**Present:** Beth McDonald, Russ Cumming, Carolyn Partridge, William Anton, Laurie Garland, Mickey Parker Jennings, Antje Ruppert, Kathy Scott, Gail Wyman, Howard Ires, Eileen Widger, Bill Dunkel, Crystal Corriveau, Betsy Huffman, Maureen Bell, Erin Kehoe, Marcia Clinton, Jeff Rubin, Kermit Blackwood, All on Zoom.com

**Call to Order:** 4 PM

**Additions and Correction to Agenda:**

Russ asked to have a discussion on Carolyn’s article which appeared in Windham New & Notes, as well as a discussion on Kord Scott’s memo from Attys. Fisher & Fisher, concerning the Ad Hoc committee and subjects concerning the WES.

**Minutes and Correspondence:**

Beth moved to approve the Jan 4th minutes. Carolyn offered a summary of the Jan. 4th minutes reading parts from them and offering various comments and additional supplemental information she acquired after the meeting concerning subjects that were discussed. Carolyn specifically requested that the sentence at the end of the minutes be removed.

**Bills and Pay Orders:**

Carolyn moved to approve pay orders 12 to 26, Russ 2nd, motion passed.

**Public Comment:**

Crystal Corriveau stated that she had spoken with Mickey about speaking with other parents and creating a Facebook page for WES. She spoke to the issue of asking parents to communicate with Mickey about concerns they may have. She also spoke about improving the playground equipment. Crystal mentioned the timing of the school board meetings not being good for parents at 4pm. Maybe another day of the week and a later start time would get more parents involved in the meetings. Crystal mentioned that Erin Kehoe was very helpful is setting up the Facebook page and contacting the parents to get involved.

**Principal’s Report:** See attached report

Bill Anton asked Mickey about the “envelope” around the school and who has keys and whether there is a process for contacting someone to get access to the building. Mickey indicated they maintain a list of who has keys and there is a sign-in sheet at the front door. The consensus is that Mickey will control who has access to the building.

**Superintendent’s Report:**

Bill reported that Greg Frost will be the new Director of Operations starting on Feb. 8th 2021. His written report is attached.

**Old Business:**

Laurie Garland, CFO of WCSU discussed the revised budget, noting the property and income yields have been updated so the effective tax rate has declined. Mickey inquired about a reimbursement on physical education costs and whether it was reflected in the budget since due to COVID they were not able to receive the services in a timely manner. Laurie mentioned the credit would be forthcoming. Antje asked about special education costs and was concerned that there may not be adequate funds provided in the budget if a need arose in the future. Laurie addressed that by indicating that special education costs were pooled among the schools in the WCSU and Windham’s share would be a net 2% to 3%. She also responded to Russ’s question about requesting that the WCSU board apply the cost sharing to ECSE and K-12th at their next meeting in April 2021.The final tax rate is estimated at $1.70 for the FY 2022. A copy of the budget and the tax rate calculation is attached to the minutes.

Laurie mentioned that based on her current estimates Windham will end up with a surplus of about $30,000. This surplus comes from a savings in the current year from a reduced actual current expense in ECSC and a savings in Physical Education expenditures. Laurie suggested that the board hold that surplus in reserve to cover unexpected costs that may arise in the future.

Russ asked a question concerning adding a certified teaching position and what that would do to the budget. He related that both Mickey and Bill had discussed this idea with the board over the summer and they might need to consider this additional position if the number of students increases. Bill had stated that the one principal/teacher scenario was a temporary situation. Laurie expressed that the consideration of an additional educator was part of longer range planning that Windham should consider for 2023 to 2025.

**New Business:**

Discussion re: meeting dates and timing of school board meetings resulted in asking Sara or Beth to canvas the parents to see what dates and times may be best for future meetings.

On the subject of norms of operating a school board, Bill suggested that be discussed after the Town Meeting when the board goes though reorganization. The Vermont School Boards Association may come and provide guidance after the election to any new school board members.

The Code of Ethics discussion will be further discussed after the March 2nd Town Meeting day.

A discussion of mailing ballots is still an open question as of this date.

The bus route is set as the Leland and Grey students are returning to in-person instruction next week. Carolyn moved to approve the bus route as requested by Kord, the bus driver. Beth 2nd. Motion passed.

Russ mentioned he appreciated Carolyn’s efforts to communicate with Windham residents about the school budget. He commented there was some additional information he thought should also be communicated as well. A major contributor to the per-student costs is the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) expense and a review of the calculation may be needed in next fiscal year’s planning. Russ spoke to the increase in sale prices of real estate in Windham and how sales are 25% to 50% higher than the 2015 reappraisal values. That will reduce the CLA well below 90 and may end up forcing a reappraisal of all properties in Windham. He also reiterated that the need for an additional certified teacher should be considered along with the impact that would have on the school budget for future years.

Carolyn’s responded that she agreed that these items should be considered. She said she was limited in the length of the article. She further expressed that she felt there were options for Sara and they should be considered. Carolyn also pointed out that there could be some relief from the Weighting Study that was working its way through the legislative process. Carolyn asked Russ if there was something that the Listers could do to rectify the situation with a dropping CLA number. His reply was that improvements individuals make in their homes that occur without filing a permit application escape the Listers ability to adjust the appraised value of the property. He noted that without a permit application Listers had no basis to consider an adjustment to the appraised value. Many households make improvements in that manner and then a sale of their property reveals the difference of value between the assessed and fair market value. There is no remedy at hand for the Listers to make interim adjustments. A town wide reappraisal would need to be done if the CLA falls below 85 or above 115 and it would occur the year after one of those targets was triggered.

Russ raised the subject of the memo from the Law Firm of Fisher & Fisher dated April 9, 2020. The memo was addressed to Kord Scott, a Windham Selectboard member, and members of the Ad Hoc committee. It addressed several questions that had been raised during the discussions by those who were attending the Ad Hoc meetings. In the interest of full disclosure both Carolyn and Russ attended those meetings. Of keen interest to Russ was the third question dealing with Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) charges from the WCSU. The reply from Emily Simmons, General Counsel to the Agency of Education was very informative.

She stated that “there is no distinction between pre-K and K-12 special education as far as how it is assessed by the SU.” Earlier this afternoon in a discussion Russ had with Bill A., Russ learned that it is something that Windham could address with the WCSU board this coming April 2021. He suggested that Windham request that ECSE be treated in the same manner as K-12 special education, i.e. as a ratio of ADM of Windham’s students to the ADM of the WCSU. That is a factor of between 2% and 3%.

There followed a discussion of actions Carolyn is taking to the seek changes in the State’s level of reimbursement. ECSC is reimbursed at a lower percentage than the K-12 rate and a proposed bill is seeking to make the rates the same for all special education reimbursement. Bill A. indicated that both Carolyn and Russ are correct and work needs to be done to get reimbursement normalized for all areas of special education.

**Adjourned:** 5:44 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Cumming, Clerk