

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

April 17, 2014

Minutes

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

Dr. Michael Harvey opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and others present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Jeanise Bertrand, Bill Dery, Deb Evans, Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Stacey Metternick, Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Roger Kuebel, Larry Swartz

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of SC Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Assistant Treasurer

Dr. Harvey welcomed Stacey Metternick, who was recently elected to the Committee. Acting as temporary chair pending the annual post-election reorganization of the Committee, Dr. Harvey called on the Committee to elect its officers for 2014-15.

**DEB EVANS NOMINATED BILL WILSON FOR
CHAIRPERSON OF THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE
NOMINATION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

**BARBARA LAWRENCE NOMINATED SHEILA MACDONALD
FOR VICE CHAIR OF THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE
NOMINATION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

**BILL WILSON NOMINATED DEB EVANS FOR SECRETARY
OF THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT. SHEILA
MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION
PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

**SHEILA MACDONALD NOMINATED JEANISE BERTRAND
FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE HW REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED
THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

**BARBARA LAWRENCE NOMINATED SHEILA MACDONALD
FOR ASSISTANT TREASURER OF THE HW REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION.
THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.**

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

Elaine Appel (Linden St., Hamilton) urged the Committee to resist misguided external mandates, to seek input about important proposals from the ground up, and not to lock the district into a top-heavy administration or what she described as an unproven, expensive iPad leasing program.

OLD BUSINESS:

Curriculum Leader Reorganization

Dr. Harvey gave a PowerPoint presentation of a revised proposal to reorganize the curricular administration staff, which was scaled back from the original proposal, in response to feedback from faculty and others since his presentation of the original proposal at a previous Committee meeting. (The slides are appended to these minutes.) The revised proposal would create elementary curriculum coordinator positions for English language arts, math, and special education for the 2014-15 school year. He said discussion would continue about whether to make changes in 2015-16 to administrative positions related to grades 6-12. His presentation and additional information provided by Dr. Bowler touched on the roles of the proposed curriculum administrators; data about HWRSD elementary schools' ranking on state math tests, and variation between the three schools; the existing math coach position and its influence on math learning; and the proposed responsibilities of an elementary special education coordinator. Committee members' comments touched on topics including the Committee goal for the district to improve MCAS scores; teacher evaluation under the new state-mandated system; and whether adding a special education coordinator would improve things for students.

B. Wilson invited public comment.

Susan Lucia (Porter St., Wenham and a teacher at Cutler Elementary) spoke highly of the current math coach; said teachers deserve credit for increased student achievement in math; said the current curriculum leader positions and math coach positions are effective; and said the district has good and helpful administrators but does not need more. She also said most elementary teachers learned of this proposal on the day of this meeting, or just a few days before it.

Charlie Pepper (Meyer Rd., Hamilton) said hiring more administrators to collect data to align curriculum with the common core risks losing some of the "magic of teaching." He suggested the Committee consult other districts about their stance on the common core.

Ruth Collins (Blueberry Lane, Hamilton) said a strength of the American educational system is that it helps student become innovative, critical, nonliteral thinkers, and said if HWRSD becomes a test-centered administratively heavy district that would change. She

asked whether the proposed restructuring would cut any teaching positions.

Ariana MacDonough (Rust St., Hamilton) noted the data Dr. Harvey presented was from a single year, and said that if it is critical to the decision, data showing trends over multiple years should be offered. She asked why teachers were not informed or consulted earlier.

Michelle Bailey (Remington Rd., Wenham) said the current system of having a special education teacher in each building serve part time as the chair for that school allows them to establish close relationships with parents and to know the students well.

Deb Clapp (teacher at HWRHS) agreed more data would be helpful and asked how much the positions would cost and where in the already-approved 2014-15 budget the funds would be transferred from.

Bridgid O'Donnell (105 Main St. and a teacher at Winthrop Elementary) spoke about how elementary teachers currently work together to improve instructional practice, and how they work with the math coach. She suggested hiring a curriculum writer would be more constructive than adding curriculum administrators.

Deb Safford (22 Perkins St., Hamilton) said decisions that might reduce teaching staff should not be made based on a few test scores; she said the real measure of how current 3rd and 4th graders are doing will be the outcome when they leave high school for college.

David McGeney, who identified himself as a member of the Peabody School Committee and said he was invited to this meeting by C. Peppler, spoke critically about the common core and said Massachusetts has lowered standards to accommodate it. He encouraged Committee members to learn a lot about the common core and PARCC test.

B. Wilson asked whether others wished to speak; no one responded. He closed the public comment period.

Committee members' comments touched on topics including student opinion about the common core; state mandates regarding alignment with the core, and staff evaluation; the district's standardized text results; and anticipated advantages of the proposed reorganization.

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE CREATION OF THE POSITIONS OF ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATH EDUCATION COORDINATORS AS PRESENTED IN THE ATTACHED JOB

DESCRIPTIONS. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION.

Further comments by Committee members addressed topics including letters the Committee received from interested parties, and that deficiencies have evolved over time and must be corrected for students to do as well as possible

Kathy O'Shea (Howard St., Hamilton, and a teacher at Buker Elementary) spoke from the audience and said teachers were not asked what they need in their classrooms. She suggested additional teaching assistants would be more helpful than additional administrators.

Jenny Beauregard (Hamilton Ave., Hamilton) spoke from the audience and expressed concern about data driven analysis and supervisory authority over teachers.

S. MacDonald said the three elementary principals have been asking for three years for these positions. She asked K. O'Shea whether during that time span, principals talked with teachers about the idea. K. O'Shea said they did not; S. Lucia said at a meeting on the day of this meeting at Cutler, 80 percent of teachers were unaware of it.

THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-1-2. (S. Metternick abstained.)

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE CREATION OF THE POSITION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR AS PRESENTED IN THE ATTACHED JOB DESCRIPTIONS. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION.

Discussion touched on the perceived deficiency that led to this proposal, anticipated benefits, and budgetary impact (which Dr. Harvey said would be neutral).

THE MOTION PASSED 5-0-2-2. (B. Wilson and S. Metternick abstained.)

A citizen who did not identify herself spoke from the audience and urged the Committee to become conversant with issues around the common core, and expressed dismay that public comment at the meeting did not cause any Committee members to suggest further deliberation before voting.

CONSENT AGENDA:
Minutes of April 3, 2014

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APROVE ALL OF THE REMAINING ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR

AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-1-2. (S. Metternick abstained.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None; instead, the Committee discussed what subcommittees to appoint for 2014-15 (see below).

NEW BUSINESS:

Appointment of Members to Sub Committees

The Committee discussed which subcommittees to appoint for 2014-15. Members postponed a decision, and appointments; B. Wilson said he would consult members by email regarding subcommittees on which they would prefer to serve, and priorities for 2014-15. Discussion touched on topics including the roles of the Committee and administrators; whether some subcommittees create more work for administrators, as J. Sands suggested; whether to revive a communications subcommittee and/or policy subcommittee; disbanding the audit subcommittee and instead having representative from the Committee participate in milestone meetings with auditors; and the legal need for a negotiations subcommittee and, when state-funded capital projects are in process, a building committee.

School Liaisons for 2014-15

Members volunteered to serve as Committee liaisons to specific schools.

Vote on Last Official Day of School

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE OFFICIAL LAST DAY OF SCHOOL TO BE JUNE 19, 2014 AS A HALF DAY. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Vote to Accept Grant Monies from Edfund

Grant documents with details of the four grants below are appended to these minutes.

Hydroponic Garden

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT \$2,022.40 FROM THE EDFUND FOR THE HYDROPONIC GARDEN. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION.

Dr. Harvey said the Miles River life skills teacher proposed this grant to create a garden to promote healthy eating and sustainable agriculture. Questions touched on whether there would be recurring costs and whether the teacher who proposed this grant has related expertise.

THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Chromebooks & Carts - MRMS

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT \$18,546 FROM THE EDFUND FOR THE MRMS

CHROMEBOOKS AND CARTS. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION.

This grant would be used to purchase 50 Chromebooks and 2 carts to move them between classrooms. Students would use them for writing. Questions and discussion touched on topics including whether there would be peripheral costs; the schedule for roll-out; why these devices were chosen; the process in the district before a grant proposal is submitted to the Edfund, and the capacity of the tech staff to handle additional tech requests; and whether it is efficient to have students use both Chromebooks and iPads.

THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Cyberbullying Presentation

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT \$2,000 FROM THE EDFUND FOR A PRESENTATION ON CYBERBULLING. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Elementary School iPads

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT \$53,089 FROM THE EDFUND FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IPADS. JEANISE BERTRAND SECONDED THE MOTION.

The grant would be used to purchase 30 iPads for each of the elementary schools (total 90) plus charging stations, for use by grade 3-5 classrooms; iPads for the earlier grades were funded in the budget. Discussion touched on topics including training teachers to integrate the devices into instruction, and whether teachers are enthusiastic.

THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

OLD BUSINESS:

Policy: Second Readings

B. Lawrence briefly described minor changes made to policy drafts following discussion at an earlier meeting.

Emergency Closings

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE EMERGENCY CLOSINGS POLICY AS PRESENTED. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

School Bus Safety Program

This policy would take effect in July to avoid introducing new procedures during the current school year.

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PROGRAM POLICY AS

PRESENTED. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Student Conduct on School Buses

SHEILA MACDONAALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES POLICY AS PRESENTED. STACEY METTERNICK SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Student Transportation Services

SHEILA MACDONAALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES POLICY AS PRESENTED. DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

VOTE TO ADJOURN:

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

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

HW Edfund project grant applications and grant acknowledgements
(14 pages)
FY15 & FY16 Reorganization Plan PowerPoint presentation (April
17, 2014 revised version) (6 slides)
Job descriptions for 3 proposed curriculum coordinator positions (8
pages)
Massachusetts Association of School Committees information sheet,
Authority Responsibility and Actions of the School Committee
(7 pages)
Draft policies: Emergency Closings, Student Transportation Services,
School Bus Safety Program, Student Conduct on School Buses
(4 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith