

**Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee**

**March 6, 2014**

**Minutes**

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

Roger Kuebel opened the meeting at 7:07 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, Roger Kuebel (chair), Sheila MacDonald (7:12), Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson

**ALSO PRESENT:**

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

**ABSENT:**

Deb Evans, Barbara Lawrence

**CITIZENS' CONCERNS:**

Richard Boroff, 40 Moynihan Rd., Hamilton, asked the Committee and administrators about their knowledge of the PARCC test now being field tested, about another district's decision to allow families to opt out of the field testing, about their overall opinions of standardized testing, and about whether they have read a particular book, which he recommended. Dr. Harvey informed him this district will field-test the PARCC in selected grades in Winthrop and Miles River next year.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

MRMS Principal Search update

Dr. Harvey announced that he has hired Craig Hovey, assistant principal of O'Maley Middle School in Gloucester, as principal of Miles River Middle School. He is to begin work July 1.

He announced also that retired educator Lawrence (Larry) McIlheny will act as interim principal of Cutler School while J. Clifford is on maternity leave, which is expected to be from shortly before April vacation through the end of the summer break.

Recirculate Superintendent's Goals in anticipation of mid-cycle review

He noted that the Committee would soon be doing his annual review and invited members to review to his written statement of his goals as superintendent. (They are appended to these minutes.)

Operational Audit Report Update

Dr. Harvey said he would make this report at the March 20 meeting.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

Minutes of February 13, 2014  
Executive Session Minutes of  
January 30, 2014

L. Swartz asked to remove the executive session minutes of Jan. 30, 2014 from the consent agenda.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW 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 7-0-0-2.**

Brief discussion touched on the rationale for approving executive session minutes with all details redacted, like those of Jan. 30, and whether the full minutes would be released later. R. Kuebel said the minutes were presented because the law requires it, and the Committee could vote again to release the minutes with readable content when there is no longer a need for confidentiality. He said the redacted material is about contract negotiations.

L. Swartz recommended combining sections 1 and 2 of the minutes, which both refer to the Committee entering executive session, and asked for a correction to indicate that adjournment was from executive session. The Committee agreed, and renumbered the sections of the minutes accordingly.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF JAN. 30 AS AMENDED. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-1-2.**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Audit	J. Sands said he has met with the district's auditors, reviewed the management letter, and prepared a detailed response for the superintendent and Committee, which he said would be finalized by March 14.
Facilities	This group's most recently scheduled meeting was postponed.
Negotiations	A contract negotiation session took place Feb. 27 and another is scheduled for March 10.
Policy	This group's recommendations were discussed later in the meeting.
Warrant	None
Student Representative	None
Other	Dr. Harvey said the master plan demographic report is posted on website. A final draft of the visioning session report is near completion; upon its release, feedback sessions are to be scheduled. He forecast the final master plan report would be completed in early April.  Collins Center report regarding planning for a joint district-Towns department of public works is posted on the Town of Wenham website;

Collins Center representatives are to report to the Committee on March 20.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Review of SC 2013-2014 Goals

Members were encouraged to forward feedback to B. Wilson, who will synthesize responses as part of the Committee's review of its 2013-14 goals.

Policies—2nd Reading  
*Naming Facilities*

S. MacDonald said the Policy Working Group made slight changes to the draft Naming Facilities Policy discussed at an earlier meeting. Members read the revised version silently before voting.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE POLICY ON NAMING FACILITIES. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-1-0-2.**

(Bill Dery voted no.)

*Vehicle Idling—Review*

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE SECOND POLICY READING OF VEHICLES IDLING. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.**

Brief discussion of this existing policy, presented unchanged at this meeting for preapproval, touched on topics including whether it is necessary to approve existing policies; slight variations between relevant state and Town laws; specifics of the draft text, including the District's jurisdiction in this matter 100' beyond the border of school property; and the case for keeping buses' or trucks' diesel engines running when they are briefly parked outside a school. L. Swartz said the Policy Working Group plans to routinely review each policy approximately every three years going forward, and if in agreement with a policy, would recommend the Committee approve it unchanged to indicate that review has taken place and support continues. B. Dery suggested review and revision of the first paragraph, which stipulates details including permitted uses, time limits for idling, and signage. L. Swartz said some language matches state statutes and/or regulations and the Committee cannot modify it.

**THE MOTION PASSED 6-1-0-2.** (Bill Dery voted no.)

(The policies are appended to these minutes.)

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Budget: Briefing on Saturday meeting

L. Swartz reported that at its March 1 meeting, the Hamilton Finance Committee voted 4–0 to support a District budget only to 4% over the forecasted expenditures for this year. He noted that the budget approved by the Committee is 4.6% over forecast. R. Kuebel said that at a joint meeting on February 12, representatives of the two Towns

expressed nearly unanimous support for the district budget as approved; he said Wenham's FinCom and selectmen indicate they still support it, and the Hamilton Town Manager indicates the Hamilton selectmen do, too. He said he would attend the Hamilton Board of Selectmen meeting on March 10 to advocate for support for the budget.

Discuss revising District goals to incorporate MCAS level 1, etc.

Dr. Bowler gave a PowerPoint presentation on a new initiative called Project Success 2027, which she and Dr. Harvey created in response to the Committee chair's request that the administration formulate a plan to improve student achievement and move the entire district to a "level 1" rating as measured by student performance on the MCAS. (The PowerPoint slides are appended to these minutes.) She said data would be gathered on all incoming kindergartners starting with those entering in fall 2014, and data gathered by regular assessments thereafter would be employed to target daily instruction to meet each student's specific needs, with a goal of all the students in the fall 2014 entering group becoming proficient in reading by third grade (2017). Assessment and analysis would continue through grade 12. Her presentation and discussion that followed touched on topics including uncertainty about whether MCAS may soon be replaced with another widely-used assessment; the rationale for starting with kindergartners, and with reading; options for training all teachers in strategies for differentiated instruction; whether focusing efforts on low-achieving students may mean other students may suffer; what constitutes proficiency in reading; and options for alternative class groups, such as multi-age K-1 classes or organizing reading groups of students with the same profile who are in different grades. Dr. Bowler discussed the dynamic between assessment and instruction, and the kindergarten assessment being piloted this year to provide a baseline. R. Kuebel said the district should educate students in a way that whatever measure is used they will come out at the top.

2015 School Calendar

Dr. Harvey presented two options for a 2014-15 school year calendar (who are appended to these minutes) and summarized their pros and cons. Discussion touched on topics including his proposal to schedule a teacher workshop day (on which students do not attend school) on election day 2014 so voting at Winthrop Elementary would not disrupt a school day; and educational issues regarding starting before or after Labor Day, and regarding continuing school into late June. He recommended starting school before Labor Day, as has been District practice for some years, and said teachers and the leadership team agree. Several members commented that as students they would not like that schedule. B. Dery asked whether the Committee could create a school calendar that scheduled school days on some federal holidays; Dr. Harvey said the Committee could, but R. Kuebel noted that this could not be changed within a contract. Discussion also touched on whether a difference of several days in the school year starting date would significantly impact the schedule for facilities projects during the summer break.

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE BEFORE LABOR DAY G1 SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR 2015. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-1-0-2. (J. Bertrand voted no.)**

Members of the leadership team said replacement of the "glass curtain" at the front of Winthrop school has been rescheduled from summer 2014 to summer 2015 because the turn-around time for manufacture and delivery of the units is unexpectedly long, and the district cannot bid the job this spring in time to for installation before school resumes for fall 2014. The job is to be bid in October 2014 so units can be ordered in time for delivery in June 2015 for installation during summer break. J. Sands said funding would roll over; at R. Kuebel's request, he said he would check with the district's auditors to confirm that delaying the project would have no adverse financial impact.

J. Sands reported bids and specs were posted on the day of this meeting for the Buker and Winthrop boiler projects and the projects are on schedule.

Reserve Funds Policy

The Committee discussed the existing policy on reserve funds (which is appended to these minutes). J. Sands said the Committee and administrators have spent much time on this issue this year and recommended the Committee resolve soon whether to alter the policy. Discussion touched on topics including what should take place if the district receives more state funds than anticipated, or if spending efficiencies transpire during a budget year; whether such funds could be used for projects the Committee did not include in the budget, but would have liked to; and how frequently the district office recalculates the anticipated end of year balance. J. Sands said he would draft a policy for Committee consideration.

Policies—1st Reading

S. MacDonald explained the Policy Working Group's draft policies (which are appended to these minutes).

*Authorized Use of  
School-Owned Equipment*

This draft expresses the Committee's wish to be of assistance to other Town departments and community organizations, and leaves to the superintendent's discretion specific decisions about whether to authorize loans of equipment to them, or to staff/students who want to borrow equipment for district-related use. S. MacDonald said liability would be covered by district insurance. The superintendent would establish proper controls and users would be responsible for returning items in the same conditions as at the time of release for use.

*Building & Grounds Inspections*

This draft policy states that principals and head custodians shall conduct safety inspections of at least 10 specified structures, facilities and equipment at least once per semester and report and make

recommendations to the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration. B. Dery said municipal boards of health and fire departments perform inspections the draft policy mentions; he recommended tabling the proposed policy. He noted that this policy is safety-oriented, and said a handbook should be developed that would create a schedule of preventive maintenance inspections.

*Building & Grounds Security*

This draft policy states that the superintendent will assure that reasonable procedures are in place to maximize security of buildings and occupants, including maintenance of a secure building and protection from hazards related to fire and to electrical, plumbing and heating equipment. L. Swartz acknowledged that the language is general and said the Policy Working Group expects the state will soon issue regulations the District would be required to follow; in the meantime, this proposed policy would put it on the record that the Committee recognizes the need for building and grounds facility. R. Kuebel suggested amendment of the draft to say procedures would ensure, not maximize, security.

*Memorials for Deceased Students or Staff*

This draft was reworked after prior discussion by the Committee; the updated version would limit memorials on District sites to either living memorials (trees or shrubs), or perpetual awards or scholarships. Permanent memorials of other types that already are in place could be removed only by a vote of the Committee.

*Guidelines for Public Comment*

This draft policy would limit public comment to 20 minutes per Committee meeting, limit each speaker's time to 3 minutes, specify the length of time during which public comment would be accepted during the Committee's meetings, state the range of topics, and require Committee members to direct through the chair any queries for clarification. It also would establish a process for requesting in advance to make a presentation to the Committee. The draft specifies steps to be taken if an individual is disruptive, and states that the Committee will not hear personal complaints about personnel or any member of the school committee, which it states should in most circumstances be dealt with through administrative channels.

Motion Regarding 2014 Use of E&D Funds

R. Kuebel said that although in February, Town boards indicated they do not want excess FY14 funds returned all at once, they have reconsidered and reached a consensus requesting the District transfer the funds during the current fiscal year. (Letters from both boards of selectmen are appended to these minutes.)

**BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO RETURN \$1,519,443 OR 100% OF THE DISTRICT'S FY13 CERTIFIED EXCESS AND DEFICIENCY TO THE TOWNS IN THE FORM OF A REDUCTION TO THEIR FY2014 ASSESSMENTS. THE AMOUNTS TO BE RETURNED TO THE TOWNS OF**

**HAMILTON AND WENHAM ARE \$1,048,263.73 AND \$471,179.27 RESPECTIVELY. THE DISTRICT'S ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF FINANCE RECOMMENDS THAT THESE AMOUNTS BE SPREAD EQUALLY OVER THE FINAL THREE (3) MONTHS OF THE FISCAL YEAR; APRIL 2014, MAY 2014 AND JUNE 2014. THE DISTRICT TREASURER SHALL DETERMINE THE EXACT AMOUNTS APPORTIONED TO EACH TOWN, BY MONTH, AND SHALL CERTIFY SUCH AMOUNTS TO THE RESPECTIVE TREASURERS OF EACH TOWN WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THIS DATE. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.**

J. Bertrand asked why the district does not return funds to the Towns by check; J. Sands made a case for the current system of reducing the monthly assessments that the Towns pay to the district. Discussion also touched on topics including the jump that would later take place in the assessment; perception of that in Town government and among citizens; and the total sum the District has returned to the Towns over four years.

**THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

**VOTE TO ADJOURN:**

**BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

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

Superintendent's Goals, dated Oct. 3, 2013 (3 pages)  
School Committee Goals 2013-2014 (approved 10.3.13) (4 pages)  
Policies presented for second reading: Naming Facilities, Vehicle Idling (2 pages)  
Project Success 2027 PowerPoint presentation (6 slides)  
2014-2015 School Calendar draft options G1 and G2 (2 pages)  
Reserve Funds Policy (1 page)  
Policies presented for first reading: Authorized Use of School-Owned Equipment, Building & Grounds Inspections, Memorials for Deceased Students or Staff, Guidelines for Public Comment (6 pages)  
Letter from Wenham Board of Selectmen to HWRSC dated Feb. 25, 2014 re return of funds from Excess and Deficiency (2 pages)  
Letter from Hamilton Board of Selectmen to HWRSC dated March 3, 2014 re return of funds from Excess and Deficiency (1 page)

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Sierks Smith