

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of December 13, 2012

Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER:** Larry Swartz called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.
- PRESENT:** Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz (acting chair), Bill Wilson
- ALSO PRESENT:** Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration; Kathy Harris, Director of Student Services; Alan Taupier, Director of Information Technology; Brian O'Donoghue, Principal, Buker Elementary School; Christopher Heath, Principal, Winthrop Elementary School
- ABSENT:** Roger Kuebel (chair)
- CITIZENS' CONCERNS:** None.
- SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Harvey noted that 31 applications have been received for the position of high school principal. The search committee is to decide in December which candidates to invite for interviews, which are to be scheduled for the week of Jan. 7.
- Dr. Bowler reported five teachers recently achieved certifications for which they will be recognized in person at a future meeting.
- CHAIR'S REPORT:** None. The Committee agreed to meet starting at 5:30 p.m. on Thurs. Dec. 20 to continue discussion of the superintendent's proposed budget, before taking up the regular meeting agenda at 7 p.m.
- CONSENT AGENDA:** Minutes from July 3, Aug. 16, Nov. 15, Dec. 6 (public hearing), Dec. 6 (regular meeting), 2012
- BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE ALL THE ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION.**
- Discussion followed about whether only the members who were present at a meeting vote should vote on the minutes of that meeting (as has been Commission practice), and whether grouping minutes together for a consent agenda vote is practical if different members were absent from the different meetings in question.

THE COMMITTEE TABLED THE MOTION.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES DATED JULY 3, 2012. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-2-1.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES DATED AUGUST 16, 2012. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES DATED NOVEMBER 15, 2012. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1-1.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE MINUTES DATED DECEMBER 6, 2012, AND AMEND THEM TO INCLUDE BILL WILSON'S NAME IN THE MINUTES AS PRESENT. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE PUBLIC HEARING ON SCHOOL CHOICE MINUTES DATED DECEMBER 6, 2012. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-2-1.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy

The working group plans to present recommendations about five sections of District policies to the full Committee in January, and about the remaining sections in February.

Communications

Work continues on revamping the website.

Legislative

No report.

Facilities

B. Dery updated the Committee about informational meetings this working group has been having with architectural firms, in preparation for creation of a request for proposals for work at Winthrop School. The firms agree the district's existing facilities study can be used as a design resource. Their presentations emphasized flexible design and touched on how students react to various conditions such as lighting and space, and how this influences student learning. Presentations were videotaped and will be accessible for online viewing by Committee members; several members briefly discussed providing access to the public.

NEW BUSINESS:
Budget Presentations
Elementary Schools

B. O'Donaghue and C. Heath verbally briefly reviewed the proposed FY14 budgets for the 3 elementary schools, including the projected number of students and proposed FY14 budgets, staffing, student population, and number of classrooms, and the percentage change from the FY13 budget. (The information appears in spreadsheets appended to these minutes; see pp. 8–16.) Dr. Harvey said that although staffing numbers differ in some lines of the FY13 and proposed FY14 budget, in fact the proposal is to keep staffing exactly the same in FY14; the spreadsheet variations are due to some positions being overstated in the FY13 budget. He noted the Winthrop budget is always higher because that building houses the preschool and special needs programs for the entire district.

In response to Committee members' questions, the principals said that if funds were available for programming above level services, their priority would be to add elementary math coach and math teaching assistant (TA) positions similar to the reading specialists already on staff. B. Lawrence suggested training volunteers to assist. Dr. Bowler commented positively about Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell students who assist in the schools.

B. Dery and Dr. Harvey briefly discussed heating costs, touching on oil consumption at Buker, and the FY14 budget's elimination of an FY13 budget line for heating oil for Cutler, which has no oil burner.

Special Education

K. Harris said SPED staff cannot be certain in December what services specific students will need in the following school year, so the proposed SPED budget may be revised in February. (See budget spreadsheets pp. 29–30, appended.) Implementation of the new X2 student information management system may make it possible to reduce SPED clerical staff over the next 2 years. The out of district (OOD) budget line was affected by the move into the district in FY13 of 2 students with significant special needs, both of whom require services out of district this year and one or both of whom may in FY14, too. She explained what supplies and consulting services are included in the proposed FY14 SPED budget; spoke of efforts underway to enable district staff to provide some services for which consultants are now employed; explained the purpose and eligibility guidelines for the district's 5-week summer SPED program; and provided details about the district's current in-house SPED busing system for in-district SPED students, vis a vis Dr. Harvey's recommendation the district contract for such busing going forward. She also spoke also about the number of OOD placements and the practical and financial aspects of transportation, and noted the pending integration of the student services department phones into the district-wide system may lower costs. She discussed capacity building in-district to provide assistive technology

services, and work this year on the student assistance team process, and how they relate to SPED costs. She suggested the student services department could generate revenue if adequate staffing is maintained. She spoke about professional development grants in FY13 to train regular education faculty about differentiated instruction, noting she has applied for a grant to train additional teachers in FY14.

In response to Committee members' questions, K. Harris said that if funds were available for programming above level services, a priority would be to hire an assistant administrator to deal day to day with litigation, participate in team meetings, and assist her with other tasks.

Dr. Harvey noted that the FY13 and FY14 budget spreadsheet data indicates the FY14 proposal would increase SPED spending by 15%, in fact the current draft of the proposed FY14 budget requests the same amount of funding as the district is on track to spend this year. He explained that some budget lines were entered incorrectly in the FY13 budget. K. Harris said increased funds are requested for OOD placement due to the addition of the two students who enrolled in FY13 who require such services.

L. Swartz requested information on past years' costs for contracted services and a projection of future needs.

Technology

A. Taupier provided information about salary, infrastructure and "lifecycle management" costs (replacement of broken or outdated equipment). (See budget spreadsheets pp. 31–31, appended.) He spoke about topics including staff training, contracted services, the mix of equipment he proposes to replace in FY14, the cost of replacing outdated smartboards, software licenses, and broadening wireless access to the elementary schools. He said the technicians added to the staff in FY13 handled some tasks but an engineer was hired on a consulting basis for some higher level tasks; the proposed FY14 technology budget includes funds to continue outsourcing some functions. Committee members asked questions and offered some suggestions about specific equipment and whether networks and ports would be adequate long-term. A. Taupier said he hopes to complete a draft technology plan in January that would make specific proposals for the next 1 or 2 years, and state broad goals for another 3 to 5 years beyond that; he said the field changes so quickly that it is impractical to try to make 5-year projections about specific technology needs.

Central Office

Dr. Harvey said some clerical expenses are budgeted to rise in FY14, and payments to retiring teachers for accrued unused sick days appears this year in the proposed central office budget, instead of the personnel line as in the past. The central office budget includes funds for raises for principals, who unlike teachers have no contractual salary steps; they would be set at the end of the school year. The curriculum and instruction section of the central office budget provides more detailed

information than in the past about payments to teachers in addition to their base salaries. Some central office staff positions have been revised during FY13 and the FY14 proposal reflects those changes. The budget for instruction of English language learners (ELL) also is within the central office budget; the number of ELL students fell this year but Dr. Bowler said the same staffing would be required, so the budget is unchanged from FY13. She agreed to recheck her calculations at the Committee's request.

Regarding the upcoming bid process for school bus service, Dr. Harvey said bus contractors honor one another's areas and rarely bid against one another, but he will try to obtain several competitive bids. Discussion followed about low ridership on some routes and whether some could be combined; B. Lawrence suggested offering families the opportunity to opt out of bus use, so route planning could take expected usage into account. P. Gray said revenue from student parking fees pays for police details to direct traffic at the high school.

The proposed middle school, high school, athletic, facilities, and fringe benefits budget are to be detailed at the meeting of Dec. 20.

School Building Committee Appointment

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING PERSONS TO THE BUILDING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEBT EXCLUSION PROJECTS: PETER GRAY, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION; BILL DERY, SCHOOL COMMITTEE; MARK ANDREW, WENHAM TOWN MANAGER; MICHAEL LOMBARDO, HAMILTON TOWN ADMINISTRATOR; JOHN RICHARDSON, COMMUNITY MEMBER; AND EX OFFICIO, RICHARD SHRUHAN, DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES, HWRSD; BILL TYACK, DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES, TOWN OF WENHAM; JOHN TOMASZ, DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES, TOWN OF HAMILTON. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

Acceptance of FY12 Audit by Powers & Sullivan

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FY12 AUDIT AS PRESENTED BY POWERS & SULLIVAN AT THE DECEMBER 6, 2012 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

OLD BUSINESS:

K. Donnellan asked Dr. Harvey to post the operational audit report on the district website and circulate it to the Committee.

Dr. Harvey said the goals formulated at this fall's Committee "retreats" are to be presented at the Dec. 20 Committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Helen Allard requested permission to speak from the audience and was recognized by the acting chair. She asked Dr. Harvey the status of the entry plan he said in early fall he would present around this time; what the process would be for moving beyond the entry plan to a strategic plan; and how, in the absence of a strategic plan or guiding principles, the leadership team and Committee would make decisions if it proves necessary to cut the FY14 budget. Dr. Harvey replied he expects to present his entry plan in January, following review of it by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's new superintendent program. He said the strategic planning process should start with focus groups and surveys, and that the leadership team should then draft statements of vision and core beliefs for the district based on that input, and circulate them to the Committee along with recommendations about how to achieve certain outcomes. Discussion followed about decision-making about program cuts in the absence of a strategic plan.

THE MOTION TO ADJOURN PASSED 8-0-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

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

Selected budget spreadsheets, HWRSB FY14 Budget, dated 12/11/2012 (16 pages: 8–16, 24–26, 29–32))
Memo from Dr. Harvey to R. Kuebel dated 12/11/2012 re Appointment of Building Committee to Oversee Capital Projects (1 page)
Letter from P. Smith of Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association to HWRHS Principal John Hughes dated Dec. 6, 2012 (1 page)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary