

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Nov. 14, 2013

Minutes

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

Roger Kuebel opened the School Committee meeting at 7:06 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. Ken Whittaker opened the special meeting of the Wenham Board of Selectmen at 7:07 p.m. The Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and others present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jeanise Bertrand, Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Deb Evans, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald (7:35), Bill Wilson

WENHAM SELECTMEN PRESENT:

Ken Whittaker, Jack Wilhelm, Patrick Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Administration and Finance; Jennifer Clifford, Principal, Cutler Elementary; Chris Heath, Principal, Winthrop Elementary; Brian O'Donoghue, Principal, Buker Elementary; John Hughes, Acting Principal, Miles River Middle School (MRMS); Christy Reynolds, Assistant Principal, MRMS; Eric Tracy, Principal, HWRHS; Bryan Menegoni, Associate Principal, HWRHS; Kathy Harris, Director of Student Services

ABSENT:

No one.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

None.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel noted that both Town Meetings approved the debt exclusion proposed by the district, but that the matter will be decided by ballot; he encouraged Hamilton residents to vote Nov. 21 and Wenham residents to vote Dec. 12. He said a question he followed up with Hamilton's Town Manager after receiving an email from another party asking whether the fact that Winthrop School is leased by the district has any impact on projects proposed for that building; the Town Manager said the Town has no plans to other things with that building. He apologized for not yet presenting minutes of an executive session meeting Sept. 5 and said they would be presented for approval at a Committee meeting soon. He informed Committee members of an upcoming workshop on conflict of interest, and how to register.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Review of 11/12 Workshop

Dr. Harvey reported on a staff workshop on 11/12 featuring Dr. Tony Wagner.

NEW BUSINESS:

Interview of candidates for open School Committee seat

R. Kuebel explained the Wenham Board of Selectmen was present because the Committee and Board would jointly interview candidates for the open seat on the Committee, and then jointly vote to make an appointment. The Committee and Board spent more than an hour interviewing Larry Swartz and Stacey Metternick (both of Wenham) and then commenting one by one on the candidates' strengths and the specific needs facing the Committee, before the vote took place.

Lawrence Swartz

L. Swartz described his previous service on the School Committee and the Wenham Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. He said he has time to fill this open seat until the April election but does not intend to run for election to fill out the remaining years of the term. He spoke of his knowledge of ongoing Committee business. and said he would like to serve while a teacher's contract is negotiated during this school year. He responded to questions that touched on topics including what he would bring to communication with the community, what his training as an attorney might contribute to the Committee's work, his point of view about the teacher's contract, what he is proud of accomplishing to date as a Committee member, and the district's greatest strength and weakness.

Stacey Metternick

S. Metternick described her volunteer activity in the League of Women Voters, on the board of directors of a Hamilton preschool, and as a parent representative to the Cutler School Council. She said she would bring a fresh approach and is interested in serving long-term on the Committee. She spoke about her active interest in past school budgets. She said she has a child at the middle school and at Cutler. She responded to questions that touched on topics including what opportunity and what threat the district faces, whether she is uncomfortable with any district policies, what she would particularly want to focus on during her tenure, whether she is associated with the community group SOS, what matters most to her in education, whether she thinks the current Committee represents a balance of the perspectives in the community, and what changes she thinks are needed in the schools.

Committee members' and selectmen's statements of their observations touched on topics including one candidate's ability to "hit the ground running" versus the other's willingness to stay on the Committee longer; important Committee business pending between now and April; and the difference in the types of questions asked of the two candidates.

Vote to choose candidate to fill open seat

R. Kuebel explained the procedure would be to vote on a motion to appoint one of the candidates. If the motion were not to pass then the Board and Committee would vote on a motion to appoint the other candidate. In notes provided by the superintendent's assistant, the

motion to appoint L. Swartz came first so the motions would take place in that order.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPOINT LAWRENCE SWARTZ TO FILL THE PRESENTLY OPEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE SEAT. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-3-0-0. (J. Wilhelm, J. Bertrand and D. Evans voted no.)

R. Kuebel thanked S. Metternick and reiterated earlier comments by Committee members and selectmen that they hope she will seek election in April.

JACK WILHELM MADE A MOTION THAT THE WENHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN VOTE TO ADJOURN. PATRICK WILSON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (3-0-0-0).

The Wenham Board of Selectmen meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m. The selectmen departed. The School Committee meeting continued.

Leadership Team presents budget initiatives At the Committee's invitation, the principals and Dr. Harvey presented verbally and in writing their "big ideas" for new initiatives they would pursue if money were no object. R. Kuebel noted that these presentations were informational and that the Committee was not considering committing at this meeting to funding any of the projects the principals discussed. (The handouts they distributed at the meeting are appended to these minutes.)

B. O'Donoghue, speaking for all three elementary principals, presented two proposals. They proposed replacing the existing position of literacy specialist with the position of literacy coordinator, which would involve more administrative tasks and require a higher level of certification, and would increase expenses by about \$10,000. The elementary principals spoke highly of the impact of having a math coordinator, and recommended doing so for language arts as well; discussion touched on how to measure the impact of such a shift. They also spoke in favor of making all the district's kindergarten classes full-day, which B. O'Donoghue said would increase the cost of that program by about \$133,000 (based on six classes). They explained why they recommend moving to full-day kindergarten from the current model that offers half-day kindergarten at no charge, and the option of full-day kindergarten for \$4,000 a year tuition; there are four full-day and three half-day kindergarten classes this year. Their presentation and discussion that followed also touched on topics including parents' preferences, and the prevalence of full-day kindergarten in Massachusetts school districts.

J. Hughes proposed reorganization of the middle school faculty on a team teaching model; alignment of the high school and middle school schedules to provide more opportunity to share staff with appropriate certifications; increased focus on technology at the classroom level; elimination of user fees for four activities for which students' families currently must pay; and replacement of some walls with movable dividers to allow for larger group instruction per the recommended team teaching model.

E. Tracy recommended a 1:1 iPad program for the high school; having several teachers teach three classes and spend the rest of their work hours as curriculum leaders, which would include assisting with teacher evaluations; and replacing some classroom furniture with furniture appropriate for multiple configurations that would better support project-based learning. Discussion touched on topics including projected costs, whether iPads or other technology would be more appropriate,

Dr. Harvey proposed institution of a \$75,000 "innovation fund" to support teachers or groups of teachers interested in researching and developing innovative instructional approaches, which they would then share with their district colleagues. Discussion touched on whether this could be funded by transfers within the current year's budget, or would need to wait until a future budget year.

Presentation of Executive Summary of School Choice Report

Barbara Lawrence read aloud the executive summary of the report by the Committee on School Choice (which is appended to these minutes, and posted on the district website). It lays out how the committee researched the issues around the choice program; concludes that it costs this district more than it brings in revenue; and recommends that the district substantially reduce the target number of students at the high school (over four years, to allow current choice students to graduate) and annually reassess the number of out-of-district students who could be admitted to the high school without requiring an increase in the number of class sections. The Committee is to discuss the report and its recommendations at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED AT THIS MEETING:

Letter of interest in appointment to Committee, from Larry Swartz, dated Nov. 8, 2013

Letter of interest in appointment to Committee, from Stacey Metternick, dated Oct. 22, 2013

Proposals for K-5 Literacy and Math Coordinators (2 pages) and Full Day Kindergarten (2 pages)

Middle School Big Picture Ideas (2 pages)

Game Changers for the future of HWRHS (2 pages)

Innovation Fund Proposal (3 pages)

School Choice at Hamilton Wenham Regional High School report dated Nov. 14, 2013 (43 pages)

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary