it was up to the companies policy on people out on Worker's Comp. They have to treat all employees equally and that there is job protection only for so long.

Mrs. Maisano is concerned that the employee's jobs are at risk if they become employed by Whitson's, and if they lose their job they would have no protection from the Board of Ed any more. Mrs. DePalma is concerned that the cafeterias might lose the community of people that currently live and work in this town. Mr. Palladino requested the specifics for the benefits of these employees if they become Whitson's employees. John Gersbeck stated that this was not his area of expertise; they would have to speak with Human Resources. **Mr. Palladino asked if someone from Human Resources would be able to attend a Board of Ed meeting so questions could be asked.** Mrs. Vineyard stated that the café worker's would remain at the same pay grade for the contract duration of one year. Mr. Palladino stated that they would look at renewing the contract after one year and would take into consideration if Whitson's let any of the employees go during the contract and would be able to rehire those worker's. Mr. Palladino stated that the Board of Ed, Superintendent, and Principals would be keeping their eye on Whitson's. Cathy Adinolfi believes they would be throwing them to the wolves. Mr. Palladino stated they are trying to work on getting the first day of school running a littler better with less. There are so many laid off people in the country, people losing jobs that they owe it to the taxpayers to do the best job they could. They are not trying to get rid of people just to do what is best for the town. For example, Central Office is down two people and they are getting the job done with fewer personnel. Judy Kamienski knows they have

guaranteed positions and wages but feels everything else they fought for over the years in their contract will be gone.

Mr. Lathrop stated that on Tuesday's Agenda was the possible approval of the Food Service Bid, and that the current contract was null and void. A new contract would need to be made by July 9th as it has to be sent for review and signature to the State of Connecticut. **Mr. Palladino requested someone from Human Resources from Whitson's attend a Board of Ed meeting to discuss the benefits.** John Gersbeck stated that he would give Mr. Palladino the director's phone number after the meeting.

Mrs. DePalma is concerned about the numbers and needs proof they are correct. The café worker's are near and dear to the East Haven people and she has reservations about outsourcing them. She needs to hear how the café worker's will be protected and what is in it for them and the children and does it benefit the taxpayers. They have the need to hear and see it and not through an email. These are the people that work with the children and do not get paid for anything near what they do for them. John Prunier stated they have a job to do, a business to run. In the district they have great team members and they are not treated unfairly. They could renegotiate if they wanted to stay unionized as they currently have unionized employees.

Mrs. Maisano wanted to know what would happen to the worker's when their contract ran out. Mr. Lathrop said they would be laid off and retained by Whitson's on September 1st and they would be forced out of their current benefits as stated in their contract. Mrs. Maisano wanted to know where the number was in this figure if the worker's were laid off and what would the savings be. What would the Board of Ed have to pay out for unemployment if they were eligible?

Mr. Lathrop stated that the worker's have the right to collectively bargain as a group by Federal law once Whitson's hires them. Mr. Palladino stated that they would be guaranteed a job and discussed how the café worker's do not get paid through the summer but do retain their benefits. Cathy Adinolfi is concerned that they would lose their accumulated sick days and medical. Judy Kamienski stated that as union president she fought over the years for benefits such as paid holidays, accumulated sick days and seniority which they would lose as there is no guarantee they would retain these benefits only their position and wages. **Mr. Lathrop stated that early retirement terms could be checked into.** He also stated that six employees were retiring. Mrs. Maisano wanted to know the cost of paying out the accumulated sick days, unemployment rates and retirements which are not in the bottom line figure.

Mr. Lathrop stated that they could explore these costs. Mr. Serio stated that they were here at this time to discuss and bring things to the forefront in order to make a decision. Mrs. DePalma stated that they would not be able to vote in Tuesday's meeting as the accurate numbers were not being provided.

John Gersbeck stated that they had taken over Hamden's worker's six years ago. Mr. Lathrop stated that the Hamden Board of Ed had saved \$110,000 dollars the first year. John Prunier said when they took over Hamden they treated the worker's like team members and treated them well. John Gersbeck stated that they know all the ladies have passion and energy for what they do which could not be matched. They are not an evil part of the future and with the correct information they could make an educated decision. The café worker's have a position for next year and the benefits need to be worked out. Judy Kamienski said none of them would mind working for Whitson's but they do not want to be let go from the Board of Ed as they like working for them. John Gersbeck said they would get holiday pay and take team members out for the Holiday. They work hard while the kids are learning and they are the kids' favorite people.

Mrs. Vineyard motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting.

3. Executive Session

There was none needed this evening.

4. Regular Session

There was none needed this evening.

5. Any other business that might rightfully come before this subcommittee.

There was no other business this evening.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Palladino and seconded by Mr. Hennessey. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

**KRISTEN VINEYARD, CHAIR
FOOD SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE**