

Washington West Supervisory Union Executive Committee
&
Act 46 Study Committee
Draft Minutes for December 9, 2015
Harwood Union High School Library

WWEC Board Members Present: Doug Mosle (Fayston), Rosemarie White (Harwood), Garrett MacCurtain (Harwood), Kate O'Neill (Moretown), Eve Frankel (Waitsfield), Alycia Biondo (alternate for Warren), Jason Gibbs (Waterbury-Duxbury), Alex Thomsen (Waterbury-Duxbury, arrived at 5:45 p.m.; left at 8:20 p.m. and Reed McCracken served as her alternate)

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), Alycia Biondo (alternate for Warren), Alex Thomsen (W-D for Waterbury), Jason Gibbs (W-D for Waterbury), Sam Jackson (W-D for Duxbury)

Other Board Members Present: Dale Smeltzer, Reed McCracken (alternate for Alex Thomsen later in meeting)

WWSU Administrators: Brigid Nease, Michelle Baker

Consultants: Jeff Maher, Walter Nardelli

Other: Kaiya Korb (Waitsfield principal), Duane Pierson (Moretown principal), Channel 44 camera person

- 1) **Call to Order:** Gabe Gilman, chair of the Study Committee, and Eve Frankel, chair of the WWEC, called the respective meetings to order at 5:41 p.m.
- 2) **Confirming Agenda:** Brigid noted that the WWSU Full Board Meeting date needed to be rescheduled under WWEC business.
- 3) **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - a) Approval of Minutes of November 19, 2015:
 - i) **STUDY COMMITTEE ACTION:** Jill Ellis moved to approve the minutes as written. Alycia Biondo seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - ii) **WWEC ACTION:** Rosemarie White moved to approve the minutes as written. Kate O'Neill seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - b) Approve the WWSU Board Warrants: **WWEC ACTION** -Kate O'Neill moved to confirm Board Warrant #1086 in the amount of \$55,153.72 as recommended by Rosemarie White. Doug Mosle seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 4) **Study Committee Discussion Items:**
 - a) **Consultants Report and Review of Draft #1 of the Articles of Agreement** - (*Alex Thomsen arrived at 5:45 p.m.*) - Brigid Nease distributed a handout of the Draft Articles, prepared by the consultants. Gabe noted the progress so far, and suggested focusing on the thirteen mandatory articles. The consultants then provided answers to questions that had been asked, within a handout titled "WWSU Questions for 12/09/2015". These questions dealt with when the incentives would start, when the new board would take over, clarifying "preferred" and "necessary", PTO's money, building councils, R&R's, special programs at each district, and financial model.

Two new questions were brought up:

New question: do school board terms need to be refilled on the local boards at Town Meeting on March 2017?

New question: Article 12 (and others?) need to address whether the SU board level would continue to exist, or go away as well.

(Sam Jackson arrived at 6:18 p.m.) There was discussion about how to provide assurances for special programs that exist within the current schools, such as the before and after school program at Moretown which is run by the school district and is not a separate 501(c)3. Gabe also pointed out that Articles 14 and 15, which are general aspirational statements from Chittenden East SU, might not be appropriate for language of these articles which need to be very specific legally.

There were suggestions about possible wording for an article to deal with these special school programs, and whether the consistency should address how programs are being "paid for", rather than dealing with the specific programs themselves. The consultants suggested that the Article about the new Board having the responsibility to standardize operations might cover this. Brigid suggested possible wording: *"From a funding and programmatic perspective the board will ensure that equity exists for individual school programs."*

It was suggested that Article 14, language that addresses establishing structures to allow local input, should allow for the option of structures being established, but not require it.

- b) **Op Ed #2** - Brigid noted that this was going to be published in the local weekly papers in two consecutive parts.
- c) **Report from Administrators: Looking at Merger Financial Projections, Comparisons of the 3 Models (using the Financial Tool)** – First, these was follow up to a question from the previous meeting about the statewide Financial model. Brigid noted that perhaps there were two questions involved: What can you tell us about the financial projection tool to help us understand its authenticity? Can someone modify this tool and use it themselves to do other functions? This second question is what Nicole Mace at VSBA had said could not happen; the answer to the first question is not clear and will be followed up on. Consultants were hired to create the statewide model.

Michelle Baker distributed a handout dated 12/9/15, containing one page of the equalized pupil history and 3 yr and 7 yr averages, and then pages for each town projecting the tax rates through FY 21-22 for six separate scenarios. Brigid reported that in looking at the results from this model for each town, every town has its own story which includes some wins, and also some "costs" related to the big picture. She and Michelle have worked to review all the numbers and compared the tax rate, three year average juxtaposed against a seven year average. They also made projections for a scenario for savings that could be obtained if the operations were shifted for maximum efficiency (\$600K savings) as well as account for a new bond at Warren plus shifting Waterbury-Duxbury's remaining bond over all the districts. She also noted that the impact of these costs shifts drops when they are considered as part of the whole \$32 million budget rather than a local district's budget. The difference between the scenarios results in being pennies on the tax rate for households. There were questions and discussion regarding the upcoming Warren bond vote, and how the timing impacts the Act 46 work and upcoming vote.

There was then discussion about the scope of the work needed to present all the information that board members think the public will want. Gabe suggested it might be possible to do some "capacity" analysis to help show the possibilities that could be considered in the future. The new board will be the one that has to review and decide about any possibilities was what most board members felt can be articulated at this time; what this first step does is make the governance change that will enable the possibility to then tackle these difficult issues.

- d) **Identify Next Steps, Future Agenda Items** - It was agreed that committee members submit any comments they have to Gabe on the draft Articles of Agreement, who will send out an electronic document to mark up. Going through these Articles will be a major part of the agenda for the next meeting. Alycia passed on a question to the consultants about the requirements for a district who does not pursue a merger.

- 5) **STUDY COMMITTEE ACTION - ADJOURNMENT** – Gabe Gilman moved to adjourn the Study Committee meeting at 8:29 p.m. Jill Ellis seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 6) **Executive Committee Business**
 - a) **FY2017 Budget Update** - This will be provided at the next meeting.
 - b) **Change to SU Rules of Organization associated with centralization of Special Education and the proposed Special Education Assessment by Actual Cost to each School:** Michelle distributed a handout of the WWSU Rules of Organization with proposed wording suggested by legal counsel to add the new apportionment method into the bylaws previously adopted on January 16, 2014. Several clarifications were suggested, including noting the date in the first line of these further amendments.
WVEC ACTION: Doug Mosle moved to approve the document and warn it for action at the upcoming WWSU Board meeting. Rosemarie White seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - c) **FY 2017 Audit bids and recommendations:** Michelle reported on the bids received, which she presented on a projected slide. Her recommendation is that audit rotation is a good practice, and that we go with RHR Smith & Company.
WVEC ACTION: Garrett MacCurtain moved to approve the bid of \$43,200 from RHR Smith & Co. Rosemarie White seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
 - d) **Date for Full WWSU Board meeting** – Brigid noted that to comply with the 30 day warning needed for changes to the SU Rules of Organization, the soonest a meeting could be held would be the week of Jan. 11. It was agreed that combining this full board meeting with the Jan 13 Study Committee meeting made the most sense.
WVEC ACTION: Alycia Biondo moved to warn a WWSU Board meeting for January 13, 2016 at 6:30, with Study Committee starting at 5:30, recessing for the full board meeting, and then continuing after that meeting ends. Jason Gibbs seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- 7) **WVEC ACTION - ADJOURNMENT** – Alycia Biondo moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. Reed McCracken seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Dale Smeltzer