

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of September 6, 2012

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

R. Kuebel called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 (chair), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz, and Bill Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Assistant Superintendent Peter Gray

ABSENT:

No one

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

Presentation, Friends of the Arts

Emily Hayden of the community group Friends of the Arts proposed raising money to support arts in the district by soliciting donations and installing plaques on high school auditorium seats inscribed as donors wish. Donations would go to FOTA, which would use the funds to support arts programs and events in the district. She said FOTA wants to begin the campaign by Oct. 6. Committee members asked about details including costs, technical aspects of plaques, and text approval. They requested more specific documentation, which E. Hayden said she would try to provide in time for consideration at the Sept. 20 Committee meeting.

Presentation, Proposed Composting Program for High School Cafeteria

High schools seniors Emma Hughen, Catherine Martin and Lizzie Donnellan proposed instituting composting at the high school, by placing compost bins in the cafeteria so students could deposit food in them as they discard trash after lunch. They offered data indicating that well over half the trash collected there is compostable. They have applied for a state grant to pay for bins. Noting that two 4th grade classrooms at Buker School began composting several years ago, the Committee encouraged the students to consult the Food Services department and investigate other details regarding storage and pick-up of compost. B. Dery recommended the district also consult the Board of Health if indoor storage is contemplated. Committee members applauded the students.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Consent Agenda

Dr. Harvey announced that starting at the next Committee meeting, uncontroversial action items would be grouped on a consent agenda, for

the Committee's approval by unanimous consent without discussion. Members are to receive written information about those matters in advance. If a member wishes for discussion to take place about a particular item, the member can request that it be shifted from the consent agenda to the regular agenda.

Interim Plan and Goals

He noted that he has submitted two documents to the Committee: his interim plan, which reports on his work since joining the staff in July and lays out his plan for moving forward; and a statement of his goals. (Both are appended to these minutes.)

Committee Retreat

Dr. Harvey informed the Committee that its retreat is scheduled for Thursday evening Sept. 27, at the Wiley Inn at Endicott College in Beverly, starting at 6 p.m.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel reported on his presentation to the Wenham Board of Selectmen several days prior to this meeting; on efforts to arrange a similar presentation to the Hamilton selectmen; and on scheduling an Open Meeting Law training session for Committee members and others. The Committee set Sept. 13 as the date for the latter. A. Minois agreed to assemble contact information for leaders of district-associated groups that are subject to the open meeting law, so they can be asked to send a representative to the training session.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Legislative

This working group was to meet in the week following this meeting.

Communications

This working group was to meet in the week following this meeting.

Policy

B. Lawrence said the Policy Working Group is considering five policies that need to be updated in rapid succession.

Negotiations

R. Kuebel noted the office personnel contract has not yet been approved. L. Swartz and Dr. Harvey, and P. Gray commented on the process and issues to date, and the Committee reached a consensus favoring adding a side letter to the contract that is before the bargaining unit for ratification, to clarify in writing some points that were clarified verbally in the past about stipends for training.

Finance

This working group had no specific report.

Facilities

B. Dery reported that Rep. Brad Hill has offered to arrange for state officials to make a presentation to the Committee about cost trade-offs regarding repair, refurbishing or replacement of school buildings. The Facilities Working Group unanimously recommended the Committee participate. A. Minois agreed to would contact Rep. Hill's office to inquire about availability for a Thursday evening presentation.

B. Dery invited all Committee members to attend this working group's scheduled Sept. 11 meeting at 7:30 a.m. to hear a presentation by a Massachusetts School Building Authority representative on technical options for repair of the Cutler School roof.

NEW BUSINESS:

Introduction of Student Representative

Committee members welcomed the student representative to the Committee for 2012–13; high school senior Matt Chigas, the student government president. R. Kuebel explained that members would welcome his comments and input, but that he is not a voting member of the Committee.

Cross-Country Team to Warwick, RI

Dr. Harvey requested Committee approval of a team's day trip to an athletic meet, which requires Committee approval because it involves out-of-state travel. (The field trip approval request is appended to these minutes.)

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FIELD TRIP REQUEST FOR THE CROSS-COUNTRY TEAM TO TRAVEL TO WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2012. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

B. Dery asked about transportation costs. Brief discussion noted that student user fees cover 80% of the cost of this sport, and the bus would be paid for out of a dedicated revolving fund.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

Status of Financial Audit and E&D Submission

P. Gray said the district's auditors have said that by Sept. 14 they will be ready to report to the Committee on the FY12 audit, and submit Excess & Deficiency documentation to the state for approval.

Update and Schedule for Funding Communications

The Committee discussed strategies to inform the public about for proposed projects for which the Committee hopes to raise funds by bonding, and some delays in communication due to technical problems with the district's transition to a new e-mail system. A Winthrop School "walk-about" and PowerPoint presentation are planned to acquaint interested residents with repair needs; other presentations may be arranged, and information is to be posted online. Members made suggestions about language in the draft PowerPoint and discussed at some length whether presentations should be limited to description and portrayal of repair needs, or also include discussion and text about the quality of past work and why the school building fell into disrepair. S. Condon agreed to review the presentation and give feedback to the B. Lawrence and S. MacDonald before they lead the Winthrop

presentation on Sept. 12. (The PowerPoint slides are appended to these minutes.)

VDPW Update and Extension

L. Swartz reported on summer projects carried out collaboratively by district and Town maintenance staff and ongoing planning for a Virtual Department of Public Works (VDPW), and on projects contemplated for fall 2012. He said District and Town administrators speak positively about their working relationship and accomplishments over the summer and have requested extension of the existing temporary agreement through Oct. 31, 2012 as they continue to refine details for a finalized agreement that would go to voters at Town Meetings in early November.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE AN ADDENDUM TO THE CAPITAL PROJECTS AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWNS THAT WOULD READ AS FOLLOWS: THIS AGREEMENT ALSO PERTAINS TO FALL PROJECTS THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2012, AND WOULD ALSO AUTHORIZE DR. MICHAEL HARVEY TO BE AUTHORIZED TO NEGOTIATE THE IN EFFECT FINAL INTERMUNICIPAL AGREEMENT WITH THE TWO TOWNS. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION.

Discussion followed. K. Donnellan questioned whether the VDPW should hire workers at a pay rate equivalent to time and a half for existing district staff, for work the existing staff could be offered at that pay rate. L. Swartz and B. Dery responded that some tasks involve skills existing staff do not possess; Dr. Harvey said student painters were employed during the summer at a lower pay rate so custodians could perform other tasks to ready the buildings for fall reopening. B. Dery said he believes a single VDPW administrator would be more effective than collaborative management by Town and district staff; stated that Town staff members are more proficient in engineering; and reported that the Facilities Working Group's deliberation about whether to recommend the Committee extend the temporary agreement resulted in a 2-1-1 vote. Members addressed the electoral issue of whether this constituted a majority of that working group favoring the extension, centering on whether abstentions should be considered when tabulating a majority. R. Kuebel said extending the agreement would not preclude a permanent agreement including features that B. Dery favors. B. Dery expressed dissatisfaction with the planning process and said he would withdraw from the ongoing debate. B. Lawrence proposed independent assessment of the quality of the work performed over the summer, and how well the VDPW system is working so far; she requested benchmarks for details. Dr. Harvey said some Town officials have told him changes the Committee has proposed to the agreement are unworkable; he spoke of a need to find common ground.

THE MOTION PASSED 8-1-0. (B. Dery voted no.)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Because technical problems with the district's e-mail delayed delivery of draft minutes to Committee members, they deferred voting on minutes, to allow time to review them.

STATEMENT FROM AUDIENCE:

Bob Hannon of 45 Willow St., Hamilton requested permission to speak; R. Kuebel asked Committee members whether they had any objections, and receiving none, he recognized B. Hannon.

B. Hannon recommended a the district devise a back-up plan for communication in case its server fails again in the future. He also spoke about the proposed VDPW; he said he has not yet seen a plan for how it would be structured, and commented that the Committee should be honest about how deferred maintenance problems came to pass, and should ensure it does not happen again.

ADJOURNMENT:

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. BARBARA LAWRENCE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-1-0. (B. Dery voted no.)

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

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

Interim plan submitted by Dr. Michael Harvey, dated ?? (ZX pages)
Superintendent's goals dated ?? (X pages)
Field trip request form dated ?? and associated documentation, high school cross-country team trip to Warwick, RI (X pages)
PowerPoint presentation, bonding proposal for repairs to Winthrop School

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary