

**HARWOOD UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2016 6:00-9:30 P.M.
HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Approved Minutes

Attending Members: Christine Sullivan, Rob Williams, Jill Ellis, Peter Langella, Maureen McCracken, Rosemarie White, Garrett MacCurtain, Alex Thomsen, Caitlin Hollister, Jim Casey, Alycia Biondo, Gabriel Gilman, Sam Jackson

Administration: Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker

Attending Public: Valerie Bigalow, Jeremy Gulley, Howard Wynne, Colin Fennelly, Ray Daigle, Lisa Atwood, Denise Goodnow, Amy Rex, Beth Peterson, Kathleen Dempsey, Duane Pierson, Donarae Dawson, Jean Berthiaume, Tom Drake, Elizabeth Belmap

1. Christine called meeting to order at 6:08
2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda - superintendent/administrator report,; Feb, Apr, June coordinated board report.
3. Approve Meeting Minutes of 12/7/2016: *Rosemarie White moved to approve minutes, seconded by Rob Williams. Motion carried.*

4. Discussion Items

A. Budget Work: Information available electronically on the WWSU website, Equalized pupil rate - have some drafts but no final numbers yet. Next time will be able to look at final budget, tax rates, etc. Tax commissioner issued letter on Dec. 1 with some recommendations. Income yield will be lower, residential tax rate lower. Equalized pupil numbers seeing a significant decline.

Each year, do a budget at end of year, have an audit and some districts have a fund balance. In some cases, the fund balance revenue is issued back to tax payers. Michelle created the fund balances for each school district. These balances can be applied in 2017/2018 to taxpayers or could go into maintenance funds. Two ways to fund HUUSD reserve: fund balance could be used, or the \$500,000 because payoff of bond could be used.

Alycia suggested that while realizing savings in some places, board might want to reconsider cutting two teachers this year. Discussion followed of the need to respond to declines in student enrollment and make correct decisions, even if there are funds in the maintenance budget. Have to apply policies fairly across all schools regardless of the amount of savings. As things change, budget will respond as needed. Facing difficult issues, the all of the board needs to work together. Have to stop talking about each district as individuals and discuss things as the combined board. Ways to build towards equity through cost shifting of staff.

Historical maintenance spending, including maintenance reserve (some districts have a balance which will remain with individual schools). Board needs to look at efficiencies with combined districts.

No additional information to add on budget until January 4th.

Administrators have received many questions from Town Clerks in various districts. All school districts and union school districts (Waterbury/Duxbury and Harwood) still have to have annual meetings for all issues except budget. Meetings have to be warned. In addition, will have to have annual report with everything except budget information. Also Ghost Board Members will need to be elected. Probably will have board orders through end of July.

This board will have their annual meeting Monday night before town meeting. Do presentations at individual town meetings on the new UUHS budgets, etc. – create a road show. Need to have very strong communication outreach.

B. Workgroup Reports:

a. **Facilities Working Group:** wrote up minutes.

b. **Policy Working Group:** have not met yet. Need short-term choice policy, or if possible a long term one. Will let us know about meeting date - January. (Mill River District has a choice policy.)

c. **Communications Working Group** – want to close feedback loop and thank folks for taking part in school choice survey with a letter to communities. Peter read proposed letter. *Gabe Gilman moved that the board approve distribution of the letter prepared by the Communication Working Group pending discussed changes. Jill Ellis seconded. Motion carried.*

Discussion of another survey regarding the Granville/Hancock issue. Where to distribute communications? How to get communications onto the blog at the bottom of the HUUSB tab. How specific does the agenda need to be on Front Porch Forum posting? Brigid suggests posting should be careful about being too specific.

Committees decide what information they want to be put out, discussion by whole board, and then sent to WW office to post. Recommend that current information be put on WW web site and then replaced with new information, as it occurs, older ones moved to archive.

d. **Administration Report:** Hancock & Granville survey created. Found it had to go before Hancock & Granville board. No email serve, so no way to get survey out to community. Admin office may have to send by snail mail and collate information as it comes in.

Committees of the Board group meetings need to warn, need to take minutes and follow open meeting law. They are a public entity and have to uphold the standards of Vt. open meeting laws. *Christine Sullivan made a motion that, as advised by our attorneys, Work Groups need to uphold to standards of open meeting law, Rob Williams seconded. Motion carried.*

Gabe Gilman & Alycia Biondo voted No to the motion and Peter Langella and Rob Williams abstained.

Talked last time on the seniority question. If contract negotiation is not settled by June 30, if there is a reduction of work force, union can decide on the seniority issue.

Contract negotiations have stalled because of the open meeting law. Report got sent to all of the board by Brigid. Having a negotiation committee, which constitutes a public body, the meeting has to be in open session. Both groups do not want to negotiate in open session. They will only negotiate in Executive Session. If not settled, the HUUSB will have to file an unlawful labor practice suit. Suggest that we wait and see what happens. Other communities are experiencing the same issues. Clarification around Open Meeting Law – Addison County being sued for violating the open meeting law.

5. Public Comments: Valerie Bigalow from Warren. Warren School is one of five schools in Vermont with high poverty rate that have high scores in tests. Wants to address class size and value to students. Advise that death by a thousand small cuts will destroy staff morale. Take time this year to sit and strategize about this new HUUSB and get over it.

Liz Belmap wished to echo comments made by Alycia about reconsidering staff cuts because of student number. Suggests that board take this path carefully and make sure it is well thought out.

6. Other Business: Work Groups will report to board every other month to discuss issues about their information.

Confirm meeting dates: January 4, 11 with back up on January 25.

Board went into Executive Session excusing Peter and Garrett from this session because of their work.

7. Adjournment of regular meeting.

Submitted by Freya Chaffee