

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee
Meeting of March 1, 2012
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: A. McCloughan called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. at the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan (7:06) Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Jack O'Keefe, Dacia Rubel, and Larry Swartz (7:12)

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Gray, Superintendent

ABSENT: No one.

ADJUSTMENTS TO 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, SPECIFICALLY AN UPDATE ON THE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

STATEMENTS OF GUESTS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:
Superintendent's Budget Presentation P. Gray presented the budget he proposes for FY2013 and displayed PowerPoint slides detailing the proposed expense and revenue budgets. Printouts were available at the meeting, and the slides were to be posted on the district website the day following the meeting; they are appended to these minutes. He explained contractual reasons for a 6% increase in salary costs; the rationale for adding three staff positions (2 instructional technology technicians and a human resource manager); and reasons for increases in the food service, transportation, SPED, technology and maintenance budgets. He proposed level funding all other expenses per the Towns' request. He provided revenue figures and detailed the process by which he projected the end-of-year Excess & Deficiency account balance. He reported that the administration expects to be placed on NEASC probation in July due to lack of action to reduce user fees and/or upgrade the high school auditorium, and that federal authorities have directed the district to make Cutler and Buker handicap accessible per ADA guidelines.

He responded to Committee members' questions about the effect a contractual bonus, a cost of living increase (COLA), and contractual salary steps have on the projected salary cost increase; SPED tuition prepayment; the accuracy of projections about spending during the

remainder of FY12; a shift in how staff development costs are listed in the budget; and how funds for routine maintenance and for capital maintenance projects are to be presented to the Towns, and how any overlaps between the maintenance funding in the operational budget and in a separate maintenance warrant item would be resolved.

R. Kuebel asked detailed questions about funds set aside in case unexpected special education expenses arise. Members and P. Gray discussed the nature of the E&D account, circuit breaker funds, and the proposed new SPED emergency fund. A. McCloughan suggested the Committee ask the Director of Student Services to clarify her recommendation about an emergency fund for SPED expenses. She also asked P. Gray to prepare for the following week's meetings a handout that provides additional detail about circuit breaker funds and makes clear the transfers from revolving accounts to the Excess & Deficiency account.

B. Dery said some citizens are concerned about the amount of unencumbered funds in district accounts; he proposed the Committee set a budget cap, and return some funds to the Towns. Members discussed fiscal responsibility, technology and infrastructure needs, and whether the Committee or Town officials and voters should address what the community is willing to spend. L. Swartz urged the Committee to analyze whether one-time funds are being spent on one-time expenses, or would commit the district to costs that carry forward.

John McWane of the Hamilton Finance Committee noted the FinComs of both Towns would meet with the School Committee the week after this meeting, and asked for the following data for consideration at that time: FY11 spending, budgeted FY12 spending, projected actual FY12 spending, and proposed FY13 spending; budget breakdowns by school that indicate what is level funded and what is funded above FY12 levels; the end-of year FY11 total for unallocated, unencumbered cash available totals for the end of FY11; and a projection of the latter for the end of FY12.

Catherine Harrison noted that the superintendent's proposed budget requests about \$500,000 more from the Towns but noted that P. Gray referred to the request as level funded P. Gray responded that last year the district used \$500,000 from the E&D account to offset the sum requested from the towns.

Brief discussion took place about planned handicap accessibility modifications to Cutler School. Administrators are gathering cost data. The Committee decided by general consent to include the cost in the FY13 budget, rather than pay it with current year funds.

Tracy Mayor of Hamilton asked the Committee to return to the past practice of including in publicly distributed budget information a list of programs, positions, purchases et al. that the district considered, but

decided not to include in the proposed budget. She asked the Committee to consider reducing user fees, which she called a "tax on school families."

The Committee discussed user fees; specific topics included whether to pay 20% of sports user fees only, or sports plus extracurricular activities; the restoration of full season schedules that would accompany the change in the fee structure; and how the HWRHS sports budgets compare to nearby districts'. Members also discussed whether to create a new staff position of development officer.

They agreed to meet on March 7 and March 8 with the Towns' finance committees, and to plan to approve a budget at the regular meeting scheduled for March 15.

OLD BUSINESS:

Superintendent Search Committee

K. Donnellan distributed copies of the draft profile for the superintendent search; Committee members commented and suggested changes that are to be incorporated into the document. The draft profile is appended to these minutes.

L. Swartz and A. Minois distributed copies of the draft request for proposals from search consultants, and discussed the search schedule, proposed responsibilities of the consultant, and possible budget. The draft RFP is appended to these minutes. A. McCloughan said she would find out the hourly rate the district paid the consultant who assisted with the last such search. The Committee decided by general consent to vote on the search budget at its March 8 meeting after proposals are received.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPOINT IAN MACLEAN TO THE SEARCH COMMITTEE. BILL DERY SECONDED THE MOTION. VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

ADJOURNMENT:

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. LARRY SWARTZ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

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

Superintendent's budget proposal (PowerPoint presentation; X slides)
Draft profile for superintendent search
Draft request for proposals for consultant to assist with process of search for new superintendent

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary