

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2013  
(Unofficial Until Board Approval)

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairman Erika Wiecenski at the Town Office Building.

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

ABSENT: None

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Osha Roller expressed her support to start a school breakfast program in Willington. She said she spoke with Dawn at End Hunger Connecticut (EHC) who explained that there is a lot of support for the program on both the state and federal levels as far as funding. The application process is easy, you submit a menu and the start date and they will help get it set up. Willington is their radar because they are one of 5 communities they were targeting and the only one that has not joined. They are advocating the grab-n-go program or the students can eat in the lunchroom. If Willington joins the federal program there is a reimbursement for each meal at 3 different levels. Osha thinks it is a good idea and says some research state that students who eat breakfast test at 17% higher on math and attend more school days per year. She wants to advocate and is willing to help get the program started.

Superintendent Harding responded that he has spoken with EHC and they accompanied the committee members when they went to other schools to see the logistics of how their programs operate. He said it is not a matter of finances, it is financially not a loss and potentially a gain but it is an issue of logistics for the Willington schools. The grab-n-go program is difficult because due to allergies, food is not eaten in the classrooms. The others schools visited had 20-30 minutes spent in the morning to have the program and we do not have that much time before the school day starts, homeroom is only a few minutes long. He stated that the committee has not given up on the program and will continue to look at the logistics.

Osha Roller replied that 68 new schools this year have started the program and have encountered the logistical issues as well. She would like to go back to EHC and ask them about our concerns and see what they can do to help or come in to see our schools.

Superintendent Harding replied that the EHC representative came on the visits with Willington and he has spoken to them regarding the logistics. He stated that there has not been a lot of parental support expressed for the program and he has received only one phone call this month.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent informed that they continued to modify the teacher evaluation plan as needed and have also been given dates this summer for professional development. The administrators will be required to attend a five day session and the superintendent will have to attend a four day session. He and Deb Sullivan have signed up for a session this summer but Phil Stevens and Holly McCarthy will need to go to a session in the fall due to the late notice conflicting with

summer schedules. The plan should be approved this summer after a few small changes and clarifications as requested. Implementation is July 1, 2013 but training is not until the end of July and August with some in the fall. All teachers will be implementing fully in the fall, the teachers know it is coming and had input on it. The biggest impact will be on administration for observations required. The data management tool can be linked to goals and performance and tracked over time. The professional development is free for the first year then there will be a cost. The program will identify the weaknesses and will direct a teacher to professional development component through videos, local conferences and seminars, literature etc., it will track changes in performance over time based on those changes. The smart goals will be refined with professional development at the end of this year and the beginning of next year

Superintendent reported that there is a school security grant that came out this month. It has a deadline of July 29, 2013. It will provide a 63% reimbursement for a variety of facility related items. Many of the items are things we are already doing at CES such as cameras, doors, radios, etc. There is a limited amount of funds and it will go to priority schools first. Willington will most likely not receive any of the funds the first time around. There is also a good deal of preliminary work to be done in order to qualify. He stated he would go through the process and be prepared for the second round.

Superintendent stated that he wanted to mention that the PTA has once again been very generous in contributing ten dollars per student to help defray the cost of field trips. They do this every year along with many other activities that benefit the schools.

Superintendent reminded the Board that the HMS grade 8 graduation is June 21, 2013 and members that plan on attending need to let him know.

Superintendent Harding informed that three HMS students, Macon Jeffreys, Amelia Cunningham, and Andrew Park, two teachers Liz Peczuh and Mike Cioe along with Principal Deb Sullivan went to Charter on Friday to be interviewed by Dr. Neyes on the program Education Matters regarding the iPad initiative. The interview went well and will be aired on channel 14 on June 18 at 4pm, June 20 at 6pm and June 22 at 10am or it can be found on the web at [www.ctv14.com](http://www.ctv14.com) under videos on demand titled Education Matters. Board member Michelle Cunningham went with the group and stated that it was exciting, a lot of fun, and that the students did very well.

Board discussed the request to look into adding an additional preschool class due to having 19 children on the waiting list. Superintendent Harding commented that most new programs are presented during the budget season which has already ended. He stated that the Kindergarten position is being held off and if it is not needed then the money could be available to do something else with but it would be a Board decision. The kindergarten number is up to 41 as of now. Members agreed to add a discussion to the agenda.

MOTION: by Leo Mercado, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to add item B. Preschool Discussion under New Business on the agenda.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

Superintendent Harding requested members to e-mail him their availability for the summer board meeting dates in July and August.

TRANSFERS:

Superintendent Harding presented and explained the transfer requests to the Board for an iPad cart for HMS grades 4, 5, and 6. A similar cart has been used successfully at CES and the students transitioning from grade 3 to 4 would not have the opportunity at HMS to continue to use the iPads without this purchase. Board discussed the various transfers involved to cover new iPad cart including the Superintendent conference line item to be put toward this purchase.

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Erika Wiecenski, to approve the transfers from the accounts listed in the amount of \$10,767.00 to the HMS computer equipment account as presented for a new iPad cart at HMS.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, Liaison for EastConn reported met on May 28, 2013 for an annual meeting prior to the regular Board meeting with Dr. Anthony Rigazio-Digilio from CCSU who gave a powerpoint presentation on the teacher and administrator evaluation plan. He gave a history of evaluations from the 50's to present. He stated the present evaluation plan will have modifications and improvements to make it stronger. The regular meeting took place after the annual meeting approving the budget for approximately 70 million dollars which is an increase from about 45 million due to the collaborative health program being added. The head start program took a hit of about \$976,000 but EastConn is working on applying for other grants to take care of that down the road. It was a successful year overall.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Erika Wiecenski, seconded by Mark Jones, to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2013 Board meeting with correction of date from June to May for great east music festival in Board comments.

VOTE: Yes: Mark Jones, Erika Wiecenski, Barry Wallett,  
Michelle Cunningham, Herb Arico, Leo Mercado  
Abstain: Heather Estey

Motion Passed

Board held discussion on the preschool program and the waiting list of 19 children, alternate programs available in town such as the Willington Nursery Cooperative, Kids Kingdom and other private establishments. Currently there is two sessions of preschool, morning and afternoon with about 10-12 students in each session. The preschool program is a peer based program choosing students identified with needs first then adding their peers.

Members stated that some families may not be able to afford the private preschool options or they may work full time and cannot meet the volunteer commitment required at the Cooperative Nursery School so Willington could possibly fill the need for these students to gain a preschool option. Stating that this would not only benefit the student but in the long run benefit the school as well to prevent children needing more services down the road if there needs are identified and addressed earlier. Members stated that the identified needs students are chosen first for the program.

Members expressed concern that the town is not responsible for families' daycare, if a parent

chooses to stay home instead of work because it is too expensive for daycare it is not the schools responsibility to offer a free alternative. Also the schools should not be taking work away from private businesses in town just too essentially provide babysitting. School is not a requirement until kindergarten. Preschool is a beneficial service to help the identified students before entering kindergarten.

Members stated it is a hard time right now to try and justify adding a preschool program when they are reducing the amount of a required kindergarten classes, if the money was available it would be a different case. Board asked if CES is seeing a difference in the students who have attended the preschool versus the ones that have not, is there a need, if the answer is yes then it should be considered but if not then why would it be necessary. Need data to answer and additional information to show the cost of adding an additional preschool class including the cost of a second certified teacher and necessary para-professionals.

Superintendent Harding noted he can have a presentation on the preschool program for the Board in the future.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

Superintendent Harding discussed the update on the Siemens energy efficiency plan stating that the scope of the work is decreasing and the retrofit for the boilers may not be as efficient as what is already in place therefore that is currently being reviewed. The other work, mainly lighting, can be done in 45 days which could take place over the summer if the town agrees to commit to the project.

Superintendent researched the proposed field trip to Philadelphia and found that it would require that a rider be added to the insurance. The rider would cost between \$300.00-\$400.00. There would be a probability that nurse would have to attend and there might be a need, based on IEP's, to have additional support personnel attend. The need to subsidize some students who might not be able to afford the trip would also need to be addressed. It would be an obligation to provide subsidizing for the students who could not afford to attend. Some issues are how do you base the subsidization, is it based on free and reduced lunch status and what portion gets paid and how many students will need this assistance, these answers are not known.

Members asked for an overall cost if the trip moved forward. The cost of the nurse and staff can be estimated but the biggest unknown is the number of students that would need subsidizing.

Members of the Board and the parent committee discussed issues including sustainability stating would have to see if the first one is successful or not, the need for a nurse and how that person would be paid, contractual and stipend issues for nurse and teachers. Fundraising was discussed raising issues of 67 students in one town all trying to sell items for the same purpose competing with one another for sales, which makes it difficult for people without a large network to accomplish a lot in the fundraising area. Suggested group fundraising versus individual so that all students benefit equally. Members wanted the trip to be inclusive not exclusive and did not think one bus would hold all the students and chaperones which would mean a price increase.

Board members expressed that the any funding by the school for the trip has not been included in this year's budget. The budget was completed before this idea was presented. Therefore the money necessary to subsidize students, pay for the nurse and staff, is not in the budget. It was mentioned that many other schools take these kinds of trips but they are budgeted for beforehand. This is a large expenditure to undertake with zero dollars in the budget.

Discussed the amount of time and the timing of the trip being a Wednesday to Sunday then the week back is April Vacation. Board was not fond of so many days out of school. Committee members stated they had already considered scaling it back to 3 days and 2 nights based on the travel representative suggestion.

Board members wanted to see support from the school staff and teachers regarding this trip. It is presented as an educational trip yet none of the teachers were at the meetings to support or advocate for it. The feedback from teachers that members have spoken too was not in support of the trip. The other issues were that only one grade 8 core teacher was willing to attend the trip and the rest were unified arts teachers which means that coverage for grades 4-8 unified arts teachers during that three days would need to be covered with substitutes. It would be more functional if the grade 8 content teachers went on the trip to limit the impact on the students.

Committee members expressed that the trip would be a great educational opportunity, learning tactically, onsite experience, different non-classroom experiences and a rite of passage for the students that would build on itself over time. Members agreed that the trip would be beneficial but did not feel that a rite of passage is necessary for this age group and that a one day trip to Boston would be just as beneficial to the student's experiences.

Members asked for a spread sheet containing the possible cost versus number of students ratio so that they can better see the feasibility of the trip.

#### PRESENT TO SPEAK:

None

#### BOARD COMMENTS:

Board member informed Superintendent Harding that EO Smith did not purchase the Renaissance learning or Star programs as was originally discussed. Superintendent was not aware of this stating that it was agreed in the meetings with Ashford, Mansfield, Willington and EO Smith that everyone would purchase the same data programs so that they were all on the same page and EO Smith would have ability to track data of their incoming students. He stated this is a lost opportunity.

Herb Arico reported that EO Smith has a digital committee that is trying to develop a computer program with similar devices as iPads. Students would have access to other devices when moving up from Willington.

Board thanked the PTA for their continued generosity each year, and the PTA, Phil Stevens and Sean Conlin for the Fun Run held. Commended the chorus and band on both the concerts and the Great East Festival where HMS band, chorus, and select chorus took home Gold awards and a platinum award for the Lady Falcon Singers.

Board mentioned the HMS Success Assembly will be on June 21 at 8am, Hall Idol will be on June 20 at 1pm, Graduation on June 21 at 7pm, and Friday students turn in their iPads.

Member inquired about the insurance coverage for the iPads stating if 20-30 were damaged, how were they damaged and was it all covered. Superintendent responded that the damage was by dropping iPads, but that the \$10 collected covered all but about a few hundred dollars worth. The insurance policy is working out great and plans on continuing to collect the fee for each student each year to cover the deductibles. They may consider changes to the policy to charge another fee if the same students break their iPad a second time. He also stated that seventh

graders will get their same iPad returned to them for grade 8. Members discussed having a meeting about the future of the iPad initiative mentioning perhaps it can be on their agenda for the retreat this summer.

Members asked about the school safety legislation passed stating that school security is different in each town. Every school has the opportunity to do what they want and in Eastern Connecticut there is not any resident police the smaller towns rely on the state police. Smaller towns have less funds and the state grant will go to the areas of need and the wealthier towns will provide for themselves so where does Willington stand.

Superintendent Harding responded that we will try but most likely will not get part of the state grant this year but that most of our improvements were already made and we are looking for reimbursement. He stated he met with resident troopers from some of the surrounding towns and got feedback on security. Willington looks to be in good shape. We do not have a resident trooper but we are in contact with the state police barracks.

Board stated that this was a good year, the Charter interview was a great opportunity to be recognized for the iPad initiative and there is a lot of people interested in what Willington has done. Board commended the Board as whole stating they have worked hard and put in a lot of hours and done a good job.

Board thanked and appreciated Superintendent Harding giving up his conference funds for the benefit of the students stating it is important and mostly unseen but should be noted.

Board commended Mr. Phillips on the wonderful shows and performances he has been able to get the students to do.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION:

MOTION: by Erika Wiecenski, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to enter executive session at 8:40 pm to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation and invite Superintendent Harding to join

VOTE: All in Favor

Motion Passed

Board Exited Executive Session at 9:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Nichole Page  
Recording Secretary