

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of January 24, 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 (7:06)

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration; Kathy Harris, Director of Student Services; Catherine Donovan, Food Services Director

ABSENT:

No one.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

R. Kuebel invited members of the public to raise concerns. None were forthcoming. He noted the distinction between public meetings, and meetings that take place in public, and said this Committee's are the latter; public comments are invited at a particular time during the meeting, but during the rest of the meeting, members of the audience can speak only at the discretion of the chair.

NEW BUSINESS:

Student Government

High school student government officers Brian Gerden, Maggie Abott and Matt Chigas briefly updated the Committee about Spirit Week; a holiday fund-raiser; and postponement until February of the holiday assembly originally scheduled for late December, which was postponed because the originally scheduled date was a national day of mourning following the shootings in Newtown, Connecticut.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

High School Principal Search

Dr. Harvey outlined the upcoming visits of the two finalists for the position of high school principal, and the remaining steps in the evaluation process, which he said would culminate in an offer to one of the finalists during the week of Feb. 4. R. Kuebel said that even if a quorum of the Committee were to attend public interview sessions with the candidates, the Open Meeting Law would not apply, because the hiring decision is not under the Committee's jurisdiction.

Dr. Harvey reported a decision is due in February on a grant proposal for \$386,000 in seed funding from the state to plan and implement a town-district facilities department. He and the Committee discussed how the department might affect the district budget in the coming year, and future years; issues in integrating the three entities' current operations, including variation in accounting software; and the expectation that the district's maintenance costs would be similar or higher in at least the initial years of a joint department.

Action item:

- The Committee asked Dr. Harvey to provide an update in mid-February on the Department of Public Facilities and Infrastructure.

K. Donnellan requested an update about work on the district website; Dr. Harvey said the Director of Instructional Technology has no firm completion date in mind, and is fully occupied now with another project.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

R. Kuebel responded to some of the questions asked by members of the public at the previous meeting and noted that presentations by others at this meeting, and Dr. Harvey's presentation of his entry plan at a future meeting, would address the others. He responded that:

- a facilities master plan and a district strategic plan would both reflect goals the community sets, and therefore be consistent and complementary
- the Towns would finance consulting for a facilities master plan, probably via a higher assessment
- the public can provide feedback about the FY14 budget proposal at the meeting of Feb. 7, and at the official public hearing on the budget at the meeting of Feb. 13 (or 14; the schedule was uncertain at the time of this meeting)

The Committee discussed funding options for consulting work related to the master plan, and an upcoming presentation to Town officials about the tentative budget proposal.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes of August 7, 2012 and
January 10, 14 and 17, 2013

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE ALL OF THE REMAINING ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA. THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DISCUSSION OR AMENDMENT OF THIS MOTION. KYM DONELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy

B. Lawrence said the working group has not yet learned what policies the district is required to have, and continues to research this. Committee discussion touched on how much time and how many policies the Committee can productively consider, over what period of time, in a given meeting; how extensive discussion should be; ways to resolve some questions and issues outside of the meetings; and how updated policy documents should indicate revisions.

Facilities

B. Dery outlined the bidding process and time frame for Cutler roof work. Discussion also touched on forecasting cash flow, and how this affects the timing of work and billing. P. Gray said bids are due Feb. 8.

Legislative

A. Minois mentioned key education-related features of the governor's proposed state budget proposal. She invited other members to attend an upcoming meeting of the Suburban Coalition with her.

Negotiations

R. Kuebel said the teacher's union has asked for another meeting to discuss education in this district of children of faculty who live elsewhere, but the union does not appear to wish to bargain on this matter. He said the Committee had agreed earlier to discuss it further with union representatives only if they wish to bargain, but that otherwise, it would serve no purpose to rehash the issue.

Communications

K. Donnellan said this working group plans to begin informing the community about the FY14 budget when the Committee approves it in mid-February. She said the group feels unable to produce an annual report of the type released in recent years; she asked what law requires.

Action item:

- The Committee agreed the Communication Working Group would meet with Dr. Harvey to discuss the format for communication around the budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

Representative Brad Hill

Postponed; Rep. Hill was unable to attend.

Food Service Budget

C. Donovan gave a PowerPoint presentation that addressed topics including these:

- changes in state and federal regulations re food served and sold at schools
- changes in partial reimbursements of districts' costs for providing free and reduced-price lunches
- local and national food cost increases
- local and national trends in the percent of students purchasing meals at school
- additional upcoming changes in nutrition regulations
- staffing

- FY13 actual and projected income and expense data
- the department's FY14 budget

(The slides are appended to these minutes.)

R. Kuebel inquired about how a price increase might affect student participation, and net revenue or loss. C. Donovan predicted that raising the school lunch price by 25 cents might lead to a 2% drop in participation, but net \$17,000 more a year. Other questions touched on equipment costs and how they are budgeted for; the financial impact of the point of sale computerized payment system installed last year; and how this district's school lunch price compares to other local districts'. R. Kuebel stated that it was his understanding that Food Service health care costs would be expensed against the Food Service Fund, with the shortfall transferred from the General Fund.

Presentation on Special Education

K. Harris gave a PowerPoint presentation that addressed topics including these:

- state and federal special education regulations
- the district's major special education costs, including legal costs, and placements outside this district
- number and percentage data about HWRSD students currently receiving special education services
- issues under study by the leadership team, including whether some students are slipping through the cracks; why 19% of middle school students receive special education services, compared to 10 and 11% at the elementary schools and 9% at the high school; and what provisions are in place to identify and provide services to students who do not have a diagnosed learning disorder, but who struggle in school
- costs and reimbursements
- contracted services, including special education transportation
- this district's trend toward replacing some contracted services with staff members proficient in those areas, and resulting reduction in the contracted services budget
- proposed FY14 restructuring of the department leadership
- proposed FY14 staff reductions, including reduction from 2 to 1 teachers in the STAY program; redesignation of a special education teacher to an intensive learning program; redesignation of half of one SPED teacher's time to focus on assistive technology; and redesignation of one Winthrop special education teaching position to a behavior specialist, which requires special licensure
- possible relocation of the language based disabilities program from Buker to Cutler
- the reduction in Skills level classes at the high school, the increase in differentiated instruction classrooms co-taught by a content specialist plus a special education teacher, and her evaluation that this is proving very effective

- common misconceptions about inclusion
- staff professional development in differentiated instruction
- research on special education students' achievement when educated in special education classrooms versus general education classrooms

(The PowerPoint slides are appended to these minutes.)

She responded to Committee members' questions, including B. Lawrence's about the extent of special education services to choice students; R. Kuebel's about how to assess whether special education services are "satisfactory," and A. Minois' about an upcoming routine state review of the district's special education services. K. Donnellan indicated she had a number of other questions; R. Kuebel asked her to send them in writing to K. Harris due to the late hour.

ADJOURNMENT:

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. KYM DONNELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 10:26 p.m.

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

Department of Food Services Financial Report dated Jan. 24, 2013,
PowerPoint presentation (10 slides)
Department of Student Services presentation dated Jan. 24, 2013,
PowerPoint presentation (18 slides)

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary