

**WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Tuesday, December 12 2023**  
**Virtual Meeting: Hybrid (in-person and online)**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Minutes**  
Zoom Recorded

**Members Present**

Briana Ross - Chair  
Jennifer Goodale - Vice Chair  
Samantha Sperry - Secretary  
Ann Grosjean  
Tracey Anderson  
Arthur Christensen  
Jon Mitchell

**Also Present**

Superintendent Phil Stevens

**1. Call to order**

Due to the election of officers, Superintendent Phil Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Superintendent Stevens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Election of Board Officers**

**a. Chair**

Superintendent Stevens provided an overview of the process for the election of officers.

J. Mitchell nominated A. Christensen and he accepted.

A. Grosjean nominated Briana Ross and she accepted.

Discussion: A. Christensen said that on the second election day he spent 11.5 hours outside of the town hall greeting voters and that is a fraction of the commitment he puts towards the position and the commitment he would make to being Chair.

B. Ross said that she has learned a lot about the schools after being elected to the Board of Education two years ago. She said she cares about the students and staff and would be honored to be the Chair of the Board of Education.

A. Grosjean stated she believed B. Ross would bring a lot to the position of Chair and that as a kindergarten teacher, she has a profound understanding of the students and school system. S. Sperry stated she believed A. Christensen would make a great Chair and that it is a great asset that he is also on the Region 19 Board and how they have been learning a lot about how they do their Board of Education and that the knowledge could be very helpful to know what to expect for when students go to high school.

Superintendent Stevens closed nominations.

**Votes for A. Christensen:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross		x	
A. Grosjean		x	
J. Mitchell	x		
T. Anderson		x	
S. Sperry	x		
J. Goodale		x	
A. Christensen	x		

**3 Yes, 4 No (failed)**

**Votes for B. Ross:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross	x		
A. Grosjean	x		
J. Mitchell		x	
T. Anderson	x		
S. Sperry		x	
J. Goodale	x		
A. Christensen		x	

**4 Yes, 3 No (passed)**

*B. Ross was elected Chair.*

**b. Vice Chair**

J. Mitchell nominated A. Christensen, who accepted.

A. Grosjean nominated J. Goodale, who accepted.

Discussion: A. Christensen said that having a Democrat as the Chair it would be important and add balance to have a Republican as Vice Chair.

J. Goodale stated that she appreciates the party distinctions, and said the group has a big job in front of them and will have to work together and she will do all that she can to make that happen.

S. Sperry said that she believes Jen would do a good job, however, her lack of experience is something to take into consideration.

**Votes for A. Christensen:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross		x	
A. Grosjean		x	
J. Mitchell	x		
T. Anderson		x	
S. Sperry	x		
J. Goodale		x	
A. Christensen	x		

**3 Yes, 4 No (failed)**

**Votes for J. Goodale:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross	x		
A. Grosjean	x		
J. Mitchell		x	
T. Anderson	x		
S. Sperry		x	
J. Goodale	x		
A. Christensen		x	

**4 Yes, 3 No (passed)**

*J. Goodale was elected Vice Chair.*

**c. Secretary**

J. Mitchell nominated A. Christensen, and he declined the nomination.

A. Grosjean nominated T. Anderson

Discussion: T. Anderson said it was her seventh year on the Board of Education and that she has had a lot of experience to be the Secretary.

A. Christensen nominated S. Sperry, who accepted.

S. Sperry stated that she was the recording secretary for the Board of Finance and said that she recently got nominated for the Region 19 Secretary, so her experience would be helpful in the role.

A. Christensen said that the reason he declined and nominated S. Sperry is because she is the Secretary for Region 19, so she has the experience.

**Votes for T. Anderson:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross	x		
A. Grosjean	x		
J. Mitchell		x	
T. Anderson		x	
S. Sperry		x	
J. Goodale		x	
A. Christensen		x	

**2 Yes, 5 No (failed)**

**Votes for S. Sperry:**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain
B. Ross	x		
A. Grosjean	x		
J. Mitchell	x		
T. Anderson	x		
S. Sperry	x		
J. Goodale	x		
A. Christensen	x		

**7 Yes, 0 No (passed)**

*S. Sperry was elected Secretary*

**4. Present to Speak**

Carrie Rainville, Potter School Road: Ms. Rainville stated upcoming events for the Willington PTA.



## **5. Communications**

Phil Stevens said that he sent out a message from the School Building Committee who had posted their final report online and that there will be a Willington Wire article that will be submitted.

## **6. Superintendent Report**

### **a. Board Retreat and Training**

P. Stevens said that they will be sending a Google Form link to schedule a Board Retreat and Training. It will contain several dates. The training will be done by the Board attorney, Christine Chinni.

### **b. Budget Calendar**

P. Stevens noted that members were emailed the dates of the Budget Workshops in January that start at 6 pm. He noted that they do not have the remainder of the budget dates yet, but he will share them when they are posted.

### **c. Staffing**

P. Stevens noted that they currently have one open position, and that is the staff support specialist at Hall School. He said that they have not had any applicants, but they are not filling that position at this time anyway because of the tight budget.

### **d. Facilities Study (walk thru 12/5)**

P. Stevens said that he spent about 4 hours with QA+M staff walking through Center and Hall Schools on December 5th. He said a lot of pictures were taken and that they are processing all the information they collected. He said he would contact them before the Holiday break for an update.

### **e. School Building Committee final report**

P. Stevens noted that the final school building committee report was sent to the Board today. The report can be found on the District Website under the School Building Committee folder.

### **f. Reading waiver**

P. Stevens said that the reading waiver was not approved by the state. Only 17 of 83 districts who applied had their waiver approved. He stated that he has a meeting with the state on Thursday to determine our next steps, but it looks like we are going to have to make some changes to our primary reading program, at least for kindergarten through grade 3. He said they are in the process of reviewing the state-approved programs and expect we will be bringing one to the February Board meeting. It will go before the curriculum committee first.

### **g. CES chimney issue**

P. Stevens said that they have had no changes in the condition of the CES chimney, even with all the rain that occurred this past weekend. He said that there were some leaks in the physical education office and neighboring office and that they are working with Silktown Roofing to address those issues.

### **h. Upcoming events**

P. Stevens noted that the HMS Chorus and Chamber concert would be Wednesday, December 13th from 6:30-7:30 p.m. and that the HMS Band and Jazz concert would be Thursday, December 14th, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. He noted that the tree lighting was successful and everyone involved did an amazing job.

**i. School Roof Projects**

P. Stevens said that the Office of School Construction did not meet his expectations for a conversation regarding their canceling the roof projects. He said Tammy Nuccio reached out to him and she was able to schedule a meeting with the Commissioner. He stated he was very disappointed that it takes a politician to get a meeting. He noted that they are meeting on Thursday to discuss the town's reimbursement rate and the cancellation of the Center and Hall School roof projects by ex-director Kosta Diamantis, on June 29, 2021.

**j. Other**

P. Stevens said that they had to bring in Admiral Septic last week due to a blockage at Hall School. They spent the day at HMS clearing the blockage and noted that the pipes were rusting and products were snagging on the rusted pipes. He said he expects a report from Admiral Septic outlining the issue in the next week or two.

**7. Financial Report**

**a. December 2023 financial report**

**Attachment #1**

P. Stevens said as mentioned last meeting, this is a bleak budget. Very little money has been spent since last month. He had approved some important maintenance items including the roof patching at Center School and septic work at HMS. He said that grants have been applied at this point except for the first round of the excess cost grant which will come at the end of February and applied to program 3 special education.

**8. New Business**

**a. Approve Regular Meeting Minutes of November 2023**

**Attachment #2**

A. Grosjean moved to approve the November Meeting minutes.

J. Goodale seconded the motion

Motion passes unanimously.

**b. Board of Education Meeting Calendar**

**Attachment #3**

P. Stevens said that the 13-month calendar needs to be approved. It sets regular meeting dates as required by statute.

J. Goodale moved to approve the calendar.

J. Mitchell seconded the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

**c. CES Plumbing Funding Request**

P. Stevens said that they already approved the funds for HMS plumbing projects. Center School is now requesting the \$20,000 that was set aside in the capital improvement project budget which does not impact the operating budget. Repair requests include four classroom sinks and countertops, a leak in a women's restroom, as well as a boy's room toilet that leaks.

S. Sperry asked about the classroom sink project, she noted the price was \$11,388 and asked if it was required to get three quotes for it.

P. Stevens noted that it was applicable here and had already been done.



A. Christensen asked about the boy's restroom project, regarding the \$2,588 price. He asked how that project was priced since there are so many unknowns when it comes to the problem.

P. Stevens responded that he believed they had quoted time, but did not have those quotes in front of him.

A. Christensen said he was concerned because the women's room that needs a new toilet is \$1,000 more than the boy's room's estimated repair where it is unknown if a new toilet would be needed. He said he was interested in how the figures for the repairs came about.

P. Stevens said one thing that could be a factor was that they have the gym flooring so if they have to do new flooring, they have the flooring so there would be no cost to it, they would just be installing it.

J. Mitchell asked how it would work if the project cost more than estimated.

P. Stevens replied saying that typically in the past he would send a communication to members explaining the issue and saying that they could either stop the project or he could find money in the maintenance budget to finish the project.

A. Grosjean asked if he would go to the Board of Finance if more money was needed in the budget for the project.

P. Stevens responded by saying that he would not at this point but they could if it was absolutely needed.

T. Anderson moved for the Board of Education to request the Board of Finance to request the Board of Selectmen to call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$20,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund to 04-4049 CES Plumbing Project.

A. Grosjean seconded the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

**d. 2024 - 2025 Willington Public Schools Calendar Draft      Attachment # 4**

P. Stevens showed the draft calendar for the 24-25 school year. He said he worked with superintendents in Ashford, Mansfield, and Region 19 to align our calendars. He said he is requesting eight early release days for professional development. The last half day is before the start of the summer. This calendar is modeled after the last several years. He noted that this is the first review of the calendar and it doesn't get voted on until January or February.

A. Grosjean suggested putting parent-teacher conferences after report cards come out.

P. Stevens said that the move to put conferences first was intentional so parents and teachers could discuss grades that the student may be getting and why they would be getting it.

A. Grosjean asked if they should have a half day on October 11th instead of October 4th due to the long weekend.

P. Stevens said he would double-check the reason.

J. Mitchell asked if they would be providing child care on those half days.

P. Stevens said that every person who has asked for child care on the half days has gotten it and that it has worked out. They would continue that practice next year.

P. Stevens asked that any feedback be emailed to him.

**e. Board of Education Committees 2023 - 2025**

P. Stevens said that the Board needs to identify committees. He said he built a draft for the Board to review. He noted that they have four standing committees, policy, transportation, finance, and facilities, and 5 ad hoc committees.

A. Christensen asked why his Board of Education ad hoc is separate from the finance.

P. Stevens said typically finance is more about bills and negotiations are strictly negotiations.

A. Christensen said he believed there were too many ad hoc committees and finance and negotiations should be combined because negotiations directly affect finance.

A. Grosjean said the other thing to consider would be availability because negotiations are often held after school.

A. Christensen asked P. Stevens to expand on the wellness committee.

P. Stevens said that they have a wellness policy that they are required to meet. He stated the wellness committee addresses air quality, food in the cafeteria, exercise, and a variety of things.

J. Goodale said she would like to be on the wellness committee.

J. Mitchell said he would like to be on negotiations instead of finance because they are very similar and he has experience in negotiations.

A. Christensen suggested J. Mitchell take his spot in negotiations.

J. Goodale was moved to the wellness ad hoc committee and A. Christensen moved to the curriculum ad hoc committee.

B. Ross suggested adding alternates to the ad hoc committees.

A. Christensen asked why add alternates to the ad hoc committees when they do not have a quorum and do not have the same rules as committees.



B. Ross said she suggested adding alternates to keep connections between committees, but if they did not think it was necessary then it did not need to be done.

P. Stevens suggested not having an alternate for security because if Brianna could not attend then they could not have a meeting, and not having an alternate for negotiations because if you try to jump into a third meeting with missing the first two you would not have the needed information.

Board members decided not to add alternates for ad hoc committees.

#### **f. Board of Education Student Representatives**

P. Stevens noted that A. Christensen requested that the Board consider adding a student representative to the Board. P. Stevens said that he pulled some policies from various districts as you would need a policy to outline the purpose and how it would be implemented. He said that if the Board is interested in implementing something like this, then they can gather the policy committee to make a recommendation.

A. Christensen said the idea came from something similar that they do at E.O. Smith. He said he believed it would be a really good idea because in 7th and 8th grade you are starting to learn about civics and it would be a great idea for kids to learn and get involved if they were interested.

S. Sperry said she enjoys hearing from the students on the Region 19 Board. She said there is a different effect of hearing the student's perspective and that there are a lot of really good developmental aspects to it.

A. Grosjean said she enjoyed having students help with policy, such as the dress code in the middle school. She also wondered if they could make a connection with the student government if they could share what they were talking about in the school meetings.

B. Ross asked if parent consent was needed.

P. Stevens stated that this is something the policy committee would decide on. He said he believes most of the policies were written for high schools, however, they can draft their policy how they like and he believes he could come up with a draft by next week.

### **9. Old Business**

#### **a. Capital Improvement Project requests**

P. Stevens said that some CIP items don't have prices as he expects they will be getting more information from QA+M, and he said he also expects the CIP committee to add a flat dollar amount again, not necessarily aligned to particular projects. He noted that the priority on the submissions is roofing and HVAC-related. P. Stevens went through a document of multiple repairs that are needed and grants that could cover some funding on some of the projects. One project discussed was solar panels and P. Stevens said if you do a roof it is recommended to get solar panels because they are reimbursable. P. Stevens said that if the Board was okay with the priority suggestions, like the HVAC projects, then he could meet with the CIP committee and present as well as discuss it with

them. He stated that a lot of the repairs depend on price and reimbursement.

J. Mitchell asked who they have on their end to make sure construction crews are doing the projects correctly.

P. Stevens replied saying that there is usually a project manager or construction manager involved in the process.

J. Mitchell asked if the town should hire someone to oversee the repairs since this is going to be a long-term process.

P. Stevens said that the town does not have a facilities manager but it does make sense for the town to hire one. He noted that experts are needed to help through the process. P. Stevens said the Board of Education could write a letter to the Board of Selectmen suggesting putting money in the budget for a facilities manager.

A. Grosjean asked if the money for that position would come out of CIP money.

P. Stevens responded saying he believes that money would come out of the operating budget.

J. Goodale said that as a member of the CIP committee, they have had a lot of opportunities to tour places around town and a facilities manager is a conversation that they have had. She said that there needs to be strategic planning with experts to make repairs to be effective.

P. Stevens said the place to start would be writing a letter and now would be the time because they are in the process of figuring out the budget.

A. Grosjean said that the town already has so many shared services, that it would make sense to make this a shared service as well.

P. Stevens said salary is something you need to consider and possibly splitting services with another town could be a way to keep costs down. He did state that he did not know if they could get the service they needed with a split service.

A. Christensen said that it could be in the better interest of the Board of Education to have their own facilities manager so they do not get pulled to other projects. He said that they may not get the return that they want with one person managing all the facilities in town.

P. Stevens also said that they could treat the position as a retainer like they do with the Board attorney. He said that they could look into buying a block of hours for a position like this.

S. Sperry said because the town has older facilities there will be many projects, and after witnessing the effects of committed salaries on operating budgets she thinks it is a big commitment to have someone on staff with a salaried position. She said it would be a lot for one person to cover the town because there are a lot of problems in multiple buildings all at once. She said that after they get past some of the immediate hurdles it would be good to have a maintenance schedule in place to make sure things are being kept up and it would be cost effective.

P. Stevens said that CIP was stuck with a half million dollars a year to figure out 3.5 million in



projects and prioritizing them, which is why they are in the situation they are in with the buildings. He says he does not know how long it will take to get out of the repair hole that they are in. He asked if they would like to draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen.

B. Ross suggested writing a letter to see where they stand on the issue of hiring a facilities manager.

J. Mitchell said that he did not think a facility manager should be doing the work, and that they should have an outside opinion from someone who was making the repairs.

P. Stevens said that they were ahead of the game on a lot of the projects due to work that was done with the SBC and such, it was just a matter of finding funding. He also noted that he would get updated prices and information.

#### **10. Present to Speak**

Michelle Cunningham, Liska Road, thanked the Board for approaching the building issues so comprehensively.

#### **11. Board Comments**

J. Goodale thanked the residents who participated in the recent election and said it was an honor to be at the table and involved in the discussion of education. She also mentioned the highly successful tree-lighting event in town.

A. Grosjean welcomed all the new Board members.

T. Anderson welcomed new members. She also expressed disappointment with how the reading waiver turned out with the State. She also thanked Phil for his efforts in trying to fix the roof.

J. Mitchell thanked the Board for having him and said he was excited to be there and had a lot to learn.

A. Christensen thanked those who voted for him during the special election to keep him on the Board. He noted that he ran for and joined the Board because he was disappointed in the way it operated, but after the actions earlier tonight, he said he continues to be disappointed.

S. Sperry thanked everyone who voted for her and said she was excited to bring a new fresh perspective to the Board. She also said that she was hoping they could all work together to fix the schools.

B. Ross said that she wanted to touch on the reading program. She said it was frustrating, however it happened and whatever PD is required does not negate the professional development that has been done so far. She also thanked the PTA for the work they do with the gift shop.

#### **12. Adjournment**

J. Mitchell motioned to adjourn the meeting.

J. Goodale seconded

The motion passed unanimously, meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

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WILLINGTON, CT.

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TOWN CLERK