

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2013
(Unofficial Until Board Approval)

Chairman Ericka Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT: Erika Wiecenski, Herb Arico, Michelle Doucette Cunningham, Heather Estey, Barry Wallett, Leo Mercado, Mark Jones, Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: None

COMMUNICATIONS:

Superintendent Harding read a thank you note from retiring teacher Linda Blinn.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

No one.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent Harding made the following report:

The school year ended well and we are already looking forward and planning for next year.

Center School Principal Phil Stevens is doing a lot of work at CES cleaning up rooms and organizing areas that have been overlooked in the past. The mulch is already in at HMS. The doors at CES are completed and we are waiting on the contractor for the cameras at CES. The work on the Morning Newsroom has begun at HMS. It should be a very exciting program next year.

A consultant has been hired to prepare a 10 year enrollment projection so that we may have a more informed discussion about the sustainability of the school system.

Data was reported on how many iPads were damaged and have consulted with our attorney to make adjustments to our policy.

We will also continue the discussion of the 8th grade field trip to Philadelphia. Of concern is the lack of 8th grade core teachers interested in attending. Having the Unified Arts teachers out of school as chaperones impacts all of the grades who are not on the trip.

The date for the public hearing on the Siemen's energy plan will be Wednesday, JULY 10th at 6pm. (at the public library).

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, EastConn liaison reported on activities.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION: by Michelle Doucette Cunningham, seconded by Herb Arico to approve the minutes of June 11, 2013.

VOTE: All in favor

MOTION PASSED.

The Board reviewed policy 5131.82 iPad Acceptable Use Policy with the changes that were recently made. Superintendent Harding stated that 51 iPads were damaged last year and even though it cost \$1,000 we have a great insurance policy on them. Discussion was held about students who are multiple offenders of damaged iPads, and what the consequence should be. Discussion was also held on the fee for the insurance policy. Erika Wiecenski stated that the \$10 fee is not enough, and should be raised to \$20. Barry Wallett disagreed and stated that the students did not ask for the iPads; therefore \$20 might be asking too much. Herb Arico stated that \$15 might be a more effective cost.

Erika Wiecenski clarified that we did not budget for it last year. Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated that the class sizes are decreasing; therefore we might not have as many students using them next year.

Superintendent Harding will retype the policy with the changes / additions that were discussed and will present to the Board at the next meeting (August 13th) to be voted on.

Superintendent Harding stated that he hired a consultant to study the enrollment projection. He presented the study which shows a 10 year projection of our school enrollment. The total enrollment projection is based on 2013 to the year 2022 and shows a decrease at HMS; but also remains relatively constant at CES. He added that the whole state has been experiencing a reduction. He suggested that the Board plan accordingly, and start discussions with other towns.

Barry Wallett cautioned that the State mandates what we spend and we might need to begin to look at regionalization. Discussion was held on various suggestions such as consolidation of schools. Superintendent Harding stated that everything needs to be put on the table and we need to not only look at this during budget season – we need to start now and continue to have an informed discussion. The study states the last time we had numbers like these were back in 1965.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham suggested involving the teachers to be part of the discussions. Superintendent Harding stated that the focal point of the discussion should be brainstorming and reaching out to other towns to see what they are doing about this.

Barry Wallett asked Superintendent Harding to project the budget for the next 10 years with the assumptions made from the study to see what we are looking at. Superintendent Harding agreed and stated it is worth doing to begin the discussions. He will keep it on the agenda and will discuss regularly.

Superintendent Harding stated in response to the increasing budget and proposed enrollment reduction, he has been thinking of proposing a separation incentive to teachers that have 25 or more years of service which might save the Town money. He has researched similar plans that

have been offered in other towns and has also consulted with legal council, who has advised it would be wise to present in the fall.

He would like to propose a retirement plan to eligible teachers, offering to pay 50% of their premium of their group insurance for two years (not to exceed \$2000 each year) and to offer a payment of \$6,000 for two years.

The proposal also states that the effective date must be June 30, 2014 and the retirement letter must be submitted by October, 2013 and it also must be accepted by 5 or more teachers to be cost effective.

He noted that a senior teacher can make up to \$70,000 and we would be able to save the difference in the insurance costs. He tried to set parameters to save as much money as possible, adding that having the notices in by October will assist the BOE in budget preparations.

Herb Arico stated that October is too early. Michelle Doucette Cunningham agreed but added that the teachers who are already thinking about retiring have it in their mindset; therefore they won't see it as too soon of a deadline. Superintendent Harding clarified that he is in no way trying to get rid of any teacher in particular; he is taking the enrollment projections that were discussed earlier into consideration.

Mark Jones asked if we really want 9 teachers to go if 9 are eligible. Chairman Wiecenski agreed and stated if they all took the incentive, she would feel as if we have lost something.

Superintendent Harding will complete the incentive offer and present to the Board in September.

OLD BUSINESS

Erika Wiecenski stated that she has had some concerns about this, particularly the length of the trip. She added that there still are no core teachers who have come forward to chaperone. She added that since no one is here to discuss it, they must no longer be interested. Michelle Doucette Cunningham clarified that people might be on vacation, and we should wait to see if some teachers are interested. They could then present to the Board at a later time. Chairman Wiecenski added that if the unified arts teachers do agree to go, then the remaining other grades would miss out on three days, and then we would need to get fill in for those who are on the field trip. Lastly, she added she was discouraged that the parents stated that they are going to take their children out of school with or without the field trip happening.

Superintendent Harding said he spoke with a parent and explained if no core teachers come forward, the trip cannot happen. He then said if the teachers change their minds, they can present it again.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

No one.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mark Jones thanked Superintendent Harding for his initiative on the enrollment projection.

Herb Arico stated that the negotiation team has begun to meet.

Heather Estey thanked Superintendent for trying to be creative in trying to deal with increased costs.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated that she is glad that we are revisiting the iPad use policy. We should continue to revamp each year.

Erika Wiecenski stated she thought we had a great end of the school year and she was honored to hand out the certificates at the graduation ceremony. She added it is nice to see the number of people who have attended HMS in the past and under their banner at graduation time, noting that there are more people this year than last.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Michelle Doucette Cunningham, to enter into Executive Session at 8:27 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation, inviting Superintendent Harding to join them.

VOTE: All in favor

MOTION PASSED

The Board exited Executive Session at 8:45 p.m.

The Board thanked Superintendent Harding for an excellent year.

MOTION: by Ericka Wiecenski, seconded by Michelle Doucette Cunningham, to extend the Superintendent's contract to June 30, 2016.

VOTE: All in favor

MOTION PASSED

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.