

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee
June 25, 2009
Minutes

CALLED TO ORDER: Lisa Gaquin called a duly posted meeting of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee to order at 7:04 p.m. The meeting was held in the Multipurpose Room of Buker Elementary School.

PRESENT: Denise Bisailon, Richard Boroff, Donald Gallant, Lisa Gaquin, Alexa McCloughan, Tess Leary, and Dacia Rubel.

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent and Paul Szymanski, Asst. Superintendent.

ABSENT: Lauren Prior and Jack O'Keefe

RECOGNITION: None

L. Gaquin stated that the School Committee will meet on as needed basis during the summer. There will be a meeting next Thursday night at the Wenham Town Hall to discuss the Blue Ribbon Committee Report. L. Gaquin encouraged all school committee members to attend. .

STATEMENTS OF GUESTS: None

REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

Liaisons Reports:

Communications:

T. Leary stated that the group will begin work on the annual report. The group will hold meetings the day after school committee meetings and will work on a biography page for school committee members on the website.

Governance:

D. Gallant stated that the group will begin review of the regional agreement.

Blue Ribbon Committee & Finance:

D. Gallant stated that finance will be discussed later an agenda item. R. Boroff noted that the committee will review capital items again to see what needs to be done and to develop a strategy for the town meetings.

Legislative:

D. Rubel stated that she sent the email regarding sterilization of musical instruments to our state representatives. She is going to follow up to ensure they received it.

Negotiations:

L. Gaquin stated that she and Dr. McGrath had a preliminary discussion with the teachers' association president to talk about next year's negotiations.

Policy:

D. Bisailon will meet with Dr. McGrath to identify the policies for the two-year review.

Working Group Minutes:

The following minutes were included in the packet:
Communication Subcommittee – June 10

Information and Communications:

FY 10 Chapter 70 Update:

Dr. McGrath stated that the conference committee voted a \$70,000 reduction in Chapter 70 for the District. She also commented that regional transportation was the area hardest hit with a reduction of \$267,255 but \$10 million was restored to the fund by the conference committee. The circuit breaker funding will be

decreased to 42% from 75%. Overall, D. Gallant noted that the reduction to school funding for 2009-2010 is about a 15% reduction from the state. M. McGrath stated that the FY 09 monies have not yet been received. D. Rubel will send a letter, on behalf of the school committee, to Gov. Patrick for regional transportation and circuit breaker to fund it at the FY09 level.

Redistricting Update:

Dr. McGrath reviewed that there are 9 children being redistricted; 6 children will attend Buker School and 3 children will attend the Cutler School. She reviewed the process and said that Principal Vaich called the families to notify them which were followed up with a written letter and a phone call to them from the Buker and Cutler principals inviting them to their schools before school ends. Both principals have had follow-up meetings as well. Dr. McGrath and Ms. Vaich met with three families and she said that some suggestions were very valid and may be implemented. Several parents came to the meeting to make statements.

Peter Bachini, Blueberry Lane, Hamilton, noted that they did not volunteer to be redistricted and said his twin children were targeted. He believes that the District did not follow the criteria or process and that the process was not transparent. He requested a private meeting with the school committee to discuss the matter. He also requested that an independent auditor be hired to implement and monitor the redistricting process.

Mary Jane Brown, Walnut St, Hamilton, stated that her daughter will be redistricted. She said she did not like how the redistricting the process was handled. She and her husband believe that the published criteria was not followed and stated it is different from how school choice students are selected. They do not want their child to ride the transfer bus and stated that they reject the busing that is offered by the school district.

Rudolf Pizzano, Essex St, Hamilton, noted that he has a daughter going into 3rd grade. He read a victim statement from her in which she stated that she does not want to go Buker and take the transfer bus. Mr. Pizzano stated that he feels that none of the issues have been addressed and that he does not want his child to have a 45 minute bus with a transfer; this is not an option for them. He feels the redistricting and transition was handled in a rushed manner and hoped the school committee would fix the situation that evening.

L. Gaquin thanked the parents for attending the meeting.

Alfred and Sara Weiss Scholarship Fund:

Dr. McGrath explained that this scholarship fund was administered by the Town of Hamilton and the selectmen have voted for it to be administered by the high school. Since the scholarship account is under \$5,000 there is no need to vote to accept it. Dr. McGrath thanked the Town of Hamilton for giving the scholarship fund to the high school.

NEW BUSINESS:

Hamilton-Wenham Sports & Activities Alliance Gift:

Dr. McGrath noted that the HW Sports and Activities Alliance is closing its account at the Essex Foundation. She referred to a letter from John McGrath, former president of the HW Alliance, which stated they are gifting the remaining funds to the district for equipment and scholarships. Don Doucette was very happy to receive this gift. **ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ACCEPT \$9,854.28 TO BE ALLOCATED AS FOLLOWS: 75% OF THE FUNDS TO BE UTILIZED TO PURCHASE**

ATHLETIC CAPITAL EQUIPMENT AND 25% OF THE FUNDS TO BE UTILIZED FOR SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS IN NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN ATHLETIC OR EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. D. Gallant asked does Title IX effect this donation. Dr. McGrath stated that spending for the equipment would need to be compliant with Title IX. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

Blue Ribbon Committee:

D. Gallant gave a brief review of the Blue Ribbon Committee's presentation to the school committee and town selectman. The data used for the report were from 2007. The sample included 15 like communities to which our district was compared. In many areas, HW was at or below the average in spending. The Blue Ribbon Committee recommends that an outside group audit all the programs costs which would be primarily on special needs and instructional salaries. The Blue Ribbon Committee (BRC) did not think that it should hire the audit company; the BRC recommended that the towns to do that. D. Gallant said he did not feel that the School Committee should be involved in an audit of the district. There is a meeting on Thursday, July 2 for the school committee and selectmen meet and discuss this. No one is sure where the money for the audit would come from. D. Gallant stated that he has resigned from the Blue Ribbon Committee since its work was complete.

