

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

May 1, 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, Bill Dery, Deb Evans, Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Stacey Metternick, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Jeff Sands, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration; Eric Tracy, HWRHS Principal; Bryan Menegoni, HWRHS Associate Principal

ABSENT:

Roger Kuebel

UPDATE BY REP. BRAD HILL:

Rep. Hill reported on recent budget deliberations by the Massachusetts House of Representatives that would increase education funding, and an amendment he co-sponsored that calls for appointment of a commission to examine the Ch. 70 formula by which local aid is calculated. These House measures now go to the state Senate for consideration. He urged the Committee to write to Sen. Bruce Tarr in support of the Ch. 70 amendment. He also discussed the state's role regarding the common core and PARCC.

B. Wilson responded with comments about the common core, PARCC, and the district's pending I-Pad program.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

B. Wilson said members of the audience could comment on the I-Pad program later in the meeting; he invited the public to comment on other issues at this time.

Margo Killoran (Sagamore Farm Rd., Hamilton) spoke favorably about use of I-Pads in instruction of students with disabilities and provided examples from her children's experience.

Elaine Appel (81 Linden Hamilton) invited those present to a Peabody School Committee-sponsored presentation by Jim Stergios of the Pioneer Institute about the common core, on May 6 at 7 p.m. at the Higgins Middle School in Peabody.

Deb Safford (Maple St, Hamilton) expressed various reasons she believes the Committee should reconsider a recently approved administrative restructuring, and the I-Pad program, before moving

forward with them, and urged the Committee to learn more about the common core. She objected to a Committee member's statement at the previous meeting that those opposed to the restructuring are afraid of change. B. Wilson and B. Lawrence responded to D. Safford's use of the term "rubber stamping" and said the Committee discussed the restructuring at length before voting. B. Wilson said the Committee is to discuss the common core at its May 15 meeting.

Charlie Pepler (Meyer Rd, Hamilton) said the Massachusetts legislature has not mandated the common core. He commented on salary budget figures for the administrative restructuring; Dr. Harvey and B. Wilson said those figures have been changed.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Update on discussion with Hamilton BOS

B. Wilson noted that Hamilton Board of Selectman chair Scott Maddern was present and later in the meeting would discuss issues about financial reserves policy.

SEPAC Presentation 5.15.14

He said also that M. Killoran would make a presentation at the May 15 meeting about the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). She spoke briefly at this meeting about the group's yearly Educator of the Year award and said she would announce this year's recipient at the May 15 meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Common Core Presentation from
C. Bowler on 5.15.14

Dr. Harvey said Dr. Bowler would present at the May 15 meeting an overview of Massachusetts' curriculum framework documents as revised in 2011 to reflect common core state standards.

He briefly discussed districts' options re standardized tests including the PARCC test, and said he would learn more about its pros and con at a mid-May meeting of superintendents.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of April 17, 2014

B. Wilson asked for the minutes of April 17, 2014 to be removed from the consent agenda. He requested two corrections, to list him as present, and to correctly report his abstention on one vote. The Committee agreed to these amendments by general consent.

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2014 AS AMENDED. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Audit

None

Facilities

None

Negotiations	None
Policy	B. Lawrence said district policies are now posted online available in print. This working group will continue to update policies.
Warrant	None
Student Representative	Chase Schaub said seniors have 11 school days remaining.
Other	B. Dery said engineers recommend replacement of the control systems Winthrop and Buker boilers, which might cost an estimated \$80,000. The Massachusetts School Building Association has agreed to pay a portion of the cost of replacing the boilers but will not contribute toward replacement of the controls. He said it appears workable to pay for the controls with funds already raised by bonding. L. Swartz recommended consulting bond counsel. J. Sands said he is pricing the work.

NEW BUSINESS:

1 > 1 I-Pad Update

E. Tracy gave a PowerPoint presentation recapping the planning process for the 1 > 1 I-Pad program, and he and B. Menegoni answered questions from the Committee and audience. (The PowerPoint slides and a timeline document are appended to these minutes.) His comments touched on details including the planning timeline, programs in other districts, teacher training, and Internet security.

Questions from Committee members touched on topics including whether students would have to lease I-Pads through the school or could use their own; how the devices work with various types of thinking; advantages identified during this year's pilot program; the findings of a much larger pilot program in a Minnesota high school; issues of distraction; other devices that were considered; how to assess the impact and effectiveness of instruction using I-Pads; and whether electronic devices would reduce textbook costs.

B. Wilson invited the audience to comment and ask questions.

Ruth Collins (Blueberry Lane, Hamilton) said she disagrees with some of the Committee's decisions at its prior meeting but thanked members for their earnest, hard work. She spoke highly of use of laptops in classrooms, based on her professional experience teaching at the university level, and asked why I-Pads were chosen instead. E. Tracy spoke about the mobility that I-Pads offer; B. Menegoni spoke of the ease and speed with which I-Pads can be put away and/or turned off.

D. Safford said requiring families to purchase or lease a device may constitute a tax and asked whether this is legal. She said if the goal is to "level the playing field," those who need I-Pads as a tool could have

them without requiring that every student do so. She spoke of distractions and extended training time her son experienced at another school where I-Pads are in use, and asked about the financial cost of training and the opportunity cost of distractions. Dr. Harvey said leasing I-Pads would not be mandatory, and "loaners" would be on hand in classrooms. B. Menegoni described how other districts handle this.

John Mulvihill (Arbor St., Wenham) said excellent teachers and mentors are an asset of this district and expressed concern that extensive use of I-Pads might diminish students' relationships with teachers. E. Tracy said that the devices would be available but not omnipresent, and teachers would help students learn to construct arguments and develop of a sense of what online information is and is not valuable. B. Lawrence spoke enthusiastically about the devices and called them a powerful tool.

Louise Brown (Essex St., Hamilton) expressed concern about adolescents' distractibility and asked how the faculty would teach with I-Pads without letting students become distracted. She expressed concern also that developing such strategies after the program is introduced might cause some students to "lose a year." B. Menegoni said HWRHS already allows students to use mobile devices in the classroom, and teachers already use related classroom management strategies.

Ariana McDonough (Rust St., Hamilton) requested a clear statement online that parents can opt out of the program; asked whether further assessment could take place before broad implementation; said teachers and students can do creative things without the devices; expressed concern that they might especially distract students who are not highly motivated; and suggested limited use of the devices, in particular subject areas and/or for students who especially need them.

A (Bay Rd., Hamilton) resident spoke favorably about the 1 > 1 program and her daughter's use of an I-Pad in school as part of her individualized education plan. She expressed concern about requiring families to pay a fee for an element of public education, and asked how teachers would be held accountable for using the devices in ways that go beyond posting assignments online. E. Tracy spoke about expectations, documentation and other contractual issues.

B. Wilson asked whether others would like to speak; no one responded. He ended the public comment period.

Discussion of E&D Reserve and treatment of excess state revenue

Hamilton Board of Selectman chair Scott Maddern and Committee members discussed that board's letter to the Committee about SC policy about returning funds to the Towns if state revenue exceeds the budgeted level. Discussion touched on topics including the timeline for

state certification of the district's excess funds versus the timeline for the Towns to set tax rates; staff time spent this year on related issues; and the existing policy. J. Sands noted that the Committee previously asked him to draft a recommendation. B. Wilson recommended that due to the late hour, the Committee discuss the Board's letter in more depth at a future meeting.

B. Dery said the issues have been discussed at length, and he advocated making a decision promptly.

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE SET A POLICY FOR YEAR END EXCESS MONEY AS FOLLOWS: ALL MONIES, IRRESPECTIVE OF SOURCE, THAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE IN EXCESS AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR WILL BE CERTIFIED BY THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS AND THEN WILL BE USED TO FIRST REPLENISH EXCESS & DEFICIENCY UP TO A LIMIT OF 3 PERCENT OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET, AND THEN THE REMAINDER OF THAT EXCESS WILL BE RETURNED TO THE TOWNS VIA A REDUCTION IN ASSESSMENT FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR. FURTHER, THE E&D FUND WILL REMAIN AT 3 PERCENT AND WILL ONLY BE USED FOR EMERGENCIES DECLARED BY THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.

The motion was not seconded.

J. Sands said administrators would not know for 10 to 11 months how much the state would certify as excess & deficiency for FY14. Further discussion touched on topics including the Hamilton BOS's willingness for district officials to take time to carefully formulate a new policy; funds returned to the Towns over the past 3 years; and differing features of returning funds in the current fiscal year or a future year.

Update on last year's audit

J. Sands updated the Committee about the FY13 audit, and referred to PowerPoint slides (which were not projected but which members had received in print prior to this meeting; they are appended to these minutes). His update touched on topics including the overall nature of audit reports and the management letters they include; deficiencies typically identified in management letters; the deficiencies the FY13 HWRHS audit report identified; and which have been resolved and which are in process. He said he would further update the Committee in writing quarterly. A meeting was to take place with the auditors on the morning following this meeting to begin the FY14 audit process. Brief discussion touched on cash reconciliation issues; J. Sands said all but two accounts have been reconciled, and a contractor is to resolve software issues that are delaying reconciliation of the remaining accounts.

Creation of Sub Committees

The Committee discussed whether to approve sub committee assignments drafted by B. Wilson, who noted that he did not receive feedback from all members before assembling that document (which is appended to these minutes). They discussed whether sub committee members or the entire Committee should create the charges for these groups and reached a consensus that the sub committees would do so. J. Sands said some sub committees on the list relate to tasks that are part of his job description and asked for specifics about the sub committees' roles versus his role.

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE FOLLOWING SUBCOMMITTEES AND THE LISTED MEMBERS WHO WILL SERVE ON EACH OF THE SUB COMMITTEES, WITH CHARGE TO COME:

- i. FACILITIES: BILL DERY, BARBARA LAWRENCE, JEANISE BERTRAND**
 - ii. WARRANT: SHEILA MACDONALD, JEANISE BERTRAND**
 - iii. AUDIT: BILL WILSON, ROGER KUEBEL**
 - iv. NEGOTIATIONS: ROGER KUEBEL, LARRY SWARTZ, BILL WILSON, DEB EVANS**
 - v. POLICY: BARBARA LAWRENCE, SHEILA MACDONALD, LARRY SWARTZ**
 - vi. COMMUNICATIONS: DEB EVANS, STACEY METTERNICK**
 - vii. LEGISLATIVE: STACEY METTERNICK.**
- DEB EVANS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

SHEILA MACDONALD MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE FOLLOWING SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO SERVE AS THE SCHOOL LIAISONS FOR THE 2014-15 SCHOOL YEAR:

- i. BUKER ELEMENTARY SWCHOOL: JEANISE BERTRAND**
 - ii. CUTLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: BILL WILSON**
 - iii. WINTHROP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: BARBARA LAWRENCE**
 - iv. MILES RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL: STACEY METTERNICK**
 - v. REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: DEB EVANS**
- BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-1-0-1. (B. Dery voted no.)**

Policies 1st Reading

Postponed

OLD BUSINESS:

Policies 2nd Reading

Postponed. B. Lawrence asked that the postponed policy matters placed earlier on the agenda of the meeting of May 15.

VOTE TO ADJOURN:

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

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

Audit & Management Letter Update dated May 1, 2014 (5 PowerPoint slides)

Letter from J. Sands to Committee dated March 14, responding to FY13 audit Management Letter (4 pages)

2014-2015 HW School Sub Committee assignments (1 page)

Letter from Hamilton Board of Selectmen to HW School Committee
Re policy on return of excess funds

1 > 1 PowerPoint presentation

1:1 Learning Timeline (2 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith