

Waitsfield Elementary School
WAITSFIELD BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS Minutes
December 16, 2013 7:00 PM
Waitsfield Elementary School

ATTENDEES

Board Members Present: Eve Frankel, Helen Kellogg, Allison Champlin, Rob Williams

WES and WWSU Members: Kaiya Korb, Emily Smith, Brigid Scheffert, Michelle Baker.

Community Members: Seth Achilles, Kathy Haskell, Amy Caffry, Michelle Nucci, Jonathan and Jean Goldhammer, Christine Sullivan, Audrey Huffman, Deri Meier, Susie Lowe, Susanne Peterson, Chris Badger.

CALL TO ORDER

Rob Williams called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Eve Frankel made a motion to approve the minutes from Nov. 18, 2013.

Allison Champion seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION

Audience and written communication – none submitted.

Petition for moving the annual school budget articles to Australian Ballot:

Deri Meier spoke of how many residents are not able to attend the annual meeting and therefore don't get to vote on our school budget. He added that many don't come either because of the time (and patience) required to stay for the day to get one's voice heard, as well as the discomfort with being a dissenting voice in the crowd. The petition is an attempt to get wider participation in the school budget discussion. Eve Frankel identified the three-month dialogue that leads up to the budget and expressed concern for those who might vote without any participation or information to understand that budget. It is our understanding that it is at the discretion of the School Board to place this item on the Australian ballot or to vote from the floor. Amy Caffry raised the question as to whether the Australian ballot will generate more participation at the school meeting. Rob Williams will devote time at the January 20th school board to discuss this topic. Chris Badger suggested that we look to other towns that have moved to this Australian Ballot to see what the impacts were on time, involvement and funding. Christine Sullivan asked to know more about the participation in the Australian Budget process in other

aspects of the town.

Middlebury Interactive Language: Emily Smith presented regarding this first trial year of the MIL program. Kaiya noted that Harwood is also using the program in some of their classes. The program offers three different types of courses:

- 1) exploratory – gradual translation of stories from English to the target language with a simple graphic. This is not an approach to language instruction that Emily has used or is commonly endorsed
- 2) competency – more of a traditional textbook style approach with vocabulary, translation and grammar activities.
- 3) fluency – this is newest element and what the school is using. While it's designed for older students, the immersive approach is proven successful; it is consistent with the approach used in the world renowned Middlebury Language Program. Currently students in 3rd – 6th grade are using this program approximately half of the time students are in French class. Emily took us through several sample activities kids have engaged in. She stressed the cultural authenticity of the program. Audrey Huffman noted that giving the parents an overview of home-based activities and giving the students some incentive could help increase participation. Chris Badger and Kathy Haskell noted increased enthusiasm for French learned in class.

Proposed 2014-15 Budget:

Kaiya began by noting that there are numerous revenue and tax factors that fall beyond the purview of the board's decision making; our history has been to build budgets that are fiscally sound and offer a quality education at a reasonable cost and she encourages continuing to make decisions in this vein. As a result in changes, made at the state level, in the tax formula, taxes would increase significantly even if spending levels remain exactly the same. Additionally, we are also experiencing a loss in revenue, even though our student number has slightly increased.

Michelle spoke to five factors in the budget:

- 1) Revenues
- 2) Base education rate
- 3) Equalized pupil
- 4) Homestead taxes
- 5) CLA

She then went through several budget scenarios for this coming year to help the board and community members understand the process by which our tax rate is

calculated from the budget.

Kaiya then reviewed the budget proposed at the last meeting and several options for budget reductions. She walked through potential reductions individually:

- 1) Reduce a kindergarten position and replace that with a 1.0 FTE support staff. Questions ensued on potential class size and the choice to propose reduction in kindergarten over reduction of language and music.
- 2) Reduce .20 FTE math instruction and replace with a .30 FTE support staff.
- 3) Reduce Middlebury Interactive Language program
- 4) Reduce custodial staffing to 25 hrs/week
- 5) Reduce technology equipment proposal.

Christine Sullivan spoke to the shift to full day kindergarten 2 years ago and the 19-20 student classroom that occurred that year. She expressed concerns that this incoming kindergarten class could be even larger. Likewise, Kathy Haskell spoke to the experience of having a child in the 19 student kindergarten and concern that this should not happen again. Kaiya would prefer to leave the option/hiring for a full teacher for next year, with the capacity to RIF the position if the numbers hold at 18 or lower. Kaiya added that there is a behavior interventionist that comes to the school and is paid for by funding from Medicaid. We could eliminate that position and redeploy that funding elsewhere, but she recommends doing that as it would have little effect on the budget as the places where we could use medicaid funding are currently paid for with federal funds. Chris Badger brought the conversation back to reviewing the oil expenditures and alignment of actual spending with budget projections.

Eve asked that Kaiya bring forth any other potential programmatic reductions for us to consider. Kaiya responded that the French and music programs would be the next options – these are not required courses. Music reductions would limit lessons and flexibility of providing instruction. A French reduction would eliminate the program entirely. Chris Badger noted that we are running a very tight budget and could have a surplus given what we are proposing, and also that there are many parents and community members who volunteer their time and services, which should be noted in this budget process. A budget to be brought before the town will be voted at the next meeting on January 20th.

Board of Directors: Kaiya noted that we will have a position open for this election period and requested that we reach out to people who might be interested in serving on the board. She will advertise the opening in the

newsletter.

Policy The board will defer and discuss the pending policies at the January meeting.

REPORTS

Financial Report: Fund balance is slated to be \$4,030. Revenues are more than anticipated, as are expenses.

Principal Report: The winter program allows the staff to do a bulk of the action plan professional work. One key area is around climate (PBIS) positive behavior based interventions. WE ROCK (responsible, engaged, safe, kind) is being maintained throughout the year. Also the staff is evaluating individual EST plans for impact and effectiveness. In writing and literacy, the focus for early release days is on reading instruction and making sense of complex text. See Ann Beattie's blog for a great representation of what this work looks like translated back to the classroom. Consistent writing evaluation is also underway. This allows a group of teachers to evaluate one piece for consistency of approach and review.

WWSU Representative's report: Eve noted a significant amount of work going on at the executive committee and WWSU. She spoke specifically to the boundary adjustment. The state is exploring the dissolution of the Rochester/Hancock/Granville district and reassigning these to our supervisory union. The exec committee unanimously rejected this and is pushing through testimony in Burlington for the state to reconsider.

Superintendent's report: Brigid followed on this boundary discussion that while something needs to be done for our southern neighbors, it can not be at the expense of WWSU. This responsibility would be closer to \$130K (not \$20K as projected) across the 8 towns in our WWSU. She's proposed as an alternative that we take them all as designated part of our community. All 68 students would come to our school. The second option is to effectively disaggregate the Hancock and Granville students and have them assigned to the schools they choose. The goal is to either delay the vote if not clarifying that the WWSU is not the right partner for this boundary adjustment. On a budget note, Brigid called out that the central office is choosing to hold centralized expense rather than charge them back to each school, and the exec committee agreed. This makes the central office budget look bigger, but again, is a more efficient presentation of the expenses incurred to support all schools. Final note is to create a school calendar that allows for the professional development days outside of the school calendar.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Allison Champlin made a motion to go into executive session on a matter of real estate. Eve Frankel seconded and the board went into executive session at 9:44 pm. The board came out of executive session at 9:50. No action was required.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm. The next meeting will be Monday January 20th at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Kellogg
Clerk and Secretary