

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Feb. 13, 2014

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, Deb Evans, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson (7:12)

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Administration

ABSENT:

No one

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

Richard Boroff of Hamilton (Moynihan Rd.) said candidates for public office are not to use publicly funded email accounts as a campaign tool; he referred the Committee to two relevant state publications.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Presentation by North Shore United Way

Postponed

Meeting with joint BOS and FinComs

R. Kuebel reported that by the end of a 2/12 meeting with both Towns' finance committees and select boards, Town officials expressed near-unanimous support for the district budget as currently proposed. He said also that although Town officials last week asked the Committee to return excess funds to the Towns immediately, at the 2/12 meeting they said they have since learned this would be problematic; district officials and the Towns' administrative staff are to discuss the issues and formulate a mutually acceptable proposal and timeline. Committee members briefly discussed Town officials' desire for the district to be cautious about hiring maintenance staff and acquiring vehicles, and the Committee's desire for a proposed agreement for a joint Towns-district public works department to be detailed and protect the district's rights. Several members thanked R. Kuebel and Dr. Harvey for their presentation and interaction with Town officials at the 2/12 meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Update on MRMS Principal Search

Dr. Harvey said the three finalists for the position of middle school principal each spent a day in the district and met with faculty, students, the leadership team, parents, and Dr. Harvey. Site visits to their current districts of employment are to take place in the week of Feb. 24. He forecast a hiring decision in early March.

Upcoming Events

Dr. Bowler gave details about spring programs at the public library and the Wenham Museum through the district's Coordinated Family Engagement Grant, and a weeklong STEM-themed summer day camp for students who will enter Grades 1 through 6 in the fall. Information about the programs is on the district website.

CONSENT AGENDA:

J. Bertrand asked for the vote on a proposed field trip to be removed from the consent agenda so she could ask a question about it.

Minutes of February 6, 2014 meeting

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO 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 UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

Field Trip to Peru

J. Bertrand asked whether on field trips such as the proposed April 2015 trip to Peru, students are permitted to carry EpiPens and albuterol inhalers, or whether adults on the trip take charge of them. Discussion established that a district policy applies in the schools, but those present were uncertain whether it covers field trips, too. R. Kuebel suggested the Committee vote on the field trip, and subsequently address the medical policy.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FIELD TRIP TO PERU. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Audit

None

Facilities

None

Negotiations

L. Swartz reported that at a session prior to this meeting, both parties presented initial proposals. They set meeting dates and times for sessions to come.

Policy

None

Warrant

None

Student Representative

None

Other

None

OLD BUSINESS:

Discussion and possible motion on

R. Kuebel presented a chart he created to document the size of school

reducing the size of the School Committee committees in Massachusetts single-town school districts with populations of 25,000 and less. (The chart is appended to these minutes.) He noted that in the sample represented on the chart, only two districts have 9 members, and both are larger than HWRSD. He recommended the Committee ask Town Meeting voters to amend the regional district agreement to reduce the size of this committee to 7 members. He said legal counsel advises that this could be accomplished by not filling seats left vacant by resignations, and/or by reducing by one the number of seats to be filled by election in two different years that would result in the most even distribution possible of terms (such that in a three-year rotation, 3 members would be elected in one year, and 2 in each of the other years). The Committee discussed whether to recommend a committee of 5 members; several commented that an immediate change from 9 to 5 might be too abrupt. Discussion touched on topics including the amount of subcommittee work; this district's policy of electing all members district-wide versus the practice more common in other regional districts of each town's voters electing members from that town, to represent each town on the committee proportionate to population; past practice in this district; whether having an even number of members is workable; and the statutory requirement regarding how terms are staggered across multiple election years.

R. Kuebel said he is considering running for reelection this spring with the intention of, if reelected, then resigning upon the conclusion of teacher contract negotiations; he suggested that if the Town Meetings vote to reduce the size of the Committee, and he runs and is elected, his resignation could constitute a reduction by 1 of the Committee size.

R. Boroff requested permission to speak from the floor and was recognized by the chair. He commented on whether all existing subcommittees are needed, the volume of work the Committee now performs, the management style of the chair, and R. Kuebel's tentative plan to run and then resign, with which he took issue.

L. Swartz said he, too, is considering running for reelection and, if reelected, resigning after the contract and other important issues are resolved. His term and R. Kuebel's would expire in different years, because he was appointed earlier in this school year to an unexpired term; he noted that together, their resignations could reduce the Committee to 7. He said he and R. Kuebel discussed this prior to this meeting.

In a straw poll, B. Dery supported reducing the Committee to 5 members; others favored a reduction to 7.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO RECOMMEND THE AMENDMENT OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN

OF HAMILTON AND WENHAM WITH RESPECT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SO AS TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM NINE (9) TO SEVEN (7) MEMBERS, AND MORE SPECIFICALLY TO REVISE SECTION 1, PARAGRAPH (B) THEREOF TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

"THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL BE VESTED IN AND EXERCISED BY A REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE, HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE COMMITTEE. ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE SHALL SERVE UNTIL THEIR RESPECTIVE SUCCESSORS ARE ELECTED AND QUALIFIED. THE COMMITTEE, WHICH CONSISTED OF NINE (9) MEMBERS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2014, SHALL BE REDUCED AS FOLLOWS TO SEVEN (7) MEMBERS HAVING STAGGERED TERMS:

(a) NOTWITHSTANDING SECTION I, PARAGRAPH (H), NO VACANCIES ON THE COMMITTEE SHALL BE FILLED UNLESS SUCH VACANCY WOULD REDUCE THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS BELOW SEVEN (7).

(b) AT THE DISTRICT ELECTION IN 2015, THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO BE ELECTED SHALL BE SUCH AS TO BRING THE COMMITTEE TO A TOTAL OF EIGHT (8) MEMBERS. NOTWITHSTANDING THE PRECEDING SENTENCE, IF VACANCIES REDUCE THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO SEVEN (7) PRIOR TO THE 2015 ELECTION, THEN THE NUMBER ELECTED IN 2015 SHALL BE SUCH AS TO BRING THE COMMITTEE TO A TOTAL OF SEVEN (7).

(c) AT THE DISTRICT ELECTION IN 2016, THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO BE ELECTED SHALL BE SUCH AS TO BRING THE COMMITTEE TO A TOTAL OF SEVEN (7) MEMBERS.

(d) THEREAFTER THE SEVEN (7) MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE SHALL BE ELECTED IN STAGGERED TERMS, SUCH THAT EVERY THIRD YEAR THREE (3) MEMBERS SHALL BE ELECTED AND IN ALL OTHER YEARS TWO (2) MEMBERS SHALL BE ELECTED.

SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.

Brief discussion touched on the likely mix of experienced and new Committee members, should a reduction in size be accomplished by the proposed mid-term resignations mentioned above. J. Bertrand said she favors keeping the committee size at 9.

THE MOTION PASSED 8-1-0-0. (J. Bertrand voted no.)

Committee secretary D. Evans said she would contact the two Towns' administrators about Annual Town Meeting warrant items re amendment of the regional agreement.

Dr. Harvey reported that the Town Clerks have withdrawn a proposal to alter the procedure for collection and verification of signatures on School Committee nomination papers. District staff will continue to verify these signatures, checking them against voter lists provided by the Town Clerks.

Discussion and possible motion regarding the use of E&D Funds Postponed

NEW BUSINESS:

J. Sands recapped the superintendent's budget recommendation, which is unchanged from the version presented at the Committee's prior meeting. (He referred to PowerPoint slides, which were not projected at the meeting but which the Committee received hard copies of; the slides are appended to these minutes.) He and the superintendent recommend a \$485,000 increase in budgeted expenditures for FY15, a 1.8% increase over the FY14 forecast, to maintain existing staffing and services; they also recommend budgeting an additional \$1.21 million (a 2.8% increase over the FY14 forecast) to fund five "priority overlays": all-day kindergarten for all students, a "1 to 1" technology initiative for two high school grades, maintenance projects, technology upgrades district-wide, and funding for maintenance staff, equipment and vehicles. The proposed net budget increase (for a level services budget plus the priority overlays is \$1.21 million, a 4.6% increase compared to the FY14 forecast. The proposed FY15 budget is \$29,403,253.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE A FY15 GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES BUDGET OF \$29,403,253. THIS AMOUNT INCLUDES GENERAL FUND OPERATING EXPENSES (AFTER OFFSETS) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$27,432,861 AND GENERAL FUND DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,970,392. THERE ARE NO GENERAL FUND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES INCLUDED IN THE FY15 BUDGET. FURTHERMORE, THE GROSS OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE DISTRICT (BEFORE OFFSETS) HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO THE DESE-DEFINED ACCOUNTS ACCORDING TO THE "SUMMARY BY DESE CATEGORY" CHART ON PAGE 2 OF THIS BUDGET PRESENTATION DATED 2/13/14. BILL DERY SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ASSESS THE TOWNS OF HAMILTON AND WENHAM A COMBINED TOTAL OF \$24,478,847 AS THE AMOUNT NECESSARY TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE DISTRICT, AS WELL AS PAY DEBT SERVICE, FOR FY15. THE DISTRICT TREASURER SHALL DETERMINE THE AMOUNT APPORTIONED TO EACH TOWN, AND SHALL CERTIFY SUCH AMOUNT TO THE RESPECTIVE TREASURERS OF EACH TOWN WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THIS DATE. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.

R. Kuebel said that because Town officials now wish for the district to retain some excess funds, and details have yet to be determined, the assessments to the Towns for FY15 could change. The sum stipulated in the motion is the maximum assessment; the Committee could vote later to reduce it. Such a change would have no impact on the total approved budget.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

VOTE TO ADJOURN: BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 9-0-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

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

Field trip form and supporting documents, students grades 10-12 to Peru, April 2015 (63 pages)
Committee Size v. Population (1 page)
HWRSD FY15 Budget Discussion, School Committee Meeting, February 13, 2014 (6 slides)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary