**Present:** Beth McDonald, Russ Cumming, Carolyn Partridge, William Anton, Laurie Garland, Mickey Parker Jennings, Antje Ruppert, Kathy Scott, Gail Wyman, Crystal Corriveau, Betsy Huffman, Erin Kehoe, Jeff Rubin, Carolyn Rubin, Bridgette Blanchard, Bridget Corby, Katherine Wright, Joeanne Chlebogiannis, Pat McLaine, Emily Goyette, Virginia Crittenden, David Crittenden, Mary Aller, Rebecca Eliastam, Kermit Blackwood, Allan Partridge. All on Zoom.com

**Call to Order:** 4:01 PM

**Additions and Correction to Agenda:** None

**Minutes and Correspondence:**

Carolyn moved to approve the Jan. 4, 2021 minutes, Beth 2nd. A discussion followed concerning how Carolyn had modified the 01/04/2021 minutes with suggestions she had made and submitted them to the WCSU web site without a final board motion and approval that could have occurred at this meeting. Bill A suggested the board set at the reorganization meeting or a date soon after Town Meeting Day and have a discussion on how amended minutes are moved for approval. Russ obtained, motion passed.

Carolyn moved to approve the Feb. 1, 2021 minutes, Russ 2nd, motion passed

Joeanne (JoJo) Chlebogiannis submitted a letter, by Email, and asked that it be read into the minutes. Beth read the letter. The board had also received letters from Bridgette Blanchard, Bridget Corby and Emily Goyette (parents of children who either are or will be attending WES). These letters are also attached. Beth noted that she was glad to get letters from parents and welcomed any other parents to also communicate with the School Board.

Beth asked Bill A. and Lorie G. to respond to some of the questions raised in the letters. Bill addressed the need for an additional qualified teaching assistant by affirming the School Board had discussed the subject this past summer and that Sara was in the process of getting a provisional teaching license. Bill noted the costs associated with her training was being covered by a grant and would not be borne by the tax payers of Windham. The budget, as presented at Town Meeting, includes two qualified teachers and does not include an administrative assistant.

Laurie addressed the question of the cost of students at L&G, noting that the proposed budget did include a tax rate of $0.64 that is included in the final homestead tax rate of $1.697. The tax rate for secondary students is reflected as a percentage of the WRMUD approved budget. Windham’s elementary EP count is 19.7 and there are 10 students from Windham attending school in Townshend. The ratio of 69.5% elementary students and 30.5% secondary students is shown in the 3 year comparison. The 30.5% of the WRMUD education tax rate equals the $0.64 tax in the Windham education tax rate noted above.

Carolyn then addressed the question of the school choice option for Windham. She pointed out that Windham lobbied hard to remain our own school district during the Act 46 merger mania. She reminded participants in the meeting that Windham had sent out letters and lobbied to be a standalone district and this effort having been successful allows us options. Now if the day comes, and we decide to close the school, our families may choose where they want to send their children. Carolyn responded to a question from Ms. Chlebogiannis that as a result of the successful move to be our own school district the parents could choose to send their children to Townshend, Flood Brook, Chester or Grafton. She also mentioned that our petition to leave the West River

District was not successful as Newfane and Brookline approved but Jamaica and Townshend did not approve and we would need all 4 towns to approve the petition in order to be successful in leaving the WRMUD. Carolyn pointed out that it does not mean we could not seek their approval again. Carolyn also made clear that if the voters if Windham decided to close the school the parents could choose to send their children to any public or approved independent elementary school in the state of Vermont. (Windham would pay the school the state specified standard tuition rate or the rate established by that school.) Crystal Corriveau pointed out that if we did have school choice for K-6th our middle and high school students would still go to Townshend middle school and high school.

 Antje added to the discussion with the affirmation that in Vermont all high school students did have school choice at a public school. (Burr & Burton and the Long Trail School are independent schools). Bill affirmed her statement and stated that a student could apply to the school in grades 9 to 12 and if accepted could attend tuition free. (The parents would need to provide transportation)

At this point in the meeting there was a lot of Q &A on a wide range of topics. Some addressed the concern from parents about the multiple grade/age teaching at WES. With a student count of 8 currently and grade levels of K to 3rd there was concern expressed that the comprehension level of the students within that range were very different. Mickey addressed the question by reminding the participants in the meeting that due to the small number of students he was able to tailor individualized instruction to each students learning ability. Mickey felt that as the student count increased and Sara’s provisional license was completed he could address this subject better in the next school year

**Bills and Pay Orders:**

Beth moved to approve orders 27 to 31, Carolyn 2nd, motion passed

**Pulic Comment;**  None

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

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

**Old Business:**

The budget information was covered in detail while answering questions in the correspondence section of this meeting. No additional questions were asked at this time.

**New Business:** None

**Other Business:**

 A reorganization meeting for the new school board was set for March 8th at 8: am

**Adjourned:** 6:16 pm

Respectfully submitted

Russ Cumming, clerk

Attachments:

Letters from: Bridget Corby, Emily Goyette, Bridgette Blanchard, Joeanne Chlebogiannis

Principal’s and Superintendent’s reports