

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Audio Recording: Yes

Video Recording: Yes

Notes Taken: Yes

Members Present

Herb Arico - Chairman

Elena Testa - Vice Chairman

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Secretary

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Laura Rodriguez

Members Absent

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

First Selectwoman, Erika Wiecenski

Director of Pupil Services, Marcia McGinley

Members of the Public

Chairman Herb Arico called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Chairman Arico led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present to Speak

No one was present.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Arico stated I would like to thank the staff for all of their efforts over the past months during the pandemic. We realize how difficult it has been.

Communications

Chairman Arico stated board members received a letter from the teacher's union, WEA.

Superintendent Report

a. Enrollment update

Superintendent Stevens stated we have had some shifts in our enrollment with new students moving into the district, some students have moved to fully remote, and some students are returning to on-

campus learning. Our current enrollment at Center School is 205 students with 166 students learning on-campus and 39 students learning fully remote. Our current enrollment at Hall School is 196 students with 139 students learning on-campus and 57 students learning fully remote. We had 5 students at Center School move to remote learning after our two week remote period, while 11 students at Hall School moved to remote learning. We currently have 24% of our students learning fully remote.

b. COVID-19 school operations

Superintendent Stevens stated the last month was extremely busy with 4 COVID related incidents. We had 2 positive COVID cases and 2 close contacts identified. The contact tracing that occurs for each of these cases is extensive and very time consuming. We moved to remote learning for 8 days, starting November 23 through December 4 because of a significant shortage in staffing. The first week was the week of our Thanksgiving break and Monday and Tuesday were minimum days for parent teacher conferences which occurred through Zoom. I would like to send a heartfelt thank you to our staff for all their efforts this year. We announced a move to remote learning on Saturday, November 21 and opened our buildings to our staff on Sunday if they wanted to make any adjustments to student supply bins for parent pickup that evening. We had a significant number of teachers who volunteered their time on Sunday to pack student bins, an act that demonstrates their sincere dedication to the Willington Public Schools. Families picked up bins at both schools on Sunday night to start remote learning the next day. We continue to monitor staffing and regional cases with hopes we can continue to stay open for on-campus learning.

Superintendent Stevens stated we have installed all the air purifiers we ordered for Hall School in each of the 12 classrooms. The ventilation project at Center School to extend the exhaust system to the last two classrooms was completed.

Superintendent Stevens stated I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the Public Works department for installing our carports. This was a large task and saved the board of education over \$16,000 that a local installation company would have charged. Public Works has a couple minor tasks remaining to complete at Hall School.

c. Willington Emergency Communications Task Force meeting update

Superintendent Stevens stated the task force met on November 18 and had a presentation for a communications product called Everbridge. The committee will be meeting tomorrow night to compare the two companies that we have had presentations on, discussing what questions to ask residents for the types of emergency communications they expect, and we will also be reviewing surrounding town notification protocols.

Chairman Arico asked if Everbridge is a product the town would be getting or the school.

Superintendent Stevens replied this would be a product for the town but the board could decide to utilize it as well if beneficial to the district.

Chairman Arico asked if there are two separate messages that could go on the system one for the town and one for the school system.

Superintendent Stevens replied we would collaborate as we do now. Our system now only sends messages to our students and their families.

Chairman Arico asked if the cost would be shared.

Superintendent Stevens replied I don't believe it is shared right now, the cost is going to be on the town unless we decide that we want to use this system.

d. CES and HMS roof projects update

Superintendent Stevens stated the request for proposals for an owner's project manager is on the department of administrative services website. We expect all proposals to be in my office in a couple weeks. My timeline was off because we have to include a question and answer period and time to interview contractors as part of the process. The current timeline allows the board the ability to make a decision at the January board meeting and have plenty of time for a summer installation. Your committee for the building committee is the entire board, however, do you want to do an Ad hoc committee for this or do you just want to use the finance committee? When all of those proposals are in you're going to want to review them, and if you want to interview any of the groups you could do that and then make a recommendation to this board in January.

Ann Grosjean asked about reimbursement if we are to build a new building is there an issue here with that.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes when you apply for these grants we have to sign off that there is the expectation that these buildings will be used as schools for I believe 20 years. I have asked about this and DAS has responded that the majority of your payments are done after ten years so it wouldn't be a large amount of money you would have to pay back. The BOF supported the projects either way and thought it was still a valuable use of the funds.

Donna Cook stated a concern that the decision is getting pushed too far out.

Superintendent Stevens replied it would probably only take one meeting to interview then you could present your thoughts at the next BOE meeting on the 12th.

Donna Cook asked if we could agree on a drop dead date.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes, my drop dead date is December 23rd. I can let everyone know as soon as we have all the applications in and look over them the general dollar amounts and some quick details.

The board agreed to have the Finance Committee meet and review the applications.

The date for the Finance Committee meeting was set for January 4, 2021 at 6:00PM.

Financial Report

- a. 2020-2021 budget update
Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens stated we were hoping to have this balanced out, however with the new software and Covid complications it's been a challenge.

Superintendent Stevens stated the title one grant for program 1 just came in, it will be applied to that account adding \$35,000 to it. A piece of that grant will also be applied to program 2. There is a salary shortfall but we expect this number to come back due to the CRF grant. Program 3 is where the outplacement tuitions come in which still have not been billed. There is also a salary shortfall there. The IDEA grant was applied and we may see savings in the summer school

support program. Program 4 has a shortfall for diesel but we may see a savings because we have not had sports. Program 5 is short \$10,000 but will be replenished with the CRF funds. Program 6 we do have some people who are attending conferences but there are not as many offered as usual. The stipend positions were just encumbered so some of that money will come out of there. The utilities have all been encumbered, and the custodial supply line that is short is all supposed to come back with the CRF funds. The system wide support is not all encumbered as of yet. Program 10 has not been balanced out yet. I am estimating we are going to be putting about \$125,000 back into this budget from the CRF grant.

b. COVID-19 reopening expenses

Superintendent Stevens stated we have updated the reopening cost worksheet that I've been using. At this point, all of the grants have been approved and we are meeting this Friday to start reimbursing the district with grant funds for items that have already been purchased. I had asked the state for additional funding for ventilation, but when we adjusted our plan to air purifiers I thought the money would be moved to another district. However, I am working with the CSDE grants department to determine if we can utilize some of those additional funds for other items.

2. New Business

a. Special education review

Marcia McGinley, Director of Pupil Services stated the Individuals with Disabilities Act or IDEA is the federal law that ensures all children ages 3-21 have access to a free appropriate public education that is designed to meet their unique needs in order to prepare them for further education or live and work independently. The law requires that the education takes place in the least restrictive environment alongside non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. The special education process begins with a referral by either a teacher, an interdisciplinary team, a parent, or a community based provider. An initial referral meeting takes place which is made up of the parent, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a school administrator, and related services staff. The planning and placement team (PPT) reviews the referral to determine if comprehensive educational testing is needed to determine if the student has a disability which requires special education services. Evaluations may consist of achievement testing, cognitive testing, language evaluation, fine or gross motor evaluation, and social and emotional scales. Students may be referred for further testing beyond the in district evaluations. Parents must give consent for evaluations to be conducted and the PPT will meet within 45 days of the referral to review the evaluation, determine if the student has a disability which qualifies for special education services, and develop an individual education plan (IEP). Annually the PPT will meet to review the student's progress and update the IEP. Every three years the student is re-evaluated to determine if they continue to qualify for special education services.

Marcia McGinley stated special education services in Willington consist of the following required services:

academic instruction provided by special education teachers - three full-time teachers at Center School and three full-time teachers at Hall School; occupational service through a district part-time Occupational Therapist; physical therapy services through district a part-time Physical Therapist; social/emotional services provided by counselors - one School Social Worker at Center School and one School Counselor at Hall School; one district School Psychologist; two district board certified behavioral analysts (BCBA) contracted through EASTCONN one day per week; and, paraprofessional services for both academic and behavioral supports to students on an individual basis - ten Paraprofessionals at Center and twelve at Hall School.

Marcia McGinley stated we currently provide special education services for 84 students. They are identified for services under one of the following categories; learning disability, dyslexia, attention deficit or hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD), speech impairment, hearing impairment, emotional disturbance or other health impairment. Out of the 84 students, 6 students attend parent choice programs at local magnet schools which are overseen and funded by WPS. Three students attend outplacements which are determined by the PPT. Students who move into the district who are receiving special education services continue to qualify for services and a transition PPT is held shortly after their enrollment to ensure that services remain in place. The program 3 special education budget currently remains on target except in the outplacement tuition line. This line will most likely exceed originally budgeted expenses due to the increase in students attending parent choice magnet schools.

Marcia McGinley stated during remote learning all special education services continue to be offered through Zoom sessions. The sessions focus on providing instruction in the students IEP goals and objectives. Case management services are also important during this time to assist families with their students learning and social/emotional well-being.

Marcia McGinley stated we hired two special education teachers at the start of this school year. Both teachers have made positive connections with their students and have been strong additions to the department. The department has also been committed to enhancing services to the students. Three of the special education teachers have attended Wilson Training and currently all of our teachers are trained in Wilson instruction.

b. Approve Special meeting minutes of October 7, 2020

Attachment #2

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2020 special meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			

L. Rodriguez	✓			
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Motion passes.

c. Approve meeting minutes of November 10, 2020 Attachment #3
 Ann Grosjean made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 regular meeting.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

d. Approval of Curriculum committee meeting minutes Handout
 Ann Grosjean made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2020 Curriculum Committee meeting.

Laura Rodriguez seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham			✓	
D. Cook			✓	

T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa			✓	
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

e. Approval of Finance committee meeting minutes

Handout

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2020 Finance Committee meeting.

Donna Cook seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson			✓	
A. Grosjean			✓	
E. Testa			✓	
L. Rodriguez			✓	

Motion passes.

f. Remote learning on snow days

Superintendent Stevens stated the state board of education is allowing districts to provide remote learning on snow days this year if they would like. To gather some feedback, we surveyed parents and staff on the option to do remote learning this year on a snow day, a day where it would be unsafe to provide bus transportation. The parent survey had 39 people saying just enjoy the snow day, 46 parents saying make every snow day a remote learning day, and 79 people saying make some snow days remote learning, but not all snow days. The staff results were also distributed with some supporting the idea, others with lots of questions, and some disagreeing with the concept. To

be able to do this, we would need to make sure students and teachers have their materials and the town doesn't have significant power outages. We could consider this after a certain number of snow days, say 4 for example. Some of the uncertainty falls around students that would be at a daycare provider, staff members with unstable internet, and families that need help with snow removal. The emotional recharge may be a benefit this year to just having typical snow days. I'm looking for Board feedback on this matter.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated it would be helpful to have some sense of certainty for parents so maybe if we capped the number of days perhaps 10-12 then it would go to a learning at home basis.

Superintendent Stevens stated right now we go to the 16th of June so we do have some days built in.

Ann Grosjean stated I think the power issue is a concern and I think inconsistency could create a lot of problems.

Laura Rodriguez stated I like the idea of the first three or so days being regular snow days, however I do also think the power issue is a concern even just in Willington it can be divided as to who has power, not to mention the teachers living in other towns.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated perhaps we should make the cap longer, possibly 10 days.

Superintendent Stevens stated I recommend 7 days instead of 10 so that it would put students to a Friday.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated we could do the first 7 as snow days and then advise after that just in case there is a storm with power outages.

Donna Cook asked if we could assess the snow days as they come and give you (Superintendent Stevens) the option to decide whether it should be a snow day or a remote learning day.

Elena Testa stated I agree with Donna that the Superintendent should have the flexibility to determine which kind of a day it will be.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham suggested Superintendent Stevens make the decision and then keep consistent.

g. WESS Memorandum of Understanding, utility staff
Superintendent Stevens stated the WESS union president and I have been collaborating on an MOU around COVID-19 expectations for staff and the district, and the addition of the utility staff to the union. The finance committee agreed we have the funding to support adding this position to the WESS staff for the remainder of the school year with the use of the ESSER grant, and the negotiations committee supported the items in the MOU. My recommendation is to accept the MOU as it is written. The WESS union has not approved this MOU yet, but I would like to be ready to move forward with the utility staff because we will need them when we return after the holiday break. If the WESS has any changes, we can make the adjustments at the January meeting if needed as long as you support the addition of the utility staff.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion to accept the WESS Memorandum of Understanding for the Utility Staff.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

h. 2021-2022 budget workshop calendar (draft) Attachment #4
 Superintendent Stevens stated I've attached the draft budget workshop calendar for you with the programs that will be reviewed each night. Last year I believe you took all four evenings, but it is up to you how you would like to establish this calendar.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked if we know when we will need to present to the BOF.

Superintendent Stevens replied I believe we are on target for CIP and BOF presentations with this schedule.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion to accept the 2021-2022 budget workshop calendar.

Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			

M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

i. Capital improvement projects (draft)

Superintendent Stevens stated the finance committee met and reviewed all of the items in the capital improvement plan that was developed with input from our maintenance custodians, administrators and myself. The finance committee recommended some minor changes and the document that was sent to each of you reflects those changes. I would gladly go line by line for each of these items or just speak to the new items and the placement of items that are in year 1. Once you approve of the items and year placement, I will complete the documents required by CIP which are due by December 31. Each of the five years is relatively balanced, though whatever you approve can be changed by the CIP committee.

Chairman Arico asked which items are being prioritized.

Superintendent Stevens replied in year one we have the fire panels in both Center and Hall Schools, window replacement in the upper wing of Center School, the CES sealing of the lower main parking lot, the clock/PA security system at both schools, painting of the library, HMS gym floor refurbishment, heat on the gym stage, and the School Building Committee consultants.

Chairman Arico made a motion to approve the CIP project requests.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abset
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			

D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

- j. Approve BOE 13 month meeting calendar

Attachment #5

Chairman Arico made a motion to approve the 2021-2022 BOE 13 month meeting calendar.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

- 3. **Old Business**
 - a. 2021-2022 Willington Public Schools Calendar

Attachment #6

Superintendent Stevens stated I met with the Region 19 group of superintendents, including Ashford, Mansfield, Columbia and E.O. Smith. We are very aligned to the calendar that you have in front of you this evening. The only item that I'm not sure about is the potential for election day to be held at HMS again next year. We were able to accommodate that this year because of our ability to implement remote learning, but I don't know if the state will be approving distance learning next school year which would mean it would be a day off from school. I do not have a formal request at this time to hold elections at Hall School.

Chairman Arico made a motion to table the vote for the 2021-2022 WPS calendar.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstai	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

4. Present to Speak

First Selectwoman Wicewski was present. She stated I would like to thank Superintendent Stevens and the custodial staff for all of their hard work in assisting our registrar of voters. This is a great example of how we collaborate between the town and our schools. I did mention the Selectmen's comment to one of the Registrar's and it would be up to them to determine what they would like to do.

5. Board Comment

Chairman Arico stated I would like to thank Marcia for her presentation. First Selectwoman Wicewski made a great point about collaboration between the town and the BOE. We want to be helpful to them whenever we can. We will address Michelle's letter to the board at a later time.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I would like to thank Superintendent Stevens for his decisive action in closing the schools for quarantine. I urge our families and the rest of the community to continue to be vigilant in reducing the spread of the virus.

Elena Testa stated I had a misunderstanding of what happened last night at the BOS meeting when the Building Committee was chosen, there was only one representative from the BOE appointed to the board. At our February 11th meeting, we made the decision that there would be two representatives. I am disappointed to see the Selectmen choosing to ignore that decision.

Donna Cook stated I would like to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season and a happy New Year.

Ann Grosjean stated I would like to congratulate the teachers who did a wonderful job with remote learning, I thought the bins worked great. I would also like to thank Marcia for coming tonight and updating us on special education.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would like to thank everyone for an amazing fall semester especially with everything that is going on. I wish everyone a wonderful holiday.

Tracey Anderson stated I appreciate that we are working together, it makes the morale for the whole community better.

6. Adjournment

Laura Rodriguez motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05PM

Donna Cook seconded the motion.

Vote:	Ye	N	Abstain	Abse
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

Next regular meeting January 12, 2020