

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

December 11, 2008

Minutes

CALLED TO ORDER: Laurie Wilson 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 Bisaillon (arrived at 7:13 p.m.), Richard Boroff, Jack O’Keefe, Alexa McCloughan, Lauren Prior, and Dacia Rubel.

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent, Paul Szymanski, Asst. Superintendent and Katharine Moroney, Student Government Representative

ABSENT: Donald Gallant and Lisa Gaquin.

L. Wilson noted an agenda change. Due to the weather in northern Vermont, the demographic study has been postponed until the January 8, 2009.

RECOGNITION: Dr. McGrath introduced Katharine Moroney, student government representative who is filling in for Emily Bartlett. She thanked the leadership team for selling trees for the Ed Fund and Megan Causil for designing a new cover for the school committee agenda. She also congratulated Erick Fecke and Abby Frost for a great middle school concert. P. Szymanski thanked the individuals (who wish to remain anonymous) who donated the “energy misers” for the vending machines in the schools.

L. Wilson stated that School Committee members L. Wilson, D. Gallant, R. Boroff, J. O’Keefe and L. Gaquin along with Wenham Selectmen John Clemenzi and Harriet Davis met and interviewed two potential school committee candidates (Karen D’Amour and Dacia Rubel) in a joint meeting with Wenham to interview and appoint a new school committee member on December 9, 2008. The school committee and Wenham selectmen vote unanimously to appoint Dacia Rubel as a school committee member until the annual election in May 2009. L. Wilson and other school committee members welcomed her to the committee.

STATEMENTS OF GUESTS: None

REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:
GIC Insurance Analysis Presentation: Dr. McGrath introduced Ken Lombardi who is the district’s insurance advisor from EBS Foran Associates. K. Lombardi presented information regarding the GIC (Group Insurance Commission) Insurance Analysis. This presentation detailed the analysis conducted for the district to determine if there would be a cost savings to the District to join the GIC. He reviewed the requirements of the district to implement the GIC which include: (1) district must decide to sign up for a 3 or 6 year time period. At any point and time the GIC can modify or change the plan annually, (2) the district cannot subsidize any of the GIC benefits. There are some significant increases in rates in co-pays and prescriptions in comparison to the current Harvard Pilgrim Plan, and (3) to join the GIC the district would have to accept the Section 18 requirement. The district has an emerging risk because of the large number of retirees and several

of them have not joined Medicare. Since they have not the district must pay the initial enrollment fee for Medicare. There would be a \$7,000+ monthly fee to pay for the retirees to join the GIC plan to pay the Part B Premium share. K. Lombardi then reviewed the costs regarding the current insurance company and the proposed place through the GIC.

J. O'Keefe asked what options the district would have to join other insurance groups if it left the GIC in 3 or 6 years. K. Lombardi stated that since there would not be any claims history, it is likely that the district would have to self-fund for a time period which would be very costly to the district.

D. Rubel asked if the 1% administration fee was factored into the estimates. K. Lombardi responded that they were.

L. Wilson asked if the employer/employee split would be the same if the district implemented the GIC. K. Lombardi stated that the communities and regional school districts that have joined have either maintained the same cost share or increased it. K. Lombardi stated that right now the district pays 60% and employees pay 40% and the majority of towns and regionals have a 80%/20% cost share or higher.

D. Bisailon asked about the fee regarding Medicare and the open enrollment. The penalty above the \$96 is the districts requirement.

D. Rubel asked how long the GIC has been available to which K. Lombardi responded that it has been available since July 1, 2008 and there are 207,000 people covered by the GIC currently. D. Rubel also asked if more communities sign up will the cost will go down. K. Lombardi indicated that it is likely that the costs will increase given the larger pool.

R. Boroff stated that Swampscott voted to join the GIC today. L. Wilson stated that Swampscott was at 60%/40% split and increased their cost share to at least 70%/30%. L. Wilson noted that the deadline for participation in July 1, 2009 was October 1. As a last remark, K. Lombardi stated that at this time, the GIC would not provide a cost saving for the district due to the retiree cost and the 60%/40% cost share in place. L. Wilson said the committee will continue to review the GIC for future savings.

Demographic Study Presentation:

Postponed

Liaisons Reports:

Communications:

A. McCloughlan stated that the group is still working on the annual report which will go to the printer next week. The group is also working on the frequently asked questions. If community members have questions please email them to Alexa McCloughan.

Facilities:

L. Prior stated that the Building Committee for the HVAC Cutler boiler project is completed and will be voted on later in the meeting.

Finance:

L. Wilson reported that she and D. Gallant met with P. Szymanski and M. McGrath to review the FY 10 budget timeline, assumptions, and goals which will be reviewed later in the meeting.

Blue Ribbon Committee:

L. Wilson reported that the Committee is collecting benchmarking data.

Legislative:

J. O'Keefe reported that he attended the November MASC/MASS conference and the workshops were very informative. One workshop was on the 21st

century skills we need to be teaching in our schools which focus on problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and team work. Dr. McGrath reported that state will likely reduce Chapter 70 funds by 7% to 10% for FY 10. J. O'Keefe indicated that he and Dr. McGrath attended a very good workshop on special education workshop and that our district has implemented many of the programs recommended to cut costs.

Negotiations:

L. Wilson stated that negotiations with the nurses and office personnel are ongoing.

Leadership Team Report:

Cutler: J. Clifford stated that the elementary band/chorus will perform at all three elementary schools. Cutler will have a holiday concert on Friday December 19th. Toy bingo was a huge success last Friday night. Many students donated prizes to Toys for Tots.

Curriculum: M. Duffy noted that they received a Tower Grant for \$15,000 for the school libraries to purchase non-fiction materials from grades K thru 8.

Middle School: M. Fox congratulated the students and teachers for their terrific performance at the middle school concert. He also stated that the school council and Friends are examining the school honor roll and that there will be a parent meeting on Tues., Jan 13th at 6:30 to discuss the honor roll.

High School: B. Krol stated that the fall athletic programs had major successes at the state level: 3rd place cheerleading, 2nd place boy's soccer, 1st place cross country team and Steve Sawyer (girls' track) and Matt Gauron (boys' soccer) received Cape Ann Coaches of the Year awards. Cross country team member, Emily Lanois, was named Runner of the Year. He congratulated Mr. O'Reilly and his students for a great history fair. In other high school news, B. Krol said the first annual Thanksgiving pancake breakfast was a huge success and the new wireless writing center with 33 computers is now open. The lab was purchased with funds from the HW Edfund, HS Friends, and SOS. Lastly, Mr. Krol indicated that an alumni survey is being conducted for class of 2008 and Jim LaSelva is working with Gordon College to start up an Outing Club.

Financial report:

P. Szymanski reviewed the October 2008 financial report. He stated that the FY 09 budget has been "frozen" to stay within the budget. He also stated that the corrective action letter written in response to the auditor's management letter is completed and will be posted on the district website. He reviewed the items that needed to be addressed in the management letter.

Superintendent Report:

Dr. McGrath spoke updated the committee on the lock down which occurred on November 17. She thanked Salter transportation, the staff, and the Hamilton and Wenham Police Chiefs and officers for their assistance. She reviewed the areas where they need to improve such as (1) the need to set up a command station away from the school office, (2) the need to have blinds in the middle and high school offices, and (3) the need for either a cell tower or a system of repeaters on the building since the Nextel system did not work beyond the school lobby. The estimated cost of such a system is between \$20,000 – \$80,000. In addition there is a need to determine how to segregate the schools if the incident does not involve one or the other school. She stated that Connect Ed was crucial in getting the information to the parents so Dr. McGrath reminded everyone to update their information so they will get the notifications. There is a form and directions on the district website.

On another note Dr. McGrath reminded parents to review the gift policy (on the district website) during this holiday season.

L. Wilson thanked the administration and staff for everything they did during the lockdown. R. Boroff asked if Connect Ed will keeps cascading through the six numbers in the emergency mode. Dr. McGrath said it continues through the numbers until a live voice answers during an emergency.

L. Prior asked if the Friends groups could use the Connected information to reach parents. Dr. McGrath stated that due to regulations regarding confidentiality the school district cannot share that information with the Friends' groups. The information has to be given voluntarily which is why the Friends' develop the individual school directories.

Subcommittee Minutes:

The following minutes were enclosed in school committee packet:
Communications: 10/27, 11/5, 11/12 & 11/20
Finance: 11/10

Information and Communications:

Frequently Asked Question:

A. McCloughan reviewed this month's frequently asked question regarding what constitutes "residency" as per MA General Law. The information is available on the district website www.hwschools.net in the Frequently Asked Questions section.

High School Principal Search – Winter 2009:

Dr. McGrath reviewed the high school principal search process and timeline. The information is on the district website. Focus groups held on December 15 for staff and January 6 at 8:30 am and 7:00 pm for parents. The role of the school committee is to attend focus groups and to participate in the candidates evening.

OLD BUSINESS:

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY 10 Budget Assumptions, Goals & Timeline:

Dr. McGrath reviewed the school committee priorities, goals, and assumptions for the FY 10 budget. She stated that MA is the most heavily regulated state in education and she reviewed the federal, state, and local mandates. In special education goal is to keep students "in-district" whenever possible. Dr. McGrath stated that she will build the budget with 2 levels: base budget requests and strategic plan program improvement budget requests. The base budget assumes the same level of service to the schools from the FY09 budget to FY10 budget including the current school programs, staffing levels, class sizes, and services as well as any staff needed to address enrollment changes in programs. She reviewed the expenditures for staff and program and stated that user fees will be budgeted at 100% unless the school committee decides otherwise during the budget workshops to be held in January. Dr. McGrath also reviewed the contractual obligations, fixed costs, utilities and capital requests assumptions that would be part of the FY 10 budget.

The revenue for FY10 state aid is in question. Dr. McGrath asked the school committee if they wanted to decrease the Chapter 70 revenue further. She recommended that the committee should decrease it from a 5% reduction to 7-10%.

Budget workshops will be held at Buker School on Jan. 15th and 22nd. The towns think that they will be able to inform the school regarding the towns' estimated contribution the week of February 23rd. Other key dates include: March 24 - the public hearing, March 31st school committee votes the FY 10

budget. The PowerPoint on the budget and timeline are on the district website www.hwschools.net under the link entitled FY 10 Budget Information.

Discussion:

L. Prior asked for clarification on when a new classroom is budgeted. R. Boroff wanted to know why the district would not receive information from towns until Feb 23rd. Dr. McGrath stated that the goal is to get the contribution numbers before school vacation. This year, the towns indicated that local receipts for will not be available until February 1st. Susan Mehlin, Wenham Finance Committee, stated that Wenham will try to get the information to the schools before that date but she could not guarantee when. A. McCloughan stated that the timeline is later because the committee wants to give the most accurate picture to the community so they can be informed as possible. Lisa Kane, Hamilton resident, commented that presenting the base budget on March 5th was that too short of a timeframe for the community and also wanted to know if the timeline be published for the community. J. O'Keefe stated January is the time for the community needs to take responsibility to watch or attend budget workshops. Dr. McGrath stated that the FY 10 budget timeline is posted on the district website.

The school committee discussed the chapter 70 funding forecast given the state has suggested that it might reduce the funding by 7 to 10%. J. O'Keefe felt it is better to be conservative and cut the anticipated revenue by 10%.

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO REDUCE THE ESTIMATED FY 10 CHAPTER 70 FUNDS BY 10% FOR BUDGETING PURPOSES. A. MCCLOUGHAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

RICHARD BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FY 10 BUDGET TIME LINE, ASSUMPTIONS AND GOALS. A. MCCLOUGHAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

*Building Committee Membership for
Cutler HVAC Project:*

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPOINT THE CUTLER HVAC BUILDING COMMITTEE AS PRESENTED. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. P. Szymanski reviewed the requirements for the composition of the Cutler HVAC Building Committee and that the MA School Building Authority (MSBA) must also approve the building committee although the school committee retains all fiduciary responsibility. **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).**

*Out-of-state field trip request: HS Choral
Trip to Washington, DC, April 24-28, 2009:*

Dr. McGrath suggested that the school committee suspend their policy of two readings before voting on this field trip since there is a need to make the deposit. She also recommended that the student activities account for music should pay for the cost of substitutes instead of the district account.

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION TO VOTE TO APPROVE THE HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC ON APRIL 24-28, 2009 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DISTRICT POLICY ON SCHOOL SPONSORED STUDENT TRAVEL. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. L. Prior inquired about the impact of interrupting school time and being away not only for the 97 students who will be away but for those who are left behind. A. McCloughan said the school committee should not set a precedent for trips during school time. **THE MOTION PASSED (4-2-1)**

WITH A. McCLOUGHAN AND L. PRIOR VOTING NO AND L. WILSON ABSTAINING SINCE SHE WILL BE A CHAPERPONE FOR THE TRIP.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

- TWO YEAR POLICY REVIEW:

1. Electronic Messaging:

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE POLICY FOR USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGING BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AS WRITTEN. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

2. Pest Management:

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE POLICIES FOR PEST MANAGEMENT AS WRITTEN. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 6, 2008-Regular meeting:

R. BOROFF MADE MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 6, 2008. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED WITH LAURIE WILSON, RICHARD BOROFF AND DACIA RUBEL ABSTAINING (4-0-3).

ADJOURNMENT:

R. BOROFF MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN AT 10:00 P.M. TO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING STRATEGY RELATIVE TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND NOT TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION. J. O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. A ROLL CALL VOICE VOTE WAS TAKEN:

Denise Bisailon	Yes	Lauren Prior	Yes
Richard Boroff	Yes	Dacia Rubel	Yes
Jack O'Keefe	Yes	Laurie Wilson	Yes
Alexa McCloughan	Yes		

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (7-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacqueline Cooper
School Committee Secretary