

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

Minutes

Town Office Building, Lower Level Meeting Room

7:00 p.m.

Audio Recording: Yes

Notes Taken: Yes

Members Present

Michelle Doucette Cunningham

Herb Arico

Elena Testa

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Liz Perry

Members Absent

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

First Selectwoman, Erika Wiczenski

Members of the Public

Meeting was called to order at 7:01pm.

Present to Speak

No-one present to speak.

H. Arico made a motion to include a new item to the agenda between “Present to Speak” and “Communications”: “Executive Session for the discussion of a document protected by attorney-client privilege and review of a pending FOI legal claim”, and invited Board Attorney Craig Meuser to attend.

E. Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			

D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

Executive Session - Discussion of a Document Protected by Attorney-Client Privilege and Review of a Pending FOI Legal Claim

Executive session began at 7:04pm.

Executive session ended at 7:57pm.

Communications

No communications.

Superintendent Reports

a. Science Vacancy at HMS Filled

Superintendent Stevens informed the board that Jessica Blanchfield was hired to fill the vacant science position to join the 7th and 8th grade team. Ms. GC left the makerspace position which Ms. Rychling will be filling, but she stayed in the science until they found a replacement. Ms. Blanchfield recently finished her teaching placement at Tolland Middle School and has outstanding references. She will be joining the staff on January 27.

Superintendent Stevens reminded the board that the math position is still open, but is currently being filled by the interventionist.

b. HMS Boiler Update

Superintendent Stevens informed the board that the new boiler, which was approved by the Board of Finance, has been received at EMCOR. It is an oil-fired hot water boiler with a 10-year warranty from light-off and a 1-year labor warranty from EMCOR. The boiler has a 40-year life expectancy if it's maintained. The old boiler will be removed piece by piece and EMCOR estimated the new one will be up and running in a few weeks.

Financial Report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens presented the budget summary as of January 14, 2020 with the following notes:

Program 1 appears as a negative percent due to a grant-adjustment offset planned to be applied to Center School. Because of need, the state required the grant be applied to Hall School instead. The grant money was received and it's all the same pool of money, but it affects how the line items appear.

Program 2 appears high due to the above reason, but that money has been spent. The 2 vacant positions have caused some savings.

Program 3 appears to have money remaining, but that is not the case. 2 outplacements were budgeted, but 4 students were outplaced. Tuition and transportation for those are significant expenses that haven't been billed yet. Special Education costs go up and down and are hard to predict.

Program 4 is waiting for the diesel reimbursement from Region 19, which comes every couple months. This year, some group bus stops were created for elementary and middle school routes in hopes of creating some savings. Business Manager Donna Latincics will be comparing the amount of diesel used in September and October of 2018 to the same months in 2019 for numbers on the savings.

Program 5 has money for supplies such as band-aids and ice packs remaining.

Program 6 is the same as where it was in December and is drawn down throughout the year.

Program 7 is flat and will be 0 once all the bills have been paid.

Program 8 went down about \$7,000 since December due to the payment of bills for PowerSchool (student operating system which stores grades & student information) and the school messenger system ("digital backpack" used to notify families and staff in emergencies).

Program 10 has had no change as most of the benefits are settled, although it doesn't reflect the benefits for the new hire.

Superintendent Stevens indicated that he met with Donna Latincics and that they will be meeting with the Special Education Director to look at the need to freeze the budget or if that deficit can be covered by savings elsewhere. H. Arico inquired whether \$23,000 remaining in Program 8 is enough for the rest of the year. Superintendent Stevens confirmed that it is a standard amount for this time of the year and should be fine as long as there are no emergencies. That line includes items such as fire alarm testing, supplies for bathrooms, and cleaning materials.

New Business

a. Approve Minutes of November 12, 2019 Meeting

Attachment #2

A. Grosjean made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 12, 2019.

E. Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			

M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

b. Approve Minutes of December 10, 2019 Meeting

Attachment #3

M. Cunningham made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of December 10, 2019.

E. Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

c. Approve Board of Education 13 Month Regular Meeting Calendar Attachment #4

Superintendent Stevens informed the board that due to a statute for the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), board policy 9321 requires the board to file a 13-month calendar with the Town Clerk's office by January 31st, and that no regular meeting may be held sooner than 30 days after such filing. He pointed out that the February 11 meeting on the calendar, which is the traditional second Tuesday of the month, is sooner than 30 days. Discussion was held on the proposed meeting dates.

A. Grosjean made a motion to adopt the 2020-2021 Willington Board of Education calendar as submitted; removing February 11.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

d. Approve Budget Workshop Calendar

Attachment #5

Superintendent Stevens presented a proposal for budget workshop meetings scheduled around many other town committees due to his required presence representing the Board of Education at those meetings during budget season. The presentation to the Board of Finance will take place on February 27. Discussion was held about availability and protocol of budget workshop meetings.

H. Arico made a motion to accept the Budget Workshop calendar as amended.

E. Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

e. Approve Willington Public Schools 2020-2021 Calendar

Attachment #6

Superintendent Stevens presented the proposed calendar, which aligns vacation and short days with Mansfield, Ashford, and Region 19. It includes 182 student days and 188 teacher days, per contract. The first day of school, September 3, is later than usual due to Labor Day being later.

There was discussion about making the start date earlier, but E.O. Smith High School is replacing their roof and wants as much time as possible, so the calendar matches their start date.

H. Arico expressed that he feels very strongly that Veteran’s Day should not be a school day, but recognizes that surrounding towns have school as well. D. Cook stated that she understands that the schools did special programs to honor veterans, but heard numerous veterans express frustration because school was held that day and wants to be respectful to veterans and how they feel. E. Testa said that she also heard from people in and out of town who were upset that schools are dropping the celebration by going to school that day.

E. Testa made a motion to change November 11 - Veteran’s Day to no school.
D. Cook seconded the motion.

M. Cunningham inquired about the other regional towns and received confirmation that they are now all going to school on Veteran’s Day. A. Grosjean mentioned the celebration held last year and stated that she feels it is teaching children more about Veteran’s Day by bringing the celebration into the schools. Discussion was held regarding the celebration, possibility of a half day, and logistics for families if local and regional calendars differ. E. Testa brought up the complication that adding a day off would push the end date of school past June 18 without makeup days for snow.

Superintendent Stevens spoke about the power of students introducing their veteran and stated that the veterans who came into the schools for the celebrations said it was the best Veteran’s Day experience they’d had. T. Anderson expressed that most likely kids with the day off are not spending Veteran’s Day honoring veterans unless they have one in their family, but when they are in school, they are having discussions about it. D. Cook expressed that she would prefer staff members who are veterans to feel they must work that day if they feel that they need the day off.

E. Testa withdrew the motion.

M. Cunningham made a motion to approve the Willington Public Schools 2020-2021 calendar as presented.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico		X		
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			

T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

f. Review Board of Education Committee Assignments

Discussion was held regarding the size and scope of committees. There can be no more than 3 board members on each committee; each person will serve on 1 to 2 committees. H. Arico suggested he would appoint committees based on board member interests. Superintendent Stevens referenced board policy 9130 “committees of the Board of Education shall be established at the first regularly scheduled meeting in December or as needed by a majority vote of the board.” Board members asked that descriptions of each committee be provided to them, as well as a list of who has served on each committee previously. Voting was tabled to the next meeting.

- i. Finance:**
- ii. Curriculum:**
- iii. Policy:**
- iv. Facilities committee: all**
- v. AD HOC: Wellness, Negotiations, Clubs, Security**

g. Review Capital Improvements Project Requests

Attachment #7

Superintendent Stevens presented the proposed Capital Improvement Project (CIP) priority map draft with expanded details for the board’s consideration and discussion. He explained that CIP looks at a 5-year plan and that he placed projects in those 5 years balanced by need. When looking at the spreadsheet, items highlighted in green in the left column are new items. Projects with amounts in the “grant reimbursement” columns, if approved by the state, can receive that amount back. Projects have also been noted with priority level as required to turn in to CIP committee. A column was added for the board’s information regarding whether the specific need and cost would be eliminated if a new school was built. The description document includes items that have been approved and are in-progress, which are crossed off. He grouped similar projects into the same years (e.g. CES & HMS Fire Panels) for the possibility of savings in only having to contract once.

