

**Waitsfield Elementary Board of School Directors**

**Meeting Minutes, 21 December, 2015, 7:00P.M.**

**Waitsfield Elementary School Library**

**Board members Present:** Christine Sullivan, Jonathan Goldhammer, Eve Frankel, Barclay Rappeport

**WWSU and WES Staff Present:** Brigid Scheffert Nease, Sheila Soule, and Kaiya Korb

**Members of the Public Present:** None

**7:00pm CALL TO ORDER**

**DISCUSSION**

**Additions/Edits** – Kaiya noted that we will need to add an executive session for matters of contract.

**Audience/Written Communication** – none

**Spring 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) Results Presentation**

Sheila Soule and Kaiya Korb shared a report on student assessment from spring 2015. As background, the assessment is a requirement: both Act 60 and NCLB mandate a system to hold public schools accountable annually through an approved assessment. VT also assesses science annually in grades 4, 8 & 11, but those are not included in AYP determination. It's likely that there will be less federally mandated testing as a result of the newly approved/updated NCLB, but we have not received clarification or direction on this yet.

NECAP was the assessment that VT has used since 2005. In 2010 VT adopted Common Core to align with new standards and then SBAC as an assessment aligned with these standards. This past year was the first year for SBAC. NECAP Science is still the assessment until a new assessment aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (our current science standards) is developed.

Standards based assessments are designed to assess students' performance compared to the preset standard for proficiency, as opposed to comparing students to one another.

SBAC is computer-based and generates questions based on the student responses. Questions either get more or less complex, depending on responses.

Scores are reported as a % of students who met proficiency and also as a scaled score. Scaled scores (although following a different scale system) were also used in NECAP. SBAC and NECAP scores cannot be compared as the standards are different, as are the scores.

Scaled scores for English Language Arts/Literacy range from 2114-2975, the same scale is used for Levels 1-4.

SBAC percentages of proficient across schools are available on WWSU website. Simply put, Waitsfield is performing ahead of the state levels.

Multi-school comparisons of SBAC were shown for middle school performance. Harwood Middle School is outperforming Crossett Brook in grade 7. CB outperformed Harwood in Literacy in Grade 8 but Harwood was higher

performing than CB in Math. It was noted that these are one year assessments and very difficult to make any relevant data calls based on one year's worth of information. For the most part our scores were consistent with the old standards/results. Grade 11 showed a decline, but this was possibly due to scheduling conflicts.

### **Educational Legislation and Political Activity Update/Superintendent's Report/Act 46**

Kaiya requested a discussion on Act 46 cost containment. It's rumored that the legislature may 'tweak' the cost containment rule. A decision will not be forthcoming until January most likely. It's possible that the % increase on health insurance may be removed from the cost containment ceiling.

A cost containment has always existed in some form; most recently this was connected to a portion of spending over the state per pupil average the previous year. There are \$21m of surplus funds that will be placed into the Education Fund to soften tax impacts this year, which will result in a tax increase (when these surplus funds are not available) in subsequent years. There are 11 consolidation projects going forward for a vote, there are additionally 23 studies going on that will not make the deadline for a vote this year.

Health insurance through VEHI will be replaced with new plans that will be ACA compliant beyond the 2017 deadline. Both of those contracts will need to be negotiated next year. Federal Excise Tax is a large component which would have a negative impact on schools, and is currently being delayed 2 years. In other words, there are factors beyond our enrollment that have potentially significant impact on our budget and taxes.

Kaiya commented that she has been asked if SBACs will go away under the new Obama plan. She does not feel that this is the case. The state can add to the assessments to bring in school climate, etc to demonstrate school growth. There is discussion that the SBACs will be dropped for grade 11 and replaced by the ACT or SAT.

### **Board Member Terms and Elections**

Helen Kellogg and Eve Frankel both have terms coming to an end this February. Eve commented that she is willing to run for an additional term in order to keep the strength of work on Act 46. Helen will not be running again. Kaiya commented that the concept of the board is rapidly changing with the vote on board merger coming up. There is great potential for the roles to be different for a new board member coming on board. Petitions are due January 25<sup>th</sup> for elections. Helen is vacating a two year term. Eve is finishing a three year term and will be running for a two year term. Christine pointed out that a vote for consolidated board members would take place on the same day that WWSU would vote on the merger. Candidates would need to run for either/and/or the WES Board and the Consolidated Board. We will have a need for two Waitsfield reps to run for the Consolidated Board. Terms for the CB would be staggered 2 & 3 year terms.

### **2016-17 Budget Draft #2 Review**

Kaiya noted a few changes from the prior budget reviewed in November: transportation costs have changed; teachers also had a deadline of 12/1/15 to inform if they were going to move on the salary scale. The final change was the WWSU assessment. The most new information has to do with revenue.

WES still has a -5.1% in spending. This reflects a change in education spending percentage of -0.1%. However, as a result of declining enrollment, our cost per pupil is \$16,008. The threshold cost per equalized pupil is \$15,301. Because of the way the legislation is written, even though our spending is less than that of some neighboring schools who have met their threshold, we would be fined because of the increase over our prior year's spending. In other words, we are being penalized for keeping our expenses low in past years.

Fayston has reduced their spending by eliminating their contingency to bring them closer to a \$40k difference from the spending cap. WES has a much smaller contingency (roughly \$10k). With the current pared down spending, it's impossible to meet the current threshold without cutting programs.

Kaiya does not recommend meeting the threshold. This discussion is contingent on not knowing the penalty. The only way to do this at this point would be to take the contingency fund out, reduce technology, but all would be one-time fixes adding up to around \$25k. Any further cutting would result in the loss of a position or program(s).

The current narrative is that the board has been responsive to declining enrollment by eliminating two teaching positions, careful consideration to para-professionals, elimination of special ed positions. We have low per pupil cost and low spending per pupil (in comparison with most neighboring schools) but given our current dip in enrollment, we do not meet the terms of the spending threshold cap.

The wildcard to this entire discussion is the threshold/spending cap. We don't have the information to know the tax impact of the budget in the current state. Harwood also has a decrease in spending with a change in CLA. We anticipate a 'friendlier' tax rate but the threshold is an unknown impact. If the merger is passed then the threshold is a moot point. Kaiya recommended that if the board would like her to come up with \$90k in reductions, we would need to have an additional meeting to allow for input.

Kaiya suggested as a course of action, to come back with some options in January when we have more information regarding the true tax impact.

WES does not carry a balance for facility maintenance/improvements which is impacting the discussion as there is no fund to cut this amount from.

Eve commented that with the bold action of engaging in Act 46 for the potential benefits there is good precedence to bring this to the voters with the \$90k overage. Essentially we are being penalized for reducing costs and running a lean operation.

**Draft press release** should not be issued until we have more tax information.

## **ACTION**

**Approve Board Orders:** Jonathan moved for the confirmation of the pre-approval for the voucher 1079 in the amount of \$3386.14. Eve moved to accept, Christine seconded with unanimous approval. Barclay moved to approve the voucher 1086 in the amount of \$66870.23.

**Approval of November 23, 2015 Meeting Minutes:** Minutes: Christine moved to accept. Eve seconded the motion unanimous approval.

## **REPORTS**

**Principal's Report:** While the snow is not here, the ski/board program is approaching. Should we not have the program, there needs to be contingency plans as there is a considerable amount of professional work that takes place while the students are at the mountain. This 2.5 hour chunk of time is invaluable for development time regarding proficiency based learning plans. This is also time used for SBAC training courses.

Kaiya is working on the town report – the document that is included in the annual report. She is also working on gathering more materials on the building and grounds work related to grants.

As a school we are planning another Compass Cup competition to keep students fresh and excited upon returning after vacation. Jeremy Hill has requested that we do not do a winter concert this year. Discussion took place regarding the cons and pros of having two versus one concert.

**Washington West Representative Report:** Most of the discussion is regarding Act 46, but there is a vote on January 13<sup>th</sup> regarding the WWSU budget at the all board meeting. One of the positions to be voted on is a mid-level manager position to support the changes coming through Act 46 and all other required changes. The title of the position will be Project Manager. Masters level or equivalent. The position will require someone who can do legal review, put together proposals for contract dealings, etc.

**Act 46:** Christine noted that the articles of agreement are in progress with a tentative date of early May for a vote. Language has been included regarding transfer of business, school closures, and buildings.

**Superintendent's Report:** Brigid has continued to work on Act 46 and has retained legal counsel to assist in the coming mergers to advise in the legal questions that will arise from each school. Historical data is being gathered from prior merge attempts and schools that have closed or had choice and other scenarios to add context to the discussions. Brigid has a slide presentation that can be made public to help with context.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Barclay moved to go into executive session for discussions of contract. Christine seconded the motion. The Board moved out of executive session at 9:06pm.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Barclay Rappeport moved to adjourn. Jonathon Goldhammer seconded the motion and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:08.