

**HARWOOD UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2017 6:00-9:30 P.M.  
HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY**

**Amended & Approved Minutes**

Attending: Christine Sullivan, Maureen McCracken, Alex Thomsen, Jim Casey, Alycia Biondo, Rob Williams, Jill Ellis, Rosemarie White, Garrett MacCurtain, Peter Langella, Heidi Spear, Gabriel Gilman, Sam Jackson (arrived late)

**Administration:** Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker, Amy Rex, Sheila Soule

**Student Reps:** Julianne Young

**Administration Reps:** Beth Peterson, Donarae Dawson, Jean Berthiaume

**Public:**

1. Call to Order 6:02
2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda: Peter - Discuss Gov Scott's Health Care Proposal with intended motion; Student Council Rep up the agenda.
3. Public Comment
4. **Board Reflections from Prior Meeting** - unresolved issues that need closure  
Goal: clarify questions, committee roles, agree upon new ground rules (regarding student council reps and others) if needed. New ground rule: don't question them outside their student council report unless they want to talk about something. Motion from Communications Committee - reviewed job description. Board suggests work, not the other way around. Jill thinks they are doing a great job in doing what was asked and also bringing new things to the table. Tasked with survey and outreach, not visioning work – this is for whole board. Do we need to review the role of the committees? Do in retreat – describe duties in by-laws. **Motion made by Maureen to have each committee chair bring a description of committee role to the 5/24 meeting, seconded by Jim. Motion carried unanimously.**
5. Approve Minutes of April 26, 2017. **Motion made by Alex to approve minutes, seconded by Rob. Motion carried unanimously.**
6. Reports
  - A. Policy: Committee recommendations and board review of following:  
(First 5 policies already approved:
    - C6-R
    - D2-R
    - D6-R
    - D7-R: Volunteers and Work Study Students
    - D8-R: Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace)

- C8-L-H- Already in the bucket
- D11-R: Drug and Alcohol Testing (Transportation Employees)
- D-12-R: Harassment of Employees
- D-13-R: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Compliance

**Motion made by Alex to move the above three policies to the bucket, seconded by Rosemarie. Motion carried unanimously.**

- D7-R-P: Volunteers and Work Study Students Procedure
- E7-R: School Crisis Prevention & response
- E7-R-P: Procedures for Bomb Threats
- E8-R: Tobacco Prohibition
- E8-R-P: Procedures for Tobacco Prohibition.
- F1-R: Student Conduct and Discipline
- F1-R-P: Procedures for Student Conduct
- F5-R: Education Records
- **Student Council:** Julie talked about Proficiency Based Learning and how things are going. She really likes it. Helps to be involved more. Able to redo assignments and relearn, but downside is that it's OK to not do homework right away. Have to be self-motivated. Easier to have student voice. There is a group of students who don't know they have to ask for extra assignments, getting ready to do what is next. In some classes you have to ask for stretch assignments. Have to talk with teachers a lot to be successful. Could be more communication from the teachers. Good to advocate for self, collaborative work.
- **Communications Work Group** – Rob report. Will share the data information Sheila provided, board to review and discuss next meeting. Christine to send to board. Put on next meeting agenda to discuss. Heidi discussed four major data stores provided by Michelle, including student-testing data. Sheila will give a brief overview on this. Also enrollment data – Heidi will work with Michelle to gather this data. Helpful to look at the annotated data to prepare for offsite meeting. As school moves to proficiency, SBACS should support this.
- **Negotiations Work Group** – Christine report - will meet again tomorrow. No really meaty things discussed yet. Other settlements coming in from the state. Hopefully will move process along.
- **Facilities Work Group:** Rosemarie – met today at Thatcher Brook. No major issues. School very well taken care of for such an old building – 1887. Issue – it

is at capacity. Next facility meeting at Harwood. Warren bond – hazardous waste removal bid – two bids. Moretown drainage project - issue between state and town. Harwood track – final meeting, cost estimate at end of week. “Harwood 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project” discussion, in conjunction with other projects in the district to have one big bond instead of several small ones. Board conversation – helping to define FWG to the board. Crossett Brook – potential flooding issue – Ray working with this. Talked about solar panels for Harwood. Ray will help put together a long-range plan for schools. Asked Ray to see how long to merge all maintenance budgets to help with budgeting. Capacity for TBPS on agenda? Data report on each building. Big discussion for future. Board needs to discuss what they might consider – feel it should be an agenda item. Be prepared to consider closing a school. Choice may bring decision around this.

- **Superintendent and Director of Finance:** No formal report. Any questions? Any value to promote the school choice issue – local papers? Front Porch Forum? Communications to do this. Put in Times Argus? Get word out that families can buy home in adjoining towns and send children to any school. Motion for Comm Group to get information out to Front Porch Forum, and Brigid to send to 2 local papers and letter to get someone to write a story about it. **Motion made by Maureen to have Working Group to get the letter on FPF and ask Superintendent to get letter to two local papers and to Time Argus, seconded by Rob. Motion passed unanimously.**
  
- Peter – issue about health care – VSBA focus on the numbers and asks from them are making collective bargaining difficult. Issue about Gov. Scott’s rhetoric about schools and level funding and ultimatum on Health Care. **Peter moved that the HUUSB board vote to reject the proposal by the VSBA, VSA & Gov Scott for a statewide educator health contract because the predicted savings are predicated on an imposition of terms and not open collective bargaining, seconded by Jill.** How does this strengthen the position of the board? Difficult political questions – doesn’t think it should be a board statement – political statement not sure has a place on this board – how does this help our schools and our students? Does this set a precedent for our board? The last minute process of the governor is a problem. **Garrett moved to amend Peter’s motion to indicate that we object to the process of change at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. Alycia seconded the amendment.** Applaud Peter’s passion but have higher priorities. Table the motion and the amendment. **Rosemarie moved to table, seconded by Alex. Motion carried, but Peter, Alycia, Garrett, Gabe voted no.** (Carried 66.9 to 21.6, out of 88.5 at meeting.)

## 7. Discussion

### A. **Budget Processing:**

Goal: Come to a better understanding of how individual boards have operated. Use information on short and long term goals to help set retreat agenda during 5/24 meeting. Reflect during next two weeks on these items.

- i. Hear each local boards previous process:

- a. Christine – started with level service, looked at additional needs, recommendations from administration on staffing issues. Looked at general staffing, looked at population trends in our schools and go from there. Look out two years to make decision.
- b. Rob – starting early. Have admin bring a couple of budgets.
- c. Garrett: Harwood process – look at class sizes, and needs of disciplines. Admin would give 2 or 3 different budgets to look at and discuss. Earlier the better.
- d. Alex – decide what kind of budget to work with – level service and level funding. Why some cuts? Decide which budget made the most sense. Broader discussion on whole budget not line items. Tom Drake brought key things wanted to change and why.
- e. Alycia – started with retreat. Purpose was to get general feel about what going on at school – population, etc. From there, administration would come up with budget and board would discuss.
- f. Heidi – Start with level service, saw % increase, what tolerance for increase for tax payers. Admin would discuss how to make cuts. Weighing options of one cut vs. another – how to impact enrollment. If put dent in programming, could impact enrollment. Shift teachers to provide intervention and support – combined when needed. Tried to do as early as possible to have community come and express concerns. Reached out to teachers to weigh in. Question of what cuts could budget tolerate to retain highest staff and not negatively impact enrollment. Shared comparative data on staffing models. How to get PTO to fund things.
- g. Gabe – harmonious process sitting down with administrators to decide what to cut, etc. Got good information from administrators.

ii. FY 19: What information do we need next year that we didn't have this year?

- Maureen - Figure out how to get community involved before there are things to react to – tell us about hope or to cut out something. Like to hear this early as figuring out numbers for budget.
- Peter - Ask community what school and HUUSD look like to you without us telling them parameters.
- Christine – start first looks at first meeting after board retreat.
- Rosemarie – in trying to get public input – work with administrators to come up with 21<sup>st</sup> Century vision.
- Jim – waiting until retreat too late to start process. What's a level service, level funding and what would the administrators like to see? Prioritize. Wish list to see what to improve.
- Christine – could have meeting before retreat to check in. Do we want to explore having an exec committee because such a big group? Equity issue.
- Alex – here's what the tax payers will accept as a budget.
- Jill – what to do with middle school students. Potential could be great for cost savings and beneficial. Need short term and long term plans. What are the

short and long term prospects for this. Could solve some capacity issues about TBPS. Tax payers are looking for this.

- Maureen – idea about what efficiencies could we gain – both big and small. List of possibilities for now and the future. Identify these things and follow up. Are there big things?
- Brigid – what would one of these things be? Merging middle schools – enriching and improving – not just financial. Could save on audits.
- Peter – job of getting up the list of things is for Administration and come to board to discuss
- Brigid – Statewide pressure about property taxes, own local level about taxes, big problems – bond for Harwood. Where to come from? New money? cost shifting? Savings will be in redesign. What do we have the stomach for? Admin a little skiddish about coming forward about recommending after last year. How do we get out that going forward?
- Start in September – look at data – what does level service look like? Building capacity. Can Crossett 7-8 fit in Harwood, Can all of Harwood 7-8 fit in Crossett, etc. Redesign 5-6, 3-4. What does this look like at the Valley schools.
- Jill, Peter, Gabe – need to talk about these issues, while making a budget for following year. Might make budget process easier.
- Heidi – what are our needs, what are our resources, how do we need to start discussion.
- Alex – how do we manage making hard decisions? How can we pass a budget that might include making difficult decisions.
- Rosemarie – We know have lots to do, concerned about upcoming summer break – lost some momentum, will have to back track. Suggest meet at least once a month.
- Jill – continue on with this
- Maureen – point of discussion – what information do we have to make these decisions about cutting staff.

iii. What are our thoughts regarding long term budget planning? Direction? Timeline?

iv. How do we feel about possible deal breakers around tough decision making?

B. Possible development of Executive Committee, Board Norms, Operating Principles, and/or By-Laws:

- Christine - can work on this at retreat. How do we create a process for board reflection? Alex mentioned reflection at the end of each of the WDSB meeting that worked very well. Alex will get the list used. Maureen has some that she has developed. Christine can find some sample by-law things.

Goal: Review suggestions and options. Do we want to explore any of them further and consider for our board retreat agenda? Which from the above list do we think would aid our work? Do we want to develop by-laws? Create an executive committee? Agree on any norms and operating principles until we can

generate our own at retreat? Should we review samples in advance of our 5/24 meeting?

8. Other Business:
  - Gabe - acknowledged principals of the year, Amy, Lisa and Duane.
9. Future agenda/Calendar Planning

Board reviewed suggested topics for upcoming meetings. Added topics: 5/24 feedback on survey data inventory, June 28 long range and short term budget planning.

Three things contentious during last budget: admin already had given all of the information. Would like to have discussion. Don't make a decision on one night – give information, think about it and then follow up. Administrators have more experience than board as far as data goes. Want admin. advice, rationale, comparables from other places, etc. Be more rational going forward.

**Alycia made motion to direct administration to begin work on school redesign, reconfigurations and sharing of students, seconded by Maureen, Motion passed unanimously.**

10. **Rob moved to adjourn, seconded by Rosemarie. Motion passed.**