

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of January 31, 2013

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Roger Kuebel called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration

ABSENT: Kym Donnellan

CITIZENS' CONCERNS: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Harvey updated the Committee about the high school principal search.

CHAIR'S REPORT: R. Kuebel reported briefly on a presentation he and Dr. Harvey made the night before this meeting to the Finance Committees and some of the selectmen of the two Towns about the tentative FY14 budget.

CONSENT AGENDA: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy: None; policy was addressed later as an agenda item.

Facilities: B. Dery said bids would be opened Feb. 6 for work at Cutler School; work on projects funded by a bond has begun with replacement of the electrical panels at Buker Elementary; and the Building Committee was scheduled to meet the week after this meeting to discuss engineering work and specifications for another project.

Legislative: A. Minois reported on a meeting of the Suburban Coalition at which state budget issues were reviewed vis a vis impact on suburban school districts.

Negotiating: R. Kuebel said the teachers' association had not responded to his note requesting notification in writing if the association wishes to bargain on the issue of education in this district of the children of teachers who live elsewhere.

NEW BUSINESS:

Entry Plan Findings Presentation

Dr. Harvey made a 50-minute PowerPoint presentation of his assessment of the district's situation, and recommendations in a range of areas. (The slides are appended to these minutes.) He shared his conclusions about the district's strengths (which he said include technology offerings, parent involvement, support for arts and athletics, and innovative partnerships with community groups) and weaknesses (which he said include day to day operations, financial practices, inadequate integration of special and regular education services, human resource management, and policies and procedures). He recommended coordinated study to determine whether some problems stem from the same root causes, and an overarching strategy to address those causes rather than individual "symptoms." He recommended the district hire human resource staff (perhaps sharing staff with the two Towns), and noted that if the Committee opts not to join the towns in forming a joint public works department, a large investment would be needed to build up the district's maintenance department. He said educational issues that call for close examination include the disparity between high achievement on standardized tests at the middle and high school levels, and relatively lower achievement at the elementary level; services for students who struggle, but have no diagnosed learning disability or individual education plan; and identification of twice as many students at the middle school as eligible for special education services than at the elementary and high schools. He said teachers feel burdened by the simultaneous implementation of multiple initiatives, and with 8 out of 10 top administrators quite new to the district, the leadership team is still learning to work together. He said the central question the community must deal with is to what extent this district is committed to improving the instructional core, which he said involves three main components: quality content, engaged students, and exceptional teaching.

Discussion followed. Dr. Harvey responded to questions about how to measure whether the district is successful in creating "21st century schools"; curriculum accommodation plans; how to better engage families in more meaningful ways; guidelines he recommends for strategic plan development; creation of clear objectives; priorities for the School Committee; and how human resources responsibilities are currently handled. R. Kuebel said the Committee and superintendent need to agree on objectives and goals on which to base the Committee's evaluation of the superintendent; he asked for information about which goals are short- and long-term so the Committee would have realistic expectations. Dr. Harvey said he would draft a strategic plan by early May and intends for it to be completed by the end of this school year.

Representative Brad Hill

Rep. Brad Hill briefed the Committee on the Governor's proposed budget and distributed a hand-out (which is appended to these minutes).

He recommended the Committee include in the FY14 revenue budget figures that represent the same state aid for Ch. 70, regional transportation, and circuit breaker funding as in FY13.

Status Review of School Committee
Goals for 2012-13

R. Kuebel read aloud each of the Committee's goals (agreed upon at retreat meetings in fall 2012) and the benchmark activities associated with each one. (They are appended to these minutes.) Discussion touched on topics including development of formal financial procedures, and coordinated analysis of several prior studies of issues in the district. The Committee also discussed how and when to hire consultants to assist with development of facilities master plan; whether to develop that plan on the schedule the Committee crafted during meetings in fall 2012, or on an accelerated schedule proposed by B. Dery; whether to approve funding for a consultant before bids are received; and likely features of such a plan. B. Lawrence said the School Committee's Facilities Working Group has not met for several months while the Building Committee's work has been underway.

Action items: the Committee requested:

- the Committee requested an update at a School Committee meeting in March about fiscal procedures and processes related to recently-approved fiscal policies.
- the Committee requested a status report on the district's response to date to directives in the Evergreen operational audit
- R. Kuebel asked B. Dery to prepare a page or more of explanation of what money would be for, if he proposes at the next meeting the Committee vote to support funding at a certain level.

*Discussion of Facilities Master
Plan Timeline*

No separate discussion took place, because this topic was addressed in the discussion of School Committee goals.

OLD BUSINESS:

Vote on Fiscal Policies

B. Wilson updated the Committee about amendments by the Policy Working Group this week, on advice of counsel, to draft policies that previously were presented for two readings at prior Committee meetings. The revised policies were circulated to members two days prior to this meeting (and are appended to these minutes). Disagreement over substance of some policies is noted below; votes on other policies took place after brief informational discussion.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE DEADLINES AND SCHEDULES POLICY AS AMENDED (TO STRIKE AN ASTERISK). BILL WILSON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE BUDGET TRANSFER AUTHORITY POLICY WITH THE CATEGORIES TO MATCH THOSE REFERENCED ON PAGE 11 OF THE TENTATIVE FY2014 OPERATING BUDGET DATED JAN. 29, 2013. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-1-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FUNDING PROPOSALS AND APPLICATIONS—STATE AND FEDERAL POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE ADOPTION OF THE AUDITS POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION TO AMEND THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE POLICY TO READ "A FINANCIAL AUDIT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACCOUNTS WILL BE CONDUCTED ANNUALLY." LARRY SWARTZ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION TO AMEND PASSED 8-0-0-1. THE MAIN MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE PURCHASING OVER \$25,000 POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FISCAL MANAGEMENT GOALS POLICY, ADDING THE WORD "ALLOCATED" TO THE PHRASE "MANAGE ALLOCATED FUNDS." BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE

**THE ANNUAL BUDGET POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD
SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE GATE RECEIPTS AND ADMISSION POLICY.
BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

Michelle Bailey of Wenham suggested from the audience that this policy's requirement that gate and admission receipts be deposited on the next business day following an event does not provide adequate time for district staff to record all checks received. B. Dery suggested changing the deadline to two days after an event. The vote proceeded with no amendment to the original motion or draft text.

THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1-1.

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE PURCHASING POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE
SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE PURCHASING AUTHORITY AND PURCHASING
REQUIREMENTS POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE
SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE VENDOR RELATIONS POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD
SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS POLICY. BARBARA
LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION
PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW
REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE
THE PURCHASING POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE
SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.**

Discussion preceded a vote on the proposed Reserve Funds Policy, which R. Kuebel read aloud. He suggested postponing this vote until all members were present; other members wished to proceed with the vote. The proposed policy sets 3% as the Committee's annual goal for the

Excess & Deficiency balance and gives the Committee discretion, if more funds are available in a given year, to determine whether funds above 3% are needed for future needs; the policy states that "excess" above 3% and additional funds the Committee wishes to retain are to be returned to the Towns. B. Dery said if the Committee feels that 3% is sufficient to take care of expenses the district might encounter; the policy should say that anything in excess of 3% would go back to the towns. R. Kuebel invited him to propose such an amendment; B. Dery declined, saying it would be defeated.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE RESERVE FUNDS POLICY. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-2-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE TYPES OF FUNDS/REVOLVING FUNDS POLICY. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE DISSOLVING/INACTIVATING A CLUB OR AN ORGANIZATION POLICY. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

B. Dery said the draft Inventories Policy should be made more specific, to refer to items relevant to this district and/or to require inventory only of those items whose value exceeds a specified sum; he also suggested striking from the draft text any items this district does not own, or that it owns in such small quantities that official inventory is unnecessary (such as vehicles). B. Lawrence said these qualifications could be spelled out in procedures based on the policy, but the policy should be broad enough to apply in the future should the district's circumstances change. Dr. Harvey said he would propose a procedure to tag items with scannable tags.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE INVENTORIES POLICY. THE MOTION PASSED 6-1-1-1.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED AT THIS MEETING:

Entry Plan Findings, Michael M. Harvey, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, 1/31/2013 (28 pages)

HWRSC Goals 2012-2013 (Appendix A of Entry Plan Findings)
(7 pages)

PowerPoint presentation on Entry Plan Findings

HWRSD draft policies D-4000-4006, D-4009-4017, D-4019-4020
(19 pages)

Brad Hill's handout

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary