

Waitsfield School Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 9, 2009

6:00 p.m. Waitsfield School Library

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Cadwell, Wrenn Compère, Melissa Siner Shea, Sandy Tarburton, and Rob Williams

WWSU and WES staff present: Kaiya Korb and Brigid Sheffert

Community Members present: Matthew Riven and Todd White

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Missy Siner Shea at 6:10 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes: Sandy Tarburton moved, Elizabeth Cadwell seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the October 13th Board Minutes.

Discussion Items

III. Budget Presentation: Principal Korb explained the process used to create version I of the (draft) Budget. First steps included study of past budgets to better understand spending history at the school. Michelle Baker and Principal Korb then worked to make spending more transparent by creating logical groupings of cost categories. Factors that significantly impacted the (draft) budget were the anticipated retirement of one teacher, the implementation of a Math program that will help bring the WES into alignment with other Valley schools (Investigations and Connected Math), and the anticipated drop in Early-Ed preschool numbers.

There is still some question about how to best handle the anticipated drop in incoming Kindergarten students over the next few years. Sandy Tarburton suggested re-examining the materials collected over the past few years pertaining to 1/2 day vs. full-day Kindergarten. It is highly unlikely that the Kindergarten program will be expanded to a full-day program at this point given the budgetary constraints, but the school may partner with OHaw to provide care for preschoolers and Kindergarten students in the afternoon (parents would pay for this option, just as they pay for the traditional afterschool program.) It is likely that the school will not have enough students to run a morning and afternoon session in 2011-12 either.

There was also conversation about reconfiguring the technology position slightly to better serve the school's needs. This will not add cost to the budget, but would involve a slight restructuring of the position.

Principal Korb reviewed the entire draft Budget with the Board, answering questions from Board and community members. The draft budget meets the criteria for one-vote status.

Principal Korb shared a Capital Improvements Plan. The two stated goals are to 1.) create an inventory of all known mechanical / operating systems within the school along with their purchase dates and to 2.) use this list to help anticipate needs and responsibly manage Reserve Funds. Principal Korb will work with an energy auditor and engineer to determine optimal replacement times. The first task will be to clean the ductwork in the building. This will allow the current heating system to run more efficiently.

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IV. Preparation for Appointment of New Board Member: The Board expressed gratitude that two candidates quickly stepped up to the challenge of applying for the post and hopes to create a fair interviewing process by uniformly questioning all candidates. The Board brainstormed about traits useful in a Board Member. The list included these characteristics: objectivity, level-headedness, financial acumen, passionate about education, interest in the broader Washington West Supervisory Union, ability to meet time and other expectations (including participation on various committees), public speaking skills, someone who understands/appreciates the diversity of the constituency, sense of humor, collaborative nature, willingness to be a Public Official, and someone who provides balance to the present Board. Consideration of these optimal traits will help the Board create a lens through which to examine each candidate fairly.

Questions for the upcoming interview session were also presented:

1. Why do you want to be a Board Member?
2. Availability - How much time are you prepared to commit?
3. What do you perceive to be the challenges of being a Board Member?
4. Related Interests - What are your overlapping interests?
5. What does a Board Member do / not do in your estimation?
6. Case Study: You are confronted by a community member in the store about a controversial issue. What is your reaction?
7. Skills in Writing, Speaking, and Finance are all helpful to Board Members. Do you possess any of these skills and / or are you willing to develop skills in these areas?

Action Items:

V. Policy Reading and Adoption:

Rob Williams moved to adopt **Policy F:1 / Student Conduct and Discipline**. Wrenn Compère seconded, and the policy was unanimously approved.

Policy F:26 / Restrictive Behavior Intervention was offered for a first reading. The policy will be considered and voted upon at the December Board meeting.

VI. Community Relations Sub-Committee

Using the list generated at September's Community Relations meeting, Board Members chose the following topics as focus areas:

1. *Strengthen the presence of student work at Town Meeting* - Ensure that any video shown reflects key academic coursework as well as fun extra-curricular activities. Show taxpayers the full extent of the school's work. Consider asking classrooms to sponsor a "desert table" after lunch to show gratitude to town citizens as well as to encourage their attendance at the School portion of Town Meeting.

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2. *Focus on Energy Savings* - Interface with Town Officials and allow the school to become a pilot site for an alternative energy and/or efficiency program. This will involve undergoing an energy audit paid for by the Town. Principal Korb, Rob Williams, and Dennis Derryberry will continue to explore options in this realm and share them with the Board.

3. *Advisory Council* - Principal Korb has already formed an initial Advisory Council, which allows students to offer viewpoints regarding school-related projects/proposals to the principal. Positions will switch every trimester to allow all interested students to participate. This time around, the "fair cup system" was utilized to generate the first group of students.

4. *Website* - The Website is currently being updated and will provide a wonderful connection between school and community.

5. *Support teachers in community outreach work* - Teachers will use the same list that the Board was given to consider ways to connect with the broader community. The Board will listen to their ideas and offer support where appropriate.

VII. Transportation: Principal Korb requested a modification to the current routing for Bus 15. The suggested change will potentially increase ridership and result in children riding the bus for shorter periods of time. Elizabeth Cadwell motioned to approve this change, Wrenn Compère seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the new route design. Principal Korb will work with all involved to ensure a smooth transition.

VIII. Resignation of the Board Chair / Appointment of new Board Chair: Missy Siner Shea offered her official resignation from the Board. The Board thanked her for her 11+ years of service on the Board. Sandy Tarburton motioned to appoint Rob Williams as the new Chair; Wrenn Compère seconded, and all unanimously approved the decision. Welcome, Rob...!

IX. Financial Report: As the draft Budget review was so extensive this month, the regular November Financial Report will be discussed in December.

X. Principal's Report: Principal Korb provided a comprehensive overview of ongoing work via her "Principal's Report."

It was noted that phase I of the Flu Shot Clinic set up by the Vermont Department of Health was successful. Part II will occur at the WES on Monday, November 30th. Over eighty children were inoculated on November 2nd at GMVS through the combined clinic with WES.

Rob Williams noted that the Board might want to discuss the flu clinic event in depth after November 30th in an effort to determine what processes worked well for the school and which posed challenges. Principal Korb responded that she is most interested in providing feedback to the Vermont Department of Health, and that a conversation with the Board may be helpful in formulating feedback.

XI. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Sheffert provided an in-depth review of the work occurring at the district level. Strengths and weaknesses found at the middle and high school levels are being carefully examined to help inform instruction practices at the elementary level. Educational

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practices used at other high-performing high schools in Vermont are also being studied and compared to those used at WWSU.

Policy work is being supported at the district level. While some policies will remain "local," most will become more uniform and be adopted district-wide.

The WWSU computer system is being over-hauled in an effort to bring all the schools up to date. A new Website is being created by a Harwood senior with supervision from the district. It is up and running in a raw form and will be fully functional soon. A coordinated WWSU calendar will be one of the highlights.

Work has also begun on the creation of a district wide database tool. Teacher evaluations, support staff evaluations, and student data will all have a central location for digital storage. Report cards for elementary students, which have traditionally created a huge paper burden, will now be handled electronically. Principal Korb will work with Superintendant Sheffert to ensure a smooth transition. Additionally, the Supervisory Union is working to create consistent hiring guidelines and job descriptions in an effort to create equity/parity within the district.

The WES will be asked to provide feedback towards the evaluation of the new Superintendent beginning in December. This evaluation will allow Superintendant Sheffert to receive valuable feedback about her progress thus far. More information on this process will be forthcoming.

Superintendent Sheffert has been invited to participate on the Legislative Committee for the upcoming year, which is exciting news for our district.

XII. Washington West Representative Report: Elizabeth Cadwell provided an overview of the October 28th WWSU Executive Committee meeting. As Missy Siner Shea will no longer be able to serve as the Board Representative on this Committee, Rob Williams motioned to appoint Cadwell to this position. Wrenn Compère seconded, and all approved. The next meeting will be held November 11, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

XIII. Next Meeting: The next WES Board Meeting is scheduled for **December 14th at 6:00 p.m.** in the Waitsfield School library.

Executive Session: At the request of the Principal, Sandy Tarburton made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters at 8:57 p.m. Wrenn Compère seconded. All approved. The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:14 p.m. and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Caldwell
Board Clerk