

WILLINGTON Board of Education

April 11, 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, Stephanie Knight, Foods Services Director, members of the public.

1. Call to order

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cunningham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Present to speak

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Rd. expressed his opinions on holding Board members accountable for conduct unauthorized by the postal service. He feels it is inappropriate that the SBC is being mentioned connected to the CIP money, and he wanted those funds utilized for school repairs. Lastly, he hoped Rick Maloney's letter will receive strong consideration.

4. Willington Public Schools Food Services Presentation

S. Knight presented an overview of the program including the purpose of the program, the facilities, the staff, free and reduced lunch information, nutritional information, the food services fund, and future initiatives.

D. Cook questioned the sugar content in the cereals served. S. Knight responded that what they offer is specially formulated with suggestions from the USDA including grains and proteins. L. Rodriguez stated that cereal is a vehicle for drinking milk, which is a protein. She questioned how are we dealing with food allergies. S. Knight stated that they offer lactate milk to those students with dairy allergies and keep peanut butter and other allergens in mind when serving all students. L. Rodriguez expressed her pleasure in learning about the farm-to-school program. D. Cook asked if all breakfasts and lunches are free to all students. M. Doucette Cunningham stated yes. B. Ross expressed her appreciation for all the food service staff, especially for their very positive interactions with students. M. Doucette Cunningham thanked B. Ross for her comments, agreeing that all our staff is important because everyone plays a role in our success.

5. Chairman's report

M. Doucette Cunningham reported that the referendum on the new school building did not pass. We will need to do a full assessment regarding the repairs that need to be done on the buildings, particularly prioritizing items, and schedule them in the proper order to prevent disruption to the students. For example, if we need to rent portable classrooms, we need to plan in advance and go through the process to get appropriate reimbursement from the state. We must coordinate with our partners on the Town side to conduct the assessment. M. Doucette Cunningham stated that P. Stevens can not be the Chairman of the schools and run the repairs for the facilities and that he must oversee the school programming as a priority.

6. Communications

Richard Malone regarding SBC business and Vanessa Waite supporting the food service program.

7. Superintendent Report

a. Preparing students for Region 19 (E.O. Smith High School)

The regional superintendents have been working together to improve collaboration and coordination as students feed into EO Smith. As part of our process, I had a meeting with our 8th-grade team, HMS principal, EO principal, and an EO counselor to review the appropriateness of our student's class placement for 2022-2023 freshmen. I can report that our placement was accurate and that our students are doing well at EO based on the data shared at the meeting. We reviewed a scatter plot for semester 1 grades and PSAT scores. We reviewed English, math, science, and social studies data, and our data is in line with other feeder towns. Also, we reviewed the data for graduating seniors from June 2022. 82% of Willington students were moving on to post-high school education. 12% were moving into the workforce. 6% of students were in the other category which could be military, a 5th year of high school, a gap year, no plan following graduation, or drop out. Willington students were in the same percentage range as other towns regarding post-high-school education. We will continue to work with EO Smith to ensure appropriate class placement for our students, and to ensure they are successful in high school.

b. Staffing

We had a para opening and hired Sarah Lazendorfer. She will be working at HMS.

c. School Building Committee / CIP plan

I started working on updating the BOE requests for the capital plan for December 2023. We are going to need to be thoughtful about the order of requests as certain items should either be coordinated in the same year or done in a specific order to not disrupt something that has already been completed. For example, we shouldn't repaint the HMS library or repair the plaster until the roof is completed. Or install solar panels before completing the roof. The same issue applies to updating or installing ventilation systems as that may impact the roofs. All of these items need to be coordinated. Several of these items may qualify for a grant if we are eligible as well, which may impact the timing of requests. The vast majority of requests would be implemented during the summer months. The selectmen received ARPA funds to complete a townwide facilities study with cost estimates which I'm hoping will help with our CIP requests for next year.

8. Financial Report

April 2023 financial report

Attachment #1

You can see the current status of the budget. We will be discussing end-of-year purchases later in the meeting. At this point, it is looking like the \$150,000 non-lapsing account request to the

Board of Finance that is written into the 23-24 budget would come out of program 3, special education. I also told the Board of Finance that I expect we will return at least \$125,000 this year based on insurance savings. The only program that I expect may end in a negative is program 8 operations maintenance. We have some repairs that were identified by EMCOR we are completing, and we had an overage for the plumbing needs from the \$5,000 you allotted to each school from the non-lapsing fund. We have not encumbered funds for all the items we will need for the end of the school year yet, but I am confident we will have some funding for end-of-year items or projects.

9. New Business

a. Approve regular meeting minutes, February 14, 2023 Attachment #2

L. Rodriguez moved to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2023 meeting.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

L. Rodriguez clarified that in the minutes, d., School Building Committee Update it says "sending a new school on a new site" and I think it should say "building a new school on a new site".

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 abstain, motion passes.

b. Healthy Food Certification, 2023-2024

Attachment #3

Superintendent Stevens stated this is completed each year. I'm requesting you approve both of these motions in front of you. The motion must be read as written.

L. Rodriguez moved that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the *Willington Board of Education* certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities.

Motion seconded by Tracey Anderson.

All in favor, motion passes.

L. Rodriguez moved that the Willington Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events *but* soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales."

Motion seconded by Ann Grosjean.

All in favor, motion passes.

L. Rodriguez moved that the Willington Board of Education will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The "school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the beverage sales.

H. Arico seconded the motion

All in favor, motion passes.

c. End-of-year purchasing

P. Stevens reported that these projects should be completed by June 30, 2023. He estimated approximately \$200,000 available after returning \$125,000 and leaving \$150,000 for non-lapsing fund. Superintendent Stevens shared a list of items with the Board for feedback. Board members prioritized a few items to gather more information on, including the security cameras, flooring, painting, and chimney repair. Donna Cook asked to consider additional power outlets as well.

10. Old Business

d. Phonics Curriculum, reading #2

L. Rodriguez moved to approve the Phonics Curriculum.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

D. Cook questioned approving the Phonics Curriculum.

A. Grosjean and T. Anderson stated, that as teachers, they are extremely pleased with the curriculum and which is based on the science of reading

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

11. **Present to Speak**

Nicole Newcombe, 11 Pinecrest Rd., expressed her concerns that the CES and HMS playgrounds are closed for the winter months due to the frozen ground. She appreciates the CES PE teacher and said he goes above and beyond what is needed for the students.

Jamie Koprek, 79 Common Rd., commented that she would volunteer to paint, move mulch, etc. at the schools and wondered if other parents would also be interested in volunteering to help save money.

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Rd., thanked S. Knight for the work she is doing. He stated that he would volunteer to paint, etc. he doesn't believe that December 2023 is an acceptable timeline for the work at the schools and that he believes the BOE should change the school charge.

Arthur Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane, stated that the BOE has submitted a request to the Willington ARPA Commission to pay for the soft paving material at the playground.

Ralph Tulis, 47 Village Hill Rd., stated that he believes it's time to dissolve the School Building Committee to not jeopardize potential grant reimbursement.

Samantha Hills, 53 St. Moritz Circle commented on the BOE applying for grants and that she would also volunteer to paint.

12. **Board Comment**

A. Grosjean stated her appreciation for S. Knight and her team, and thanked Vanessa Waite for her letter. She also stated that she attended a wonderful arts night at HMS, and welcomed Sarah Lanzendorfer.

L. Rodriguez also thanked S. Knight for her work. She thanked Superintendent Stevens for his report that our students going to E.O. Smith in line with other sending districts. She welcomed Sarah Lanzendorfer. She expressed appreciation for all the curriculum work and stated that the BOE should trust the expertise and experience of our curriculum people to advise us. She thanked Nicole Newcombe for her comments.

Herb Arico thanked the food service department for all their work. He thanked the Superintendent for his information on Willington students attending E.O. Smith. He thanked the parents who spoke at present to speak.

Brianna Ross stated that she agrees with the BOE members' earlier comments and that she too attended the incredible Arts night. She mentioned that Frozen Jr. will be performed. She thanked the parents for speaking and sending emails.

Donna Cook also attended the Arts night and suggested that possibly the student work could be displayed at the Public Library. She was concerned about curriculum that contained animal abuse and that she doesn't trust the experts. She stated she had asked for the sex-ed curriculum four times, she received four sentences and that is not acceptable. She would also be willing to paint. She stated that she agrees the playground should be addressed and is concerned about the SBC continuing.

Tracey Anderson did not have any new comments.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham reminded everyone that Frozen Jr. will be performed on May 5 and 6. She stated that a minimum of 9" of mulch is required to protect against falls and is replenished each spring. She clarified that the BOE is not the School Building Committee (SBC). The SBC is a committee of the Town and is established by the Town. Whether or not there is an SBC is not the only thing taken into consideration by the state on whether or not to give a grant. If they are competitive they take into account different issues and if the project is a good investment. We are very aware of all the grants that are available because we see a lot of them every day. She congratulated Superintendent Stevens for the number of grants we get out of a one-person office and for having your secretary support you. We do not have a grant writer., larger districts have one full-time or a staff and stated that we are not eligible for every single grant. We are going to have to invest in the facilities for planning and grant writing and the necessary steps to manage those projects. A facilities planner is something that could help us manage these projects. There have been many projects on our to-do list for many years, and it is a very slow process. Even if we decide to fund capital improvement projects, the town's people need to come out and support it at the Town meetings.

13. **Adjournment**

L. Rodriguez motioned to adjourn

A. Grosjean seconded, motion passes

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 pm

Next regular meeting May 9, 2023

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TOWN CLERK