

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2014
(Unofficial Until Board Approval)

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

PRESENT: Erika Wiecenski, Mark Jones, Leo Mercado, Michelle Cunningham,
Ann Grosjean, Barry Wallett, Herb Arico, Superintendent David
Harding

ABSENT: None

COMMUNICATIONS:

Superintendent shared a notice regarding the administration negotiation dates for July, with mediation in August and arbitration in September. He asked the administrators to meet and think about the contract and plan to meet with the Board in late June to hopefully complete it before the summer time when schedules start to become an issue.

Board discussed the negotiation committee being an ad-hoc committee and for members to think about who will participate in the committee.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

None

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent Harding informed the Board the e-books for the math program that were inquired about during the last meeting are part of the original quote for the math curriculum purchase. The e-books were not provided as part of the original sample pilot but will be included once the curriculum is purchased. The students would get a log-in id to access the e-books. He also mentioned that the HMS library has e-books now as well. There is a series of sheets in the library with scan codes that can be downloaded to see the review of the book and the books are also available to students on their devices.

Superintendent reported on the town meeting last night stating he presented the short version of the budget and there were not any questions. The date for the next town meeting is April 22, 2014 with the referendum scheduled for May 6, 2014.

He stated the Smarter Balanced Testing will begin after the April vacation during the window of April 28-May16 with students currently taking the practice tests. He mentioned it is quiet with regards to tech issues and he is hopeful it will all go well.

Superintendent Harding informed the Board that he has used some grant money to hire both Akuity Technologies and EastConn to assist in plugging some of the deficiencies in our tech support. This is becoming more and more of a problem at both the schools and the town office

building . Selectman Mailhos and the Superintendent have been meeting to discuss ways to address this growing concern. Akuity Technologies is doing an assessment of where we are, stating we have a robust wireless system and the high speed internet but the other components are not suited to the amount that the schools and town are doing. The switches and servers are not adequate for the needs and are currently in the boiler room but should be in a temperature controlled, less dusty environment. After the assessment they will come in to help with the immediate needs. EastConn is also coming in on a day to day basis to help with the tech support for hardware and software issues for both the schools and the town. There are items that are broken and need to be fixed, it has been a tough few months with widespread issues. A long range plan needs to be developed with the town but as of now the schools are handling the immediate needs of both schools and the town to keep everything up and running.

Superintendent Harding stated that there has been another out of district placement since the last meeting. This now makes two that have not been budgeted for totaling 3 actual, current out of district placements. He will talk in depth about the funds needed later in the agenda.

Superintendent reported that the grant for the project for the roof at Center School looked good. They were in need of a sample for the asbestos testing which the contractor was putting off so the town engineer and the Public Works Director obtained the sample themselves. Once the results are back the turn-around time should be about two days to approve going out to bid and are hopeful for a start date in June.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, Liaison for EastConn stated they met on March 25, 2014 with a presentation on communications from CABA, with the president of CABA in attendance covering events in legislation.

Herb Arico, Liaison for Charter stated they met and their annual meeting will be on April 28, 2014. They usually invite members of the Boards of Finance and selectman from about 16-18 towns in eastern Connecticut and normally get a good turnout.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2014 Board meeting.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Superintendent explained the transfer request to adjust the work that is being done to the boilers. He reminded the Board of the Seimens' project which included refurbishing 2 boilers at HMS and 1 at CES. There was \$52,000 set aside for this. Since then, Ron Strong, Head Custodian, has come up with a way to realize a greater savings and reduce the risk of school closing as a result of a boiler failure. Mr. Strong would like to replace the boiler at Center which will require an

Members thanked Cathy Britschock for being an advocate and SEPTO for supporting on numerous occasions with donations for the programs.

Mark Jones asked for the topic of the afterschool study hall for sports teams with late practices to be discussed. He stated that some students ride the bus until 3:30 and are home for ten minutes before a parent needs to bring them back to the school for a late practice and that means about 1.5 hours is spent driving around town. If the school could have a study hall it would be a more educationally sound way to spend that time. This mostly only affects certain sports for the boy's teams that practice later in the afternoon instead of right after school.

Superintendent Harding explained the issues being there is only one facility and two people need to use it at the same time and therefore times need to be staggered such as for basketball practices in the gym, and people hired not on staff that hold later practices. It would need to be budgeted as if one teacher and one other outside person, approximately 22 days per sport, 2 hours at teacher rate to total approximately \$5,000 to do a study hall. He stated it is hard to find coaches and especially teacher coaches, due to the fact that most of the teachers already volunteer time on one activity or another or have other obligations that don't allow them to also coach a sport or run a study hall even when paid for those positions. He said the scenario is reasonable but it is hard to find someone that can do it. It works when a teacher coaches but not when it is an outside person. It has been done in the past with parent volunteers holding the study hall but once you pay someone the rules change and certifications may have to be taken into account. Once you open this to one sport then it would open the door for all other programs that are after school or in the evenings, musicals, plays, dances etc. and then the cost could grow from \$5,000 to \$7,500 or more.

Board discussed options of finding alternatives such as the after school program being asked to work with the school on this issue, the prevention of kids being able to participate in sports due to having working parents that cannot transport them back and forth for the late practices, communication to the parents ahead of time for schedules and time constraints of getting children from home and bringing them back to the school for dress rehearsal week and other events.

Board decided to have a committee look into the details of the issue to find the costs, actual number of practices per sport, other activities that would require the study hall, how many students would benefit/utilize the study hall, the YMCA option, and any certification issues and report back to the Board so they can make a reasonable decision.

Superintendent mentioned it is a value added benefit and he was recently told the tech park project in UConn would be done in about 3 years which would bring in about 1500 people. This would have the potential to most likely be a lot of families that would look to surrounding towns for homes and schools for their children and offering items such as this is a benefit to getting people to want to move to Willington. This goes along with the enrollment topic discussed next.

OLD BUSINESS:

Superintendent Harding reported that the enrollment started at 460 and is now at 464 with the Kindergarten at 41 still.

When have the potential growth in town you want it to be attractive when people look at where to live. Want to look at programs and make it appealing for people to want to come here.

Principal Deborah Sullivan outlined the pilot breakfast program to be held at Hall School for two weeks from May 19-May 31. She will send a survey to parents ahead of time to get an idea of how many will participate so that Wendy Knight can plan on the amounts of food needed. She stated at 7:28 a.m. students wishing to purchase breakfast will go from the bus to the cafeteria, get in line, take a bag and select the items they want, which will usually be a fruit, juice, cereal, bagel, or granola bar. They will then sit in the cafeteria and eat while the morning news is on. At the end of the morning news the students will be dismissed to their first period class at 7:42 a.m. All students must have cash or money on their account to purchase breakfast which will cost \$1.55 per day. Only students that get food can be in the cafeteria at this time. Morning attendance will be accounted for in first period because the students are in the same room as the homeroom. All food will remain in the cafeteria, if they do not finish the food it stays, it cannot be brought to the classrooms. The allergy free table will be cleaned before and after the students eat. There will be an additional cafeteria person for one hour each morning during the pilot. Principal Sullivan will monitor the students in the cafeteria for the two week pilot.

Barry Wallett asked if students would be allowed to bring their own breakfast and eat it in the cafeteria upon arrival. Principal Sullivan expressed that that is not the purpose of the program with Barry Wallett responding that it should not be exclusive.

Members discussed the varying opinions of if there is a big response may not want to open up to the extra students, limited amount of time to eat, not to generalize it as a subsidized program, if students need a breakfast they can get it, fairness to other students who should be able to eat in the cafe too, necessity of the program, staff issue for amount of students if program grows, plan modifications necessary if a lot of kids attend, cost impact dependent upon the numbers, grab and go options, allergy issues, and reimbursement amounts for free and reduced and paid breakfasts.

Superintendent reminded the Board that they voted to hold the pilot program for two weeks and will do the best we can within the parameters. After the pilot is completed, in June or over the summer, will be the time to discuss and debate about the impact, should it be done, do you tweak it, etc. The Board will have the opportunity to vote to go forward or not and make recommendations.

Principal Phil Stevens, outlined the pilot breakfast program to be held at Center School for the same time frame noting the children will sign up for breakfast the day before and the bags of food will be assembled the night before to speed up the process. There will not be a choice of items, all bags are the same. The students that get off the bus upstairs will go to the cafeteria to get the bagged breakfast and bring it to their classroom. The cafeteria person will check their name off on a sheet, no money will be exchanged at this time and the students must have money on their account to purchase. The cafeteria staff will enter it into the computerized system later to avoid slowing down the process in the morning. The students that enter downstairs will remain in their classroom and someone will deliver the bagged breakfasts to those classrooms.

There will be extra bags made for students who did not sign up the day before. The two classrooms that are food free due to allergies will have those students go to the cafeteria to eat their breakfasts with Principal Stevens in there to monitor. Those students will return to homeroom by 8:55 a.m. for their first special. The pilot program will not be offered to preschool students. If the numbers are low enough then they may change to all students getting breakfast to eat in the cafeteria and not have the delivery of bags. Principal Stevens will also do a survey letter to parents before the program starts.

