

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of July 26, 2012

Minutes

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

R. Kuebel called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. at the Buker Multi-Purpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz, and Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent

ABSENT:

Sean Condon

ADJUSTMENT OF AGENDA:

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE AGENDA TO ACCOMMODATE TOPICS THAT THE CHAIR DID NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATE 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING: A PRESENTATION BY THE HAMILTON-WENHAM EDUCATION FUND, AND A CHANGE TO WORKING GROUP ASSIGNMENTS. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

L. Swartz recommended a change in practice going forward, the Committee should discuss, but not vote on, matters added to the agenda within 48 hours of the meeting, and when topics are added to the agenda within that time frame, the agenda will be amended to give everyone as much notice as possible that the additional matters will be discussed. He said the state Open Meeting Law discourages votes under such circumstances; the Committee could vote in an emergency situation and then ratify the vote at a later date, but will not do so routinely. The Committee did not vote on, but was in general agreement with this practice.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

R. Kuebel invited public comment. There was none.

PRESENTATION:

Sarah Gaylord of the Hamilton-Wenham EdFund briefed the Committee about planned early September performances and in-school programs by Up With People, whose representative Malin Winberg provided more details. Ticket sales are underway at the EdFund website and 100 performers need host families to stay with from Sept. 3 to 10.

OLD BUSINESS:

Working Group Assignments

K. Donnellan reported B. Lawrence has resigned from the Communications Working Group. She outlined its workload, and asked other members to consider joining the group in addition to their existing working group assignments.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Harvey reported he conducted many informal interviews during his first month on the job, and has scheduled a retreat for early August with the principals and central office administrators. He informed the Committee that the teachers' association has requested the Committee reconsider its policy regarding enrollment of children of teachers who live outside the district, and

non-teaching staff have inquired whether they will have Good Friday off as a holiday in 2013.

Committee members and Dr. Harvey discussed concurrent November conferences for Massachusetts superintendents and school committees, and how many members should attend, given the expense. Most of the members who most recently joined the committee said they would attend, as did several others. The Committee agreed to early register for 4 spots.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel said training on state ethics and open meeting regulations would be scheduled.

Committee members discussed at length various options for a Committee retreat and expressed varying preferences. They agreed to meet on a Friday evening in August (date undetermined at this meeting) and to include Dr. Harvey. The actual date and whether to include the assistant superintendents and to engage a professional meeting facilitator will be decided at a later date.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Communications Working Group

K. Donnellan said this working group is building the annual report, working on ideas for "District Corner" articles in the local press, and may arrange for additional surveys through K12 Insight, the firm under contract to the district to facilitate surveys.

Finance Working Group

R. Kuebel said this group met in late June and discussed budget timing, formats, and bond financing. He also discussed the issue of whether the chairs of the Towns' Finance Committees could be members of the Finance Working Group, and asked Dr. Harvey to send the letter from the district counsel regarding the issue to the towns. The Committee discussed quorum issues that may arise if five or more Committee members participate in a Finance Working Group meeting; B. Dery said he would forward to Dr. Harvey for distribution a letter from another attorney exploring that issue.

Policy Working Group

B. Lawrence said she met several times with the former chair of this working group and learned about past policy reviews.

Facilities Working Group

B. Dery said this committee recommends starting a public relations campaign about an anticipated bond issue warrant article.

NEW BUSINESS:

Capital Projects

Dr. Harvey said district staff prepared an information packet in early July as the first step in officially entering the feasibility study process for Massachusetts School Building Authority partial reimbursement of the cost of replacing the Cutler School roof, and the next milestone is to vote to appropriate funds for such a study, which would be performed by MSBA staff. He recommended the Committee approve expenditure of \$50,000 from the general maintenance account to pay for the feasibility study, and replenish that account later in the year from the Excess & Deficiency (E&D) fund. L. Swartz suggested the Committee vote to spend up to \$50,000, rather than that full amount, but the committee reached a consensus to phrase the motion as the MSBA suggested, for \$50,000.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROPRIATE THE AMOUNT OF FIFTY-THOUSAND (\$50,000) DOLLARS FROM THE GENERAL FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING COSTS FOR A FEASIBILITY AND DESIGN STUDY TO REPLACE THE ROOF OF THE CUTLER

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 237 ASBURY STREET, IN HAMILTON, INCLUDING ALL COSTS INCIDENTAL AND RELATED THERETO (THE "STUDY") SAID AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CUTLER SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE. THE DISTRICT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY'S ("MSBA'S") GRANT PROGRAM IS A NON-ENTITLEMENT, DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM BASED ON NEED, AS DETERMINED BY THE MSBA, AND ANY COSTS THE DISTRICT INCURS IN EXCESS OF ANY GRANT APPROVED BY AND RECEIVED FROM THE MSBA SHALL BE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DISTRICT. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

The Committee discussed other high priority repairs and maintenance (see list appended to these minutes) and discussed funding options, including the likelihood of receiving MSBA funding, and the process by which the district or Towns might ask voters to approve a bond issue to raise money to pay for the work. B. Dery outlined priorities, starting with replacement of the Winthrop School roof. L. Swartz recommended the Committee vote to express support for the projects, a step that Town officials requested so they would have clear guidance about putting together language for a warrant article to be brought to voters at a future Town Meeting, but hold off on voting to borrow funds for the project; he said such a vote authorizing bonding would "start a clock" that by state law would require a Town Meeting vote within 60 days, earlier than the Town Meetings are scheduled to take place. He said that that because a national general election will take place in November, Town officials are preparing ballot materials earlier than in a year with no general election. K. Donnellan noted information has not been circulated to residents about legal costs, annual cost per taxpayer to pay off the bonds, or the terms of the bond. A. Minois noted that district and Town projects could total \$4 million and said a better plan should be in place before the Committee votes; she suggested using E&D funds to pay for some smaller projects. Several members commented that repair costs would escalate the longer the Winthrop roof goes un-repaired. Wenham Town Administrator Mark Andrews said under the terms being considered, bonding would add \$42.24 a year to the average Wenham property tax bill, for 20 years, which he said might be the life of the roof. B. Lawrence said upgrades have been deferred for years, some school boilers are 30 years past their date of estimated retirement, and the jobs need attention immediately.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUPPORT ACCOMPLISHING THE FOLLOWING CAPITAL PROJECTS AS SOON AS PRACTICAL: REPLACE THE WINTHROP SCHOOL ROOF, INSTALL INSULATION AT THE BUKER SCHOOL, REPLACE WINDOWS AT THE BUKER SCHOOL, REPLACE WINDOWS IN THE CUTLER SCHOOL, AND OTHER DEFICIT MAINTENANCE IN ALL HWRSD BUILDINGS (LIST ATTACHED) AS IDENTIFIED BY THE CAPITAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

Discussion continued. K. Donnellan questioned why the Committee should return \$0.3 million to the Towns in fall 2012, as previously agreed, only to then request additional funds. R. Kuebel discussed the differing benefits to residents who may move out of the district very soon, and those who will remain residents for many years, and noted that bonding matches bond life with the asset. B. Lawrence said that to maintain credibility with the Towns, the Committee

should follow through with its "give-back" pledge. B. Dery said he was impressed that Town and district officials all agreed on how to handle the bonding, which he noted is unusual; he said the plan is not perfect, but urged the Committee to start the process nevertheless. He suggested the cost of re-roofing Winthrop could double if the project is delayed several years.

Michelle Bailey of Remington Rd., Wenham, spoke from the audience and commented that the Facilities Working Group has not reported on the need of the district for its current buildings; she noted that several schools are owned by the Town of Hamilton and the district's lease on them will expire in several years, and declining enrollment could make it unnecessary to operate all three elementary schools 10 years from now.

The Committee voted on the earlier motion. **THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1.** (Kym Donnellan abstained.)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM APRIL 5, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0-0). (B. Lawrence, S. MacDonald, and B. Wilson did not vote because they did not serve on the Committee at the time the meeting took place.)

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MAY 15, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

L. Swartz proposed several amendments to the draft minutes: on page 1, in the second paragraph under "Old Business," to correct information about negotiations between Committee members and the chair of the Hamilton Finance Committee on Friday May 11; and on page 3, in the fourth paragraph, to correct a typographical error and report that A. Minois voted no on a motion. **THE MOTION AS AMENDED PASSED 4-1-0.** (Ann Minois voted no. B. Lawrence, S. MacDonald, and B. Wilson did not vote because they did not serve on the Committee at the time the meeting took place.)

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MAY 21, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0-0). (B. Lawrence, S. MacDonald, and B. Wilson did not vote because they did not serve on the Committee at the time the meeting took place.)

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 7, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 21, 2012.

B. Dery requested that the recording secretary review a portion of the videotape of the meeting to establish whether discussion of a capital request for funds to replace auditorium stage curtains was recorded accurately in the draft minutes,

and amend the draft minutes if necessary. The Committee deferred action on the minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2012, pending that review.

ADJOURNMENT:

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m.

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

Letter dated ?? from Hamilton Wenham Education Association regarding district policy on admission of students of teachers who live outside the district

Untitled and undated spreadsheet listing proposed maintenance and repair tasks and estimates of corresponding work hours and costs (2 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee Recording Secretary