

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://willingtonct.zoom.us/j/85806451162?pwd=UEh5TmVPNUpuK01GT0hEUFQ1VnkzQT09>

Meeting ID: 858 0645 1162

Passcode: 4yM9YP

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1. **Call to Order**

Chairman Arico called the meeting to order at 7:05PM

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Arico led the pledge of led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Present to Speak**

No one was present to speak.

4. **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Arico stated all children deserve an excellent education and we as a board adapt to ensure they receive it. We have not spent as much time on curriculum and goals this year as in the past due to our focus on Covid etc. It is up to the board to be effective leaders which is a massive job that deserves a lot of credit.

5. **Communications**

No Communication.

6. **Superintendent Report**

a. **Enrollment update**

Superintendent Stevens stated we currently have 398 students enrolled. Two students are outplaced. Center School has 201 students with 158 students learning on-campus (79%) and 43 students learning remotely (21%). Hall School has 195 students with 148 students learning on-campus (76%) and 47 students learning remotely (24%). We are seeing a trend of students returning to on-campus learning.

We have 18 students that moved to homeschooling because of COVID-19. I anticipate those students will return when the pandemic is no longer impacting schools.

Chairman Arico asked if parents who homeschool need to communicate with the school.

Superintendent Stevens replied they are supposed to notify us and sign off that they will be providing their child's education but we are trying to stay connected to these families because some if not all plan to come back after Covid.

Chairman Arico asked if these students will be on course when they return.

Superintendent Stevens replied that is entirely up to the parent and when they do return we will meet them wherever they are. They have to give us at least 7 days notice.

b. Willington Emergency Communications Task Force meeting update:

Superintendent Stevens stated you appointed me as your representative to the communications task force and we had our first meeting on September 16. This initial planning meeting was to review some general information about the purpose of the committee. Goals for the committee will be developed and community needs will be identified. We briefly discussed different alert systems that could be utilized in an emergency, the need for protocols for usage, and educating community members regarding those protocols. This committee was formed in response to the tragedy that occurred here in Willington last May.

c. Reopening Committee Meeting update

Superintendent Stevens stated our School Reopening Advisory Committee met last week to review several topics and to prepare for an update to our plan. The utility staff are working out tremendously, though two were just hired to fill paraprofessional openings we had so we are looking to replace those utility staff.

The committee approved a shift for student cohorts to be able to share items in physical education class and during recess with proper hand washing before and after. This will allow students more options at recess and will open learning opportunities in physical education. Items will not be shared beyond a cohort without proper cleaning or quarantining. These are the only areas students will be able to share items. This decision is supported by the Department of Public Health as the main transmission of the virus is through respiratory droplets, not touch.

The committee also discussed adjustments to loading buses, school picture day, and other school-related topics. Lastly, I wanted to inform the Board that we received 500 adult masks from a joint Connecticut State Department of Education and the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. This initiative was supported by the National Guard to help with the distribution of the masks. One of our parents, Corey Brennan, who is a Senior Airman in the Air Force helped with the distribution and delivered our masks to Center School for us. Thank you to him. We received a notification today that we will be receiving child masks next week.

Chairman Arico asked if we are taking temperatures when students enter school, and with all the precautions we are taking it seems odd to open up the school for elections and possible contamination.

Superintendent Stevens replied we are not taking temperatures because the accuracy is low and the Department of Health did not support this idea. As far as the election is concerned they will be restricted to the gym and cafeteria and everything will be disinfected as it is when students are there, we will also have the ventilation operating at full capacity.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked about the earlier conversation about giving parents some ideas about safe activities to do with their children after school.

Superintendent Stevens stated it had not been brought up again by the committee but Jason

Phillips has been running Zoom clubs.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated perhaps next time the reopening committee met they could come up with a plan.

d. CIP project for HMS boiler room work

Superintendent Stevens stated the boiler room work at Hall School has been completed by EMCOR. They rebuilt two heating pumps and replaced the mixing valve. The final touches were completed yesterday since we didn't have staff in the building and they needed to turn off the water. We now have one new boiler with functional heating pumps and mixing valve at HMS. The only other CIP project for 20-21 we have is the column work at the front entrance to Hall School.

e. Umbrella donation

Superintendent Stevens stated thanks to Jennie Arpin, Human Services Director, organized an umbrella drive for our students. People donated umbrellas for students to be able to go for a quick walk outside for a mask break on rainy days. Thank you to Jennie and the townspeople who donated for their support!

f. Teacher Evaluation Committee update

Superintendent Stevens stated we submitted a waiver for our teacher evaluation plan for the 20-21 school year. As a result of all the COVID-19 related adjustments we will be modifying our evaluation plan for the school year. The CT State Department of Education provided flexibilities to districts to best meet the needs of our students. Adjustments were made to the number of evaluations required. The CSDE also recommended teacher and administrator goals be focused on social and emotional learning. This waiver is only for the 20-21 school year, and teachers will not receive a summative rating.

g. CES and HMS roof projects

Superintendent Stevens stated I shared a timeline with the board of education earlier today. I realize that people may believe that we missed an opportunity to install the roofs during the summer of 2019, but that is not true. You can see the referendum that contained the roof project was approved in May, 2019. After that approval, the board would have needed a town meeting to approve the funds, hire an architect, submit plans to the state, receive approval from the state, hire a construction company, and complete the work. That may have been unclear to some folks. It takes months to complete the state approval process alone. We were on track to do the roofs this summer, but the pandemic hit and we were unable to hold meetings. Now that we have been back in school for 5 weeks and moving along, I will be putting my attention to the roof projects for completion in 2021.

Elena Testa asked if we could consider hiring someone for this project and if Superintendent Stevens could get some information on that for the next meeting.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes.

7. **Financial Report**

a. 2020-2021 Budget update

Attachment #1

- Program 1. Maintenance is over approximately \$20,000 in projects for reopening
- Program 2. No grant funds have been applied yet
- Program 3. Outplacements have no been billed yet
- Program 4. Region 19 diesel charge of about \$14,000 for the year not shown
- Program 5. Approximately \$12,000 over in supplies
- Program 6. Professional Development funds not spent
- Program 7. All encumbered
- Program 8. Approximately \$20,000 over in cleaning supplies
- Program 9. Bills for school choice not in
- Program 10. Subs not used

b. 2019-2020 Budget final

Attachment #2

Superintendent Stevens stated I emailed a copy of the final 19-20 budget to you this afternoon with budget notes in it for each program to allow for a transparent accounting of funds associated with each program.

c. Grant applications

Superintendent Stevens shared he had applied for the several grants. Some of these are annual grants and some are new as a result of COVID-19. He reviewed each of the grants.

i. Title 1

Superintendent Stevens stated this grant provides funds to improve the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. There must be evidence of serving students who qualify for free and reduced services. These dollars show an offset in the Center School Program 1 and Hall School Program 2 as a portion of a teacher at each building.

ii. Title 2

Superintendent Stevens stated this grant is being used for professional development and curriculum leadership at both Center and Hall Schools. There must be evidence of serving students who qualify for free and reduced services. These dollars show as on offset in program 6.

iii. Title 3

Superintendent Stevens stated the purpose of Title III is to help ensure that English learners attain English language proficiency and meet state academic standards. We join the EastConn Consortium to utilize Title III EL funds and use it to purchase decodable text.

iv. Title 4

Superintendent Stevens stated Title IV is intended to improve students' academic achievement by increasing access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

v. Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)

Superintendent Stevens stated this grant provides districts with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools. We are waiting to see if any of our Coronavirus Relief Funds are denied as this funding source is more flexible. At this time, this fund is helping off-set the cost of the utility staff. This grant totals around \$60,000.

vi. Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF)

Superintendent Stevens stated the Coronavirus Relief Fund is part of the CARES act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) for school districts to safely reopen and assist with costs associated with responding to COVID-19. This grant was for approximately \$200,000 but it's not clear if we are eligible for that entire amount yet.

1. COVID-19 reopening expenses

Handout

I was going to provide a handout this evening, but I realized after submitting the grants at the end of last week that it may make more sense to have the update for you once we know what has been approved so we can show the funding source for each item. I do not have a handout prepared at this time and would like to have this on the November agenda.

d. WPS Food Services Budget final 19-20

Attachment #3

Superintendent Stevens stated this report is generated out of the business office. You can see the year end balance for food services is \$16,462. We do still have the \$5,000 buffer from the town in the account which we plan to move out this fall. We need to ensure we have enough money in the account for payroll and to order food, which is why we increased breakfast and lunch prices. We are getting hit with bank charges because of the Wordware program and will be investigating methods to avoid those charges. We are going to do an equipment inventory as well for this program as we have had to pay for several repairs including the CES freezer and coolers at both schools.

8. New Business

a. Approve minutes of September 8, 2020

Attachment #4

Tracey Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2020 regular meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Donna Cook stated she would like to have item 8a on the minutes changed as she had abstained the approval of those minutes. Also on the first paragraph on page 8 mental care should be changed to medical care. On page 10 paragraph 6 procurious should be precarious.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated on page 9 paragraph 3 expertees should be expertise.

Chairman Arico stated these are all friendly amendments so we can go ahead and vote on the approval with these changes.

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

Motion passes.

b. HMS ventilation and CES ventilation projects

We need to consider requesting the BOF to fund ventilation projects at Center and Hall Schools. Center School has two classrooms that need ventilation in the upper wing. The cost to complete this project would be around \$8,000. Currently, we have windows open with fans mounted to exhaust air, but this will not work once it gets colder. Improving ventilation in schools is one of the safeguards for the health and safety of students and staff during the pandemic.

Hall School is more complicated, and significantly more expensive. The wing built in the 1950's does not have any fresh air intake or exhaust upstairs or downstairs. Again, we have windows open with fans in them to improve ventilation. We have researched the most cost effective solution which we believe to be the installation of individual Energy Recovery Ventilators in each of those rooms. It would require creating a hole in the wall of each room and installing an individual unit in each room. Installing one or two main units on the roof would be significantly more expensive because we do not have any ductwork installed. The cost of this project is estimated to be over \$100,000. My recommendation is to request the Board of Finance for \$135,000 to complete these projects which would need to go to town meeting.

Chairman Arico asked if they will be able to finish before the cold weather.

Superintendent Stevens stated they are working as fast as they can.

Tracey Anderson asked if we can pay for these projects partially from the non-lapsing fund and partially with grant money.

Superintendent Stevens replied we will use every dollar of grant money possible but we aren't sure how much will be given to us.

Elena Testa made a motion to request \$135,000 from the Board of Finance for the HES and CES ventilation projects.

Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.

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

Motion passes.

c. Draft BOE Goals 2020-2021

Attachment #5

Superintendent Stevens stated you received a copy of the goals from last year, which I would like to extend.

Ann Grosjean stated they could add the items regarding school maintenance projects which they discussed tonight to the third goal.

Donna Cook stated I am worried about simply extending our previous goals, I feel like we aren't preparing the children to be successful members of society with these goals.

Superintendent Stevens stated we also have our mission statement and portrait of a graduate which focus on preparing students for the future.

Donna Cook stated these goals don't seem attached to giving kids real life skills.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated we typically spend hours in a retreat discussing our goals for the year. I think we need to focus on getting students through these uncommon times.

Elena Testa stated I agree the goal is to make it through this unprecedented time but maybe we need to adjust the goals for this year specifically to mirror what is happening.

Tracey Anderson stated we can use the same goals and possibly adjust how we are going to go about reaching those goals.

Superintendent Stevens stated it may help everyone to see some of the measures we have built into the administrative side of the goals such as setting up time frames for when we want to complete each goal.

Donna Cook stated it is hard for me to picture without having an example in front of me. I'm concerned about seeing test score declines.

Superintendent Stevens stated usually it is the board's job to think big and come up with these goals and then my job is to take my team and see how we can achieve these goals. I can come back to you with some of the admin goals if that is what the board wants.

Ann Grosjean asked if they would like to make the motion to approve the goals they have tonight.

Chairman Arico stated I'd like to vote on them all together.

Elena Testa stated perhaps we should have a special meeting to work on the goals.

Donna Cook stated I would like to see the concrete information in front of me so I can better understand where the teachers are heading.

Elena Testa stated we might want to add the items discussed and have the goals reflect this year's problems to put the parents at ease.

Chairman Arico suggested we put a hold on voting on the goals and address this at the next meeting.

9. **Old Business**

a. Discussion of WPS behavioral and mental health services

Superintendent Stevens stated we did talk to CHC about dates for them to come back for another presentation and to answer questions. The other things I've heard a desire to have are representatives from Ashford and Stafford who use CHC as well as teacher representatives and a discussion about a curriculum such as Second Step.

Elena Testa asked if we could have people present at the next regular meeting.

Tracey Anderson stated I felt the last special meeting was very helpful and I don't think we should rush through discussing these items, I would prefer a special meeting.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I would also like a separate meeting.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would like to hear from teachers and hope to have a special meeting.

Donna Cook stated I would prefer not to have CHC come back and hope the meeting lengths don't get torturous.

Everyone agreed to hold a special meeting on November 4th.

b. Board of Education Committees

Attachment #6

Chairman Arico stated because of the pandemic, committees have not been meeting as often or at all. We need to find some committees for Laura to participate in.

Elena Testa stated Laura could take her place as an alternate to the Finance Committee.

Laura Rodriguez agreed to take that spot.

Elena Testa stated Laura could also take her place on the Policy and Curriculum Committee. Laura Rodriguez accepted the position.

10. Present to Speak

No one was present to speak.

11. Board Comments

Chairman Arico stated I would like to thank the fire department for allowing the school to lease the area on their property for use as outside learning space. I would also like to thank Phil and his staff for continuing to persevere.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would like to thank Phil and his staff for the amazing job they are doing as well as the reopening committee, and Corey Brennan for getting the masks. I would also like to thank Jason Phillips for his dedication and Jennie Arpin for the umbrellas. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone for allowing me to participate in the committees within the BOE.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I would like to reiterate what Laura said.

Elena Testa stated I would also like to echo those before me and hope everyone continues to stay healthy.

Tracey Anderson stated I also would like to echo everyone and add a thank you to Donna and Phil for giving us more information on the reports.

Ann Grosjean stated I would also like to thank the teachers who are juggling both in person and online teaching. Their work is really appreciated.

Donna Cook stated I would like to add a thank you to the Kindergarten teacher who was kind to my neighbor. A little kindness goes a long way.

12. Adjournment

Chairman Arico adjourned the meeting at 9:38PM

Next regular meeting November 10, 2020