Board discussed the continuation of the 7th and 8th grade iPad initiative. Superintendent Harding reported that he spoke with the Apple representative and the cost of 55 iPads at \$379.00 each would be \$20,845.00 with insurance at \$80.00 per iPad for a 3 year plan would be an additional \$4,400.00 to total \$25,245.00.

There are 67 iPads in the current eighth grade with one year of warranty remaining on them. He spoke with the insurance company and the warranty would be transferable to the families if they were to purchase the iPads. There is a \$49.00 deductible for repairs/replacement. The Apple representative thought \$150.00 was a fair market price for the current iPads with the one year warranty included to sell to families. If all 67 were to sell it would total \$10,050.00, the cost to refurbish with the 3 year warranty included would be \$15,195.00. The tech grant is for \$34,493.00 with about \$5,000 of services and \$29,000 for equipment.

Board discussed options, sending a letter out to parents to let them know so they can plan on purchasing or not, anticipating more repairs before the end of the year, cut-off date for parents taking ownership, forms for the transfer and the program continuation.

MOTION: by Michelle Cunningham, seconded by Erika Wicewski, to authorize the school to sell the iPads at \$150.00 each to grade 8 parents as discussed.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Board discussed the teacher early retirement incentive with Superintendent explaining there are changes daily with two new out of district placements for next year. He explained the excess cost will cover the expenses for the current school years' new out of district placements. There is \$21,000 for the boiler and \$42,000 for the roof added with the placements will total about \$155,000 needed for next year.

There is three grade four teachers going to CES next year from HMS but only two classroom teachers are needed. He reminded the board of their preference to cut through natural attrition but depending on the budget figures it may be a possibility to have a lay off situation. He surveyed some staff about possibly reworking the retirement offer to include teachers with 20 years of service instead of 25 to see what the impact would be. He has been looking and running numbers to see if can pay for the out of district placement without going back to the town for more money. One plan is to buy \$77,000 worth of items from next year's budget this year and not return money to the town this year. Some of those items would be tractor, math books, and Mirma. The town does not expect money back this year and if the board returns the funds then

he would need to ask the town for additional money for next year and the MBR rises for next year and that creates issues. He would still need \$78,215.00 for next year, there is a \$4,000 credit, can omit his CAPSS membership, \$3,200 for Star, dropping the RTIM program, and the healthcare percentage changed from first 9.5 then 8.5 but now is at 5.5 which will save \$36,000 on top of the HSA savings for next year. This leaves it short about \$29,000. He is working with the bus company to see if one less bus is possible which could save about \$45,000 and the end of the year is not yet here, there could be a retirement which typically saves about \$25,000.

He discussed with the Board if get both the bus and a retirement then there could be some money left for technology support which is greatly needed. There is equipment still in boxes because there is not enough time for one person to set everything up and maintain it all. With the IT network issues there is a single point of failure and only one person responsible for all of it, if there were a company then you could have multiple people that are knowledgeable, with resources available to support the network. If a bus reduction and a retirement do not take place then there would be a \$29,000 shortfall, it would be a tight year but possible to pull it off.

Possible to go to town to ask for additional tech support with Selectman Mailhos and might get the money for the town and school. Retirements, MBR, out of district placements, will all need to be looked at for next year along with the possibility of a teacher layoff. E.O. Smith will affect the MBR the most.

Board discussed the technology issues, wanting to look at what we are doing with the computers, the results and costs versus more tech support and not a teacher, hiring extra support, and needing a foundation, long range plans and expertise for technology, along with grant funding and infrastructure.

Board discussed having Board of Education Chair meet with the Board of Finance Chair to share and review status of where the Board is at, at this point, with the budget to make sure they understand why the transfers will be made and the MBR effect on the budget.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

None

BOARD COMMENTS:

Barry Wallett thanked Success SEPTO for supporting the children in the schools as they do each year and he thanked David Harding for all his work and appreciates what he does, and noted the play was phenomenal.

The Board reiterated Barry Wallett's comments stating Superintendent Harding is creative and doing a fine job, the budget looks good and positive it will pass without opposition. Noted what a nice gesture it was for the interns working with the Kindergartners to bring homemade cards and cookies to the senior center.

Board thanked Principals, Stevens and Sullivan, for their work on organizing the breakfast program pilots, members for bringing up the afterschool study hall topic, and SEPTO for their different programs through the year and the Yankee Candle fundraiser that helps fund the

donations they make to the schools.

Members attended the musical stating it was fantastic, the kids were amazing and thanked Carol Frassinelli, Jason Philips, Lauren Quinn, Mike Cioe, John Collins and Deb Taylor for all their time, hard work, and long days and nights they put into the show.

Members thanked the Board for being able to have civil and heated discussions but walk out remaining friends, stating that this is important.

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Nichole Page
Recording Secretary