

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2013
(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, Michelle Cunningham, Heather Estey, Mark Jones, Barry Wallett (arrived at 7:04 p.m.), Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: Leo Mercado

COMMUNICATIONS:
None

PRESENT TO SPEAK:
None

PRESENTATION:
Superintendent Harding explained the Connecticut Teacher Evaluation Plan was previously submitted and approved by the Board over the summer but due to the waiver of CMT testing being used some amendments to the plan needed to be made. He reviewed the changes of using an alternative assessment for the teacher evaluation percentages, adjustments to the reviews of practice and the revised chart and matrix language to coincide with these amendments. Board members discussed the changes.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:
Superintendent Harding thanked members for the information at the Board retreat.

Superintendent stated that the work has begun at both schools on the energy efficiency plan as evidenced by the trailers in the parking lots. It is starting slowly but will pick up as all the schedules are coordinated.

He gave a reminder that the two special meetings scheduled for discussion of declining enrollment and maintain quality programs are scheduled for October 16 and November 18 from 6-8 p.m. at Hall Memorial School.

He informed that tomorrow night is a meeting at E.O. Smith with regional Board Chairs and Superintendents from Region 19, Ashford, Mansfield and Willington to discuss declining enrollments and cost saving methods.

Superintendent Harding informed the Board that the research Holly DiBella-McCarthy was pursuing regarding the feasibility of a program at CES to generate revenue would be at a high initial cost with no guarantees for any revenue. He stated this is no longer an obstacle and grade four moving to CES can now continue to be discussed by the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:
Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, Liaison for EastConn stated committee met on September 24, 2013 in Hampton with a presentation, review of head start program, reviewed goals for EastConn and information about an extensive State and Federal audit to take place in October for one week. EastConn will meet again on October 22, 2013.

Herb Arico, Liaison for Charter stated met on September 16, 2013 discussed operations and reported on cost and programs. They meet once every three months. Programing includes games, shows, and various events at the schools.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2013 Board meeting.

VOTE: All in favor
Motion Passed

Board reviewed the BOE Policy 1140 Distribution of Materials by Students. Board discussed the policy being outdated due to most materials being distributed digitally now and the complaints of people that too much is sent and it is described as spam-like. Discussion of how to revise the policy while maintaining the items important to the community. Board reviewed the policy and the proposed edits and reread at the next meeting.

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Heather Estey, to table Policy 1140 Distribution of Materials by Students until the next Board Meeting.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

MOTION: by Erika Wicewski, seconded by Mark Jones, to approve the amended Connecticut Teacher Evaluation Plan as presented.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Superintendent Harding distributed a copy of the complete Willington Education Association Contract for 7/1/2014-6/30/2018 and a list of agreements made during the mediation session to the Board members. The items on the agreement consisted of a 4 year contract instead of a 3 year contract in order to make the appropriate step and general wage increase adjustments agreed upon, elimination of HMO and POS health insurance retaining only the HSA agreement, a rollback on the cost sharing of the HSA, a change in the Boards contribution to the deductible on the HSA, an increase to the life insurance coverage amount from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in year 4, change from 10 hours to 20 of additional teacher time over the contract period, eliminated the wage step category degree of BA plus 15, increased course fee reimbursements from \$300 to \$400, substitute duties eliminated from the first four times so that each time above the 200 minute prep time will be paid at \$20 per hour, increased 6th year tuition reimbursement from \$500 to \$1000, modified language that a verbal reprimand does not require a written statement of reason, and stipend positions will increase on the same scale as the general wage increases.

Superintendent Harding explained that the Board saves about \$45,000 on the health insurance, and there may be more savings realized as possible retirements occur.

Board discussed the contract, thanked the committee for doing a great job during negotiations avoiding a costly arbitration and thanked Al Ference of the Board of Finance for attending all the meetings.

MOTION: by Michelle Cunningham, seconded by Herb Arico, moved to accept and ratify a new four year contract with the Willington Education Association as presented to the Board, and that the chair is authorized and directed to sign the new contract for and on behalf of the Board of Education.

VOTE: All in Favor
Motion Passed

Superintendent distributed one handout on the current Board goals in the policies and one amended copy reflecting a change in the curriculum to the Common Core Standard and a possible change in the statement of Business and Finance. Board reviewed and decided to put this on the agenda to be discussed further at the meeting next Wednesday.

OLD BUSINESS:

Willington Public Schools Enrollment Projection was discussed with Superintendent Harding stating that he had additional information going back ten years, along with E.O. Smith's ten year projection so that trends can be identified.

He also restated that the idea to create an early special education program is not feasible it will not be pursued any further, the meeting tomorrow is geared toward brainstorming to save money and asked the Board if there were any other items they wished for him to gather for the next meeting on October 16, 2013.

The Board requested a list of extra-curricular activities including sports and enrichment programs above the core subjects. Board discussed the classrooms at CES for grade three and if UA would be utilized differently if grade four moved to Center. Board and Superintendent Harding discussed the 10 year enrollment projection, taking current budget and if did nothing and divided the enrollment to see the per-pupil expenditures and then what a 1-4% increase would do. The costs would be high and that is the reasoning for keeping this on the agenda for discussion because it is a long term problem that needs to continue to have ideas generated to effectively and efficiently serve students. Board discussed the minimum budget requirements from the State and the correlation with declining enrollment.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Peter Latincics of Trask Road, questioned the contract proposal and asked what the timeline is for the contract to go to the town clerk to be available to the public and Superintendent Harding responded that it should go to the clerk tomorrow.

Peter Latincics then asked about the aggregate increase including status of salary from the last contract to this one. Superintendent Harding responded that he would need the business manager to fully reply but that as he stated it is an approximate figure from \$100,000 to \$105,000 but there are many variables such as stipends, health insurance, factored salary, and other numbers that offset the costs such as the HSA savings of approximately \$42,000 000 and he is trying to do

a couple things to negate expenses.

Peter Latinscics asked about a table in the document and about increases with Superintendent Harding responding with figures read earlier in the meeting.

Tim Smith of Clint Eldredge Road asked the Board to consider a policy change when students are questioned in school so that parents are informed and can deal with the student's emotions when they arrive home. He stated it would make it easier and more helpful for the parents when students come home needing consolation. He said it is not helpful to parents to get blindsided when they send their children to school to be educated and protected and that the school has notification systems in place that can be used to contact the parents and let them know of a situation so the parents could be there for the kids.

Superintendent Harding stated that there is not a policy to address this because it is an administrative.

Alex Strong of Fermier Road asked about the teacher contract and if any changes were made due to the class sizes in the contract. Superintendent Harding responded that the original language was vague and that the Board could make changes. Ann Grosjean of Birch Meadow Lane, asked about the overlapping bus routes and if some consolidation could be done. Board member commented that roads are turn-around spots for many buses due to another road closure. Superintendent replied that he tried in the past to get a regional bus contract to reduce the overlapping but it was not feasible since Ashford has their own buses and Mansfield uses another company but that he hopes to revisit the topic at the regional meeting tomorrow.

Heidi Leech of Burt Latham Road, said she feels similar to Tim Smith and wanted to understand the hierarchy of the Board and the hiring of the Superintendent. She also felt that there should have been some notification to the parents when an administrator questions a student.

Superintendent said the general rule of thumb is that it is a judgment of the administration to notify the parent and each situation is different for a variety of reasons. It is not something that should be addressed via policy.

Heidi Leech asked if the policies are online. The Board Chair responded that all policies are on line but this is not a policy issue. The Superintendent responded that if you feel a situation has been handled poorly and the Board agrees then they have the ability to get rid of the administration involved or to create policies regarding dealing with students but those types of policies can create an environment that hampers the administration from doing their job.

Members commented that if the parents are concerned then the Board needs to make sure they are heard and understand the situation. Superintendent responded that you cannot give everyone what they want nor will everyone always be satisfied. Members stated that Board and administration are sensitive to student's emotional health and that the concern has been heard. Superintendent stated that first and foremost we protect the children.

Peter Latinscics of Trask Road, asked about enrollment projections and if any concrete decisions have been made yet from the discussions held. Board responded that they have only had a few meetings including the Board retreat discussing the issue and that it is just brainstorming to be proactive but nothing concrete as of yet.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Board thanked the negotiating committee who worked tirelessly on the teacher's contract stating they did a good job, it is a fair contract and glad that it did not have to go to arbitration. Thanked Superintendent Harding for his advice and assistance throughout the process.

Board encouraged people to come out and listen to the discussion at the meetings about declining enrollment and if they have any ideas to contribute to please email the Board members ahead of time because the meetings are held in public but are not public meetings meaning there is not any back and forth with the audience.

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Nichole Page
Recording Secretary