

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Virtual Meeting: Zoom

7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting

Members Present

Herb Arico - Chairman

Elena Testa - Vice Chairman

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Secretary

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Laura Rodriguez

Members Absent

None

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

Mary Kay Tshonas, Principal of Hall Memorial School

Members of the public

1. Call to Order

Chairman Arico called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Arico led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Presentation

a. CAFE Leadership Awards (Mary Kay Tshonas)

Principal Tshonas stated I'm pleased to present two of our outstanding Hall Memorial student leaders. CAFE has recently added middle school students to their Leadership Certificate Program. 8th grade teachers and teams were asked to nominate two students they felt exemplified the qualities they listed in their leadership certificate program. The first nominee was Kai Tolley. Kai is a student leader who has strong academic work and respect in the school community. He is a high honors student who participates in sports and musical activities. He shows his peers respect and works to create a positive experience for all. Kai has also won school citizenship awards and the awesome author award.

The other student who has been given this award is Juliana Bernard. She is a student leader who exemplifies kindness, compassion, and diligence in all of her work. She advocates on behalf of community members seeking equality and a positive change in the world around them. She wants to help her peers as demonstrated by her participation in student council. She also helped prepare a writing center at HMS. Juliana is a high honors student and has also won awesome author and school citizenship awards.

Chairman Arico made a motion to add an item to the agenda under 11b. for Executive Session - Superintendent Evaluation.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a friendly amendment to add it to the very end of the meeting after board comments.

Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion to add item 10c to the agenda: WEA Memorandum of Agreement.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			

A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

4. Present to Speak

No one was present to speak.

5. Chairman's Report

Chairman Arico stated CAGE published a liaison newsletter where they list items they are doing during the course of the month. CAGE has developed a survey for boards of education to determine the demographics of school boards in Connecticut. CAGE also has programs for professional development and are open to board members.

6. Communications

No communications.

7. Superintendent Report

a. Staff appreciation week

Superintendent Stevens stated our administrative team held their staff appreciation week last week, with support from Subway, Horace Mann, and our local PTA. The admin team organized special treats each day of the week to recognize all our staff. Instead of recognizing groups on different days, we facilitated 5 days of celebration to honor all our staff members as it takes our entire staff to operate a school district successfully.

b. Region 19 Referendum

Superintendent Stevens stated the E.O. Smith budget referendum passed. It was approved 274 to 59 with voters in each town supporting their budget.

c. BOE Budget Referendum

Superintendent Stevens stated at this point, the town and school budgets will be voted on no later than June 30, with the hopes of adoption earlier than that date. The Selectmen voted to approve the extension allowed by the Governor's executive order 10E. We will still have a town meeting and a referendum, but it will be later than normal because the Selectmen's office is waiting on details regarding federal funding that could help decrease their budget. The Board of Education has already offset their 2021-2022 budget with ESSER II funds.

d. Enrollment update

Superintendent Stevens stated our current enrollment at Center School is 213 students with 198 students learning on-campus and 15 students (7%) learning fully remote. Our current enrollment at Hall School is 192 students with 165 students learning on-campus and 27 students (14%) learning fully remote. We currently have 10% of our students learning fully remote.

e. COVID-19 school operations

Superintendent Stevens stated we have not had any positive cases within our schools since the last Board meeting. We have had a couple close contacts however, but those are significantly less disruptive. We will continue to implement our mitigation measures, and will be reconvening our reopening committee from last summer to discuss the 2021-2022 school year. This is a requirement of the ESSER III grant. We are also sending out our climate surveys and expect to see some feedback

regarding the 20-21 school year in the open ended question at the end of the survey.

Our pupil services director applied for a summer programming grant connected to the pandemic and learned we will be receiving \$20,000 that will allow our students additional opportunities this summer. We will be providing the opportunity for several of our students identified with special education needs to attend a local summer camp.

Our two circus tents are up on the school grounds and being utilized for mask breaks and outdoor education. Thank you to our Public Works crew and maintenance staff for putting up the tents which will remain up through the end of the school year.

Two of the major changes expected for next year include the elimination of remote instruction almost entirely. The Connecticut State Department of Education is emphasizing on-campus learning opportunities like we have been doing since the beginning of this school year. The CSDE released a statement that they do not anticipate the need to mandate, due to public health necessity, continued voluntary remote learning options next year. I anticipate that we will have our reopening document ready by the end of this school year and it will include a statement eliminating remote learning unless required by the State of Connecticut, or if deemed necessary by the Willington BOE. This would not prohibit the use of remote learning for emergency situations as directed by the Superintendent or for a student that needed to quarantine. However, we do not know what will be permitted yet as will be determined by the legislature and the CSDE.

Donna Cook asked if a student is going to be out for an extended period of time due to a surgery etc., could they learn remotely?

Superintendent Stevens replied I believe there will be a medical exemption.

Elena Testa asked if we will be allowed to use remote learning for snow days.

Superintendent Stevens replied the board can decide that when we get to that point.

f. CES and HMS Roof Replacement

Superintendent Stevens stated we learned our grant applications were approved today and we received our official confirmation project numbers from the State which allows us to move forward with the process. Scott Pellman, our owner's representative, has been working with the architect on the roof drawings and they are finalizing the plans. Our environmental testing came back and Eagle Environmental did find asbestos in some of the roof materials at HMS. Both buildings also had some lead based paint. The roofing project will take care of the remediation of these environmental issues.

g. Office of School Construction staff school visit

Superintendent Stevens stated the School Building Committee invited Kosta Diamantis, the Director of the Department of Administrative Services for the Office of School Construction Grants and Review, to visit the schools. We learned Mansfield had done this for some guidance and direction prior to their building project so we made an official request. Michelle Dixon, a member of the OSCGR grant staff, requested background information including current special education data, enrollment data, a recap of regionalization conversations, aerial maps of both schools with acreage and lot lines, and school specific data including square footage, grade range, enrollment, capacity, age, etc. to share with their office prior to his visit. He will be visiting during school hours with the SBC chairwoman, First Selectwoman and I. All the information sent can be found on the SBC website along with a list of questions prepared by the SBC. OSCGR will use the visit as a fact finding tour and we expect Kosta will meet with our committee at a later date once he has time to process the information with members from his office. It is our hope that they provide the SBC some recommendations based on their findings

h. Year-end activities

Superintendent Stevens stated we are in the process of planning many year-end activities including preschool screenings, kindergarten orientation, promotion ceremonies, and special events such as the egg drop, the 4th grade visit to Hall, and HMS band concert. Obviously we are facilitating these events with the proper mitigation strategies to keep our school community members safe.

8. Financial Report

a. May 2020-2021 budget update

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens reviewed the May budget report.

b. ESSER III, American Recovery Plan Act

Superintendent Stevens stated we learned about some of the details yesterday regarding the ESSER III funds. The district will be receiving \$577,357, and \$115,471 will need to be utilized for learning recovery. We learned that we will need to provide a safe-return to school plan, which is kind of ironic because we've been in school all year, but it is a requirement. The plans will need to be reviewed every 6 months, posted to our website, and require public comment through September 30, 2023. The application will be available on May 14, but not due until August, however districts can apply early. Two thirds of the funds will be available to the district on May 24 and all ESSER III funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024.

My administrative team has been receiving input from staff throughout the school year to identify district needs. Our number one priority right now is to update and approve curriculum. I would like to write the grant to hire a Director of Curriculum and Instruction for a 3 year limited term position. The curriculum committee and finance committee both learned about this need at their last meetings. The ESSER grant could entirely cover this position, which would not continue beyond school year 23-24. I will be bringing you an MOU from the administrator group along with a job description for your June meeting for approval to add the position. You will hear more from the Curriculum Committee during their committee report.

Ann Grosjean asked what this is expected to cost.

Superintendent Stevens replied they calculated about \$120,000 per year plus benefits but I will get back to you with a more accurate number.

9. Committee Reports

a. Negotiations Committee (4/14)

Superintendent Stevens stated the negotiations committee met a couple times and they reviewed a contract extension request from WEA. These meetings are not posted because it is a negotiation.

b. Curriculum Committee (4/26)

Ann Grosjean stated we met several times this year with Kristen Stevens and Erica Bushior who are the language arts and math coaches and we asked for samples of what the curriculum would look like. They shared these with us at our second meeting and it was very helpful. These two individuals are very busy with other tasks so Phil decided to come to us with the proposal we just discussed.

Laura Rodriguez stated we also discussed the idea of sharing someone with Ashford but decided that probably wouldn't work due to the workload. We also discussed how long this person would be needed. We decided in three years we would get the curriculum in place and then set up an annual review of the curriculum so it can be updated.

c. Finance Committee (5/5)

Superintendent Stevens stated they discussed CHC contract, ESSER II, ESSER III, and year-end spending for items such as classroom FM systems, HMS library media furniture, and televisions to replace smartboards.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated they discussed the contract with CHC and made a couple of edits. We saw the final copy of that this week and were all happy with it.

Superintendent Stevens stated the contract has been resubmitted to them and we will see what they come back with.

10. New Business

a. Approve regular meeting minutes of April 13, 2021

Attachment #2

Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2021 regular meeting.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

b. WESS Memorandum of Agreement

Attachment #3

Superintendent Stevens stated he worked with Nichole Page, president of the WESS union, to draft a simple MOA to extend the utility staff position through the end of the 21-22 school year. The funds for these positions are in your budget and are entirely offset by the ESSER II grant. Again, the utility staff have been critical in completing tasks associated with the pandemic and have helped us stay open throughout the school year. This extension would keep the positions in their union through the end of next school year.

Tracey Anderson moved to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the CSEA and the Willington Board of Education.

Ann Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

c. WEA Contract Extension MOU

Superintendent Stevens stated the negotiations committee, which included Matt Clark from the Board of Finance, reviewed the request from the teachers union to extend their contract. Their request was to extend the contract for two years, but after reviewing the data, the committee offered to extend the contract for 3 years with the same contract language and a 2.75% total cost increase each year. All committee members and union leadership felt this was a fair offer. The MOU needs to be approved by the Board and then the WEA union would vote on the deal at their May meeting.

Ann Grosjean moved to approve the WEA Memorandum of Understanding for July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			

T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

11. **Present to Speak**

No one was present

12. **Board Comment**

Chairman Arico stated we are proud of the students who received CABA awards.

Tracey Anderson stated I would also like to congratulate the students who received awards. I appreciate the negotiations for the two contracts we voted on. I'm grateful our students are going to be able to have regular year end activities.

Ann Grosjean stated I would like to thank Phil, his administration, the teachers, and staff for allowing us to come back to school on day one of this year.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would also like to congratulate the two students on their awards. I'm also thankful that our small district has been able to be in person this entire year. I am looking forward to the fall.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I would like to echo what has been said thus far. Also a special thanks to everyone on this board we spent a lot of time this year on zoom meetings getting things done.

Elena Testa stated I love seeing our school operating and I think it's a huge accomplishment. I would like to thank everyone who helped make that possible. I hope next year is even better.

Donna Cook stated I would like to thank the student who traced their hand and put it around my thank you package, it is now on my refrigerator.

13. **Executive Session**

The board went into executive session at 8:25PM.

The board left executive session at 9:25PM.

14. **Adjournment**

Michelle Doucette Cunningham moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:26PM

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

Next regular meeting June 8 , 2021

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WILLINGTON, CT.
2021 MAY 32 P 1:45

TOWN CLERK