

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Dec. 5, 2013

Minutes

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

Roger Kuebel opened the meeting at 7:08 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and others present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:**

Jeanise Bertrand, Sean Condon, Bill Dery (8:02), Deb Evans, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Administration and Finance

**ABSENT:**

No one.

**CITIZENS' CONCERNS:**

None.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

2013 State Champions Girls'  
Cross-Country Team

High School Cross-Country coach Steve Sawyer introduced the 10 cross-country runners who competed in invitational meets at the end of the cross-country season and led the team to its state Division II championship. He spoke about each of them. Dr. Harvey and the Committee congratulated them, and those present applauded the team.

2013 AP Honor Roll

Dr. Harvey announced that HWRSD is one of 477 school districts in the U.S. to be named to the 2013 AP honor roll, which recognizes districts that both increased access to AP courses for students, and increased the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher on AP tests.

MRMS Update

Dr. Harvey said John Driscoll, who has been on medical leave this year, has resigned as principal of Miles River Middle School. The job is to be posted the week following this meeting, and interviews would take place in January. The new principal would begin work in July; the interim principal will fill out this year.

**CHAIR'S REPORT:**

R. Kuebel thanked citizen Michelle Brown for her reminder that votes on budget matters require 6 yes votes.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

Minutes of 10.3.13  
Minutes of 10.17.13  
Minutes of 11.25.13  
Field Trip, Cambridge, MA, Model UN  
Acceptance of \$4,379.43 from the

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE H-W REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE ALL OF THE REMAINING ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED**

Town of Hamilton, Conservation Commission Grant  
Acceptance of \$3,414 in Grant money from the EdFund for Exo Labs Focus Microscope & Cameras

**8-0-0-1.**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Audit B. Wilson said the district submitted its end of year reporting package to the state on Oct. 22; excess and deficiency has not yet been certified.

Facilities S. Condon said this group is working on a maintenance manual and reviewing facilities policies. It is to meet next on Dec. 19.

Negotiations This subcommittee is scheduled to meet next on Dec. 17.

Policy B. Lawrence said this subcommittee would recommend 45 facilities policies to the full Committee at an upcoming meeting.

Master Plan B. Lawrence said reports are to be circulated soon.

Choice The report of the special subcommittee to assess aspects of the district's participation in the school choice program is posted on the website, under superintendent / reports.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Motion to approve Memorandum of Agreement for School Nurses R. Kuebel noted the Committee discussed this pending agreement at a prior meeting.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION UNIT C - NURSES. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

Motion to fill open seats on subcommittees: Negotiations & Policy R. Kuebel invited nominations of Committee members to serve in subcommittee roles that were left vacant by the resignation of Melissa Even Moore from the Committee. B. Lawrence nominated L. Swartz to serve on the Policy Subcommittee. S. MacDonald nominated L. Swartz to serve on the Negotiations Subcommittee.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO HAVE LARRY SWARTZ FILL THE OPEN POSITION ON THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF NEGOTIATIONS. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO HAVE LARRY SWARTZ FILL THE OPEN POSITION ON THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

Preliminary FY15 Budget Presentation

Dr. Harvey gave a PowerPoint presentation on his draft of an FY15 budget, which includes some placeholder financial figures, and a list of possible new initiatives and their projected costs, for the Committee's consideration as discussion and design of the FY15 budget get underway. (The slides are appended to these minutes.) A level services budget (with no changes to current programs and staffing) as outlined in this preliminary FY15 budget document would cost \$150,000 less than the FY14 budget, because healthcare costs are projected to be \$634,000 less than was budgeted for FY14, which would more than offset the projected \$484,000 increase in other costs. The budget document also lists 29 "priorities and big ideas" that the leadership team described to the Committee at a prior meeting, at the Committee's invitation; if all were adopted the total cost would be approximately \$2 million, of which \$791,622 would be one-time expenditures, and \$1.2 million would be recurring expenditures. Committee members and Dr. Harvey noted that this list is an array of options for consideration, and further discussion will take place at future meetings before a decision is reached about whether to include any in the FY15 budget, and if so, which ones.

Discussion that followed touched on topics including how administrators arrived at expense projections; whether any positions could be eliminated, and whether any senior staff retirements might result in new hires at lower pay rates; the assumption of level student population; redesignation of some line items previously described as revenue in the budget which in this proposed FY15 budget are listed as offsets; uncertainty about FY15 state funding levels, and how some state funding is calculated; possible future district expenses related to planning for a joint public works department with the member Towns; the calculated confidence level of the current year's budget (which, absent overbudgeting for healthcare costs, administrators estimate will be within .2% of actual expenses); and whether budgets should anticipate predictable future costs for replacement of items that have a limited useful life. Several Committee members said including the entire balance of the Excess and Deficiency account in the budget might confuse Town officials and residents, and might be misleading, as the Committee has yet to decide whether to return some E&D funds to the Towns. They asked Dr. Harvey to make it clear in budget presentations and documents that the list of "priorities and big ideas" is for discussion and consideration, and that the budget does not propose those items.

Discussion of FY15 Budget Timeline

Dr. Harvey proposed a schedule of meetings, hearings and votes

& Process

between the date of this meeting and Feb. 13. the date by which the Committee must approve a budget (per state law, and the scheduled dates for the Hamilton and Wenham Town Meetings). (The proposed schedule is appended as the last page of the PowerPoint presentation on the preliminary FY15 budget draft).

Committee members agreed extra meetings should be scheduled, starting with one on Thursday, Dec. 12 to consider proposed policies.

D. Evans suggested the Committee offer the public an earlier opportunity to provide input about the budget, and invite public comment later during Committee meetings, after briefings and discussions of specific topics.

Policy First Reading  
*Staff/Student Fraternization*

B. Lawrence said this policy is being proposed on the advice of the superintendent, and has been reviewed by the Committee's legal counsel.

Motion on Recommendation from Audit  
Committee regarding appointment of  
Financial Auditors

B. Wilson conveyed the Audit Subcommittee's recommendation that the Committee contract with Powers & Sullivan to conduct the routine annual financial audit for three more years. He spoke favorably of the firm's performance for the three-year period ending with this fiscal year. The firm charged \$21,000 a year under the current contract, and has requested \$24,000 a year for the proposed three-year contract; B. Wilson said the job has taken more time than the firm anticipated when it bid for the first contract. The \$3,500 fee for the end of year report would not change. He said the Committee should change auditors every six years.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO HAVE POWERS & SULLIVAN REPRESENT THE DISTRICT AS THE AUDITORS FOR THE FY15 SCHOOL YEAR ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE, FOR FY14, FY15 AND FY16, PER THE CONTRACT WHICH IS OUTLINED AT \$3500 PER THE ENGAGEMENT LETTER, AND \$24,000 PER YEAR FOR THE FUNCTION. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).**

**OLD BUSINESS:**  
Second Reading of Policies

B. Lawrence noted that the Committee previously discussed these policies.

*Special Procedures for  
Conducting Hearings*

At R. Kuebel's suggestion, the Committee agreed to amend this policy to replace the word "chair" with the phrase "chair or acting chair."

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS POLICY, AS AMENDED. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).**

*Guidelines for Public Comment*

B. Lawrence informed the Committee that some language the Committee decided to delete from this draft policy remains in the version presented at this meeting, because the Committee's legal counsel restored it and explained she did so because this was necessary to comply with state law. The language would require an individual to arrange 24 hours in advance with the district administrative office to address the Committee during the time for public comment at an open meeting. Several Committee members expressed opposition to such a requirement, and several expressed skepticism that state law requires this. The Committee deferred a vote; R. Kuebel said he would consult the counsel.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

**DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS**

Model UN Field Trip to Cambridge, MA request form and supporting documents (10 pages)  
Letter from Hamilton Conservation Commission dated Nov. 22, 2013 re Environmental Education Program funding (1 page)  
Email from Donna Gourdeau to leadership team dated Oct. 24, 2013 re EdFund grants (1 page)  
Memorandum of Agreement between HWRSD and HWR Education Association (Unit C - Nurses) dated 11/7/13 (1 page)  
PowerPoint presentation, FY15 Superintendent's Budget Recommendation School Committee Presentation December 5, 2013 (8 slides)  
Draft policy, Anti-Fraternization (1 page)  
Draft policy, Special Procedures for Conducting Hearings (1 page)  
Draft policy, Guidelines for Public Comment (2 pages)  
Proposal of services for FY14, FY15, and FY 16 (6 pages) and engagement letter (both unsigned and undated) from Powers & Sullivan, LLC

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary