

WILLINGTON Board of Education

February 14, 2023

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Zoom Recorded

Members Present (all present remotely through Zoom)

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Chair

Ann Grosjean- Vice-Chair

Herb Arico - Secretary

Tracey Anderson

Laura Rodriguez

Donna Cook

Briana Ross

Also Present

Phil Stevens, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Erin Conley, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Kristin Stevens, Literacy Coach; members of the public

1. Call to order

Chair 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

Nick Tella, 49 Mirti Rd, explained how there were issues getting the agenda for the budget meeting. He inquired and discussed the operational savings and was wondering how it will work with the teacher-to-student ratio. He stated he understood that some teachers would be let go. He asked the Board of Education if they were okay with this.

4. Chairman's report

None.

5. Communications

None.

6. Superintendent Report

a. General update

Superintendent Stevens discussed the ARPA request and what was approved and what was tabled. He also shared that 4 HMS students qualified for the 2023 All-State Elementary Chorus and a group of students attended the Eastern CT Chapter MathCounts competition. He also shared about the school media center needing new books.

b. Staffing

Superintendent Stevens explained that Christine Collenbaugh, the teacher out on emergency leave, had resigned and Sherry Kraus was hired to fill that position.

c. Reading waiver

Superintendent Stevens discussed legislation passed that requires the Board of Education to implement an inclusive k-3 reading program. He discussed what this included and why they need to complete a waiver.

The committee discussed what would happen if they did not apply for the waiver, why it was important and when it was due. They discussed the programs they currently use. They also wondered what other subjects this could become an issue for, such as math or science. They discussed how long the waiver will last.

d. School Building Committee update

Superintendent Stevens discussed that the committee is recommending sending a new school on a new site to a referendum and recommending adding a second question for an auditorium. He explained that the SBC is presenting this recommendation Thursday night at the Board of Finance meeting and anticipate a town meeting for discussion and then the referendum on March 28. He also stated that the anticipated town meeting for the SBC is March 14th, which is the same day as the next Board of Education meeting. He recommended if this happens on the same day to cancel the Board of Education meeting so the townspeople could attend the SBC meeting.

The Board explained that they will decide when it gets closer if they will cancel or have a special meeting.

7. Financial Report

a. February 2023 financial report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens shared the February financial report. He explained that not too many changes had happened.

8. New Business

a. Approve regular meeting minutes, January 10, 2023

Attachment #2

H. Arico moved to approve the meeting dates from January 10, 17, 24, and 31, and also the Curriculum Committee meeting of January 25th.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

7 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, motion passes unanimously.

d. 2023-2024 Board of Education Budget

Superintendent Stevens shared the updated budget and the application of non-lapsing funds.

L. Rodriguez moved to approve the 2023-2024 Board of Education budget at \$9,164,473.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

The Board discussed the percentage increase, what happens to the money at the end of the year, and if it could be used for new books for the library. Donna Cook expressed her concern regarding the amount of money they are spending and that their students are not meeting academic standards.

They stated they would love to add more items to the budget (clubs, sports, and so on), but for now, it's not feasible. Most of them stated they are satisfied with where the budget is at. The Board also inquired about the list of unfunded mandates. Laura Rodriguez discussed how it is so important to realize their students are more than just standardized test scores and that there are so many more measurements when looking at students' growth.

7 yes, the motion passes unanimously

e. Phonics curriculum review (first reading)

Dr. Conley provided an introduction to the phonics curriculum. She shared slides explaining the curriculum and resources being utilized.

The Board discussed how critical some of these items are such as the sound wall. They discussed parts of the program and if they are part of the state's recommended programs. It was suggested having this available as the public library for young children to use with their families. They also inquired if some of these materials are available to actually look through as well as the lesson plans. They discussed how the teachers are being trained and learning how to implement this curriculum. There was a discussion about how the students are reacting to the curriculum as it has already been implemented in classrooms.

9. Old Business

a. Science curriculum (second reading)

Superintendent Stevens explained this was emailed to the Board and did not receive any questions. He shared that this curriculum was up for approval.

The Board discussed if they should vote on this curriculum now or at a later date.

T. Anderson moved to to approve the science curriculum for k-8

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

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

5 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain, motion passes.

b. 2023-2024 Willington Public School calendar

Attachment #5

Superintendent Stevens shared the school calendar for the next school year- 2023-2024.

Chair Cunningham pointed out that the calendar stated that September 31st was the first day for students and realized that was not what was meant, but advised fixing it.

Superintendent Stevens fixed the mistake.

A. Grosjean moved to approve the 2023-2024 school calendar for the Willington Public Schools with the clarification that school starts August 31st.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

The Board suggested making an indication at the bottom of the calendar which days there would be childcare provided after school or some way to make it clear for families to notice it.

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

6 yes, 1 no, 0 abstain, motion passes.

10. Present to Speak

None.

11. Board Comment

H. Arico wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day. He thanked Superintendent Stevens for presenting a reasonable budget. He also wanted to thank Erin for all her hard work and for answering the Board's questions.

B. Ross congratulated the musicians and mathematicians representing Willington. She also wanted to thank Ms. Britner for all she does. She explained that her own daughter still has postcards from years ago that Ms. Britner wrote to her and even in high school those words stick with her. She wanted to welcome Mrs. Kraus and she wished Mrs. Colenbaugh the best. She also jokingly suggested "phonics fairies" costumes to Erin and Kristin. She had a whole vision of how to make the vowel ladies that much cooler.

L. Rodriguez thanked Phil and anyone that worked on the budget. She also wanted to celebrate some of the ARPA funds that are coming in, such as the recess equipment and the extended learning opportunities. She wanted to congratulate their musicians and mathematicians. She was very excited about the wonderful programs. She wished Mrs. Colenbaugh well and welcomed Mrs. Kraus. She also expressed her excitement for the theater department choosing "Frozen" as their next performance. She wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day.

A. Grosjean shared she believed the dates for the production of "Frozen" were May 5th and May 6th. She wanted to thank Erin and Kristen and anyone that was involved in the phonics and the new curriculum. She felt the work they were doing was wonderful. She also stated speaking as part of the School Building Committee she encouraged everyone in town to try and attend one of the informational sessions to learn about their new proposal, to go to the town hall meeting, and to vote. She reminded everyone that this is a decision the town is going to make together.

T. Anderson agreed with everything that had been said so far. She stated that she appreciated the Board's hard work too, especially during budget season.

D. Cook congratulated the students that excelled in areas they love. She asked for Superintendent Stevens to email a copy of Erin's presentation. She also stated she had not received the sex education curriculum. She also had questions about breakfast at school and what it includes, as parents have contacted her regarding this. She also explained there was a proposed bill number 3696 that they need to look more into as at first glance she felt it looked scary. She explained it sounded like it would allow educators to teach what they want and how they want no matter what the Board of Education guidelines are. She wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day.

M. Cunningham shared that Governor Lamont signed a bill today making lunch free for all Connecticut students for the rest of the school year.

12. Adjournment

H. Arico made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 pm

D. Cook seconded the motion.

7 yes, motion passes unanimously.

Nicole Fusco
Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.
2023 FEB 17 AM 12:30
TOWN CLERK

Next regular meeting March 14, 2023

