

Governor Wentworth Regional School District

Minutes of the Deliberative Session

February 4, 2023

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 by Moderator Randy Walker

Moderator Walker welcomed those in attendance and invited those that wished to participate to stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of the head table included Board Members John Widmer, Chair, James Pittman, Vice Chair, Tom Bickford, Brodie Deshaies, Wendi Fenderson, Stefanie King, Dr. James Manning, Charlene Seibel, Dana Streeter, District Attorney Barbara Lohmann, Superintendent Caroline Arakelian, Business Administrator Kathy O'Blenes and School District Clerk Michelle Capone, Heather Cummings, Assistant Superintendent at side table and Assistant Moderator Kaitlin Murphy.

The Moderator reminds non-residents of legalities regarding non-residents voting on district affairs and reminds voters that they will vote on Article I at the polls on March 14, 2023.

The Moderator reviews procedural rules of the meeting, amendments to and voting on the Articles on the Warrant. Identifies that Articles II-VII are submitted by the School Board and two Petition Warrant Articles VIII and IX have been submitted, an amendment to Article 8 has been submitted and will be discussed and voted on then amended article will be voted on.

Moderator introduces Chair Jack Widmer to give State of the Schools Address. Mr. Widmer extends welcome those in attendance and welcomes Superintendent Caroline Arakelian to her first Deliberative Session of the District. Mr. Widmer reviews some of the highlights from each school's students and staff praising all for their achievements and how the district's proposed fiscal year 2024 budget was developed.

Mr. Widmer extends deep gratitude on behalf of the Board to faculty, staff and administration for their compassion, dedication and tireless efforts on behalf of our school district community over past few years and to the families and community members for continued support.

Meeting is turned back over to Moderator Walker.

Moderator reads Article I:

To choose the following School District Officers:

School Board Member from Brookfield 3-year term

School Board Member from Wolfeboro 3-year term

School Board Member-At-Large 3-year term

School Board Member-At Large 1-year term – only contested race

Running for School Board Member again are Dr. James Manning, Brookfield; Charlene Seibel, Wolfeboro and Tom Bickford who is running for the 3-year Member-at-Large seat. The 1-year Member-at-Large seat is a contested seat. Moderator ask the candidates to stand or raise their hand as they were introduced. Christopher Baca of New Durham and Mary Schillereff of Wolfeboro were introduced. Kaitlin Murphy is running unopposed for Moderator.

Moderator reads Article II:

ARTICLE II: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Governor Wentworth Regional School Board and the Governor Wentworth Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2024	\$ 752,025
2025	\$ 1,021,601
2026	\$ 1,047,371

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$752,025 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)**

Moderator introduces Board Member Wendi Fenderson to address Article II. Ms. Fenderson discusses challenging times, getting back to in person learning and overall costs for families and district. Ms. Fenderson discusses the basis for each year's increase. Ms. Fenderson turns the meeting back to the Moderator.

Moderator ask if there are any other questions or discussion on Article II.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford who speaks to article, Ms. Fenderson responds.

Moderator ask if there is any further discussion or questions on Article III. Seeing none, moves to Article III.

Moderator reads Article III:

ARTICLE III: Shall the Governor Wentworth Regional School District, if Article II is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article II cost items only? **(Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Ms. Fenderson to address Article III. Ms. Fenderson states should voters not approve Article II this allows for board to hold discussions with teachers and bring new proposal for voters to consider. No costs associated with this article.

Moderator asks if there are any questions on Article III. Seeing none, moves to Article IV.

Moderator reads Article IV:

ARTICLE IV: Shall the Governor Wentworth Regional School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$59,810,618? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$59,304,374 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Governor Wentworth Regional School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. * **NOTE: This warrant article (operating budget) does not include appropriations requested in ANY of the other warrant articles. The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Chair Jack Widmer to address Article IV.

Mr. Widmer gives an overview of the funds and their purposes and the priorities the district set for their usage. He discusses the phases of ESSER grants. ESSER I, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), ESSER II Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and ESSER III, American Rescue Plan (ARP). ESSER III being the largest of the grants and must be expended by 2024. A review of some of the ways the district has prioritized and used each of the grant funds according to the grant guidelines is given. All grant funds not used must be returned and no grant funds can offset normal district costs or to lower taxes.

Mr. Widmer moves to address how the budget is developed, the process and dates of public hearings on the developed budget. An explanation of the enrollment numbers, trends and specific areas of the budget is given. Chair reviews employee/labor costs and reviews areas in General Fund noting areas of increases and decreases as well as debt service. A review of the impact on taxes within each town is also discussed.

A review is also given on guidelines and differences between proposed budget and default budget.

Moderator ask if there are any questions or discussion on Article IV.

David Bickford of New Durham addresses the increase in New Durham and asks for explanation stating New Durham numbers are down. Chair Widmer addresses the question discussing last year's student population from New Durham was up and how the state sets the formulas to be used and the percentages that have not changed.

Moderator asks if there is any further discussion or questions on Article IV. Seeing none, moves to Article V.

Moderator reads Article V:

ARTICLE V: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to be added to the Turf Field Capital Reserve Fund previously established and furthermore to name the school board as agents to expend. This sum to come from the June 30, 2023 fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2023. No amount to be raised from taxation. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member Brodie Deshais to address article.

Mr. Deshais reviews history of article being presented, life of field and current funds in the Turf Field Capital Reserve. The District will exceed the life expectancy of the field due to care and in 2025 with continued support of warrant article should have full cost of the replacement in 2025.

Moderator asks if there is any further questions or discussion on Article V, seeing none moves to Article VI.

Moderator reads Article VI:

ARTICLE VI: Shall the Governor Wentworth Regional School District raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty-thousand dollars (\$150,000) for repairs and improvements of buildings/grounds at the Kingswood Regional High School, Kingswood Regional Middle School, Lakes Region Technology Center, Kingswood Arts Center, Carpenter School, Crescent Lake School, Effingham Elementary School, New Durham School, Ossipee Central School, Tuftonboro Central School and the SAU 49/Transportation Facility? **The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Board Member Jim Pittman to address article.

Mr. Pittman reviews history of article, how it is developed and the purpose with an overview of the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 projects identified for use of these funds should the voters approve the article. Overview of Capital Improvements completed in Fiscal Year 2022/2023 is shown. With continued voter support the district can be proactive in addressing the needs of our facilities.

Moderator asks if there are any further questions or discussion on Article VI, seeing none, moves to Article VII.

ARTICLE VII: To see if the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty-five-thousand eighty dollars (\$55,080) for the purpose of creating a new regular school year position of School Resource Police Officer (SRO) for Kingswood Complex. **The School Board recommends this appropriation. (Majority vote required)**

Moderator recognizes Chair Jack Widmer to address article.

Mr. Widmer addresses the article, it's needs and purpose and 50% cost sharing with the Town of Wolfeboro for this fulltime position.

Moderator asks if there are any questions or further discussion on Article VII.

Moderator recognizes Steve Wood, Chair of the Wolfeboro Police Commission. Mr. Wood gives an explanation of how request for second SRO was determined, identifying current load on existing SRO and how second SRO can be an asset to the administration and be present in all processes with present SRO. Mr. Wood speaks to hiring process and care that will be taken in this hire and what commission is looking for in candidate.

Moderator recognizes Guy Donnelly, Principal of Kingswood High School, not a resident of the district. Mr. Donnelly has worked with every SRO and has seen need for additional support needed at the Kingswood Complex, how current SRO is integral part of school community and praises her for all her talents. Mr. Donnelly encourages the voters of the district to approve the article.

Moderator recognizes Christopher Bacca from New Durham. Mr. Bacca speaks to the needs and suggest the district might be better served to hire more administrators not an SRO.

Moderator recognizes Steve Wood, Chair of Wolfeboro Police Commission to address Mr. Bacca's comments. Mr. Wood sites the classified and confidentiality factor, current work load the current SRO has but cannot get to and emphasizes that this request in no way indicates that the schools are not safe.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford of New Durham. Mr. Bickford reminds those in attendance that the district did not request the SRO the Wolfeboro Police Commission did. He sites his background, knowledge of current juvenile crimes as reasons to support the article.

Moderator recognizes Delina Bickford and her daughter who is a senior at Kingswood High School. Ms. Bickford sites issues she is aware of within the district such as student depression and need for counselors. She asks if funds for this issue has been discussed. Her daughter addresses issues students face and the difficulty they have in asking for help. They both support this article.

Moderator recognizes Kurt DeVylder. Mr. DeVylder, a former student, current resident and attorney in the district addresses the changing needs of students identifying mental health needs. Mr. DeVylder feels that is separate issue and supports this article.

Moderator asks if there are any questions or further discussion on the Article VII. Seeing none, moves to Article VIII.

Moderator reads Article VIII.

ARTICLE VIII: We, the undersigned registered voters of the Governor Wentworth Regional School District, hereby petition the School Board pursuant to RSA 39:3 to insert the following article on the Warrant for the 2023 Governor Wentworth Regional School District meeting:

To see whether the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000) for the purpose of acquiring a 40-year agreement with the Town of Wolfeboro for exclusive year-round use of two locker rooms and one room with showers and bathroom facilities at the renovated Pop Whalen Ice and Art Center. The sum would be appropriated to be paid One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000) in 2023 and One Hundred Fifty Thousand (\$150,000) in 2024.**(SUBMITTED BY PETITON – This Special Warrant Article requires a majority vote)**

Moderator recognizes Kurt DeVylder from the Friends of Pop Whalen to address this Petition Warrant Article.

Mr. DeVylder explains reason for putting forth the article and that he has submitted an amendment to Article VIII. Mr. DeVylder gives the history of the old and current use of facility and vision for future use.

The Moderator reads the amendment which changes the amendment to read:

ARTICLE VIII: To see whether the Governor Wentworth Regional School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000.00) for the purpose of acquiring a 40 year agreement with the Town of Wolfeboro for exclusive year-round use of two locker rooms and one room with showers and bathroom facilities at the Renovated Pop Whalen Ice and Arts Center.

Moderator asks for motion to amend Article VIII to read as above. Motion made and seconded, motion to amend article passed.

Moderator asks if there are any questions on the amended article.

Moderator recognizes Gordon Lang of Ossipee. Mr. Lang questions 40 year agreement, asks what happens at end of 40 year agreement and who would be responsible for these repairs.

Moderator recognizes Victor Drouin from Friends of Pop Whalen. Mr. Drouin states in the proposed draft of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the Town of Wolfeboro would be responsible for normal wear and tear. If there was damage to our locker rooms/area the school district would be responsible for those repairs. **The MOU would not be signed unless the voters approve the Petition Warrant Article and all areas would be clarified between district and town.**

Moderator recognizes Scott Lounsbury. Mr. Lounsbury questions the procedure on the article. The Moderator responds that the substance of the article did not change. Motion to approve as amended will be voted on. Mr. Lounsbury questions length of agreement and having the MOU would help voters understand what's being proposed.

Kurt DeVlyder informed the assembly that there is a working draft of the MOU circulating explaining responsibility of parties.

Moderator recognizes Linda Murray, Wolfeboro Board of Selectman. Ms. Murray states the Town of Wolfeboro Board of Selectman use MOUs on projects such as this and that all the fine tuning is a process to guide citizens in the future.

Moderator recognizes Kurt DeVlyder. Mr. DeVlyder asks if the vote will be to approve the article as amended in which the Moderator responds in the affirmative.

Moderator asks if there are any other questions or further discussion on the proposed amendment.

Motion to approve made and seconded. All in favor.

Moderator recognizes David Bickford of New Durham. Mr. Bickford states that the Warrant does not show if the Board is in favor of this Article.

The Moderator asks Chair Jack Widmer to address this. Mr. Widmer informs the assembly that the School Board meeting is in session during the Deliberative Session, which is Mr. Walker's meeting and that when the Deliberative Session is adjourned the School Board will break for five minutes and then reconvene their meeting to discuss Warrant Article VII. The Board will then vote on whether to support or not support the Article and then this is what will appear on the ballot.

The Moderator asks if there are any other questions or further discussion on Article VIII as amended. Seeing none the Moderator moves to Article IX.

Moderator reads Article IX:

ARTICLE IX: WARRANT ARTICLE REAFFIRMING OUR FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS

By Petition of 50 or more eligible voters of the Governor Wentworth Regional School District to see if the district will vote to prohibit expending district funds for the purpose of taking action towards the banning of books or any other content from our Governor Wentworth Regional School District libraries thereby guaranteeing our citizens their First Amendment Rights and their rights under the New Hampshire Constitution [Art.] 22. [Free Speech; Liberty of the Press.] Additionally, to see if the voters will direct the Governor Wentworth Regional School District School Board to urge the New Hampshire General Court to stop all actions including House and Senate Bills infringing upon our First Amendment Rights as explained in the 1939 Library Bill of Rights, the 1953 Freedom to Read Statement, and 1999 Libraries: An American Value. The record of this vote approving this article shall be transmitted by written notice from the Governor Wentworth Regional School District School Board to our New Hampshire State Legislators, our Carroll County Attorney, our Strafford County Attorney, the New Hampshire Education Committee, and Commissioner of Education Frank Edelblut, informing them of the vote of the Governor Wentworth Regional School District March 14, 2023, District wide Elections within 30 days. **(SUBMITTED BY PETITON – This Special Warrant Article requires a majority vote) The School Board recommends this article.**

Moderator recognizes Bobbie Boudman, resident of the District.

Ms. Boudman explains the reason and need for the article, sites proposed bills before the state legislature. Addresses current Right to Know Requests of district and protecting parental rights.

Moderator ask if there are any questions or discussion on Article IX.

Seeing none the Moderator recognizes Chairman Widmer who wishes to speak before adjourning the meeting.

Chairman Widmer recognizes Wendi Fenderson for years of service to the district and how everyone has benefit from her contributions. Ms. Fenderson is presented a gift from the Board She thanks everyone and returns to her seat to a standing ovation.

Moderator entertains a motion to adjourn. Lloyd Wood makes motion to adjourn, motion is seconded.

Moderator adjourns meeting at 11:24am reminding the assembly that the School Board Meeting will resume in five minutes.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Michelle Capone
School District Clerk