

WILLINGTON Board OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, August 13, 2019

Town Office Building, Lower Level Meeting Room

7:00 p.m.

Audio Recording: yes

Notes Taken: yes

Members Present:

Herb Arico

Tracey Anderson

Ann Grosjean

Stephanie Summers

Ellena Testa

Chiara Bambara

Members Absent:

Michelle Doucette Cunningham

Also Present: Superintendent of Schools Phil Stevens

Call to Order:

A. Grosjean called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Present to Speak:

Judy Threatt: Thanked the Board for all of their hard work and is in complete support of efforts for new schools, specifically maintaining single school

Donna Cook: Is concerned if option to expand Center could result in eminent domain on neighbors, asked the Board to keep in mind historical district. She stated that the state is only one avenue for financial reimbursement; the burden will have to be bared as a resident of CT

Jim Bulick: Spoke about bonding calculations for the proposed projects and spoke to the increase to mill rate. He believes there is a lot of uncertainty in the air regarding state funding.

Lisa Finkelman: Is in support of keeping school systems in Willington strong and not sending the students elsewhere.

Sarah Parsell: Thanked the Board for great education they gave her son and doesn't believe the town asks for a lot and explained the importance of a good school system and facility in town.

Peter Latincsics: Questioned the number of options presented of the facility study and urged to look at more flexible options with attention to the fiscal condition of the town.

Sarah Smith: Stated she chose to move to Willington for education and is grateful for the education her son received here.

Superintendent Reports:

Resignations

Bethany Scafidi: Kindergarten, Lori Paolini: Pre-K, Paul Nash (retired): School Counselor; Kate Levesque: Library Media Specialist, Mike Cioe: 7th Grade Math

New hires

Rob Rider: HMS Special Education, Desiree Daigle: CES Paraprofessional, Rose Dwyer: CES Principal's Secretary; Stephanie Bergan: Pre-K; Becky Swanson: Kindergarten; Amy Cournoyer: CES Paraprofessional; Chrissy Senechal: CES Paraprofessional. Interviews are being held this week for the school counselor and the math position is now posted.

Oil tank update

The oil tank should be completed tomorrow with final inspections soon to follow. Service Station Equipment ensured the project is going to be completed by the start of school.

Phone system update

The phone system has been updated and a brief training will be held when the staff returns.

Convocation

Convocation is set for August 26th at the Willington Hill Firehouse. The location was chosen due to the size and temperature control of the room. The Board is welcome to attend.

Board Retreat

August 22, 2019, 4:00-6:00 p.m. at the Willington Public Library.

Financial Report

Budget Report

The budget looks normal for the time of year. For example, the special education budget appears at 51% due to certain things like outplacement transportation which has not been billed yet. A final rundown of the '18-'19 budget will be prepared for the next meeting along with the CES and HMS school activity and foodservice accounts.

New Business

Approve minutes of July 2019

A. Grosjean made a motion to approve the minutes from July 2019.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico	X			
Tracey Anderson	X			
Chiara Bambara			x	
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				x
Ann Grosjean	X			
Stephanie Summers	X			
Elena Testa			x	

Motion passes

WPS Food Service payroll review

Due to the minimum wage increase over the next few years, there needs to be a decision on wage increases for the food service employees. It was proposed that the increase match what was negotiated with the WESS union. A discussion was held on how the increase in pay will impact this being a self-funded program.

A. Grojean, Made a motion to give 2.75% increase for this school year or larger to meet the minimum wage requirement. T. Anderson second.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico	X			
Tracey Anderson	X			
Chiara Bambara	X			
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				x
Ann Grosjean	X			

Stephanie Summers	X			
Elena Testa	x			

Motion passes unanimously

Facilities study

255 total surveys were collected (online and paper copies). There were 76 additional comments and questions submitted.

Presentation of survey data

The majority of survey participants stated they were very familiar with the study and are aware of facility needs. The following results were shared:

66.7% disagree or strongly disagree with completing the minimum building maintenance.

64.7% agree or strongly agree to have all students in one preschool through grade 8 building.

46.3% agree or strongly agree in support of renovating to like-new condition one of the schools.

53% agree or strongly agree with building one new PreK- Grade 8.

79.6% disagree or strongly disagree with building one new PreK- Grade 5 building and paying for students Grade 6-8 to attend a school out of the district.

60.8% agree or strongly agree a renovated or new building will attract new families to Willington.

The final question asked to rank categories relating to school attributes on a scale of unimportant to important. Participants rated that having a school near the center of town and aesthetically pleasing as neutral/unimportant. Economic long-term investment, tech equipped, energy-efficient, and onsite field spaces were rated as important.

Comments from the survey were put into categories based on the theme. P. Stevenst shared comments for each theme: do nothing (8), no new building (2), regionalize (4), no regionalization (3), no one PreK-8 (3), one PreK-8 (2), build new school (17), build new or renovate (8), renovate (11), other (18).

P. Stevens asked the Board if they wanted the comments to be placed on the website. A discussion was held and the comments will be available for review on the website.

E. Testa posed the option of waiting to proceed and using the capital improvements money in the interim due to the time length of the survey not being long enough. T. Anderson stated the survey was one piece of the puzzle; this has been a long ongoing discussion over multiple years.

P. Stevens spoke to some of the concerns brought about from public comment, specifically regarding eminent domain stating the town does not have that authority to take the land through eminent domain. The land acquisition cost was built into some of the budget options for the potential purchase of abutting land.

Removal of facility study options

S. Summers discussed eliminating option 1, 2, 3 and 6 based on cost, need, and survey results.

Option 1 was discussed and it was clarified that the number presented would need to be bonded. It was reiterated that removing options from the facility study was so cost figures can be updated for the next meeting.

T. Anderson stated option 4A, 4B and 5 should still be considered; eliminating 1, 2, 3 & 6.

S. Summers made a motion to remove options 1, 2, 3, and 6. C. Bambara second. H. Arico amends the motion to vote on each separately. C. Bambara second.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico	X			
Tracey Anderson		X		
Chiara Bambara	X			
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				X
Ann Grosjean		X		
Stephanie Summers		X		
Elena Testa	X			

Motion did not pass.

Returned to the original motion of removing 1, 2, 3 and 6 collectively.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico		X		
Tracey Anderson	X			

Chiara Bambara	X			
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				X
Ann Grosjean	X			
Stephanie Summers	X			
Elena Testa		X		

Motion passes.

P. Stevens asked what additional information he would need to provide to eliminate more options from the study. A discussion was held.

E. Testa motioned to change option 5 from demolishing Center School and building new in the same place to building a new school on a new lot. A. Grosjean second.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico		X		
Tracey Anderson			X	
Chiara Bambara	X			
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				X
Ann Grosjean	X			
Stephanie Summers	X			
Elena Testa	X			

Motion passes.

Discussion continued on eliminating additional options.

P. Stevens pointed out the comments from a local project manager and engineer that options 4A and 4B have elevated risk. He asked the Board if they would prefer to spend money on a risk analysis or listen to testimony from licensed professionals.

A. Grosjean motioned to eliminate option 4A and 4B due to the high-risk potential. C. Bambara second.

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Herb Arico		X		
Tracey Anderson		X		
Chiara Bambara	X			
Michelle Doucette Cunningham				X
Ann Grosjean	X			
Stephanie Summers		X		
Elena Testa		X		

Motion did not pass

P. Stevens stated he would seek updated pricing on the updated option 5 and would reach out to both the project manager and engineer to present a professional opinion for the next meeting.

Present to Speak

Sarah Smith: Stated she attended the meeting to see if a decision was going to be made and/or narrowed down and urged the Board to reach a decision and move forward.

Donna Cook: Reminded the Board that Hall Memorial School is the town’s designated emergency shelter. Then brought up turning Center School over to the town could just be moving the problem.

Sarah Parsell: Thanked the Board for their discussion and asked how other members of town could be reached.

Judie Threatt: Thanked the Board and P. Stevens for all their hard work and listening to everyone’s comments

Board Comments:

Herb Arico: Thanks Phil for all his efforts with the survey and presentations. Also, the 255 members of town that completed the survey.

Tracy Anderson: Thanked everyone that came out and voiced opinions. Wishing everyone who resigned and retired well wishes and welcoming those incoming.

Chiara Bambara: Thanked everyone who filled out the survey and Phil for all of his hard work.

Ann Grosjean: Thanked everyone who retired and moving on, and welcomed the new hires.

Stephanie Summers: Appreciated public comment it helped Board lead the discussion. Wishing all those retiring and leaving well.

Elena Testa: Based on the economy building a new school is not feasible and will hurt the student's education in the long run by taking money away from education. [LISTEN TO COMMENTS](#)

Adjournment

A. Grosjean adjourned the meeting at 9:45 PM