**Harwood Unified Union School District Board of Directors**

**Minutes**

**November 29, 2017**

**6:00 to 9:00 PM**

**Harwood Union School Library**

**Approved Minutes**

**Present from the Board:** Christine Sullivan (Chair), Gabe Gilman, Jim Casey, Garett MacCurtain, Tom Cahalan, Maureen McCracken, Rosemarie White, Caitlin Hollister, Peter Langella, Alexandra Thomsen, Jill Ellis.

**Not Attending:** Lorraine Wargo, Alycia Biondo,

**Board members late:** Rob Williams arrived at 7:20.

**Present from HUUSD:** Brigid Nease, Superintendent and Michelle Baker, Director of Finance

**Public**: Kim Laidlow, Amy Caffry, Chris Keating, Jeremy Gulley, Madeline Hughes, Nan Jabairn

1. Call to Order: Christine called meeting to order at 6:04.
2. Additions and Deletions: None
3. Public Comment: Expressed a wish to have board look carefully about the needs of each school, including staffing. Please be careful with our children.
4. Approve minutes: Motion made by Rosemarie to accept minutes with corrections as discussed, seconded by Caitlin. Jill abstained – not at last meeting. Motion passed.
5. Reflections:
   1. Peter spent day at Fayston with Jean and a group teachers, administrators and students at Harwood. Think there was no conflict of interest with his project, but if anything comes up he will excuse himself.
   2. Peter attended last Moretown public meeting – wanted to thank those board members (and board members of other districts) for their hard work.
   3. Discussion regarding questions that arise at meetings that are specific and require more time. Consider moving the discussion to an agenda item for another time.
6. Reports:
   1. **Negotiations-Personnel Committee:** Create a timeline to be able to review evaluation with superintendent at the first July meeting. 1st step is to review job descriptions, review evaluation tools, start rewriting and be able to recommend to board in early April.
   2. **Communications Workgroup**: Next meeting will be at the Three Mountain Cafe in Waitsfield at 7 a.m.
   3. **Building Committee**: things moving along as planed. Kitchen looks great – things at Warren going well. Will be working with town on master plan for plowing, etc. Issue with VAST trail, Ray working with VAST and town of Moretown. Next meeting at Thatcher Brook on the 20th of December.
   4. **Community Engagement**: Working on details for Dec 18 event from 5:30 to 7 at the Harwood Library Starting to get word out. Bring questions next meeting. What comes out at event may drive the survey. Be prepared for things that may come up to be able to point folks in the right direction. Send any ideas to Alycia and Lorraine. Motion made by Caitlin to have scribe present to take notes on Dec. 18, seconded by Alex. Motion passed
   5. **Update on Warren project by Michelle:** insurance claim to date approximately $320,000; in the end school district will be in it only for $9,000. Just received check for $9,000 from Efficiency Vermont, more money to come in future years. Overall renovation project, still working on some small items – balance approx $24,000.
7. Director of Finance - Continue budget work / State perspective:
   1. Michelle showed a video Making Sense of VT Education Funding System.
   2. She explained the HUUSD Current Homestead and Non-Residential Tax Rate in the various towns - CLA makes difference in each town. Waiting for Yield – determined by legislation.
   3. Focus tonight is revenue and fund balance. Discussion of Maintenance Reserve Fund and Fund Balance. Surplus can be returned to tax payers, or contributed to maintenance reserve or other specifics, such as operating revenues, etc. Where did surplus come from? There were changes in healthcare, chunk of PD money, couple of positions not filled. Need to have enough maintenance fund for the seven buildings – need more information. Could use some of the surplus towards bond spending. Have to notify voters about surplus.
   4. Discussion of level of debt for each school district, which HUUSD took over (both bonds & notes). A significant amount of bond expired in 2017.
   5. Expenditures and revenues will come together with the number on Friday, then can start to calculate rates. Michelle will bring the proposed FTE next time. Some schools create an innovation fund with fund balance for program advancements. Question of Harwood Bond issue – What is it? Will be asking for? Harwood built in 1965 – many things are out of compliance – e.g. Science classrooms, etc. Plan was created several years ago - merger happened and plan was put on hold for time being. This changed things in thinking what needs to be done based on possible changes in other schools.
   6. Next week: may have some changes on expense, maybe more revenue numbers, staffing, etc. Third week in Dec. equalized pupils, and early tax rate estimates. Need to aim for Jan 17 for final numbers. .
8. Superintendent - Schools report, general information sharing, and redesign: Brigid holding meetings with entire administrative team. Able to discuss new ideas: Healthcare has been figured out, now able to look at equity and other new ideas - possible summer program, technology, looking at PD, etc.
   1. Now budgets are integrated – will be one number instead of each school. Will talk about recommendations and equity. Will report on this every step of the way.
   2. If cuts need to be made, entire administrative team would come up with ideas.
   3. Should we develop a calendar for community to show what’s happening when? Put on Front Porch Forum: for example: “at last meeting, \_\_\_\_\_ was discussed and at next meeting \_\_\_\_\_.”
      1. Make calendar for Communications Work Group. Put this on FPF, etc.
      2. Put the video showing how to get to tax rate on website for people to see.
      3. Add budget tab on front page of website – or put a link to get there.
   4. White paper on redesign to be presented December 20.
   5. Suggest people attend Governors Conference at VTC.
   6. Board Report – Do 3 presentation a year – January 24 with Kathy Cadwell and some students; training for board on same date. Middle schools presentation to board, then elementary schools. Writing summary reports on things happening within the schools. (November, February and May.)
   7. Debate of definition of who is in bargaining unit and who is not, and when is an employee confidential – some based on the law, in mediation on some issues, etc.
   8. Proficiency aspect of the report: issue seems to be at high school level on not having letter grades. Proficiencies have been given a bad name; Brigid’s role not to approve the issue of grades vs. proficiency, but to keep supervising administration to make sure they are answering these questions, responding, getting information out, etc. Need to be aware of how much feedback is coming in. Brigid receives copies of complaints any of the administration get. Working on Q & A on all questions that have come up. Students, faculty, etc. will be putting out information. Complaints have to come to Brigid because some concerns involve personnel issues rather than PBL. Can parents have a point person to help them understand what the PBL scores mean? Working on a Jane Doe cheat sheet page to show parents how PBL grades are arrived at – integrated scores across the classes, not just in one class. Discussion of the value of PBL and the interaction between teachers and parents. Is there an assessment for teachers who may still be working on these issues?
   9. Discussion on hiring process for new employees.
9. Board Warrants: Rosemarie moved to approve board warrants: Voucher 1123 for $22,524.94 and Voucher 1122 for $247,060.21, totaling $269,585.15. Seconded by Rob. Approved unanimously.
10. Other business/future agenda planning:
    1. All questions board has asked of Michelle around budget to be answered next meeting.
    2. Agenda item – hiring committee for HHS principal.
    3. Any updates on Harwood wellness about the five students, since issue was back in the news? It will be difficult when trial starts. Some students still receiving counseling. Would like to know how students react and feel about businesses putting up the five stars again.
    4. Jim might be resigning his seat due to circumstances around family. Would like to post in Front Porch Forum to get word out for Waterbury people to fill position– will know for sure by next week.
    5. Set plans for Val so Caitlin can check in with her.
11. Executive Session: none
12. Adjourn

Rosemary moved to adjourn, seconded by Rob. Motion approved.

Submitted by

Freya Chaffee