

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Erika Wiecenski at the Town Office Building.

PRESENT: Erika Wiecenski, Herb Arico, Michelle Cunningham (departed at 8:35pm), Barry Walleth, Leo Mercado, Mark Jones, Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: Heather Estey

COMMUNICATIONS:
None

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Kathy Mikel, saw that the iPad update was on the agenda and wanted to share the positive experience her eighth grade son was having. She stated it was a motivating tool and so much creativity has come from it both academically and at home. She thanked the Superintendent and the Board for putting it all together and approving it.

PRESENTATION:

HMS teachers Laura Rodriguez & Mike Cioe presented on the iPad initiative and gave an update on how they have been used in the classrooms this school year. They showed various administrative and organizational apps that are utilized by the teachers and some of the many different apps that are used by the students. They explained about the process, the learning curve, improvements that have been made in different apps by the manufacturer to make use easier, and availability of materials for absent students.

Board members asked questions about teachers noticing any negative aspects with the iPads. The teachers reply was that there is some distractibility for some students but usually it is not in class but outside of school. There are a few students that do not use the iPads and use paper for various reasons.

There are some issues with flash player with some items that were previously used for lessons that cannot be used on the iPads but they are hoping to find alternatives for this.

Board discussed the amount of broken iPads and the insurance coverage with Superintendent Harding stating there had been about 30 broken that have been replaced under the insurance policy. The \$10.00 expense to parents has covered the majority of the deductibles for the claims. They are planning on a similar cost for next year as well.

Board discussed the information for parents for next year with teachers replying that they have more information to give in the initial meetings for set up, storing, and saving data now than they have completed the first year.

Superintendent informed that the iPads will not go home with students over the summer due to not having support for any issues or breakage that may occur.

Superintendent Harding mentioned to the Board that he along with the HMS principal and six teachers will be attending and presenting at a conference for iPads to about 450 people at UConn tomorrow.

HMS Principal Deborah Sullivan and parent Gianna Stebbins discussed the proposed 2014 8th grade field trip. A committee of parents has proposed a 3 day/2 night trip to Philadelphia for the eighth grade class next year in April which would cost approximately \$400.00 per student with plans for families to fundraise to offset individual costs. They surveyed the parents in writing and received about 26 responses, they then surveyed by phone and reached a total of 66 parents with 46 stating yes they would like for their child to participate in the trip and 11 stating they would not. There were 9 parents that they were unable to contact.

Principal Sullivan stated that she had 6 staff members that were willing to attend and supervise the trip with the grade 8 social studies teacher interested in participating in the planning to coordinate with the curriculum being taught.

Board members asked questions and discussed the reasons for the trip, if it would be an annual trip or just for this one grade, they questioned if a nurse was needed, if the liability insurance covered overnight field trips, how many parent chaperones would be needed or allowed to attend, if the school could or would need to assist with costs for students that could not meet the financial requirements, if there are special education students that would need support people to attend, the ratio of staff to students, the educational value of the trip and if it ties into curriculum, and the staff needed to cover the classes and students that would not attend the trip.

Some of these issues need further investigation and members are to send any further questions to Superintendent Harding.

Superintendent Harding presented the Food Service account update giving members a handout of figures over the last five school years. He explained the figures and the reasons for some of the changes such as not having the food service director any longer but instead having Wendy Knight as a manager which was a savings, increased lunch prices as per state regulations to continue to receive certain funding, and purchases of equipment as needed. There was a letter from the State about the fund balance accumulation needing to be spent, which was already handled with the purchase of some necessary kitchen equipment by the time the letter was actually received.

Superintendent commented on what a great job Wendy Knight does managing the food service department with Principal Sullivan also stating that she does a fabulous job going above and beyond what is required or asked of her.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent reported he has renewed the contract with M&J Bus as had been discussed at prior BOE meetings. The clause dealing with the lease of the bus lot is now a separate document between the bus company and the town. Also the CIP passed the referendum which includes repairs to the lot as well as the trailer.

Superintendent informed the Board of the results of the State History Day contest. One student, Rachel Horowitz-Benoit, is going to nationals. Rachel got 2nd place for her paper on Roe v. Wade. There were two special awards: Andrew Marco-Outstanding Entry Related to Civics, Government or Citizenship for his performance on Sputnik; Liam Parsell and Macon Jeffreys-Outstanding Entry in Maritime History for their documentary on the Panama Canal. He stated HMS has consistently maintained going to Nationals for about 10 years.

He reported that the budget passed on Tuesday. The numbers were low but the margin was good. It was a difficult budget season and he thanked everyone for their efforts in supporting the schools.

Board discussed adding a message to the school sign out front to help increase the numbers of participating voters.

Christian Kollegger, special education teacher, at Hall has taken a position elsewhere for the next school year. Holly Dibella-McCarthy is conducting interviews to fill this opening.

Superintendent informed that the HMS grade 8 graduation is June 21, 2013 and members that plan on attending need to let him know how many tickets they need.

Superintendent reported that there have been some issues with the leach fields at Hall. Ron Strong got several estimates and a company looked at the system and determined there was a broken pipe which was dug up and replaced at an approximate cost of \$1,000.00.

Superintendent informed that Success SEPTO has received a nomination for a spirit award and congratulates them on all their hard work.

Superintendent Harding received positive feedback on the evaluation plan which will be implemented on July 1, 2013.

He was notified that the WESS and BOE grievance has been finalized with the Board prevailing. The case was not made and the judge saw as the Board did that retirement meant leaving the workforce and not for alternate employment and stated if they had not prevailed the precedence would have been costly over time.

Superintendent Harding informed the Board that the kindergarten numbers had decreased by 6 students instead of the anticipated increase. There were four students that moved, one that will be homeschooled and one that will remain in pre-school another year. The Board discussed if the plan to hire another kindergarten teacher should proceed or not. The Board decided to hold off on hiring an additional teacher at this time but holding the funds so that if the kindergarten numbers increase to 44 or 45 before the start of the next school year they will have the ability to hire another teacher. They do not think it is fiscally responsible at this time to have three kindergarten classes with only 12 to 13 students if the numbers remain at 38 or 39.

TRANSFERS:

Superintendent Harding presented and explained the transfer requests to the Board. Board discussed the various transfers to cover new laptop carts for HMS and Phil Stevens presented pictures of a proposed sidewalk addition to be installed at CES.

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Leo Mercado, to approve the two transfers in the amounts of \$2,800.00 and \$23,000.00 for new laptop carts at HMS and for installation of a sidewalk at CES as presented.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, Liaison for EastConn reported that the Board of Directors met on April 23, 2013 and discussed adult education programs and the draft budget for 2013-14. The annual meeting will be in Hamden on May 28, 2013 with a small reception and keynote speaker, Dr. Anthony Rigazio-Digilio professor at CCSU.

Herb Arico, Liaison for Charter reported they met at the University of Connecticut and covered progress and government relations. He mentioned to tune in to channel 14 for local events stating Charter does a nice job of broadcasting. He stated board members and leaders in towns such as selectman and board of finance people are invited to the meeting. Requested if anyone has any issues they would like brought up at the next meeting to let him know.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Mark Jones, seconded by Barry Wallett, to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2013 Special Board meeting.

VOTE: Yes: Mark Jones, Barry Wallett, Leo Mercado
 Abstain: Herb Arico, Erika Wiecenski

Motion Passed

OLD BUSINESS:

Superintendent Harding discussed the update on the Siemens energy efficiency plan. There have been some changes to the work to be done. The work planned for the boilers at the schools cannot be done without the town spending money. Ron Strong was present at the committee meetings and discussed what can be done for a scaled down project to refurbish the boilers with new seals and pumps. The electrical, lights etc. will remain as planned. The new numbers and rates and the amount of years are not yet known, Siemens is getting prices together. It should be less money and a shorter term due to it now being a smaller project and the work should be able to be completed before the summer is over. Superintendent will keep the Board informed of the information as it is known.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Deborah Sullivan, Principal of Hall Memorial School, informed the Board that five students participated and took first place in the Science Quiz Bowl held in Mansfield. Science teacher Laura Rodriguez and students Macon Jeffreys, Andrew Marco, Andrew Park, and Billy Leech participated in the event.

Board members expressed their congratulations on the achievement.

Superintendent Harding gave the Board members a handout on the recommended evaluation process for their review.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Board Members congratulated Success SEPTO on their award, thanked Laura Rodriguez and Mike Cioe for the presentation and for the teachers being innovators of the iPad initiative program, appreciated the Board being conservative in the kindergarten teacher position and the understanding of CES Principal, Phil Stevens, for the situation.

Board thanked the administration and staff for all the work on the budget, congratulated the History Day award winners stating it is a great program and pleased it continues each year. Members were disappointed that the teacher/staff variety show was postponed but it is planned for October of next school year. The Great East Music Festival trip is Friday, May 17, 2013. The success assembly for HMS is planned for the last day of school, June 21, 2013 at 8am. Board advised that people check the community calendar on the web often for all the end of year events.

Board commented that the year is winding down, has been successful and hope it continues this way until the end of the year.

Members expressed wanting to look into security options for graduation and wanting to be sure

to take a hard look at the Philadelphia trip.

Superintendent Harding mentioned that there was a conflict of dates with the parent sponsored eighth grade dance and the Friends of HMS Drama and Music Cabaret, when the Friends tried to choose an alternate date there was not a venue available so Superintendent Harding contacted Ashford School and they agreed to let them use their café and stage for the cabaret. Superintendent thanked Ashford School for allowing the use of facility.

Meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Nichole Page
Recording Secretary