

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Herb Arico - Chairman
Elena Testa - Vice Chairman
Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Secretary
Ann Grosjean
Tracey Anderson
Donna Cook
(all members present remotely through Zoom)

Members Absent

Laura Rodriguez

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens
Members of the public

1. Call to Order

Chairman Arico called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Arico led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Present to Speak

No one was present to speak.

4. Chairman's Report

Chairman Arico stated that he attended the graduation on June 15th. He gave compliments to how well the staff ran the event and overall how well disciplined the staff and graduates were.

5. Communications

Chairman Arico mentioned a CABE convention on November 12, 2021 at the Mystic Marriott Hotel. Superintendent Stevens added that if any board members would like to attend to let Brenda know.

6. Superintendent Report

a. Staffing

This afternoon we had interviews for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and I hope to hire someone by August 1. We have a finalist for the .4 special education teacher at HMS. We coordinated with Union Schools to hire Nicholas Cody as our .5 health teacher at HMS. Nick will be in Union 2 days a week and 3 days a week in Willington. We had two paraprofessionals resign, Skye Budney, and Janina Eldredge. Skye took a position closer to home and Janina is going to school. Lastly, we are still looking for an athletic director as retired teacher, Deb Ostein, has resigned after 5 years of service post retirement.

b. Summer school

We have a small summer school this year as many families declined services as they wanted to give their

children a break after the challenging year we had. Our summer school is operating 3 days a week for 4 weeks in July and has 12 students in person. We also have students going to social skills camp and students coming in for related services.

c. WPS Community Health Center handbook

The Pupil Services Director, Marcia McGinley, and I are working on a handbook for our school based behavioral health clinic. At this point, the sections in the handbook include professional expectations, privacy expectations, eligibility for services, and the qualification process to receive behavioral services. We will have the full handbook completed for staff orientation come the start of school.

d. HMS sidewalk project

The Economic Development Commission hosted a meeting in June where our land use agent Mike D'Amato presented information regarding the large sidewalk project grant that we received. This Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program million dollar grant project will result in new sidewalks from Hall School down to the mill. Hall School will receive new ADA accessible ramps on either side of Route 32. The side road from Pinney Hill into the HMS parking lot will be permanently closed. A new entrance to the parking lot will be created across from the front entrance of HMS. New crosswalks with flashing beacons will be created to cross Rt. 32 and Pinney Hill. The crosswalks on Rt. 32 will be protected by pedestrian islands. This engineered project will improve the safety and function of a key corridor within the South Willington Village.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked for information on the timing of the project. Superintendent Stevens stated that he was not sure yet because Mike D'Amato is still working on key details. Superintendent Stevens then asked Erika Wicewski if she could comment on the timeline. Erika Wicewski stated that they were still working on final review of the design which is the cost that the town will be paying for and if this all goes through then they would be looking at around next spring to summer.

e. Set date for presentation on IReady student data

Superintendent Stevens shared that he would like to review the June iReady assessment data and SBAC data at the September Board meeting. We have the iReady data from June, but with my administrators not working most of the summer, I would like to wait until they return to school for the 21-22 school year. We only have the SBAC data for students that took the assessment in person. The data for students who took the assessment remotely should be available later this summer. Is September a good time for a full review of that data?

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked Superintendent Stevens if they would have a larger number of SBAC scores by September in hope of a larger picture. Superintendent Stevens responded that they only said the scores would be available later in the summer. Board members agreed that September would be better because you get the bigger picture.

f. Roof update

The Office of School Construction Grants and Review notified me by email on June 25, and then in a formal letter from Director Diamantis on June 29, that both roof projects were canceled. The letter noted that if the district decides to only do the roof projects, OSCGR will accept the grant application materials previously submitted. We have had some minor leaks with all the rain we have had and will be bringing in Silktown Roofing to do some additional patching.

Chairman Arico stated that the roof will not be repaired until a year from the summer. Superintendent Stevens stated that if the school building committee and town agree to do nothing then they would start capital improvement projects including the roof.

7. Financial Report

a. June financial report

The 20-21 financial report has all the updates that occurred from your last meeting. We have approximately \$178,000 remaining in the budget after completing maintenance and security upgrade projects, purchasing Promethean boards, library furniture, nursing software and fire resistant filing cabinets. I want to note that we received two quotes for installation of the Promethean boards that were significantly less expensive. We received a quote from a reputable contractor for about a third of the initial quote. Once all the accounts are settled by the end of the summer, the Board will need to make some transfers to balance programs.

Chairman Arico stated that the balance was \$178,000 and questioned if this would increase. Superintendent Stevens responded he was not sure at this time. Chairman Arico stated that some of this money would be returned to the town.

Superintendent Stevens stated that he recommends again the committee request the Board of Finance for the balance of \$60,000 to go into the nonlapsing fund.

b. Food Services financial report

Attachment #2

We received an update on the School Lunch Fund and the balance looks healthy. We expect our balance to be around \$40,000 after all breakfast/lunch reimbursements and funds borrowed from the General Fund are returned. The program received additional funds this year due to COVID and the government making breakfast and lunch free for all students. We received \$1.89 per breakfast and \$3.51 per lunch. We will need to set lunch prices at the next BOE meeting.

Superintendent Stevens stated that the \$40,000 is an outstanding amount of money but he does have concerns about the age of the equipment within the kitchen.

8. New Business

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|---|---------------|
| a. Approve minutes of special meeting June 1, 2021 | Attachment #3 |
| b. Approve minutes of regular meeting June 8, 2021 | Attachment #4 |
| c. Approve minutes of special meeting June 15, 2021 | Attachment#5 |
| d. Approve minutes of special meeting June 21, 2021 | Attachment #6 |

Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2021 special meeting, the minutes from the regular meeting on June 8, 2021, the minutes from the special meeting June 15, 2021, and the special meeting June 21, 2021.

Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.

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

Motion passes

e. Community Health Center, Inc. contract

Superintendent Stevens shared that after the admin team provided feedback on the CHC contract, the negotiations subcommittee made a significant number of recommendations to the contract. CHC accepted all the requests so the contract was shared with the entire Board for approval. We have shared the contract with two separate attorneys. Board attorney Chinni shared feedback on the contract and said we should add that all legal notifications be sent to the Superintendent's office and I submitted that change to CHC. She also said the contract is extremely protective of parental rights and that the Board's adjustments are more restrictive than state law. CHC's Chief of Behavioral Health Officer said their policy is very conservative and that it requires their review for approval for a social worker to see a student without parent permission. They stated it should be rare if it ever happens. After extensive feedback, I recommend you approve the CHC contract with the minor addition mentioned earlier regarding legal notifications.

Elena Testa questioned the change that was made to the contract and stated that the contract which Superintendent Stevens has is different from the committees in which the contract she had discussed last meeting had total parental consent when it came to providing behavioral health service. She questioned if all students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade according to the law can be seen by the specialist without parents knowing. She feels that this is not what they discussed. Elena then questioned group counseling and felt children do not understand because of their age and they do not understand privacy questions. She feels this is not what they voted for during their meeting. In the termination section 1B she feels that 90 days is too long.

Chairman Arico stated about 1B that during a prior meeting he mentioned he would prefer a 60 days notice and within this contract its still at a 90 days duration. Under Health Services Description (ex. A) Chairman Arico suggested prior that he wanted a further description of the types of things that would be covered under individual counseling, group counseling and family counseling such as anxiety, stress etc... Chairman Arico also stated that he has concerns about the counselors handling many different items such as assessing and handling LGBTQ youth and feels that this person may not be trained to deal with all of this. Telehealth concerned Chairman Arico about security when it comes to using technology and if the information about the children is secure enough. Chairman Arico feels that his large overall points were ignored when it came to the change of 90 days to 60 days and the description of counseling areas.

Michelle Doucette Cunnigham stated that from a previous meeting, Chairman Arico, requested to expand on the term behavioral health services which is why it's now listed out as a subgroup of services they provide. Chairman Arico stated that he felt it was not a proper description. Michelle Doucette Cunnigham then responded to say that she felt that listing the mental diagnosis would limit the list and does not feel the list of mental diagnosis should not be in the legal contract.

Donna Cook suggested bringing the contract back to the committee for further discussion. She further stated that the big problem with the contract is that it's allowing a child over twelve to be too psychologically independent without the parents knowledge or consent.

Tracey Anderson asked Superintendent Stevens what happens when a child is out of control within a school day and services cannot be provided. Superintendent Stevens responded by saying that a school counselor or administrator would be working with that student, calling 211 and families. When the 211 call goes out the state trooper will come out, evaluate the situation then make the decision if the family cannot be reached.

Elena Testa stated that she was not made aware of the law that twelve and older children do not need permission from parents to see counselors early on when they were discussing if they wanted the services or not.

Michelle Doucette Cunnigham stated this contract would give extra expertise within the school and make sure that situations are handled properly, and that this provides more resources to act appropriately.

Chairman Arico then asked how many times have the police been called within the last five years? Superintendent Stevens responded that it can be around three times a year or three times a week depending on the student.

Donna Cook stated that her problem with the contract is that a child over the age of twelve can make an appointment and get treated by the counselor without the parent's knowledge.

Ann Grosjean directed a question to Superintendent Stevens about if the new social worker will have to follow the guidelines set by the state about being able to treat children twelve and older without parental consent. Superintendent Stevens responded by saying social workers have to follow this law, and it's very rare for a child to be treated without parental knowledge, but in some situations like child abuse it does happen.

Elena Testa stated that child abuse is not a social worker's business that it's the police's responsibility. Michelle Doucette Cunningham responded by saying that child abuse leaves emotional trauma behind and the specialist can help the child come to terms with the past. If you do not pass the contract you will be denying children like this to have an extra specialist which in the end could impact their education.

Tracey Anderson stated that she had a question about exhibit A and the Health Services Description in the contract and asked if it had to be stated in that manner. She questioned if Health Services Description could be called Health Services Categories.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated that the state has power to set the age for the law but they chose a lower age because there are many young people that have suffered traumatic experiences and need these types of services without fearing repercussions from abusive parents. This is a balance of parental rights and children's rights. If we were to try and change this the school system would be out of state law and CHC would never sign an illegal agreement.

Donna Cook asked if all parents will be notified with a letter to let them know about the state law within the contract. Donna also stated that she is worried about the direction the children can be pushed.

Chairman Arico motioned to lay this topic on the table until the next meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

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

Motion is Defeated.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham motioned to approve the contract as provided with the exception of the change to the 60 days to terminate the contract instead of 90 days.

Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham then made a friendly amendment to include changing the address for the contact to the superintendent office instead of the school buildings.

Tracey Anderson accepted that friendly amendment.

Chairman Arico asked if there were any more comments before they put it to the vote and Donna Cook stated that she was particularly concerned about group counseling in such a small school and community which opens the door to bullying. Chairman Arico stated that the reason he asked to table this was so the committee could resolve some of these issues, then bring it back to the board.

Chairman Arico mentioned again that there was a motion on the floor which was to accept or reject the contract as presented and changed slightly.

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

Motion is Defeated

Superintendent Stevens asked the Board what they wanted him to do because he had given them the same contract in May and did not get this feedback until tonight. He asked if he should call a committee meeting now. Chairman Arico and Michelle Doucette Cunningham agreed on having another committee meeting about the contract.

Superintendent Stevens then requested that the committee put their changes in writing so he would know what to adjust and the legality of it. Donna Cook then requested that Superintendent Stevens send out the most recent copy of the contract. Elena Testa requested an official letter from the lawyer which states that we cannot put our own layer of protection in the contract saying everyone needs parental consent. Superintendent Stevens requested that Elena Testa send Chairman Arico the specific questions she wanted answered by the attorney.

f. Food services payroll 2021-2022

We need to update the food services payroll for the 21-22 fiscal year. I worked with our payroll coordinator and food services director to draft a 3 year plan to address the minimum wage increase. Minimum wage is now \$13.00 per hour, will move to \$14 in 22-23, and \$15 in 23-34. The minimum wage increase impacts several of our food service employees and we need to maintain a reasonable buffer between our kitchen staff, kitchen managers and food service director. I propose that we increase the hourly rate by \$1.00 for all food service employees under the food services director for the 21-22 school year. I propose a 3% increase for the food services director to maintain the buffer between the kitchen managers and food services director. This 3 year plan we created would result in the same request in 22-23 and 23-24. The increase would be approximately \$7,400 in 21-22, \$6,000 in 22-23, and \$6,100 in 23-24.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham motioned to increase the food service and food employees' rates of pay as presented.

Elena Testa seconded the motion

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

Motion passed.

g. Meeting procedures for remote, hybrid and in-person meetings

Chairman Arico shared the types of meetings the Board could have in the future. Superintendent Stevens shared that Executive order 7B expired and was replaced with the Implementer Bill provisions through April 30, 2022 and that each Board can decide which methodology to implement for their meetings. An overview of the methods was shared along with the requirements for each.

Chairman Arico stated that Erika Wiecenski had mentioned you could change the meeting style. Superintendent Stevens said the only limit to that is giving enough notice to the change. He also stated that if you decide to stay remote but then four members decide to attend the town office instead you must then open it up for the public.

Elena Testa asked a question about remote meetings and the 24 hours in advance rule. Superintendent Stevens asked Ericka Wiecenski to further explain and she said you would have to provide a public location and the same equipment a person attending remotely would have access to.

Michelle Doucette Cunnigham asked if the meetings were in person would they be required to wear masks or would it just be mandated for people who are not vaccinated? Ericka Wiecenski responded by saying the policy in place now is the same as the state. The unvaccinated must wear a mask inside, and if you are fully vaccinated you are not required to. She also stated that moving forward you can change the types of meetings you just need to give the members of the board 48 hours in advance.

**Elena Testa made a motion to continue to hold fully remote meeting for the year 2021-2022
Donna Cook seconded the motion**

Michelle Doucette Cunnigham then asked if the way the law was passed was this part of the extension of requirement? She then stated that she does not believe the Governor has the power to make this decision for the whole year. Superintendent Stevens then responded saying that the Implementer Bill runs through April 30, 2022. Then Michelle Doucette Cunnigham stated they could only vote this through to the end of April.

**Elena Testa then accepted the friendly amendment of saying through April 30,2022.
Donna approved the friendly amendment**

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

Motion Passed.

h. Policy 2134: Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Attachment #8

Last meeting you approved the job description for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. We took that description to draft the policy that aligns with the BOE policies for principal and pupil services director.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve policy 2134 for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction temporary position.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

9. Old Business

a. Social emotional learning curriculum, Second Step

Following your last meeting, I provided information on the Second Step curriculum including the curriculum committee Youtube meeting link, information on the CASEL framework, general information from the Second Step website, the scope and sequence for the elementary and middle school Second Step models, and their alignment with the CASEL standards.

Chairman Arico stated that he had a question about SEL and the amount of time spent on it. He feels that more time will be spent on SEL compared to other basic academic courses. Superintendent Stevens responded saying that this is already built into schedules that they have at CES they often do SEL once a week in morning meetings. SEL is tied to what is in the curriculum already. At the Middle school SEL is tied into an advisory block and it has been there for years.

Chairman Arico asked if SEL will impact other subjects within the curriculum such as math and social studies. Superintendent Stevens stated that the professional development schedule is in the works for fall for the kick off and SEL would be part of it. There are times that are built into the day for teams to collaborate. A portion of professional development at the beginning of the year will be used to talk about the implementation of Second Step. Chairman Arico then asked how much time in class they will be involved in SEL. Superintendent Stevens replied by saying that these lessons are minimal and typically would max out at thirty minutes.

Donna Cook asked a question about the Second Step Elementary Digital Program, specifically in the eighth grade unit lesson twenty one which talks about values and relationships. She felt it was vague on the values that were talked about and was not sure what boundaries would be put in place. Superintendent Stevens responded by saying you would want to connect the values to the portrait of a graduate. Donna Cook responded by saying that the portrait of the graduate is hard to connect to when it's not been finished. Superintendent Stevens then listed the values from the lesson which were humor, perseverance, gratitude, honesty, kindness and integrity. Donna Cook felt that randomly calling on the students to list different values could be bad because you never know what you will randomly hear.

Chairman Arico asked if they would be assessing SEL as they would other subjects. Superintendent Stevens responded it will be more like benchmarks. He continued to state that the purpose of the SEL program is to show students how to handle situations. Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated that the State Department of Education is piloting an optional evaluation process which had basic questions about how connected students are to the school. Donna Cook stated that she would feel more comfortable with the program if the students were only graded on participation and the school kept families up to date on what is being taught.

Tracey Anderson stated that this SEL curriculum is highly requested by the teachers and is the best fit for what the committee is looking for. It also follows the best practice of the teachers and she feels that the Board should move on this. Chairman Arico stated that there is a lot of money involved behind SEL but is proud that the teachers feel strongly about this.

Donna Cook motioned to accept the Second Step Elementary Digital Program to meet our social emotional learning requirement with the understanding that parents will be informed, timely, so they can participate in the process and express any concerns they have and to help reinforce the positive things that are being taught.

Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

b. Board Goals

Donna Cook motioned due to the late hour and late receiving of the Willington Board of Education District Framework to table this until the next meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

10. Present to Speak

No comment.

11. Board Comment

Chairman Arico asked Superintendent Stevens if all rooms had ventilation systems in both schools going into the next school year. Superintendent Stevens replied not all the rooms are ventilated, but they do have air purifiers. Chairman Arico also wanted to have information on the student activity fund at the next meeting. He also wanted to thank the superintendent and teachers that put together the graduation.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated that she wished they had asked Superintendent Stevens about the Board goals and not moved so quickly to pass the motion to move it to the next meeting. She also stated that she was disappointed that the contract was not agreed on but looks forward to discussing it with the committee. Also that the Board should have another conversation about the remote meetings and maybe around October discuss having hybrid meetings so parents could be more involved.

Tracey Anderson stated that she wants to send well wishes to the staff that left and welcome Nicholas.

Donna Cook mentioned that she would like it if Superintendent Stevens would share his list of dreams with the Board knowing this list can change and it would be beneficial to support the vision. She also stated that she wishes the portrait of the graduate to be finished.

Ann Grosjean complimented the graduations at both Hall and Center school and thanked everyone for making that happen.

Elena Testa requested that for the next meeting short information cards are made available to the public about whether Critical Race Theory is infused in our curriculum, if Project 1619 is taught in our schools, and if children in our school are taught if they can select their gender. This is so parents who want to know are informed.

12. Adjournment

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham motioned to end the meeting
Elena Testa seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Next regular meeting August 10, 2021