

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District  
Office of the Superintendent  
Wenham, Massachusetts 01984

Date: February 4, 2015  
To: School Committee Members  
From: Michael Harvey, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Thursday, February 5, 2015

**CALL TO ORDER:** Sheila MacDonald called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm in the Buker Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room.

**Present:** Bill Wilson (arrived at 7:54 p.m.), Larry Swartz, Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Deb Evans, Stacey Metternick and Jeanise Bertrand

**Absent:** Roger Kuebel,

**Others Present:** Michael Harvey, Celeste Bowler, and Jeffrey Sands

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** all rose for the Pledge of Allegiance

**CITIZENS COMMENTS:**

Andrew Beckwith (5 Batchelder Park, Wenham) thanked the Policy Subcommittee for working with homeschool parents on the policy being voted on tonight. As a Gordon College graduate he has been following the discussion and had two questions related to the upcoming decision on holding graduation at Gordon College. At the 12/18/14 meeting Principal Tracy was charged with gathering more specific information from students who may be concerned and uncomfortable with Gordon's faith and conduct policy. When will the results be reported to the public and school committee? Has there been or will there be meetings between the school and the college to discuss and address the concerns prior to the 3/5/15 meeting to prevent a contentious and divisive vote at the public forum? He hopes the college will be given the opportunity to work with the school and school committee rather than the devastating loss of severing the relationship.

John Mulvihill (40 Arbor St, Wenham) stated how impressed he is with Jeff Sands' clear, concise and helpful budget presentations. Jeff received a round of applause from all members of the School Committee.

(Chair's report moved down agenda to accommodate Bill Wilson's arrival)

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Snow-Mike thanked the custodial staff and the Hamilton and Wenham DPW for their incredible work of cleaning up two weeks of an historic snowfall. He empathizes with parents and their frustration over closing school; the primary concern is to keep student safety at forefront of decision. They are working to keep main roads clear and also have to look at conditions of sidewalks and side streets. We have used all 5 of our allotted snow days; the present release date is Monday, June 22. Dr. Harvey's current plan would be to extend the school year during that week of June if necessary; he has no plans to hold school during April vacation.

Welcome our exchange students from Donglu Middle School in Shanghai, China who spent day at school attending classes and are staying with host families from Hamilton and Wenham. There are more activities planned tomorrow such as a cultural exchange assembly tomorrow afternoon and students will attend our Middle School dance. They have 28 students and 6 teachers/principal here. After their visit to Hamilton-Wenham, they will travel to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.

Congratulations to the Boston Globe Scholastic Art Award winners. Kirsten Losee reports our students won three gold keys, 10 silver keys, and six Honorable Mentions. The Gold Key artwork will be exhibited in the Boston 808 Commonwealth Ave gallery at Boston University. Information and pictures are available at [HWFinearts.blogspot.com](http://HWFinearts.blogspot.com).

Governor Baker- announced a new round of 9C cuts this week; Chapter 70 remains unchanged. The effect that filters down is to the circuit breaker (about \$200K statewide). MARSD has asked the Attorney General to rule on the legality of the actions related to transportation. We didn't budget for the original increase so we are not affected by the cut in regional transportation.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

#### **A. MINUTES OF JANUARY 22<sup>ND</sup> SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING (Exhibit A)**

Discussion: Name and address corrected on minutes.

#### **B. FIELD TRIP TO NYC (Exhibit B)**

Discussion: The field trip will be open to all Spanish 4 and 5. There is an error on the letter to parents related to the 40 available slots for students that will be fixed. There is no money being asked for from District funding. The cost to fingerprint chaperones (\$35.00) is built into the per student cost of the trip. At a future School Committee meeting, there should be a discussion on fingerprinting volunteers, funding of fingerprinting, and consistency across all school buildings.

Deb Evans moved that the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee approve the minutes of the January 22 school committee meeting as amended by Stacey's communication with Donna Bunk. Approved 6-0-0.

Deb Evans moved that the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee approve the field trip request to NYC on March 11, 2015. Approved 6-0-0.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **A. BUDGET (Exhibit C)**

- Jeff provided a review of the Superintendent's recommended budget presented 12/18/14. It is a level service budget plus Priority 1 overlay to fully fund the MRMS teaming model net result increase in total expenditures of \$923,050.00 or 3.25% versus FY15 budget. As a continuation of the priority overlays in the six specific DESE areas covered in previous weeks (Maintenance, IT, Educational Programming), tonight we'll talk about Special Education and Athletics.
- Special Education- Kathy Harris Director of Special Education and Jeff reviewed the budget recommendations. The FY16 Budget of \$29,343,112 is the largest of the components (23.2% FY16 of Gross Operating Budget). It is a level service budget with modest increases based on COLA and Step increases. The budget is represented by each school in the district and the District Office increase of

\$312,345 is related to Out of District tuition and transportation. There is a staff of 88 teachers and Teaching Assistants. Some of the FTE number changes are more of an accounting change than a personnel change, except at Cutler where there is an increase of a T.A. There is a schedule of the approximately 33 students Out of District.

- Sheila asked would it be cost effective to have some of the programs here in light of the \$3.1M cost of OOD tuition and transportation? Kathy said it is always a consideration when the placement determination is made. There's a wide array of students' needs (significant medical, cognitive, multi-disabilities), sometimes it's not cost effective to educate a student in-district with highly specialized intensive services; sometimes two students may meet the criteria for a substantially separate program, but it might not be in the students' best interest to be in a program of just two students. We are working toward discussions with area districts who face similar situations and we will discuss building and sharing programs; parents need to be willing to allow their children to attend school in a different community. We consistently review all programs and students' needs; when it is fiscally responsible and in the student's best interest, we will have that program. The reality is it is often difficult to bring students back into the district once they leave. We are driven to include students; Kathy reflects on programs and insists that it will not be "inclusion by illusion." It must be a meaningful educational experience.
- Barbara asked about most of the OOD placements and if the programs are private or are any public? Kathy responded North Shore Educational Consortium (NSEC) is a public program collaborative; most of the private schools are approved by state and public funds can be used. There are occasions where students can be placed in programs that are not approved, such as out of state programs, we seek sole source funding- legal agreement for settling a placement dispute. With approval from the state, we can apply that tuition to our circuit breaker funding.
- Larry asked if staff, service providers, administrative staff, assistive technology etc. is included in the \$3.16M Budget line as well as tuition. Tuition is largest piece of \$3.1M but it does include salaries, etc. They made \$90K in cuts- go to district wide special education P&L page you can see that information in the budget book published a few weeks ago. Larry confirmed the district has created programs to keep students in district and accepted students from other districts; Kathy responded in the past three years, we have two students who tuition in; adding a student is good for a small program and the child is part of the community. We will continue to look for those opportunities as long as it doesn't put undue burden on our program. H-W has a marketable name; we've worked to refine our programs, but have not made a concerted marketing effort. Kathy anticipates over time look at programs for our own kids and wants to ensure the programs can be sustained over time. Barbara asked about bringing students in to district program whether the same principle as choice applies, to accept students but not increase staff. Kathy confirmed, absolutely. We

have to be mindful of that cost benefit. Startup costs for a new program can be difficult in trying to maintain a budget with that 3% increase.

- Deb discussed trends and the FY15 district budget \$2.848M and wasn't that insufficient to our needs? Jeff is projecting fairly significant overrun (particularly in the OOD tuition and transportation). What we were expected to receive would more than cover the cost and we will be on budget for the year for total FY15 budget. Circuit breaker funds were used to offset the increases in Out Of District costs. Circuit Breaker offsets have run from 45% to 75%- we don't know what the new governor is going to do. Even if reimbursement rate lowers and we are spending more on Out of District Tuition, we have been conservative and should be ok.
- Stacey inquired about Out of District Special Education students moving out of the country and later returning. Kathy responded if they don't reside in the district, we do not track them. If they were to return to reside in the district, we would revisit and start the process again for placement. We don't hold a placeholder for tuition in the budget.
- Jeff and Athletic Director Craig Genuardo presented the Athletics Budget Recommendations. The district only funds a portion of the athletic budget; the rest is funded through user fees. The Total Gross Operating Budget is roughly flat year over year at \$333,000 or 1.1% of the total budget. Jeff reviewed the total athletic budget of \$668,000, which is split 50% district/ 50% user fees in FY16. In the budget book handed out a few weeks ago, Craig listed sport-by-sport costs.
- In the fall, the district covers 20% of user fees; as the season continues and a student plays an additional sport, the district covers an additional 10%; there is a family cap as year goes on, all told about 30% covered. The superintendent's recommendation for the FY16 budget is level service, without an increase in district paid user fees.
- Priority funding for athletics is funding assistant coaches in nine sports. Every varsity team should have the benefit of an assistant coach for safety, teaching, and supervision; years back the district eliminated assistant coaches to reduce user fees when fees were 100%. We do ask for volunteers who have a rigorous process of CORI, CPR certified, concussion test, etc. It is difficult to ask someone to come in to practice every day for no money. It makes more sense to have uniformity of district assistant coaches.
  - Barbara has followed the town teams up through high school level- does the funnel get too narrow with Varsity and JV; maybe a student isn't at Varsity or JV level- could we increase the program that way? Craig responded where participation warrants it we will have a freshman team as well. Some sports are no cuts (track) and 95-96% kids who come out for team make it. What percentage of students participate in athletics? Single athlete- over 2/3- which is an extraordinary number. Last year it was 69.2%.
  - Bill is a fan of robust athletic program- how do we compare to like districts? Craig answered we have an incredible portfolio. We added boys' JV ice hockey, girls' softball- which is not going to take away from girls' lacrosse or track. Related to user fees, we are still the highest in the Cape Ann league

and Northeast conference; we have to look at how the administrative budget is calculated at other schools. Our district funds a lower portion of traditional athletic budgets; but it is better funded than the "word on the street"- it is funded 50-50. The \$666K number is well funded and we fund less of it than other schools. Craig would like to see less burden on parents for the hidden costs- so the user fee is the user fee, and the district covers more cost.

- On the Athletic Budget priority list, the cost for nine assistant coaches would be approximately \$25K. The district does not fund any game uniforms (this is a hidden cost to parents). We want quality uniforms where everyone looks the same, but it doesn't have to be fancy. Deb clarified, generally speaking, 80% of the cost of the sports program is on parents. She would like to see less burden on parents for user fees. We could do that as a conscious decision in the budget. It's important to gather accurate information before we compare ourselves to other districts. Booster clubs' fundraising still comes from parents. Deb would like to see game uniforms included in our programs. Mike said we're going to put all teams on a replacement cycle in a reasonable way. It will cost about \$7500/year on a rotating schedule.
- Barbara said it is important to look at the cap for families for extracurricular and athletics. Ten years ago Lynnfield had a \$200 cap for families. Mike responded the extra \$10K last year for scholarships was put into the \$154K for user fee relief. This is applied to offset user fees, not on needs basis.
- Larry felt it was odd from accounting perspective that the \$333K doesn't include the revenues from user fees. Jeff has been doing it this way since he got here 16 months ago; they received a good audit from Powers and Sullivan who concur the way we account for it is good. Larry made a comment to the committee- everybody would like to reduce user fees, provide TAs for Kindergarten, etc. We've got a budget that has risen by 3.5%-- the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent have not recommended them- so if we want these, we have to be prepared to cut elsewhere. Bill agrees, we need to look at it holistically. He is surprised it didn't come in at a higher priority.
- Deb said if we are going to have any traction on the Tier 2 overlay assistant coaches in this budget cycle, we need to discuss it. Jeff concluded Mike is not recommending in this year's budget cycle. Barbara suggested the committee revisit it next year.
- 3-year Financial Forecast Model- Jeff explained the organization of the slide and key points of data. Key indicators and drivers at bottom: Enrollment is declining at fairly rapid pace at 25 students per year; we need to build a strategy for how we're going to deal with it. Net Operating Budget per student; Student to Teacher Ratio; and Student to Teacher +TA Ratio are all highlighted. Jeff has also added FTEs headcount such as Professional Staff, Other is technology teams, etc. who don't necessarily fit into categories. Column C is the FY16 budget recommended. We've taken a dynamite step in meeting the challenges with the 3.3% increase.
  - We looked at projections and are forecasting continued enrollment decline. The most recent NESDEC report shows the line of decrease was not as steep.

A decline of 25 seemed like the right number based on what we've seen in the past. Over a 4-year span enrollment will be down over 100 students. We take action with respect to enrollment and staffing by continuously rightsizing and are forecasting staffing headcount to proportionally decrease. Jeff has made assumptions related to operating costs, for example Transportation is coming up for bid, utility costs have increased.

- Barbara has read that the same projections hold true for other areas of north shore; are you finding this population shift from Hamilton to Wenham to be the same in other areas? Mike responded the answers are outside the people in this room, but the dynamic of the communities is shifting; people are retiring in place, not as many young families are moving in.
- Bill asked how we compare to our cohorts on the teacher: student ratio. The district is in the 70th percentile for teacher:student ratio; what would it take to get to get to 55th-60th percentile? Would the metric change with two buildings rather than three for elementary? The master plan recommends a two school district but that cost has a 50-year payback. There are things we have to live with based on our models. We haven't gotten to that level of school by school at MS and HS ratios. As enrollment continues to decline we need to continuously right size and improve the district.
- Deb stated the FY14 actual number 10.3 student:teacher ratio is a disturbing number- how do we get class sizes (example 22 students in Kindergarten) and a ratio of 10.3? Jeff answered the formula was all students divided by teachers. What is the ratio if we strip out all Special Education students? Jeff responded with time and effort we can get that number. Last year we reviewed every position, every staff. We will do it again. Jeff views the district as a business and our students are our product. We need to deliver a superior product at an affordable price. What does it look like classroom by classroom? Mike stated these numbers say we are very well staffed, but we keep hearing- we need more staff. How do we justify that? Are we deploying the resource in the most effective manner possible? We are adding staff for MS teaming (2 positions). We cut staff 5.0- which allows us to fund the MS team model and COLAs.
- School is roughly around 70% of town budget; generally 2/3 of every town's budget.
- Jeff reviewed schedule/calendar for the School Committee FY16 budget vote on 2/12/15. He and Mike stand by the recommendation of the 1/18 meeting. They have received good feedback from FinComs. The other priority overlays are not to be considered in this budget, they are for the future.
- The snow removal budget has utilized four service providers (Hamilton and Wenham DPWs, the custodial/maintenance staff, and a private contractor who is on a fixed rate for this winter). We're fine.

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT:**

##### **A. ORGANIZATION OF MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

With budget behind us we will discuss holding graduation at the Gordon chapel. The agenda for the 3/5/15 meeting held at Buker will be outlined as start the meeting - could be only topic; give overview;

Mike and Eric could speak and provide updates; allow Dr. Lindsay the opportunity to speak; and give the public an opportunity to speak. Set the ground rules allowing 2 minutes per person to speak; ask that people not restate things, but reiterate support (as is protocol); then we'll discuss as committee. The committee will participate in deliberation (but not back and forth with public) and possibly make a decision at end. Barbara likes that public will have opportunity to speak after substantive information has been provided by Dr. Lindsay. Larry wants to be clear- the public input is for opinion, not for making inquiry of committee or Dr. Lindsay. Deb commented we need to stay focused on facts. Will Eric, Mike, Dr. Lindsay, etc. have the opportunity to clarify or correct (not deliberate, not argue) misinformation? Barbara stated if they want to respond at end of public comment (not required) they should be able to. Think of it like a debate with a summation at the end.

We should post the ground rules on the website; part of the communications subcommittee role and the deadline hasn't passed. The venue will be Buker with the sole purpose of the meeting on this topic.

We should have a potential motion ready; the preference is to make a decision, but if something comes up we may need more information. We must be mindful of our role and boundaries. It's an important decision and we want to put closure on this ASAP.

Previously the committee was questioned on reading policies verbatim. Bill spoke with counsel and we do not need to read them verbatim, but the policies must be available on the website or hard copies.

#### B. 2<sup>ND</sup> READING OF POLICIES

##### · RESERVE FUNDS: EXCESS & DEFICIENCY (Exhibit D)

Sheila MacDonald moved that the HW Regional School Committee vote to approve the **RESERVE FUNDS: EXCESS & DEFICIENCY POLICY AS PRESENTED**

Discussion: this is the policy Jeff and Mike support; it is acceptable to both Boards of Selectmen and it is acceptable to them. The only challenge Bill has received is once you know there is an excess, why not give it back immediately? Everyone understood it was due to 9C cuts coming at any time. There were no edits from first reading. Approved: 6-0-0 (Larry stepped away).

##### · HOME EDUCATION (Exhibit E)

Sheila MacDonald moved that the HW Regional School Committee vote to approve the **HOME EDUCATION POLICY AS PRESENTED**

Discussion: Barbara said the policy group had 10-12 citizen participants who made useful, helpful and thoughtful comments. The group made changes, mainly in the opening paragraph that makes it much more friendly. The policy confirms the Superintendent has final authority to allow student in a class. Everyone seemed pleased with the changes. They are all district kids whether they are home schooled or in class. District Counsel reviewed the policy and also approves. The policy only covers students under 16-- attendance is not compulsory over 16. Jeanise pointed out that her high school schedule classes did not meet the same time each day, so logistics may be difficult. Approved 6-0-1 abstained

· **TITLE I SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT (Exhibit F)**

Sheila MacDonald moved that the HW Regional School Committee vote to approve the **TITLE I SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT POLICY AS PRESENTED**

Discussion: This policy comes right from USDOE; Celeste looked it over. We had a good discussion last time. Not much to discuss, this is the law. Approved 7-0-0

C. **REPORT ON CLASS SIZE POLICY DISCUSSION (Exhibit G) (no motion tonight)**

Discussion: We heard from the community that they wanted a number in the class size policy. We need to schedule a public meeting for more input. It was a first reading; we'd like to have a full school committee meeting following procedure where the public comes to offer comment. After public comment and school committee discussion, the policy subcommittee will go back to draft the policy. We have two policies: the current policy available on line; and the second proposed policy presented by Mike which puts the responsibility on the school committee to evaluate the superintendent based on class sizes reflecting the goals and culture of the district. Larry stated there's a lot advice out there to districts that says don't put a number in the policy. Bill asked if it is a contractual issue for teachers. Mike responded any number in the current policy is a recommendation-- when fiscally possible. It illustrates a desire. It is not desirable for a class size of 26-30 at the high school. Larry pointed out that's the danger of setting the number- if your class size is up to 30- why is your budget for 22? Jeff encouraged the committee to create flexibility in the policy and tie it closely to the financial model and controlling per pupil expenditures. Barbara said the numbers have crept up to surpass where most people will be comfortable. We have two approaches with the same goal- how to reach that goal. The policy supersedes individuals in the Superintendent role. It will be on the March 19th agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS**

A. **VOTE TO RATIFY AGREEMENT WITH CUSTODIAL UNION FOR 2014-15 SCHOOL YEAR**

Sheila MacDonald moved that the HW Regional School Committee vote to **RATIFY THE AGREEMENT WITH THE CUSTODIAL UNION FOR THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR**

Discussion: This is a 1-year agreement for the current year. It would be effective retroactively to July 1, 2014. It includes a retroactive 2% COLA to July 1, 2014; add Good Friday as paid holiday (equitable with all other district workers); resolve the issue of the shift differential rate provision 66A where head custodian shall be paid no less than 10% higher than others. When we did the math it was only +8.5% (.34/hour) but was not grieved. All costs are covered in budget. Now we need to work on a three-year agreement. Approved: 7-0-0

B. **1<sup>ST</sup> READING OF POLICIES**

· **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE** (Exhibit H) we don't have a policy on this. New state law requires organizations with over 50 employees need to have some type of policy. Most is standard language from MASC. The second paragraph gives the school committee some leeway and decision making related to the leave being paid and the employee needing to use personal leave or sick leave. The support of our staff outweighs the financial impact to the district for the 15 days. There is documentation the employee will provide. Jeff stated in the corporate world he has seen rules for using some of your sick time first. Larry said the in the rules of parental leave you need to use sick time first. Sheila commented the Domestic



Violence Policy is specific to employees who are victims. We'd like to start the policy this way and hope that we never need to use it. It can be revisited in the future.

- COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (Exhibit I) is related to the education of children with a communicable disease. We don't have a policy at this time. Please review and have questions or discussion sent to policy group or Mike for 2nd reading. Typos will be fixed.
- HEALTH EDUCATION (Exhibit J) we need a policy stating the school committee's commitment to health education. We have a program, but not a policy. Policies will be backed up by procedures.
- INOCULATION OF STUDENTS (Exhibit K) Again, we don't have a policy on the books. This policy is very close to MGL 76:15 and includes opt out.
- PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS (Exhibit L)  
It's best for students to have their physical examinations by their own doctor, but if that isn't possible, we have this policy. Stacy asked about students needing an exam for working papers, you have to have one within the year. The best practice is an annual exam. We don't require it annually. We employ a physician for this purpose. The budget includes a local physician on the books, a very small amount- perhaps \$2500?

End of new policies. That's it for our review. Excellent work.

**Adjournment:**

Sheila MacDonald moved that the HW Regional School Committee move to adjourn at 9:58 pm. Approved 7-0-0