Superintendent Stevens reminded the board that projects on this map do not come out of the Board of Education budget; funds for these projects are approved by the Capital Improvement Committee. When the Board of Education is ready to spend the money on these projects, it

requires going to the Board of Finance and Town Meeting. He continued that the items in Year 1 are the projects that will be discussed by the CIP committee this year. If approved, those are the only projects that will happen; projects in Year 2 and farther out are on the map for planning purposes only and would be revisited in subsequent years. Superintendent Stevens provided the following additions to the notes as he presented the line items:

Center Elementary School:

CES Item 5 - Upper Wing Window Replacement: Labor is reimbursable, not materials.

CES Item 8 - Upper Wing Air Conditioning: The lower wing has air conditioning in the library and hallways, but the upper wing does not have that. He wouldn't suggest doing that project without replacing the single-pane windows (CES Item 5), so they are in the same year.

CES Item 9 - Pave Upper Parking Lot: There have been mixed messages about the feasibility of paving this lot.

CES Item 10 - Seal Lower (main) Parking Lot: The lower parking lot replaced number of years ago, but significant cracks have formed. If they don't fix it now, they'll get worse.

CES Item 11 - Playground: would eliminate the need and cost to maintain wood chips each year. If ever installing a new playground at Center School, that would be the time to do it, but it is not a major priority as the wood chips can continue.

CES Item 12 - Standby Generator: Safety measure. If there was an ice storm and no-one can get to the building to run the current portable gas generator, this would kick in. Hall School has one.

CES Item 13 - Exhaust Fans: Identified by EMCOR in their survey. One has already been replaced; the estimate covers the remaining 13.

CES Item 14 - Clock and PA System: The clock and PA are one system. Beside the inconvenience of clocks showing different times, the PA system needs to work well in case there is an emergency that needs to be communicated quickly. Estimate includes replacing every unit.

Hall Memorial School:

HMS Item 1 - Roof: in progress; on agenda as a separate item.

HMS Item 2 - Heating Unit Replacement: Exactly the same as the one already approved for Center School. It is in Year 1 due to potential savings by putting out one bid to do both.

HMS Item 4 - Boiler Replacement: \$60,000 per boiler. One boiler failed and the new one has been approved and will be installed in February 2020. Parts from the failed boiler can be used to keep the remaining boiler running, but eventually it should be replaced.

HMS Item 6 - Sidewalk Replacement: Left picture is an exit from the school and someone could be hurt. Right picture is from the front entrance where there is a 2 inch crack in the connected slab. Due to the pitch of the slab, they can't cut the bad section out and re-pour it.

HMS Item 7 - Pave Parking Lots: Should be highlighted green as it is a new project. The project would include the parking lot across the street as well as the driveway and lot behind the school.

In conjunction, Public Works would like to improve the public road that goes behind the upper parking lot as it is in poor shape.

HMS Item 8 - Locker Replacement: Keeping an eye on the surplus store at UConn in case an opportunity to replace these for free presents itself.

HMS Item 9 - Front Entrance Repair: Project was approved years ago but it is unclear why it did not happen. Includes pillars and architecture at front steps as well as trim that goes all the way across the front of the building and around to the back. It is in Year 1 due to the upcoming planned centennial celebration. It is structurally safe, but there is some rot in the bottom of the boards where water has come down.

HMS Item 10 - Sidewalk/Landing Ramp Replacement: This ramp is part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. It could be due to crumbling foundation or incorrect installation. It is still structurally sound, but needs to be replaced.

HMS Item 11 - Gym Curtain: Lower priority because there is not currently a need to hold 2 Physical Education classes at once.

HMS Item 12 - Elevator Modernization: Modernization is not a full replacement, as it salvages the long-lasting, working parts, but brings it up to current standard, hydraulic elevator. You could replace the panel and electronics and not modernize the entire box, but that still costs \$100,000. It is currently working, but if it were to break and they couldn't find parts for it, it causes a major issue, as it's used by students every day to access all levels of the building. The elevator is serviced/inspected on a yearly basis.

HMS Item 13 - Boiler Room Work: If replacing the boiler, these things should also be replaced. The circulator pumps at CES have been replaced. This is a need that has been identified by EMCOR.

HMS Item 14 - Fire Panel: More money than CES because it's a larger building. Work replaces the panel and smoke heads.

HMS Item 15 - Air Handling Units: Large one has been replaced in the gym already. There are no air quality issues as of now.

Willington Public Schools (WPS) District:

WPS Item 3 - Building Committee Consultants: Hiring would go through the Board of Finance, but it needs to be in the CIP plan. It is only reimbursable if the town does build a new building. The number in there is \$100,000, which would be the amount the school committee would need to say within when hiring consultants.

WPS Item 4 - Land for New School. The number comes from an estimate by Friar. It is also reimbursable as long as you build a new school. CIP literature requires this to be noted somewhere.

WPS Item 5 - New Prek-8 School on New Site: CIP literature requires this to be noted.

Superintendent Stevens noted that there are projects not included on this list. They include updating the lower wing air conditioning unit at Center School, installing window film for security at both schools, ADA accessibility to the upper wing at Center School as the old lift did not meet code, and installing double vestibules to enter both buildings for security. Superintendent Stevens welcomed the board's thoughts, questions, and feedback. Discussion on the importance of items was held.

The board discussed that the plan approved at this meeting will be given as a recommendation to the CIP committee, but that committee can and does make changes and move items as they see fit. It was noted that CIP has supported necessary school repairs recently.

D. Cook stated that she thought it would be prudent to put the building committee items to referendum for the townspeople to vote on whether they wanted the building committee to move forward with investigation, as \$100,000 is a large number. Superintendent Stevens explained that a referendum is held on the decision to pursue building a new school once there is an actual dollar amount identified by hired consultants. He explained that in order to spend approved CIP funds, the Board of Finance recommends the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting, and that is when townspeople have the opportunity to decide whether the funds should be spent.

E. Testa expressed surprise that an exploratory committee would cost money, stated that \$100,000 is a lot of money to spend if there is a chance it won't be reimbursed, and proposed calling a Town Meeting. M. Cunningham explained that the presented document is a planning tool and does not actually authorize any funds being spent. Selectwoman Wiecenski added that what CIP approves for Year 1 goes to townspeople for input and approval as part of the budget process. D. Cook expressed a desire to separate the building committee funds from the rest of the CIP plan so that the other necessary projects aren't overlooked and voted down as part of it.

The cost and procedure to acquire land and its inclusion on the plan was discussed. T. Anderson stated that the townspeople asked for updated information and numbers in order to make an informed decision on whether to build a new school and that funding the exploratory committee is the only way to find out that information. A. Grosjean suggested adding a subtotal line to the CIP plan to show the \$153,565 requested for directly improving schools separate from building committee funds. E. Testa suggested removing the building committee numbers from the plan due to insufficient information. Superintendent Stevens explained that removing the dollar amount completely would leave the building committee unable to operate and would essentially reverse the prior recommendation from this board to explore the possibility of building a new school.

M. Cunningham made a motion to accept the Willington Public Schools CIP Priority Map with 3 edits - 1) split the \$100,000 allocation for building committee consultants equally between Year 1 and Year 2, 2) to move the \$750,000 land allocation to Year 2, 3) to move CES Clock/PA system update from Year 3 to Year 2.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

E. Testa made a motion to divide the motion to 3 separate items.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham		X		
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson		X		
A. Grosjean		X		
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

M. Cunningham made a motion to split \$100,000 to \$50,000 in Year 1 and \$50,000 in Year 2.

H. Arico seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook		X		
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa		X		
L. Perry		X		

Motion passes.

Clarification was sought by board members as to who voted which way. H. Arico changed his vote.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico		X		
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook		X		
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa		X		
L. Perry		X		

Motion does not pass.

M. Cunningham made a motion to move the \$750,000 land for the new school from Year 1 to Year 2.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa		X		
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

A. Grosjean made a motion to move the Center School Clock/PA system update from Year 3 to Year 1.

M. Cunningham seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			

T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

M. Cunningham made a motion to approve the Willington Public Schools CIP priority map for the year 2020-2021 as amended.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa		X		
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

h. Request Board of Selectmen to Hold a Town Meeting to Patch School Roofs

Superintendent Stevens stated that he attended the Board of Finance meeting to relay the board’s request to patch Hall School and put a 10-year roof on Center School. The Board of Finance voted instead to patch both buildings for \$16,900. Superintendent Stevens will attend the Board of Finance meeting on Thursday to find out the direction they’d like to go. On December 16, Selectwoman Wiecenski and Superintendent Stevens met with state officials regarding the building committee and upcoming projects. It was made clear that the town can submit a grant application for full roof replacement reimbursement, but should not plan to be considered for that reimbursement if considering a new school.

Superintendent Stevens continued that the leaks need attention as soon as possible, so patching both roofs is the fastest route to a temporary solution. The \$16,900 is coming out of CIP funds that were approved for the roof replacement project. The patching company won’t guarantee that all leaks will stop; they patch the issues they can see.

D. Cook expressed the opinion that if patching is all the Board of Finance will approve right now, then the board should move ahead with that instead of taking more time to go back to the Board of Finance again.

M. Cunningham made a motion to recommend the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to authorize up to \$16,900 be taken from Capital Reserve for the patching of both Hall and Center School roofs.

E. Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

H. Arico made a motion to add an item to the agenda: “Vote to approve the minutes from a special meeting on December 17, 2019.”

No second was made.

Present to Speak

Peter Latincsics thanked the Chair and the entire board for their service to our community and the long hours they’ll be putting in.

Selectwoman Wicewski summarized that there was lots of discussion at this meeting about CIP and how they figure out the plan. She encouraged members of the Board of Education to attend CIP meetings and be part of the conversation. She said that there has been representation from the Board of Education on that committee in the past; there are currently no open seats, but as they come up, she encourages a member to consider sitting on the committee, which is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. There is no conflict in being on that committee as well as on the Board of Education. The CIP committee currently meets every Wednesday in the town office building.

George Debski thanked the Board of Education for their efforts and serving on the board. He inquired as to why the minutes from a lawfully held meeting by this board on December 17, 2019 were not posted or put on the agenda, which makes it look like that meeting does not exist or hold. H. Arico replied that the board met with the attorney and decided to uphold the Chair and Secretary positions as appointed by the Board of Selectmen and that the issue is in the process of being resolved. E. Testa added that a compromise has been found in this conflict and the board will choose a Vice Chair together at the next meeting. H. Arico continued that resolving the conflict via working together to reach a compromise is in the best interest of the town, the community, and the board, and that the board will be able to operate together and prevent litigation. He concluded that the board doesn't want to do anything to hold up the educational process for the children in town and that the important items for the schools brought before the board takes precedent. Mr. Debski thanked those from both parties again for their time and making the huge commitment

Jan Castle spoke to a few positive things happening at Center School. The 4th grade winter concert will be held at 6:30pm tomorrow night, including short instrumental numbers, and invited anyone interested in coming. She continued that Center School is starting a program on Friday called "Looking for the Good". This will be a 2-week concentrated program on character and a sense of gratitude from the students. There was a grant to get some of the materials.

Board Comments

H. Arico thanked all the board members for their efforts this evening. He said everything will be fine down the road and the board will try to work together. There will be differences, but it's not personal.

M. Cunningham apologized for texting during this meeting, but said she has a family health emergency out of state which made it necessary.

E. Testa stated she is grateful the board had the meeting.

L. Perry said that serving on the board will be a learning process, but she is all in.

T. Anderson stated that she hopes the board will continue to uphold the goals for student growth and success and remember that the board has always strived to continue its commitment to students.

M. Cunningham made a motion to move into executive session to "discuss a personnel matter: employee request for emergency leave" and invited Superintendent Stevens to attend.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			

M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

Executive Session

Executive session began at 10:21pm.

Executive session ended at 10:28pm.

M. Cunningham made a motion to approve the employee request for unpaid emergency leave for Robin Watts through the end of the school year.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			
T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.

H. Arico made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:29pm.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	X			
M. Cunningham	X			
D. Cook	X			

T. Anderson	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
L. Perry	X			

Motion passes.