**Windham Elementary School Directors’ Meeting May 18, 2021 Approved Minutes**

**Present:** Beth McDonald, Russ Cumming, Carolyn Partridge, William Anton, Laurie Garland, Mickey Parker Jennings, Gail Wyman, Crystal Corriveau, Bridgette Blanchard, Howard Ires, Eileen Widger, Tom Widger, Betsey Huffman, Pat McLaine, Becky Eliastam

**Call to Order:**  6:00 PM

**Additions and Correction to Agenda:**

Bill Anton spoke of compliance with the Open Meeting Law (OML) and the entry under Executive Session and the need to be more specific about what the discussion may be about to comply with OML guidelines.  Russ asked to talk about the residency policy at the end of the meeting. He also asked if Bill could talk about the guideline for “Public Comment” in the 2019 Essential Work of Vermont School Boards publication, specifically how Board meetings are held in a public setting but are not meetings of the public, before we ask for public comments.  Russ also asked to discuss under old business year to date financials and the 2020 FY audit.

**Minutes and Correspondence:**

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes with suggested corrections, Russ seconded, motion passed.  Beth read a letter from a resident.  The letter is attached.  Russ commented that it is not expected that the board or a board member will comment on either correspondence or a subject brought up during public comment.

**Bills and Pay Orders:**  None

**Public Comments:**

Bill’s interpretation is for the Board to hold a meeting in a public format and for the public to make comments during the meeting. Bill noted that some boards are restrictive of public comment time and others are very liberal in allowing active public participation. He specified that board meetings are not like a town meeting where active participation is expected, but a meeting where the business of the school board is discussed and they receive comments on the agenda items.  Russ pointed out that public comment is an opportunity for members of the public to make comments on the agenda items but not to make comments concerning personal emails between non-school board persons.  Russ also commented that the meeting is not a forum like Facebook or Twitter where comments are truly in a public format.   He noted that emails sent to other members of the community are private communication, not public communication.   Public comment is not an opportunity to engage in the pettiness of Facebook or Twitter comments.

Bill continued to say that we cannot predict every communication that will happen but we need to consider: is it correspondence to the board, a comment regarding a previous board meeting, or a comment on the agenda.  Bill also noted that the board should consider whether information received should be included for discussion, and if so, where it is placed and how it is placed.

Carolyn made a comment that we should understand that anything we put in an email could possibly go out to the world.  Bill commented that as public employees if you do not want to see it on the front page of the paper, do not put it in writing or an email.

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

Beth commented that she is planning on writing an article for the next edition of News & Notes asking for help from the community in removing the old playground equipment. There was a discussion on the “wood chips” that are specified for a playground installation and the community’s help is needed to get it completed.

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

Bill reported that he had spent some time with 3 students at WES and had participated in a science experiment. Using a vacuum chamber, they removed air from the chamber after placing a marshmallow in the center and watched it expand or balloon up in size.  Everyone was amazed! Bill summarized that he is working with the WCSU principals to spend down the available grant funds and to plan for summer school activities.   He reported that Laurie G. is working to accurately account for the expenditure of grant funding as there are four different sources of the funds and they each need to be accounted for separately.

Russ asked Bill about how the USDA has provided verbal guidance to the State that during the School Year 21-22 all School Food Authorities will be allowed to use the Seamless Summer Option to serve meals to all children for free.   He pointed out that last year WES opted out of the school lunch program.  He asked if there was a way Windham students could get the same lunch program other students in area schools are receiving.  Bill indicated that Mickey has begun to look into the possibility and feels it is a worthwhile endeavor to see if it may be accomplished.  Bill pointed out that the meal cost is reimbursed but all the other costs, like labor and transportation, are not covered.

Russ pointed out that there is a surplus from last year FY2019-20 as well as a potential surplus for this FY2020-21 budget.  He asked if funds may be allocated for maybe a new refrigerator or microwave to accommodate the lunch program if we planned ahead. He felt that providing meals is important for a successful learning experience.

Carolyn noted that there are two bills that may impact this: H.106 is the Farm Fresh program and S.100 is the universal breakfast program.  Reimbursement is estimated at $0.82 for breakfast and $1.18 for lunches, additional funding may be received if the meal content is sourced locally.  The school breakfast and lunch program is an important service for Windham students and the board will work to see if this may be developed for the next FY.

**Old Business:**

Bill noted that transportation costs for FY2021-22 may increase to reflect the true cost of labor.  He also noted that there are additional field trips that add to the transportation costs and they will be reflected in budgets for subsequent years.  Bill estimated a $4,000 to $5,000 increase.

Laurie reviewed the YTD expenses. She pointed out that the bulk of the savings were in the lower actual expenditure in Pre-K special education line item. Laurie indicated there is an estimated surplus of about $41,000 for this FY 20-21. The FY 2019-20 audit indicates a similar surplus of about $40,000.  She pointed out the financing (borrowing) of money to cover the previous year’s deficit for special education costs is partially impacting the surplus. The combined surplus for two FYs is about $80,000.

Laurie pointed out that about $28,000 of grant money (Federal Funds) went into the HVAC system and $52,183 of REAP grant funds into the new playground equipment and teacher Professional Development.  The CRF- LEA grant funds went into PPE and supplies.  Laurie pointed out that Mickey negotiated a great deal with the playground vendor and subsequently other people are also contacting the vendor.

Laurie raised the idea of using the surplus to help offset the costs of the breakfast and lunch program next year and maybe retiring the Peoples Bank Loan.  She also looked back to see if there was a motion to use the bus fund to offset the bus repair costs for this year and did not find one.  Russ asked if Laurie could inquire about the payoff amount for the Peoples Loan and another loan that may have covered lighting or a security system for the school.  He also commented on the projected costs of replacing the school bus, noting it would be fiscally responsible to establish a reserve fund and set aside money each year to offset the costs of replacing the bus. Carolyn stated that we already have a reserve fund for bus replacement and have had for many years.

Carolyn supported the idea of reviewing the loan balances and having a conversation over how the estimated surpluses might be allocated at our June board meeting. Bill spoke to the source of future availability of some funding.  ARPA (?) funds have a timeline out to 2023 but the specifics regarding how they may be spent is still unclear. Bill also noted that Act 173 will have a serious impact on school budgets once it is actively in place impacting special education as reimbursements are reduced.

**New Business:**

Carolyn moved to affirm the bus route change.  Beth 2nd, motion passed.

The boiler at WES needs to be replaced. The estimated cost is approximately $15,000 to $20,000.  A discussion of its replacement will be delayed until the next meeting.

The subject of a Residency Policy was raised by Russ.  He checked from Bill’s email following the last board meeting where Bill had sent the *Stratton Verification of Student Residency Policy.*  Russ had retyped it adopting the language for an “operational” school district. He also typed a parent/guardian affidavit for consideration of the board.  Russ sent the revised information to all board members and felt it would be appropriate for the board to review the material and consider it for the next board meeting.

Bill supports a residency policy. Bill noted that the policy Russ reviewed is the same as Wardsboro, Dover and Stratton. He also noted that the policy was prepared by the same attorney that he would recommend Windham consult. Bill offered to send residency policies from other operational school boards for discussion at the next board meeting.

The next School Board meeting will be June 15, 2021, at 6 PM via Zoom.

**Adjourned:**  7:08 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Cumming, Clerk

Attachments:

Letter from a citizen

Principal’s Report

Superintendent’s report