

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of December 8, 2012

Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER:** Roger Kuebel called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. in the Center Building.
- PRESENT:** Sean Condon, Roger Kuebel (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Ann Minois, Bill Wilson
- PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Larry Swartz
- ALSO PRESENT:** Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent
- ABSENT:** Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Sheila MacDonald
- NEW BUSINESS:**
Superintendent's Draft
FY14 Budget
- Committee members and Dr. Harvey discussed his draft FY14 budget on a topical basis, and Dr. Harvey explained how the document differs from prior years'.
- He and the Committee referred to 65 pages of spreadsheets. The spreadsheet packets available to the public at the Committee's Dec. 6 meeting omitted pages 35-65, which contain information about each employee by name, including salary information. Dr. Harvey noted that pages 35-65 are public information and can be obtained by filing a public information request.
- Topics discussed include those below. Some related budget spreadsheet pages are indicated in parentheses.
- Full-time equivalents (FTEs)** Dr. Harvey explained steps he took this year to identify and correct past overstatement of FTEs due to listing of unfilled or "double booked" positions. (6)
- Financial software** He detailed underutilization to date by district staff of the district's Budget Sense financial software; the impact of this on financial documents, and payroll withholding errors; his more extensive employment of the software in preparation of the FY14 draft budget; and additional staff training underway. He and Committee members discussed the option of switching to the more commonly used Munis financial software, both for functional reasons, and because future job candidates would be most more likely to be trained and experienced in the use of Munis.
- Supply budgets** Dr. Harvey said some supply line items in the draft FY14 budget show increases of up to 140% over FY13 because FY13

budgeting for those lines was out of sync with principals' routine practice of ordering supplies toward the end of one fiscal year to stock schools over the summer for the reopening of school in the fall of the following fiscal year. He noted that the sum involved is fairly small, but the percentage increases may appear alarming.

Budget categories Breakdowns for the entire district in categories such as administration, regular education, and supplies are so far unavailable. The FY14 draft budget lists these expenses by school.

Stipends for extra duties Dr. Harvey answered Committee members' questions about stipend payments to teachers and others for coaching, serving as advisors to extracurricular clubs and activities, and other extra duties. They discussed the one-year term of such positions; that the stipends are not specified on specific employees' salary lines in the proposed budget; their impact on pensions, but not on other benefits; past and current payments by stipend for some tasks that the teacher contract does not identify as stipended positions; the payment of many stipends from revolving funds; and points to consider including in a district policy on stipends. R. Kuebel asked for information about total wages that individual employees receive, including salaries, stipends and grants, and said the Committee needs to convey to the public that the "head count" in the budget is accurate. Dr. Harvey expressed reluctance to release salary data by employee name. (22)

Athletics budget Dr. Harvey explained the schematic arrangement of the athletics budget, which differs from other department budgets; costs are identified for each sport and a standard administrative overhead cost is added (by percentage). The proposed FY14 budget allocates \$259,261 to extracurricular athletics to cover administrative costs, user fee scholarships, and 20% of the user fees for each sport. Some aspects of this discussion applied also to other extracurriculars. Consideration continues of how many games to schedule for upcoming seasons. (9, 25)

Professional development Dr. Harvey explained these funds pay for workshops, classes and activities arranged by and for district staff; outside speakers in classrooms; substitutes who are hired when a teacher is absent because of attending a professional development event; and to reimburse faculty for workshops and graduate courses. Some such expenses are covered by grants. (22, 27)

Data about number of teachers in particular subjects and grade levels, and class sizes Dr. Harvey discussed how some teachers' multiple certification to teach more than one grade or subject area affects the task of detailing the existing staffing of the schools; how the assignment of some elementary teachers to a single classroom but others to multi-classroom specialist positions impacts the staffing count for those schools; and his intention to hire dual-certified science teachers at the high school level as vacancies occur, to increase

flexibility in course scheduling. L. Swartz recommended careful review of middle school and high school staffing and consideration of whether the array of teachers is appropriate. (6)

Kindergarten and pre-kindergarten As in the past, funds for scholarships for pre-K and for full-day kindergarten are generated by the fees charged to families who pay the full tuition. That fee now reflects overhead charges as well as direct costs such as staffing.

High school and SPED staffing R. Kuebel said there is expectation of an analysis soon by high school principal John Hughes of high school staffing issues and similar analysis by Kathy Harris of SPED staffing. The Committee discussed per pupil spending, and the overall downward enrollment trend. Dr. Harvey spoke about scheduling of required versus elective courses and expressed support for minimum class sizes. He noted that a stipended teacher creates the high school course schedule and spoke in favor of shifting this responsibility to the principal. He discussed the decisions and process involved in scheduling. Some Committee members contributed ideas regarding staffing. They discussed what level of specificity about employees' pay to release publicly. (8, 63)

Transportation Dr. Harvey recommended the district end its practice of leasing, staffing and operating its own buses for SPED students and some other uses; he said this would save the district money. The request for proposals being prepared for the FY14 school bus contract will request bids that cover the services the school now provides in-house, as well as what has routinely been contracted out. (32)

Maintenance R. Kuebel suggested splitting out the draft maintenance budget into basic categories to inform the public about how much is spent on various things. Dr. Harvey noted that past practice was to simply list "maintenance" as a cost line item and said he pressed the Director of Facilities to detail specific annual maintenance tasks and activities. Capital projects are absent from the draft FY14 budget because the Towns recently approved funding a group of capital projects with a bond issue. Discussion touched on what percent of budget to aim for as the standard maintenance budget; tracking by schools to determine actual maintenance spending; breaking out regular, emergency and proactive maintenance cost; and the potential impact on these of the proposed town-district Department of Public Facilities and Infrastructure (which was referred to during the earlier planning phase as a "virtual department of public works"). (29)

Technology Dr. Harvey said he found technology line items in both the central office and capital accounts of the budget and asked the Director of Information Technology to compare account lines and determine what is actually needed. The FY14 budget line for hardware is \$130,000, down from \$240,000 in the FY13 budget. R. Kuebel said the staff has not communicated rationales effectively in the past for

proposed technology spending. Committee members discussed past technology spending above budgeted figures, some of which the Committee reviewed in advance and supported. The discussion also touched on software license renewals; routine replacement of computers; having the tech director instead of principals approve technology purchase orders; and tracking technology spending by school. (33, 34)

Revenue and assessments The Committee agreed to review operating revenues and risk for FY14 at a future meeting. Dr. Harvey said he would update the assessment calculations on p. 3. Discussion touched on monthly reporting and the fact that revenue and spending do not occur evenly month to month across the school year; opinion within the community regarding spending levels, tax rates, and the level of services residents want the district to provide; and a 5-year strategic plan. (1-8)

Committee members discussed whether to schedule another meeting for the weekend of Dec. 15 and 16 to continued discussion of the proposed budget in detail. No date was set.

ADJOURNMENT:

BARBARA LAWRENCE MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0-0-4.

The meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

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

Budget spreadsheets, HWRSD FY14 Budget, dated Dec. 5, 2012
(65 pages)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary