

WAITSFIELD BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 20, 2010, 6:00 p.m.
Waitsfield Elementary School

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Cadwell, Helen Kellogg, Scott Kingsbury, Wrenn Compère, and Rob Williams (chair).

WWSU and WES Staff Present: Kaiya Korb and Brigid Scheffert.

Community Members Present: Darryl Forrest, Henry Erikson, Robin Morris, Valerie Capels, Gary Kingsbury, Lynn Kingsbury, Mike Kingsbury, Lynne Kingsbury, Ray LaRochelle, Chris Pierson, Drew Simmons, and Todd White.

I CALL TO ORDER

Rob Williams called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

II APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Wrenn Compère moved to accept the minutes from the December 13, 2010 Waitsfield School board meeting. Scott Kingsbury seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

III DISCUSSION

- Audience and written communication. None submitted beyond the water system discussion.

IV ACTION

- Policy: postponed until the January meeting.
- Water System Selection
 - o Review of History. Kaiya Korb provided a history of the school water analysis. In 2005, a sanitary survey found WES water system to be out of compliance. Several issues were since corrected, but the chlorination contact time was not fully addressed. Since 2005, the system has been out of compliance, but with a daily maintenance process to ensure the safety of our water. In 2006, the town meeting passed a vote to authorize the school board to seek a loan to address the water system. The board set about exploring options for the repairs, including connecting to the municipal water system. In Oct of 2008, the school signed on to the municipal water project. The decision was influenced by the issues with the current system, as well as the future vision for the need. The state allowed the school to operate out of compliance because it is signed on for the town water program. Another state sanitary survey will happen this summer and will show WES to still be out of compliance unless one of our options is pursued.

- Analysis of upgrades to current water system: The primary issue with our current system is that we don't have a disinfection system that meets state requirements. The system options currently discussed relate only to the school and no longer include the General Wait House and fire station, as they will join the municipal water system. Phelps Engineering offered estimates as follows:
 - A UV disinfection system for \$34,300
 - Chlorination only disinfection system (\$28,000).

Our current water system is maintained by Joe Robinson, the lead custodian, and requires ongoing training and certification. Also, our school lacks a full food service program primarily because our two septic systems are not built for the kind of waste generated by a food service program. The septic is limited by the wellhead protection zone.

Michael Kingsbury asked if either of the proposed systems could be installed without the engineering cost. Kaiya wasn't sure what level of engineering was required by our loan expectations. Kaiya noted that as the state would forgive loans up to \$25,000, \$9,000 is the top amount of new money needed to install one of these systems. There are maintenance costs for ongoing care, and so the school would put money into a capital improvement fund. Weston and Sampson projected putting \$5K a year toward that maintenance. This amount has not been set-aside in the past few years, in part because a capital expense plan was not in place. Another \$1,000 would be set aside for the training and time of internal WES personnel, making estimated ongoing annual costs approximately \$6,000.

Scott Kingsbury asked about this maintenance costs and if it exceeds what the school has spent in recent past. Kaiya noted that the systems maintenance has not been planned for in the past but addressed only when issues arise; we are now looking to anticipate those costs in advance throughout our facility.

If the school hooks up to the town system, the school stops being the water system operator and no longer conducts the testing; the town assumes this responsibility.

Michael Kingsbury asked how, if we've never spent money on maintenance, could the \$5,000 annually be reasonable. Kaiya noted that the capital improvement plan estimates are based on expected lifespan of the system; that is how we plan for all costs in our facility and doesn't match when an item actually breaks down. Kaiya looked into other schools' capital investments in water and \$5K annually is reasonable.

In summary, our current water system needs to be addressed. We know that the limitations of our current system, because of the proximity to the septic system, will impact future growth.

Chris Pierson asked about the potential for the expansion of the septic by the town to support food program expansion. There are no current plans for municipal sewer.

- Analysis of connection to Municipal Water System: Kaiya asked the Water Task Force to address the questions raised by the school board and the community members attending today's meeting. Kaiya provided an overview of her previous meeting with the task force. Specifically, the discussion led to a recalculation of the ERUs, which determines the amount the user is assessed. The WTF reduced the ERUs from 23.7 to 14.1. There was a misunderstanding of the school's current use, which does not include showers or food service. Robin Morris introduced the task force and spoke to the recalculation based on the added information provided. ERU stands for equivalent residential unit and is actually 240 gallons a day. Michael Kingsbury asked if a meter would allow people to recalibrate their ERU. Robin responded that the ERU costs are a proportion of the total costs. An ERU initially costs \$850 – $\frac{3}{4}$ debt service and $\frac{1}{4}$ operations and maintenance. Additional users will drive the debt maintenance costs down. Users can expect costs to remain stable or decline over time. Michael Kingsbury noted that Waterbury has \$34 per ERU and Montpelier is paying \$38 per ERU. Michael stressed that the taxpayers are in some ways paying for those inflated ERU costs. Valerie Capels noted that those towns have paid off their debt service, and that we can expect our costs to drop significantly as we do so too. Robin highlighted that Waitsfield's program cost is carried by the user. Michael responded that the Waterbury system is much more advanced and not 40 years old. He noted that we are vulnerable to school closing every time there is an issue. The concern about school closing and the response rate of testing after an issue was discussed. Kaiya inquired with Eric Law at the state about the rate of system shut downs. Municipal systems do not have a history of any shut downs and are thought to be more stable than individual systems.
- Robin Morris noted that the Fire Station and the Wait House would participate in the municipal water program. Other benefits Robin noted: potential for sprinkler use, increase area for potential septic system, reduced admin for the school, and reduction of chlorinated water. Henry Erikson spoke to the piping plan, which is to come through/under the parking lot and in through the front of the building. Michael Kingsbury noted that you'd need a 6" pipe to take advantage of the sprinkler option, while the current plan is to use 2" pipe.
- The school could request 6" pipe at no additional cost. Henry spoke to ways they are reducing costs through rural development loans and grants. Through these funds, the cost of the work to connect to the buildings is being paid by the town. Kate Williams noted that you have to use the loan money first and then the grant money, so giving back the loan money would disable access to the grant money. The users are happy to have those initial costs offset.

- The school will be hooked up to the system in the summer of 2011. ANR met with the WTF and determined that they will be on track to have water in the system in Q3 of 2011. Kaiya inquired as to whether we will have access to our existing system until the new line is tested and the old line is cut off; yes. Michael asked about the need for internal work to hook up to the new town system, and Kaiya noted that there will be some and that it has been budgeted for. Michael noted that the WTF couldn't guarantee that the system will be in compliance by this summer or the start of the 2011-2012 year. He presented that the only way to be in compliance for sure is to do our own system. Michael asked about pursuing both municipal and our own systems. Kaiya noted that there is only one \$25K loan forgiveness program and that the redundant system would be a cost burden to the taxpayers. Kaiya spoke with Sterling Mountain about their work being done with minimal interruption to school in session. So, in the event that there was a need for an alternative system, we could do the work before or beyond the summer.
- The municipal system will not require chlorination treatment, given the ground source. The municipal water is tested regularly and would be in a position to chlorinate the water in the event of contamination. Kate Williams noted that the town chose a system that would not be continually chlorinated, with use of chlorination only in the event of contamination. Kaiya noted that the schools UV system is also said to need chlorination back up.
- Michael Kingsbury asked if there is a circulator on the 400K-gallon system to prevent stagnation. Robin committed to getting back to the group with the answer.
- The town's system will be gravity fed.
- Scott Kingsbury asked how many breakages we should expect in a winter season. Henry noted that the PVC piping should not be expected to break. Michael Kingsbury asked that we check with other systems, as any break in the system could be a lost school day.
- Michael Kingsbury tallied this municipal system to costs \$12K a year. Rob Williams asked if our use could be re-evaluated to lower our cost. Robin clarified that the cost of an ERU might be reduced annually, driven by the rate of new users. The only way your ERU would be reduced is if your waste water permit is altered. Todd White asked if the costs to the school could go up if users drop out. There is no protection against that, but also no precedent of people dropping out of a water program.
- The water will be billed quarterly and that 2011 will be a pro-rated bill given the water slated to arrive in fall.
- Kaiya provided a summary and recommendation as follows. When considering the numbers only, the municipal system looks to be more expensive for the next couple of years, in the order of \$7,000 annually. Considering the value of options for

expansion, installing a kitchen, potential value of sprinklers – she is disinclined to stick with our own system. Also, given the growth in this area of town and the vulnerability of our wellhead protection, we are exposed to greater risks. Finally, the board made a commitment in 2008 and the town has moved forward with that understanding. She recommends sticking with the school’s commitment to the municipal system. Regardless, she is clear that we, the school, will have access to good water in either scenario. Scott Kingsbury asked if the school board was given dollar amounts in 2008, which Rob and Kaiya confirmed we were. He also asked what the lock is on the rate the town is quoting. Valerie noted that the debt service is a fixed amount and that the maintenance and operation costs are clear. Michael asked why the school did not take action after the town vote approved \$50K to replace the current system. He resents the imposition on the town’s taxpayers again.

- Elizabeth Cadwell noted the difficulty of the decision and focused on the future growth of this community. She concurred with Scott Kingsbury that the yearly use fees for the public system seem high. Nevertheless, she understands why the town is attempting to increase the vitality of the village center and appreciates that the school is one of the town’s most important assets. This could become an even greater consideration should consolidation of any type occur. Her feelings about the topic are mixed, and she would like to revisit the topic if it appears that the system may not become operational this year. She suggested a Plan “B,” should we run into problems or decide that the price tag is simply too high.
- Michael Kingsbury feels he to be a supporter of a town water system but feels that this is being done poorly.
- Scott Kingsbury feels that the school board is too involved in the role of the town and task force.
- Todd White concurs that we need to disassociate from the community role and focus on the school board priorities.
- Gary Kingsbury asked if there is a third option – which might be to stay with our existing system for the next five years, and hitch on at a later date when the ERUs are down. Henry noted that some lots have paid for a stub with no usage, in order to be able to sell the lots with that access in place. They pay debt service only. Kaiya asked what the debt service would be without usage fees. Answer: 75% of the ERU. Right now the hook up fee is \$7K and will be six times that in a few years.
- Chris Pierson asked why he couldn’t hook up and connect, regardless of the usage. Robin clarified that you must pay the debt service to have a hook up.
- Robin Morris spoke as a business owner and the landlord to 10 businesses in his building. The town went ahead when the community said it would sign up. To drop out now would hurt each other user.

- Lynne Kingsbury notes that we could have free water with a system upgrade. Kaiya noted that there is still a maintenance cost to a new system.
- Wrenn Compère noted that the school board had its eyes on the school and on the future options ahead of us when it chose the municipal water system in 2008. Now there are issues like potential consolidation and increased population that only further reinforce the decision.
- Valerie Capels resisted the temptation to speak to the impact on the community of having the school withdraw, but feels there are many meaningful points available for those interested. However, she noted that municipal water is a key ingredient to the success of Irasville and the potential growth and investment in our community. Septic systems and well head protected areas are creating a stagnant growth curve for the town.

Scott Kingsbury made a motion to withdraw from the contract and pursue upgrades to our current system through ultra violet disinfection. Wrenn Compère seconded.

Discussion:

Kaiya noted that we would lose the \$5,800 deposit paid and we'd be in breach of contract. Todd White asked if we are exposed to restitution by other water system participants. Kaiya is not clear on our risk regarding restitution. Scott does not want the school to be the brunt of this system. Wrenn Compère responded to feeling the tension around the community and feels we should not focus on the needs of local businesses growth or the sensitivities to those who would disagree; we should decide based on the needs of the school. Todd contributed that the time is now if we are going to do it, given the availability of grant monies. Elizabeth asked if you can re-open or not close well tanks once we hook up to the town water system. Kaiya clarified that one cannot resurrect our well source at a moment's notice, but we do have the option of not filling our well tanks.

Scott Kingsbury suggested that if the water project is not showing sufficient progress with the water project by August, that we revisit our plan. The board agreed.

Rob Williams' concerns with respect to the project were around the initial ERU calculation and the chlorination. Those have since been addressed and he is focused on the need for expanded use expected of this school.

The motion was not carried. Rob Williams, Wrenn Compère, and Helen Kellogg voted against the motion. Scott Kingsbury voted to pass the motion. Elizabeth Cadwell abstained.

The Board requested that we review the progress of the water project in the summer and evaluate our position again then.

V REPORTS

- Financial Report – Kaiya spoke to the strong fund balance as appropriate and not a result of “padding” in the budget. Also, Kaiya noted that the special funds - like the sixth grade trip – were brought in to the school budget for greater transparency and oversight.

- Principals’ report – Kaiya spoke about the school moving along with great activity and progress around responsive classroom and science programming, per our action plan goals. Rob and Helen will plan to attend the school staff meeting at January 4th, specifically to answer questions about the budgeting process.

- Superintendents Report – There was a successful supervisory union board meeting. The SU is focused on the state reporting dates in December and January, going through 14 common policies. The goal is to update 28 policies for the year.
 - Challenges for Change data show a savings of \$4M statewide. If all had participated we would have reached \$23M. However, if you add the \$4M above and the jobs money, it totals to \$23M. If none of the schools participated, the tax rate was going to stay at .6. If they all met the target, the change would be .81.

 - The consolidation study monies were declined because we were not tackling K-12 governance as part of our consideration set. So, we will have to study the models on our own, or ask Waterbury Duxbury to create a K-12 board and have the potential to get \$20K study money. Brigid feels that is highly unlikely. Overall, the intent from the state was to foster the development of a K-12 board, which our SU schools are not interested in. In terms of the evolution of the supervisory union duties as of July 2012 (Act 153), Brigid feels that slow and steady wins the race, especially in the absence of direction from the state.

 - With regard to consolidation, our numbers are still driving the need to consider consolidation, regardless of available study monies. A study group from the executive committee is needed. Governance issues are central. Montpelier feels that if we consolidate there will be real savings in the form of efficiencies.

- Washington West Representative Report – Elizabeth Cadwell noted that the Superintendent’s report on the SU meeting covered the executive meeting report.

The Class size policy needs to be reviewed on Monday, January 10th at 6:00 p.m.
The following meeting is Monday, January 17th at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Kellogg
Secretary and Clerk