

WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Regular Meeting Minutes

Via Online Public Zoom Video Conference

7:00 p.m.

Audio Recording: Yes

Video Recording: Yes

Notes Taken: Yes

Members Present

Herb Arico - Chairman

Elena Testa - Vice Chairman

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Secretary

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

(Liz Perry submitted her resignation effective April 9, 2020)

Members Absent

Also Present

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

First Selectwoman, Erika Wiecenski

David Lytwyn, Owner of Admiral Septic

Members of the Public

Chairman Herb Arico called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present to Speak

Laurie Semprebon of 271 Turnpike Rd. read a letter to Mr. Arico and the Willington Board of Education regarding her thoughts on the board's recent decision to deny Willington students free mental health services.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Herb Arico spoke about the fact that the forum for Board of Education meetings has changed for the time being and gave an update on the way education is moving forward in light of the pandemic. He commented that the board, administration, staff, parents, and students have responded at remarkable speed to the world's changing realities; managing and using remote

communication as a new norm. In his opinion, the school system has remained engaged, responsive, and committed to our students, staff, and the community. He concluded that we should be proud of the school system, staff, and administration for what they have accomplished in the last few weeks.

Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Stevens requested the board discuss item G first so Dave Lytwyn, attending the meeting via phone, can answer questions promptly.

H. Arico made a motion to move item G to the next item.

M. Cunningham seconded the motion.

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

Motion passes.

G. CES Septic Tank and Leach Field

Superintendent Stevens stated that Admiral Septic has continued their work on the leach field and septic tank at Center School. We have 7 distribution boxes, and one was in good condition. 6 of the boxes were replaced, including the main box. 3 of the boxes that were fixed were given additional protection with concrete because they are under the parking lot and blacktop.

The leaching trenches have been located. 5 were in good condition but have been not functioning due to blockages from collapsed distribution boxes or crushed pipes. The issues have been addressed and those are now functional. 6 of the trenches were jetted to clear debris. We have 3 of the trenches at the end of their life. The work that Admiral has been doing has definitely led to rejuvenation of the system.

The septic tank is a 6,500 gallon tank, not 7,000 as stated on the original plans. The tank and dosing chamber have been pumped twice during this project. Admiral found that one of the pipes was not the same size pipe as listed on the plans, and that the last 6 feet sloped uphill to the tank. That section of pipe was replaced and the issue was corrected. A plumbing cleanout was added to the tank inlet pipe to improve future servicing.

Superintendent Stevens continued that they are a little under \$16,000 into the project. He noted that a new system could potentially cost around \$250,000, so that is \$16,000 well-spent. The

Board needs to consider what to do with the dosing chamber which is deteriorated. Dave is recommending to replace the complete dosing chamber for \$18,600 which would offer the longest life for the leaching field. It would be code compliant and could remain if the leaching field ever needed to be replaced in the future.

David Lytwyn told the board that prior to doing any repairs on the leaching field, the 3 lowest trenches were being hit with the majority of waste from the school, centered around the hours of the school day, which is why a couple of the trenches were overloading and breaking out to the surface. The original design was never intended to have that kind of concentrated load applied to very few trenches. With the repairs on the leaching field, 11 of the 14 trenches were brought back to service. The dosing chamber is meant to distribute the waste going to the field over a longer period of time, thereby giving the system time to drain down, giving oxygen a chance to get in, and improving on the denitrogenation process. On a modern system, they would set up a time-dose system which distributes the load over a 24-hour period instead of the 7-hour school day. The advantage there is that each trench gets about 100 gallons per day of waste instead of three trenches getting 400+ gallons per day.

D. Lytwyn continued that structurally, the chamber is not sound because rebar is exposed and 1-2 inches of the concrete is gone or too soft to function. The older design provides no method for the school to know if there is a problem and if it's overtaxed or damaged, it could overflow into the parking lot and playscape. The current design requirements call for 150% reserve capacity over expected flow, which would push Center School over 18,000 gallons per day.

D. Lytwyn proposes going to a tank with a time-dose pump system and high-level alarms tied in with the school Delta electronic system so it notifies maintenance of any issue before it becomes a problem.

Superintendent Stevens explained to the board that the Delta system already in place in the schools helps monitor the heating system. For example, if it senses a drop in temperature, it sends an e-mail to the custodian so they are aware even if they aren't in the building. The proposed alarms on the septic would tie into that same system.

