

# WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

## Join Zoom Meeting

<https://willingtonct.zoom.us/j/85320285511?pwd=QndodXJuMGVlc2lIS3M3ekRlMmQ0dz09>

Meeting ID: 853 2028 5511

Passcode: 546632

## Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 853 2028 5511

Passcode: 546632

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**

None

## **Also Present**

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

Jason Phillips, HMS Music/Drama Director

Members of the Public

### 1. **Call to Order**

**Chairman Arico called the meeting to order at 7:00PM**

### 2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Arico led The Pledge of Allegiance.

### 3. **Present to Speak**

No one was present.

### 4. **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Arico stated CAGE has been sending me a liaison letter, a newsletter they are producing every month. They offer a lot of professional development programs, we can now be at home and log in on some of them. One program they offered was promoting civility around the board table and beyond, which was offered in January. They also provide a lot of services and information of Covid-19. With legislation starting, CAGE has representatives on site almost every day. They recommend if anyone wants to contribute at some meetings they can contact them and they will set you up so you can give information at a committee meeting.

## 5. **Communications**

Chairman Arico stated I have had some emails and phone calls from people who wanted to check out our curriculum and I was able to refer them to our website.

## 6. **Presentation:** HMS Music Program, Jason Phillips

Jason Phillips stated I am here tonight to talk about virtual drama. We have had great success with virtual drama thus far and as you know, when the pandemic hit it became almost impossible for theatres to meet due to the CDC guidelines. In response, starting with last year's drama class we began exploring alternate avenues of how to do drama. Last year we put on "Same Room, Different Story" as a stage reading. Over the summer, Kathleen, my co-director and I watched several shows done virtually over Zoom to figure out how to bring this to HMS. The goal this year was to create a group that actually performed virtually. We are extremely pleased with the result. Our mission is to provide a safe and healthy alternative, in the absence of live theatre, to all students and the community at large through a variety of opportunities and events. Jason Phillips shared a calendar of events for past and upcoming events. He stated on November 13th we performed *Horror Movie 101: Failing Can Be Deadly*, January 22nd we performed *Ten/Two*, coming up on or around March 13th we will have a Monologue Workshop and Contest, and on May 28th we will finish with performing *She Kills Monsters*. Anyone can audition for each show regardless if they performed in the previous one. Everyone attends one full cast meeting each week in addition to their scheduled rehearsals. Everyone records their scenes in the final weeks and then there is a virtual watch party and Q&A session where the show is premiered for the public. Some of the other opportunities provided for students include; Q&A with playwrights, doing their own make-up/providing their own costumes, watching other venues put on virtual shows, and creating trailers for each show. Jason Phillips shared pictures from the plays the group has previously performed virtually as well as sharing their trailers. Jason Phillips stated after the performance, the Zoom audience was able to ask the cast members questions. Jason showed the google classroom and stated this is where students can go to sign up for the upcoming monologue and they are also able to see previous shows.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked if there is anything we can do as a board to be more supportive or to get more kids involved.

Jason Phillips stated I will let you know if I come up with any ideas.

The board thanked Jason for his presentation and stated they enjoyed seeing the students succeed in drama.

## 7. **Superintendent Report**

### a. Enrollment update

Superintendent Stevens states our current enrollment at Center School is 208 students with 176 students learning on-campus and 32 students (15%) learning fully remote. Currently, we have 3 classes at Center

School that have all students learning on-campus. One classroom at CES has 6 remote learners. Our current enrollment at Hall School is 194 students with 141 students learning on-campus and 53 students (27%) learning fully remote. Every class at Hall School has at least one remote learner. One classroom at HMS has 8 remote learners. We currently have 21% of our students learning fully remote.

Chairman Arico stated at the beginning of the school year you stated some students/families had opted to move to home schooling and I believe you said some students are coming back.

Superintendent Stevens replied that is correct I don't have those numbers in front of me right now but I can get them.

Chairman Arico asked if the homeschooled students contact the school to set up a plan which they would follow.

Superintendent Stevens replied they are only required to do a sign off stating they are going to home school and that they will follow an appropriate curriculum.

Chairman Arico asked if the students learning remotely stay remote all the time or if they switch on and off.

Superintendent Stevens replied if they are remote they do not come into our building at all.

#### b. COVID-19 school operations

Superintendent Stevens stated our staff continues to work extremely hard during this pandemic. We continue to have cases that need contact tracing, and as you are aware, we needed to close Hall School for four days from January 26-29. We were able to shuffle staff to open January 25th and to get students home with their supply bins, but it was not sustainable the remainder of the week. We are not seeing student transmission in school, though we are seeing some transmission in the community as a result of small gatherings.

We continue to implement our mitigation strategies and provide on-campus learning for our students. Our superintendents group met with 10 legislators yesterday and reiterated that we needed to know as soon as possible if we would be required to provide remote learning as an option again next year.

Currently, we are working to identify students that may need additional support. We will be utilizing students testing data, attendance, teacher input and other factors to determine which students need support. We are also discussing Zoom tutoring opportunities and summer programming.

Ann Grosjean asked if there was any discussion about the teacher receiving vaccines when you met with the superintendents group.

Superintendent Stevens replied we are closing in on the teachers being eligible for the vaccine and they currently are if they are 65 and older but it is going to take a long time to get everyone vaccinated.

Ann Grosjean asked if they are included in the essential employees within the town.

Superintendent Stevens replied no those were mostly first responders.

#### c. CES and HMS Roof Replacement

Superintendent Stevens stated I have had several meetings with Scott Pellman and Charles Warrington from Colliers International. We have already met informally with a member from the office of school construction and the request for architectural services has already been posted. Architectural proposals are

due on Thursday and we have time for interviews on Friday if needed. The Board will need to meet to approve the hiring of the architect as the entire Board is listed as the building committee for this project. We will be applying to the state grant system the first week of March with hopes for a quick approval. Unfortunately, the way the system works it only allows you to apply the first 10 days of each month and you must have all of your materials complete and correct, and if you are denied you must resubmit the following month. Colliers has a very tight timeline for this project and we are doing everything possible to ensure this project gets completed as quickly as possible.

d. Willington Emergency Communications Task Force meeting update

Superintendent Stevens stated during the last task force meeting the committee finalized a town wide survey. The survey link will be in the digital backpack this Thursday. The survey is intended to gather information regarding the types of communication townspeople would like to receive. The information gathered from the survey will allow the committee the opportunity to determine if a system should be utilized for emergency communications only or if townspeople would like a system that would provide the opportunity to receive emergency communications and general town announcements.

e. School Building Committee update

Superintendent Stevens stated the school building committee held their first meeting on January 26. The committee discussed the process and reviewed the charge of the committee. I provided the committee an overview of the Friar study and next steps were identified. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 22nd and will include answers to numerous questions that the committee identified at their first meeting including land availability, town owned properties, and lot maps at CES and HMS.

Ann Grosjean stated I was very impressed with the people on this committee. We have a lot of people with experience and good backgrounds.

8. **Financial Report**

a. 2020-2021 budget update

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens reviewed the budget document notes.

b. COVID-19 reopening expenses

Superintendent Stevens stated we have accounted for all the Coronavirus Relief funds in the 20-21 budget where it was an offset. In total, the Board spent \$241,046 from this grant on cleaning supplies, carpools, utility staff, protective equipment, and other items needed to educate our students during this pandemic. We also received the ESSER I grant for \$60,567 which is being used for additional cleaning supplies and to cover the cost of the utility staff from January 2021 through June of 2021. We were notified last Friday that we were receiving an ESSER II grant in the amount of \$268,525. The application for the grant has not opened yet, but we know it can be used to cover utility staff, COVID related supplies, to address learning loss, for providing mental health supports, and purchasing educational technology. We have already offset the 21-22 budget with these funds to cover the utility staff, Lexia and to purchase an SEL program. This offset is approximately \$115,500 (utility staff: \$106,000; lexia \$3,000; SEL \$6,500). We are investigating purchasing iPads for prek and kindergarten so they have 1:1 age appropriate technology, maybe 1st grade as well but we just started this work.

9. **Committee Reports**

a. Finance committee

Superintendent Stevens stated we reviewed the qualifications for the Owner's Project Manager for the school roof projects and made a recommendation. You have already approved the recommendation.

10. **New Business**

- a. Approve Negotiations Committee meeting minutes, December 7, 2020 Attachment #2
- b. Approve regular meeting minutes of December 8, 2020 Attachment #3
- c. Approve Finance Committee meeting minutes of January 4, 2021 Attachment #4
- d. Approve special meeting minutes of January 7, 2021 Attachment #5
- e. Approve Curriculum Committee meeting minutes of January 13, 2021 Attachment #6
- f. Approve special meeting minutes of January 19, 2021 Attachment #7
- g. Approve budget workshop #1 meeting minutes of January 19, 2021 Attachment #8
- h. Approve budget workshop #2 meeting minutes of January 28, 2021 Attachment #9
- i. Approve budget workshop #3 meeting minutes of February 2, 2021 Attachment #10

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the minutes as presented from the meeting dates of December 7th, December 8th, January 4th, January 7th, January 13th, January 19th, January 19th, January 28th, and February 2nd.**

**Laura Rodriguez seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

j. 2021-2022 Board of Education Budget Approval  
 Superintendent Stevens stated Donna, Brenda and I worked through the changes that the Board recommended. We offset the utility staff, Lexia and SEL program using the ESSER II grant. We had to increase the utility salary because we hadn't budgeted for the contractual increase in the original budget. We reduced the safety officers to 1,500, superintendent conference to 1,600, and superintendent travel to 1,200. We also had updated health insurance savings (\$50,623) and workers compensation savings of 1,121. The bottom line after all of these adjustments brings the budget to a 1.142% increase (\$101,181) for a proposed budget of \$8,962,009.

