

**Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee
Meeting of September 8, 2011
Minutes**

- CALL TO ORDER:** A. McCloughan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room of Buker School.
- PRESENT:** Sean Condon, William Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Jack O'Keefe, and Dacia Rubel
- ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Gray, Acting Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning
- ABSENT:** No one.
- ADJUSTMENT OF AGENDA:** **ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE AGENDA TO ACCOMMODATE TOPICS THAT THE CHAIR DID NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATE 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).**
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** **ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 15, 2011. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).**
- ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 23, 2011. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION.** William Dery pointed out the sentence "Committee members agreed to attend a meeting on June 29, 2011." was inaccurate; the Committee reached a consensus to strike that sentence. **ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 23, 2011 AS AMENDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).**
- ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 25, 2011. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 6-0-2.** (William Dery and Roger Kuebel abstained because they were not present at that meeting).

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS:

New Staff, 25-Year Recognition, Professional Status, *Boston Magazine*,
Welcome to New Student Representative

P. Gray displayed the names of the district's new employees and welcomed them, and congratulated Barbara Moroney for her 25 years of service and 21 teachers for attaining professional status through advanced training. He announced that *Boston* magazine recently ranked HWRSD the ninth best school district in Massachusetts. He introduced Ian MacLean, the 2011–12 student representative to the Committee.

Introduction of New Leadership Team

He introduced four new administrators: Assistant Superintendent for Learning Dr. Celeste Bowler, Director of Student Services Kathy Harris, Interim High School Principal John Hughes, and Interim Middle School Principal John Driscoll. Each briefly addressed the Committee and audience.

First Day of School Reports

The principals briefed the Committee on the opening of the school year, praised the summer work of custodians and other support staff, and reported on 2011–12 enrollments, new hires, and the dates of upcoming parent events. One week into the school year, high school enrollment is 708, 16 more than in 2010–11; this includes 97 choice students, 2 fewer than in 2010–11. Miles River has 431 students. Buker has 260 students and is operating 12 classrooms K–5. Cutler has 270 students and 13 classrooms K–5. Winthrop has 301 students pre-K to 5.

District administrators also provided updates. Athletic Director Don Doucette said 350 high school students signed up for fall sports, the most in his 7-year tenure; the boys' and girls' freshman soccer program reinstated this year had 27 sign-ups each. He said he would submit protocols to the Committee in response to changes in state laws regarding student concussions. Food Service Director Catherine Donovan said a single manager will run both the middle school and the high school kitchen this year; a pilot "farm to school" program with Hamilton's First Light Farm starts this fall at Winthrop, and might later be implemented district-wide; the food service department will "ease in" this year some nutrition guidelines that will be mandatory statewide next year; and a previously approved computerized meal payment system is to start operating in the cafeterias in early December. Business Manager Pola Andrews said the routine annual audit of the district's finances is underway.

Opening Day Video

P. Gray screened a brief YouTube video about teachers, which was shown to teachers on their first workday of the school year.

OLD BUSINESS:

Central Office Re-Organization

P. Gray explained the central office reorganization the Committee approved in June; details including salaries appear in the "Central Office Reorganization and New Hire Analysis" appended to these minutes,

which was available to the audience at the meeting. Three central office positions have been eliminated: Director of Curriculum, Assistant Superintendent for Finance, and a half-time administrative assistant. The .75 FTE (full-time equivalent) position of District Accountant has been changed to the full-time position of Business Manager. The position of Assistant Superintendent for Learning was created. A budgeted Latin teacher was not hired, and the money earmarked for that position have been reallocated toward the salary of the Middle School Principal. Together, these changes result in a net staffing decrease of .65 FTE and a net salary expense decrease of \$123,999 from the levels approved in the current budget. P. Gray said the actual net savings for 2011–12 will be higher because although the high school's principal's salary remains in the budget at \$120,000, the interim principal is accepting a salary of \$67,000 because of terms of his retirement package from another district.

Discussion, Impact & Solutions, Two Assistant Superintendents

W. Dery (reading prepared comments that are attached) said that by hiring an Assistant Superintendent for Learning on a three-year contract, the Committee has "boxed [itself] into an expensive corner." He said that because P. Gray is beginning the second year of a three-year contract, and has been appointed to a one-year term as interim superintendent, if the Committee conducts a search this year for a permanent superintendent and hires someone other than P. Gray, the Committee would either have to buy out the remaining year on his contract, or restructure again the administrative staff so he could return to his previous (and now eliminated) position as Assistant Superintendent of Finance; he said the latter choice might require the Committee to buy out the contract of the Assistant Superintendent for Learning. He recommended that the Committee immediately offer P. Gray the job of permanent superintendent, to forestall the issue he described plus save the \$20,000 to \$30,000 he said it might cost to conduct a job search for that position over the coming months. He suggested that another option would be to extend P. Gray's one-year contract as interim to make it a two-year contract. A. McCloughan and D. Rubel responded that the Committee discussed these issues extensively in June before approving the reorganization, and A. McCloughan characterized W. Dery's comments as "grandstanding."

Operational Audit Update

A. McCloughan reported that the selectmen of both Towns asked four questions of the Committee in a July letter. They asked whether the Committee would clarify its response to the operational audit; whether it understands that Town leaders especially want more information about the SPED budget and the high school student/teacher ratio; what the Committee's position is on reconfiguring the elementary schools, and moving the central office to the high school; and by what forum the Committee will respond to the operational audit, going forward. A. McCloughan said the district's initial audit response document is confusing and awkward, so an updated version would be posted on the district website this fall. She said district officials are considering trade-

offs regarding student/teacher ratios and SPED, and a plan is due by Sept. 30 and would be made public at a Committee meeting soon after. She said the Committee has no plans to reconfigure the elementary schools, because it is not clear that it would be positive educationally, and is uncertain that moving the central office staff to the high school would save money, because it could require construction of a \$1 million high school addition. She said operational audit updates would be provided at Committee meetings. P. Gray said he would have an update in October. He said the main issues behind the audit appear to be SPED spending, the district's curriculum choices, and staffing.

Liaison Participation,
Subcommittee Update

Each Committee member is an official liaison this year to one or more of the district schools. A. McCloughan said members received lists of major events and the plan is for at least one member to attend each one.

She announced that R. Kuebel is temporarily chairing the Finance Working Group until a new chair is officially approved to replace past chair D. Gallant, who has resigned from the School Committee. She noted that W. Dery resigned from the Legislative Working Group. He would not discuss his reasons. He said he is willing to serve on the Finance Working Group, but declined to serve on others.

NEW BUSINESS:
GIC

P. Gray said a Sept. 21 meeting is planned with health insurance representatives to explore district participation in state Group Insurance Commission health coverage.

Committee Vacancy

A. McCloughan announced that Donald Gallant has resigned from the Committee, after more than 20 years of service. The regional agreement stipulates that because he lives in Wenham, a resident of that town must replace him on the Committee. That agreement lays out the process: Wenham residents have until Sept. 12 to submit resumes and letters of interest; candidates will be interviewed, with the public welcome as observers; and the full Committee and the Wenham Board of Selectmen will vote jointly, probably on Sept. 22, to appoint a new Committee member to the vacant seat.

Committee Calendar

Dates have been agreed upon for all the 2011–12 meetings of working groups.

Budget Process Committee Charge

P. Gray said both Towns have approved a revised charge to the Budget Process Committee (BPC), and he asked the Committee to approve it too. Discussion followed. R. Kuebel noted the charge specifies that the assistant superintendent should be a member, but that given administrative restructuring, it is more appropriate for the superintendent to participate; P. Gray agreed. Several members expressed doubts that the five-year plan the charge calls for is a realistic goal. They discussed whether selectmen are obligated to appoint BPS members who represent a range of opinion, and other aspects of this advisory committee.

R. KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE CHARGE AS PRESENTED OF THE BUDGET PROCESS COMMITTEE. KYM DONNELAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

Tri-Board Meetings with Towns

A. McCloughan said she declined this summer invitations for the Committee to participate in joint meetings with the two Towns' selectmen because there seemed to be no agenda for the proposed meetings, and because she felt that the Committee should independently discuss and vote on issues such as the BPC charge, rather than try to reach agreement about them in a group of as many as 17 participants. She said some have accused her of inappropriately making decisions for the entire Committee.

