

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of November 15, 2012

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Roger Kuebel called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. at the Winthrop Elementary School cafeteria. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald (7:05), Ann Minois, Larry Swartz

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Assistant Superintendent Dr. Celeste Bowler; Assistant Superintendent Peter Gray

ABSENT: Bill Wilson

CITIZENS' CONCERNS: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

AP District Honor Roll
Dr. Harvey announced that HWRSD has been named to the AP District Honor Roll because it increased AP course offerings and maintained or improved performance levels.

Approval of Bond Issue
He thanked residents for approving a bond issue to fund school repairs, and said he is eager for members of the community with experience in engineering and construction management to serve on the building committee that will oversee the projects.

Cutler Project Approved for MSBA Reimbursement
The Massachusetts School Building Authority has agreed to reimburse 43.4% of the district's costs for upgrades at Cutler School.

Community Innovation Challenge Grant
Dr. Harvey asked the Committee to officially state its support for the Town of Wenham's application for a grant on behalf of both Towns and the district, to pay for consultants to help the entities create a process for a joint department of public works, and to purchase software for a work order system. He said both Boards of Selectmen already voted to support for this grant application. K. Donnellan noted that this vote would express support for applying for a grant to explore how a joint department could work well, and would not commit the district to anything beyond the grant itself.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO PARTICIPATE IN AND SUPPORT A REGIONAL APPLICATION FOR

COMMUNITY INNOVATION CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

Anti-Bullying Initiatives

Dr. Harvey reported on public and staff presentations about bullying. K. Donnellan said parent turnout was low and asked about advance publicity; administrators said numerous announcements were disseminated prior to a ConnectEd phone notification the night before the public event. No tape of the event was produced because the speaker's contract does not permit it.

MASC/MASS Conference

B. Lawrence reported that delegates to the Massachusetts Association of School Committee conference approved all proposed resolutions.

High School Principal Search

The high school principal position was posted Nov. 1 and Dr. Harvey is assembling a search committee, which Cutler principal Jen Clifford and high school math teacher Tony Walsh are to chair. A leadership profile survey is to take place.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel noted that about two-thirds of Hamilton and Wenham voters supported at the polls the bond issue to fund facilities repairs, and thanked them.

Committee Retreats

The Committee decided to hold a third retreat on Nov. 29 at 6:30 p.m. for informal discussion in preparation for strategic planning. The retreats are posted public meetings open to the public.

Budget Planning

R. Kuebel said that at an upcoming meeting, P. Gray is to report on FY12 financial projections versus what actually transpired in FY12, and discuss the reasons. Administrators and the Committee will then reexamine FY13 projections to better project FY13 E&D.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of Nov. 1, 2012

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOV. 1, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0-3-1. (Three members abstained because they were not present at that meeting.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Communication

Committee members discussed the district website and who will redesign it. They asked Dr. Harvey to specify a timeline, in December.

Legislative

This working group is to meet Nov. 26.

Policy

B. Lawrence reported members of this working group compared a number of this district's policies with 5 other districts' policies on similar topics and found some gaps in HWRSD policies; they plan to review the remaining district policies in this fashion in the two weeks

following this meeting. Recommendations and a timetable for policy creation and revision are to follow.

Facilities

B. Dery reported that following Capital Management Committee (CMC) discussion of preliminary work on district master planning, he is contacting 6 consulting firms to arrange meetings about how they might assist the district in this process. L. Swartz noted that given the likely cost, selection of a firm would require a formal request for proposals, so the meetings should be purely informational.

Student Representative

Matt Chigas reported briefly on Spirit Week and his participation in the Northeast Regional School Advisory Council.

CPAC

Helen Allard referred members to a report they received in writing from CPAC; reported she met with Dr. Harvey and Kathy Harris about how CPAC might participate in the strategic plan process and said the group would like to address the Committee at a future meeting to present its report formally to the Committee and community and air general education and special education issues that CPAC members wish for the district to consider.

NEW BUSINESS:

School Choice Discussion

Committee members and Dr. Harvey discussed the high school school choice program. Discussion touched on topics including how class size policies may influence net revenue from the program; distance learning; the optimal number of high school students; class size trends in the middle school classes soon to enter the high school; whether the Committee could vote now to make participation beyond 2013-14 conditional on satisfactory completion of a comprehensive study of the the program; and whether the choice program produces non-financial benefits such as student diversity and increased course offerings. Following discussion the Committee expressed a consensus favoring extensive study of this district's choice program, and asked Dr. Harvey to propose at the Committee meeting of Dec. 20 a plan for conducting this study.

The Committee scheduled a public hearing on the school choice program for Dec. 3 meeting, to be followed by a vote on whether to participate in 2013-14.

Discussion of FY14
Budget Goals/Guidelines

Members and Dr. Harvey discussed how to initiate budget planning; the options of a level funded, level services, or enhanced budget; and that \$2 million of the current year's budget came from the Excess & Deficiency account, which will not have that sum available for FY14. Members agreed to schedule a Finance Working Group meeting, at a date yet to be determined, prior to the next regular meeting.

Hamilton Finance Committee chair John McWane asked to address the Committee and was recognized by the chair. He spoke about the

increased gap between district per pupil cost and school choice per pupil revenue since the district began participating in the program; per pupil costs and how they compare to peer schools; and the impact on the tax rate if a level spending budget is approved. He asked the Committee to consider efficiencies that might reduce per pupil costs, and to return some of the Towns' contributions if the district receives more state aid than was forecast in the revenue budget.

Adjustment of Agenda

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE AGENDA FOR NEW BUSINESS TO ADD TO ITS AGENDA FOR NOV. 15, 2012 TO INCLUDE AN ITEM IN REGARDS TO A REQUEST FROM A PARENT FOR CONSIDERATION OF ALLOWING PARENTS TO ATTEND HAMILTON-WENHAM SCHOOLS, NOT CONTEMPLATED 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

Residency Waiver Request

Without identifying the family, Dr. Harvey provided details of a request by parents that the district allow their children to remain in school in this district although the family moved to Beverly in early November. He said the parents own a seasonal home in Hamilton that is not habitable during the winter; lived there from the summer through early November; told school officials they had a contract to purchase a year-round home in the district but it fell through; and declare their intention to buy a year-round home in the district by spring 2013.

Discussion touched on topics including state and district regulations regarding residency; whether letting the children remain in district schools would set a precedent; whether the tax bill on the family's seasonal home should be a factor in the decision; the district policy on enrollment of children of teachers who live outside the district; whether denying the request would constitute a hardship for the students; whether the Committee could vote at this time to allow the students to remain in district in 2012-13, but specify that this would not be the case if the family were to move out of district for the winter in future years; and whether to amend the residency policy.

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION TO ALLOW THIS FAMILY TO CONTINUE HAVING THEIR CHILDREN ATTEND WHATEVER THE SCHOOL IS FOR THE REST OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-3-0-1.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. KYM

DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

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

Potential Residents Policy (2 pages)

Student Admission Policy (4 pages)

Letter received Nov. 14, 2012 requesting waiver of above policies
(1 page)

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary