

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of April 5, 2012

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

A. McCloughan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Buker Multi-Purpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Dacia Rubel, and Larry Swartz

ALSO PRESENT:

Peter Gray, Superintendent (until 9:27); Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning

ABSENT:

Jack O'Keefe

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, SPECIFICALLY THE REGIONAL AGREEMENT RELEVANT TO THE VDPW. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: A. McCloughan invited public comment. None was forthcoming.

PRESENTATIONS:

History Fair

High school and middle school students who participated in the state history fair were present, and applauded by the Committee and audience. History curriculum leader Kevin O'Reilly reported that six HWRHS projects advanced to National History Day, the district's best showing ever; one third of the Massachusetts projects advancing to the nationals are by HWRHS students. The Committee and audience viewed a video documentary produced by a high school team, and asked its creators questions afterward.

Representative Brad Hill

Rep. B. Hill provided his quarterly update on education-related legislation. He noted that the proposed FY13 state budget would provide \$78,000 less to HWRSD than in FY12; the budget includes \$160 million more for Ch. 70 funding but most is earmarked for cities. He addressed several matters related to transportation costs in regional districts; said the house budget would propose boosting special education circuit breaker funding in FY13 to about 71 percent; and reported briefly on increased oversight of regional educational collaboratives, a bill to create protocols for virtual schools (of which there is just one so far in Massachusetts), and House Bill 168 regarding state funding for district legal costs in SPED appeals, which he said is likely to be sidelined for study.

Committee members asked about the statewide financial features of the school choice program and the foundation budget. B. Hill said he would obtain more information from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) about projections of what this district is to receive next year per choice student educated in this district.

OLD BUSINESS:
FY13 Budget

P. Gray briefed the Committee about adjustments to the proposed FY13 budget since the Committee's last meeting. A packet of updated budget worksheets and other information is appended to these minutes. He detailed changes in the expense budget (adjustment of capital projects funding, and reduction of the IT budget by \$25,000 because duplication of some expenses was discovered), informed the Committee that the state has certified the district's Excess and Deficiency (E&D) account as of July 1, 2011 as \$1,501,282, and reported that the district's auditor advises that excess funds now in the kindergarten revolving accounts can be used to balance the FY13 budget. He presented budget breakdowns the Committee had requested of IT and central office expenses in excess of \$5,000 per line item.

The Committee discussed in detail which fund sources to use for capital projects pending in the balance of this fiscal year, which to use to balance the FY13 budget, and which to allocate for capital projects in FY13. Members discussed the upcoming April 5 joint meeting with Town boards and asked P. Gray to distribute updated information to members of the participating boards well before that meeting.

Members discussed L. Swartz' suggestion that the Committee revote the proposed FY13 budget to reflect updated budget figure, and also various possible capital funding scenarios given the Wenham Board of Selectmen's decision not to include on the annual Town Meeting warrant a bond issue to fund capital projects that was proposed by the Capital Management Committee. They reviewed pending capital projects and their prior prioritization of energy efficiency upgrades eligible for utility rebates and accessibility work at Cutler Elementary, and discussed whether to proceed with upgrades to the high school auditorium in summer 2012 if the bond issue does not come before voters. P. Gray said that work would take 6 to 8 weeks and is best done over the summer, but B. Dery said contractors he consulted say week-long school vacations would provide adequate time; he mentioned also the urgency of repairing the Winthrop Elementary roof, and questioned prioritizing seating, flooring and stage curtain upgrades over bringing the air handling system up to code. Committee members note that if funds for the roof are not included in the FY13 capital budget, and a Town-sponsored bond issue is not proposed, the Committee could later bring that project forward and request funding by the Towns. They decided that during a joint meeting with the Towns' selectmen and finance committees on April 12 they would request input about whether to fund auditorium upgrades in the proposed FY13 budget. A. McCloughan advised that if small adjustments are made to the budget in the coming weeks, the Committee not adjust the budget repeatedly, but make one adjustment prior to town meeting that reflects "a package" of changes.

P. Gray said two meetings have taken place so far of the committee formed to assess whether scheduling changes at the high school are feasible and could reduce costs.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE AMEND THE FY13 OPERATING BUDGET AND ADOPT THE AMOUNT OF \$27,602,826 FOR OPERATIONS. LARRY SWARTZ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1. (Bill Dery voted no.)

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE AMEND THE FY13 CAPITAL FACILITIES

CAPITAL PROJECT BUDGET AND ADOPT THE AMOUNT FOR \$719,891. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMIOUSLY (8-0-0).

NEW BUSINESS:

Field Trip Request – London/Paris

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FIELD TRIP TO LONDON AND PARIS. LARRY SWARTZ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

Virtual Department of Public Works (VDPW)

B. Dery said the Committee has dragged its feet on working with the Towns to reach agreement about sharing maintenance services (Virtual Department of Public Works, or VDPW), and that this is a major reason that Wenham selectmen will not put a bond issue before voters at the May Town Meeting. A. McCloughan disputed this. P. Gray said he and J. O'Keefe met the week before this meeting with representatives of both Towns, and that a revised version of the Towns' draft regional agreement was reviewed by district counsel, who advised there are some major legal issues still to be resolved; P. Gray asked the Towns for some clarifications and modifications. A. McCloughan said counsel said a big issue is that the draft agreement does not cap what the district would be liable to pay to the VDPW. D. Rubel noted that the Committee designated J. O'Keefe and P. Gray to work with Town officials on a regional agreement and said it is counterproductive for B. Dery to work "behind the scenes" on this issue. She also charged he now works for a firm of which the chair of the Wenham Board of Selectmen is an owner; she raised ethics issues. B. Dery said the Committee should accelerate the process; he suggested that at its next meeting, the Committee list its objections and concerns, and provide P. Gray and J. O'Keefe with that list to work with. L. Swartz suggested this instead take place at the Facilities Working Group level.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None.

UPDATES:

Superintendent Search

R. Kuebel said the search committee he chaired interviewed 11 candidates for the job of superintendent, and has recommended four finalists. The search committee has disbanded; the full School Committee will interview the finalists. Their names were to be released in the week after this meeting after further contact with them by consultant Tony Bent of the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), who is assisting the Committee during the search process. He briefed the Committee about options for interview schedules, visits by candidates to this district, and visits by Committee members and district staff to the current places of employment of the candidates (site visits). The Committee decided to ask each finalist to spend a day in this district in late April and early May, which would include meetings with staff and with the public, who would be invited to provide written feedback to the Committee; in the evening, the Committee would interview the finalist; the public could attend as observers. After debating the value of site visits, they decided to proceed with them; T. Bent advised them to post site visits as official meetings of the Committee. A. McCloughan, S. Condon and D. Rubel agreed to draft questions for the interviews, which the Committee agreed might include questions specific to particular candidates. Members discussed with T. Bent the process by which the Committee would deliberate in public about the candidates, and vote.

The Committee scheduled a brief separate meeting for April 12, to precede the scheduled regular meeting, to agree on an interview and site visit schedule and

other details, and a meeting at 7 p.m. May 7 to discuss the candidates and choose a new superintendent.

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR DISCUSSION RELATING TO NON-UNION PERSONNEL:

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR DISCUSSION RELATING TO NON-UNION PERSONNEL, AND NOT TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION. SEAN CONDON SECONDED THE MOTION.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN:

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| Sean Condon | Y | Roger Kuebel | Y | Jack O'Keefe | Absent |
| Bill Dery | N | Alexa McCloughan | Y | Dacia Rubel | Y |
| Kym Donnellan | Y | Ann Minois | Y | Larry Swartz | Y |

THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED AT THIS MEETING:

Untitled, undated packet of revised budget sheets and related information (page 1 title is Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District – Superintendent's Budget – April 5, 2012) (9 pages)
Field Trip Request form dated 1/8/12 for high school student trip to London and Paris in April, 2013, with associated documentation (11 pages)
Superintendent Search Committee Interview questions (3 pages)
New England School Development Council packet of planning materials for arranging details of interviews, site visits, and other aspects of consideration of finalists for position of superintendent

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary