

WESTBOROUGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WESTBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS  
MINUTES

Tuesday

December 4, 2013

The Westborough School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chairman, Ilyse Levine-Kanji. Committee members present included Mrs. Nicole Sullivan, and Mrs. Karen Henderson. Administrators present were Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Marianne O'Connor; Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Daniel Mayer; Director of Finance and Administration, Ms. Irene Oliver; Student Representative, Addie Egan; Principals, Maryann Stannard, Suzanne Kenny, Jack Foley, Brian Callaghan, Director of Technology, Kathy Martin; Director of Fine Arts, David Jost; and Finance Committee members, Kathy Senie, John Arnold and Edward Behn.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Mrs. Levine-Kanji reviewed the Agenda.

**MINUTES**

Upon a motion by Mrs. Henderson and a second by Mrs. Sullivan, the Committee voted 3-0 in favor of approving the regular session minutes of November 26, 2013, as amended. The Committee will place the approval of the November 20, executive session minutes on the next Agenda.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS AND HIGHLIGHTS**

Superintendent O'Connor announced the Strategic Planning Committee for Technology met yesterday. Guest speakers led a discussion about the strength of the program in place in Westborough, and where to go in the future. On-site visits will occur in the future.

Mrs. O'Connor was in receipt of a letter from the Secretary of Education, Matt Malone, thanking everyone who participated in his visit to the Mill Pond School and commended the impressive curriculum in place. Students will have a half day on December 6; faculty will participate in Professional Development. The Supervision/Evaluation Committee met today. It is looking at rubrics for nurses and specialists.

Superintendent O'Connor stated she sent a letter to the staff today announcing that after 30 years in public and private education, she was announcing her retirement at the end of this school year. She needs to spend time with her family, grandchildren, and mother. It has been an amazing career from substitute, classroom teacher, team leader, principal, director of curriculum and instruction, assistant superintendent and superintendent. She added it has been a privilege to have worked in Westborough with dedicated and talented professional people, her leadership team, outstanding community support, school committees of the past and present, and especially the children. They have given her strength. Mrs. O'Connor stated she has confidence they will keep the district going in the right direction. She will be here to support the next leader of the district. She will not miss the 4:30 a.m. calls to make the decision on whether to delay or cancel school.

Mrs. Henderson noted the fact Mrs. O'Connor's leadership team is in attendance at the meeting is a testimony to the kind of leader she is. It will be difficult to replace Mrs. O'Connor who has been an excellent superintendent with a thirty plus year career in education. The district is in top notch shape which indicates a top leadership team, great faculty and staff, and support of the community. Mrs. O'Connor's accomplishments will be celebrated in the coming months.

Mrs. Sullivan thanked the Superintendent for helping her in her "rookie" year as a school committee member, and noted Mrs. O'Connor has such respect in the schools and community which benefits the children.

Mrs. Levine-Kanji added Mrs. O'Connor is leaving the district in a great spot, and has always focused on what benefits the district. The Superintendent is on the job from early morning to late at night, has taken very little vacation or sick time.

Dr. Mayer stated it has been a privilege to have worked with Mrs. O'Connor for over ten years, working on regional committees, and is greatly indebted to her for her association.

Ms. Oliver added when she interviewed for her position, she had a great sense of Mrs. O'Connor as a leader, and she has not been disappointed. It has been great working on the Superintendent's team, and she hopes the next leader has the same qualities and integrity.

Dr. Mayer announced the state reported the International Student Assessment results, measuring the top performing systems worldwide. Massachusetts comes out on top year after year. Westborough's ranking in the top 10% of the state, which is ranked #1 in the country, is a tribute to the teachers and students.

Ms. Oliver reported she and the Director of Building and Grounds met with the Capital Expenditure Committee and reported on the problems with the acoustic tiles at the high school and boiler at the Gibbons School. The presentation was well received.

Mrs. Henderson added a very thorough description was presented to the Capital committee, and felt it had a good understanding of the urgency of the matter. It would mean looking at a \$75,000 expense for both. The Committee will meet with the town manager December 19 to see how the ratings come out. All departments' needs are considered. A five year outlook was also presented on items that will be coming up.

#### **COMMITTEE REQUESTS AND REPORTS**

Addie stated from a student's perspective, Mrs. O'Connor's hard work has shown through. She is a role model to the students. Mrs. O'Connor always brings back childhood memories to the students, how far they have come, and how much they have grown.

Addie announced Westborough won the Thanksgiving football game against Algonquin 31-7. Winter sports are underway. All winter athletes will meet December 9 with a parent or guardian. The a capella concert was held December 3, and the Winter Concert will be held December 17. There is an Anatomy and Physiology Club pizza fundraiser going on this evening. The Winter semi formal will be held December 6 in the WHS lobby. The national Honor Society will conduct a blood drive December 11, and the polar plunge is December 8.

At the Fales School a food drive for the Food Pantry is underway until December 13. It is related to a state organization, Project 351. Freshman, Connor Schoen has put in a great deal of effort into this project. The Book of the Month for December is How to Heal a Broken Wing by Bob Graham.

The Fifth Anniversary of the Fales School will be celebrated December 6. Parent, Dave Crandall has put together a video, and Kate Flanagan has taken photos. Thanks to both of them. At the Armstrong School a "Holiday Shoppe Event" will take place December 12.

Mrs. Sullivan announced she and Kathy Martin met last night with a non profit group of sponsors for a Technology Board of Directors and fundraisers.

Mrs. Levine-Kanji commended Addie on a recent article in the Community Advocate relating to the National Honor Society. Mrs. Levine-Kanji wished to draw attention to the number of homeless families in the district. Mrs. O'Connor noted 100 units of a motel in Shrewsbury are shelters and the food pantries are struggling.

#### **BUDGET PRESENTATION**

The Superintendent presented a summary and recommendations for the FY15 Budget. The Salary budget accounts for approximately 80% of the total budget of \$43,743,054. The Tuition account is down 11% due to rolling over some funding and bringing back two students into the district, and one is aging out in September and one in January. Transportation indicates a slight increase due to the anticipated need of adding a bus. The rate has been frozen for one more year at the rate we received this year. The Salary Budget increases 3.3% moving everyone up a step and lane and no cola. Contracted Services are reduced -4.3%; Technology -2.1%; Equipment -0.1%; Supplies 1.8%. For the seventh year, the district has not invested in supplies and materials. The 1.8% increase in supplies is to add equipment for a new classroom, most likely at Fales. Textbooks increase 33.5% for math texts to align to the common core. Utilities are up slightly, 1.5%.

Over the past six years, Grants have decreased from \$2,463,667 to \$1,966,317. The Chapter 70 monies depend upon the type of student and the delivery, but that money goes back to the town. There has been a 20% decrease in Grants since 2009.

The six-year budget average indicates the local contribution average of 2.49%; the state and federal contributions, down 3.89%; the total percentage of change, 2.13%.

The Superintendent presented the new position requests/reductions and reasons for them. The Fales School needs a grade 2 teacher, a .3 ELL tutor both due to enrollment; Hastings, one grade 2 teacher (enrollment figures); Mill Pond, a .5 ELL tutor (increase in numbers from grade 4) and a .5 Reading teacher (no service for these students in grade 6). The High School needs a .2 Spanish teacher (Gibbons students moving up); a .2 Computer Science teacher (STEM 21<sup>st</sup> century learning goals); .2 Drama teacher (enrollment oversubscribed); .05 secretary (11 months to 12 months due to business in the office during the summer). The high school will be reducing a .2 Latin teacher due to program phase out. All students in the program will be served. A guidance counselor will be reduced due to the reorganization of that department. The SPED department will be reducing the Out-of-District coordinator's position by .4 due to reorganization of resources. A BCBA teacher is needed in intensive SPED population; 1.0 licensed social/psychologist for assessment/emotional needs; and a 1.0 Wilson teacher for specialized reading services. Districtwide, a kindergarten teacher is being added due to anticipated enrollment; 1 ELL teacher for students 14-16 new to the district that are at a grade 4 level. English is not their primary language. These students will remain in this classroom until they can be immersed into the regular education programs. A reinstatement of a 1.5 technology curriculum teacher is needed.

Superintendent O'Connor stated the personnel requests are must haves, and are not the full complement of requests. The total increase request is 6.75 FTE; reductions, 1.6 FTE; total increase 5.15 FTE.

In response to a question by Mrs. Sullivan, the Superintendent acknowledged that if some of the personnel requests are not met, outside consultants will have to be hired. Out-of-district placements can be up to \$200,000 plus transportation.

The total Salary Budget is \$34,986,419; Operations \$8,756,635; Proposed FY15 Budget \$43,743,054. Percentage increase over last year, 2.46%. This does not include pending salary negotiations. It does include the proposed personnel increase/decreases.

The Public Hearing on the Budget will be held December 11.

In regards to the hiring of the social worker/psychologist, the Superintendent noted the need is for outreach to families with children with emotional and social disabilities, which is hard on families. Parent training is needed and equipment to help parents do what the school is doing. There are families experiencing serious troubles, not just with younger students, some of it due to the erosion of the nuclear family. Schools are asked to do more and more. There is one adjustment counselor at the high school and a .5 one at Gibbons. They need help.

Mrs. Levine-Kanji noted it is cost avoidance, eliminating the need to put the student in residential placement. Mrs. Henderson added it makes financial sense to keep the students in the district. Superintendent O'Connor stated the cost reduction of one residential placement, can get 5 teachers for the district. The decision to place a student on an IEP is a result of a team decision. If the district cannot provide a service, the student has to go out of district.

Mrs. O'Connor reported 20 units of the 120 Toll development project have been sold and resulted in 28 students added to the district. That is from only one of the two developments underway.

#### **MASC Representative**

Mike Gilbert of MASC gave an overview of his credentials to assist with a superintendent search. He has been a field director of MASC for 18 years, served 20 years as a school committee member. There are 40 superintendent searches underway at this time. Usually a district will receive between 30-40 applications. Mr. Gilbert encouraged

the Committee to look for an interim replacement until they are ready to move forward. A number of retired superintendents do this kind of work. He suggested the Committee draw up the qualities and skills of the next superintendent and then look at internal candidates first, then do the outside search. There is the need to think about budget and a timeframe. It usually takes 3-4 months if looking at an outside candidate, with an estimated budget of \$15,000-20,000. Cost of a consultant would be approximately \$10,000 plus \$2,000 in expenses. Advertisement will cost about \$2500-3500. Travel costs will depend upon where a candidate is coming from. Involve the community and use its input as a gauge as to what they want to see. Set salary range up front.

Mr. Gilbert added at the mid step in the process, a search committee of 9-15 should be established with representatives from the community, staff from each level, parent from each level, a high school student, support staff and administration. Keep odd number of people. The search committee will narrow the candidates down to 3-5, screen papers. The real focus of search committee should be on questions. The school committee decides on the best fit for the community at this time.

The search committee is subject to open meeting laws. An exemption allows for the interview of candidates before the number is cut to the finalists. Once the finalist's names are presented to the school committee, the names become public.

Mr. Gilbert stated the process could be completed by the end of May if started now. If time is a problem, then consider looking for an interim person. A survey could go out to the community in January, advertise early in February.

If the district does its own search, MASC will provide technical assistance. It will help with the process, design questions, provide a timeline, help with outreach brochure and application process. It will help with advertising in Education Week, not the Globe. MASC will provide content for a brochure and printing costs and provide a mailing list.

In response to a question by Mrs. Henderson, Mr. Gilbert noted the search committee should not have a school committee member on it. It can taint the process. Let it do the work for you. If doing the search yourself, have one member of the school committee on the search committee. Let the teachers choose the teacher; the parents choose the parent. Put school committee member names in a hat. It shows the process is not rigged. Criteria should be discussed in open meetings. School committee members can go to focus groups and bring back information to the table. An online survey should be conducted by MASC or the school committee.

Dr. Mayer inquired whether there are more candidates in the summer months than in January/February. Mr. Gilbert responded candidates will pay attention all the time. It does not make a difference. Candidates look at Massachusetts as a leader in education and some have ties to the area.

People working for MASC are primarily former school committee members and come from that perspective. Competitors come from non-profits and former administrators. There is also for profit competition.

It was suggested the School Committee look at the questions on an earlier survey and make any updates necessary. While the survey is going on, the Committee could establish a focus group. In response to Mrs. Sullivan's question regarding the number of focus groups, Mr. Gilbert responded, there should be one with staff in each building, central office staff, possibly 2 parent/community groups on different days. The finalist should be expected to put in a 12-16 hour interview day, whereby the candidate starts in the central office, ends the day with a meet and greet community and then does a 90 minute interview.

For the advertisement, Mr. Gilbert would need specific qualifications, what level of degree, certified or certifiable in Massachusetts, (requiring an advanced degree reduces the pool), salary range and specific experience, such as building projects, technology, etc. The search committee does not need information too early. They will have nothing to do until March.

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Mr. Gilbert will send a mock up of an advertisement to the Committee, a copy of a survey, what search committee should consider. He will put together a timeline for the Committee.

The Committee will discuss the ad and survey at the next meeting and what route the Committee wishes to take in terms of the search itself.

MASC would do a preliminary background search, but would not do CORI. MASC charges a base fee of \$7500, except printing and travel up to \$2500. Mrs. Levine-Kanji asked for a cost estimate for a brochure. There is a need for time to train a search committee and the school committee has to do its work. Three months is about the shortest amount of time for a turnaround.

**MOTION**

At 7:50 p.m. Mrs. Sullivan made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Henderson seconded the motion and the Committee voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Doret, Secretary

Documents presented to the Committee:  
Minutes November 26, 2013  
2014-15 Budget Recommendations

These minutes are as recorded by the secretary to the school committee and do not become an official part of the record until so noted in a subsequent record.