

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Jan. 9, 2014

Minutes

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

Bill Wilson opened the meeting at 7:05 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, Deb Evans (7:25), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson (vice-chair)

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Administration; Eric Tracy, Principal, HWRHS (through 8:05 p.m.)

ABSENT:

Roger Kuebel

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

None

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of January 6, 2014
Powers & Sullivan Agreement

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA AS STATED. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Harvey updated the Committee about upcoming capital projects at Buker and Winthrop; the Buker budget has been revised down, and design work has begun so that work can begin as soon as the school year ends. B. Dery said energy rebates are expected for some components of the work.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Audit

A letter of agreement has been executed with the district's auditors Powers & Sullivan.

Facilities

None

Negotiations

This group met in executive session the night prior to this meeting to discuss bargaining strategy.

Policy

None

Warrant

None

Student Rep.

Chase Schaub reported the high school student government is doing public service announcements as part of its initiative about digital

citizenship, and has instituted a committee focused on murals at the high school.

Building

B. Dery said new windows and insulation at Buker have noticeably improved heat retention; thermostats are to be reset.

NEW BUSINESS:

High School Class Size Update

E. Tracy briefed the Committee about class sizes at the high school in fall 2013. (The data is appended to these minutes.) Across all departments, the average class size is 20. Discussion that followed touch on topics including these: why a small number of classes have 10 or fewer students, and whether it is possible to combine some sections to avoid this; the move underway to have students register online this spring for fall 2014 classes; the Policy Subcommittee's upcoming review of the district's existing class size policy; efforts underway to coordinate middle and high school class periods so faculty members who teach at both schools could more easily move between classes at both on a given day; how this district's class sizes and teaching loads compare to other districts'; reevaluation underway of the senior portfolio program; and online "virtual high school" (VHS) courses.

Review Tier 1 Overlays

Review Overlays - Tiers 2 & 3

J. Sands detailed the changes to the budget overlay priorities list (which is appended to these minutes) in the updated version discussed at this meeting. The proposed purchase of Apple apps, was mistakenly omitted from the original but now appears in the Tier 1 list. Other technology proposals previously grouped together are now split out as separate line items, but with the same total projected cost. His and Dr. Harvey's comments on the proposed projects, positions and other expenses on the list, and extensive discussion with the Committee, touched on topics including these: whether to include a budgeted amount for salary increases in the tentative budget before contract negotiations are completed; planned restoration of the team teaching structure at the middle school, which Dr. Harvey said he expects to be budget neutral, or even reduce expenses a bit; the new staff evaluation system recently mandated by the state, the challenges it poses, and how some recommended staffing changes might address those challenges; whether to restore a second language to the middle and/or high school curriculum, add online language courses, or a combination of the two; upcoming review of budget line items at the meetings of Jan. 23 and 30, and Feb. 6; the two budget votes that must take place per state regulations, the first at this meeting to approve a non-binding tentative budget, and the second on Feb. 13 to approve a budget proposal for consideration by the Towns; and the process by which the Committee might decide what to include in the budget it is to approve Feb. 13, beyond existing programs, maintenance and capital expenses, and staffing.

Adopt Tentative FY15 Budget

DEB EVANS MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADOPT THE TENTATIVE

FY15 BUDGET (EXHIBIT D) AS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.

(The tentative FY15 budget is appended to these minutes.)

Discussion that followed touched on the proposed transfer of \$1.5 million from the Excess & Deficiency Account (E&D) to help fund the FY15 budget, and the resulting E&D balance going forward; and whether the Committee should approve the tentative FY15 budget that Dr. Harvey presented, or amend it before voting. L. Swartz said the FY14 approved budget proved \$900,000 higher than actually needed, and suggested that FY14 actual spending (as projected at this time), not the total approved budget, should be used to calculate a budget comparison. Committee members discussed the potential for voters and Town officials to misunderstand the nature of the tentative budget, which the Committee characterized as a "placeholder" being acted on only to satisfy state requirements, and debated whether to vote on the tentative budget as Dr. Harvey proposed it, or reduce it, so as not to send the wrong message to a bargaining unit with which the district has not yet begun negotiating. Discussion touched on the faculty's unusual concentration of teachers with extensive experience, at the upper end of the salary scale; options for making it clear on the district website and in communication with Town governments that the budget to be approved at this meeting is a tentative placeholder; and whether it is better to approve a high tentative budget that might be revised down later, or the opposite.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION TO AMEND THE TENTATIVE BUDGET AMOUNT TO A TOTAL OF \$28,038,951. BILL WILSON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION FAILED 2-5-1-1. (L. Swartz and B. Wilson voted yes; J. Bertrand abstained.)

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION TO TAKE THE RECOMMENDED TIER 1 PRIORITIES NUMBER TO \$2.5 MILLION. THE MOTION FAILED 1-7-0-1. (B. Dery voted yes.)

The Committee voted on the original motion.
THE MOTION PASSED 7-1-0-1. (L. Swartz voted no.)

Members noted that a subcommittee's report on the school choice program, which is posted on the district website (search for "school choice"), is to be discussed at the next Committee meeting on Jan. 13, during which citizens will be able to comment. After discussion, the Committee is to vote on whether to participate in the program in 2014-15 by accepting new choice students; the vote will have no impact on choice students already enrolled the district. Dr. Harvey said he would consult the district's counsel about whether as non-residents, choice

students and members of their families can address the Committee at the meeting.

VOTE TO ADJOURN:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. LARRY SWARTZ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED AT THIS MEETING:

Letter of Agreement with Powers and Sullivan, signatures dated 12/5 and 12/13/2013 (6 pages)
HWRHS Class size 1st Semester 2013-2014 (data spreadsheet, 4 pages)
Histogram, Class Size (1 slide)
HWRSD FY15 Budget Summary: Tier 1, 2 & 3 Priority Overlays, dated 1/9/14 (1 page)
HWRSD Tentative FY15 Budget Book as of January 9, 2014 (5 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary