

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

August 9, 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

Chairperson Cunningham called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cunningham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Present to speak

Nicholas Tella, 49 Mirtl Road stated he was waiting for a response from the chair and also wanted to point out that someone he met at voting had expressed their concern of not being able to attend the meetings virtually. He felt having the public being able to show up is ideal.

4. Chairman's report

Chairperson Cunningham reminded the board members of the CABA convention that is coming up in November.

5. Communications: None.

6. Superintendent Report

a. Enrollment

Superintendent Stevens discussed what they expect enrollment should be for the upcoming school year.

H. Arico inquired how many special education students were part of the enrollment and how many students are outplaced at this time.

Superintendent Stevens explained he would have these numbers for the September meeting.

b. Staffing

Superintendent Stevens discussed the progression in hiring and who has been hired thus far. Ryan Colenbaugh (HMS para) and Sharon Benitez (Spanish, left for a full time position) have

resigned. Kristen Brindamour (Kindergarten), Emily Karanian (grade 3), Heidi Aforismo (math coach), Zac Thomas (grade 6 math) and Douglas Fink (.5 HMS PE) have all be hired.

c. Breakfast and lunch prices

Superintendent Stevens explained they are receiving \$67,000 from the state to help keep breakfast and lunch free for the students.

d. After school program

Superintendent Stevens explained that they are trying to apply for a competitive grant to start their own after school program.

e. Congratulations to Erin

Erin Conley is officially Dr. Erin Conley as she successfully defended her dissertation.

7. Financial Report

a. August 2022 Financial report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens shared the new school year (2022-2023) budget.

H. Arico inquired about grant funds.

Superintendent Stevens explained that the grant funds have already been assigned to things. But he will give an update next meeting.

8. New Business

a. Approve minutes of July 12, 2022 meeting

Attachment # 2

D. Cook moved to accept the regular meeting minutes from July 12, 2022.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

b. Memorandum of Agreement: WESS utility staff

Attachment #3

Superintendent Stevens reminded the board what the position was and that it was created during COVID. He was asking the board to extend this one more year as at the end of this year there will not be any grant funding left. It will have to come out of the board's budget if they extend beyond this school year.

H. Arico moved to agree to the memorandum agreement between the WESS/SEIU Local 2001 and the Board of Education for the school year 2022-2023.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

H. Arico was wondering more information about these utility people and their pay.

Superintendent Stevens explained the position, the pay and that the union agreed to it.

7 Yes Motion passes unanimously

9. **Old Business**

a. Educational Specifications for school building committee

Superintendent Stevens did a recap of what was discussed at the last meeting about square footage and all the different spaces needed. He discussed new questions he had, ideas for different rooms and the usage for certain spaces, specifically the auditorium.

Board members discussed different ideas and ways to move rooms or space to really get the most efficient square footage possible. They also were wondering what the opinion of the music teachers were with this space.

B. Ross shared her experience when working at Hall School on a theater production and the challenges they had with space and having a music room backstage. She also explained that four spaces may seem like a lot but they need to remember that is for the whole district to use.

D. Cook expressed her concerns about having the auditorium on the list as the town voted no for any extra money being available. She discussed what their options could be without the auditorium and what the square footage would be without it.

Chairperson Cunningham inquired if the size spaces are being increased or decreased from the spaces they have now.

Superintendent Stevens explained for the most part it is exactly the same as they have now and he discussed some of the different spaces, sizes and uses. He also explained the total square footage on the ed specs as of now is 82,834.

Chairperson Cunningham agreed with B. Ross that trying to use the space for two separate things might not actually be saving space.

Superintendent Stevens discussed their tour of the Tolland School and what they were able to observe of their auditorium and music room space.

T. Anderson felt things should stay the same in the ed specs and that having a second question in the referendum would be essential for the auditorium. This way the board could get an idea how the town feels about adding more space, which would add more cost.

D. Cook explained her experience in a multi-use cafeteria and all the options the space had.

L. Rodriguz asked for clarification for how this process works with the state, the referendum with two questions and the final costs.

Superintendent Stevens explained how Colliers helps with this. He then discussed another space-STEAM room and the need for it or not.

Chairperson Cunningham explained that they are not losing the content and they will still have the maker space.

Superintendent Stevens wanted to confirm with Colliers if these spaces are all off one grand room because that would change some of the placement of these spaces.

Chairperson Cunningham expressed her concerns with having some of these rooms connected when one is needed for a quiet space but right next door is group activities.

D. Cook agreed with Chairperson Cunningham that if the maker space is loud and/or messy it should not be located next to the library. She wondered if the STEAM and maker space could be used together in the same spot.

B. Ross inquired why do they need the STEAM space.

Superintendent Stevens explained it has a full kitchen, lego robotics, hammering and so on and they are not accessible in a classroom. These items are located in different rooms but not regular classrooms.

D. Cook was very supportive of having these spaces available for students.

A. Grosjean expressed her thoughts of having the STEAM/maker space be its own separate room away from quiet classrooms.

Superintendent Stevens explained he would discuss further with Colliers for more details and make sure his suggested square footage is correct. His next item he wanted to discuss was the general education programs. He started with preschool and kindergarten spaces. He went through the specifics for each space such as; sinks, cubbies, hooks, lighting, flooring, white boards, bulletin boards, changing tables, furniture and so on.

A. Grosjean inquired if there was an OT/PT room in the building. She was told there in fact was.

D. Cook expressed her concern with having a sand table inside the classroom but thought having one outside would be wonderful.

B. Ross explained how her classroom uses the sand table for many uses and it's very beneficial for many students. She also inquired about the changing tables in the bathrooms. She wondered if the board had thought about becoming NAEYC accredited at some point. She shared how it offers opportunities for grant fundings too.

Chairperson Cunningham felt NAEYC accreditation was a valuable standard to look at and to keep that in mind when looking at these particular classrooms.

The board discussed how the preschool program will most likely grow just as the kindergarten did this year and having the available space to expand the school if needed was important.

Chairperson Cunningham inquired about electrical outlets and having enough of them and the storage for the computers.

Superintendent Stevens explained that is a concern for him as well since currently they are lacking outlets being spaced throughout the classrooms.

H. Arico inquired about the boiler room, air conditioning, size and shapes of windows and such. He wondered if they would have a say in these items.

Superintendent Stevens explained they will get to those specifics as it is not on this chart.

Chairperson Cunningham inquired about "building in" bookshelves and such as it would be safer for the younger kids.

Superintendent Stevens then discussed classrooms grade 1-4 and the specifics for that space just as he shared with preschool and kindergarten space.

A. Grosjean made a suggestion for book shelves under windows. She was thinking of ways to save space and store items.

B. Ross suggested magnetic white boards as some are not and changing tables should be accessible to children older than preschool.

Superintendent Stevens explained that for grades 1-4 he has the changing table in the nurse's office and the community bathrooms outside the gym space. He also added another classroom so there are 9 in total for 1-4 grade.

D. Cook wanted to remind everyone that the heating system is usually under windows so too many "built-ins" could become a problem. She wanted to be sure the heating company could do their job when needed.

Superintendent Stevens then discussed grades 5-8 and their specific spaces. There are 10 general classrooms for this group. He chose not to do lockers to save some space and wondered what the board thought.

D. Cook inquired the difference between cubbies and lockers as far as size/space.

Superintendent Stevens explained the cubbies are the same size as a medium locker. Having students be able to fit their everyday items can be difficult with lockers.

The board then discussed the safety of lockers, where they are located, the size, the usage of the lockers and carrying backpacks around the school.

Chairperson Cunningham inquired what the 10 classrooms are for in grades 5-8.

Superintendent Stevens explained what each room would be used for. He then suggested from the discussion they were having that the larger lockers in the hallway would be the better avenue to take.

Most of the board agreed and gave a few suggestions on the location, size and usage of the lockers.

D. Cook inquired about the kidney shaped tables instead of round.

A. Grosjean explained they are instructional tables and how the teacher sits in the middle and helps all the students.

Superintendent Stevens then discussed the unified arts program and the specifics needed for the art room.

D. Cook inquired why there were only 4 easels and suggested folding easels so they could have more.

Superintendent Stevens explained because they take up so much space and are not used all the time they chose 4 easels.

Chairperson Cunningham expressed her concern regarding the student work storage and felt for over 400 students they will need more.

A. Grosjean explained an idea of storing students' art work in oversize drawers.

Chairperson Cunningham suggested having the current art teacher tour a few schools to see what they think would be essential for their classroom.

Superintendent Stevens then discussed the instrumental music space and the specifics.

Chairperson Cunningham asked for clarification regarding the mylar.

Superintendent Stevens explained it's shatter proof. He then discussed the general music room and its specifics.

B. Ross inquired if there was space for guitar and keyboard and where they would be stored.

Superintendent Stevens explained there was not a separate room for these instruments. They would be used with the space provided. He then discussed the physical education space and the specifics.

The board inquired how many PE teachers there would be and if the family bathroom was accessible from an exterior door. There was also a suggestion of having a larger storage closet.

Superintendent Stevens explained there would need to be two teachers and there would be accessibility to the bathroom.

Chairperson Cunningham suggested having a special meeting regarding ed specs where they can go through the remaining items.

Superintendent Stevens explained he could release some of this information ahead of time for the board to look through and submit questions.

D. Cook stated she liked having the information beforehand to look over and jot down questions.

The board agreed to have the information beforehand, submit or write down questions and then discuss as a group.

10. Present to Speak

Arthur Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane, wanted to thank Superintendent Stevens for his conversation regarding the ARPA funds. He also expressed that he liked the idea for the cover for the playground and hoped it went through.

Nicholas Tella, 49 Mirtl Road expressed his concerns towards having items in front of the windows and the safety if the children needed to get out. He also wanted to know where the data of 45 births a year came from. He also wanted to know how many students were in magnet schools this year. He also made some suggestions about where the board could get rubber tires for the cover of the playground. He stated that every meeting he has been on the board seems to be planning for a new school, which is concerning. He had some questions and concerns with the school teaching sex education to kindergarteners.

Janice Castle, 18 Pinney Hill Road, discussed the instrumental and choral space is for instructional use not just rehearsal. She also expressed her concern how there was no general music area in one diagram then in another there was not a choral music area. She felt something was not lining up.

11. **Board Comment**

D. Cook thanked everyone that showed up for the meeting and would like the board to think about going to hybrid starting in September this way if people from the community want to show up they are able to. She wanted to be sure everyone that wants to participate in the meetings are able to.

H. Arico wanted to thank the Superintendent for the presentation on the ed specs. He wished the staff a successful and happy new school year as they begin in a few weeks.

A. Grosjean wanted to congratulate Erin for finishing her PH.d all while writing their new curriculum too. She also wanted to welcome all the new teachers and wished them well for the upcoming school year.

L. Rodriguez wanted to congratulate Erin as well. She stated how excited she was for the innovation grant for the afterschool program. She hopes it is able to happen. She welcomed the new teachers and good luck to those that are leaving. She also thanked Superintendent Stevens for his hard work on the ed specs.

B. Ross wished the board a happy and healthy rest of their summer and she is looking forward to a great opening for the best year yet at Willington school, 2022-2023.

T. Anderson wanted to congratulate Erin. She wished everyone a good rest of their summer and a good start to the school year.

Chair Cunningham welcomed all the new staff and hoped they would have a productive and happy stay at the Willington Public schools. She then discussed her belief and usage of the word "activist". To her it means she is actively working on behalf of an issue she cares about. For her it's about every child being able to grow up healthy, safe, happy and well educated. That's what she dedicated her career and this public service to. She proudly calls herself an activist.

12. **Adjournment**

L. Rodriguez made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 pm.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

7 Yes Motion passes, unanimously

Nicole Fusco
Recording Secretary

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Next regular meeting September 13, 2022


TOWN CLERK