D. Rubel noted that the BRC did a tremendous amount of work and shares the concern about the potential cost of the audit. D. Gallant noted that the District looks forward to an audit and that the school committee is not against it. He said the committee is open to looking at ways to save money and getting credit for implementing cost saving programs.

A. McCloughan also said she is not opposed to an audit; she is looking for good feedback that can be implemented. She said this is a very complex process and said the District should not be spending hours working on the process if there is no way to fund it. She also stated that people should not think there is there is a \$ 2 million dollar savings as was discussed at the BRC meeting. She cautioned that there are structural differences between the districts.

D. Bisailon stated her concern is the participation of the administration and how much it would them away from their day to day responsibilities and the strategic planning.

R. Boroff also noted there is a tremendous amount of time that would be required of the administration. He said he would welcome the audit to see if the public perspective is valid or not.

T. Leary stated that the \$2 million dollar figure is not something easy to compare since services could be different even in similar communities.

L. Gaquin is concerned about the cost and any bias. She stated her view that the district could be viewed as trying to have influence on the outcome if it is involved or paying for it. In her opinion, an independent entity has to draw up the RFP for the consultant who would be hired and the RFP for hire the consultant. She said that if it is the will of the community than we will accept this audit. She feels that the District can not be a driver of this initiative. She ended by saying that these are issues the school committee can raise with the Selectman next week. She also commented that some of the similar communities were Norwell and Lynnfield. Neither of the communities are regional school districts and each one only has two elementary schools. The effects the instructional salaries right off the bat. She ended by saying that it is

up to the towns to find out how they are going to fund this. L. Gaquin if the selectmen could put this on an override. D. Rubel noted the key is to figure out how to keep the same education with a lower cost. The meeting is at 7 pm at the Wenham town hall on Thursday, July 2, 2009

Authorize payment for FY 08 unpaid bill:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF INVOICE NUMBER 3100534979 TO STAPLES BUSINESS ADVANTAGE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,042.49. THE SCHEDULED PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE FROM THE FY 09 HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY SUPPLIES ACCOUNT. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. P. Szymanski noted that the District can not pay a prior year bill with funds from another fiscal year as per Mass General Law. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

L. Gaquin shared a letter from Mr. Portnoy who wrote to thank the school committee for the retiree reception. Dr. McGrath reviewed the results of National History Day Fair recently held at the University of Maryland. Rebecca Fallon went into the final round and was one of the top five. Corey Goodwin and David Rowe won 8th place for documentary and 1st place World War II.

Authorize Special Revenue Fund Adjustments:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MOVED THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER FROM THE GENERAL FUND ACCOUNT NUMBER 001 FOR AN AGGREGATE TOTAL OF \$65,000 TO THE SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 2009 NET TO ZERO THE SPECIAL REVENUE ACCOUNTS AS SUMMARIZED IN THE DOCUMENT DATED JUNE 25, 2009. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. P. Szymanski reviewed the annual process used to adjust all accounts to zero as part of the year end closing. P. Szymanski also reviewed the particulars of the negative balance for the year in the Cafeteria. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

Reauthorization of the Special Revolving Funds for FY 2010:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MOVED THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE, PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 44, SECTION 53E ½, OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS, VOTE TO REAUTHORIZE THE USE OF SPECIAL REVOLVING FUND ACCOUNTS IN FY 2010 FOR THE PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY SUCH SPECIAL REVOLVING FUND AS SUMMARIZED IN THE ATTACHMENT DATED JUNE 18, 2009. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. P. Szymanski noted that revolving funds have to be reauthorized each year per Mass General law. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

Approve 2009-2010 Food Service Salary Schedule:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MOVED THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FOOD SERVICE 2009-2010 PAY SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. P. Szymanski stated that Catherine Donovan has been trying to make the most for food services. P. Szymanski reviewed and made a price adjustment to cover her costs and lowered the number of full time employees. Still there was a loss of \$100 a day for a la carte and \$250 loss for lunch cost. They have to pay 18% in revenue for health care costs. P. Szymanski stated that there is a possibility for a 3rd party to come in. They are going to look into that. Dr. McGrath stated that Catherine has done an

incredible job to try and manage this but based on the deficit there will be a 0% increase for her employees. R. Boroff noted that he has been impressed with her presentations. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

Appoint SC Representative to Towns/School Budget Process Committee:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPOINT ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN TO SERVE AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE TOWNS/SCHOOL BUDGET PROCESS COMMITTEE FOR 2009-2010. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. Alexa has been involved in the budget process and trying to get the group back up and running. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

Appoint SC Representative to the Northshore Coalition for School Funding:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPOINT DACIA RUBEL TO SERVE AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE NORTHSORE COALITION FOR SCHOOL FUNDING FOR 2009-2010. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. Laurie Wilson served on this committee last year so the school committee wants to continue this effort. Manchester-Essex and Beverly started this group. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

Appoint SC Representative to the Capital Management Advisory Committee (CMAC):

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPOINT JACK O’KEEFE TO SERVE AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO CAPITAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR 2009-2010. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. They are looking to give the group more authority to make them a capitol management committee. They have the opportunity to explore this. The group is for the two towns right now. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

POLICY DEVELOPMENT & ADOPTION: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
Regular Meeting June 11, 2009:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 11, 2009. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED WITH ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN ABSTAINING (6-0-1).

ADJOURNMENT:

ALEXA MCCLOUGHAN MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN AT 8:38 P.M. RICHARD BOROFF SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacqueline Cooper
School Committee Secretary