

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, November 11, 2019

Minutes

Town Office Building, Lower Level Meeting Room

7:00 p.m.

Audio Recording: Yes

Notes Taken: Yes

Members Present

Michelle Doucette Cunningham

Herb Arico

Elena Testa

Chiara Bambara (term ends 11/19/2019)

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Also Present: Superintendent of Schools Phil Stevens

Members Absent

Stephanie Summers (term ended 11/5/2019)

Meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.

Presentations

Art Programs Student Work

Alison Spector presented on artwork by students in Center and Hall School. She updates an Instagram account (willi_art_rocks) with student work daily, brought cardboard sculptures, and showed a powerpoint presentation with a snapshot of what each grade level is working on.

Communications

No communications.

Board of Education Chairman's Report

M. Cunningham said that a number of BOE members are signed up for the CABE conference this upcoming weekend. She hopes that members can sit together and share what they learn at each session.

M. Cunningham brought up the Town Meeting, which will take place tomorrow. There was a lot of misinformation around last week's election, and many voters left the polls confused that there wasn't a question on the ballot about building a school. She clarified that it is a multi-year process to decide whether Willington might build a school, so the agenda items at the Town Meeting are just about establishing a school building committee to explore the potential of building a school.

Superintendent Reports

a.) New BOE Member Meetings

New BOE members will be taking office on November 19 and Brenda will schedule meetings with them. P. Stevens hoped that a retreat with new members could be scheduled before budget season in order to review the budget process and review BOE goals, roles, and responsibilities.

b.) Food Services Program Update

P. Stevens presented a table comparing numbers of breakfasts and lunches sold in September & October 2018 and 2019, showing that the numbers have not changed significantly between last year and this year with the increase in the cost of lunch. Discussion was held on possible reasons for the increase in numbers of lunches bought at HMS. Phil noted that the increase in the number of free and reduced breakfast/lunches served shows that eligible students are accessing this resource.

c.) Retirement

P. Stevens stated that Donna Campagna is retiring; she was hired in 2000 and has been working as a paraprofessional at Hall Memorial School (HMS) since then. The board wishes her well for her retirement at the end of the school year.

d.) Finance Software

P. Stevens said that the town put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for new accounting software, as the current software is sunsetting at the end of the fiscal year. The Board of Finance decided to go with Infinite Visions, which is an item on the agenda for the Town Meeting. Whether it passes at Town Meeting or not, the town will still need to purchase a new software.

E. Testa inquired about two different prices that came in, and that one price was lower. P. Stevens detailed that Infinite Visions services all of the town offices and accounts as well as the school system, while the cheaper price was for a system that served primarily the school and would need modification to meet the needs of the town.

e.) Portrait of a Graduate

P. Stevens said the District Steering Committee started detailing the key skills that 8th graders should be leaving Willington Public Schools (WPS) with. They have started by looking at what E.O. Smith High School details for key 21st Century Skills. At the first meeting, the committee decided to identify a Portrait of a Graduate before working on the district improvement plan because the identified qualities can then be infused into the curriculum. The committee plans to bring in community members and Board of Education input as they get farther into the conversation. They will continue to connect to E.O. Smith's work.

f.) Hall Memorial School Speed Sign Data Update

P. Stevens said that the signs that were ordered were backordered, but that the flashing crosswalk will be delivered next week and the speed sign will be here this week. P. Stevens presented graphs on the data of cars going past HMS and how the speeds have been decreasing with the use of the flashing sign, and he has been standing outside of the school himself to encourage drivers to slow down. The school zone sign flashes on Route 32 from 7:00-8:00am and 2:30-3:30pm.

g.) School Security: Visitor Background Check software

P. Stevens detailed that there is a need for software that he saw in action when visiting other schools. Visitors present their license upon entry to the school and the software does a quick scan (not full background check) of the sex offender registry. It can print a visitor's badge with name and destination within the school. The programs work with PowerSchool software to confirm that a person is authorized to pick up a student and can be used on iPads by the staff in charge of parent pick-up.

The cost for the software would be about \$3,000 for the initial purchase and \$1,000 yearly subscription beyond that. P. Stevens said that he will move forward with the purchase of this software if money is available in the technology budget. He brings it to the BOE because there is no policy surrounding this yet in Willington and a policy meeting will need to be held.

Financial Report

a.) 19-20 Budget Report

Attachment #1

Program 1 looks low because a portion of grant money had to be shifted to program 2 to remain eligible and Librarian Amy Redding is working at both schools.

Program 2 looks high because people have not yet been hired for open positions in math and science, so a lot of the excess is salaries for those positions. Additionally, there were savings from staffing changes.

Program 3 looks high on the attachment but is not - to be detailed in agenda item B under Financial Report.

Program 4, transportation, is about even, just waiting on a diesel reimbursement.

Program 5 remaining money is for supplies and substitutes.

Program 6 money gets spent throughout the year as there hasn't been much opportunity for teacher professional development yet.

Programs 7 & 8 are fine for this point of the year; a new custodian has been hired for the position at HMS.

Program 9 is school choice money; the bills just came in, so that money will soon be gone

Program 10 is high because it includes money saved on insurance, but is money that will go to substitutes as well.

In summary, most money has been encumbered.

b.) Special Education Budget

P. Stevens detailed that program 3 looks like money is remaining, but it absolutely is not. There is a shortfall of about \$200,000 due to the number of paraprofessionals needed to meet IEP requirements, and additional outplacements needed this year (budgeted for 3 but currently there are 4).

A large adjustment was made at the end of last year. Willington Public Schools have worked with CREC and EastConn to contract for paraprofessionals. Those organizations take care of hiring and contracting and Willington pays them a fee. Although those contractors were not on Willington insurance, after looking at it, CREC and Eastconn contracts were more expensive in general. New hires were done as Willington employees and joined into the WESS union, otherwise the shortfall would be greater.

The savings from insurance and staffing savings this year may cover the shortfall amount, but that is unsure. P. Stevens reminded the board that he froze the budget in December of last year, and that it was due primarily to the costs of special education.

A. Grosjean asked about the state reimbursement. P. Stevens clarified that the \$200,000 shortfall is after that is taken into account. A. Grosjean inquired how long the contracts are with CREC and whether it has been considered to move more hiring over to Willington employees. P. Stevens replied that the people in place now are doing well and that we want to keep them in their positions.

New Business

a.) Approve Minutes of October 8, 2019 Meeting

Attachment #2

T. Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 8, 2019 meeting.

A. Grosjean second the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
M. Cunningham	X			
H. Arico	X			
T. Anderson	X			
C. Bambara	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
S. Summers				X

Motion passes.

b.) 2020-2021 Willington Public Schools Calendar draft

Attachment #3

P. Stevens said that Willington usually aligns its yearly calendar with the other Region 19 towns. He will be meeting with the other superintendents and is looking for feedback, not approval, from the Board right now. Due to the fact that E.O. Smith is replacing their roof this summer, they are starting at a slightly later date than normal. He highlighted that it means school getting out on June 17 with no snow days, or later in June depending on the number of snow days. Discussion was held on impacting school year schedule and the average number of snow days in the last 5 years.

c.) Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy positions

P. Stevens said that he did a records review as part of finding a person to do the Special Education audit. He found that the Physical Therapist and the Occupational Therapist are treated differently - one as a contractor, one as a non-unionized Willington employee. Both are part time and neither has had a raise since 2013. After speaking to the board attorney, both people should be Willington employees. First, he proposed making the Occupational Therapist a Willington employee.

Second, he proposed providing both employees with prorated sick/personal time hours, as currently they have none. Third, he proposed a 6% salary increase (1% for each year since 2013), starting January 1, 2020, which will cost Willington less than \$4,000 this year for both employees. Finally, P. Stevens proposed revisiting their salaries each year in the same way as the cafeteria staff. Both employees' hours are based on need per IEP, so their hours can change year to year, although they've been pretty consistent. Currently their salaries are on the low end

compared to what is paid in surrounding towns, and that the 6% increase would give them more competitive salaries. A small raise for both employees was in the budget 4 years ago but never happened.

A. Grosjean made a motion that the Occupational Therapist become a Willington Board of Education employee; that the Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapist receive prorated sick and personal days, that they receive a 6% salary increase as of January 1, 2020, and that their salaries be renegotiated each year.

T. Anderson seconded the motion.

E. Testa inquired to learn more about what OT and PT do.

P. Stevens replied that they work with students who are identified with special needs.

Occupational therapy includes skills like gripping a pencil. Physical therapy includes students learning to walk. Their services are specifically identified for hours in student IEPs; the hours can adjust based on student needs. They are paid hourly, which is why the 6% raise comes to less than \$4,000 for the year.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
M. Cunningham	X			
H. Arico			X	
T. Anderson	X			
C. Bambara	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa		X		
S. Summers				X

Motion passes.

d.) Broadway Field Trip

Mr. Phillips wants to bring a group to see Aladdin on March 25, 2020, much like the Broadway trip last year, which was a success. This year they want up to 25 students to have the opportunity to participate in a Broadway rehearsal at Ripley Grier Studios for 90 minutes in addition to seeing the show. The bus would leave at 5:30am and return around 8:30pm depending on traffic. They will use an invitation hierarchy similar to last year to make sure the kids whose passion is musicals get to go (i.e. students in the musical will be given the first opportunity to sign up).

There will be set locations for lunch and dinner. A fundraiser was done last year and the trip won't be subsidized by the Board of Education unless someone comes up who needs it.

H. Arico made a motion to approve the trip to NYC to see Aladdin on March 25, 2020.

C. Bambara seconded the motion.

A. Grosjean clarified that more than 25 students will be attending, so what will the other students do during the rehearsal portion of the day? P. Stevens replied that they will be able to watch.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
M. Cunningham	X			
H. Arico	X			
T. Anderson	X			
C. Bambara	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
S. Summers				X

Motion passes.

e.) Roof Update

Multiple companies from the state bid list came to look at both roofs. The last meeting the BOE approved the superintendent to request up to \$100,000 for roofing patches from the BOF, but the first quote came in at \$150,000, which would be to roll silicone substrate on all of the sections of the roofs that need to be done (every section that isn't new). This option comes with a 10-year guarantee. The same company offers a 3-year warranty for patching just the sections they identify, for \$72,000, but there is no warranty if new leaks pop up in other areas.

A third option, quoted by two companies, is for approximately \$20,000 for both buildings, to seal separated seams and patch things that they see, which would include a 1-year warranty for areas they fixed. Both companies identified different items to patch. Both companies stressed the horrible condition that the roof over 5th grade wing is in at HMS. The timing of replacing versus patching the roofs and the cost and guarantees of the options presented were discussed.

M. Cunningham proposed splitting the projects to do the full silicone substrate with 10-year warranty on the Center School roof and to patch the roof at Hall School with the 1-year warranty, which was quoted at \$12,250. The Board agreed and recognized that even with spending that money to patch the Hall School roof now, if the town decides not to build a new school and continues to use Hall School, the roof will need to be replaced.

f.) Request to the Board of Finance for the Special Education Resource Audit (Non-lapsing Fund)

The Board of Finance voted to put \$5,559 into the non-lapsing account from last year. P. Stevens is asking the Board of Education to authorize him to request that money to go to a Special Education resource audit to look at finances for the large expenses within Special Education. The purpose of the audit would be to determine if the Special Education Department at Willington Public Schools offers sufficient programming (personnel, service hours, resources including programs, and professional development) to provide appropriate and effective services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. P. Stevens has already met with an independent contractor with outstanding references who will tailor the audit specifically to Willington’s needs, looking at staff and hours within IEPs.

H. Arico made a motion to authorize the Superintendent to ask the Board of Finance to appropriate up to \$5,559 for the Special Education audit.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
M. Cunningham	X			
H. Arico	X			
T. Anderson	X			
C. Bambara	X			
A. Grosjean	X			
E. Testa	X			
S. Summers				X

Motion passes.

Present to Speak

Resident Donna Cook asked if, in the interim while decisions are being made and money is being moved, the blue tarps you see covering damaged buildings in disaster areas could be used to cover the leaking roof at Hall School, as cleaning up water and working around buckets is surely inconvenient for teachers and students.

Board Comments

H. Arico thanked P. Stevens for all of the information and appreciated the school data. He says the graduate profile is a good idea but will be a difficult job, as there are so many things needed by a graduating student. He wishes the retiring paraprofessional well and says that Willington will miss her. He said that the student artwork was very good. Finally, he thanked the board members who have served for the last 4 years and will not be returning but have done a good job and said that it has been fun to work with them.

T. Anderson thanked Alison for coming and presenting, as the Board doesn't always get the window into the whole student range. She appreciates P. Stevens' diligence to find that the Occupational and Physical Therapists were being passed over, and she's glad they've stayed around. She appreciated the Veteran's Day assembly at HMS; it was touching, and nice to see connection between students and Veterans.

A. Grosjean thanked Alison for sharing the exciting art program and congratulated Donna on her retirement at the end of the year.

C. Bambara thanked Alison for doing wonderful work and sharing it. She says thank you to everyone who she has worked with on the Board for the past 4 years.

E. Testa expressed great respect toward Chiara's service on the Board and the spirit of integrity she operates with. She would like to make a correction to the beginning comments in that the building committee's goal is only to explore the possibility of building a new school. She said thank you to citizens in Willington for voting on election day. She said that everyone may think differently and she doesn't want people to look at different points of view as points of argument; we can do best what we believe is right, which is the point of being on the Board of Education. She said that the town should continue to be in peace with each other and to connect with people who represent your opinion and continue to respect each other in sharp moments like this.

Selectwoman Wicewski clarified that the word "explore" was never removed from the motion regarding the formation of a school building committee. The committee doesn't have specific charges yet, as it does not yet exist, but if it is established, there will be specific items they will be charged with looking at, but that the idea has always been a committee for the purpose of exploring.

M. Cunningham thanked Alison for her presentation today, as it's helpful to bring the school to the Board. She is excited about the Broadway field trip. She thanks Chiara and Stephanie for their service on the Board, as it's not a small commitment and takes time away from people's families; it is a gift to the town for people to spend their Tuesday evenings in the town office building.

M. Cunningham adjourned the meeting at 8:55pm.