D. Lytwyn added that another advantage to tying it into the Delta system is that you can calculate the amount of usage, e.g. water consumption over time. He continued that there is opportunity to see some cost savings. With the ability to monitor what's going on in the leach field and at the dosing chamber, the school will be aware years ahead of time when the system is nearing end-of-life and can plan finances accordingly, rather than scrambling to come up with money once it fails. He also said that the vast majority of the cost of this project is for the materials.

Superintendent Stevens clarified that the age of the system is about 40 years old and inquired what percentage of the system will have been rejuvenated once the project is complete. D. Lytwyn responded that 75-80% of the leaching field has been rejuvenated and continued that when the system was first built, water use per student was lower. He anticipates that with proper maintenance and keeping levels where they're at, he would expect another 30 to 50 years from the system. An increased number of students would lead to a decreased life expectancy.

D. Lytwyn continued that other factors to consider include items which are prone to wearing out. He tried to select components that were the lowest but most reliable cost. They chose smaller equipment such as pumps because it isn't a large distance to travel, but these components are readily available off-the-shelf if something happened and they needed to be replaced quickly.

E. Testa inquired about the final price. D. Lytwyn replied that the quote on the dosing chamber was \$18,607. There are some minor issues to be addressed; they held off on doing the exit baffle modifications to the tank to avoid digging it up twice, but that will cost around \$750. They didn't re-pave the areas that had been concrete because he suspected that Willington's Public Works department would get a better price on asphalt. Superintendent Stevens added that Public Works has already agreed to do the paving for just the cost of material. E. Testa clarified that the full cost of the project then would be between \$35,000 and \$40,000 and Superintendent Stevens confirmed.

A. Grosjean inquired whether the Board of Education has the money for this or if it will have to go to the Board of Finance. Superintendent Stevens replied that he believes we do and would go into more detail in his Financial Report. He continued that if the school gets another 40 years from the system for that amount of money, it makes sense since a new system costs \$250,000.

D. Cook inquired whether this project can be done before school is back in session, as students aren't in school right now and won't be back for quite a while, for the safety of the workers and the children. D. Lytwyn replied that that is a very reasonable timeline. He has already spoken with the health district and has been keeping them up to speed. They've been working hand-in-hand on this and they're aware that this would need to be done before bringing kids back.

Superintendent Stevens stated that initially, this was seen as an emergency project because of the way it started. At this point it could be considered all part of the same repair or the board could decide to add a new agenda item to approve the cost, although the exact number isn't in yet. He stated that paying for the project will require a transfer, but it can continue to move forward as long as the board agrees. The board agreed to keep as part of the emergency project and asked to be kept up to date.

Superintendent Stevens thanked Dave Lytwyn for his time and information and told the board that Dave's reports have been great; Admiral has been very reasonable and responsive to our needs and he greatly appreciates it.

A. School Closure

Superintendent Stevens summarized that this unprecedented event has resulted in a significant number of executive orders from the Governor. All the executive orders can be found on ct.gov. He gave a timeline of events so far and invited questions from the board:

- March 12: Executive order 7 waived the requirement for 180 school days, but told schools to plan to be in session until June 30. At this time, the Commissioner and CT state department of education advised districts to simply cancel school and plan to make

up the days, like snow days, at the end of the year.

- March 13: We announced Willington Schools would be closed for 2 weeks.
- March 15: Executive order 7C canceled all public school classes from March 17 through March 31, and also provided municipalities with a 30-day extension for budget adoption, including regional districts.
- March 17: Executive order 7E provided further modification of the 180 school day requirement, allowing districts to close on their scheduled end-date as long as the district provided opportunities for continuity of education to all students to the greatest extent possible. Our last day of school for students will be Wednesday, June 17, which includes our 4 snow days, which will equal 177 student days.
- March 21: Executive order 7I suspends in-person budget adoption requirements. This order provides the Board of Finance the power to establish the budget for the town for FY20-21. It also allowed Region 19 to establish their budget, which they have done.
- March 23: Willington Public Schools started our interim learning plan.
- March 24: Executive order 7L extended the school closure to April 20.
- March 26: Executive order 7N suspended school testing (SBAC) for the 19-20 school year.
- March 31: Executive order 7R provided a continuation of funding for boards of education requiring the state to process appropriated grant funds including Education Cost Sharing (ECS). It also required a continuation of payment of public school staff, which Willington had already committed to. Lastly, this order required the preservation of student transportation services and special education providers for outplacements. The piece of the order around transportation requires some negotiation which is currently in the works.
- April 10: Executive order 7X extended the school closure through Wednesday, May 20. If we return on May 21 we would have 19 school days before the summer break and would have completed 37 days of our interim learning plan.

E. Testa inquired if there is flexibility about the last 19 days and an option not to return or if the children must return. Superintendent Stevens replied that at this point, it is purely the decision of the Governor, who has been consulting with the Commissioner of Education, the Health Department and all the professionals around this. They are the ones dictating when districts can open at this point in time. There have been talks about doing it in waves based on counties, but it is not a Willington decision. If they say we can open, we may have the opportunity to make our own decision, but might have to make up those days and no longer end on June 17.

H. Arico asked if the town isn't transporting students, is the town still paying money for the service that isn't taking place, and are the bus companies still paying drivers? Superintendent Stevens replied that he would answer that in detail under E). Transportation agenda section.

H. Arico inquired whether there was anything in the executive orders that affects the Board of Education. He understood that some of them gave the Superintendent added strength or power due to the emergency.

Superintendent Stevens responded that one item that came down from the Department of

Education was a sample policy that boards could institute which would give the superintendent more authority to act quickly on things without having to adjust. This situation is so unprecedented, but the town has done a good job taking time to consider options and not making rash decisions. Superintendent Stevens stated that he doesn't think instituting the emergency policy is necessary. The piece that he thinks might be important for future board consideration surrounds the absence of a superintendent or administrative team in layers as part of an emergency plan. It looks at the continuity of leadership if leadership were to be incapacitated; next steps, who is next in charge, what are they responsible for, who do they report to, what powers do they have, etc. Because Willington has small staff, anyone in a position right now would probably be able to step up and cover, but it's worth considering a policy around in the future.

E. Testa inquired how and when Superintendent Stevens suggests working on those emergency policies. Superintendent Stevens suggested waiting and putting something in place in the future, as everything is moving along at a good pace right now. He detailed that his administrative team knows his every move at this point in time and would be able to cover if something happened because their communication is so close.

B. Interim Learning Plan (ILP)

Superintendent Stevens stated that the amount of work to establish the interim learning plan has been tremendous, as it's a significant change for school districts. He thanked his Administrative team and school staff for all their support and effort to get it off the ground. They were able to create an ILP in just a few days and made a significant attempt not to overwhelm families with hours and hours of required work. The commissioner of education has said over and over that the most important thing for our students right now is their physical and emotional health and safety. The ILP was crafted with that in mind. Some districts are moving from 5 days of instruction to 4 days per week because of the strain that was placed on families to balance working and distance learning with one or more students. We believe the workload we are requiring from students is reasonable, and those seeking more work can access our supplemental learning opportunities, which are available across all disciplines. He continued that the ILP is not providing the same level of instruction as students would be receiving in schools by any means, but is the best we can do in this situation.

Superintendent Stevens continued that Willington's ILP will be shifting after April vacation to include a balance of videotaped instruction and online programs. We have been using Zoom for meetings, recorded teacher messages, live morning meetings with students, and lunch groups. The district is not using Zoom for live instruction unless it is one to one to protect student confidentiality. We are also using Google Classroom, mainly for middle school, to house documents and allow students to share their work with their teachers. Last week they invested in a video program called *Seesaw* for the elementary school to allow students to "turn in work" and will be rolling that out in the very near future. As so many resources become available, it will take some time to get them up and running; the district will be providing teachers with professional development on several programs next week so they have the knowledge they need. The ILP has been implemented for 3 weeks and is constantly being revised as they receive feedback from parents and staff.

Superintendent Stevens reported that online participation rates for week three were around 87% for the mandatory work. They will continue to monitor student participation on an individual basis and try to keep students motivated during the closure. Lastly, the schools had two major device distribution times and still continue to distribute devices to families in need so their child can complete the required work. Over 170 devices have been distributed so far.

A. Grosjean commented that she has been participating in the ILP with her grandchildren and that the teachers have been very helpful in getting everything running. iReady has been wonderful and each child is working at their own level. Both children have had Zoom experiences with their classes which they really loved. She added that Mr. Napoli has been providing a morning “welcome” each morning that you can listen to whenever you’re ready. They’re fun, provide updates, and it’s a great way to change the mindset to “school time”.

T. Anderson commented that things have been going very well for her middle school student as well. She commended the teachers because they’ve had both e-mail and phone calls to check in and see how they’re doing, not just from classroom teachers but from support services, and that the principal is sending videos as well. She feels it’s bringing back some of that connection that was so quickly taken away from students, allowing them to stay involved, and trying to keep things somewhat normal in these not-so-normal times.

C. Food Services

Superintendent Stevens stated that our food service staff has been doing an outstanding job preparing meals for all students for pick-up at Hall School since March 23. An online survey is sent out each week and families are able to sign up for meals for the week. We are serving meals for every day, but are only on site Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week. We may be moving that to two days a week after April vacation in order to limit the number of days that staff is in the building. We served a full week's worth of meals yesterday, breakfast and lunch for each day, sending out around 1,000 meals to 106 children in the wind and rain. About 45 families are accessing our meal service each day. We have a few volunteers delivering meals to families that are unable to pick them up and Superintendent Stevens would like to send a sincere thank you to them.

Superintendent Stevens continued that all of the breakfasts and lunches that are going out are covered by the state and will get a reimbursement of \$3.41 per lunch and \$1.84 per breakfast per student. Because the food program is normally a self-sufficient program and relies on lunch sales, the Board of Education may need to provide some funds to support this program because the full staff are being maintained. He anticipates that we are losing about \$750 per week and is looking into a grant to support the program, but will closely monitor this as we move forward with the closure. He noted that not all of the students who get free/reduced lunch are accessing the program, so they will be looking into the reasons and make sure those students have food if they need it.

D. Employee Expectations

Superintendent Stevens detailed that it was decided to keep all our staff employed at the start of

the closure, which was good because it turned out to be required through an executive order. We have identified expectations for all our staff and done so collaboratively and without the need for any contractual letters between our unions and the board. I greatly appreciate our staff and their flexibility during this extreme adjustment. Concerns have been addressed as they've come up and will continue to be. All the Administrators and teaching staff are working remotely. The teaching staff is expected to be available during the day to support student learning and connect with students and families via Zoom, email and/or the phone. Teachers are monitoring student progress and developing supplemental lessons for students. Moving forward, they will also be recording some video lessons as well. The administrative team has been meeting with the teaching staff via Zoom on a regular basis and are working to maintain clear communication with the staff and community in order to hear expectations and concerns. They have also been connecting with families to support technology needs and ensure the plan is running efficiently.

The non-certified group (custodians, nurses, secretaries and paraprofessionals) have also been completing their assignments. Custodians are on site and cleaning the buildings and working on projects using social distancing guidelines. Nurses have been working with parents to return medications and completing required paperwork. Secretaries have been working both in the buildings and remotely, answering the phones (which they also have ring to their cell phone), helping organize the chromebook/ipad distribution, delivering chromebooks, updating the website, and answering emails. Paraprofessionals have been completing a minimum of 15 hours of online professional development per week, which is great because more professional development was noted in the special education audit.

He concluded that overall, this is not a comprehensive list of tasks for all these groups, but he assured the board that the entire staff is working incredibly hard during the closure.

H. Arico commented that the staff has done a magnificent job going to distance learning in a matter of weeks. The results have been excellent. He inquired about the 13% of students not completing work and whether it's older students or if the numbers fall across the board.

Superintendent Stevens replied that the numbers are across the board, not a certain grade level. One of the tasks for staff right now is to follow through with families who aren't turning in anything to find out the reason. They realize that they have to work with these families for unique situations, e.g. older children caring for younger students, single parents juggling distance learning with being an essential employee, etc. Superintendent Stevens appreciates the commissioner for saying that emotional health is the top priority right now.

H. Arico inquired whether all children have access to online communication via the equipment that has been distributed now. Superintendent Stevens replied that the town has one family left to give iPads to. If a family notified the school at any point that they thought they were all set but needed something else, the school can get them what they need. There are plenty of working Chromebooks, though they are getting outdated. iPads are really only being loaned to PreK and Kindergarten students; older students are getting Chromebooks.

A. Grosjean added that the kids are working individually on iReady programs for 0.5 hour on

math and 0.5 hour on reading per day. It is individualized and good for the kids, but guardians may need to stay on top of them to keep them on task.

E. Testa asked about teachers calling students and whether that's an obligation to call once per day or just when the need arises. Superintendent Stevens replied that they are asking teachers to connect with families in any way that works best; some families prefer email and some prefer phone calls. Teachers know their families and students, so they know who they need to check in with. Teachers are not calling every day and they're using *67 so they aren't giving away their personal cell number. Teachers are required to check email throughout the day and respond back within a certain period of time. They're also checking data, creating new lesson plans, and attending staff meetings virtually. If a teacher hasn't been able to get in touch with a family, the administrator reaches out and then the superintendent if necessary, though they haven't needed to do that. Superintendent Stevens noted that families have been very responsive and are doing a great job.

E. Transportation

Superintendent Stevens stated that Executive Order 7R requires a continuation of payment for student transportation services. Each board of education needs to negotiate with their transportation provider to identify a more accurate cost during the closure. The purpose is to sustain continuity of service when school resumes, to keep their employees paid and insured. The bus company must provide documentation that they are only charging the actual and reasonable cost of sustaining wage and health insurance payments. Area superintendents have collaborated on what information to request from M&J Bus, even though we all have our own contracts. We will be requesting the same information from M&J. This will include a cost breakdown for basic transportation (i.e. to and from school only), a list of active employees, a detailed breakdown of each active employee's wages and benefits, and actual fleet cost including maintenance.

Superintendent Stevens continued that there are a couple issues here because M&J bus drivers have been laid off and collecting unemployment since March 13. We do not want to pay our entire bill until we know they have been reinstated per the executive order. The executive order does not allow M&J to be "enriched beyond the actual and reasonable cost incurred". The other issue here is bus companies are attempting to clarify what information must be provided because their profit margin will be clearly identifiable and impact their ability to negotiate in the future. As long as the board agrees, he will continue to work with area superintendents and the bus company to pursue an adjustment.

E. Testa inquired about the fact that we must definitely be saving on gas at this point. Superintendent Stevens replied that unfortunately, that is not the case. He explained that the town buys diesel in bulk and has to contract and pay for a certain number of gallons in order to get the lower rate, regardless of whether they're used. Every year, Willington has always used the fuel amounts. Though we're not using fuel because we're not filling buses every day, we're still billed for it. Dime Oil, the company we purchase from, isn't making the profit; it's the company they're getting it from. Dime Oil nor Willington have storage tanks for incredible amounts of fuel, so they can't receive it. Superintendent Stevens noted that if school is out for the rest of the

year, they may look for a creative solution to use the buses like Ashford is using them to deliver food.

Donna Cook stated that she believes home heating oil is just diesel that is dyed a different color. She inquired whether it would be beneficial to reallocate the diesel someplace else so it doesn't go to waste if the town is paying for it anyway. She suggested filling residents' tanks who are on assistance with home heating oil. Superintendent Stevens replied that they will try to be creative and identify some method, but they don't know what that is yet or what the numbers are right now. If schools go back in session, they'll definitely be using some, maybe through July 1.

E. Testa inquired whether there is a way to negotiate with the oil company so next year the town can have a lower discounted price because this isn't fair to the town. Superintendent Stevens replied that Dime Oil isn't making the profit because they're just the distributor. If the town finds that it has an excess, we can try going back and asking for a lower rate than what's already been negotiated for next year, but then Dime Oil would be losing money. Superintendent Stevens noted that he will be meeting with Donna on Friday to go through budget items and that this will be a topic of discussion.

Selectwoman Wicewski was recognized as having information on the topic and commented on E. Testa's idea but explained that the negotiations regarding diesel rate for FY 20-21 were completed in December and the town is already committed going forward, though they will look at every avenue. She noted that the town doesn't have a large enough fleet to utilize the amount of fuel that we have, nor did we know we'd be out this long because things evolved so quickly. As it was, the town filled up its fuel tank when schools were first shut down and will be in the process of replacing that fuel tank, so there will be the issue of having much more fuel in it when we go to replace it than anticipated. They will look at all avenues for what can be done with the fuel in that tank, but as it stands right now it's not looking like the town will be able to save money on fuel.

F. CES, HMS Roof Replacements

Superintendent Stevens stated that the COVID-19 situation has put the roof replacement project on hold. They are at a significant disadvantage with communicating and meeting at this point. He's hoping to be able to pick this process up again soon. Thankfully, the patching at both buildings has been successful. He noted that every moment in the last month has been spent on COVID-19 and the ILP.

H. Retreats

Superintendent Stevens noted that with COVID-19 and the resignation of a board member, he proposed the board hold off on both the board retreat and new-member retreat at this time and consider rescheduling them at a later date after the social distancing mandate is lifted and a new board member has been seated.

H. Arico agreed and stated that he hopes to plan for a date soon.

Committee Reports

H. Arico stated that committees have been established but no meetings have yet been completed.

Financial Report

A. 2019-2020 Budget Update

Attachment #1

Superintendent Stevens provided the following information:

- Program 1: Salaries have been trued up at Center School. About \$12,000 of the remaining \$32,000 is in supplies and purchased services and the remainder is salary.
- Program 2: See about \$200,000 savings in salaries at this point due to the positions that were open this year for a significant period of time, and a grant was applied to Hall School instead of Center School as originally planned. The remainder is spread through sports, supplies and purchased services.
- Program 3: Excess Cost Grant added \$46,000; the shortfall of \$225,000 will be covered by health insurance in program 10 - special education students are still being serviced.
- Program 4: See Section E above; waiting on fuel reimbursement.
- Program 5: Anticipate minimal savings in supplies.
- Program 6: Anticipate some savings in professional development costs.
- Program 7: Nothing to report.
- Program 8: Some salary savings.
- Program 9: Remaining money in purchased services for items the district has to continue to take care of, and a small amount in supplies.
- Program 10: We will see some savings in the substitute line as they aren't being used, and hopefully it will cover the unemployment claims from substitutes which the town must honor.

E. Testa inquired about the \$240,000 excess due to open positions at Hall School and expressed that she hoped the town is not going to fill them at this point in time. Superintendent Stevens confirmed that there is no hiring right now.

E. Testa inquired that from the \$240,000 excess, how much goes to the open position?

Superintendent Stevens answered approximately \$200,000 because there were multiple positions. Due to the combination of hiring people at a lower rate and the open positions due to shortage areas, the school saw a significant savings. He gave the example that Erica Bushior was the math interventionist at Center School but has been teaching 7th grade math because they couldn't find someone for the job, so no salary was being paid for the interventionist. Another example is that they couldn't find a science teacher so there was an opening there for quite some time. Additionally, the Library Media Specialist is now billed to Center School rather than Hall School, so that was another \$80,000 that was shuffled.

Superintendent Stevens continued that the excess here can go toward the Center School septic and some other things that will be coming the board's way. One of the things he'll be looking at with Donna Latinsics on Friday is closing out open purchase orders so they can get a good sense of what's left in the budget. Some subscriptions are paid for through purchases services year-round, but this excess may potentially help to offset next year's budget if the Board of

Education is asked to make cuts. Superintendent Stevens noted that NOVUS was doing research on our Chromebooks and discovered that the operating system will not be able to be used for SBAC testing next year, which is frustrating. The number of chromebooks to replace would cost approximately \$90,000.

E. Testa inquired if, Chromebooks aside, the board could consider potentially taking the \$200,000 excess and applying it toward next year's budget.

Superintendent Stevens replied that's one of the things he will be looking at with D. Latinesics on Friday to determine what they can and can't use. He added that the townspeople will want to weigh in and that the auditors have frowned on pre-pays to offset the budget, but certain items make sense to pay in advance. For example, the town contracts NOVUS for years at a time rather than year-by-year because it is far more cost-effective. He noted that the entire excess is not savings yet, but there are savings in salaries for sure. Then it will be up to the board to determine how to address that, taking into consideration what the town and the auditor are going to be okay with so it doesn't look like the board is going on a spending spree.

Superintendent Stevens stated that for the May meeting, he will bring the board a forecast through the end of June on what will be spent and what will be left in each line and some options moving forward. He told the board that some of it may need to be done earlier than that, as the board will need to have a budget meeting to discuss the Board of Finance's request.

B. 2020-2021 Budget Update (Executive Order)

Superintendent Stevens stated that the executive order shared earlier provides the Board of Finance (BOF) with the ability to set the FY 20-21 budget. The BOF sent a letter today that he shared with the board via email. They are asking budget writers to resubmit their budget at a 0% and -3% cut. He believes that the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) will come into play and the board will not need to submit a -3% cut and he has e-mailed the state to confirm that.

Superintendent Stevens explained that the MBR means that towns can't go below last year's K-12 education budget. A 0% budget would mean cutting approximately \$300,000. However, Region 19 already approved their FY 20-21 budget and it came in about \$170,000 less for Willington, which could come off of the \$300,000. Peter Tanaka recognized in the Board of Finance meeting that he understands that a town can be heavily penalized if it doesn't meet its MBR.

Superintendent Stevens continued that board members should plan to have a special budget meeting to discuss options. He will be meeting with the Administrative team on Monday, April 20 when they return from vacation to review options in order to have exact numbers for the budget meeting, as these are approximates. He believes it is a waste of time to come up with a -3% budget if the MBR doesn't allow it. He concluded that some of the savings that we may see in the current budget could have an impact, but they need time to look at that information and prepare options and numbers so the board can decide what to submit to the Board of Finance.

H. Arico inquired as to the Board of Finance's rationale for 0% and -3%. Superintendent Stevens

replied that the numbers are generally random and that the board said these are unprecedented times and because they're not sure of the financial impact of this situation, they'd like to see what that cut would look like. Selectwoman Wiecenski made sure the Board of Finance knew that they don't have line item veto within the Board of Education budget, their say is on the bottom line.

M. Cunningham asked that because the Board of Education has met its statutory requirements to vote on and approve and budget and provide the Board of Finance with information, is this more of an informational exercise to help them make a decision based on anything that might have changed, or is the Board of Finance asking everyone to redo the budget process and do an entirely new presentation?

Superintendent Stevens replied that he asked that question and that the Board of Education has an obligation to review the entire budget; added items like the long-term substitute line and possible remaining excess in the employee insurance line may be the first thing to review. He stated that the Board of Finance needs to understand that if the Board of Education takes an amount out and doesn't have the money to pay for something, they'll return to ask for that money. The Board of Education should detail the student impact and what the schools would be losing by removing this amount. Superintendent Stevens stated that he was clear with the Board of Finance that 3% of the budget is non-contractual supplies like paper, pencils, scissors, PE equipment, art supplies, music, etc. and that it's already a tight budget. He thinks the Board of Finance just wants to see a list, not a brand new budget, but to get a sense of what we think we could eliminate and what the impact would be.

E. Testa inquired whether the board is obligated to submit a -3% budget unless Superintendent Stevens finds out it'll put Willington below the MBR. Superintendent Stevens replied that the board can decide together, but doesn't think that they're obligated to do that if the board decides it's unreasonable. He noted that the job of the Board of Education in any budget process is to submit its best budget and that the board could decide to go back to the BOF and tell them that that level of cuts means cutting people and explain why they can't do it.

C. Capital Improvement Plan

Superintendent Stevens explained that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) may need to be adjusted based on the Board of Finance letter. He recommends the Board consider eliminating the Center School heating project to cover a portion of the cuts requested, which can be discussed more at the special BOE budget meeting. The CIP money for the CES heating project and fiber optic cable was transferred to next year to allow more time to complete the projects. \$90,000 is approved for the heating project, which could be put into the future as long as the BOF knows that if something breaks, we will come to them for funding. If the board decides not to do that, the heating project can be completed this summer. He does not recommend changing the fiber optic project as it is tied to a grant with e-Rate and may pay for itself in a year.

New Business

A. Approve Minutes of March 10, 2020 Meeting

Attachment # 2

**A. Grosjean made a motion to accept the minutes of March 10, 2020.
M. Cunningham seconded the motion.**

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

Motion passes.

Present to Speak

Selectwoman Weicenski thanked the Board of Education for embracing this new normal way of meeting for now. She wanted to recognize and publicly thank the Superintendent's Office for the collaboration that allowed the town to utilize devices that the school had and weren't using in order for town employees to work from home. She detailed that there is a skeleton crew working in the Town Office Building and that most departments didn't have devices that allowed them to work from home. This shows the great amount of collaboration between the town and schools in Willington and has made a difference. In one week, NOVUS got the town the schools up and running and without them, she doesn't know what we would've done otherwise.

Resident Elaine Newcomb inquired what the Region 19 per pupil cost is or where that information could be found. H. Arico replied that the information can be found at the Region 19 Superintendent's office.

Elaine Newcomb continued that she is concerned about the fuel issue, as it sounds like that issue may well be affecting many towns in the state. She stated that the Governor has been prolific in addressing issues and changing policies with executive orders; many school districts may be being penalized because of this situation because no-one buys fuel expecting they're not going to use it. She encourages the Superintendent, perhaps in conjunction with other superintendents, to direct some concern to the Commissioner of Education to see if something might be done on a higher level to address this, whether to allocate the fuel somewhere else and get some sort of credit, or another solution. In the explanation of the bus employees, the concern is that they be made whole, but districts have a right not to be penalized because schools were closed for the rest of the year as well. She noted that the fairness issue is important here.

Superintendent Stevens replied that he can see if area superintendents are in the same boat. He doesn't know what their loss ratio is and once they know that information, they'll have a sense of the impact.

Board Comments

A. Grosjean - Thank you to Superintendent Stevens, administrators, and teachers for the wonderful job they've done with online learning. It is a whole lot more than regular teaching but it's really appreciated.

E. Testa - Considering the uniqueness of this moment everyone is doing well. I think we should try to stay more positive and watch less news. The situation is being handled perfectly and though the situation is terrible, something good will come out somewhere. I encourage everyone to be optimistic.

M. Doucette Cunningham - I agree with Ann on the congratulations to the staff for a fast turnaround time. I am frequently really proud of the way Willington handles things with a cool head and doesn't jump to conclusions only to have to change things later. I appreciate that we have someone level headed at the helm keeping us on course. I also want to call out the principals who have been doing morning meetings. I watched the one for April Fool's Day and was laughing and it was terrific. I have encouraged other people to use video in a way that is creative and uplifting. Both of the principals have captured that and the people in our schools is really what makes Willington a unique place. We must be protective of them because they are doing work well beyond what they had prepared for. This is something we all have to get through together but I think that they should really be applauded for this amazing job.

M. Doucette Cunningham - I just wanted to comment on the fuel oil question and I think that one of the things that's interesting when you've read all of the governor's executive orders is that that's exactly the type of thing the governor should address in an executive order as it affects more than just school systems. It is not a Department of Education issue; there are lots of small businesses around the state who buy their fuel in advance. They're making so many other types of protections that that's the right approach. I would encourage us as a board of education as well as individual members and anyone who is watching this video online to consider contacting the Governor because he has the power to make that change fairly quickly.

D. Cook - As we're muddling through this together, I am thankful for perseverance. I know that there's a lot going on at once so we need to keep on keeping on and hopefully we will continue to see the blessings in the midst of the muck. It's so good to see everyone's face even though we're not in person; it's heartwarming. I did quickly check and diesel fuel can be used for home heating fuel, so that may be a help. I would encourage us to consider the Center School heating project while the kids aren't in school and we're not having a problem so it's not a last-minute thing. I'm not sure what all is involved with that, but I'm not sure we should give that up because when things break then you're really under the gun versus taking care of it and maintaining it. I would need more specifics for that for later.

T. Andersen - I agree with what everyone else has said. I do really appreciate the administration, faculty, staff, and all the personnel. From what I see through communications with the district as a parent but also on social media, we're doing a great job.

H. Arico - I will echo everything that has been said about the staff, administration and everyone involved in keeping school going and they should receive commendations. They're doing a magnificent job and we're proud of them.

H. Arico stated that in regards to the Portrait of a Graduate, the attribute titled "compassionate individuals" doesn't seem to align with E.O. Smith's attributes. He asked Superintendent Stevens if that was mostly for the children at the elementary school. He continued that he knows that these are in the early stages the people involved are doing a lot of work; the titles are fine and it's what goes underneath that makes a difference. He inquired as to the timeline and when the board might receive more information on these. He noted that E. O. Smith has seven or eight attributes to Willington's four.

Superintendent Stevens replied that one piece of feedback that EO Smith provided was that they have too many. The conversation so far has been between a group of teacher leaders and administrators and intended to go to an internal audit review with other staff and then the pandemic hit. We will come back to it and have an internal audit to share how they came up with attributes. The committee felt strong about the compassion attribute. You'll hear how they define it and what they mean by it. Other districts have something similar but may call it empathy or mental toughness. He emphasized H. Arico's sentiment that what's important is what falls under each heading; how you define it and why you want students to be compassionate. They will define those for the Board and community so they have a sense. That committee doesn't have them set in stone, but definitely can defend them in their presentation. He concluded that hopefully we can get back to the reality of all the other things we were working on once we move away from online learning.

Chairman H. Arico adjourned the meeting at 9:09pm.

*Next regular meeting
May 12, 2020