

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of January 3, 2013

Minutes

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

Roger Kuebel called the meeting to order at 7:05 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), Barbara Lawrence, Sheila MacDonald, Ann Minois, Larry Swartz, Bill Wilson

**ALSO PRESENT:**

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

**ABSENT:**

No one

**CITIZENS' CONCERNS:**

None.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Dr. Harvey briefly described the financial data about food services provided to the Committee prior to this meeting. (The memo that conveyed the data is appended to these minutes.) Committee members asked for further information and requested that Food Service Director C. Donovan attend a meeting in person to discuss the current year and her department's proposed FY14 budget.

Action item:

- R. Kuebel asked for labor cost data
- L. Swartz asked for average weekly cost/revenue data for each school

Dr. Bowler briefly previewed upcoming standardized testing of English language learners, and upcoming introduction of the anti-bullying program Olweus to students at all the schools.

**CHAIR'S REPORT:**

R. Kuebel said he and Dr. Harvey are to make a budget presentation to Town boards on Jan. 7 similar to the one that Dr. Harvey would make later in this meeting.

The Committee discussed the budget deliberation timeline and agreed that in addition to the regular meetings on the first and third Thursday of each month, they might schedule additional Thursday evening meetings in January and February on an as needed basis. They scheduled a meeting for Thurs. Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. L. Swartz asked for

School Committee meetings to be posted for the hour prior to each of the member communities' Town Meetings so the Committee could legally confer at that time, if necessary.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

Minutes Dec. 20, 2012

R. Kuebel requested that the minutes of the meeting of Dec. 20, 2012 be removed from the Consent Agenda.

He proposed a correction of text near the top of page 5, to state that he requested follow-up about alternative models for structuring fees (not about protective equipment, as the draft minutes incorrectly stated).

**LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DEC. 20, 2012 AS AMENDED. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Facilities

B. Dery reported that the building committee met for the first time just before this meeting and will identify what jobs district and Town staff can accomplish, and what jobs should be hired out.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

First Reading of New Fiscal Policies

B. Lawrence recapped the process by which the Policy Working Group determined which new policies to propose, and drafted text for those policies. Some existing policies were revised in recent years; this year's focus is on proposal of policies that were absent. B. Wilson summarized each proposed new policy. (The policy drafts are appended to these minutes.) Discussion during his presentation focused on content; B. Lawrence asked Committee members to e-mail suggested changes in phrasing to Dr. Harvey. R. Kuebel and K. Donnellan recommended that excerpts from Mass. General Laws, rather than just the references to them, should appear in the written policies.

Discussion took place about several of the proposed policies. Among points addressed were these:

- Budget Deadlines and Schedules Policy: Members discussed whether the draft policy's timeline accurately sequences and provides adequate time for mandated budget reviews and approvals. Members agreed to have the Committee's counsel review it.
- Adoption of Budget Policy: R. Kuebel recommended more specifics be added.
- Budget Transfer Authority Policy: Some members favored adding dollar values or more specifics about budget categories to make it clear when the Committee would need to pre-approve budget transfers, or be notified of them after the fact.

- Purchasing Policy, Purchasing Authority Policy, and two Purchasing Requirement Policies: the Policy Working Group separated these policies because though closely related, they entail many details, but B. Wilson said the group would consider consolidating them. These include state-mandated regulations about staff and Committee members signing purchase orders, to provide checks and balances.
- Reserve Funds Policy: As drafted the policy states the district would comply with state requirements that the Excess & Deficiency Fund not exceed 5% of the current year's General Fund expenditures; members discussed whether to set an official goal of a lower percentage, or stipulate a lower percentage as a binding limit. They did not reach a consensus.
- Types of Funds/Revolving Funds Policy and Student Activity Account Policy: Dr. Harvey and members touched on whether to consolidate groups that raise funds for targeted activities and sports, or continue with the present system in which they operate independently. P. Gray reported briefly on the district's role in auditing and disbursing these groups' funds. Discussion touched also on issuing scholarship awards as grants so graduating seniors' scholarships from the colleges they will attend would not be reduced as a result.
- Inventories Policy: B. Dery suggested inventorying only major equipment of substantial value. Topics of discussion included inventory requirements linked to federal grants, and whether principals or other staff should oversee inventorying;

Action items:

- Members are to submit suggested changes to Dr. Harvey by email.
- The Policy Working Group is to review members' input, revise the draft policies accordingly, and circulate revised drafts prior to the next regular meeting.
- The revised draft are to be submitted to counsel for review.
- B. Wilson requested a list of existing "booster club" funds, and information about which of those groups remains active.

Superintendent's Recommended  
Budget V2

R. Kuebel made a presentation about district finances, based on a 5-page document he prepared to clarify the differences between various district funds and revenue flows, and the process for determining the Town assessments. (The document is appended to these minutes.)

Dr. Harvey made a PowerPoint presentation on his recommended FY14 budget, as updated as of 1/3/2013. (The PowerPoint slides are appended to these minutes.) His presentation addressed topics including:

- how the 1/3 version differs from the December version

- budgeted expenses that were reduced or eliminated to "scrub" \$720,000 from the previous version, including grant-funded salary funding that also was budgeted for in the general fund
- a \$100,000 decrease in the proposed student services budget
- changes made in response to the Committee's recent input
- how some expenses are offset by directly related revenue
- how the use in FY13 of one-time funds plays out in the revenue budget for FY14

Discussion touched on Committee members' desire for additional information and analysis regarding high school staffing, class size, and scheduling; building principals' responses to Committee members' questions at a prior meeting about what additional positions or programs they would add if funding were available; further scrutiny of the special education program; and the lack of a strategic plan.

Dr. Harvey said 15 fewer class sections would be scheduled for the high school for 2013-2014; he said cuts would be made by consolidating multiple sections of courses, and no courses would be eliminated.

K. Donnellan questioned cutting classes before the Committee is satisfied with the analysis of high school staffing and class size and scheduling, and in the absence of a strategic plan. She requested C. Bowler's input. Dr. Bowler spoke about the role of math coaches (a priority of the elementary principals) and why she did not support adding these positions in 2012-13, but encouraged the Committee to consider funding these positions for 2013-14. B. Lawrence asked whether trained volunteers could assist; Dr. Bowler explained the coaches would train faculty members, and would not work directly with students.

Action items: The Committee requested

- a full description of the math coach position, and a rationale for adding it
- data about the class size of high school course sections for the current year
- the presence of high school Principal J. Hughes and Student Services Director K. Harris at a future meeting

Tracy Mayor of Hamilton requested permission to speak from the audience and was recognized by the chair. She said parents would want extensive information about the specific impact of decreasing the number of high school class sections. Dr. Harvey responded that students register for the upcoming year's classes in February, but the schedule is not created until after the budget is approved, so no list exists yet of what multi-section courses would have fewer sections next year.

Review of Facilities Master Plan

B. Dery described the Facilities Working Group's proposed timeline for preparation of a request for quotation (RFQ) this spring in time to obtain bids prior to the Town Meetings for consulting work focused on creating of a facilities master plan. He urged the Committee to endorse drafting, review, approval and issuance of an RFQ in the proposed timeframe so votes could take place at Town Meetings on the specific sum that would be required to hire a consultant, and work could commence promptly. (The proposed timeline document is appended to these minutes.) Discussion that followed touched on how a facilities master plan would relate to a district strategic plan; how the consultant would proceed; whether it would be adequate to bring the expenditure before Town Meetings in the fall; how the working group's proposed RFQ schedule relates to priorities the Committee agreed on during retreats in fall 2012; and B. Dery's desire to consult Town officials about the proposed RFQ during the same time frame that the Committee would be reviewing it.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**KYM DONNELLAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0-4.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:23 p.m.

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

Financial policies comparison grid (1 page)  
Draft HW Policies # D-4000 through D-4023 (25 pages)  
Memo from C. Donovan to Dr. Harvey re Food Service Department finances, dated Jan. 2, 2013 (2 pages)  
Breakdown of Added Expenses to Reinstate Maximum Games (1 page)  
Charts re RFP preparation timeline, master plan consultant (2 pages)  
Selected budget spreadsheets dated 1/3/2013, Superintendent's recommended FY14 budget (28 pages)  
PowerPoint slides of Dr. Harvey's presentation on the draft FY14 budget (slides)

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary