

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of Nov. 17, 2011

Minutes

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

PRESENT: Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Jack O'Keefe, Dacia Rubel, and Larry Swartz

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Gray, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning

ABSENT: No one.

ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA: None.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The previously approved minutes of the meeting of Sept. 8 misstated high school enrollment data. They incorrectly stated that high school enrollment stood at 804 as of 10/1/2011; the correct figure is 708.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2011 MEETING. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-1. (Larry Swartz abstained.)

The Committee deferred action on the minutes of the meeting of Nov. 3 to give members time to review them thoroughly.

PRESENTATIONS:
Food Services Annual Report
Food Services Director C. Donovan reported on student participation in the school lunch program; budget and staffing; recent professional development activities; classroom initiatives; and changes in state and federal regulations. She reported on pending implementation of a point-of-sale cash-free system for student meal payments. Her PowerPoint presentation was to be posted on the district website on the day after this meeting.

Warren Gray of Bay Rd. asked for expense data. C. Donovan said total revenue for FY12 was \$507,660, and total costs, including employee health insurance, came to about \$600,000. W. Gray also asked about the relative cost of outsourcing food service. P. Gray said administrators researched this a year ago and concluded that outsourcing would produce no or very little savings.

Committee members discussed with C. Donovan new regulations about sale of food within half an hour of the start or end of the school day (including bake sales), and whether middle school students are allowed to keep food in their lockers for after-school snacks. P. Gray said he would report back about the latter issue. They also discussed the district's policy of including employee health insurance costs in the department budget, unlike the majority of districts that account for food service employees' insurance costs in the general fund.

The Role of the School Committee

Glenn Koocher of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees made a presentation at the Committee's invitation. Topics he addressed included these: planning who would chair a meeting in the absence of both the chair and vice chair; remote participation in meetings by committee members, now allowed on an opt-in basis under the state Open Meeting Law; committee evaluation of administrators; public dissent among members of a committee; and "mindful" communication with the public to avoid misinterpretation. He responded to members' questions about Committee involvement in budget and policy issues, investigation or resolution of independent financial reports, responsibilities and how they differ from those of district staff, the role and responsibilities of the chair, and how members should handle differing points of view and split decisions. He elaborated on the concept of principled dissent. He distributed three documents (attached) to Committee members.

NEW BUSINESS:

Budget Preparation Update

P. Gray noted that prior to this meeting Committee members received copies of new forms and instructions that will be used during the FY13 budget planning process, and a 1-page statement of budget goals.

School Councils

C. Bowler explained the make-up and role of the school councils: they adopt educational goals, identify educational needs, review the annual budget for their specific buildings, and will help formulate School Improvement Plans, which are due prior to the January 2012 budget workshop. Each school's Council includes equal numbers of parents and teachers plus one or more community member; at the high school, a student representative participates.

Remote School Committee
Participation at Meetings

A. McCloughan asked Committee members to read a memo from the Committee's attorney conveying the Attorney General's explanation of regulations that permit members of public bodies to participate in meetings remotely. The Committee is to discuss this at a future meeting, and vote on whether to adopt such a policy, and if so, with what parameters. Several Committee members expressed reservations about remote participation in executive sessions.

MASC/MASS Conference Update

Committee members and P. Gray reported on workshops they attended at the recent concurrent annual conferences of the Massachusetts Associations of School Committees and School Superintendents. They briefed the rest of the committee about workshops on "green initiatives," legal issues, the Open Meeting Law, improving budgets, state resources for evaluation of schools and programs, social media, catastrophe avoidance, evaluating a superintendent, and other topics. A. Minois reported the MASC approved all 5 proposed resolutions, but that one regarding prospective students' visits to vocational schools was controversial and passed by a narrower margin than the others. B. Dery related information he learned at the conference about National Grid rebates available for "green projects" such as increased insulation of school buildings, and suggested these might apply to roof and window upgrades that are under consideration; Committee members discussed the potential savings.

P. Gray suggested inviting the director of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools, with whom he spoke at the conference, to the next Committee meeting to brief members on Committee roles and responsibilities specific to regional districts.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Working Group Minutes

The minutes of the Communications Working Group meeting of Nov. 4, 2011 are available.

LEADERSHIP REPORT:

A. McCloughan read aloud the list of members appointed to the Superintendent Search Committee (attached). Its first meeting is scheduled for Nov. 30.

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT &
ADOPTION:**

None.

NEXT MEETING / AGENDA:

The Committee placed on the agenda for the meeting of Dec. 1, 2011 a student government report, an update about the condition of the

Winthrop School roof, and consideration of whether to submit a Statement of Interest for a state grant program.

ADJOURNMENT:

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

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

Communications Working Group minutes of Nov. 4, 2011
Food Service Department Annual Report 2010/2011
FY13 Budget Instructions and Forms
HWRSD FY 13 Budget Goals
Nov. 14, 2011 memo from Naomi R. Stonberg re Open Meeting Law
and remote participation by members of a public body
MASC document, Regulations Promulgated by the Attorney General
Relative to Remote Participation at Public Meetings
MASC document: Quick Guide to Remote Participation at School
Committee Meetings
MASC document: Roles and Responsibilities of School Committees:
Addressing Controversy in a Public Setting
Superintendent Search Committee membership list

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Smith, School Committee Recording Secretary