

Harwood Unified Union School District

September 27, 2017

6:00-9:00

Harwood Union High School Library

Unapproved Minutes

Present from the Board: Christine Sullivan (Chair), Caitlin Hollister, Jim Casey, Garrett MacCurtain, Maureen McCracken, Alycia Biondo, Alexandra Thomsen, Jill Ellis, Caitlin Hollister, Peter Langella, and Rosemarie White.

Present from WWSU: Brigid Nease, Superintendent and Michelle Baker, Director of Finance & Operations

Public/Press present: Chris Keating (Valley Reporter), Maddie Hughes (Waterbury Record)

1. Call to Order

Christine Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. Additions and deletions

Gabe Gilman's 9/26/17 letter to the Board.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approve minutes 9/20/17

Several needed corrections and typos were noted:

- ☐ Gabe Gilman made a motion that the June letter be referred to legal counsel. After a brief discussion, Gilman withdrew the motion.
- ☐ It is Act 166, not Act 61.
- ☐ The Board thanked Caitlin Hollister for organizing the retreat not Rosemarie White.
- ☐ It is McCracken, not McCracken

Peter Langella made a motion to approve the amended minutes. Garrett MacCurtain seconded. Alex Thomsen, Caitlin Hollister, Christine Sullivan, Garrett MacCurtain, Jim Casey, Maureen McCracken, Peter Langella, and Rosemarie White voted in favor of the motion. Jill Ellis and Alycia Biondo opposed. No abstentions. Motion carries on a weighted vote of 68.4 to 10.4.

5. Reflections

None.

6. Unfinished business

A. Work Groups/Committees - agree on job descriptions and work scope, membership, meeting schedule.

The Board reviewed the descriptions, membership, and timelines for Board Work Groups/Committees.

- Communications: Committee should use a variety of communication venues. Letters to the Editor and Op/Ed pieces need to clearly state when being submitted on behalf of the Board. Board would like to see annual reporting on type and frequency of the communications that took place; review of which can be added to the Board's work plan. Discussed Board's interaction with the committee and the impact on the committee's effectiveness. Suggested a committee work plan that details what type and when communications are published, with authority delegated to the Board chair to review routine communications.
- Policy - B3, C3, C5, C10 - which to review at board level, which to committee, others to be prioritized - discuss and agree upon draft and review process

Christine Sullivan reported that she did not receive an updated committee description.

Brigid Nease confirmed that the policies approved by the Board in June have been posted on the WWSU website since June.

Last year, the Board Policy Committee took over the creation and editing of policies. There has been some confusion about who is holding the final approved policy and when Central Office knows the version it has can be posted to the WWSU website. Brigid Nease described how policy development and review took place when the WWSU executive committee existed. Central Office held the creation, editing, and warning of policies. The school boards reviewed, asked for revisions if needed, and approved policies. Central Office posted final, approved policy to the WWSU website. There is a lot of statutory language that needs to be in place in policies. Review and approval process needs to be consistent with the Board and Superintendent roles and responsibilities.

Board discussed returning to previous process for administering policies and to focus the Policy Committee's role on review, discussion, vetting, and recommending policies to the full Board. Policy Committee can create an annual work plan for which policies it will take on and develop a timeline for review. Part of process will be determining which policies they can review and recommend to the full Board and which policies will need Board input in the development stage before being presented for review and approval. If there is disagreement about recommended policy, an alternative policy can be brought forward to the Board for the Board to consider and determine which it will move forward.

Alycia Biondo moved that the Policy Committee follow the same process that WWSU executive committee used for the development and review of policies as described by Brigid Nease. Alex Thomsen seconded. Motion carried unanimously. No abstentions.

Committee will plan to continue to meet on first Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.
Central Office will create the agenda and warn it.

□ Facilities

Committee's work focuses on making recommendations to full board vis-à-vis long-term facilities planning; problem-solve emergent issues; and keeping track of work on annual basis. The committee meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month and rotates locations to visit the different buildings. Tom Cahalan will join the committee.

□ Negotiations (2 scheduled meetings remain 10/5 & 10/19)

Hoping to have the contract settled soon. Will plan additional meetings if necessary. If contract is settled, members of negotiations team could move to other committees.

□ Personnel/Superintendent Evaluation - tool, establish membership and overall timeline for completing process in FY19

Evaluation planned to be completed by June 2018. The group needs to review the current tool and process and if necessary revise or replace it. Board asked for a check-in at the end Oct/beginning of Nov. If contract is settled, negotiation team could shift to this committee and/or join other committees. Maureen McCracken could transition out and Caitlin Hollister would join.

□ Community Engagement

Board discussed creating a community engagement committee, its role and purview. It can provide an important function for data gathering and assessment regarding the community feedback and input on the Board's focus and direction. Need to start at the beginning with a discussion about what is the Board engaging with the community about. Should community engagement be delegated to a committee or is it the responsibility of the full Board to be going out to the community in a variety of venues and ways soliciting input?

Board agreed that initially, community engagement can be an exploratory work group charged with assessing what is possible and viable, developing shared understanding of the language, how to keep the work from overlapping with Central Office and individual schools' engagement efforts, and identifying avenues for gathering information. Christine Sullivan will write up a description.

Alycia Biondo and Maureen McCracken volunteered to be the exploratory workgroup. Need to set a first meeting time and establish an agenda. Forward to Central Office to warn it.

B. Review Self-Assessment tools and schedule for use (follow up at retreat?) Rubric for meeting reflection and how to handle (when in meeting, etc.?)

Not discussed.

7. New Business

Peter Langella made a motion to put discussion of Gabe Gilman's 9/26/17 letter to the Board on the agenda for the next meeting, Oct. 11th. Alex Thomsen seconded. Discussion: Concern that the letter will be in the public sphere without the Board having discussed it for two weeks. Christine Sullivan reviewed the statute relevant to how Boards respond to a complaint or an informational letter, as there are different timelines involved. Christine Sullivan amended the motion that the discussion happens when Gabe, as the Board member sending the letter, is able to be at the meeting to present the letter. Discussion: Gabe has made his feelings clear and the letter includes time sensitive recommendations on a direction that the Board needs to take to address the issues raised. Does the letter itself violate open meeting law?

Peter Langella, Caitlin Hollister, Jill Ellis, Alex Thomsen, Alycia Biondo, Maureen McCracken, and Christine Sullivan voted in favor of the amended motion. Garrett MacCurtain, Jim Casey, and Rosemarie White opposed the amended motion. Motion passes on a weighted vote of 56.9 to 21.9. No abstentions.

A. Superintendent Report

Brigid Nease is going to write a response to Gabe Gilman's letter to be attached to the meeting minutes in order to correct the record with regard to some of the statements she feels are erroneous.

Brigid reported that she seeks out legal counsel as needed; she does not need to be directed to do so by the Board. She is not required to share everything she learns, due to confidentiality (attorney/client privilege). With regard to the June letter, the Board did not direct her to take it to legal counsel and report back to the Board. Under her own authority, Brigid did consult with Pietro Lynn. She summarized her communications with him and his response. Pietro Lynn is one of several attorneys, with different specialties, who work for VSBIT, the district's insurer.

Brigid reported that the open Fayston seat is being advertised on Front Porch Forum. The deadline for letters of interest is Oct 13. The office has received one so far. Appointing a candidate to the open seat will be on the agenda for Oct. 25. The open seat is for a two-year term that is ending in March 2018. Candidates running for the seat in March will be running for a new three-year term.

Brigid reported that the communication some Board members received prior to the 9/20/17 meeting was related to a concern with the potential closing of a private pre-K provider due to the loss of their licensed Pre-K teacher and a request to assist with the situation. Implementation of universal Pre-K remains complicated. The district has to have a legal contract with each private, licensed provider that it partners with. To be a licensed provider, there needs to be a licensed Pre-K teacher. The Agency of Education licenses preschool teachers and Agency of Human Services licenses private preschool providers. While the district is required to implement some elements of the universal pre-school legislation, such as collecting the data on free and reduced meals, the district has no involvement in the licensure component and cannot assist with the emergency or provisional licenses.

Brigid is working with Waterbury to find ways to increase capacity at Thatcher to serve more 4 year olds at Thatcher Brook, without those efforts being considered expansion. This, in turn, could make more space in private providers for 3 year olds. Meeting the preschool needs of the district's families supports our schools all the way through matriculation to Harwood. She will have a have a written report for October 11th.

Question about when will students be attending the Board meeting? Brigid will speak to Lisa Attwood about that.

B. Director of Finance Report

Michelle Baker reported she would have a written financial report for 10/11/17. The money allocated for bus services for Granville/Hancock/Roxbury has resulted in new students in the district: 5 pre-K and 4 K – 6 students going to Warren Elementary; 1 student going to Waitsfield; and 4 students going to Harwood.

C. Review and begin to populate work plan (year-long agenda planner)

Not discussed.

D. Follow up on code of ethics/conflict of interest - how to handle and schedule further development work around these (retreat?)

Not discussed.

8. Other Business

None.

9. Possible Executive Session

None needed.

10. Adjourn

Rosemarie White made motion adjourn at 8:31 p.m. Motion passed unanimously. No abstentions.