

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

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 our state legislators are working on education bills, they are still in the proposed state. Some topics involve distance learning, special education, hiring minority teachers, tuition to other highschools, and social and emotional learning. If there is anything you are particularly interested in you can attend those hearings. Chairman Arico stated the Selectman held a special meeting last night to discuss the budget. There have been quite a few changes, region 19 budget referendum will be voted for on May 4th. The BOE budget should not have any changes.

Chairman Arico moved to add the finance committee report to the agenda as item 8c.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

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

Motion passes.

5. **Communications**

Superintendent Stevens stated we received an FOI request which was sent nationwide and the

request has been processed.

6. Superintendent Report

a. Monologue competition

Superintendent Stevens stated Mr. Phillips held a monologue competition as part of his virtual drama series on March 19. The 40 minute program had 19 performers doing their best monologue which was judged by 3 impartial judges. The winner was Lucas Anderson who performed Harry's Monologue from This Phone Will Explode at the Tone. The Board watched his 3 minute monologue on YouTube. Congratulations to all the performers.

b. Enrollment update

Superintendent Stevens stated our current enrollment at Center School is 210 students with 189 students learning on-campus and 21 students learning fully remote. Our current enrollment at Hall School is 193 students with 157 students learning on-campus and 36 students learning fully remote. We currently have 14% of our students learning fully remote.

c. Current CIP projects

Superintendent Stevens stated boiler valves and pumps were installed at Hall School and came in right on budget. I will report on the roof project shortly. Regarding painting the pillars and completing repairs at the HMS front entrance, we learned from the roofing project that they may take care of a portion of this work as they repair the fascia. The architect recommended we wait to complete the painting and repair work until after the roofing project is complete. If we do that, I would need to request the BOF transfer the funds from that project from fund 930, capital expenditures, to capital projects which would extend that project beyond June 30.

Donna Cook stated I think it makes sense to request the funds transfer.

Ann Grosjean stated I think it would be great if we can turn that into reimbursable money.

Superintendent Stevens stated we are preparing an RFP for the heating project at CES to replace unit ventilators.

d. DOT and Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) project

Superintendent Stevens stated you may have seen our land use agent Mike D'Amato presenting in meetings talking about the large sidewalk project grant that we received. This is still in the works, but it is looking like we will see the installation of an accessible ramp on the front parking lot side of HMS, along with island buffers for pedestrian safety when crossing Route 32. Some adjustments are still being made to the plan, but the parking lot across from HMS will be handicapped accessible at the completion of the DOT portion of the project. Our parking lot project in the CIP plan will not be impacted by this work. The LOTICIP portion of the project will improve the HMS front sidewalks which will extend down route 32 toward the church.

e. USDA Meal Service

Superintendent Stevens stated The U.S. Department of Agriculture extended free meal service through September 30, 2021. This action gives schools more flexibility to feed children during the summer months. Our Food Services Director, Stephanie Knight, and I are working on the feasibility and need of serving meals this summer.

f. Town Office Building phone bill

Superintendent Stevens stated we had someone gain access to a phone number at the TOB and international calls were made. This occurred at night when the building was closed and action has been

taken to increase our security and settings adjusted to block international calls. The Selectmen's office is working with the phone company and the charges have been disputed.

g. COVID-19 school operations

Superintendent Stevens stated we have had a couple positive cases and several other situations where community members were identified as a close contact in the last month. We continue to implement our mitigation measures to keep our students and staff safe. We had our second vaccine clinic last Tuesday and had over 100 staff and bus drivers get the Moderna vaccine. We had about 25% have significant side effects which forced us to go to a remote learning model on Wednesday and Thursday.

Our ESSER II grant is due on Monday, but will be turned in this week. That grant is the offset we used for utility staff next year, but also includes updating wifi in both buildings in coordination with our Erate funding, ipads for kindergarten and 1st grade, and professional development for our staff. We identified our school needs and are using the funds to address learning loss, technology infrastructure, school safety around cleaning, and social emotional learning. We are still processing all the grant payments from the CRF grant and the ESSER I grant as we want our accounting to be spot on with all the additional financial support that has been provided.

Our maintenance crew and Public Works will be putting up our tents in the next week as an additional space for outdoor learning and mask breaks. Lastly, we will be sending out a survey to staff and families regarding next school year once we have more information from the CSDE.

h. CES and HMS Roof Replacement

Superintendent Stevens stated the grant applications for both roof projects were submitted to the State on Friday. Brenda, Scott Pellman, Silver Petrucelli and I reviewed the applications several times and were happy with our submission. Scott will be reaching out to the state this week to try and keep our momentum going for a summer application. The environmentalists came out last week with the architect and drilled holes to ensure no hazardous materials exist in the roof material at either school. Silktown Roofing patched each hole. One issue we learned during the application process was the state had never approved our security plan despite being submitted several times. I submitted our plan directly to a different branch of the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and shared that we had done so in years past as required and had documentation to prove it. DEMHS prepared a letter supporting our roof application so it would not slow the process, but we will need our plan fully approved to be able to receive reimbursement. We hope to have our plan approved with formal documentation from DEMHS by the end of May.

i. Staffing changes

Superintendent Stevens stated one of our long-time staff members Niko Semerzakis has accepted a special education position in Somers. Niko has filled various positions in Willington including custodian, paraprofessional, and special education teacher. We wish him success in the future. We also received resignation letters from Zoe McAvoy, paraprofessional, and Ronnie Gainey, utility staff, and we wish them all the best. We hired a social worker at Center School and welcomed Emily Nason who joined us from Manchester. Yesterday was Emily's first day in Willington.

7. Financial Report

a. April 2020-2021 budget update

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens reviewed the financial report for April.

8. Committee Reports

a. Negotiations Committee

Superintendent Stevens stated we received a request for a contract extension from WEA and the

committee is processing the request.

b. School Building Committee

Superintendent Stevens stated the School Building Committee met and discussed planning to have The Office of School Construction Grants and Review staff tour our schools. A brief presentation was developed for OSCGR along with questions from the committee. School building committee documents are posted to our district website. One thing I found interesting in what we learned is if you build new, you get 55% reimbursement which is less but there are very few items that are not reimbursable where as if you renovate you would receive a 65% reimbursement rate however there are a lot of items that are not reimbursable.

Ann Grosjean stated we formed a sub committee for communications and we were brainstorming different ways we could communicate with the public. We decided it would be important to have a presence where we could announce meetings and things like that. We talked about putting something in every Willington Wire and we are also working on a FAQ section. We were also working on the RFP for a project manager.

c. Finance Committee

Chairman Arico stated this committee has been assigned to look into the School Based Health Center, we have to develop a contract with them. I would like to set a date for this committee. I know Phil and Marcia have been working on this. The contract has to be agreed upon by the BOE.

Donna Cook asked why this resides under the Finance Committee and not the Contract Negotiation Committee.

Superintendent Stevens replied this is a unique type of contract for us and usually the Finance Committee takes care of those.

Donna Cook asked if they will send us a template for the contract.

Superintendent Stevens replied they did send us their typical template and we have read through that and made it more specific to Willington needs.

The committee agreed to have Brenda reach out with the meeting dates.

9. New Business

a. Approve regular meeting minutes of March 9, 2021

Attachment #2

Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2021 regular meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

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

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

Motion passes.

b. WPS Healthy Food Certification (due June 30, 2021)

Attachment #3

Superintendent Stevens stated this requires each BOE certify whether or not the food you sell to students will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

Chairman Arico moved to accept the Healthy Food Certification of C.G.S. Section 10-215f which states, Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Willington board of education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.

Donna Cook asked if we are supposed to be doing the other motion on the certification to allow school events to sell items outside of the healthy food certification.

Superintendent Stevens suggested the board vote on both motions and they can change if need be.

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

Motion passes.

Ann Grosjean moved to accept the Healthy Food Certification food exemption which states, The Willington board of education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

Elena Testa 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. Superintendent end of year evaluation planning

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated when we did this the last time we had a google survey which everyone was able to fill out with the questions we used. I believe I still have that form I could send it to everyone.

Ann Grosjean stated I thought that survey was comprehensive and covered all the areas we needed.

Tracey Anderson and Elena Testa agreed.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated we should probably have this done before contract negotiations this summer.

Superintendent Stevens stated they could plan to go into executive session at the end of our meeting in June.

10. **Old Business**

a. Schedule summer retreat: 6/14-17

Superintendent Stevens stated not everyone responded to Brenda about the dates. If everyone could do so by the end of the day tomorrow we can schedule the retreat.

11. Present to Speak

No one was present.

12. Board Comment

Chairman Arico stated the monologue was very good and I enjoyed it. We do have a lot on our plate and I think we are doing a great job. We want to thank those who are leaving for their time and wish them well.

Tracey Anderson stated I wish Niko well and appreciate his dedication to our community and thank you to the others who are departing. We welcome Emily to our district. I'm glad we are moving forward with the Community Based Health Network and are bringing more services to our community. I loved the monologue. Thank you for the efforts from all of our teachers and staff.

Donna Cook stated I want to echo the appreciation for Lucas' monologue and I think great things are in store for that young man. I also want to say an appreciation for Mr. Phillips and all he has done to encourage that greatness. The news has made me more appreciative of what goes on in our town. I want to thank the teachers, parents, and students for the extra effort they have been putting in.

Elena Testa stated I would like to join everyone with congratulations to Lucas for his performance and also say in spite of the difficulties we have had this past year, we are doing very well.

Ann Grosjean stated we are a model, thanks to Phil and his staff we have been open since day one. Thank you to everyone for working so hard. I want to thank Niko for his service and wish him well. Thank you to Zoe and Ronnie. I would like to welcome Emily, it will be great to have a new social worker. I am also glad to hear that the school based behavioral health network is falling into place.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham said I would like to echo what Ann said and add a thank you to everyone for being quick and efficient tonight. I hope everyone continues to stay safe.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would like to thank Niko and congratulate him on his new position. I wish Ronnie and Zoe well and welcome Emily. Our small district does amazing things.

13. Adjournment

Chairman Arico moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48PM.

Laura Rodriguez seconded the motion.

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

E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

Next regular meeting May 11, 2021