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the budget for the 2021-2022 school year in the amount of \$8,962,009.**

**Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

**k. Review extension of Wednesday early dismissals through June, 2021**

Superintendent Stevens stated a brief parent survey was conducted regarding the extension of the early dismissal days through the end of the school year. We had 85 parent responses. The first question asked parents if their family would support extending early release Wednesdays through the end of the school year. Of the 85 responses, we had one maybe (1%), 11 families responded no (13%), and 73 families responded yes. 86% of respondents said they would support this extension. The purpose of this extension would be to continue to provide teachers the time needed to meet the demands of teaching remote learners and on-campus learners at the same time. This time is also used to connect with remote learners. I would suggest the Board extend the minimum day Wednesdays through the end of the school year.

**Ann Grosjean moved to approve the extension of the early dismissals on Wednesdays through June 2021.**

**Elena Testa seconded the motion.**

Donna Cook stated I'm concerned about the families that answered no on the survey. Do they have child care issues and are there some options to help them out.

Superintendent Stevens stated there was only one response that stated it didn't meet their families needs but I know that family has made an accommodation.

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

Motion passes.

I. Education Specifications for CES Roof Project Handout  
 Superintendent Stevens stated I worked with Colliers to draft ed specs for the CES and HMS roof projects. I also sent the document to the school construction department for feedback and they said they were acceptable. The Board must approve these two items separately.

Ann Grosjean asked if the building has to be used as a school for a certain amount of time for the reimbursement.

Superintendent Stevens replied we did talk to them about that and they said the amortization is done over a ten year period and most of the payments are done after seven years.

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the Education Specifications as presented for the Center School partial roof replacement.**

**Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.**

<b>Vote:</b>	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			

L. Rodriguez	✓			
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Motion passes.

m. Education Specifications for HMS Roof Project

Handout

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the Education Specifications as presented for the Hall School roof replacement.**

**Chairman Arico seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

**11. Old Business**

a. 2021-2022 Willington Public Schools Calendar

Attachment #5

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 minus some random contractual differences. The election department does not intend to ask for the use of Hall Memorial School for voting next year so I believe this calendar is ready for approval.

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the calendar for the 2021-2022 school year as presented.**

**Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

**b. WESS Memorandum of Understanding, utility staff**

Superintendent Stevens stated the last MOU that you approved was not signed by the WESS leadership. They requested we remove all the additional COVID related items and strictly focus on the utility staff. This is basically the same MOU with all the additional items removed. We will need to reopen this MOU at the end of the school year to extend the utility staff into next school year. The MOU has already been approved by union leadership and I'm looking for the Board to approve this update.

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to accept the Memorandum of Understanding between CESA SEIU local 2001 and the Willington Board of Education as presented.**

**Elena Testa seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

c. C.I.P. update (add Portable radios)

Superintendent Stevens stated Stuart Cobb, chairman of the CIP committee, emergency management director, asked if we had any interest in putting portable radios on our buses as the current system does not work well and we have dead spots. We tested the radios and they worked extremely well, even in the typical dead zones. The committee allowed me to add these radios to the CIP submission. Currently, they placed them in year 1 as they are safety related. They would allow us to remove them from buses as well, and it allows the bus drivers access to either school, public works and emergency services. Currently, the CIP committee has the following items in year 1: the CES fire panel, CES chip seal, HMS fire panel, HMS painting library, HMS gym floor, HMS heat on stage, district building committee consultants, and 9 portable radios. The clock/PA system at both schools and window replacement at CES were both pushed out a year.

**12. Present to Speak**

No one was present.

**13. Board Comment**

Chairman Arico stated we had a good meeting tonight and I'm happy to hear the roof project is moving along. It is also exciting to have the budget approved by the board and having it be a very reasonable budget while still providing the services and education our students need. We have done very well so far this year in dealing with Covid-19. I also wanted to thank Jason for his presentation this evening. I enjoyed watching their first show.

Elena Testa stated since Covid started last year we haven't heard anything about academic results or academic success and now that the budget is behind us we can focus on that.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I wanted to also say it is great to have the budget behind us and to thank Mr. Phillips for his presentation. I look forward to when we can all be together in person.

Laura Rodriguez stated I wanted to echo what you have all stated. Thank you Jason for what you do, your innovation is incredible. This was my first budget season on the BOE so thank you for making it a smooth process. I hope you all stay healthy and well.

Ann Grosjean stated I want to thank Phil for everything he has put into the budget and thank you to all the teachers and staff for everything they have done to make it work.

Donna Cook stated I want to thank Jason for his time and for sharing his presentation. I am looking forward to learning more about what the kids are learning.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I wanted to thank the parents who are on the call tonight. We appreciate your participation.

**14. Adjournment**

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to adjourn the meeting 8:50PM.**

**Elena Testa seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

\*Next regular meeting March 9, 2021\*