**Harwood Unified Union School District Board of Directors**

**Board Minutes**

**December 13, 2017**

**6:00 to 9:00 PM**

**Harwood Union School Library**

**Unapproved Minutes**

**Present from the Board:** Christine Sullivan (Chair), Jim Casey, Garett MacCurtain, Tom Cahalan, Maureen McCracken, Caitlin Hollister, Peter Langella, Jill Ellis, Lorraine Wargo, Alycia Biondo, Rob Williams, Rosemarie White

**Not Attending:**

**Board members late:** Gabe Gilman at 6:20, Alex Thomsen at 7:50

**Present from HUUSD:** Brigid Nease, Superintendent and Michelle Baker, Director of Finance, Val Gardner, Consultant.

**Public:** Madeline Hughes, Chris Kolba

1. Call to Order: Christine called meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.
2. Additions and Deletions: Will not be talking about PBL tonight; will start discussion in January - Admin creating a document on frequently asked questions.
3. Public Comment: None
4. Approve minutes from 12/6/17: Rob moved to approve minutes as amended. Alycia seconded. Motion passed. Rosemarie abstained – not here for last meeting.
5. Reflections from Last Meeting:
   1. Really appreciated public comment last time from former board members; need to be able to hear from everyone and need to keep perspective.
   2. Economic development and trying to make it possible for people to live here. Would behoove us to think about affordability and other issues affecting the state in general
   3. What has happened with Mr. Henry’s request for information? Received a reduced request, but still not manageable. Michelle will look at the four questions and will give whatever can be downloaded in an hour. After that there will be a charge for copies.
   4. Appreciated Rebecca Holcombe’s report on PBL (she is Vt. Secretary of Ed).
6. Board tune-up with Val Gardner topics include self-evaluation and community engagement - recommendations & discussions at the end of this report –**Item 13** – because discussion very lengthy.
7. Work Group reports - policy, neg./pers.:
   1. Negotiation Committee: Reviewed job descriptions and are looking for redesign piece. Job descriptions need to be changed to get through next few years, adding more descriptive information on things more relevant to our district.
   2. Policy Committee – Looking at board member conflict of interest, and a few other policies to make them consistent.
   3. Communications – continue fandango with our press friends. Meeting this week.

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1. Continue Budget discussion regarding expenditures, including: Operations, Maintenance and Long Term Capital needs, Solar service contract and leases, Transportation (45-55 minutes)
   1. Michelle - Early information about tax rates – some items of revenues estimated. Early information about equalized pupil not definite – still an estimate. Issue with some of the incentives – we were told that taxes could not go up over 5% with the merger - now find that this is not correct. Lots more to learn and understand. State revenue lower. Let public know that this is going on and bring attention to the state. Make narrative strong by showing different scenarios. Have to find a way to minimize the impact on taxpayers. We are playing by the rules controlling cost, state is failing – your problem – you fix it. Felt so demoralizing where group has worked so hard to keep budget in check. Each year feels worse than the time before.
   2. What are we going to do? How to take control of things you can’t change? Any increase is going to be hard for the taxpayers - if took 5% off budget, it would mean 20 teachers. Find ways to make revenue. Need to think long and hard about what to do. Should be a VSBA issue to ask state not to change laws around merger and advocate on our behalf.
   3. Summary of HUUSD Solar Services Agreements, and a draft of a 3-year Maintenance Plan for each school.
   4. Might have to make hard choices for the future.
2. Board Warrants: Rosemarie make a motion to confirm board warrants for a total of $827,103.80, seconded by Peter, motion passed (without Alex).
   1. Board Warrants: Voucher 1141 for $313,899.53, Voucher 1133 for $524.80, and Voucher 1124 for $512,679.47.
3. Other business: Brigid distributed a position paper of the district redesign. Will be sent to newspapers, taxpayers, schools, etc. Will discuss at next week’s meeting.
4. Executive Session: not needed
5. Adjourn: Rosemarie moved to adjourn, seconded by Rob at 9:07 pm Motion approved

1. **Val Gardner, Consultant Discussion**
2. Board Evaluation:
   1. Twice a year board should ask members to do a self-evaluation and peer (board as a whole) feedback. Could be before annual summer retreat. The data should be collated and shared with the full board. Val created a template for the conversation: Tool #1. The Board Chair Feedback should be completed on an annual basis.
   2. From this process of providing feedback, specific goals can be set and built into the board’s annual work plan.
   3. Guide for Board Conversation after board meeting self-evaluation: What led board to be effective – choose one broad area and say what to commit to as a board. Who takes responsibility to follow through on this and when does board reassess.
   4. Board should provide feedback at each of its meetings.
   5. One member can gather the Board Meeting Feedback at each meeting – could have an online form for everyone to use. Becomes part of the agenda for meetings – 5 minutes.
   6. If same 2 people talking and no one else, means all voices were not heard. Board Chair has to share where board is on track or where it is not.
   7. **Rosemarie moved to add 5 minutes at end of each agenda to do this board meeting feedback, seconded by Caitlin. Motion passed unanimously.**
   8. Chair Feedback – end of June? Add to work plan – when is the time of the annual board self-evaluation, - do at same time. When is best fit for feedback cycle for board chair?
   9. If board becomes high functioning and board-meeting feedback gets to be difficult, could have one person observe for the 5 minutes at end of each meeting.

Community Engagement:

1. First engagement forum next Monday. Wanted a place to start community engagement. Committee members went through agenda last meeting. Agenda:
   1. Welcome and explain role of committees on the board - which ones are operating at this time; explaining all towns involved, and community engagement itself.
   2. Facilitator addresses ground rules and assists with introductions – name and which town they are from.
   3. Have suggestions of topics for discussion and ask for other topics for discussion. Create a time plan for discussion. Will have note cards for people to jot down questions for future events.
   4. Have some handouts – policy about public comment, have another board member with computer in case folks have questions about policies that are available on the website.
   5. Quick Exit Survey. Adjourn at 7.
   6. Create a public survey with some of the questions.

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1. How to get information to the public about forum – blurb – what do they value most about school, what is missing, what are your thoughts about our 5 adopted goals and how would you prioritize them. What is reality of people’s perceptions of what your role is – how to differentiate between what board work is and governance, be ready to respond. What are board and what are administrative questions? Thank for question and say you are going to direct this back to the administration. Be careful about getting too specific in your school vs. broader questions. Are you listening and are you responding. Val liked question: What are you looking for in your school?

What do you think we should be thinking about as a new board?

How to address specific questions? Address what admin and curricular groups have in process for answers.

This is a balance of information given to the community about how this group is functioning as a board. If someone asks how to influence this group – explain complaint policy. Answer is that board will do what they think is best.

Can submit a public comment, can listen to the board discussion. Budget will not be voted on line item by line, but the budget as a whole.

Have created very specific goals, saying to public these are the goals we promised you when we came together as a district. Have responsibility for students and tax payers – responsible for entire community, not just the parents. The foundation is to build for next several years.

Individual thinking they can affect programming? How to help folks realize that we will not change things just on their voice alone? Important to let person know their voice has been heard. Advocacy is a strong thing but board job is about all children. This is what we need to hold Admin to. How is this meeting the equity promised?

How to handle redesign: in board meetings and beyond. Have a special work group to be sure public can be heard. Need really good help doing this. Plan in place for what the timelines are and what benchmarks are for this redesign process. Who make what decisions? Get help from other districts to see what they are doing. Enter into very intentionally, not lazifare. *(sp)* Appreciate them coming to meeting but that theirs is one voice. Piece to figure out is how to engage them. How to engage in conversation within a context that is appropriate? Could have a great venue with Kathy Cadwell’s café at Harwood. Make this part of a boarder plan. Have much discussion about redesign – combination of listening and providing information. What is underlying value here?

Val has a strong belief in symbolism and how to set things up. Set up in a way that allows a group of people to engage with each other – small groups. Have people move to get in groups with people from different schools. How to ensure engagement by everyone? Let people know that they are expected to participate. People are more open to speak If in smaller group and from different areas. Have people introduce selves in the small groups.

Forum is about us listening to people – another event purpose could be to have community listen to each other and connect. Could develop and pursue going forward. Monday’s event is to come up with ideas for future forums. Board members could go to PTO or select board meeting in other town to get more information. Which idea goes to board or which is directed back to Administration? Need to be clear as board members, will get all kinds of things – bus runs, funding, etc.

Have other board members in audience? Not facilitating meeting – not exercising authority of board. Meeting has to be warned.

Broader Community Engagement? Group should gather information and bring analysis back to board. Here’s what you can expect to get back to people. Note taking – design it in a way that it is not public comment but engagement of people. Clarifying that this is well beyond public comment but engagement and public comment take a different form.

Public comment is public comment – some in regard to agenda and others whatever they want to say. Controlling public comment is very important.

Public comment has right to comment on whatever providing not student information or personnel procedures: Title 16, school board shall afford any opportunity for public comment. General Open Meeting Law and Education Law not the same. What’s the legal interpretation and what’s the value sent to community? Discussion of policy on public engagement. Have public engagement at beginning of meeting.

Next meeting with Val: Montering and metric to get to goals.