

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

April 24, 2012

Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER** A. McCloughan called the School Committee meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. at the Buker Multipurpose Room.

**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, Acting Superintendent (until 5:42); Susan Givens, candidate for position of Superintendent of Schools

**ABSENT:** No one.

**ADJUSTMENT TO THE 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, DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL AMENDMENT TO THE FY13 BUDGET. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

FY2013 Budget

**ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE FY13 OPERATING BUDGET TO \$28,086,066. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

P. Gray explained that the proposed amendment of the proposed FY2013 operating budget reflects an expense reduction, and an expense increase in another area. He proposed reducing the budget by \$356,631 by deleting from it those capital projects that the Committee did not prioritize as projects that need to be executed during summer 2012; a hand-out listing those prioritized projects and updated budget figures is appended to these minutes. He also informed the Committee that since the most recent vote on the proposed budget, the director of student services has received two special education out-of-district placements plus a summer program for 2012-2013 at a total estimated cost of \$100,000, and she has requested addition of that sum to the out-of-district line of the SPED budget so as not to immediately exhaust the entire circuit breaker fund. The proposed revised budget figure reflects both these adjustments.

During brief discussion, several members said they wanted to discuss the proposal to reduce the capital facilities budget before voting, and L. Swartz suggested that separate votes be taken on the capital and operating budgets. A. McCloughan said there was not time at this meeting to discuss these matters at length; she proposed tabling the motion.

**THE MOTION WAS TABLED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).**

P. Gray left the meeting.

**INTERVIEW:**

The purpose of this meeting was to interview Susan Givens, one of 4 finalists for the position of Superintendent of Schools. Committee members asked her questions, many of which had been prepared in advance. These minutes briefly state the topic of each question, and summarize her answer; for the full text of prepared questions see the

numbered questions in a document appended to these minutes, which correspond to the number/letter in parentheses after each brief question summary below.

A. McCloughan asked S. Givens to reflect on her day so far (1a). She said all the groups she met with mentioned similar concerns, and that she noticed a high level of community interest in leadership and education in the district.

A. McCloughan asked what she believes people notice about her when they meet her (1b). S. Givens said they notice she is warm, interested, engaging, and passionate about education.

A. McCloughan asked why she is interested in working in this district (1c). She spoke about her personal experience with the district through her sons' friends and her own recreational involvement in Hamilton and Wenham, as a long-time resident of Beverly, and familiarity with the district through analysis of this district's standardized test scores, contract details, and other data in the course of comparative studies she performed for Masconomet Regional School District.

A McCloughan asked for specifics about how she would spend her first day and week on the job (1e). S. Givens said she would talk with people in the district and community; read reports including contracts, policies, and school and district improvement plans; and conduct separate "retreats" during the summer for the Committee and for administrative staff to establish roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

A. McCloughan asked S. Givens what kind of support she would need (1e). She mentioned an administrative assistant, curriculum specialist and special education director.

J. O'Keefe asked S. Givens how she motivates people who are working under and with her to do their best (1f), and to tell of an on-the-job experience that required her to perform under pressure (1g). She said she identifies individuals' strengths, and allows them to lead in positions that fit their gifts, skills and talents, using a team approach. She spoke about a financial crisis early in her tenure in the Masconomet School District that required her to tactfully explain substantial budget shortfalls, and exercise finesse to communicate what the situation was and what needed to be done, and to encourage stakeholders to move forward rather than focus on blame.

B. Dery asked how she would communicate with constituent groups (2a). She said face-to-face contact is critical, and also mentioned use of brief newsletters, budget documents that include multiple forms of presentation of information (including trends and relationship to the district's goals), and visibility in the schools and community.

D. Rubel asked about her management style, her strengths, and about areas for improvement and steps she is taking to improve (3a). S. Givens said her strengths include community relations, data-driven decision-making, and management and operations. She said she has focused recently on improving her understanding of 21st century skills and the relationship between pedagogy, engagement, and the relevance to students.

D. Rubel asked about her past relationships with boards (3b). S. Givens said the Masconomet School Committee members represent three towns with different philosophies and processes, and it has been a challenge to get them to work as a committee and not take sides by town. She spoke about a handbook she prepared to orient new School Committee members and administrators.

D. Rubel asked about her experience in negotiations and relationships with teachers' unions (3c). She described the negotiating teams in her current district and said she does all data preparation prior to negotiations, and has experience with strikes, work to rules, and arbitration. She described a relationship of trust, if not always complete agreement, with teacher union leaders.

K. Donnellan asked S. Givens to tell about the strongest team she has built and what made it strong (3d). She mentioned the team she now works with. She said she gives on the spot technical tests during job interviews and considers individuals' communication skills, character, and competence in and enthusiasm for their primary role.

K. Donnellan inquired about a planning process in which S. Givens has been involved (3e). S. Givens spoke about leading a task force to develop a technology plan for the district, and the process of developing a vision statement for what a 21st century school should look like, which spun off the first task force's work.

K. Donnellan requested specifics about S. Givens' experience in leadership searches (3f). She mentioned her roles in searches for superintendents, principals, a special education director, and department heads, and described the process in her current district.

S. Condon asked why faculty and staff should support her candidacy (4a). S. Givens said she shares their concerns, and understands the dynamics in education, issues around state and federal mandates, and the challenge of incorporating 21st century skills into the curriculum without losing existing curriculum features in the process.

S. Condon asked what values and concerns she thinks this district's staff members share. She said they feel a strong need for a vision—that they are working hard but getting tired, and want more clarity about priorities and the order in which important issues should be tackled.

S. Condon asked how she assesses curriculum (4b). She said she facilitates a team process in her current district to integrate technological standards into the curriculum, which considers (among other things) proficiency levels and instructional inconsistencies; she said observation and exit evaluations are valuable.

He asked her opinion about the difference between a good and an excellent teacher (4d). S. Givens said great teachers use a variety of sources, share their thoughts, are organized, "connect the dots" for students, and are passionate about their work. She said professional development energizes staff members.

A. Minois asked S. Givens about new concepts in education (4f). She spoke about her current district's process for pilot programs and talked about letting teachers with strong skills and passion in a particular area lead staff development, which she said should not be "one size fits all." She also mentioned peer-to-peer review and curriculum development by strong department heads.

A. Minois asked how S. Givens would establish credibility with faculty, given that finance and administration are her areas of expertise (4h). S. Givens replied she would observe classrooms, establish a professional development committee so teachers would have a voice, and meet regularly with union leaders.

A. Minois noted S. Givens' recent experience has been in a grade 7-12 district and asked about the transition to this pre-K-12 district. S. Givens acknowledged that elementary schools have some different needs and dynamics.

R. Kuebel asked S. Givens about the key to successfully developing a budget for a regional district and getting it approved (5c). She mentioned setting clear goals and objectives before starting financial planning; including narratives, demographic information, 5-year data comparisons, and graphics in budget presentations; and reevaluating goals and needs yearly.

L. Swartz asked what data she considers most effective when there is a need to make a change in the budget (5e). She advocated conversations with teachers and curriculum leaders to assess a proposed cut's potential impact on teaching and student learning. She said leadership teams should consider what cuts are possible "the furthest away from students" to avoid cuts detrimental to students' college, career, and global readiness.

L. Swartz asked how Masco modified its program to integrate technology into the learning process. She spoke of having reliable infrastructure in place before making investments in new technology, and using pilot programs to explore new technology. She said Masco is near the end of a pilot program evaluating use of tablets, and teachers and students agree that netbooks are a better classroom resource.

**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).**

A. McCloughan recessed the meeting at 6:58 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:10 p.m. at the Wenham Tea House; the Committee and candidate continued informal conversation over dinner. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS**

**USED AT THIS MEETING:**

Updated FY13 budget information including list of prioritized proposed capital projects (2 pages)  
Interview Questions — School Committee Interview (7 pages)  
Supplemental interview form for superintendent search 2012 (3 pages)

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary