

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee

Meeting of February 2, 2012

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: A. McCloughan called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. at the Buker Multipurpose Room. The Committee and audience rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Sean Condon (6:38), Bill Dery, Kym Donnellan, Roger Kuebel, Alexa McCloughan, Ann Minois, Jack O'Keefe, Dacia Rubel, and Larry Swartz

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Gray, Superintendent; Dr. Celeste Bowler, Assistant Superintendent for Learning; Pola Andrews, Business Manager; John Driscoll, Miles River Middle School Principal; Christy Reynolds, Miles River Associate Principal; Rick Shruhan, Director of Facilities; Alan Taupier, Director of Information Technology

ABSENT: No one.

ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA: **ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO AMEND THE AGENDA TO ACCOMMODATE TOPICS THAT THE CHAIR DID NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATE 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING, SPECIFICALLY GETTING AN UPDATE ON THE PAYROLL ISSUE FROM POLA ANDREWS, DISCUSS THE FIELD TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY, THE FIELD TRIP FOR THE MODEL UN CONFERENCE, A REQUEST PAYMENT OF VACATION DAYS, AND A POLICY DEVELOPMENT ADOPTION ITEM, THE REMOVE ACCESS POLICY. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).**

STATEMENTS OF GUESTS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: **ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY 19, 2012 MEETING. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0-0).**

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE:
Interim Middle School and High School Principals
P. Gray said that because the district does not yet have a permanent superintendent, he considers it prudent to keep John Hughes on for a second year as interim principal of the high school; the district has applied for and received a state waiver that would allow this. Forums are planned to obtain input from faculty, parents and students regarding whether to ask John Driscoll to remain for another year as interim principal of the middle school.

Payroll Software

Business Manager P. Andrews read aloud a prepared statement giving detailed information about problems with payroll software in mid-2011 and at the beginning of 2012, and the district's response. Her statement is appended to these minutes. A. McCloughan said the teachers' union representative appears satisfied with the resolution and explanation.

UPDATES:

Proposed Agreement with the Virtual Department of Public Works (VDPW)

Richard Boroff of Moynihan Rd., Hamilton asked about the basic concept of a VDPW, whether the district could use outside services or withdraw completely if unsatisfied, and whether current custodial staff would remain as district employees. P. Gray responded.

NEW BUSINESS:

Field Trip to Peru

P. Gray announced that upon learning that the costs of a previously approved high school student trip to Argentina in April, 2013 are higher than projected, the sponsoring faculty member proposes modification of the plans to instead take students to Peru. The 2013 trip would be essentially the same as prior student trips to Peru, and the same tour company would be involved. Committee members received documentation in writing prior to this meeting.

L. Swartz suggested that the district explore ways to reduce the cost of future student trips below the \$4,000 estimated cost of the Peru trip, and suggested the Committee require specific security measures.

LARRY SWARTZ MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO REQUIRE THAT ON OVERNIGHT TRIPS, SECURITY MEASURES IN TERMS OF PLACING SECURITY TAPE ACROSS A DOOR TO INDICATE WHETHER SOMEONE HAS LEFT DURING THE COURSE OF THE EVENING BE A REQUIREMENT OF THE TRIP AND THE INDICATION OF THE BREAKING OF THE TAPE IS A MAJOR VIOLATION THAT WILL RESULT IN THE CHILD BEING SENT HOME FROM THE TRIP. ROGER KUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION.

Discussion that followed touched on issues including the Committee's, parents', and students' responsibilities regarding field trip rules and security; whether new security policies approved in the future should apply to previously-approved trips; security needs in different countries; the lack of information about other districts' policies; and whether to consult teachers who have chaperoned such trips in the past. The Committee tabled the motion and reached a consensus that information on this topic should be gathered, and the Committee should discuss it further at a later date.

ROGER KUBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE TRIP AS MODIFIED. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 7-0-2. (Bill Dery and Larry Swartz abstained.)

Safety Plan for Music Trip to Toronto

P. Gray noted that in response to L. Swartz's request at a prior meeting, E. Fecke provided written information about security measures and the planned ratio of chaperones to students for a previously approved trip by student musicians to a music festival in Toronto; this information was distributed to Committee members prior to this meeting and is appended to these minutes. P. Gray said the student/chaperone ratio complies with district policy. L. Swartz said he would abstain from this vote as he did on the prior motion because of concerns about safety issues, but that he was comfortable with other aspects of both trips.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE SAFETY PLAN PRESENTED FOR THE MUSIC TRIP TO TORONTO, CANADA. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-1. (Larry Swartz abstained.)

Field Trip Approval: Spanish Class to New York City

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE DAY FIELD TRIP FOR THE SPANISH CLASS TO NEW YORK CITY ON MARCH 22, 2012. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

Field Trip Approval: Model UN Conference in Cambridge

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE FIELD TRIP FROM FEB. 10, 2012 TO FEB. 12, 2012 FOR THE MODEL UN TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE IN CAMBRIDGE, MA. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0-1. (Larry Swartz abstained.)

Vacation Days

P. Gray said his workload as assistant superintendent in 2010-11 and as interim superintendent 2011-12 made it impossible for him to take an extended vacation, so he has accumulated 37 unused vacation days, and does not expect to be able to use all of them in this or a future fiscal year. His contract entitles him to 25 vacation days per year. If he were to continue as interim superintendent through the next school year, he would be able to carry over 10 of the 37 days which he has "on the books" at present. He asked the Committee for a one-time payment for 20 vacation days.

Discussion followed about the option of approving the carry-over of more than 10 days, and district precedent for such a payment. .

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO APPROVE THE PAYMENT OF 20 UNUSED VACATION DAYS FOR INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT PETER GRAY. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

FY13 BUDGET WORKSHOP CONTINUATION:

Budget Calendar

P. Gray updated the Committee about remaining tasks in reconciliation of the FY11 budget. He also suggested several changes to the FY13 budget calendar.

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADOPT THE OPERATING BUDGET CALENDAR FOR FISCAL YEAR 13 AS PRESENTED. DACIA RUBEL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

The revised budget calendar is appended to these minutes.

Middle School Team Concept

J. Driscoll said faculty members favor restoration of the middle school team system; a 9-member committee just concluded an 8-week study and proposed two possible models. C. Reynolds briefly detailed that committee's research method, the models it proposes, and how class schedules might change. They spoke of advantages of a team system and why they believe it could be restored without increasing staffing.

FY13 Facilities Budget Proposal

R. Shruhan responded to Committee members' questions about high-priority maintenance projects, about which they received a prioritized list prior to the meeting (which is appended to these minutes). The Committee asked him to get reliable estimates of the cost of Winthrop roof repairs and add that project to the list; gather and report cost projections and other details about re-siding the Center Building with Hardieboard versus cedar siding; and gather and report information about insulating of the Buker School attic, and funding available through National Grid. They struck from the priority list item 7, gutters for Cutler School, which R. Shruhan said was listed in error.

FY13 Information Technology
Budget Proposal

A. Taupier discussed the routine replacement schedule for district computers, suggested developing a strategy for purchasing iPads, and listed costs associated with IT. He answered members' questions about improving administrative data systems, the unit cost of computers stated in the budget proposal, and shortcomings of the district's current systems. P. Gray said technology line items are embedded in each school's individual budget so it is hard to pull together district-wide IT cost data. P. Gray said some FY12 funds for IT purchases are still to be spent, and the FY12 and proposed FY13 budget include funds for a consultant regarding the district website.

Proposed FY13 Revenue
Projections and Preliminary
Excess & Deficiency Account Review

P. Gray proposed that the Committee keep its request for funds from the member Towns level with the current year's by applying to the FY13 budget the available funds in the Excess and Deficiency account (E&D) and several revolving accounts. These would be one-time funding sources. Members discussed with him topics including the legal and appropriate uses of fee revenue, the anticipated balance in revolving accounts once past year's accumulated funds were expended, and town Finance Committee members' statements that this budget strategy might enable the Towns to provide additional support to the district in future years. They referenced an FY13 revenue projection document that is appended to these minutes.

The Committee and P. Gray also discussed extensively the district auditors' advice that the Committee should vote during FY12 to approve use of E& D funds for capital purchases, having failed to vote separately

on that when approving the FY12 budget, as is required by the state. The Committee and P. Gray discussed legal issues regarding use of E&D funds; whether budget figures presented for particular projects during the FY12 budget planning process were consistent and/or accurate; whether the Finance Working Group should review the relevant capital expenditures and propose an updated figure for approval; and other issues. R. Kuebel reported that figures in Committee minutes and FY12 draft budgets and handouts do not always add up. In response to a question from a member of the audience, P. Gray said the E & D balance stands at approximately \$1.5 million; he and R. Kuebel said the explanation of how that sum accumulated is complicated and is to be explained at the Committee's Feb. 16 meeting. P. Gray said the Committee could either vote to approve \$338,248 in FY12 capital expenditures as the auditors recommend, or postpone the vote and in the interim determine the precise amount spent so far on capital projects, and the projected costs of capital projects that are expected to move forward between now and June 30, 2012. They also briefly discussed revenue from the school choice program, and enrollment goals for that program.

BILL DERY MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO GO BACK AND LOOK AT THIS NUMBER AND PUT THE ACTUALS, BEST GUESS ACTUALS AND PROJECTED ACTUALS, AND MODIFY THAT NUMBER THAT YOU HAVE RIGHT THERE. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED 8-1-0. (Dacia Rubel voted no.)

LEADERSHIP REPORT:

Committee Reports
Communications

K. Donnellan said survey results are being analyzed, and the committee is working on the district's annual report.

Finance

D. Rubel said the committee meets regularly with auditors regarding finalizing the FY11 financial audit; the auditors are to present the audit during the Committee's Feb. 16 meeting. Members are discussing policy initiatives that might ensure sounder financial management and guard against accumulation of funds in some accounts going forward.

Legislative

A. Minois reported that the state legislature's lobbying event "Day on the Hill" is scheduled for March 27. Planning is underway for an in-district breakfast with legislators, perhaps in the first week of April.

Negotiations

A. McCloughan said this working group met briefly on Jan. 31 with a teacher's union representative to discuss whether the district might switch to the GIC program for employee insurance. The union rep and a representative of the School Committee are to do groundwork together about the GIC program, and potential savings, and report back to the working group.

Minutes

The minutes of six working group meetings in Nov. 2011 through Jan. 2012 are available for public review. D. Rubel suggested that working group minutes should report what the groups did rather than going into detail about what was said. The Committee expressed a consensus that

the relevant working group should approve working group minutes before they are forwarded to the entire School Committee.

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND ADOPTION:**

School Committee Member Ethics

D. Rubel highlighted important points of a Massachusetts Association School Committee Code of Ethics for school committee members, which the Policy Working Group proposes this Committee adopt. It is appended to these minutes. This was an informational discussion.

Remote Access

L. Swartz detailed the Policy Working Group's recommendations for a policy to allow Committee members to participate in meetings from other locations. The working group's recommendations include that remote access participation be limited to two meetings per fiscal year per member; allowing members to participate by remote access in regular meetings of working groups and the School Committee, but not in executive sessions of the School Committee; a procedure for approval by the chair prior the meeting; requiring that absent members participating by remote access be audible to all present in person at the meeting; and requiring roll call votes during meetings involving remote access. The full School Committee could vote to waive the twice a year maximum on a case-by-case basis. This was an informational discussion.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

Members scheduled an additional meeting for 7 p.m. Thurs. Feb. 9 at Buker School.

ADJOURNMENT:

ROGER KUEBEL MADE A MOTION THAT THE HW REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADJOURN. JACK O'KEEFE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

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

Field Trip Request form dated 1/26/12 for travel to Peru in April 2013, with documentation
Proposed Field Trip to Toronto for members of the Concert Band:
Security Plan
School Committee Member Ethics (Massachusetts Association of School Committees Code of Ethics)
P. Andrews statement regarding payroll software
Revised FY13 Budget Calendar
List of facilities project priorities
Instructional Technology budget request, FY13
Draft revenue projections, FY13
Preliminary Review of FY12 Excess and Deficiency Account

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Sierks Smith, School Committee recording secretary