

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of December 20, 2012

Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER:** Roger Kuebel called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room.
- PRESENT:** Sean Condon, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson
- ALSO PRESENT:** Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration; John Driscoll, Miles River Middle School Principal; Craig Genuardo, Athletic Director; Kathy Harris, Director of Student Services; John Hughes, High School Principal; Alan Taupier, Director of Information Technology
- ABSENT:** Bill Dery
- DISCUSSION OF REVENUE PROJECTIONS:** Committee members, Dr. Harvey, and P. Gray discussed the FY14 draft budget revenue projections and related issues from 5:40 p.m. until 6:51 p.m. They referred to FY14 draft budget spreadsheets (appended to these minutes; see pages 1-3 and 7). R. Kuebel distributed a 5-page document (which is appended to these minutes) that he prepared to explain the components of district revenue.
- Topics the Committee touched on included these:
- projecting Grade 8 enrollment
 - projecting kindergarten and pre-school tuition revenue
 - calculating the assessments to the two Towns
 - state Ch. 70 and transportation funding projections
 - the food services department's current deficit and a recap of how employee health insurance is budgeted in FY13 and the proposed FY14 budget. Dr. Harvey said the food service director's upcoming budget presentation would include a financial status report on FY13 operations.
- Action items:**
- Bill Wilson asked administrators to add FY12 actual spending data to the draft budget sheets, for comparison purposes; B. Lawrence endorsed this request.
 - R. Kuebel asked administrators to reexamine the auditors' Examination of Financial Reports and compare it to debt service figures that appear in the draft FY14 budget, which he observed differ. Discussion followed.

Noting that in FY12 they discussed whether to pursue alternative sources of funding, but tabled the issue pending the hiring of a new superintendent, members discussed whether to move forward now with exploration of a capital campaign, and if so, how.

The Committee agreed on these action items:

- Dr. Harvey is to look at debt capital service.
- Dr. Harvey is to provide guidance to the Committee re revenue item variance.
- K. Donnellan is to meet with Dr. Harvey and others regarding supplemental revenue sources.

RECESS:

The meeting recessed from 6:51 p.m. until 7:03 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Upon resumption of public session at 7:03, those present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. They observed a moment of silence for the families and events of the previous week in Connecticut.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

None.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Harvey

CHAIR'S REPORT:

None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of Oct. 11, Oct. 25, Dec. 8 and Dec. 13, 2012

Dr. Harvey reported that Robert's Rules of Order allow members to vote on minutes of meetings they did not attend.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE ALL THE ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA, WHICH ARE ALL OF THEM. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

The communications and negotiations working groups did not report.

Legislative

A. Minois reported she discussed with Rep. Brad Hill the district's upcoming research into the costs and benefits of participation in the school choice program; he expressed interest in the outcome and willingness to introduce or arrange a sponsor for a future bill to request an increase in the program's state-regulated tuition rate.

Policy

The working group is considering how to divide district policies into sections and will do so after winter break.

Facilities

This working group has completed its interviews of firms that could assist the district with a master plan, and will now consider what to specify in the request for proposals.

School liaisons

K. Donnellan said members of the district CPAC, with whom she has met several times, are formulating their own thoughts about the district's strategic planning and finding common ground between regular education and special education (SPED) issues and needs.

NEW BUSINESS:

Budget Presentations

Secondary Schools

Miles River Middle School principal John Driscoll highlighted information contained in FY14 budget spreadsheets, including the proposed FY14 budget, staffing, student population, and number of classrooms, and the percentage change from the FY13 budget. (The information appears in spreadsheets appended to these minutes, on pages 17-19.) He said the proposed FY14 budget would provide services identical to those provided during the current school year, but some data FY13 and FY14 data differs on the spreadsheets because this year administrators found that some financial and staffing figures were incorrectly stated in the FY13 budget. Details he offered, or provided in response to questions, included these:

- 422 students are currently enrolled (as of 12/20/2012)
- Approximately 70 receive SPED services
- No textbooks orders are scheduled for FY14
- Leased equipment consists largely of copy machines
- A challenging aspect of the recent restoration of the teacher team system is that the student population at each grade level is too large for one team of teachers to teach, but well below the number typically taught by two complete teams of content area specialists. J. Driscoll said he would research strategies used at other middle schools of similar size.
- The high school and middle school share librarians and technology specialists.

Action item:

- R. Kuebel asked J. Driscoll for more detailed information about courses, class sizes, and the number and type of professional staff assigned to particular classrooms including lead teachers, and SPED teachers and teaching assistants.

B. Lawrence asked whether students' families are being asked to provide an increasing, and increasingly costly, list of supplies at the beginning of each school year, and whether district funds are available to families that cannot afford to do so. Dr. Harvey said he would find out and answer her questions at a future meeting.

J. Hughes discussed spreadsheet data about the high school (see spreadsheet pages 20-22). He highlighted topics including these:

- the higher number of affiliations and conferences required at the high school compared to lower grades
- stipends for staff working with extracurricular student groups
- a \$2,000 increase in the professional development budget for teacher training regarding the math common core
- shifts in the number and timing of college applications, and the impact on the Guidance office, and how this impacts counselors' ability to meet with freshmen and sophomores. Dr. Harvey said he may propose an official context for meetings with sophomores.
- 62 high school students currently receive SPED services. The ASPIRE program has been discontinued, which K. Harris said reduced the SPED staff by 4. .
- buying some English textbooks in FY14 originally budgeted for FY13, because the FY13 order was misplaced, and the trend toward technology-based instructional materials
- Dr. Harvey said some schools of similar size have bigger nursing staffs, and he may propose increasing FTEs in the future.

R. Kuebel requested a status report on analysis of high school staffing and possible changes to increase efficiency, as the Committee requested during the past school year. Dr. Harvey said he, J. Hughes and K. Harris have met during this school year to discuss it and would present a written report for the Committee's Jan. 3 meeting.

Action item:

- R. Kuebel asked K. Harris to provide specifics about FY12, FY13 and proposed FY14 SPED staffing.

Discussion followed of the reassignment of some instructional positions to different sections of the proposed FY14 budget.

Athletics

C. Genuardo reviewed the athletics spreadsheet (appended, see p. 23). He said 60 to 65 percent of students participate in at least one sport. He noted that the proposed FY14 budget would:

- cover 20% of user fees for extracurricular athletics
- provide \$10,000 for user fee scholarships
- restore junior varsity softball
- restore full schedules for varsity teams, which he said is necessary because the addition of Saugus to the Cape Ann League led the league to require participating schools to schedule at least 17 games per season

Discussion that followed touched on topics including details and projected costs of restoring full seasons, whether volunteers could handle some currently paid positions, reconditioning of protective equipment, proposed 2013-14 user fees and alternative models for structuring such fees, and freshman sports.

Action item:

- R. Kuebel requested follow-up about alternative models for structuring fees.

C. Genualdo said he might recommend in the future that the district hire paid varsity assistant coaches for varsity teams, which he said might cost \$3,200 per sport.

Deb Evans of Hamilton asked to speak from the audience and was recognized by the chair. She supported restoring full seasons, and suggested the Committee increase the public funding of extracurricular sports by 5 percent per year to reduce user fees gradually.

Maintenance

P. Gray reviewed the proposed district maintenance budget (see appended spreadsheet page 27) and noted that in FY13 these costs were within the superintendent's budget but have been moved to a separate section for FY14. He noted that the line items refer only to maintenance of district-wide costs, including the district maintenance director's salary and that department's clerical costs, and costs directly related to the central office at the Center building. (Budgeted expenses for maintenance and custodial staffing of each school appear on school-specific budget spreadsheets.) Capital expenses are down from FY13 because a bond issue will fund FY14 capital projects.

Fringe Benefits

P. Gray explained the fringe benefit line items (see appended spreadsheet p. 28). The projected costs are based on what he described as a conservative estimate of a 5% increase in health insurance premiums; the increases in that and other costs have not yet been announced but official information about that is expected before the date on which the Committee must approve the budget.

Cutler Fund Appropriation

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROPRIATE THE AMOUNT OF FIFTY-TWO THOUSAND (\$52,000) DOLLARS FROM THE GENERAL FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING COSTS TO REPLACE THE ROOF OF THE CUTLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 237 ASBURY STREET, IN HAMILTON, INCLUDING ALL COSTS INCIDENTAL AND RELATED THERETO SAID AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED UNDER THE DIFRECTION OF THE CUTLER SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE. THE DISTRICT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY'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 8-0-0-1.

School Choice Task Force

Dr. Harvey informed the Committee he named P. Gray, J. Hughes and B. Lawrence to a task force to study the effects of the school choice program on the district. They are to recruit additional members, submit a time line for the task force's work, and present the task force's findings by early June, 2013. (His 12/18/2012 memo to the task force leaders is appended to these minutes.)

School Committee Goals for FY12-13

R. Kuebel read aloud the statements of the Committee's 2012–13 goals in the areas of finances, facilities management, audits, and policy, and noted that benchmark activities for each appear in the written policy statements (which are appended to these minutes).

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADOPT THE GOALS AND RELATED BENCHMARK ACTIVITIES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE FOR THE FY2012–13 SCHOOL YEAR AS PRESENTED IN THE DOCUMENT DATED 12/20/2012 AT THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 20, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

The Committee briefly discussed the motion. B. Wilson said the benchmark dates may be too aggressive, and suggested tracking reports instead; R. Kuebel said they could be modified in the future.

THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

LARRY SWARTZ 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 9:43 p.m.

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED AT THIS MEETING:

Selected budget spreadsheets, HWRSD FY14 Budget, dated 12/11/2012 (9 pages: 17–23, 27–28)
Selected budget spreadsheets, HWRSD FY14 Budget, dated 12/20/2012 (4 pages: 1-3, 7)
School District Finances District Finance Explanation dated 12/19/2012 (5 pages)

Memo from Dr. Harvey to P. Gray, J. Hughes, and B. Lawrence dated
12/11/2012 re School Choice Task Force (1 page)
Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee Goals 2012–2013
(4 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary