

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

December 14, 2021

7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Virtual Meeting

Full video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRiWAKbmzI4&t=8s>

Zoom recorded

Members Present

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Chair

Herb Arico- Secretary

Ann Grosjean- Vice Chair

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Laura Rodriguez

Briana Ross

(members all present remotely through Zoom)

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

Members of the public

1. **Call to order**

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Cunningham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Present to speak**

None

4. **Chairman's report**

Chair Cunningham discussed a letter she received from the first selectwoman regarding a region 19 district reapportionment committee that needs 2 board of education members to join. The committee will include members that are part of region 19-Willington, Ashford and Mansfield. This committee will help the towns be more fairly represented. Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that this reapportionment would allow every voter in each town to be equally represented within the region and that this happens every 10 years based on the census information. There was enough of a population change within the district to allow the reformation of a committee to review the reapportionment weight of votes, develop a plan to submit to the state and bring it to a referendum in each of the three towns. Columbia and Chaplin pay tuition to the region but do not have seats on the Region 19 B.O.E. Laura Rodriguez and Ann Grosjean volunteered to be a part of this committee. Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that at the Board of Selectmen's meeting Laura and Ann will be appointed to the committee.

5. **Communications**

Two emails from Michelle Christensen.

H. Arico made a motion to add the approval of the Special Meeting Minutes of 11.29.2021 to the

agenda under new business.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D.Cook			x
T. Anderson	x		
A.Grosjean	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		
B. Ross	x		

Motion passes

Roll call of votes was taken.

6. Superintendent report

a. Veteran's Day

Superintendent Stevens reported that Thursday November 11 was Veterans Day, and as you know students can be in school that day as long as we provide programming for them. In a non-COVID year we have invited veterans into school and held in-person programs. This year, students made cards and wrote letters for veterans expressing their gratitude for their service, some of which were sent to Corporal Jeremiah Dwyer, the son of one of our staff members who is stationed in Okinawa, Japan. Students completed research posters with information on the 5 branches of the military for display at the veterans day celebration at the Willington senior center. Students listened to patriotic music, learned marching techniques in PE, watched videos about the military, read informational texts on soldiers, wrote about the character traits of a soldier, wrote poems for our soldiers, participated in a webquest, and created Google presentations on famous veterans and the origin of veterans day. I am proud of our staff for the experiences they provided our students.

b. 2021-2022 update

We have had 16 positive COVID cases since the last board meeting. The uptick in cases across the state has been significant. The admin team recently reviewed our protocols to determine if any additional measures should be implemented, but we feel the strategies we have in place are effective. We are not seeing transmission in school in Willington, even with the implementation of the screen and stay program which allows an unvaccinated student or staff member who was identified as a close contact to remain in school as long as they are asymptomatic. We have had approximately 20 students participate in the screen and stay program and not go positive. Testing in the northeast corner of the state is an issue and our local health director and I have requested the Department of Public Health extend hours at clinics or open a new testing site in our region as a result of the uptick.

On December 8, Griffin Health operated two vaccination clinics at Hall School, one pediatric clinic and one

adult clinic. The clinic was extremely successful for community members wishing to receive the vaccine. Griffin Health administered 39 first dose and 3 second dose pediatric vaccines. The adult clinic resulted in 16 first dose and 1 second dose vaccines. Griffin Health provided 78 booster vaccines as well. They will be operating a second clinic on December 29 from 3:30-7:00 p.m. We will be moving the clinic into the gymnasium for more space, and are looking for volunteers to help facilitate the clinic.

We are in the process of setting up tutoring for students in need following the holiday break. Grant money will allow us to provide over 200 hours of tutoring, and I just applied for another grant that would provide another 100 hours.

Lastly, congratulations to the chorus and band students, Mrs. Canestrari and Mr. Phillips, on a successful concert recording at the Mill Works last Friday. A special thanks to Tom Buccino from the Mill Works who allowed the groups to utilize the space for free to record their shows. An online viewing will occur through Zoom in the near future once final edits are made to the recording. Also, Mr. Phillips has a group of students participating in a virtual drama titled *Sixteen in 10 Minutes or Less*, which will be online via Zoom on Friday at 6:30 pm. The show is a group of 10 minute plays about the lives of seven teenagers dealing with a variety of challenges from extracting a gummy bear out of a new set of braces to coping with bullies. These characters share their innermost hopes and fears with each other, reminding the audience that being sixteen isn't always easy. I'm sure it will be another outstanding production.

c. Enrollment update

Center School has 204 students and Hall School has 186 students. We currently have 3 outplacements and have a total of 390 students.

d. Staffing

We hired Elizabeth Angell as the art teacher for the district. She started on Monday and we look forward to her contributions.

e. Special Education software change

The state is going to be providing a new program to host data for special education, including individualized education programs or IEPs. The program is free, however we are still learning about the details necessary to transition to this new program which is slated for July 1, 2022. We are gathering information related to the cost for professional development to train staff, the transfer of data from our current program, and the cost associated with connecting to our student information system, PowerSchool. I hope to have more information for you at budget time.

H. Arico asked about training for the software. Superintendent Stevens reported that they would be using the "train the trainer" model. H. Arico asked what the program would do and Superintendent Stevens stated that it would maintain student IEP information, create documents and have many other features. H. Arico asked if 504's would be included in the program. Superintendent Steves stated yes and the name of the program is Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT SEDS). The program will improve parent communications. H. Arico asked if we compared this program to others. Superintendent Stevens stated that we do not have a choice, this is the program the State is using and all towns will be using it. B. Ross stated that if this program is being implemented across the state, it will be very beneficial to special education students who move within the state because the program and all the information will follow the student. D. Cook asked since this is mandated by the state will our information roll over into the new program or will someone have to re-input the information because the state has decided to change

programs? Superintendent Stevens stated that a Superintendent in a significantly larger district estimated that it would cost them \$60,000 to transfer the information. The State is trying to work out the details and they don't have all the answers yet. We are expecting Frontline, which used to be IEP Direct, are going to come out with a patch for a one time fee to transfer data to the State. D. Cook asked if it can be made evidently clear to them that this is going to cost us because they decided to change something. She also stated that the State doesn't currently go into our system to access our information and that we have to send it to them. Superintendent Stevens stated that we send the state our information. D. Cook expressed concern about cybersecurity and the possibility of our student information being hacked. PS stated that the cost of the cybersecurity is extremely expensive and that the State will have 169 towns to protect. H. Arico would like to investigate all the possible programs available and stated that it doesn't seem right that the State could mandate this program, although as Briana said this would be beneficial to our students. He stated that he would prefer to have a choice on the program.

M. Cunningham asked if tutoring will be one on one by current staff. Superintendent Stevens stated that it could be one on one and will depend on the student. We will have to see how many students will participate and then decide if we have current staff.

7. Financial Report

a. December financial report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens highlighted the major changes to the programs.

Program 1: Next month the art teacher and principal will be encumbered

Program 2: Next month we hope to have hired a new secretary at HMS so that would be encumbered, along with art. He also mentioned that Nichole Page, HMS secretary, left to take a position at UConn and will be greatly missed.

Program 3: Outplacements and transportation have been encumbered, but grants not applied.

Program 10: Health insurance was balanced based on our staff today, and still has the \$27,000 budgeted placeholder.

8. Committee Report

No Committees met. Superintendent Stevens stated that after the committees are updated this evening, Brenda will be scheduling meetings: curriculum will have curriculum to review, the policy committee has several policies to review, the negotiations team will start with WESS negotiations and the transportation committee will start with the bus contract. The school building committee is closing in on posting an RFP for an owner's project manager so I expect we will be discussing educational specifications starting some time in February.

9. New Business

a. Approve minutes of regular meeting November 9, 2021 Attachment #2

H. Arico moved to approve the minutes of November 9, 2021

A. Grosjean seconded the motion

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D. Cook	x		
T. Anderson	x		
A. Grosjean	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		
B. Ross	x		

Motion passes

b. Review, assign B.O.E. Committees

Chair M. Cunningham shared what committees each board member has been assigned to as follows:

**Willington Board of Education Committees
2021**

Policy	Finance	Curriculum/Instruction
Ann	Laura	Laura
Briana	Michelle	Ann
Herb	Donna	Tracey
Alternate	Alternate	Alternate
Michelle	Herb	Donna
		Herb

Ad Hoc

Staff Neg.	Clubs	Wellness	Security	Facilities	Trans.
Herb	Michelle	Laura	Michelle	All	Michelle
Michelle	Laura	Tracey			Donna
Ann	Briana	Donna			Briana

c. Approve B.O.E. 13 month meeting calendar

Attachment #3

T. Anderson made a motion to approve the 13 month meeting calendar with caveat of adding we will meet virtually.

H. Arico seconded the motion

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D.Cook	x		
T. Anderson	x		
A.Grosjean	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		
B. Ross	x		

Motion passes

d. Approve B.O.E. 2022-2023 budget workshop dates

Attachment #4

Superintendent Stevens discussed the budget dates with the board.

e. Approve the minutes from the special meeting on November 29, 2021

H. Arico moved to approve the minutes from the special meeting on November 29, 2021

B. Ross seconded the motion

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D.Cook			x
T. Anderson	x		
A.Grosjean	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		
B. Ross	x		

Motion passes

8:07 pm D. Cook exited the meeting

10. Old Business

a. Capital Improvement Projects prioritized

At the October meeting the Board requested that we focus on safety issues and projects that would protect our infrastructure, especially ones that would result in damage if not completed.

Superintendent Stevens stated that he has organized the CIP spreadsheet accordingly and kept it simple.

BOE members asked questions about various projects and the process.

b. 2022-2023 School Calendar

Attachment #5

Superintendent Stevens stated that we are implementing a great deal of professional development connected to curriculum improvements. One area of professional development is the science of reading, and that staff are participating in a two year training for LETRS. This is a very time consuming training with weekly expectations to finish the program. We are also going to be scheduling additional professional development next year in project based learning, curriculum unit rollout, NGSX for science, and iReady training. He would like the Board to consider instituting some ½ days in the 22-23 school calendar for professional development. Early dismissals would provide time for teachers to complete the training we need to ensure we are providing the most research based programming possible for our students. The principals are struggling to even host staff meetings at this time as they are using every moment possible for LETRS training. He reported that he hosted a voluntary feedback session with teachers and they are stretched very thin with the implementation plan we are instituting because it is very aggressive. Some districts provide the opportunity for additional PD weekly, but he would be requesting 1-2 times per month for the 22-23 school year. He would also need to calculate our instructional hours to ensure we are meeting the state requirement. We could also consider keeping paraprofessionals for the remainder of those days to provide intervention support to students in need. If the Board is interested, he would like to survey parents on this matter and the feedback could be discussed at the January meeting.

11. Present to Speak

None

12. Board Comment

H. Arico stated his appreciation for the Superintendent's comprehensive report. He was disappointed to hear the covid numbers. He wished everyone a Happy Holiday, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

L. Rodriguez stated how thankful she was for the Veteran's Day programming. She was also concerned about the positive covid cases. She was happy and hopeful that none of them were serious. She was glad there was not any transmission in the school. She wanted to thank Mr. Phillips for continuing to do phenomenal things with our students. She welcomed the new art teacher and principal. She was sad to hear Nicole Page resigned, but understood and wished her well. She wished everyone a wonderful, restful and peaceful holiday. Best of new years.

T. Anderson also wanted to thank Mr. Phillips for live music at the Willington tree lighting. And Happy Holiday's to everyone.

A. Grosjean thanked Nicole Page for everything she has done over the years and wished her luck in her new job. She welcomed the new art teacher and new principal. And wished everyone a Happy Holiday.

B. Ross expressed how much she loved the Veteran’s Day activities. Hopefully next year the event is back in person. She loved including the community in all these activities. She thought the idea of using the Mill for the winter concert was a fantastic idea. She wished good luck to Mrs. Page and welcome to the new staff. She thanked Nicole Fusco for taking the minutes. She thanked everyone and wished everyone a Happy Holiday.

M. Cunningham thanked Superintendent Stevens, nurses and others for coordinating the vaccination clinics. She also thanked Superintendent Stevens for doing all the covid tracing and keeping our community safe.

13. Adjournment

L. Rodriguez made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

H. Arico seconded the motion

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
T. Anderson	x		
A.Grosjean	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		
B. Ross	x		

Motion passes

Next meeting January 11, 2022

Nicole Fusco
Recording Secretary