

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of February 7, 2013

Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER AND
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Larry Swartz called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Sean Condon, Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel (chair) (7:20), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz (vice-chair)

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration

ABSENT:

Bill Wilson

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Harvey briefly discussed the cancellation of school for the day after this meeting, due to the forecast of a major snowstorm. He announced 7 art students were awarded gold keys, 1 silver, and 9 honorable mentions at the Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards. He said he expected to announce on Feb. 11 the outcome of the search for a high school principal.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of June 21, 2012 and Jan. 24, 2013

B. Dery requested that the minutes of Jan. 24, 2013 be removed from the consent agenda.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE ALL OF THE REMAINING ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION. KYM DONELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-0-1.

B. Dery requested amendment of the draft minutes of Jan. 24, 2013 to report his comments about departmental budget presentations and inclusion of all expenses in such reports. B. Lawrence asked that the minutes also note that replacement costs are not accounted for. The Committee deferred a vote on the minutes of Jan. 24 pending submission of an amended draft.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy

B. Lawrence said the working group again reviewed the proposed administrative policies. A few more fiscal policies are being developed.

Communications

Discussion took place about the district annual report and the district website. Dr. Harvey said the leadership team is working on the annual report. He gave a brief status report on changes to the website. Ideas were exchanged about formats and distribution methods for budget materials for the public.

Action item:

R. Kuebel asked K. Donnellan to provide at the next meeting a one-page outline of the working group's proposal for providing public information about the budget.

In her role as high school liaison, K. Donnellan mentioned the anti-bullying program; an upcoming student performance, Hearts and Flowers; and the school choice program lottery, for which Dr. Harvey said there were more than 100 applicants.

She read aloud a list of questions she and Helen Allard of the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC) compiled from questions parents asked in other settings, following a presentation by the Director of Student Services at the Committee's Jan. 24 meeting; they address a shift toward an inclusive model, administrative restructuring, a proposed new assistive technology position, and other details of the district's SPED program. (The questions are appended to these minutes.) K. Donnellan suggested some of the questions may have implications for the FY14 budget.

Action items, R. Kuebel requested that:

- K. Harris, who was on vacation for the week of this meeting and the week to follow, respond to the questions upon her return, and upon taking a week or two to consider them
- K. Donnellan communicate to Dr. Harvey the specific questions and issues she proposes be addressed during the Feb. 14 budget hearing, in K. Harris' absence.

Facilities

B. Dery said the Facilities Working Group has not met recently, but the Building Committee has; he reported on the Building Committee's recent work regarding bids received for work on the Cutler roof. He said the Building Committee would vote on Feb. 13 to recommend which bid to accept, and that the low bid, combined with project costs to date, would come in under the projected project total.

He said the engineering firm that did preliminary work for the Cutler project has submitted two proposals, each for less than \$10,000, to do an engineering study and plans for work on the Winthrop School roof. B. Dery noted that state regulations allow the district to hire a contractor from the state "no bid list" for contracts below \$10,000; he said the price offered is a good one, and recommended its acceptance. Discussion followed about whether or not to put the job out to bid; several Committee members recommended doing so even though it is not mandatory in this instance. Discussion touched on whether the Building Committee or the School Committee has the authority to decide; L. Swartz and Dr. Harvey said the School Committee did not delegate that authority.

Action item:

The Committee asked B. Dery to get two other quotes on the work.

B. Dery also raised the issue of regulatory limits, if any, on what specific jobs can be paid for with funds raised by bonding. Discussion touched on Massachusetts School Building Authority reimbursement, and additional jobs that come to the district's attention as work progresses (but which were not on the original project list). P. Gray said Wenham Town Administrator Mark Andrews is researching the issue.

Action item:

R. Kuebel asked P. Gray to spearhead research for the district, consulting the Committee's counsel if necessary.

Legislative

A. Minois reported Rep. Brad Hill informed her that in 2010 the legislature passed a bill linking regional transportation funding to Ch. 70 funding, and that he urged fellow state legislators to reverse regional transportation budget cuts based on this previously approved legislation, but they would not.

NEW BUSINESS:

Review of Second Quarter
Financial Statements

P. Gray reported on the FY13 year-to-date financials, for the first two quarters plus the month of January, 2013. (The expense and revenue statements are appended to these minutes.) He said the year-end projections are conservative. His report addressed variances from revenue and cost expectations at the time the FY13 budget was constructed and projected revenues of 100.66% of budgeted levels, and expenses at 97.56%. Committee members asked questions about details including P. Gray's confidence in the projections; the technology budget; contracted services; federal grants; step increases for employees; and projected revenue from the school choice program. B. Dery recommended gathering data about special education costs as a percentage of budget in districts with comparable numbers of students who receive SPED services.

In response to K. Donnellan's question, B. Lawrence and P. Gray provide brief updates about progress in evaluation of the choice program from a financial standpoint.

Review of FY14 Budget

Dr. Harvey spoke about proposed reductions to the FY14 budget and recommended the Committee consider adding some others, and detailed the costs. (A page listing these is appended to these minutes.) Discussion that followed touched on topics including the practical and financial aspects of whether to have an LPN or a RN at Cutler School; hiring human resource staff, independently or on a shared basis with the two Towns; whether to reduce extracurricular user fees more than originally discussed, and if so, whether to do so in a way that provides the most relief to families that most need it.

Tess Leary of Bay Rd., Hamilton was recognized by the chair and spoke from the audience. She said proposed additional spending is very close to proposed reductions, and if the district cuts teachers for FY14 but reallocates the savings to other expenses, district officials should explain how would be more beneficial to students.

Discussion & Vote Regarding Facilities Master Plan

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION FOR THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO VOTE TO PUT AN ADDITIONAL \$150,000 INTO THE BUDGET FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MASTER PLAN. ANN MINOIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

B. Dery made the case for swiftly beginning the master plan process so a contract could be awarded by April. Extended discussion followed on the distinctions between a master plan and strategic plan, and how they should be sequenced. Committee members also discussed whether to approve a specific sum prior to the bidding process. B. Dery said his motion was intended to propose an FY13 appropriation; R. Kuebel said based on the earlier financial report it appears funds would be available. Further discussion touched on whether to establish a district-Towns master plan committee whose members would be involved in developing the RFQ.

L. Swartz proposed that the School Committee, not the Building Committee, would determine how and when to hire consultants to assist with the development of a facilities master plan.

Michelle Bailey of Wenham was recognized by the chair and spoke from the audience. She urged the Committee to reach a decision and move on to discussing other important issues.

B. DERY PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT TO HIS ORIGINAL MOTION: THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROPRIATE \$150,000 FOR THE PURPOSES OF OBTAINING AN RFQ FOR A MASTER PLAN.

Discussion turned to whether an informal expression of support for a master plan RFQ would be adequate at this stage of the process.

B. DERY REPHRASED HIS PROPOSED AMENDMENT; THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMIT \$150,000 FOR AN RFQ FOR A MASTER PLAN, WITH THE COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION TO AMEND FAILED 4-4-0-1. THE VOTE ON THE ORIGINAL MOTION FAILED 0-5-3-1.

OLD BUSINESS:

Review of FY14 Budget None

Discussion of Administrative Policies None

Review and Potential Revision of
FY13 Facilities Management Goal None

ADJOURNMENT:

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY 8-0-0-1.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

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

HWRSD FY 2012-2013 Operating Statement as of Jan. 31, 2013 (2 pages)
Projected Excess & Deficiency Balance June 30, 2013, dated 2-7-2013 (1 page)
HWRSD Proposed Reductions to FY14 budget, dated 2-7-2013 (1 page)
HWRSD Administrative Policies Section (17 pages)
Special Education families' questions compiled by Helen Allard and Kym Donnellan, SEPAC/School Committee liaisons (2 pages)
Proposed Master Plan RFQ proposal, task list, and timeline (3 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary