

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Oct. 24, 2013

Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER AND
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Roger Kuebel opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. in the Winthrop Multipurpose Room. The Committee and others present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Jeanise Bertrand, Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Deb Evans, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning

ABSENT:

No one.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

None.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel spoke briefly to note that later in the meeting the Committee would discuss how a new member is to be selected and appointed to fill the vacation Committee seat, and the November meeting schedule; both were discussed later in the meeting.

He noted this special meeting was called to hear reports.

Dr. Harvey offered condolences to the Danvers community, following a crime in a public school earlier in the week of this meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Recommendation from Master Plan
Turf Field

Hamilton selectman Scott Maddern, Joint Recreation Board member Phil Tocci, and Sean Timmons detailed the current inventory, usage, and maintenance of athletic fields in the district and towns, and said the Rec Board has formed a committee to explore the idea of constructing an artificial turf athletic field, as recommended by the recreation master plan. They said a turf field could be used much more intensively so it would relieve strain on existing natural grass fields.

Extensive discussion that followed touched on topics including nearby communities' turf fields and their cost, advantages of turf fields, whether the Rec Board or School Committee would move such a project forward if it were to be proposed for construction on the high school grounds, other costly recreational projects that voters are being asked to consider, how the current practice of renting field space at Pingree School and Gordon College impacts user fees or additional costs to families, whether adding a turf field but reducing the use of existing grass fields would provide a net increase in playable hours and

allow the district to field more teams, specifics about the field space behind the high school, and the potential for private funding.

The Committee requested information about all expenses that might result from such a project.

School Testing Report

Dr. Bowler gave a PowerPoint presentation on the district's MCAS results, including breakouts by school, grade, and subject area test. (The slides are appended to these minutes.) As a whole the district remains at level 2; it met targets for "all students" and low-income students, but not for students with disabilities and high needs. Winthrop and Cutler rose from level 2 last year to level 1 this year; Buker remained at level 2; Miles River fell from level 1 in 2011-12 to level 2 in 2012-13; and HWRHS remained at level 1.

Extensive discussion and questions and answers followed, and touched on topics including what the various levels signify, and the meaning of a commendation; why grade 8 math MCAS scores are lower than at other grade levels; how administrators propose to improve student MCAS performance at grades / on tests where scores were low in 2012-13; HWRSD standings in the Boston Globe ranking of Massachusetts schools; whether the Committee should set an official goal of becoming a level 1 district, and if so, over what time period; and the issue of "teaching to the test."

Committee members asked to hear from principals at a future meeting about their reaction to the scores, and about what resources they feel are needed to increase student achievement in some curricular areas. Some indicated they want to vote at a future meeting to create an official district objective about improving MAC results.

Review of summer 2013 construction projects

S. Condon gave a PowerPoint report on work completed in summer 2013 and on the net cost. (The slides are appended to these minutes.)

Review of proposed summer 2014 construction projects

S. Condon updated the Committee on work proposed for summer 2014 as phase 2 of the capital improvements. Dr. Harvey said soft costs might total \$500,000; reimbursable costs are projected to be \$3.17 million; if the Massachusetts School Building Authority were to agree to reimburse 43% of the latter costs it would come to \$1.363,100; and the district would bond \$1.806 million. MSBA's decision is expected in late January.

Buker & Winthrop MSBA Projects *Buker Sprinkler System* *Winthrop H&V System*

The Committee briefly revisited issues about whether to install sprinklers at Buker, a topic discussed at length at earlier meetings. Administrators and Committee members discussed which of the "placeholder" warrant articles already submitted for fall Town Meeting warrants the Committee wishes to move forward with at those meetings. An informal poll of members found that 6 did not wish to bring to Town Meeting vote this fall the warrant article re Buker

sprinklers; discussion touched on concern about other costly projects already up for votes at those meetings, voters' willingness to approve multiple projects that would increase tax rates, whether it is the most cost-effective way to improve students' safety, and whether a vote at spring 2014 Town Meetings might be better.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT HEREBY APPROPRIATE NINE HUNDRED THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$930,000) FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING COSTS OF REPLACING THE HEATING SYSTEM AT THE BESSIE BUKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 1 SCHOOL STREET, IN WENHAM, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ALL COSTS INCIDENTAL OR RELATED THERETO (THE "PROJECT"), WHICH PROPOSED REPAIR PROJECT WOULD MATERIALLY EXTEND THE USEFUL LIFE OF THE BESSIE BUKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND PRESERVE AN ASSET THAT OTHERWISE IS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING THE REQUIRED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, AND FOR WHICH THE DISTRICT MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANT FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY ("MSBA"), SAID AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED AT THE DIRECTION OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE. TO MEET THIS APPROPRIATION THE DISTRICT IS AUTHORIZED TO BORROW SAID AMOUNT, UNDER AND PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 71, SECTION 16(D) OF THE GENERAL LAWS AND THE DISTRICT AGREEMENT, AS AMENDED, OR PURSUANT TO ANY OTHER ENABLING AUTHORITY. THE DISTRICT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE MSBA'S GRANT PROGRAM IS A NON-ENTITLEMENT, DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM BASED ON NEED AS DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, AND ANY PROJECT COSTS THE DISTRICT INCURS IN EXCESS OF ANY GRANT APPROVED BY AND RECEIVED FROM THE MSBA SHALL BE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDED FURTHER THAT ANY GRANT THAT THE DISTRICT MAY RECEIVE FROM THE MSBA SHALL NOT EXCEED THE LESSER OF (1) FORTY-THREE PERCENT (43%) OF ELIGIBLE, APPROVED PROJECT COSTS, AS DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, OR (2) THE TOTAL MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, AND THAT THE AMOUNT OF BORROWING AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO THIS VOTE SHALL BE REDUCED BY ANY GRANT AMOUNT SET FORTH IN THE PROJECT FUNDING AGREEMENT THAT MAY BE EXECUTED BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND THE MSBA. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0-0).

BILL WILSON FURTHER MOVED THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT HEREBY APPROPRIATE TWO MILLION TWO HUNDRED FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,240,000) FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING COSTS OF REPLACING THE HEATING SYSTEM AND WINDOWS AT THE WINTHROP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 325 BAY ROAD, IN SOUTH HAMILTON, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ALL COSTS INCIDENTAL OR RELATED THERETO (THE "PROJECT"), WHICH PROPOSED REPAIR PROJECT WOULD MATERIALLY EXTEND THE USEFUL LIFE OF THE WINTHROP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND PRESERVE AN ASSET THAT OTHERWISE IS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING THE REQUIRED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, AND FOR WHICH THE DISTRICT MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANT FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY ("MSBA"), SAID AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED AT THE DIRECTION OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE. TO MEET THIS APPROPRIATION THE DISTRICT IS AUTHORIZED TO BORROW SAID AMOUNT, UNDER AND PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 71, SECTION 16(D) OF THE GENERAL LAWS AND THE DISTRICT AGREEMENT, AS AMENDED, OR PURSUANT TO ANY OTHER ENABLING AUTHORITY. THE DISTRICT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE MSBA'S GRANT PROGRAM IS A NON-ENTITLEMENT, DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM BASED ON NEED AS DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, AND ANY PROJECT COSTS THE DISTRICT INCURS IN EXCESS OF ANY GRANT APPROVED BY AND RECEIVED FROM THE MSBA SHALL BE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDED FURTHER THAT ANY GRANT THAT THE DISTRICT MAY RECEIVE FROM THE MSBA SHALL NOT EXCEED THE LESSER OF (1) FORTY-THREE PERCENT (43%) OF ELIGIBLE, APPROVED PROJECT COSTS, AS DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, OR (2) THE TOTAL MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, AND THAT THE AMOUNT OF BORROWING AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO THIS VOTE SHALL BE REDUCED BY ANY GRANT AMOUNT SET FORTH IN THE PROJECT FUNDING AGREEMENT THAT MAY BE EXECUTED BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND THE MSBA. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0-0).

BILL WILSON FURTHER MOVED THAT WITHIN SEVEN (7) DAYS FROM THE DATE ON WHICH THESE VOTES IS ADOPTED THE SECRETARY BE AND HEREBY IS INSTRUCTED TO NOTIFY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN OF EACH OF THE MEMBER TOWNS OF THE DISTRICT, AS TO

THE AMOUNT AND GENERAL PURPOSES OF THE DEBT HEREIN AUTHORIZED, AS REQUIRED BY THE DISTRICT AGREEMENT AND BY CHAPTER 71, SECTION 16(D), OF THE GENERAL LAWS. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0-0).

Discussion of returning excess state revenue from FY14

The Committee discussed whether to return to the Towns a sum equivalent to state funds the district has received this year in excess of the state funding that was anticipated at the time the budget was constructed. HWRSD received roughly \$75,000 more circuit breaker funding than is listed in the revenue budget, and \$117,000 more Ch. 70 funds, for a total of approximately \$192,000 excess state revenue. Discussion touched on appropriate timing for such a "give-back," whether the Committee should adopt a policy to make this standard practice, and options if the district were to return excess funds but later run short of money.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE REDUCE THE TOWNS' ASSESSMENT BY \$192,416 BASED ON THE ACTUAL RESULTS OF CIRCUIT BREAKER AND CH. 70 FUNDING IN RELATION TO HOW THEY WERE BUDGETED. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0-0).

Discussion of process for appointing member to vacant School Committee seat

R. Kuebel reported that officials of the Towns have agreed that a citizen of Wenham should be appointed to fill the vacant seat on the Committee. The Wenham selectmen are to meet with the School Committee in open session to vote together to appoint a replacement. The selectmen informally agreed to extend to Nov. 5 the deadline for expressions of interest in this appointment; School Committee members agreed by general consent.

Adjustment of meeting dates

Because a conference conflicts with the Committee's routine meeting schedule, the Committee rescheduled its November meetings to 7 p.m. on Thursdays Nov. 14 and 21.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

**DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS
SED AT THIS MEETING:**

PowerPoint Presentation, Annual Report of District and School Performance (26 slides)
PowerPoint presentation, Update: Phase 1 "2013 Summer Projects" (18 slides)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary