

Present: Beth McDonald, Russ Cumming, William Anton, Mickey Parker-Jennings, Kord Scott, Kathy Scott, Tom Widger, Eileen Widger, Bill Dunkel, Gail Wyman, Erin Kehoe, Maureen Bell, Carolyn Partridge, Crystal Corriveau, Kathy Jungermann, Marcia Clinton, Betsy Huffman, Carolyn Rubin, Howard Ires, All via Zoom.com

Call to Order: 4:03 pm

Additions or corrections to the agenda: None

Summary of special election scheduled:

A discussion of scheduling a candidate forum in the next few weeks revealed that a date and time had not been decided upon by the candidates. The public will be informed as soon as a time is chosen. A notice warning the vote has been posted in town and emails were sent out announcing it.

Principal's Report:

The report is posted on the WCSU and Windham town websites.

Superintendent's Report:

The report is posted on the WCSU and Windham town websites. The Legislative Report forwarded by the Superintendent also included summaries of two pieces of legislation, *H-663* & *S.354* which parents of 7th to 12th graders may have an interest in reading. The report will be available on the town website.

Public Comment: None noted

Correspondence:

A letter was received from a concerned citizen noting the impolite behavior of some of the members of the public during the public comment period of previous board meetings. Acknowledging that, adopting the *Code of Ethics for Vermont School Board Members* may be in line with everyone's best interests. The Board will adopt the model of the Vermont School Boards Association.

Approval of Minutes:

Russ motioned to approve the Sept. 8th & Sept. 14th minutes, Beth 2nd, motion passed.

Old Business:

Alliance Mechanical has been making repairs to the HVAC system and installing new air filters. The test results are not readily available for this month's report. The principal's report (posted on town website) has additional information on this subject. As a result of other schools reporting PCBs being found in the air during air quality testing, a concern was raised about Windham's exposure to PCBs. A motion to spend up to \$2,000 for PCB testing was made by Russ, Beth 2nd, motion passed. Laurie G. reminded us that the PCB testing may not be covered by CARES funds, and may end up being paid by taxpayers.

Average Daily Membership:

Average Daily Membership (ADM) is a key number when calculating the education property tax rate. It is derived by averaging the past year's attendance with the current year's attendance. The resulting number becomes the Equalized Pupils (EP) used in calculating the cost per pupil for the ensuing year. Adding this year's 8 students and 19 from last year, the EP amount would be 13.5. This low EP would dramatically increase the education tax for 2021.

Windham taxpayers will benefit from a bill that just passed both chambers in Montpelier. Briefly, it stated that due to COVID-19 and the larger number of families that have chosen to home school children this year, the Town will be allowed to use the same number for ADM this year as last year. There are expectations that as many as 8 additional students may be enrolled for the next fiscal year.

Review of Real Estate sales and tax rates in Windham:

Frank Seawright, a resident of Windham, prepared a Pivot Table study comparing the property sales in Windham with 21 other small towns. The purpose of the study was to evaluate whether closing the school and tuitioning students would have a negative effect on values or whether it would improve values. The study is available on the Windham Town website as part of these minutes. The issue at hand is why many surrounding towns are experiencing significant student population growth while Windham's student population is in decline.

An additional study was prepared for the past 11 years comparing education tax rates, non-resident tax rates, the proposed annual school budget, and the number of Equalized Pupils as well as the number of graduates from the 6th grade. The study showed that there has not been a dramatic increase in overall spending and the average residential tax rate has not risen significantly. This being so, then why has Windham not attracted more families with children? Members of both the school board and the community expressed a concern over this information. (Comparison study is attached.)

Bills and pay orders:

Action was deferred until the next school board meeting. Laurie Garland, CFO of WCSU reviewed the 1st quarter status report line by line. The review process disclosed that quarterly billing by WCSU is simply an accounting function where 25% of a line item for services provided by WCSU staff is moved to the WCSU's account even if that service is not actually provided to the WES. An example is Physical Education, where 25% of the budgeted amount is expended as YTD (July, August & September) and the balance is encumbered. This is after less than one month of actual school instruction. The board found this information helpful in understanding how the funds are accounted for over time. Russ asked if he could spend some time reviewing the budget process with Laurie before the next school board meeting. Laurie agreed it would be beneficial.

Laurie will begin the budget development process at our next meeting on Nov. 2nd, 2020.

Required policy regarding prevention of sexual harassment:

Russ moved to adopt the policy proposed by The Vermont School Board Association effective immediately. Beth 2nd, motion passed. This policy replaces the existing sexual harassment policy. The entire policy is available on the WCSU website.

Adjourn: 5:20pm

Beth moved to adjourn, Russ 2nd, motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Russ Cumming