S. Condon said the Committee is looked upon as tough to deal with. He added that a meeting of 17 people is not a good idea, and joint meetings of subsets of the Committee and Town leaders would be better.

A. McCloughan said she met in June with Wenham's Town Administrator, Hamilton's Town Manager, and the chairs of both Towns' boards of selectmen. P. Gray said he meets regularly with the Hamilton Town Manager and Wenham Administrator. He suggested that when issues require Town/District coordination, elected officials should suggest ideas to the administrators, who should talk them over and find a way to move forward together; if there is an impasse, he said the matter should be referred back to the elected officials.

Committee members discussed the concept of joint meetings with selectmen. J. O'Keefe said they could blur responsibilities, and do not seem necessary at present, but that he is open to considering participating if need arises. D. Rubel said such meetings should have clear agreed-upon agendas, have expertise available, and be effective and efficient. R. Kuebel said it could be helpful, but is not essential, for selectmen and the School Committee to gather to hear presentations by administrators. W. Dery said A. McCloughan overstepped her authority and the Committee was professionally discourteous in declining to meet; he characterized this as distasteful and dysfunctional power politics. He said the proposed summer meetings did have an agenda, discussion of revision of the BPS charge, and he said he believes the reason A. McCloughan refused for the Committee to participate was that she disagreed with benchmarks the selectmen wanted to add to the BPC charge. D. Rubel said she was offended by his comments, and asked whether he is part of the Committee, or trying to work against it. She said it is within the chair's role, as set forth under Committee bylaws, to decide whether the Committee will participate in such meetings. A. McCloughan said that in a subgroup discussion she expressed her own opinion about proposed

BPC benchmarks, and did not intend to give the impression she was speaking for the entire Committee.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Communications

K. Donnellan, D. Rubel, S. Condon, and A. Minois constitute this working group for 2011–12. K. Donnellan said they are working on press releases about new staff; planning "District Corner" columns for the *Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle*; and working on an upcoming survey.

Facilities

J. O'Keefe, R. Kuebel, and P. Gray constitute this working group; D. Gallant's resignation left it with a vacancy. J. O'Keefe said members have not reached consensus about how to deal with some of the proposals put forth by the Capital Management Committee.

Finance

R. Kuebel said this working group recommended the new auditing firm that is now conducting the annual audit. The Finance group is drafting a financial management policy. At the working group's suggestion, each Town will select a member of its Finance Committee to sit in on meetings about four times a year regarding the financial audit of the district, to hear the auditors' presentation of the results and to help design and develop schedules and the format for public information resulting from the audit. Catherine Harrison is to represent Wenham this year.

Legislative

A. Minois said the Massachusetts School Board Association already forwarded its five 2011–12 resolutions; she is to be the Committee's delegate to the MSBA convention. She said the working group plans to circulate more information this year about pending educational legislation.

Negotiations

A. McCloughan said this group would meet during September.

Policy

D. Rubel said she met with last year's Policy Working Group chair for information about policies in revision or development. The group plans to draft guidelines and goals for 2011–12 at its Sept. 12 meeting.

LEADERSHIP REPORT:

NEASC Update

P. Gray said the departure of the prior high school principal led to the district missing a deadline, which has been rescheduled to April 2012. He said the principal J. Hughes has extensive experience with NEASC and is optimistic that the district can avoid NEASC probation.

Financial Audit Update

No update took place.

Administrators' Bi-Monthly Meetings, HW Edfund

P. Gray said Edfund representatives have encouraged him to "think big" when making grant proposals this year, and the leadership team is doing so.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bob Bannon of Willow St., Hamilton, thanked W. Dery for serving on the Committee. He said he does not always agree with Mr. Dery but that it is constructive to hear an alternative point of view.

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT &
ADOPTION**

The Committee did not address this topic.

ADJOURNMENT:

ROGER KUBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary