

Draft Minutes
WEST RIVER MODIFIED UNIFIED EDUCATION DISTRICT BOARD
MEETING

Monday, November 16, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Present: *Board:* Joe Winrich, Al Claussen, Keighan Chapman Eaker, Ken McFadden, Dana West, Lindsey Bertram, Emily Long, Howard Ires, Mike Foley, Trish Scott
Administration: Bill Anton, Bob Thibault, Laurie Garland, Pam Bernardo, Scott Tabachnick, Marty Testo
Members of the Public: Heidi Russ, Jeryl Julian Cisse, Katie Hazelton, Kris Jerz, Patti Dickson, Rory O'Donnell, Hannah Parker, Shelly Bostrom, Beth Wells, Amy Pawling, Sue Stomski, Valerie Bills, Crystal Corriveau

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Norms

Mr. Claussen read aloud the board norms.

Members of the Public

Additions or Corrections to Agenda

Mr. McFadden spoke how on the agenda it shows 3 policies to be warned but those policies should only be reviewed instead.

New Business

Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Anton thanked the Windham Central Education Association for working diligently over the past 3 months to craft this memorandum of understanding. This memorandum provides some flexibility for administrators to compensate members of the bargaining unit who voluntarily give up their lunch duty. Also, this memorandum provides the ability to have a process for an individual teacher to request an alternate work schedule from their supervisor. Mr. Anton spoke how the WCSU committee has already ratified this memorandum on Wednesday, November 11th and River Valley's education school district is ratifying it now. Therefore, Mr. Anton asked the West River Board to ratify this memorandum of understanding.

Mr. McFadden made a motion to allow the superintendent to sign the memorandum of understanding with the Windham Central Education Association. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker second, the motion passed unanimously.

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Budget Development – Direction to Administration

Mr. Anton and Mr. Claussen compiled a list of budget questions taken from all board members last year. These questions are:

- Does the board have a YOY target for expenses?
- Class size targets?
- Combined classes in Elementary?
 - Fill 1-year position at TES beyond this year?
- Number of administrators?
- Target unified tax rate?
- Invest in facilities, upkeep and maintenance.

The hope of this discussion to allow board members to give direction on these questions early in the budget process to help administrators get prepared for a presentation to the budget committee on December 14th and the full board on December 21st.

Mr. West asked if the class sizes for next year are known at this point? Mr. Anton explained it is strange to predict class sizes for the following year during the pandemic but in general a distinct class size number hasn't been determined. Mrs. Bertram asked if there was a requirement for class size range with the school choice policy? Mr. Anton responded saying the school choice policy does mention an optimal class size range.

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker asked at a secondary school level are there minimum class sizes for certain classes to run? Mr. Anton mentioned the board has never set a minimum class size. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker strongly suggested the board set a minimum class size to run a class. Mrs. Long agreed in concept with Mrs. Chapman-Eaker but she thinks it should depend on the educational level for different classes. Mr. Ires commented small schools need to be kept in mind because there may not be enough student to fill a minimum class size and we need keep the maximum flexibility on a year-to-year basis. Mr. Thibault mentioned there are currently some small class sizes in both the AP and intermediate courses. In the past the administration has also grouped classes together if there are not enough kids and the teacher differentiates the groups within a single classroom.

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker asked Mr. Thibault if he thinks based on current practice there is an equitable distribution of students among all of the staff? Mr. Thibault commented there are different types of equity because the number of students a middle school teacher has is different than a high school teacher. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker asked if the teachers have given any feedback in terms of an unequal or unfair

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distribution of student to teacher ratios? Mr. Thibault spoke how nothing formal has been brought to his attention and to his knowledge there hasn't been any challenges around the topic.

Mr. West asked if there is still a need for the 1-year position at TES? Mr. Roach explained he included the 1-year teaching position in his budget for the following year because TES is projected to have more students.

Mrs. Bertram asked about the number of pre-k students that can fit in the Townshend School and if the needs of the district are being met? Currently there are 25 kids enrolled in pre-k and next year the maximum allowed is 32 kids. TES is projected to fill all 32 spaces and might have to put some kids on the waiting list. Mr. Anton mentioned globally there are few people on the wait list but the administration can explore the cost to open up a 3rd pre-k classroom if the board chooses. The board decided to send an outreach survey to prospective preschoolers.

Mr. Anton mentioned last year in order to reduce the overall expense budget for West River all investments in facilities, maintenance and upkeep were zeroed out. Mr. Anton advocated the board not do the same thing this year because it may become a bigger issue down the road.

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker asked if the administrator question listed involved adding more administrators or looking at the current administrator distribution? Mr. Anton commented last year the board wanted to know what the budget would look like with less administrators.

Mr. McFadden brought up the Leland and Gray building has an estimated 5-10 usable years left based on the last engineering report. He thinks no more money should be put back into the structure other than the basics to keep it running. Mr. Foley and Mr. West mentioned they want a second engineering study to be done on the Leland and Gray building before any decisions are made.

Crystal Corriveau asked if we should start thinking about a new building? Mr. Claussen responded saying the board can only propose a new building as an option. However, the board wants to discuss all options before coming to any definite conclusions on the current building. Mrs. Long and Mrs. Bertram urged the board to use caution when discussing this topic because the building is currently structural sound for use.

Mr. Ires made a motion to ask our engineers to prepare a request for proposal to repair the Leland and Gray building. No second to the motion.

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Mrs. Bertram commented she thinks we should go back to the engineers for a more detailed explanation of the building issues. Mr. Claussen mentioned on the engineering report it states to wait 6-12 months for building reevaluation. Mr. Anton suggested for himself to reach out to the director of operations who will review the engineering report. Mr. Medina will come back in a future meeting to further explain and understand the engineering report with the board.

Budget Committee

Mr. Claussen spoke how the budget committee currently consists of himself, Joe, Mike, Trish and Ken. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker volunteered to serve on the committee. The budget committee will now consist of Joe, Mike, Al, Keighan and Lindsey. Mrs. Garland mentioned the next budget committee meeting will be held at 6:30 pm on December 14th.

Winter Sports Guidance

Mr. Thibault stated the students will be fully remote the 2 weeks following each holiday break. Therefore Mr. Thibault wanted clarification if school sport practices should also not be occurring during that 2-week timeframe. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker is in support of the 2-week quarantine following school breaks to include a break from school sports as well. Mr. Claussen stated there needs to be at least 10 practices asked if there was the possibility to do remote practices instead? Marty Testo responded saying that question came earlier in the year and fall sports were able to do workouts via zoom. Marty also mentioned the VPA has not sent out any official documents in terms of what winter sports will look like.

Mr. Thibault asked for clarity purposes if the building could be utilized during winter break to hold practices and stop for the 2-week quarantine following the break? The board agreed it seems reasonable to hold practices during the winter break and stop for 2-weeks following the break.

Mr. Thibault asked what the board thought about using a third-party building for sports if the Leland and Gray building is not cleared yet? Mr. McFadden and Mrs. Chapman-Eaker commented they don't think it would be a good idea to send students to another building that the board doesn't know what the status of the air ventilation is. Mr. McFadden asked if it was a possibility to have parents sign a parental consent form to hold practices? Mr. Thibault urged caution about taking that approach because the school is currently not doing consent forms for academics. Mr. West asked if is possible for winter sports to occur with a rise in positive cases? Mr. Thibault responded saying it is entirely possible at this point.

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Mr. Thibault explained the AOE guidance states to not allow visitors in the schools and the rec sports guidance states to allow students from the community to use middle/high school gyms to practice. These guidance's contradict each other and Mr. Thibault asked the board what their thoughts were on both of the guidance's? Mr. McFadden commented he thinks the community students should be allowed to temporarily use the elementary school gyms that have passed the air quality standards as long as classes are not occurring in the school at the same time. This would be a temporary solution while the Leland and Gray gym is being worked on to meet the air quality standards. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker asked if a conversation needs to be had about the possibility of skipping winter sports for just this one season? Mr. Claussen mentioned he would like to see winter sports proceed in some type of way while there is still an opportunity. Abbie Hazelton commented she feels extra curriculums are very important right now because students need the socialization.

Mr. Claussen asked Marty when do the 10 practices need to be completed by? Marty responded saying practices can start as early as November 30th but games have not been cleared to start until January 11th. However, with the 2-week quarantine following the thanksgiving break, practices could not start until December 14th and games until January 18th for the district unless remote practices are held. Mr. Claussen suggested the board give the runway to allow the winter sports to be able to practice which will most likely be remote with the potential to use Jamaica and NewBrook gyms for smaller practices or practice outside. The board will then discuss at the next board meeting on December 21st. Marty suggested using 1 school for the girl teams and the other school for the boy teams to keep everything simpler. Mr. Thibault mentioned NewBrook and Townshend's gyms have still not been approved. The entire board was in agreeance with Mr. Claussen's suggestion.

Boiler Bond

Mr. Anton stated a \$450,000 bond was passed for our communities over a year ago. The fix for the boiler is going to be about \$250,000. Mr. Anton recommended to use the other \$200,000 which has to be approved by the electorate, to do the water system and get a generator. Mr. Winrich made a motion for Mr. Anton to engage the attorney to bring a warning to the December 21st meeting for the board to approve. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker second, the motion passed unanimously.

Annual Report

Mr. Anton explained the grant manager of the WCSU office will be producing the annual report this year. A table of contents has been distributed to the board and a draft layout will be shared on December 21st.

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Old Business

HVAC workflow updates

Mr. Anton spoke the board has the annual monthly report that shows everything happening. The big things that are happening is the second servicing at Townshend has been completed and hopefully the air testing will be done at Leland and Gray next week.

The board was provided a detailed report showing what the CFM was after the second servicing and the outdoor ASHRAE 100% air rate at Townshend. The report concluded Townshend is not able to have the population of the full school in the classrooms and reach the ASHRAE 100% air rate standard. Knowing this Mr. Roach met with his facility and principal advisory committee to come up with 2 logistically possible options. The first option being to continue with the 4 days of remote learning and be able to invite more students into the school (currently they're 30 students). While also providing some additional assistance and opportunities for social gatherings. The school would have some flexibility to be able to handle more students with the addition of more ASHRAE approved rooms. The second option being to explore the opportunity to do an a/b model. The teachers were not particularly confident in pursuing an a/b model. Mr. Anton commented this is just to inform the board and the board does not have to make any decision on these options tonight.

Amy asked if the schools get back to a point where full capacity can resume in person, will there still be a remote option for families who are on the fence about sending their children back? Mr. Anton responded saying there is a school supported home study program that will still be able to be utilized.

Approve Minutes

Mr. McFadden made a motion to approve the minutes from October 26, 2020 with the corrected spelling of NewBrook on page 4. Mr. West second, the motion passed unanimously.

Student Reports

Abbie asked since the decision was made for high school sports to be able to resume at the elementary schools if that option could be considered for theater rehearsals as well? Mr. West mentioned the theater group could possibly look at using the Jamaica town hall as an option.

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Principal Reports

The board received the principals reports and had no comments.

Superintendent Cabinet Report

The board received the superintendent cabinet report and had no comments.

Communication Committee Update

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker annouced the committee made their first posting with building leaders and community sites related to the sharing of information regarding the 2-week remote model following Thanksgiving. There were some lingering questions from community members wanting to know why the decision was made. The communication committee suggested the next time something is posted to include a short justification about the boards decision to help answer any questions.

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker also explained the budget process will be displayed through 3 lenses. The committee will also be waiting to hear from Mr. Anton in regards to information on the new pre-k access and interest survey

Approve Financials

Mr. Winrich made a motion to approve the pay orders. Mrs. Chapman-Eaker second, the motion passed unanimously.

Remote Days

Mr. Anton explained the schools have the ability on most occasions to turn snow days into remote learning days to avoid extra days getting added at the end of the year. All board members agreed with this decision.

Policy

Mr. Foley explained the board can vote of policies A25 and C29 tonight since the policies were warned at the previous meeting. Mr. Anton also previously requested the policy committee to review any policy that is 3 years old. The policy committee was able to review the first 3 policies which are A1, B1 and B2.

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Mr. McFadden made a motion to adopt policy A25 – Delegation of Authority during a Pandemic and C29 – District equity policy. Mr. Foley second, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Foley made a motion to warn policies A1 – Conflict of Interest, B1 – Substitute Teachers and B2 – Volunteers and Work Study Students. Mr. West second, the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Mrs. Chapman-Eaker made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a legal and contractual matter. Mr. Foley second, motion passed unanimously.

No action was taken by the board.

Adjourn

Mr. McFadden made a motion to adjourn, Mrs. Chapman-Eaker second. All in favor, formal meeting adjourned at 9:59 P.M.

Next Meeting

- Budget Committee Meeting December 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM. Via Zoom
- December 21, 2020 at 7:00 PM. Via Zoom