

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2015
(Unofficial Until Board Approval)

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Vice Chairman Michelle Cunningham at the Town Office Building.

PRESENT: Michelle Cunningham, Ann Grosjean, Mark Jones, Barry Wallett
Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: Erika Wiecenski, Leo Mercado, Herb Arico

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Superintendent Harding explained that during the first presentation that protocol would be broken to allow a conversation of questions and answers between the audience, board members and the presenter.

PRESENTATION:

Superintendent Harding introduced Lawrence K. Silbart, MPH, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives, Provost's Office, University of Connecticut. Mr. Silbart stated he has been a Willington resident for 23 years. He gave a brief history of his background and started the presentation regarding the exciting happenings at UConn.

He stated the initiative was started in 1995 and was originally called UConn 2000, then 21st Century UConn and now it is called Next Generation Initiative. He explained the amount of funding for the various programs and projects that will be for new buildings and improving infrastructure at the college. The initiative is to continue to strive to get UConn listed in the top 10 from the top 20 public universities. They are working on partnerships to develop, promote and maintain a workforce in the manufacturing industries in Connecticut. UConn is trying to increase specific STEM areas such as engineers that are greatly needed.

They are trying to recruit outstanding faculty, train and educate grads to meet future workforce needs, and initiate collaborative partnerships with industries. He outlined and explained the different areas they are working on such as research, undergrad education, graduate education, and materials and manufacturing. He broke down each category further listing topics such as genomics, personalized medicine, brain and mind, research thrusts, high tech manufacturing such as electronics, 3D printers, and metal powders.

Mr. Silbart gave numbers of new faculty hired last year and to be hired next year and the estimated increase in students through the new projects. He listed some different projects that will be funded and spoke about the plans for the tech park that is to be built. Stating nine parcels are to be developed with different sections being created over the years. He discussed different buildings to be built such as labs for advanced manufacturing and advanced instrumentation, new residence halls, and an engineering and science building. He listed other buildings on campus to be renovated or removed and new buildings created. He spoke about the new building bought and additions to be made to the Hartford campus.

Board members and the audience asked various questions about the number of prospective employees to be needed and hired for the tech park and the programs being added and about the depot campus. Mr. Silbart questioned if Willington would want to have undergrad or grad students live in the town or if they are looking more for families with children such as the future

employees. Members stated they are interested in staff, faculty and industry people who might move to Willington with children. Mr. Silbart suggested that Willington work with UConn HR and realtors to make sure future employees know about Willington as an option for residence.

Superintendent Harding presented the 2015-2016 Board of Education Budget Overview. He stated this is the fifth draft of the budget to date. The teachers presented to admin in the fall, the administration looked it over and then reviewed with Superintendent to look for rationale for all items. They reviewed prior year's expenditures and continue to make adjustments as new information is received.

He explained the insurance was originally projected at a 10% increase and now it will be no more than 9%. The budget total was \$7,906,963.00 which is a 0% increase over last year.

Yearly certain assumptions are made regarding different variables. Some of the assumptions are the health care percentages, placeholders for insurance, dental, liability, heating fuel and diesel costs.

He stated that both certified and non-certified salaries are down. He explained the issue with the Special Education out placements with last year's budget. The new outplacements came in after the budget was completed and presented. Superintendent did not go back to the BOF to redo the budget and ask for more funds. He anticipated some retirements and thought he could fund the outplacements with other savings as well because the budget was already at the MBR and you could not cut any further. This caused some discrepancies in this year's budget because of the different transfers and prepayments made from the accounts to cover those various costs. He stated if any additional out placements occur this year he will not be able to again absorb the costs within this budget.

He reviewed the object codes and totals within the budget and the increases or decreases along with the reasons for each. He spoke about the unknown electric cost increases and the time frame for the locked in rates. He discussed the salary for the district head custodian remaining in the budget until a decision is made to hire a person or use the funds to pay for the facility items needing repair as necessary.

He discussed the need for three kindergarten classes next year, the teacher substitute position will be removed, and there will only be two fifth grades next year resulting in one less teacher position.

Stated he was told that E.O. Smith is going to have an increase of \$60,000 for Willington as of now. The original projection was supposed to be a negative number.

With the budget at 0%, no programs are affected, everything will be done through attrition. If asked to go to MBR then there will need to be cuts to programs and layoff teachers.

Superintendent Harding does not recommend that. He stated the budget is fiscally responsible and urged people to look at the budget over several years and think about what has been maintained while still cutting and remaining at 0%.

Superintendent thanked the administration for all their work stating they have spent a lot of time working on the budget together.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent noted there is a CIP meeting tomorrow night and members are invited. He reported on the quotes from New England Mechanical for a service contract for the town office building, dog pound, public works, two schools and the old town hall. He is hesitant to accept until they can provide more information on the status of all the facility equipment and evaluate the needs. This is a lot of work for the company and they may provide a 6 month proposal to build in a survey to give the projections of items to be done.

He stated he was going to move forth with the normal items such as the lights for the CES parking lot etc. but does not have an actual price for the contract as of yet to offer the CIP committee.

Members questioned if a placeholder could be made for CIP until the costs are known. Superintendent discussed this with the board and decided he would attend and ask for a placeholder from the CIP committee.

Superintendent stated a new art teacher, Leah Coloske, was hired today. This was a difficult position to fill because there are not a lot of jobs or candidates for this subject. She is a first year teacher and will come in a couple days to work with the current art teacher, Judith Meyers, before she retires. This position allowed for a savings in both salary and insurance costs.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Ann Grosjean, seconded by Mark Jones, to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2014 Board meeting.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Superintendent explained the transfers needed for School Choice to cover the cost of an additional student attending a magnet school.

MOTION: by Michelle Cunningham, seconded by Barry Wallett, to approve the transfer of \$4,525.00 from the Health Insurance account to School Choice account as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Superintendent explained the transfer needed for an EastConn paraprofessional that was not funded in the amount of \$26,821.00.

MOTION: by Michelle Cunningham, seconded by Ann Grosjean, to approve the transfer of \$26,821.00 from the Health Insurance account to the Para EastConn account as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Board reviewed and approved the school calendar for 2015-16. Board discussed the professional development days, the possibility of being required to go to a regional calendar next year and the HMS grades available dates. Board discussed the issue of no longer printing report cards with one member not in favor of this procedure. Board discussed the portal issue and the expectations for time frames of teachers posting grades.

MOTION: by Mark Jones, seconded by Ann Grosjean, to approve the Willington Board of Education 2015-2016 School Calendar as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Board discussed budget workshop meetings for January 20, 2015 at HMS library and if needed January 27, 2015 at the town office building. The second meeting would be utilized to discuss the declining enrollment and goals if it is not needed for budget discussions.

MOTION: by Ann Grosjean, seconded by Mark Jones, to accept January 20, 2015 and January 27, 2015 as special meeting dates as discussed.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

OLD BUSINESS:

Superintendent Harding stated he did not have the update on the Board goal but would email the information to members before the January 27 meeting.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

None

BOARD COMMENTS:

Board thanked Mr. Silbart for the UConn presentation, the Superintendent for the budget presentation and all the work by the administrators, teachers and staff that helped to prepare the budget and thanked the audience for attending the presentations.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Nichole Page
Recording Secretary