

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee
Public Hearing on FY14 District Budget, and Regular Meeting
February 14, 2013
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER (PUBLIC HEARING) AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Roger Kuebel opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and others present rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration

ABSENT:

Kym Donnellan, Larry Swartz

PUBLIC HEARING:

R. Kuebel read aloud the Massachusetts law that calls for a hearing of this type, and invited interested persons to speak for or against the whole or any part of the budget.

The Committee wished Dr. Harvey a happy birthday.

Lauren Prior of Gardner St., Hamilton asked about:

- the expected impact and intent of reducing the faculty by 3.0 FTE regular education teachers
- whether cuts would impact academic classes or electives
- the recent addition to the draft budget of an additional 10% district contribution toward the cost of extracurriculars, including athletics
- whether proposed human resources staff would be shared with the Towns
- a reduction of \$410,322 compared to the current year's budget.

R. Kuebel and Dr. Harvey responded. R. Kuebel said reducing teaching positions would not eliminate any courses, but some would have fewer sections and some class sizes would increase; he spoke also about teachers' student loads. He cited Dr. Harvey's and high school principal John Hughes' statements that the cuts would not degrade the quality of education. Dr. Harvey said both electives and core academic courses would be impacted but specifics will not be known until 2013-14 course registration takes place this spring. He said both Town administrators say they will include funds in the proposed municipal budgets for shared HR administration. He said \$410,322 in budget

reductions stem from elimination of budgeted expenditures that were inaccurate in the FY13 budget, and not spent.

Richard Boroff of Moynihan Rd., Hamilton spoke to rephrase Dr. Harvey's answer to L. Prior about reductions based on "scrubbing" of the FY13 budget.

Deb Evans of Porter St., Wenham engaged in conversation with Committee members and administrators about topics including:

- class sizes, and the district's policy regarding them
- how phasing out skills sections might affect class sizes
- training high school teachers about differentiated instruction, and whether the district could require that all teachers participate in such training

R. Kuebel, B. Lawrence, S. MacDonald, Dr. Bowler and Dr. Harvey responded.

Margo Killoran of Sagamore Farm Rd., Hamilton asked about the schedule for phasing out skills level sections, and about professional development and the funding sources for it. Dr. Harvey and Dr. Bowler responded. Dr. Harvey said skills sections would be phased out gradually: none are to be offered to freshmen in fall 2013, but they are to continue in the upper high school grades.

Tom Starr of Pleasant St., Wenham suggested eliminating fewer than 3.0 FTE teachers on a trial basis; he said that once positions are eliminated, it can be hard to restore them. He asked about demographic trends; Dr. Harvey provided some enrollment trend data.

Tracy Mayor of Fox Run Rd., Hamilton, engaged in conversation with Committee members and administrators about:

- how administrators will evaluate whether differentiated instruction is working well
- how the Committee could fund restored positions if it finds that larger classes and differentiated instructions prove unsatisfactory.

She urged the Committee to schedule a date in the fall for parent and teacher feedback about instructional changes, and said if evaluation of instructional shifts were based on student assessments later in the year, and the conclusion were that the new model is not producing the desired results, students would have wasted a year. R. Kuebel described how the district would seek funds if it were determined more teachers should be hired during the school year. Dr. Harvey discussed gathering data through student assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of changes in the instructional program.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION FOR THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC

HEARING. SEAN CONDON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

The public hearing ended at 8:03 p.m. The Committee took a brief break before convening the regular meeting.

CALL TO ORDER (REGULAR MEETING)

=

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel called the regular meeting to order at 8:12 p.m.

Dr. Harvey announced he executed a contract earlier on the day of this meeting with Eric Tracy to become the high school principal.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion and Vote of FY14 Budget

R. Kuebel noted that separate votes would occur to approve a budget, and to approve the assessment to the Towns to fund that budget; he said state law requires yes votes by 6 members of the Committee (not by a majority of the members present) to approve the assessments. (Budget documents are appended to these minutes.)

Dr. Harvey recapped the differences between the budget proposal presented for a vote at this meeting, and the tentative budget the Committee approved earlier to satisfy a state regulation. (The changes are detailed in the document "HWRSD Proposed Reductions / Additions to FY14 Budget," which is appended to these minutes.) He gave a rationale for increasing the high school nursing staff by a .5 FTE RN, and hiring or contracting for human resources services, and briefly discussed several ways the district's contribution to the cost of extracurricular activities could be applied to decrease the user fees that families pay: an across-the-board reduction in user fees, or greater reductions for families with several affected children participating in such programs, or with one or more children each involved in multiple sports or other extracurriculars.

R. Kuebel said the FY14 proposed budget includes no funds for a facilities master plan and that consulting costs would likely be paid from the FY13 budget; he said the Committee would discuss this further in several weeks.

The Committee informally indicated its support for the additions to the budget of \$42,595 to increase the district's support of the cost of extracurriculars (including athletics); \$72,000 for human resources; and \$23,511 for a .5FTE nurse at the high school. B. Dery joined in this support, but requested study of athletics costs; he said costs are much lower in the Manchester-Essex district, and he objected to spending money inefficiently. Discussion followed, in which Dr. Harvey provided some details about the cost components of extracurricular athletics.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE AN FY14 TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES BUDGET OF \$29,071,521. THIS AMOUNT INCLUDES GENERAL FUND OPERATING EXPENSES (AFTER OFFSETS) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$27,229,786 AND GENERAL FUND DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,841,735. THERE ARE NO GENERAL FUND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES INCLUDED IN THE FY14 BUDGET. FURTHERMORE, THE GROSS OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE DISTRICT WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE DESE-DEFINED ACCOUNTS ACCORDING TO THE BUDGET SUMMARY BY DESE CATEGORIES CHART ON PAGE 2 OF THE BUDGET PRESENTATION MATERIALS DATED 2/12/2013. BILL DERY SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

Discussion & Vote of the Use of E&D Funds in the FY14 Budget

R. Kuebel noted that the assessment for which a motion was about to be made does not include a transfer of funds from the Excess & Deficiency account, because at the time of this meeting the state had not yet certified the E&D balance; he said this would likely occur within two weeks, at which time the Committee would vote to transfer E&D funds and then vote to adjust the assessment accordingly. He said counsel, the district's auditors, and others advised the Committee to vote an assessment at this meeting even though the assessment might change later.

BILL WILSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ASSESS THE TOWNS OF HAMILTON AND WENHAM A COMBINED TOTAL OF \$24,314,256 AS THE AMOUNT NECESSARY TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE DISTRICT, AS WELL AS PAY DEBT SERVICE, FOR FY14. THE DISTRICT TREASURER SHALL DETERMINE THE AMOUNT APPORTIONED TO EACH TOWN, AND SHALL CERTIFY SUCH AMOUNT TO THE RESPECTIVE TREASURERS OF EACH TOWN WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THIS DATE. SHEILA MACDONALD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

OLD BUSINESS:

Report from Facilities Working Group

B. Lawrence and S. MacDonald said the chair of the Facilities Working Group has not been calling meetings. Chair B. Dery said he communicated recently with the other members about scheduling.

Action item:

R. Kuebel asked the members of the working group to share information about the dates they are available, over the next two weeks.

Report from Building Committee re
Quotes for Design Work on
Winthrop School Roof Project

B. Dery reported on awarding of a bid for roof repairs; said he has requested two quotes for pre-project engineering work for repairs to the Winthrop roof as the Committee requested at its previous meeting. He reported on bond counsel's guidance re the district's latitude in allocation of funds raised by bonding for various capital projects.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. SEAN CONDON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-0-2.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

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

HWRSD FY14 Budget Revenue/Assessment Summary, dated
2/12/2013 (1 page)
HWRSD FY14 Budget Summary by DESE Categories, dated
2/12/2013 (1 page)
HWRSD Detailed Budget Summary by DESE Category, dated
2/12/2013 (2 pages)
General Fund Operating Expenses, Expense Offsets, and Sources of
Spending Reduction in FY14 Budget, dated 2/12/2013 (1 page)
Financing Expenses, General Fund Financing Sources, and Estimated
Financing Assessment, dated 2/12/2013 (1 page)
HWRSD Proposed Reductions / Additions to FY14 Budget, dated
2/12/2013 (1 page)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary