

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 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, Barry Wallett, Leo Mercado, Mark Jones (arrived at 7:04), Heather Estey (arrived at 7:04), Superintendent David Harding

ABSENT: None

COMMUNICATIONS:

Superintendent Harding shared information regarding CABE's Day on the Hill to meet with legislators on March 6, 2013 and an e-mail from SEPTO inviting interested members to attend the Special Education Day at the State Capitol from 10-2 on March 4, 2013. He also shared information from Mansfield Superintendent Fred Baruzzi regarding interest in supporting the film "Race to Nowhere". Superintendent Harding passed out an informational sheet about the movie.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Tracey Anderson thanked the Board for their efforts on the budget stating they are working hard and doing the best for the kids. She questioned the recess time at Hall school stating she has students at both Center and Hall with the same recess times but the one at Hall seems not to be able to go out for recess as often. She explained sometimes it is a temperature issue but she does not always understand why they cannot go out. She was told black ice was the issue today preventing recess. She requested that if they cannot go outside then can the kids get a hoop set up or something for exercise instead of just drawing in the classroom.

Board and Superintendent responded that today the playground was not clear from snow so there was not a place for the students to have recess, it was not black ice but Center School did have an area cleared on the playground. Also students not having proper snow gear can contribute to not being able to go out. They have had previous discussions and it is in the policy to attempt an indoor activity in inclement weather.

Tracey Anderson stated she understands the issue with this particular storm but is referring to other times in general when the temperature seems warm enough to go out but the students do not go outside for recess.

Board members asked about grades six through eight not receiving any recess or break time due to the schedule and requested looking into adding that in. Superintendent informed that teachers are encouraged to take students outside when possible for classes but that the timing of the schedule does not allow a recess added in as is. Members also stated that lunch time does not afford the students enough time to be social as it should, that pre-teens need time to talk.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS:

Superintendent Harding gave an overview of the lockdown that occurred at Hall School stating that a shotgun shell was found on the bus and passed to the driver who notified the principal who met the bus outside. Isolating the bus was the best decision and the police were notified. He

stated that if the bus was not isolated then it would have been a much longer process due to police protocols. There would have been all kinds of additional things to be done. The isolation guaranteed that it was less of a situation than other schools have recently gone through.

The police did a search on lockers, took statements from all the students on the bus, they did a good job and were very thorough. It was a good exercise. The school was put in lockdown as a precaution which was a good call.

The first communication went out at 8:15am after things were secured. At 10:30 am an assembly was held with all the students to explain the situation.

It was a tough time of day for the incident to occur with everyone coming into school at that time. It was a judgment call to allow students to still enter the building during the lockdown situation because we knew it was an isolated incident. The timing made it difficult to control movement.

During the middle part of the day parents of students on the isolated bus were contacted by phone. Another communication was sent at the end of the day to everyone. The press was there throughout the day and interviewed parents and students as they entered or left the building.

Superintendent informed the Board that he received an email from a parent asking for a forum on school security, he explained that he wanted to meet with the police to be more informed and also wanted the Boards input before going forward with that.

Overall the feedback after the lockdown has been good.

Members inquired as to how long it took the police to arrive on scene and how many arrived. Superintendent responded that the police were very quick responding on scene within 5-7 minutes. He explained at first two officers arrived then four then up to 12-14 officers were there at one time. They responded quickly and did a good job.

Superintendent Harding distributed an updated calendar to members explaining the changes due to the storm days in October, one in January and the two recent ones which total 6 days this year. The last student day extends to June 21 now and there is still room for more days if we need to make up more.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee met and reviewed the bills.

Herb Arico, Liaison for EastConn said they met on January 22, 2013 with a guest speaker John Beauregard the executive director from EWIB. He shared information on the variety of programs offered for education and career transition for young people and adults. They include employment retraining and placement, summer programs for young people, STEM program, and cooperatives. He stated that EastConn received awards from CAFE on different programs and brochures.

Herb Arico, Liaison for Charter informed that the meeting was cancelled and they will meet in the spring.

Herb Arico, Liaison for Region 19 stated they are beginning to meet on the budget and the first meeting is on February 27, 201. They have a preliminary increase of 2.9%. The Mansfield share is up and Ashford and Willington's are down.

Superintendent Harding shared that at this time the 2.9% would mean approximately \$374,000 in savings to Willington. If it was a 0% budget it would be approximately a \$400,000 savings.

Members asked Herb Arico if E.O. Smith is considering bonding again since they did in 1993 and 2002 and if they have discussed a regional K-8 school. Herb Arico responded that they have not discussed bonding or a regional K-8 for Region 19.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2013 Board meeting.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

MOTION: by Erika Wiecenski, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2013 Budget Workshop Board meeting with the paragraph in italics and striking the paragraph before that and the addition of the word “temporary” added into the first sentence of said paragraph.

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

Motion Passed

MOTION: by Herb Arico, seconded by Leo Mercado, to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2013 Special Board meeting.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

Board discussed the transfer of funds to renew the Teachscape software which is an online teacher evaluation tool used by the administration.

MOTION: by Mark Jones, seconded by Erika Wiecenski, to approve the transfer in the amount \$680.00 with \$500.00 from CES principal's conference and \$180.00 from CES printing services to purchased services as presented.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

Superintendent Harding distributed the proposed calendar for the 2013-14 school year and a sheet showing various options of dates that would not affect the contracts or the amount of school days, and the parent survey results about the professional development days. The survey was sent out in the digital backpack for two weeks and the results showed 53 people responded with 52.8% yes, 15.1% no, and 32.1% with no preference.

The board discussed the options presented along with other possible options for spreading out the professional development days.

MOTION: by Erika Wiecenski, seconded by Barry Wallett to approve the 2013-2014 school

calendar with the change of the staff development day of November 12, 2013 to a regular school day, change the vacation day of February 18, 2014 to a staff development day, and moving the last day for students to June 11, 2014.

VOTE: Unanimous in Favor

Board discussed the February 7, 2013 budget presentation to the Board of Finance. Several BOE members attended the meeting and the tone was good. The governor's budget increase in the ECS was also discussed. The board discussed the law around minimum budget requirements and stated that the penalty is \$2.00 reduction in ECS for every \$1.00 cut from the budget. Moving forward it will be important to be aware of the MBR.

The BOF will meet weekly for the next 3-4 weeks then they will call the BOE back after decisions are made. The BOF appreciated the public attending the meeting to get a sense of what the public wants and when people attend the meetings they get an idea of all the other budgets in town and how the BOF has to look at the bigger picture. The BOE thought the BOF did a good job.

First Selectman Mailhos had sent information regarding standardizing the job description and pay rates for town recording secretaries and requested the Board's input. The Board discussed the matter and how it is currently handled for the BOE secretary. The BOE pays the line item out of the BOE budget with the recording secretary reporting to the Board and the Superintendent. The Board's consensus was to keep the position as status quo at this time.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

Board discussed the Siemens Energy Audit meeting on January 30, 2013. Most of the money was for the schools for two new boilers each and lights for other facilities in town. The next step includes a smaller committee with a couple of BOE members and hopefully Ron Strong participating.

The committee is important and it will be important for the BOE to have representatives on the committee going forward before the Selectman makes a decision. Members expressed the concern to consider the low enrollment and getting new equipment over a 20 year plan that you may not actually use or need in 20 years. If the equipment were to fail now it would be an emergency situation where you may end up getting a lower quality item at a higher price due to circumstances.

There was also discussion about how to sustain the schools and to be forward thinking.

Members interested in being on the committee need to let Superintendent Harding know so he can inform the first selectman.

#### PRESENT TO SPEAK:

None

#### BOARD COMMENTS:

Board congratulated the Hall School's Boys' basketball team and their coaches on their championship win.

Board commented on everyone doing a good job in the handling of the lockdown situation. Thanked Superintendent Harding for his comprehensive coverage of the meetings and staying involved in it all.

Commented on the cut trees in front of HMS making it look bare but on a side note stated that it was one of the items mentioned in the security meeting as something to do to enhance security. Board thanked the bus drivers for doing an incredible job knowing it is hard for them with the large amount of snow.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

MOTION: by Erika Wiczenski, seconded by Michelle Cunningham, to table the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent until the March 12, 2013 Board meeting.

Vote: Unanimous in Favor

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Nichole Page  
Recording Secretary