

WILLINGTON Board of Education

May 9, 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

Tracey Anderson

Laura Rodriguez

Donna Cook

Briana Ross

Also Present

Phil Stevens, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Erin Conley, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

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. Chairman's comment: Herb Arico recognition

M. Doucette Cunningham reported the passing of long-time Board member Herb Arico at the end of April after a brief illness. She stated that he served for over 46 years as a Board member and asked that the Board take a moment to remember him. She stated that he was our parliamentarian and that she hopes we can all follow his example of service to the community. She then read a letter from Executive Director Patrice McCarthy of CABA expressing their sympathies regarding Herb's passing. M. Doucette Cunningham also expressed the Board's sympathies to his family and that Herb took his Board work seriously.

4. Present to speak

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Rd. stated that he hoped the Board would give its recommendation to the Board of Selectmen regarding the School Building Committee to change the charge.

5. Chairman's report

a. Superintendent evaluation

M. Doucette Cunningham reminded the Board about the Superintendent's evaluation and that they should look for a survey in their email and answer the questions in a timely manner.

6. Communications

Superintendent Stevens reported that the Board received a letter from Rick Maloney.

7. Presentation

Superintendent Stevens said that Dr. Conley will present the Math Curriculum overview. He stated that he will email the presentation to the full board for review.

Dr. Conley shared a presentation and discussed the shift in teaching and learning regarding math. She shared information on the Illustrative Math program being used as the primary resource for the math curriculum, and the rationale for selecting it. Dr. Conley shared the template used for writing the math curriculum and the professional development plan for staff.

D. Cook asked if kids have access to support modules to help them catch up.

Briana Ross asked how long Illustrative Math has been used in the upper grades. Dr. Conley shared that this is the 4th or 5th year and the first year for the elementary school.

8. Superintendent Report

a. Student artwork

Superintendent Stevens reported on the tremendous art show last month which several board members attended. He was able to purchase four pieces of artwork from different students. Their outstanding work was framed and is hanging in his office.

b. ARPA funds for student enrichment

The district was able to bring in staff from the New England Science and Sailing group utilizing ARPA funds for student enrichment. Superintendent Stevens shared pictures from the NESS student workshops. He also shared that the PE teacher from Center School, Bryan Phillips, was awarded a \$5,000 Dalio grant to improve the nature trail at Center School and add fitness stations along the trail. He will be working with students to complete the work as part of a hands-on problem-based learning experience.

c. Joint Meeting: Board of Education, School Building Committee, and Selectmen

I was informed yesterday that the joint meeting is being scheduled for May 24 at the Town Office Building and will be an in-person meeting.

We typically have staffing on my report but we didn't this time because we had no changes. Well, after posting the agenda I received a letter from HMS teacher, Theresa Smith, stating she would be resigning at the end of the year, after 6 years in Willington, to return to her family and teach in New Mexico. She has had a great impact at Hall School and we wish her well.

Lastly, the Hall Memorial School centennial celebration is Friday night in the HMS gym from 5:00-7:00 pm. Members of the HMS band and chorus will be performing, we will have pictures and memorabilia, and light refreshments will be served.

9. Financial Report

a. May 2023 financial report

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens shared the status of the budget. The only grant funding we are waiting on at this point is the final excess cost payment from the State that will go to Program 3. As you can see, our assessment that we will have funding for some end-of-the-year projects was accurate, mainly because of the significant savings in health benefits.

b. Grant applications submitted for school security and mental health specialist

Superintendent Stevens submitted a security grant application for security cameras. This is a competitive grant and not a guarantee that we will receive it. If we get it we would receive our 63% reimbursement rate for an award of approximately \$67,000.

Superintendent Stevens also worked with the pupil services director to submit a grant for a mental health specialist, a support position to our social worker and school counselor who have very high caseloads currently. We requested funding for an individual who has their bachelor's degree, but is yet to complete their master's degree, and therefore is not certified. This would allow someone to work towards their master's degree while receiving real-world experience. This is a 3-year grant, fully funded in years 1 and 2, and 70% in year 3. This too is a competitive grant and not a guarantee.

10. New Business

a. Approve regular meeting minutes, April 11, 2023

Attachment #2

L. Rodriguez made a motion to approve the minutes of April 11, 2023.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

b. Approve finance committee meeting minutes, April 25, 2023

Attachment #3

M. Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2023 finance committee meeting.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

c. Fire panel replacement (CES and HMS)

Superintendent Stevens shared two capital projects for fire panel replacement, one at Center School and one at Hall School. The finance committee reviewed the quotes and recommended approving Siemens to be awarded both projects. Because these are identified as two separate projects in the capital plan, you should have separate motions for each item as requested by our business manager. Once approved, this work does not need any additional approvals and can move forward.

A. Grosjean asked for more detail about the project.

Superintendent Stevens explained that when you walk into the schools, the panel is in the hallway and is connected to all the smoke heads in the building. If a fire alarm goes off, the panel shows the location in the building, and the panel is connected to the dispatch center.

A. Grosjean moved that the Board approve the CES fire panel to Siemens in the amount of \$27,100.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

L. Rodriguez moved to approve the HMS fire panel to Siemens in the amount of \$46,693.

D. Cook seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

d. Sidewalk repair and replacement (CES and HMS)

Superintendent Stevens shared the two capital projects for sidewalk repair and replacement, one at Center and one at Hall School. The finance committee reviewed the quotes and recommended approving J&E Building and Contracting. Again, you should have separate motions for each item. Once approved, this work does need town meeting approval so you'll need to request the selectmen call a town meeting for these projects.

L. Rodriguez questioned a 10% contingency for each school.

D. Cook moved to contract with J&E Building and Contracting to repair and replace the sidewalk at CES not to exceed \$11,250.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

D. Cook moved to contract with J&E Building and Contracting to repair and replace the sidewalk at HMS not to exceed \$34,850.

L. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

e. Board member vacancy

M. Doucette Cunningham described the process. Peter Latincsics of the Republican Town Committee mailed a letter to the Board nominating Arthur Christensen for Herb Arico's vacant seat. She asked if A. Christensen would accept the nomination. He said yes.

M. Doucette Cunningham asked if there were any other nominations.

D. Cook moved to nominate Arthur Christensen to the Board of Education.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

M. Doucette Cunningham asked about his background.

A. Christensen stated that he is currently on the Region 19 Board and is looking forward to the opportunity to serve on the Willington Board and wishes it was under better circumstances. He stated that he has a 6-year-old daughter who attends CES and wants to do what's best for the kids in Willington.

L. Rodriguez asked what would be his most important role.

A. Christensen stated that it would be to listen to the parents and to be a voice for the parent.

All in favor, motion passes.

11. Old Business

a. End-of-year purchasing

Superintendent Stevens requested flexibility to move on any and all of the projects he shared last month as long as he works within the parameters that the Board returns the funds promised.

The Board discussed the projects and how to move forward with spending.

Ann Grosjean moved to authorize the Superintendent to spend remaining funds for this budget year while retaining a minimum of \$275,000 to return to the town.

M. Doucette Cunningham seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion passes.

12. Present to Speak 1.21

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, stated his opinion that he was disappointed that there was no recommendation about the SBC, that pronouns are a political thing, and spoke about having a system in place for controversial library books to be checked out.

John Mitchell stated he hoped that Willington would purchase higher-end cameras and switches to support the higher resolution for 4K cameras.

Arthur Christensen stated that he was present in the schools for the science programs from the ARPA funding and the kids had a blast and that he was glad to see the funds being used in this way. He also thanked the Board for voting him in as a member and looks forward to serving.

13. Board Comment

L. Rodriguez welcomed A. Christensen to the Board, stated she was happy that funding was used to bring the New England Science and Sailing to the schools, thanked Erin for her presentation, congratulated Bryan Phillips on receiving a \$5,000 grant to upgrade the nature trail to a fitness trail, and wished Theresa Smith well in her move, and expressed how much she will miss Herb Arico.

B. Ross thanked Erin, was happy to have NESS come to the students, congratulated Bryan Phillips about the grant, wished Miss Smith well, welcomed A. Christensen, expressed her condolences to the Arico family. She mentioned that she agreed with Herb about the importance of holding a book.

T. Anderson expressed her appreciation for Herb Arico's dedication to the Town and Board of Education, welcomed A. Christensen to the Board, and shared her thanks for thinking outside the box with the grants, especially with the mental health grant.

A. Grosjean congratulated Erin Conley on her doctorate, stated that Herb Arico was such a gentleman and she will miss him, that the *Frozen* performance was phenomenal, thanked Mr. Sonnenberg and his helpers for Frozen, and welcomed A. Christensen.

D. Cook thanked the students who made cards for Herb, stated she believed it was time to move to a hybrid meeting, thanked Erin for her presentation, and shared her concerns about what is being taught and that the Board should take a deep dive into what is really being taught. D. Cook asked for the sex education curriculum.

M. Doucette Cunningham reminded the Board that we have policy 6144 regarding Controversial Issues and we also have a Community Relations Policy 1312 regarding public complaints including a full process for parents to follow. She stated that Hall Memorial School is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

14. Adjournment

A. Grosjean motioned to adjourn the meeting.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

The motion passes unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Next regular meeting June 13, 2023