

Washington West Supervisory Union Executive Committee
&
Act 46 Study Committee
Approved Minutes for February 18, 2016
Harwood Union High School Library

WWEC Board Members Present: Jill Ellis (alternate for Fayston), Rosemarie White (Harwood), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood), Gabe Gilman (alternate for Moretown), Christine Sullivan (alternate for Waitsfield), Rob Rosen (Warren), Alex Thomsen (Waterbury-Duxbury)

Act 46 Study Committee Members Present: Jill Ellis (Fayston), Rosemarie White (Harwood ex-officio), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood ex-officio), Gabe Gilman (Moretown), Christine Sullivan (Waitsfield), Rob Rosen (Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D for Waterbury), Jason Gibbs (W-D for Waterbury, arrived at 6:06 p.m.), Sam Jackson (W-D for Duxbury)

Other Board Members Present: Mike Ketchel (Warren), Dale Smeltzer (Harwood), Kitty Friedman (Fayston), Doug Mosle (Fayston, arrived after WWEC meeting adjourned), Kate O'Neill (Moretown, arrived after WWEC meeting adjourned)

WWSU Administrators: Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker

Consultants: Walter Nardelli, Jeff Mahre

Other: Channel 44 camera person, Marie Schmukal, Jennifer Patterson

- 1) **Call to Order:** Gabe Gilman, chair of the Study Committee, and Garrett MacCurtain, vice -chair of the WWEC, called the respective meetings to order at 5:45 p.m.
- 2) **Confirming Agenda:** There were no changes to the agenda.
- 3) **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - a) Approval of Minutes:
 - i) **STUDY COMMITTEE ACTION:** Rob Rosen moved to approve the minutes of February 10, 2016 as written. Jill Ellis seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - ii) **WWEC ACTION:** Rob Rosen moved to approve the minutes February 10, 2016 as written. Rosemarie White seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - b) Approve the WWSU Board Warrants: Rosemarie White moved to confirm the Board Warrant listed below, based on her recommendation. Rob Rosen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
WWSU Warrant #1121, dated 2/17/2016 for \$214,245.61
- 4) **Other WWEC Business** – There was none.
- 5) **Adjournment of WWEC:** Rob Rosen moved to adjourn WWEC at 5:47 p.m. Rosemarie White seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 6) **Act 46 Study Committee Work:**
 - a) **Reports from Consultants** - There was nothing to report. They did mention there is discussion at the state level (AOE) about bonds.
 - b) **Reports from Administrators** –
 - i) Brigid Nease reported that regarding bonds, a number of people in the State AOE have been contacted. She has sought opinions from these people and from a second attorney regarding Warren's bond. She noted that the Articles cannot limit a local board's ability to go forward with a bond. She described three possible options she was given by these people, if the committee wanted to pursue this issue.
 - ii) Brigid distributed a handout titled "What Amount of Education Spending (Budget Reduction) would it take to reduce FY2017 Homestead Tax Rate by \$0.10?". She noted the other varied benefits (such as small schools grants, hold harmless, etc.) that have been considered that also exist besides the tax rate incentive covered in this handout. In the first year, the tax benefit of \$0.10 would equal \$1.8 million in budget reduction for the same tax rate. She reminded the committee that the estimated tax impact from a Warren bond of \$3 million would be \$0.0130 in year 2, the highest year of the bond; and the Warren deficit would be \$0.0097 which would just be an impact for one year only. She

wanted to make sure that board members had an understanding of these financial facts as they discussed the issues that were coming up. The last part of the handout compared the tax rate impacts for the two choices of going with a merger, and not going forward, in terms of tax savings given up by not merging compared to the lower cost of picking up Warren's bond debt.

- c) **Board Member Share Out** – Gabe then asked for committee members to share ideas for anything other than changes in the text of the Articles. There were no general issues raised.
- d) **Articles of Agreement** – Changes were made to the following Articles, compared to the draft from the previous meeting.

(Jason Gibbs arrived at 6:06 p.m.)

- i) Article 6 – First, the new text reflects that language for Harwood and W-D be in separate paragraphs in terms of how the school property could revert to the towns, and minor wording changes were made. Then, Jill presented some ideas from Fayston regarding how the property might be used if not for educational purposes where there are students present. There was discussion about Fayston's proposed language. Gabe noted there is the option to modify the language in these Articles, per the statute referred to in Article 1, at a special or annual district meeting of the voters. There was discussion and then consensus about using a shorter statement that gives a more general definition of student education rather than referring to the school quality standards.
- ii) Article 16 - School Closure Protection - Jill reported that Fayston has a proposal for changes here as well, about students attending the school closest to place of residence unless parents choose otherwise. After considerable discussion, language to best reflect the intention for the added sentence was agreed to.
- iii) Whether an Article 19 is needed - Gabe asked whether there needs to be language addressing the after school program at Moretown. It was agreed that no language was needed. There was then discussion about fundraising and equity issues. This article was deleted.

ACTION: Rob Rosen moved to approve the Articles as written and to forward them to legal counsel for review. Jill Ellis seconded the motion which passed unanimously by voting committee members.

ACTION: Alex Thomsen moved to authorize the chair and vice chair to receive recommendations from the attorney and based upon these recommendations decide if a special meeting is needed or that the Articles are ready to submit to the AOE. Jill Ellis seconded the motion which passed unanimously by voting committee members.

- e) **Review Individual Town Story Cards** - Brigid reported that she and Michelle have given the local districts all the relevant data, and now each board member on the committee will get feedback from their board and decide what makes sense for their local district's story card. Board members agreed to have them ready for the March 9, 2016 meeting.
- f) **Develop Communication Plan** – The was discussion about possible dates and locations to hold forums. Ideas suggested were: Attending rotary club meetings, teachers in the schools, select board meetings, sending members to talk in more than just their local town, holding one at The Big Picture, holding one during the full WWSU board meeting on March 31 trying to get wide attendance and inviting the local legislators, using the school's Alert capability to send a call to all voters, mailer to every household, Facebook page. It was also suggested to combine committee meetings with local forums. The following plans were made:
 - i) Forums
 - (1) March 23 - try for Big Picture at 6:30 p.m. (5:30 committee only), or Valley Players Theatre as fallback
 - (2) March 31 – at Harwood, after full WWSU reorganization and Act 46 Committee meetings
 - (3) April 13 - Waterbury Library (5:30 committee only, then 6:30 for public for 2 hours)
 - (4) April 27 - HU auditorium
 - ii) Mailer(s) - start work with a sub-committee, aim to get out in early April;
 - iii) Newspaper insert or full page ad with names a few days before the vote;
 - iv) WDEV - to explain process;
 - v) Signs for yards and roadsides - catchy logo;

- vi) Prepare to get information out repeatedly, actively counter opposition information, encourage voter turnout, get people to sign on to vote in favor and have their names publicized paired with reaching out to Rotary and community leaders;
- vii) Offer to provide a team to come to any local meetings or gatherings.
- g) Review and Edit the AOE Report – It was agreed that the report will be shared on Google doc and any comments provided by the date identified.

ACTION: Alex Thomsen moved to authorize Gabe and Christine to finalize the report and submit it to AOE pending the signature page to be finalized at the March 9 meeting. Jason Gibbs seconded the motion which passed unanimously by voting committee members.

- 7) **Adjournment of Study Committee:** Rob Rosen moved to adjourn the Study Committee meeting at 9:30 p.m. Gabe Gilman seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Dale Smeltzer