

WILLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016
(Unofficial Until Board Approval)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Erika Wiecenski at the Willington Town Office Building, Lower Level Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Herb Arico, Ann Grosjean, Michelle Cunningham, Erika Wiecenski, Shawn Kowalyszyn, Steve Ortiz, Marybeth Wallett, Superintendent David Harding.

ABSENT: None

1. Communications

Superintendent Harding passed out a letter of retirement from Pat Pinney, the Gifted and Talented teacher at Hall Memorial School. He also passed out a letter of the dissolution of Friends of Hall Drama and Music Booster Club from John Collins.

2. Present to Speak

None

4. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Harding mentioned that History Day was this past weekend and wanted to congratulate all of the winners. Discussion was held regarding the recording of the minutes, because it is nearly impossible to record all of what is being said in a multiple hour meeting, the Board came up with a different way to try and record. Minutes only require the motions, who made them, how it was voted, and who present. A compromise was made that what is required will be written down, but the whole meeting will be recorded on an audio recorder and available for the public to listen to. All of the Board members agreed to give this way of recording the minutes a try for next month to accurately represent what is being said by Board members and those present to speak.

5. Committee Reports

Superintendent Harding and Ann Grosjean spoke on behalf of the Policy Committee where they met this past month and discussed several policies and talked about meeting more regularly. They also came up with some policies that could be amended and two of them were to be brought forth at this Board meeting. They also

spoke about budget planning and having Holly DiBella-McCarthy give an update about presenting specific updates and information on Special Education. They will set up another date for another policy meeting.

Herb Arico spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee and discussed that they went reviewed bills and that the next meeting with Eastconn will be on March 22nd.

6. New Business

A. Approve minutes of February 9, 2016

MOTION: Erika Wiecenski motioned to approve the minutes of February 9, 2016 with the amendment of taking out "Mr. Arico who abstained" on the last page.

SECOND: Steve Ortiz

Discussion: striking "Mr. Arico who abstained"

VOTE: unanimous

MOTION PASSED

B. Approve minutes of February 22, 2016 ☐Policy Committee Meeting

MOTION: Ann Grosjean motioned to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2016 Policy Committee meeting with the amendment of adding the location to the minutes.

SECOND: Herb Arico

DISCUSSION: add on location of the meeting

VOTE: unanimous

MOTION PASSED

C. Transfers

NONE

D. Review BOE Policy # 6140, Instruction, Curriculum

Superintendent Harding expressed to the new members of the Board that the way policy works is that any Board member can make a recommendation to the policy meeting, the committee would discuss it in their own meetings and then bring it to the rest of the Board.

Policy # 6140 is a current policy and what is being added is “a standard curriculum syllabus will be distributed on curriculum night and posted on teachers’ websites. Textbooks and other resources including online educational tutoring sites, referenced by topic should also be included.” Erika Wiczenski stated she was unsure with the language in this amendment saying the word “should” is a more permanent word, and teachers would want to add things... Superintendent Harding said he would be meeting with Administrators this week and they could discuss the wording of this amendment.

The Board will come back to this at the next month’s meeting as a second reading.

E. Review BOE Policy # 9323, The Agenda

Policy # 9323 is also a current policy and added to this policy was: “Any written communication, presentation, documentation, charts, research, etc., to be presented to the Board and discussed in accordance with an approved agenda item will be provided to the Board at the meeting. If an item is presented at the meeting and not provided in written form, the Superintendent will provide said documentation to the Board within 72 hours. “

Written forms can be in paper, email, etc. (whatever is preferred). This is referring to items being discussed- presentations- copies of retirement letters-research should be available if needed.

The Board will also come back to this next month as a second reading.

F. Hall Memorial School Principal Search

There are two committees working on this process: Hall Memorial School Principal Search Committee and Hall Memorial School Principal Interview Committee

Mr. Harding approached school staff about the criteria they would like in a new principal. The search committee will be doing the initial screening of new applications.

The interview committee is broader and will be comprised of teachers, parents, Board members, etc. Finalists will spend the day at the school, meet with teachers, get feedback from staff on interactions with principal and principal interactions with students. Superintendent Harding stated that if the Board starts advertising now, they can conduct interview before April break- then do site visits in May.

Motion: Erika Wicewski motioned to OK this process to find a new principal for Hall Memorial School and to post an advertisement for this position.

Second: Michelle Cunningham

Discussion- Herb Arico asked who makes the final decision and Superintendent Harding said that the committee makes the recommendation to the Board and the Board makes the final decision. Steve Ortiz asked about consolidation of different duties of administration positions, and Erika Wicewski stated this budget included principal of Hall School and would be necessary to have one. Superintendent Harding said it would be a big mistake to not hire a principal.

Vote: Yes: Ann Grosjean, Michelle Cunningham, Shawn Kowalyshyn, Herb Arico, Erika Wicewski

No: Marybeth Wallett, Steve Ortiz

G. Technology Grant

Superintendent Harding stated that the Board received a \$10,000 technology grant for 25 Chromebooks.

Steve Ortiz asked what is being filtered for ads on the Chromebooks and Principal Stevens said that there are a lot of filters, YouTube videos can be posted on Google classrooms that don't have ads before or after the video for students to see. Superintendent Harding stated that internet policies and social media were also discussed in the Policy meeting. On March 28 from 7-8:30 pm at Center School, Scott Driscoll from Internet Safety Concepts, will discuss social media and internet concerns to parents. Steve Ortiz stated that he has some concerns over Chromebooks and that instruction using technology can diminish one on one personal discussion. Marybeth Wallett stated that as of this generation, you have to be comfortable with technology so it is important for students to get to know how to use technology at a younger age. Erika Wicewski agrees with the concerns of Steve Ortiz, but it adds differentiation in the classrooms by having technology and improving on personal levels.

7. Old Business

A. Discuss 2016-2017 Board of Education budget

Erika Wiecenski stated to the Board that there was a lot of discussion last week regarding the budget among the Board and parents and faculty that came to the meeting. The Board of Finance immediately said the budget was too high. Superintendent Harding stated that the current state average is around 3%. There was discussion on possible reductions to get to this budget percent increase and the goal was to have the least impact on students. Superintendent Harding discussed different scenarios to the Board to help get the budget increase to this percent.

The different path looked at was the original budget at 3.85% to 3%, and the 4.63% to 3%.

Superintendent Harding stated that there are also could be possible retirements that could be taken place at the end of the year and could be money that could bring something back in if they are cut in this budget.

One of the scenarios included the suspension of the gifted program for one year: Marybeth Wallett felt very strongly to keep the gifted program and that maybe the Board should put out a posting for a new gifted teacher to see what they can bring to the table. Erika Wiecenski agreed that she would not want to have a budget that included the suspension of this program. Steve Ortiz also agreed with the current school wide enrichment model and this program is needed to provide services to gifted and enriched students. Herb Arico and Ann Grosjean also agreed with this. Michelle Cunningham is a fan of the school wide enrichment model and wants the new teacher to come up with new ideas, the Board can also give feedback in what they would like to see and what could be considered. Hiring the gifted teacher based on what we want for qualifications and looking at inventories on a student, teacher, and parent levels could help that.

The next scenario was the original budget to have no paraprofessionals in kindergarten and a reduction of certified interventionist: Erika Wiecenski stated that the Board heard what parents had to say and she thinks this is what our schools need, and that these positions are necessary. Michelle Cunningham is not in favor either. Marybeth Wallett and Steve Ortiz are in favor of this scenario maybe with out of the box thinking. Steve Ortiz wanted to comment on the principal position exploring combining administration and to have a vision down the road to combine

the two schools. Superintendent Harding stated that having a principal in each

school for now is crucial. At the end of the year there could be more money in budget leftover from possible retirements for certain cuts to be added back in.

Michelle Cunningham proposed to come in with the option to have no paraprofessionals in kindergarten and reduction of certified interventionist with understanding that we would revisit the budget to make final budget adjustments come the end of the year.

Motion: Marybeth Wallett motioned to approve the budget Superintendent Harding has presented to the board at 2.84%, with no paraprofessionals in kindergarten and a reduction of the certified interventionist.

Second: Steve Ortiz

Discussion: Michelle Cunningham stated that she thinks that putting a placeholder to get to the budget to 3% is a responsible way to go (for a part time paraprofessional). Hiring a part time professional would be better than nothing. She would like to amend the motion to \$12,000 being added to the budget which would be an increase of 2.99% for a part time paraprofessional. Marybeth Wallett stated that she feels that she is more comfortable with the 2.84% and Erika Wiecenski stated that she is not comfortable with either option.

Second to amend this motion: Herb Arico

Yes: Ann Grosjean, Herb Arico, Michelle Cunningham

No: Erika Wiecenski, Steve Ortiz, Marybeth Wallett, Shawn Kowalyszyn

Amended motion failed

Vote (original motion by Mary Beth)

Michelle Cunningham stated that this budget is too low in general and cutting this interventionist position is not responsible and she will not be voting for this budget at all because it is too low.

Yes: Shawn Kowalyszyn, Ann Grosjean, Steve Ortiz, Marybeth Wallett

No: Herb Arico, Michelle Cunningham, Erika Wiecenski

Motion passed

8. Present to Speak

None

9. Board Comments

Erika Wiczenski stated that this budget process has been difficult and she wishes the parents could hear this discussion that happened tonight. This past Wednesday was Dr. Seuss Day and she wanted to thank Principal Stevens and Center School for a very fun day! She encourages everyone to see Seussical the Musical this March 18th and 19th and wanted to give huge congratulations to Willington's Issa Peczcuh for her 1000th point in her last basketball game to EO Smith. She also wanted to thank Mrs. Pinney and John Collins for all their hard work and congratulations to History Day winners and Amanda Kelly for her work as recording secretary.

Marybeth wanted to state that on March 12th at Willington Public library from 2:00-4:00 pm will be the Simplify the Equation by the Girl Scouts, where you can hear panelists discuss what an ideal world would look like for girls. Each girl has artwork, presentations, songs, etc. She hopes everyone can go.

Steve Ortiz would like to thank Superintendent Harding for his services on the budget and being new to the board he wanted to thank him on answering his questions and to get to a budget number that serves the town.

Shawn Kowalyshyn wanted to thank Amanda Kelly for her services as recording secretary for the Board.

Ann Grosjean wanted to than Amanda Kelly and also really hopes to reinstate some things on the budget in the future that were cut.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 pm