

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2015
(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, Herb Arico, Barry Wallett, Mark Jones,
Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: Ann Grosjean, Michelle Cunningham, Mark Makuch,

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Sean Kowalyshyn introduced himself and stated he is running for the two year position for the Board of Education in November.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent Harding informed the Board that a week before school started, the art teacher had accepted a position in another district closer to the central part of the state. She stayed for the first two weeks to assist the new art teacher, Katie Daigle in the transition. The Spanish position has been filled with a long term substitute, Amy Pantaleo. She is a certified elementary teacher with a minor in Spanish.

Superintendent reviewed the SBAC results stating they do not give the level of detail that was in the CMT's. This is a baseline year and we are in year 2 of the Common Core implementation. It is not possible to know if this shows growth from last year due to it being a different test.

The schools have been using the Star testing for four years now. It is a national test with benchmarks. This will be continued to see how the students compared to last year to identify where there was growth. These results will be used to compare to the SBAC to see if there are any correlations.

Superintendent received a message that E.O Smith High School would be closing early tomorrow due to the heat because their building is unique and has a section that gets particularly warm. He was discussing whether or not to close early as well with the other Superintendents of Ashford and Mansfield. He conferred with the Board and it was decided to hold a full day of school tomorrow. He stated he walked the buildings today and a couple rooms were a little warm but everyone seemed fine and it would be more difficult for parents to make arrangements for care.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

TRANSFERS:

Superintendent presented the list of transfers, the first, to transfer funds from the plant operations salary to the maintenance CES and HMS accounts to cover the work by Emcor for the phase II projects. The second is to transfer from the 14-15 BOE appropriation to the non-lapsing

education fund. This transfer is required so that the BOF can move the funds into the non-lapsing fund that was established. The third transfer list is to make the salary changes due to the new teacher hires, degree changes, and para changes at the schools. The savings will be used for the out of district placements that increased from 2 to 5. Superintendent stated he is trying to cover those costs without going back to the BOF for additional funds.

MOTION: by Erika Wiczenski, seconded by Herb Arico, to recommend the BOF approve the \$79,000.00 transfer into the non-lapsing fund.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

MOTION: by Erika Wiczenski, seconded by Mark Jones, to accept the transfers out of Plant Operations to the Maintenance for CES and HMS accounts for \$15,308.00 as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

MOTION: by Erika Wiczenski, seconded by Herb Arico, to approve the transfers from various items to Outplacement tuition for \$178,590.00 as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

NEW BUSINESS:

Board tabled the motion to approve the minutes of July 14, 2015 due to only one member present to vote that attended the meeting.

Superintendent reported it has been a great start to the new school year. Everything has been working well. The buses are running smoothly, our technology is working well with very few problems and we have started on phase II of the facilities projects. All vacant positions have been filled. There have been some issues with our student data system, PowerSchool. Our new IT person is not as versed in this program and Custom Computers cannot support this program. We are bringing in some help from another source to rectify the issues.

The roof at HMS and the ceilings at CES are completed, some concrete work has been done, Emcor is on top of the facilities items and it is looking good.

Board member inquired about the emails for the student iPads not being set up with Superintendent responding that the IT person is working on completing those. This was his first summer preparing for a new school year and it was a learning curve for him to have everything ready with the issues with PowerSchool but that overall we are in good shape.

Member asked about having to have duplicate PowerSchool accounts for multiple children at EOS and HMS on your mobile phone apps. Superintendent Harding said Pearson which owns PowerSchool, has sold it and we are starting to look into what that will mean and other student information systems.

Board discussed the Google accounts being set up by the school not individual students, how it is set up for students, and being able to eliminate the need for e-backpack and the future going toward Chromebooks.

The original goal has not changed, but we are looking more at Google as the platform of choice. The students using Chromebooks are collaborating, using it outside the classroom, and differentiation and online learning are taking place.

Superintendent Harding informed the Board of the difficulty the schools are having finding substitutes. He proposed a possible solution to try which is to offer retired Willington teachers an incentive to sub by paying \$100 per day instead of the current rate of \$75. Board discussed and agreed it is a good idea and worth a try.

OLD BUSINESS:

Board reviewed and discussed the breakfast, lunch and milk pricing with Superintendent who informed that the request was sent to the CSDE to waive the price increase and they responded by asking for a list of things, he compiled the list and has not heard back yet.

Superintendent provided update on the Board goal stating he went to the BOS and BOF meetings to begin the discussion of the viable options; either remaining status quo or consolidation of all students at HMS or build a new school. He wanted to see if other members of the boards were interested in forming a committee to have a more comprehensive approach to look at all the buildings in town to form a plan. He said the BOS was fairly responsive and the gun range was on the agenda so people made the connection with regards to the property available. The South Willington group sent a letter about converting HMS to commercial property and having profits be put back into the schools. BOF was less enthusiastic and thought we should just focus on the school buildings. The Un-Willington Committee contacted the Superintendent wanting to look at the property and to assist with both issues of the gun range prevention and the new school.

Present in the audience was Dave Lytwyn of the Un-Willington group whom the Board asked to speak on the topic. Mr. Lytwyn explained he is on the steering committee involved with the prevention of the gun range in Willington. He is a licensed real estate broker and appraiser as well as an engineer. He stated the range is not just for the State police use but will also include helipads and would be used by other groups six days a week. He and Ray Crossen came up with some rough estimates as to the loss of property value for residents in the perimeter of the proposed gun range site stating 50-70% for the immediate perimeter and 30-50% for the outer perimeter. He stated the residents closest would want revaluations done on their properties to lower their taxes due to value loss if the range would occur which would cause the rest of the town to pick up higher taxes to cover that cost. The economic shock would not bode well for the town and they predict a 25% population loss. He would like to work with the schools on looking at the property as a possible option to build a new school. It would have multiple benefits to the town. Would help to prove the property is not a good place to have the gun range when it could be used for a new school instead and that this is an opportunity to develop a better future for Willington.

Superintendent Harding stated the conversation has started to form a joint committee to conduct a feasibility study. Members and Mr. Lytwyn discussed the property value, how much is being offered for it, the legalities of the contract and letter of intent, eminent domain, scoping and assessments, and how Maryland was able to prevent a similar facility. Superintendent stated the more cooperation and entities involved the better to accomplish a goal for greater good.

Superintendent informed the Board on the enrollment projections providing links to the state reports. He pointed out the projections from Peter Prada are not holding true, we have leveled off a little and this year gone up. He gave members copies of data from another source that he researched. The projections show an 11% increase with Willington being the only town in north-eastern Connecticut to increase.

Members discussed that schools are about 75% filled so not small enough for one school, the gun range could impact projections for the town, the town will not agree to go forward with new school if it cost money for the project. If HMS sold and made profitable and foundation put money back into school funds then maybe a viable option.

Superintendent informed that on the first day of school, oil prices plummeted, called the oil company and locked in on that day for \$1.85 for the 16-17 year, which is \$1.10 less than this year's price. Board thanked Superintendent for doing that.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Sean Kowalyshyn mentioned in college he had one email account set by the college for all the years he attended, inquired if that can be done similar at HMS. Superintendent replied that is the intent of what is currently being set up now.

MaryBeth Wallett introduced herself as the Sentinel candidate for the Board of Education position.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Members were glad the schools are off to a good start and like the cooperation in general between boards, wished good luck to the teachers that left, and look forward to having multiple candidates for the new board positions.

MOTION: by Erika Wicinski, seconded by Barry Wallett to enter into executive session at 8:34 p.m. to discuss the pending litigation and invite the Superintendent to join.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Board exited executive session at 8:51 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Nichole Page
Recording Secretary