

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 13, 2022

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Zoom Recorded

Members Present (all present remotely through Zoom)

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Chair

Herb Arico- Secretary

Ann Grosjean- Vice-Chair

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Briana Ross

Laura Rodriguez

Also Present

Phil Stevens, Superintendent of Schools, members of the public.

1. Call to order

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cunningham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Present to speak

Nicholas Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, inquired about the board of education meetings being hybrid, if the curriculum was sent over to the library yet and if the school system will be allowing litter boxes for students that are identifying as cats or what the procedure will be.

Arthur Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane, expressed his concerns towards the after-school care when there are professional development days.

4. Chairman's report

None.

5. Communications:

None.

6. Presentation: Rosetta Stone for HMS World Language

Hall Memorial School Principal Mary Kay Tshonas discussed the importance of foreign language instruction and how there is a shortage of world language educators in Connecticut. She explained the different options she looked into for foreign language instruction for Willington Schools. She then explained further about the program, Rosetta Stone, and why it would be beneficial.

Superintendent Stevens discussed further how this program would work, the cost and the process that would take place with implementing the program.

The board discussed their thoughts, questions, and concerns not only regarding this specific program but also the topic of foreign language instruction as a whole.

D. Cook moved to approve utilizing Rosetta Stone for Hall Memorial School for the 22-23 school year for world language instruction.

H. Arico seconded the motion.

Chair Cunningham made a friendly amendment to the motion that they allow 7th and 8th graders the choice of at least 5 languages, including at least one or two that are not romance languages.

D. Cook accepted this amendment.

H. Arico expressed his concern with this amendment and made suggestions in allowing the administration to make the choice as to what languages are offered for 7th and 8th grade. And only Spanish for 5th-6th grade during their given period to learn a foreign language.

The board discussed the motion and program further. They also discussed what their thoughts were regarding how to go about implementing foreign languages in the classroom.

Superintendent Stevens explained that if they start to see that offering 3-4 foreign languages becomes too much they would make adjustments as needed. He stated they would come back to the board of education and let them know how the program is working.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

Chair Cunningham made a motion to table the educational specifications for a later meeting.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D. Cook	x		
T. Anderson	x		
A. Grosjean		x	
B. Ross		x	
L. Rodriguez	x		

5 yes, 2 no, motion passes.

7. Superintendent Report

a. School opening, 2022-2022

Superintendent Stevens discussed the preparation for the opening of school in length. He thanked the bus drivers for all their hard work especially since the bus company is short one driver.

b. Enrollment

Superintendent Stevens discussed how many students are currently enrolled in Willington Schools, a total of 401. He also shared many other numbers such as the number of kindergarten students, special education students, 504 eligible students, outplaced students, free and reduced lunch students, English language learners, and magnet schools students, some who are receiving special education services.

c. Staffing

Superintendent Stevens discussed new teachers that were hired and teachers that have resigned. He hired Michelle Wozniak for CES Spanish and Tatria Milhomme as a para-educator at HMS and received resignations from speech and language teacher Arminda Hudon, HMS paraprofessional Alex Kalgren, and CES preschool paraprofessional Kaylee Carr. He also explained how they have been creative hiring for different shortage area openings in the schools, including partnering with other educational partners. He also stated there would be an updated list of faculty and staff.

d. After school program

Superintendent Stevens provided an update on the after-school program they are providing for the early release days due to professional development. He discussed in detail what this includes; transportation, price and student capacity.

D. Cook suggested using the savings from the foreign language teacher towards the after-school program.

Superintendent Stevens suggested trying to find funds from somewhere else rather than the foreign language teacher fund. The Board asked Mr. Stevens to identify potential avenues to fund the program.

The board discussed the pros and cons of using those funds. They also discussed the after-school program such as; the needs, timing, costs and numbers of students.

e. Professional development, 2022-2023

Superintendent Stevens share the variety of professional development activities that would be offered to staff throughout the school year.

8. Financial Report

a. September 2022 Financial report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens shared the September financial report. He shared how many funds still

seem available since they have not been billed yet or encumbered.

b. Grant funds report

Attachment #2

Superintendent Stevens went over the COVID grants in detail including ESSER I, II, and ARP ESSER.

9. **New Business**

a. Approve minutes of August 9, 2022 meeting

Attachment #3

D. Cook moved to approve the regular meeting minutes from August 9, 2022.

H. Arico seconded the motion.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

b. Potential request for emergency leave (executive session)

Chair Cunningham explained what an executive session is and how it works.

A. Grosjean moved to go into executive session to discuss an emergency leave request and invited Superintendent Stevens.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

Executive session began at 9:08 pm

Executive session ended at 9:21 pm

D. Cook made a motion to approve emergency leave for Christine Colenbaugh through November 8, 2022.

Chair Cunningham seconded the motion.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

10. **Old Business**

a. COVID protocols update

Superintendent Stevens discussed the newest adjustments and updates to the covid protocols.

A. Grosjean moved to accept the updated Willington Public Schools Covid protocols for the school year 2022-2023.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
H. Arico	x		
M. Cunningham	x		
D.Cook			x
T. Anderson	x		
A.Grosjean	x		
B. Ross	x		
L. Rodriguez	x		

6 yes, 1 Abstain, motion passes.

b. Dress Code policy #5132

Superintendent Stevens discussed the policy and questions that came up while reviewing it. Students were involved and had good suggestions and the policy was reviewed by the Board policy committee.

The board discussed the wording and the meaning of portions of this policy. It will be visited at the next meeting.

11. Present to Speak

Arthur Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane, supported the use of Rosetta Stone for learning a foreign language but was disappointed that the 5th and 6th graders are mandated to take only Spanish. He also stated how extremely disappointed he was about the after-school program discussion and that it did not go anywhere. He believes the school should be paying for it.

Nicholas Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, expressed his frustration with the after-school program not being paid for by the school. He also discussed his feelings towards the Rosetta program and having one teacher helping with up to five different languages.

Katherine Viveiros, 121 Daleville School Road wanted to encourage the board to make the education specifications an important item to discuss as she is the school building committee chairperson and the committee is patiently waiting for these specifications. If the board could expedite this it would be appreciated.

12. Board Comment

H. Arico stated he is hoping the school has a successful year. He would like an idea of how they are doing on schedule with the curriculum. He also wanted more information regarding the CIP for 2022-2023. He also wanted to discuss comments that board members made at the last meeting regarding activists and advocates.

He discussed the definitions of advocacy and activism, stating that advocacy displays as a process of dialogue and friendly exchange or negotiations. Whereas, activism is displayed as a mode of radical process and involves direct activity such as protesting and many other images and sometimes is typically displayed as violent. He stated that in his opinion, advocacy is to act to generate change where activism is working outside the system to generate change.

T. Anderson wanted to welcome everyone back to a new school year. It seems the most back to "normal" we have seen in a long time. She appreciated the creative thinking and constructive conversations regarding Rosetta Stone and the language program. She wanted to thank everyone for all the effort that went into getting the school ready for the first day. She also was thankful for the creative thinking for the speech and language situation so that they can be providing the best program for their students.

D. Cook felt having the meetings go hybrid would be prudent and wanted this to be voted on at the next meeting. She also discussed how she would like the sex education program available for the parents to view. She felt it was important for a vocabulary list for the year to be provided for everyone so they had an idea of what things are. She felt it was important to take another look at how they could fund the after-school program during professional development days.

L. Rodriguez wanted to thank Superintendent Stevens and staff for being creative during these difficult times with the teacher shortage. She enjoyed going to the opening convocation. She wanted to thank the bus drivers for all that they do, even with a bus down they are doing a great job. The custodians as well are doing a great job. She welcomed the new teachers and wished the ones that were leaving good luck. She also wanted to discuss H. Arico's definition of activists and advocates. She looked them up as well in the dictionary as well and found many meanings. An activist is someone who works to support a cause and doesn't say anything about being outside the system and certainly doesn't say anything about being violent. When she thinks of an activist she actually thinks of peace when one who is conspicuously active in carrying out any occupation or professional functions. She agreed they need to define their terms but they need to be sure people don't take over their meanings.

B. Ross wanted to review the proper cough and sneeze catching method (your elbow) because she has noticed with some young students they have been wearing masks for so long they don't remember or know how to use a cough and sneeze catcher. She just wanted to give a friendly reminder to parents to share this with their child/children. She also welcomed everyone to a great year.

A. Grosjean wanted to discuss setting up a meeting regarding the education specifications as the school building committee needs them ASAP. Monday, September 19, 2022, 6:30 pm-8:30 pm will be the education specifications meeting. This will be focusing on square footage.

Chair Cunningham thanked the board for their participation. She also thanked the paid staff for

their hard work and their unpaid hours as well. She thanked everyone in the school community including the parents and the kids.

13. **Adjournment**

D. Cook made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 pm.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

7 Yes Motion passes, unanimously

Nicole Fusco
Recording Secretary

Next regular meeting October 11, 2022

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TOWN CLERK